

SOCIETAL MARKETING'S INFLUENCE ON CORPORATE IMAGE: AN EXPLORATORY INVESTIGATION OF TOGOLESE CUSTOMERS' BEHAVIORS

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Abstract

Supported by an ever-increasing body of literature, it is clear that the societal marketing as a philosophy, has been shown to have a positive influence on consumer behaviors and attitudes in various countries especially in today's developing countries. Thus, in this twenty-first century, many companies are increasingly concerned about managing societal issues in marketing to benefit key stakeholder interests, particularly customer groups.

The present article is focused and addressed the influence of corporate societal marketing identity, corporate marketing communications and customer demographics on corporate image. A multiple regression relationships is conducted to predict customers' behaviors toward corporate image from between societal marketing identity, corporate marketing communication, customers' demographics factors. Secondly, the structural equation modeling-modeling will be expressed as path diagrams to highlight how the predictor variables are correlated and show how these observed and unobserved variables are inter-related in the model.

Key words: Societal marketing, social marketing, customers' behaviors, corporate image, Togo

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INTRODUCTION

The Societal marketing concept had been defined as: "The societal marketing concept holds that the organization's task is to determine the needs, wants, and interests of a target market and to deliver the desired satisfactions more effectively and efficiently than competitors in a way that preserves or enhances the consumer's and the society's well-being (Kotler, Philip. Marketing management: analysis, planning, implementation and control 8th ed. Prentice-Hall, 2000, p.25).

Corporate image can refer to the total impressions held of an organization by an individual or a group (Balmer & Stotvig 1997; Dowling 1993; Gray & Balme 1998). More recently, Cornelissen (2000) defined corporate image as emphasizing a receiver perspective as follows: Corporate image is a product of multiple variable impression formation process located in the interaction of the stakeholder with messages, from the organization and related business, from various news media, and from other stakeholders through word-of-mouth (Cornelissen 2000, p.122).

Customers' attitude refer to a person's feelings, convictions, or liking for an object, idea or individual. It refers to a general and enduring favorable or unfavorable feeling about an object or issue.

While a number of industry surveys attest to the positive effects of societal marketing and its related concepts on consumer behaviors throughout various countries, a scarcity of research still exists in this area, particularly investigating questions with respect to the impact of societal marketing on consumer's behaviors to corporate image, product image and purchase intention or brand choice.

How does a societal marketing influence the behaviors of consumers in relation to corporate image?

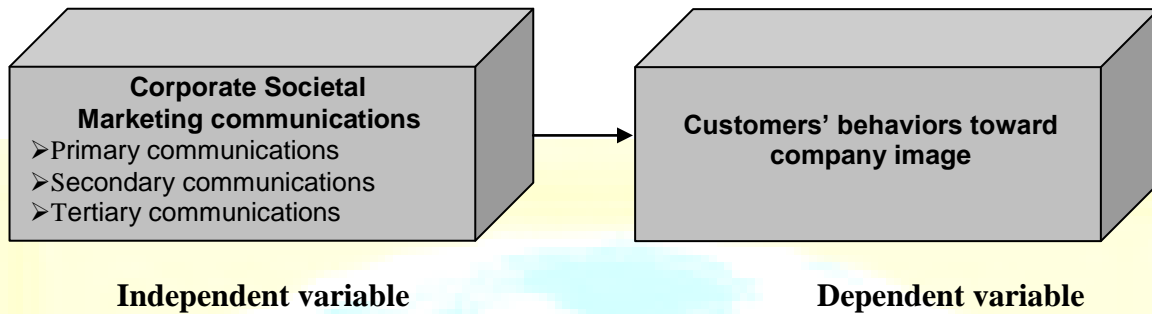
2. IMPACT OF SOCIETAL MARKETING ON CORPORATE IMAGE

This section will attempt to provide an overview of the influence that societal marketing program implementation will have on corporate image. After, a review of consumer behaviors toward corporate image after the implementation of a societal marketing program, utilizing both empirical studies is identified. The next section is focused and addressed the impact of corporate societal marketing identity, corporate marketing communications and customer demographics on corporate image.

