



## CONSUMER SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY AND ENVIRONMENTAL PERFORMANCE OF BOTTLED WATER FIRMS IN RIVERS STATE

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<p><b>Received:</b> September 30<sup>th</sup> 2023 <b>Accepted:</b> October 28<sup>th</sup> 2023 <b>Published:</b> November 30<sup>th</sup> 2023</p>	<p>The purpose of this research was to look at the link between consumer social responsibility and the environmental performance of bottled water companies in Rivers State. The quantitative research technique and cross-sectional survey method were used in the study. Two hundred and forty-one (241) copies were suitable for analysis out of a total of three hundred and twenty-four (324) copies disseminated. The respondents were chosen using purposeful/convenience sampling approaches. Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS version 23) was used to implement the Pearson Product Moment correlation statistical technique. The study's findings revealed that consumer social responsibility has a substantial relationship with the environmental performance of bottled water enterprises in Rivers State. The study also indicated that consumer social responsibility has a substantial influence on the environmental performance of bottled water enterprises in Rivers State. Based on the findings, the research advised that management of bottled water corporations and their dealers create corporate strategies that include societal well-being. Managers of bottled water companies must please customers while also balancing social welfare and profit.</p>

**Keywords:** consumer social responsibility, environmental performance, consumer awareness, consumer collaboration, ethical consumer

### INTRODUCTION

Consumers' and environmental and societal agitation for improved eco-living conditions have heightened or increased concern about the consumption of bottled water in the Port Harcourt municipal area in recent years. The demand for treated bottled water from consumers of municipal water has significantly increased as a result of the expanding population, rapid industrialization, and new applications for treated bottled water. At the turn of the millennium, the introduction of bottled and sachet drinking water gained national traction, and consumers have been confronted with the painful challenges of unhealthy practices and environmental hazards that this establishment has caused to the detriment of people and waterways (the environment). According to Forbes.com, 91% of the plastic bottles that are used every minute are not returned or recycled (forbes.com, 2017), and they end up in our drains, clogging up waterways mostly in urban areas like Port Harcourt. According to Euro-Monitor International (2017), sales of bottled water in Nigeria increased by 7% in 2016 to reach N938.6 billion, with an estimated 28.9 billion liters of bottled water valued at N938.6 billion. However, there are insufficient provisions for recycling or safe disposal of these wastes. A staggering amount of these wastes are not collected, treated, or disposed of safely, leading to a global waste crisis and increased ecological stress. Given that it takes hundreds or thousands of years for a plastic bottle of water to disintegrate (Kershaw et al., 2011), this becomes a source of environmental worry for consumers both present and future generations. More than 90% of empty plastic bottled water ends up in our rivers and drainages, posing an environmental risk by contaminating groundwater, waterways, and animals.

Policymakers are devoid of ideas for a long-term solution to this global problem because the management of these companies, which are responsible for this, has not been improving in terms of their social responsibilities. In addition to being "users" of a product, consumers are also recycling agents and have the ability to co-create value through the provision of services that "close the loop" between producers of plastic bottled water and the environment, which can be induced by monetary value. In order to educate customers about the importance of protecting the environment and becoming one, consumer education must be implemented. Social responsibility for consumers shouldn't just be seen

from the perspective of manufacturers; it should also apply to consumption agents, or consumers. The social roles that consumers play in sustaining environmental sustainability and national development will be discussed in greater detail in this paper. The responsibility for safely disposing of their consumed bottled water and preserving its economic value when returned and recycled should not fall solely on the shoulders of the management of bottled water companies.

The destruction of the natural environment is one of the most serious long-term dangers to human life. Producers and consumers are mostly responsible for this deterioration and must accept concessions in order to achieve "sustainable and national development." Consumers produce environmental externalities, mainly negative externalities, while carrying out their routine activities. Externalities cannot be dealt with by the market on their own, unless they are changed into internalities through consumer preferences (Crouch, 2016). State legislation is enforceable and may play an essential role in promoting environmentally friendly behaviors among consumers, who should take responsibility for their waste management rather than relying on the government or businesses in particular to do so. It is not flawless, and it may even reduce societal welfare due to its cost or inefficiency. This leads us to the concept of corporate social responsibility. Consumers in many industrialized nations, unlike those of us in our area of the world (Rivers State) Nigeria, are well knowledgeable about their own involvement in causing issues. They choose to act in ways that either add to or solve issues. As a result, they are not ethically accountable for environmental concerns as customers.

Given that responsibility has always been associated with corporations, it has aided consumers in purchasing the product with the sole intention of being socially responsible, which is not the case. A consumer's social responsibility extends beyond the interests of the consumer and assumes responsibility for long-term considerations that are not directly related to the consumer (Varney, 2022). People who are concerned about the effects that a purchase choice has not only on themselves but also on the world around them are the focus of consumer social responsibility. According to Dickinson & Carsky (2015), consumers have also been given the responsibility of using their "purchase votes" to achieve positive social outcomes, just as businesses have been encouraged to implement practices of corporate social responsibility (CSR). According to Vogel (2015), consumers "have" a certain level of social responsibility, which they then express as preferences for features of products or corporate social responsibility in general. This creates a "market for virtue" that attracts new products and services and drives new production and consumption patterns that are socially responsible. Markets and the behavior of responsible consumers are built in large part by businesses. According to Crouch (2016), businesses may cultivate a taste for environmental protection and sustainability because, as is common knowledge, they attempt to both satisfy and shape consumer demand. One of the most important examples in this regard is individual consumer awareness, but it is not enough to just create and implement a regulatory framework that clearly defines the roles of various stakeholders.