2.1 Corporate societal marketing identity impacts the corporate image

The factor proposed to influence attitude to corporate image is based on the features of the specific societal marketing program adopted by the company. Three key components of the societal marketing program are: symbolism, behavior of management and employees and finally communications regarding the specific societal marketing program (Stuart, 1999). Elements of symbolism include visual identity and other tangibles such as logos or names that specifically identify a particular societal marketing program. (Balmer and Stotvig, 1997; LeBlanc and Ngugen, 1996). Management behavior considers the support and value given to the societal marketing program by management, while employees' behavior addresses the quality of service delivered by employees involved in the societal marketing program (Balmer and Stotvig, 1997; LeBlanc and Ngugen, 1996; Van Heerden and Puth, 1995). Similarly to general corporate marketing communications, communication specifically concerned with the societal marketing program refers to three types of communication: primary, secondary and tertiary. These are used to communicate the details of the program to the target audiences (Stuart, 1999; Van Riel, Cees and Balmer, 1997).

Based upon these studies, corporate marketing identity that is influenced consumers' attitude toward corporate image is illustrated in Figure 1.



Source: developed for this research

2.2 Corporate societal marketing communications impacts the corporate image

An examination of past literature on corporate communications suggests the existence of three kinds of communications likely to affect consumer's evaluation of corporate image. It can be seen that a variety of corporate communications have been found to influence corporate image including, but not limited to, customer service, visual identity, access to service, reputation of directors, service offering, history, key incidents (for example client satisfaction and customer loyalty), service quality, products, employees' role, advertising and promotion (Balmer & Stotvig 1997; Markwick & Fill 1997; LeBlanc & Ngugen 1996; van Heerden 1995). Based upon these studies, Corporate marketing communications that is influenced consumers' attitude toward corporate image is illustrated in Figure 2.

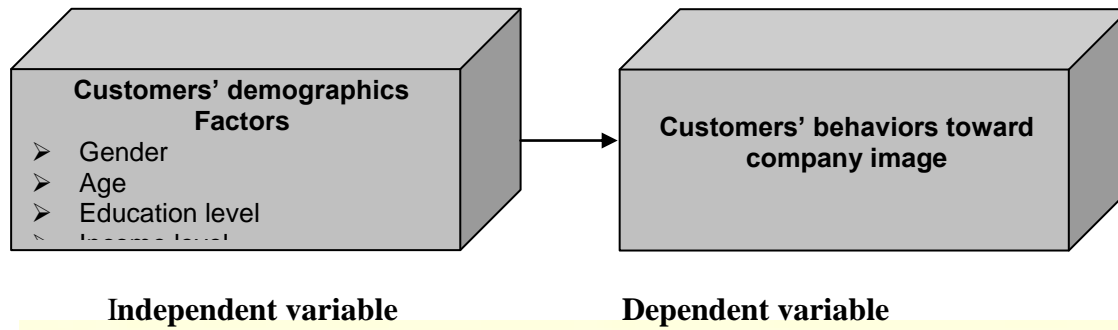
In this figure, corporate marketing communications relates to the overall communication of the company to consumers as distinct from communication specifically related to the societal marketing program will influence consumers' attitude toward corporate image. Based on Balmer and Gray's model (2000) and Stuart's model (1999), there are three types of corporate marketing communications: primary, secondary and tertiary. Primary communication refers to communication directly to or with a consumer or initiated by a consumer including direct

interaction with a staff member, attendance at corporate seminars or events and visiting a company's website. Secondary communication is identified as a system for visual identification and formal corporate communications, for example through advertising, public relations, graphic design and sales promotion. Typically secondary communication is mass communication. Tertiary communication refers to word-of-mouth and media interpretation that is communication through a third party. Several researchers support the dominant role of corporate marketing communications in corporate image formation (Balmer and Gray, 2000; Cornelissen, 2000; Dowling, 1986; Marwick and Fill, 1997; Stuart, 1998).

2.3 Customers demographics factors impacts the corporate image

Demographics refer to size, structure and distribution of a population (Hawkins, Best & Coney 1998). Size refers to the number of individuals in the society, while structure describes the society in terms of age, sex, income, education and occupation. Distribution refers to the physical location of individuals in terms of geographic region and rural suburban or urban location. Kotler (2000) however, identifies demographics more specifically as being comprised of age, family size, gender, income, occupation, education, religion, race, generation, nationality and social class. Each of these variables can influence how individual consumers think, feel and behave (Hawkins, Best & Coney 1998; Kotler 2000).