Individual customers in Rivers State lack understanding and fundamental civic sense as compared to cities in the Western world, where managing plastic bottled water waste is a mammoth task. Consumer education is critical in directing plastic bottled water garbage to approved collection centres and recyclers for safe disposal. The majority of people who use plastic bottled water are unaware of the repercussions of the plastic bottled water wastes that are created and disposed of inappropriately on the environment, ecology, and health of present and future generations. Consumers are becoming more aware of firms' responsibilities as a result of improved education and the media's impact. It may no longer be acceptable for customers to disregard their societal responsibilities. Consumer social responsibility refers to decisions that involve both people and procedures and necessitate judgments about time, energy, location, and systems, as well as economic considerations. Consumers must select whether and how to modify home items and practices, as well as reuse and recycle things. Social responsibility consumer behavior is the behavior of a consumer who is socially conscious and seeks social change. According to Min et al., (2012) and Mohr et al (2021) this type of consumer looks for more information about a product or service, purchases, uses, and disposes of it in a way that maximizes its benefits and minimizes its negative effects on society.

For instance, Jagel et al. (2012) found that people must constantly strike a balance between the needs of their families, those of society, those of nature and come across illogical situations, such as when actions meant to protect the natural environment have a negative effect on one's health (such as the toxins in reusable bags) (Klick & Wright, 2012). Additionally, we would like to emphasize that ethical motivations do not always drive responsible consumer behavior. Consumer responsibility can be motivated by economic, legal, ethical, or philanthropic goals, and their actions can contribute to the sustainability of the environment or society. The researcher ought to investigate the impact of consumer social responsibility on the environmental performance of bottled water companies in Rivers State in light of this background.

Waste management aims cannot be isolated from those of long-term national development. This is because national development principles strive to promote economic development, social development, and environmental protection. The ever-increasing flow of plastic bottled water trash is a massive environmental hazard. Recycling, a sustainable solution to these challenges, minimizes the quantity of garbage disposed of directly in landfills and waterways, and has the potential to cut disposal and waste transit costs. In other words, good waste management by consumers, rather than corporations in particular, offers significant potential benefits for the state and Nigeria, the economy, and the environment. A clean and healthy environment is one of the most important legacies a nation can leave to its future generations.

As it is observed currently, consumers in Rivers State's municipal and metropolitan authorities are embroiled in a tangled dilemma of dangerous plastic bottled water consumption, with the concomitant non-existent plastic waste management agency cum environmental pollution littering and blockage of drainages. There is an increasing requirement for producers to offer customers with safe and healthy drinking water while not jeopardizing society. It is an undeniable reality that bottled water makers, marketers, and users are socially irresponsible. The government's lack of concern for environmental management, preservation, and protection is also evident. To assist in resolving the mess left behind by these businesses, consumer awareness, consumer collaboration, and ethical consumers should be well implemented. Environmental awareness and a shift in perspective were made public to the people who buy these products about the best ways to manage the waste from their bottled water consumption. The impact of their activity (utilization exercises) ought to be clarified to them. The problem on the ground is the government's and businesses' inability to educate consumers about the dangers of using bottled water. Customers ought to play an integral role in ensuring the social well-being of the environment. Everyone is concerned about the environment. Companies have failed to recognize that consumers ought to be educated about their role in the environment, particularly after consumption.

According to an author observation from vconnect.com, the state of Rivers is expected to have a population of 6 million by 2025. This is due to the fact that the state's population exceeded 4 million in 2019 and to a growing economic base and an increased economic demand for plastic bottled water. The amount of waste that is thrown away is rising at an exponential rate as a result of the rapid rate at which manufacturers are upgrading and improving these products, which results in higher rates of waste generation. Because of indiscriminate dumping in public open spaces and river banks, where it is illegally discarded alongside municipal or hospital trash, the rising bottled water waste creation rate is causing major environmental management concerns. As a result, these dangerous practices are causing unwanted environmental degradation, which is projected to intensify because most Nigerian towns lack adequate waste management systems. Consumer social responsibility can help to keep the environment peaceful. This article examined the impact of consumer social responsibility on the environmental performance of bottled water enterprises in Rivers State. The major goal of this research was to look at the link between consumer social responsibility and the environmental performance of bottled water companies in Rivers State.

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### Theoretical framework:

**Stakeholder theory:** Stakeholder theory was refined, and additional systematic research on the various constituents that should be considered was included. Carroll and Buchholts (2003) state that the stakeholders can be broken down into primary stakeholders, which include shareholders (owners), employees, customers, business partners, communities, upcoming generations, and the natural environment. and secondary stakeholders, which include competitors, regulatory bodies, civic institutions and groups, special interest groups, trade and industry groups, the media, and the federal, state, and local governments. Nevertheless, the classification is somewhat arbitrary. Currently, customers evaluate businesses not only in terms of the features of their products and services, but also in terms of the business practices they engage in, the manner in which their products are produced, and the social impact the company has had (Hartmann, 2012). As a result, businesses that engage in corporate social responsibility (CSR) are seen as trustworthy and trustworthy partners for secure transactions. On the other hand, due to a lack of trust, businesses that do not engage in corporate social responsibility will not be appealing to customers, employees, suppliers, and other stakeholders. According to Kaufman & Olaru (2012), such businesses are also seen as profit-driven entities that have little or no regard for the requirements of their customers or business partners.