Consumer evaluation of corporate societal image is affected by consumer individual characteristics (Maignan & Ferrell 2001). The results from recent consumer surveys indicated that consumer's demographic characteristics, such as gender, age and income level, influence their behaviors toward corporate societal image (Cone Inc. 2000; Kaplan 2002). However, limited empirical evaluations of the effect of demographic variables on consumer behaviors regarding corporate image after implementation of societal marketing exist. Based upon these studies, demographics factor that is influenced consumers' attitude toward corporate image is illustrated Figure 3.



Source: developed for this research

In this figure, demographic characteristics and their influence, such as gender, age, education, income and marital status, on corporate image perception is summarized categorize demographic variables, which may or may not influence corporate image into five areas: gender, age, education, income and marital status. These areas can be expounded as follows:

(1) The gender: In most studies, the gender of consumers tended to be related to consumer behaviors toward corporate image (Berger, Cunningham & Koziets 1999; Cone Inc. 2000; Kaplan 2002; Ozanne, Humphrey & Smith 1999; Ross & Paterson 1992; Webb 1999; Webb & Mohr 1998; Straughan & Roberts 1999). Female participants showed a propensity to favor firms supporting a social because more than male participants did. Only one study showed contradictory results (Peppas & Peppas 2000), which showed that consumers' behaviors were not related to gender.

(2) Consumer age: Consumer age was shown to have a relationship to consumer behaviors toward corporate image, however with no consistent pattern. The studies conducted by Goldberg (1999) and Straughan and Roberts (1999) concluded that older consumers responded more favorably to societal marketing, while a survey from the United States showed that US teens value companies implementing societal marketing more than adults, 91% vs. 83% (Cone Inc. 2000; Cone/Roper communications 1997). However, the findings from Peppas and Peppas (2000) identify that age did not show any influences on consumer behaviors.

(3) **Education:** Education level of consumer tends to be related to consumer behaviors on corporate image. Higher educational levels were connected to more positive responses to societal marketing (Goldberg 1999; Webb & Mohr 1998; Straughan & Roberts 1999; Zimmer, Stafford & Stafford 1994).

(4) **Consumer income:** Consumer income shows a relationship to corporate image (Kaplan 2002; McWilliams 2001; Webb & Mohr 1999; Robert & Bacon 1997; Zimmer, Stafford & Stafford 1994). High-income groups generally respond better to societal marketing programs. However, the study from Straughan and Roberts (1999) showed no relation between income and corporate image.

(5) **Marital status:** Marital status shows a slight relationship to corporate image (Ross & Patterson 1992). Married respondents have more positive attitude toward societal marketing programs than single respondents do. Nevertheless, Goldberg (1999) finds no correlation at all.

In summary, female tend to have more positive behaviors toward firms implementing societal marketing than males. Additionally, highly educated and higher income consumers were shown to be more favorable to companies supporting causes. Nevertheless, the influence of age on behaviors toward firms implementing societal marketing is still controversial. Marital status was shown to have a slight relationship, but the scarcity of research on this demographic factor make the results inconclusive.

Having defined the impact of societal marketing on consumer behaviors regarding corporate image and the influence of demographic factors toward corporate image after implementation of a societal marketing program, the next section will address the preliminary theoretical research model.