### CONCEPTUAL REVIEW

#### Environmental Performance (EP)

Green procurement, eco-design, and green logistics are all important aspects of green marketing. More efficient supplier processes may help to reduce transaction costs, waste, hazardous materials, increase recycling and reuse of raw materials, and adhere to environmental regulations set by the country's government, non-governmental organizations, and other business bodies (Sarkis, 2013). To better understand fundamental environmental problems and develop comprehensive solutions, downstream oil companies must identify the sources of environmental problems in their entirety during production, transportation, procurement, and product development while producing offerings to meet populace demands and problems such as hazardous wastes, air, water, and soil as they are released into the environment (Azapagic, 2003). EP refers to all natural deposits as well as those given by man in his endeavors to make life more meaningful, meaningful, and comfortable. This is further defined as things that impact man in a variety of ways, such as land, water, air, trees, grasses, and dwellings (Nwanne, 2013).

EP focuses on falling supply chain initiatives for carbon monoxide, solid and runoff waste, gas and other emissions to air and water, sulphur dioxide (SO<sub>2</sub>), nitrogen oxide (NO), energy consumption, water and fuel use, water pollution, air pollution, noise pollution, hazardous and toxic material use and consumption (Zhu et al., 2013). All of the aforementioned causes have a negative impact on the environment, generating health issues for the same guy. It is at this stage that industrial institutions, such as downstream oil corporations, are required to be environmentally mindful in their supply chain management. The term "green initiatives" refers to any effort made to lessen the negative environmental impact of a business's offerings. According to Eltayeb et al., (2011) these efforts have a positive impact

on the improvement of environmental performance by reducing the consumption of hazardous substances and solid and liquid wastes, lowering the number of environmental accidents, and improving the health of the host community.

### **Consumer Social Responsibility**

Schrader (2017) defines social responsibility as "the intention to act based on the acknowledgement of one's duties toward self or others." Consumer social responsibility, according to some researchers, is driven by ethical or philanthropic concerns. The purpose of the consumer is explained by consumer social responsibility; i.e., the rationale behind the responsible behavior, which exemplifies motives and social, emotional, or cognitive consumption processes. We must determine the motivation behind that behavior in order to identify the components of consumer social responsibility. The concept of consumer social responsibility encompasses a wide range of behaviors and motivations; It is not enough to just say that it is a behavior that has a positive effect on society or the environment but also has an impact on the economy. Customer responses are influenced by Corporate Social Responsibility both directly and indirectly (Brown, 2019). Every company strives to build rapport with its customers in order to be successful in this competitive environment, and this relationship is not always easy. According to Bhattacharya and Sen (2014), it is a complicated interaction with numerous aspects and variables functioning at both the individual and firm levels (e.g., customer personal preferences, perceptions, and values).

Gabriel and Lang (2019) describe consumer social responsibility as 'a responsible consumer, a socially-aware consumer, a consumer who looks ahead and tempers his or her impulses by social awareness, a consumer whose acts must be ethically justified and who must occasionally be prepared to sacrifice'. Consumer accountability is still a developing notion. In reality, whereas the notion of 'corporate social responsibility' has gotten substantial scholarly study, the concept of 'consumer social responsibility' has garnered relatively little attention. This may be compared to consumers' incapacity to engage in the nation's economic growth not just via the purchase of products/services accessible to them, but also as an agent of environmental change by fully participating in the global warning. This might be related to the dominance of the concept of consumer sovereignty, which assigns consumers power rather than accountability (Brinkmann & Peattie, 2018). The four aspects of corporate social responsibility are equivalent to the four dimensions of consumer social responsibility. As a result, it is "a consumer's obligation to maximize his/her positive impact on stakeholders while minimizing his/her negative impact." Legal, economic, ethical, and charitable responsibility is the four types (Brinkmann, 2017).

As per Brinkmann and Peattie (2018), this is sensible since an individual has an obligation to regard the law, and could be seen as having a monetary obligation to add to his/her family and to help himself-herself. Organizations are supposed to act in an ethical manner somewhat on the grounds that society awards them certain honours (like a protected lawful system, admittance to an informed labour force, utilization of monetary foundation) and consequently society can have genuine assumptions regarding how organizations ought to act consequently. Society awards organizations a permit to work; similarly it awards people a permit to live as free residents. This implies that people need to consent to society's guidelines and assumptions by likewise guarding the climate not by littering it squanders. The idea of "shopper social obligation" suggests a social practice - "casting a ballot with your cash" - that can fulfil contending belief systems of commercialization (a thought established in individual personal circumstance) and citizenship (an optimal attached in aggregate liability to a social and environmental hall). A singular's product decision can fulfil his/her longing for individual wellbeing and joy while creating manageability and social understanding for society overall (Johnston, 2018).

Contrary to the more researched concept of corporate social responsibility, it appears that consumer social responsibility is a concept with more contradictions. These two areas of study have emerged with distinct expectations regarding consumer behavior: The consumer citizenship movement emphasizes that consumers must translate their rights into duties within the environment because some people believe it is their duty to act. According to Schrader (2017), some people believe that it is the responsibility of consumers to be informed about social and environmental issues, to use this information to make better (more sustainable, conscious) purchasing decisions, and to actively alter their consumption when it has a negative impact on sustainability. Some people argue that we put too much pressure on customers and that they sometimes are unable to take action because there are too many obstacles they cannot control (Moisander, 2017; Valor, 2018). Consumer responsibility has typically been viewed and studied from the perspective that it is primarily motivated by ethical or philanthropic concerns. However, Belz and Peattie (2012) notes that researchers also acknowledge that self-interested or legal obligations can have positive effects on the environment or society.