3. THE PRELIMINARY THEORETICAL MODEL

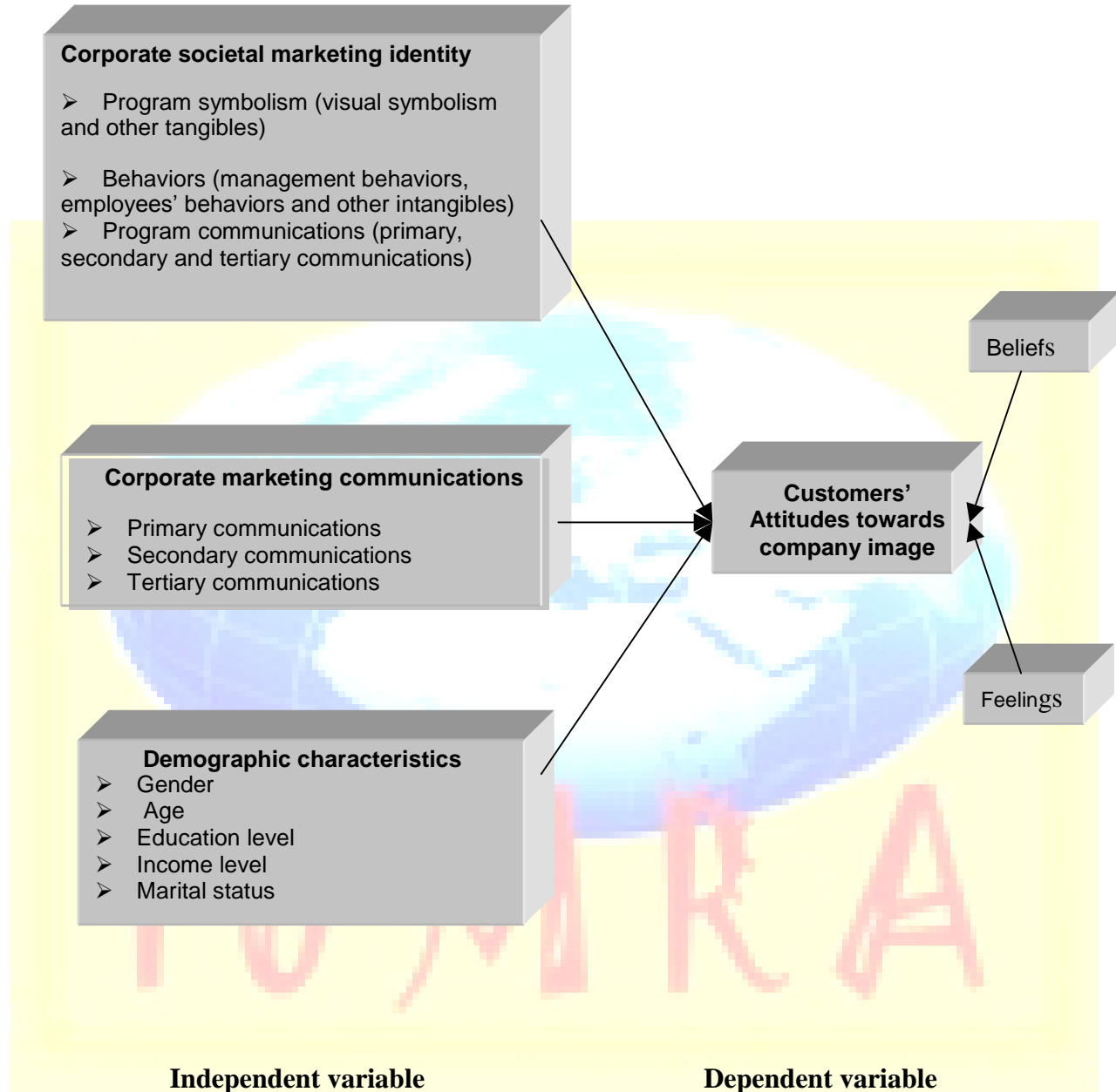
The preliminary model of the impact of societal marketing on behaviors toward corporate image is presented in Figure 4.

Based on literature review and on models from Cornelissen (2000), Balmer and Gray (2000) and Stuart (1999). In this preliminary theoretical model, societal marketing program identity, corporate marketing communications and customer demographic factors are established as the independent variables for this research. The dependent variable is customers' attitude towards the corporate image of the organization. The conceptual framework for this study as shown in Figure 3.1 proposes that customers' attitude towards corporate image is impacted upon by corporate societal marketing identity, corporate marketing communications and customer demographics factor. Corporate societal marketing identity is itself comprised of three major parts: symbolism, behavior of management and employees and finally communications (Stuart 1999). Elements of symbolism include visual identity and other tangibles such as products, service offering, service quality and history (Balmer & Stotvig 1997; LeBlanc & Ngugen 1996). Apart from management and employees' behaviour, corporate behaviour in service includes other intangibles (Balmer & Stotvig 1997; LeBlanc & Ngugen 1996; Van Heerden & Puth 1995).