### **Consumer Social Responsibility and Environmental Performance**

Consumer social responsibility is defined as a state in which a consumer expresses an intention to take action aimed at environmental problem remediation, acting not as an individual consumer with his or her own economic interests, but through a consumer social responsibility concept of societal-environmental well-being (Stone et al., 2019). Prior research has demonstrated that consumer environmental responsibility is inextricably linked to environmental education, which differs between nationalities and cultures (Slavoljub et al., 2015; Hanson-Rasmussen & Lauer, 2018). Stern et al. (2019) also discovered a large association between consumer social responsibility and pro-environmental conduct, implying that if people feel more responsible for the environment, they will be more ready to engage in pro-

environmental activity. Young et al. (2019) investigated customers who felt responsible for current environmental problems and discovered that these consumers were more worried about environmental issues and were more inclined to purchase environmentally friendly items and services. When if people bought things like plastic bottled water, their sense of disposal will be spot-on without the commands of any individual, organization, or government agency. If the aggregate customers do their social obligations by properly disposing of their consumed bottled water goods, it allows the Rivers State and Nigerian governments to engage in additional national programs, therefore raising the national development bar. Ethical consumers contribute to a clean environment. Although Ramasamy et al. (2010) suggests that religiosity has a global impact on purchase intention, no one knows how much of an impact it has stated that "religious people in Hong Kong are more supportive of socially responsible activities undertaken by businesses." They are more likely to buy goods and services from companies that care about society. In the equation of consumer social responsibility, consumers play a significant and intricate role: They may undoubtedly contribute to its spread through their purchasing habits. If companies want their initiatives in corporate social responsibility to be more successful, they need to take a more proactive approach to consumer social responsibility. According to Williams (2015), consumer social responsibility plays a significant complement to corporate social responsibility. He proposes the development of a proactive concept of consumer social responsibility that encourages businesses to behave in a way that is better for society and the environment. Peters also emphasizes the connection between responsibility and consumer power: Firms' practices and policies are influenced by customers, and as a result, they bear some responsibility for them.

According to Bhattacharya and Sen (2014), consumers' ability to appropriately reward and punish corporations is hindered by a lack of awareness of CSR initiatives. As a result, producers of bottled water in Rivers State are advised to provide responsible customers with pertinent information about the social responsibility credentials of their products and services via labelling or advertising media. Customers will, in turn, properly process this information when deciding which products to choose and what they consume. A number of environmental policy initiatives raise environmental issues' awareness and concern. This is based on the belief that consumers would alter their purchasing habits by purchasing and consuming bottled water products in an environmentally conscious manner as environmental awareness grew. These will, in turn, contribute to the nation's development and generate entrepreneurial concern for Rivers State's citizens, or customers. Plastic bottled water trash collection and disposal have become the most visible problem in our metropolitan areas, defying solutions by various government agencies in Nigeria. This problem, with its consequences for human life and property value in Nigeria, has gotten worse, and despite massive financial expenditure, nothing appears to have been accomplished. Again, the volume of plastic bottled water trash produced by the inhabitants in each city, town, or hamlet is proportional to population density (Ojikutu, 2014). Firms in Port Harcourt must make or sell ecologically friendly (green) products for the sake of consumers and national growth. Appropriate regulatory bodies must strengthen their internal activities to ensure that customers in Port Harcourt are adequately informed of the need to properly dispose of plastic bottled water items inside and outside the state for health and environmental reasons. This would enhance and better the people's economic lives in Port Harcourt than suffering from what they are unaware of. The United Nations Development Programme analyzed this in relation to Nigeria.

### **Consumer Awareness and Environmental Performance**

CSR is thought to have a beneficial influence on customer intentions and purchasing behavior (Becker-Olsen et al., 2016). CSR efforts will be ineffective if customers are unaware of them. According to Pomeroy and Dolniar (2019), excellent consumer awareness of CSR may be obtained if customers are aware of the firms' CSR actions, while companies with poor CSR can influence consumers. Consumer knowledge of the company's actions is the goal of a company's CSR communication strategy since customers take control and may utilize the information to aid in the purchasing process (Berman et al., 2019). CSR initiatives won't have a significant impact on purchasing patterns if consumers aren't aware of them. However, despite the fact that numerous studies emphasized the necessity of awareness for purchasing behavior, Duncombe and Heeks (2022) noted that awareness alone does not translate into actual actions. The awareness of customers has an effect on the customers themselves. It increases customers' confidence in the brand. We simply wouldn't be able to act (Klewes, 2009). According to Swaen and Chumpitaz (2018), trust is defined as belief, desire, or assumptions regarding a brand. According to Blomqvist (2017), a consumer's trust in a business can be broadly defined as their belief that the business will honor its promises with integrity and good will.

According to Bhattacharya and Sen (2014), consumers' reactions to the business are largely influenced by their awareness of CSR. However, an assumption or artificially induced awareness of CSR that has not been thoroughly tested is a common issue in the majority of academic research on consumer responses to CSR (Pomeroy & Johnson, 2019). Additionally, consumer awareness of CSR initiatives is ambiguous and may be quite low (Mohr et al., 2021). As a result, it is still unclear how much customers are aware of CSR initiatives. An attitude-behavior gap, or the gap between a person's attitude and their actual behavior, is likely to occur if they are unaware of and do not understand their company's CSR activities (Mohr et al., 2021), and they stand in the way of the company's goal of reaping strategic benefits from its CSR efforts (Sen et al., 2016). These observations may, at the very least, seriously cast doubt on some aspects of the business case.

As a result, when corporations describe their CSR activities, consumers may be skeptical at first (Bae & Cameron, 2016). This skepticism is partially captured by the PKM concept, which holds that consumers learn about persuasion attempts through firm CSR communications and then use that information to deal with such persuasion attempts (Friestad & Wright, 2014). Consumers view corporate motives as impacting both customer sentiments toward that firm and intent to acquire the company's products or services (Becker-Olsen et al., 2016).

The sharing economy is an emerging economic-technological phenomenon that is fuelled by developments in information and communications technology (ICT), growing consumer awareness, proliferation of collaborative web communities as well as social commerce/sharing. The sharing economy is an umbrella concept that encompasses several ICT developments and technologies, among others collaborative consumption, which endorses sharing the consumption of goods and services through online platforms (Hamari et al., 2016). Nonetheless, many poor nations have low household and public knowledge of e-waste safeguards and correct treatment. Sivanthanu (2016) found that consumer awareness has a direct association with readiness to recycle e-waste in an Indian study on e-waste knowledge and attitudes, which is a critical requirement for efficient e-waste management. Furthermore, e-waste recycling efforts in developing countries such as Bangladesh and India are ineffective because large proportions of their populations are unaware of the precautionary measures required for handling and disposing of e-wastes (Sivanthanu, 2016, Ansari et al., 2010). However, literature indicates that families in these cities are prepared to pay for proper e-waste disposal (Sivanthanu, 2016, Borthakur & Govind, 2017).

According to Sivanthanu (2016), Ben-Enukora et al., a number of studies have highlighted the significance of waste knowledge to the successful management of this waste stream. (Jafari et. al, 2017, Saphores et. al, 2012, Akhtar et al., 2013). Attitudes and levels of awareness among stakeholders, including households, determine how waste is disposed of. Consumer awareness plays a major role to route e-waste to authorized collection centres and authorized recyclers for safe disposal, as Bhat & Patil (2014) highlight. As a result, numerous international studies have highlighted the significance of individual recycling attitudes, behaviors, and waste disposal practices in influencing waste management effectiveness (Ezeah et al., 2013). As a direct result, the following hypotheses were developed:

H1: There is no significant relationship between consumer awareness and environmental performance of bottled water firms in Rivers State.

### **Consumer Collaboration and Environmental Performance**

By lowering the cost of economic coordination within communities, collaborative consumption has been anticipated to alleviate societal issues like poverty, pollution, and excessive consumption. Their participation in collaborative consumption is motivated by a variety of factors, including the activity's enjoyment and sustainability as well as financial benefits. Consumption attitudes have changed in recent years, bringing with them an increase in concern for the effects on the environment, society, and development. The "collaborative consumption" or "sharing economy" is an appealing alternative for consumers due to a growing concern about climate change and a desire for social embedment through locality and communal consumption. According to previous research, ethical consumption is discouraged by economic and institutional factors. On the other hand, these issues have been addressed and may be overcome by the development of new consumption practices through the sharing economy, such as collaborative consumption (Bray et al., 2011). The sharing economy is a new economic-technological phenomena driven by advances in information and communications technology (ICT), rising consumer awareness, the expansion of collaborative web communities, and social commerce/sharing. The sharing economy is an umbrella term that incorporates a variety of ICT advances and technologies, including collaborative consumption, which promotes the sharing of products and services via online platforms (Hamari et al., 2016).

In this context, collaborative consumption is a socioeconomic model based on the joint use of specific products that demonstrates how to avoid, or at least postpone, the accumulation of waste and losses by exchanging, giving away, renting, trading, lending, and borrowing unused or unwanted goods among individuals and groups (Botsman & Rogers, 2010; Botsman, 2015). Collaborative consumption has expanded so much as a result of community contact and the increased use of internet technology that it has transformed from a primarily private or local habit into a strong transformation movement that has the potential to undermine existing business structures. Projects such as eBay, Airbnb, Task-Rabbit, BlaBlaCar, Uber, and Zipcar are well-known instances of this trend (Owyang et al., 2014). Waste is an inescapable by product of people's regular consumption habits. As a result, waste is defined as unwanted materials left over from a production activity that are frequently emitted into the environment and cause harmful changes, or as various processes that do not add value to a good or service, but things and materials considered waste are frequently refurbished as tradable resources with consumers acting as agents.

Chukwukelo (2017) claims that Nigeria's refuse dumps currently generate 24 million tons of waste annually. In contrast to industrialized nations where Integrated Waste Management (IWM) is fully operational, most developing nations, like Nigeria, lack adequate waste collection and management systems to handle the millions of tons of waste generated annually by households. According to Sridhar & Hammed (2014), integrated waste management is the selection and application of appropriate strategies, technologies, and management programs to achieve specific waste management objectives and goals. A sustainable economy and environment depend on consumers' participation and contributions to the value-creation from household waste. By carefully separating recyclables, consumers begin the first stage of recycling, which is more convenient and cost-effective than separation at collection centers. Poon et al. say that ( 2011),