According to Balmer and Gray's model (2000), corporate societal marketing communication includes three types of communications: primary, secondary and tertiary. Primary communication refers to products and services, market behavior, behavior toward employees, employee behavior toward other stakeholders and non-market behavior. Secondary communication is identified as a system for visual identification and formal corporate communications (advertising, public relations, graphic design, sales promotion, etc.). Tertiary communication refers to word-of-mouth, media interpretation and competition.

Regarding demographic characteristics, they are composed of gender, age, educational level, income level and marital status.

FIGURE 4 : A preliminary model of the impact of societal marketing on customer's attitude towards corporate image.



Source: developed for this research based on Stuart (1999), Balmer and Gray (2000) and Cornelissen (2000)

4. STRUCTURAL EQUATION MODELING-MULTIPLE REGRESSION RELATIONSHIPS (SEM-MRR)

In this quantitative methodological approach based on a descriptive survey of the customers of Negoce services which implemented the societal marketing through its program “Investir dans Education”. Firstly, a multiple regression relationships is conducted to predict customers’ behaviors toward corporate image from between societal marketing identity, corporate marketing communication, customers’ demographics factors. Secondly, the structural equation modeling-modeling will be expressed as path diagrams to highlight how the predictor variables are correlated and show how these observed and unobserved variables are inter-related in the model.

4.1 Multiple regression relationships (MRR)

The multiple linear regression equation shows how a strong multiple correlation and regression exists between societal marketing identity, corporate marketing communication, customers demographics factors and customers’ behaviors toward corporate image. It was tested by the least squares regression line gives such line.

Corporate image = b + a1 (Societal marketing identity) + a2 (Corporate marketing communication) + a3 (Customers’ demographic factors)

$$CI = b + a1 (SMI) + a2 (CMC) + a3 (CDF)$$

In this case the dependent variable is customers’ behaviors toward corporate image (CI) and independent variables are societal marketing identity, corporate marketing communication, customers demographics factors (SMI, CMC, CDF). A model summary table, an ANNOVA table and coefficients table below (Table 1) show how these two variables are related.

Model Summary ^b				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate

1	.892 ^a	.796	.720	.18608
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a. Predictors: (Constant), CDF, SMI, CMC b. Dependent Variable: CI

ANOVA^b

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	1.084	3	.361	10.436	.004 ^a
	Residual	.277	8	.035		
	Total	1.361	11			

a. Predictors: (Constant), CDF, SMI, CMC b. Dependent Variable: CI

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Coefficients		
1	(Constant)	1.179	.400		2.949	.018
	SMI	.133	.153	.217	.871	.409
	CMC	.282	.208	.483	1.352	.213
	CDF	.199	.200	.276	.991	.351

a. Dependent Variable: CI

In this model summary table, The R Square (0.796) tells us how the four variables are related. The ANNOVA table shows that the P-value is 0.04 and under 5%). It simply tells us that all three variables (societal marketing identity, corporate marketing communication and customers' demographic factors) have a real impact on customers' behaviors toward corporate image

The estimated regression equation is:

$$CI = 1.179 + 0.133(SMI) + 0.282(CMC) + 0.199(CDF)$$

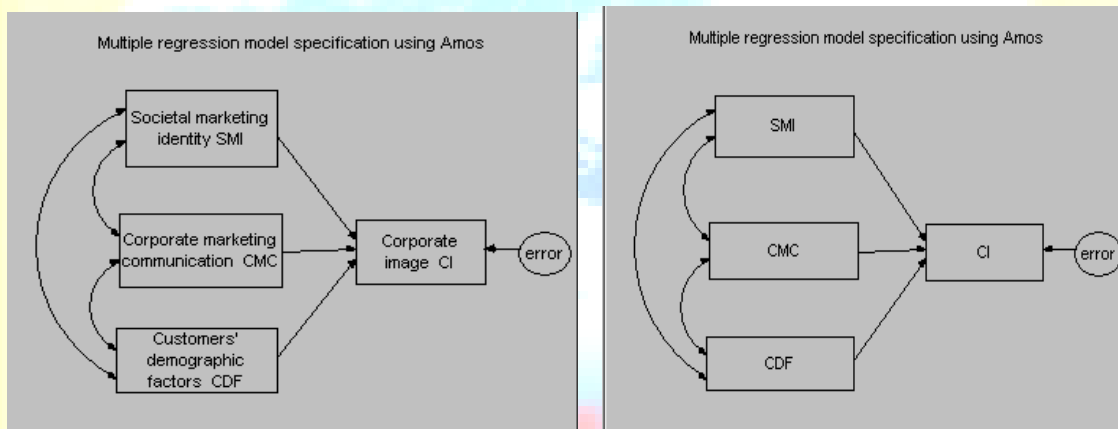
The slope of the estimated regression equation (a1=0.133) and (a2=0.282) and (a3=0.199) are positive, implying that as when changes in societal marketing identity(SMI), changes in