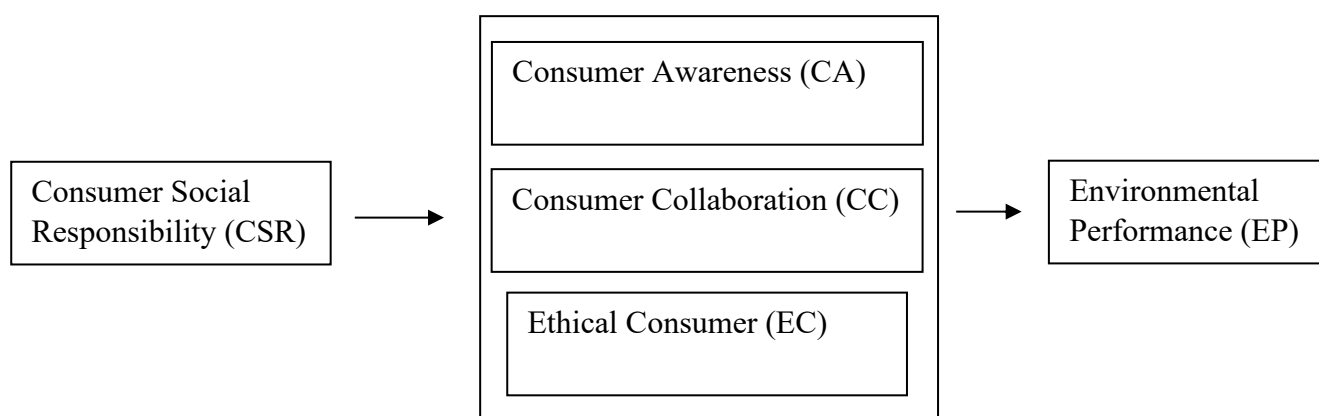
the participation of consumers in the separation of recyclable materials is crucial to the success of any recycling effort. Recycling is seen as a path to value creation and environmental sustainability due to the significance of consumer contributions. As a direct result, the following hypotheses were developed:

H2: There is no significant relationship between consumer collaboration and environmental performance of bottled water firms in Rivers State.

**Ethical Consumer and Environmental Performance**

Ethical consumer has become a trend and has spread to mainstream society. Nonetheless, many consumers continue to buy products from companies they choose without considering the companies' ethical value and social responsibility. This could be due to a lack of knowledge the consumers have about the companies they buy products from. Consumer realities are in direct conflict with the concept of CSR as preached by academia. While the notion of CSR has evolved over the last sixty years, relatively few businesses have gone above and beyond legal duties and societal conventions in their actions. Legislative reform has mostly driven social transformation. This will continue until a majority of customers signal that they are prepared to pay extra for items made by companies that are really socially responsible. Ethical consumerism is described as consumer decisions based on the social and ethical components of products, as well as sense and moral convictions (Auger et al., 2013). Green customers are sometimes mistaken with ethical consumers. Green customers, according to Balderjahn (2018), are concerned with environmental and animal welfare concerns, whereas ethical consumers are concerned with social issues such as labor, worker welfare, and so on. A corporation's primary contribution to society is continuous innovation in goods and services supplied to the public, as well as the widespread advantages of enhanced productivity through targeted economic decision-making. Moral obligations include exercises and practices that are normal by the general public and done by firms intentionally in regards to fair, equity and the regard for or assurance of partners' ethical freedoms. Moral obligations are wilful selections of firms, since they are not systematized into any regulation or guideline. These obligations reflect accepted practices, assumptions and worries of shoppers, workers, investors and the local area. Moral obligations go farther than legitimate liabilities since they include recently arising values and standards that the general population anticipates that a firm should follow and are at a better quality of strategic policies than that on-going overall set of laws required. Nonetheless, moral obligations are difficult to manage for firms in light of the fact that new assumptions from the public continue to arise and this makes the authenticity of moral obligations consistently under banter.

Auger et al., (2013), ethical consumerism is defined as making decisions based on the social and ethical aspects of a product, sense and moral convictions (Carrigan et al., 2014). Green consumers and ethical consumers are frequently misunderstood. Green consumers, according to Balderjahn (2018), are concerned about environmental and animal welfare issues, while ethical consumers are concerned about social issues like labour conditions, worker welfare, and so on. According to Carroll (2017), ethical responsibility encompasses standards, norms, or expectations that are related to what consumers, employees, shareholders, and the community consider being fair and just or that protect the moral rights of stakeholders and go beyond legal responsibility. As a direct result, the following hypotheses were developed: H3: There is no significant relationship between ethical consumer and environmental performance of bottled water firms in Rivers State.



**Figure 1: Operational/Conceptual framework on consumer social responsibility and environmental performance**

**Empirical Review**

Nsikan et al. (2015) show how CSR affects competitive advantage in the Nigerian telecommunications market. According to the study, CSR has a strong beneficial impact on competitive advantage, and there is a statistically significant

association between corporate social responsibility and company competitiveness. This may be achieved by being ecologically sensitive, offering scholarships, financing philanthropic organizations, implementing transparent hiring methods, and creating a balance between work and family responsibilities. Eshra and Beshir (2017) investigated the influence of corporate social responsibility on Egyptian consumer purchasing behavior. The findings revealed that Egyptian consumers are properly aware of the idea of CSR, but that all CSR aspects have a negligible impact on consumer behavior. This suggests that Egyptian customers do not consider any CSR factors while making their decisions. Vahdati et al. (2015) conducted research on customer perceptions of corporate social responsibility in relation to consumer attitudes and purchasing behavior. This article investigates the influence of CSR on customer purchasing behavior in terms of the company's function as a mediator. The study's statistical population includes all dairy product users in Ahwaz, including Pegah and Kaleh. Due to the limitless populations in statistical research, all consumers were picked using the Cluster Sampling method, and roughly 200 homes were estimated using an error level of 0.05, an estimate accuracy rate of 0.07, and a success ratio of 0.5. The questionnaires developed by Wong Szeki (2012) and Galbreath (2010) have been utilized for data collection. According to the findings of the research, a positive customer attitude toward corporate social responsibility has a direct and positive effect on purchasing decisions.

**METHODOLOGY**

This study looked into how environmental performance of bottled water companies in Rivers State was affected by consumer social responsibility. In terms of this paper, a quasi-experimental design was used. The researcher had no influence over the studied elements by adopting this design. In order to make logical inferences and draw conclusions, a cross-sectional survey was used to collect data from various points. This was populated by Rivers State-based bottled water companies. According to the Rivers State Yellow Pages, 2016/2017, there were one hundred sixty-two (162) registered bottled water businesses in the state. Two questionnaires were distributed to the management of the selected bottled water companies in Rivers State for convenience. The total was three hundred and twenty-four. Our working sample consisted of 324 people, or 324 people. In addition, a convenience sampling method was implemented to make it simple to assign and distribute questionnaires to the appropriate respondents. The following five-point scale instruments were also used in the study: SA stands for "Strongly Agree," "Agree," "Undecided," "Disagree," "Strongly Disagree," and "Undecided." The hypotheses that were formulated were analyzed and tested using the Pearson Product Moment coefficient tool.

**DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION**

This chapter, which served as the study's culmination, examined the respondents' replies. The researcher largely relied on data obtained from questionnaires provided to respondents. This chapter also tested the hypotheses and described the results.

**Table 1: Questionnaire Distribution and Retrieval**

Questionnaire	Frequency	Percentage %
Distributed	324	100
Retrieved	277	85.5
Not retrieved	47	14.5
Retrieved usable	241	87
Retrieved not usable	36	13

**Source:** Survey data, 2023

According to the data above, 324 questionnaires were distributed, 277 of which were retrieved (85.5%), and 47 of which were not retrieved (14.5%). Only 241 of the 277 recovered were useable, representing 87%, and 36, representing 13%, were not.

**Table 2: Gender Distribution**

Gender	Frequency	Percentage %
Male	143	59.3
Female	98	40.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>241</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source:** Survey data, 2023

According to the data above, 143 of the respondents (59.3%) were males who participated in the activity, while 98 of the respondents (40.7%) were females.

**Table 3: Age Group Distribution**

Age Group	Frequency	Percentage %
26-35	98	40.7

36-45	75	31.1
46-55	43	17.8
56 and above	25	10.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>241</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source:** Survey data, 2023

According to Table 3, 98 respondents, or 40.7%, were between the ages of 26 and 35, 75 respondents, or 31.1%, were between the ages of 36 and 45, 43 respondents, or 17.8%, were between the ages of 46 and 65, and 25 respondents, or 10.4%, were between the ages of 56 and older

**Table 4: Marital Status Distribution**

Marital Status	Frequency	Percentage %
Married	94	39
Single	115	47.7
Divorced	19	7.8
Widow/Widower	13	5.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>241</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source:** Survey data, 2023

According to Table 4, 167 respondents, or 39% of the total, were married, 115 respondents, or 47.7%, were single, 19 respondents, or 7.8%, were divorced, and 13 respondents, or 5.5%, were widows or widowers.

**Table 5: Academic Qualification Distribution**

Academic Qualification	Frequency	Percentage (%)
SSCE	55	22.8
NCE/OND	87	36.1
HND/B. Sc	79	32.8
M. Sc/MBA	13	5.4
Ph.D	7	2.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>241</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source:** Survey data, 2023

According to Table 5, 55 respondents (22.8%) were SSCE holders, 87 respondents (36.1%) were NCE/OND holders, 79 respondents (32.8%) were HND/B. Sc holders, 13 respondents (5.4%) were M. Sc/ MBA holders, and 7 respondents (2.9%) were Ph.D holders.

**Hypotheses Testing**

H1: There is no significant relationship between consumer awareness and environmental performance of bottled water firms in Rivers State.

**Table 6: Correlation showing the relationship between of consumer awareness and environmental performance**

Correlations			
		Consumer Awareness	Environmental Performance
Consumer Awareness	Pearson Correlation	1	.888**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	241	241
Environmental Performance	Pearson Correlation	.888**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	241	241

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

**Source: Field Survey Data, 2023, SPSS 23 Output**

**Decision:** The Pearson Product Moment correlation coefficient ( $r = 0.888$ ) and probability value of 0.000 were shown in Table 6 above. This finding revealed a strong and substantial association between consumer knowledge and the environmental performance of bottled water enterprises in Rivers State. Consumer awareness explained 78.85% of the environmental performance of bottled water enterprises in Rivers State, according to the coefficient of determination ( $r^2 = 0.7885$ ). This means that 78.85% of respondents felt that consumer knowledge influences the environmental performance of bottled water companies in Rivers State. As a result, we rejected the null hypothesis and accepted the alternate hypothesis, as stated in the decision rule, because the PV (0.000) 0.05 level of significance indicates that there is a significant relationship between consumer awareness and environmental performance of bottled water firms in Rivers State.

H2: There is no significant relationship between consumer collaboration and environmental performance of bottled water firms in Rivers State.

**Table 7: Correlation showing the relationship between of consumer collaboration and environmental performance**

Correlations			
		Consumer Collaboration	Environmental Performance
Consumer Collaboration	Pearson Correlation	1	.919**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	241	241
Environmental Performance	Pearson Correlation	.919**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	241	241

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

**Source: Field Survey Data, 2023, SPSS 23 Output**

**Decision:** The Pearson Product Moment correlation coefficient ( $r = 0.919$ ) and probability value of 0.000 were shown in Table 7 above. This result suggested that the environmental performance of bottled water companies in Rivers State was strongly correlated with consumer collaboration. According to the coefficient of determination ( $r^2 = 0.8446$ ), consumer collaboration accounted for 84.46% of the environmental performance of bottled water companies in Rivers State. This indicates that 84.46% of respondents agreed that Rivers State bottled water companies' environmental performance is significantly influenced by consumer collaboration. Because the PV (0.000) 0.05 level of significance, we accept the alternate hypothesis and reject the null hypothesis, as stated in the decision rule; indicating that there is a significant connection between the environmental performance of bottled water companies in Rivers State and consumer collaboration.