corporate marketing communication (CMC) and changes in customers' demographic factors (CDF) increase the variable corporate image (CI) will increase.

4.2 Path diagram

In this section the regression analysis previously conducted is considered the equivalent model fit in AMOS graphics environment. The initial step in this instance is the specification of the regression model as a path diagram (see Figure 5).

FIGURE 5: The initial path diagram for this relationship



Source: developed for this research to the field data analysis

This path diagram is a simple regression model where one observed variable, customers' behaviors toward corporate image (CI), is predicted as a linear combination of the other three observed variables, societal marketing identity (SMI), corporate marketing communication (CMC) and customers' demographics factors (CDF).

The single-headed arrows represent linear dependencies. The arrow leading from SMI to CI indicates that CI scores depend, in part, on SMI. The variable error is enclosed in a circle because it is not directly observed. Importantly, to be correctly specified, the model must include a residual or error term (e) as an ellipse which indicates a latent or unmeasured variable. Error

represents much more than random fluctuations in CI scores due to measurement error. The variable is essential because the path diagram is supposed to show all variables that affect CI scores. Without the circle, the path diagram would make the implausible claim that CI is an exact linear combination of SMI, CMC, and CDF.

The double-headed arrows in the path diagram connect variables that may be correlated with each other. The absence of a double-headed arrow connecting error with any other variable indicates that error is assumed to be uncorrelated with every other predictor variable—a fundamental assumption in linear regression. Corporate image (CI) is also not connected to any other variable by a double-headed arrow, but this is for a different reason. Since performance depends on the other variables, it goes without saying that it might be correlated with them. The initial path diagram for this relationship is drawn as a multiple regression model specification using Amos in Figure 5.

Based on the regression analysis, the salient output from SPSS shows the correlations among each of the predictors, as well as the predictors and the dependent variable. An R Square value of 0.796 is then shown, with unstandardized and standardized regression coefficients and significance tests shown in the Table 2 and in Table 3.

Table 2: Maximum Likelihood Estimates

Regression Weights: (Group number 1 - Default model)

			Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	Label
CI	<---	SMI	.133	.130	1.021	.307	
CI	<---	CMC	.282	.178	1.585	.113	
CI	<---	CDF	.199	.171	1.162	.245	

Covariances: (Group number 1 - Default model)

			Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	Label
SMI	<-->	CMC	.241	.120	2.004	.045	
CMC	<-->	CDF	.219	.105	2.091	.037	
SMI	<-->	CDF	.140	.088	1.591	.112	

Variances: (Group number 1 - Default model)

	Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	Label
SMI	.302	.129	2.345	.019	
CMC	.334	.142	2.345	.019	
CDF	.218	.093	2.345	.019	
error	.023	.010	2.345	.019	

The standardized and unstandardized parameter estimates derived from the analyses may then be viewed in visual form on the graphic interface as shown in Figure 6.

Amos does not display the path CI← error because its value is fixed at the default value of 1 and the other estimates would be affected if a different constant had been chosen. It turns out that only the variance estimate for error is affected by such a change. Changing the scale unit of the unobserved error variable does not change the overall model fit. In all the analyses, there are four sample variances and six sample covariances, for a total of 10 sample moments. There are three regression paths, four model variances, and three model covariances, for a total of 10 parameters that must be estimated. Hence, the model has zero degrees of freedom. Such a model is often called saturated or just-identified.