H3: There is no significant relationship between ethical consumer and environmental performance of bottled water firms in Rivers State.

**Table 8: Correlation showing the relationship between of ethical consumer and environmental performance**

Correlations			
		Ethical Consumer	Environmental Performance
Ethical Consumer	Pearson Correlation	1	.906**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	241	241
Environmental Performance	Pearson Correlation	.906**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	241	241

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

**Source: Field Survey Data, 2023, SPSS 23 Output**

**DECISION:** The Pearson Product Moment correlation coefficient ( $r = 0.906$ ) and probability value of 0.000 were shown in Table 8 above. This result suggested that the profitability of soft drink dealers in Port Harcourt was strongly correlated with their social marketing orientation. According to the coefficient of determination ( $r^2 = 0.8208$ ), social marketing orientation accounted for 82.08% of soft drink dealers' business success. This suggests that 82.08% of respondents

agreed that soft drink dealers in Port Harcourt's profitability is significantly influenced by their social marketing orientation. Because the  $PV(0.000) < 0.05$  level of significance, we accept the alternate hypothesis and reject the null hypothesis, as stated in the decision rule; indicating that there is a significant correlation between profitability and social marketing orientation.

### DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This section attempted to cover numerous results on data analysis and findings. The first hypothesis (Ho1) sought to investigate the important association between customer knowledge and the environmental performance of bottled water enterprises in Rivers State. The Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient was used to evaluate the hypothesis. Our study demonstrated a substantial and positive association between consumer knowledge and the environmental performance of bottled water enterprises in Rivers State ( $R = 0.888$  and  $R^2 = 0.7885$ ). This suggests that customer awareness correlated positively with environmental performance. Our findings agreed with those of Kulter and Ozdemir (2014) and Henrik (2017), who said that customer awareness affected the success of all businesses.

The second hypothesis, known as Ho2, sought to investigate the significant connection that exists between the environmental performance of bottled water companies in Rivers State and consumer collaboration. The Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient was used to test the hypothesis. Our analyses revealed a positive and significant relationship ( $R = 0.919$  and  $R^2 = 0.8446$ ) between consumer collaboration and environmental performance of Rivers State bottled water companies. According to Kulter and Ozdemir (2014), consumer collaboration has an impact on every business's success. Our findings were in line with theirs.

The purpose of Hypothesis 3 (Ho3) was to investigate the significant connection between the environmental performance of bottled water companies in Rivers State and ethical consumer behavior. The Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient was used to test the hypothesis. Our analyses demonstrated a positive and significant relationship ( $R = 0.906$  and  $R^2 = 0.8208$ ) between the environmental performance of bottled water companies in Rivers State and ethical consumer behavior. Akinsanya and Bach (2014) and Kulter and Ozdemir (2014), who stated that ethical consumers influenced the success of every business, concurred with our findings.

### CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to investigate the impact of consumer social responsibility on the environmental performance of bottled water enterprises in Rivers State. According to the research, consumer social responsibility has a significant impact on environmental performance. As a result of the analyses, it was discovered that consumer social responsibility had a significant influence on environmental performance, implying that a positive and significant relationship exists between consumer social responsibility and environmental performance and its dimensions. All of the null hypotheses proposed were rejected, and alternative hypotheses were adopted as a result.

- i. Consumer awareness improves the environmental performance of bottled water companies in Rivers State.
- ii. Consumer participation improves the environmental performance of bottled water companies in Rivers State.
- iii. Ethical consumers have a favorable influence on the environmental performance of Rivers State's bottled water businesses.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the study's results and conclusions, the following suggestions for bottled water companies and other businesses in Rivers State were made for suitable implementation.

- 1) The study suggested that dealers and the management of bottled water companies should implement corporate strategies that take into account the welfare of society.
- 2) Bottled water business owners must strike a balance between customer satisfaction and profit.
- 3) Extending the scope of application of social marketing and ensuring its sustainability will not only provide firms with a long-term competitive edge, but will also increase consumer satisfaction and social welfare.
- 4) The government, through its environmental regulatory agencies and commissions, should enact rules and standards that educate and influence public understanding about the importance of becoming ecologically friendly through energy efficiency and even in their consumption habits.
- 5) It is also critical for marketers to step in and promote green products by educating consumers on what is good for the environment. However, this is a lengthy approach that will take a long time to cultivate environmental consciousness.
- 6) The government ought to also contribute to the development and production of eco-friendly and effective products. By lowering duties and taxes, it can also encourage the import of these products, making environmentally friendly products more appealing to consumers and the general public.
- 7) In order for businesses to have a larger impact on the market, emerge as an environmentally conscious organization, and pay more attention to environmentally conscious customers who take an active role in protecting it, they should invest in and develop eco-practices.
- 8) Proper garbage disposal and management should be promoted among consumers, manufacturers, and the government. It is advised to convert discarded water sachets (polyethylene) to super wax/gloss-like substance. This would support appropriate management of polythene trash by converting from a littered environment to

an environmentally friendly one, limiting disease spread while also providing jobs for both skilled and unskilled labor and promoting green behavior.

- 9) The National Environmental Standard Regulation Agency (NESRA) must be aware of its obligations in order to clear the garbage piles in most Nigerian towns and cities. They must penalize both manufacturers and customers who breach the law's green marketing guidelines.

### SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDIES

Other aspects of environmental performance, as well as consumer social responsibility, are suggested by the researcher for further investigation.

Finally, similar research should be undertaken in other geographical areas of Nigeria to determine the degree of universality of this study finding. This, in essence, may lead to the discovery and crossing of new knowledge boundaries.

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