Table 3: Sample Covariances (Group number 1)

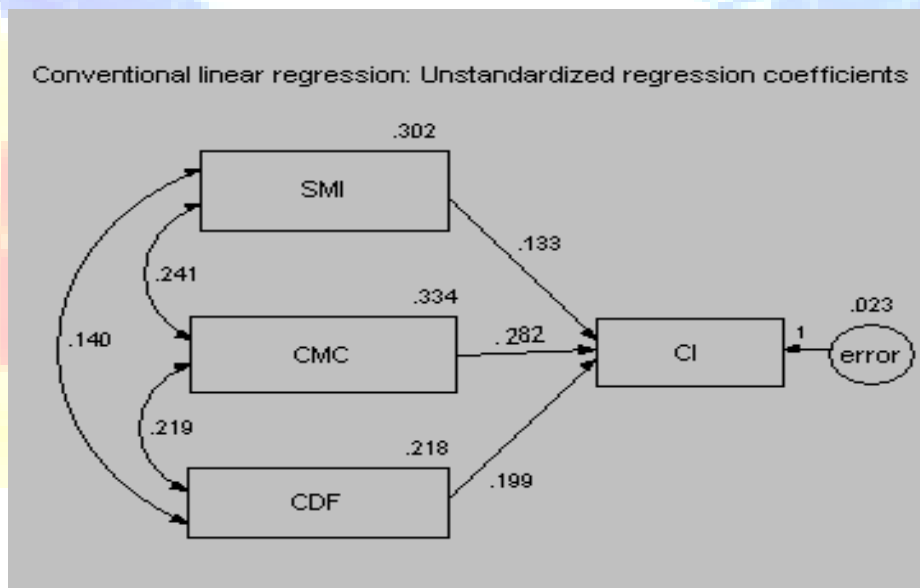
	CDF	CMC	SMI	CI
CDF	.218			
CMC	.219	.334		
SMI	.140	.241	.302	
CI	.124	.169	.136	.113

The following path diagram output illustrated in figure 6 is shown the unstandardized values.

The three predictors are allowed to covary; predictors' covariances are shown in the diagram. Indeed, the covariance between SMI and the CMC indicator is 0.241. It is -0.219 between CMC and the CDF indicator and 0.140 between SMI and the CDF indicator. The variance of each predictor appears above its rectangle. The unstandardized regression weights, which correspond to the B coefficients displayed in the SPSS output, link the predictor variables to the dependent variable's rectangle in the AMOS diagram.

For instance, the unstandardized regression coefficient of the SMI variable is 0.133. Since the unstandardized regression coefficient represents the mean of change in the dependent variable per single unit change in the predictor variable, this result suggests that for every single unit of increase in SMI level, CI is increased by 0.133 units. The same suggestion is observed every single unit of increase in CMC level, CI is increased by 0.282 and every single unit of increase in CDF level, CI is increased by 0.199.

FIGURE 6: Conventional linear regression: Unstandardized regression coefficients



Source: analysis of field data

The diagram also features a residual variance associated with the measurement of CI . Since this variance is not directly measured, it is represented as a latent variable in the AMOS diagram. The estimate of the error variance is 0.023.

In addition to the unstandardized regression coefficients, SPSS also produces standardized regression coefficients and an R Square value that summarizes the proportion of variance in the dependent variable explainable by the collective set of the predictors is 0.796. AMOS produces these statistics as well, but it uses a separate diagram to display the standardized coefficients and R Square value. In this diagram the covariances have been replaced by correlations. The correlation between the SMI and CMC indicator is 0.758. The value 0.812 is the correlation between the CMC and CDF indicator. The value 0.547 is the correlation between the SMI and CDF. These same value are shown in the SPSS correlations table above. The standardized coefficient estimates are as follows:

Standardized Regression Weights: (Group number 1 - Default model)

			Estimate
CI	<---	SMI	.217
CI	<---	CMC	.483
CI	<---	CDF	.276

Correlations: (Group number 1 - Default model)

			Estimate
SMI	<-->	CMC	.758
CMC	<-->	CDF	.812
SMI	<-->	CDF	.547

Squared Multiple Correlations: (Group number 1 - Default model)

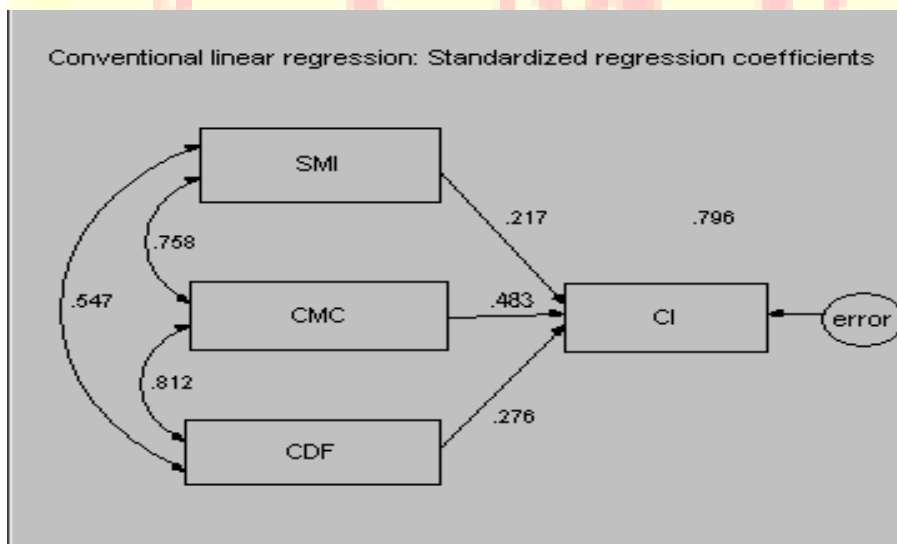
	Estimate
CI	.796

The standardized regression weights represent the unit of change in the dependent variable that is attributable to a single standard deviation unit's worth of change in the predictor variable. The entries 0.217, 0.483 and 0.276 represented respectively the standardized regression weights of SMI, CMC and CDF.

The standardized regression weights and the correlations are independent of the units in which all variables are measured; therefore, they are not affected by the choice of identification constraints. Squared multiple correlations are also independent of units of measurement. Amos displays a squared multiple correlation for each endogenous variable. The squared multiple correlation of a variable is the proportion of its variance that is accounted for by its predictors. In the present case, SMI, CMC, and CDF account for 79.6% of the variance of CI.

Standardized regression coefficients now link the predictors to the dependent variable, and the R Square value for the dependent variable appears above its rectangle on the diagram. The standardized solution is illustrated in figure 7.

Figure 7: Conventional linear regression: Standardized regression coefficients



Source: analysis of field data

Sample Correlations (Group number 1)

	CDF	CMC	SMI	CI
CDF	1.000			
CMC	.812	1.000		
SMI	.547	.758	1.000	
CI	.786	.871	.734	1.000

5. CONCLUSIONS

This Part has provided a context for understanding the impact of societal marketing programs on consumer behaviors toward corporate image by reviewing the extant literature. The findings of this research indicate that structural equation modeling that was used to test the conceptual model confirmed that a societal marketing identity a corporate marketing communications and customers demographic factors (CDF) can create positive customer's behaviors toward corporate image. Future research was identified in three areas namely, delimitations of scope, then, a further testing and validation of scales and the model developed and finally, the continued improvement and refinement of the methodology used. Ultimately, future investigations should be extended to different societal marketing and strategies across different profit and non-profit organizations in the Togolese context.

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Appendix: Data of average of societal marketing program and Togolese customers' behaviors toward corporate image

	Average of Societal marketing identity	Average of Corporate marketing communication	Average of Customers' demographic factors	Average of Corporate image
Code	SMI	CMC	CDF	CI
1	3.05	3.6	4.25	3.22
2	2.99	3.25	3.2	3.25
3	3.17	3.27	3.25	3.27
4	3.14	3.05	3.1	3.05
5	2.56	2.99	3	2.99
6	3.18	3.17	3.15	3.17
7	3.04	3.14	3.1	3.14
8	2.26	2.56	2.56	2.56
9	3.75	4.2	3.7	3.7
10	4.2	3.3	3.18	3.2
11	2.5	2.25	2.4	2.35
12	2.26	1.9	2.75	2.84