



# Indirect effect of societal engagement on corporate image enhancement and commercial performance: Role of Trust and Customers' Buying Decision

**Doman Gnoufougou**

Faculté des Sciences Economiques et de Gestion de l'Université de Kara  
BP 43 Kara - T O GO

## ABSTRACT

In a global context of ethical awareness, the corporate's stakeholders (employees, customers, suppliers, local authorities, etc.) seem to adhere to a new approach to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which takes into account the environmental and social problems. Thus, the objective of this research is to establish a theoretical model in which the customer's buying decision plays a mediating role in the relations between societal engagement, corporate image enhancement and commercial performance and to examine further the moderating role of trust and Customers' Buying Decision in the aforementioned relationships. The methodology used is based on an exploratory study of a total sample size of 417 respondents. The structural equation using AMOS.21 and the bootstrap method using SPSS.23 were conducted to test the research hypotheses. The results suggest that societal engagement impacts on corporate image enhancement and corporate commercial performance through customer's purchasing decision. Similarly, Trust subsequently moderates the indirect relationship between societal engagement, corporate image enhancement and corporate commercial performance through customer's buying decision. Finally, a discussion of the findings, theoretical and managerial implications, and a future research are provided in this article.

**Key words:** societal engagement, corporate image amelioration, corporate commercial performance, customer's trust and customer's buying decision,

## INTRODUCTION

The rise of customerist movements, environmentalist movements and growing pressure from interest groups is driving contemporary businesses to participate in the collective well-being. Indeed, the traditional marketing perspective underestimates the latent conflicts between customers' desires, their interests and the collective well-being (Kotler et al., 2009). It is therefore necessary to evaluate practices in order to reconcile these three imperatives. Thus, the societal marketing approach encourages companies to integrate social and environmental concerns into their marketing practices (Kotler et al., 2009). For some customers, these social and environmental concerns are a culture that is inseparable from the economic activity of companies (Roddick, 2004). For some firms, taking social responsibility into account becomes a way to differentiate themselves from the competition, to innovate by creating new products and new approaches that are more respectful of the environment. In addition, François-Lecompte and Valette-Florence (2006) show that societal engagement is a fertile ground for innovation and corporate sustainable performance. A company that reconciles environmental preservation, social equity, financial and economic imperatives, is a company with a strategic focus on the prospects for sustainable development. It is a company which highlights societal engagement in its managerial practices to ensure customer's trust and their purchasing decision (Nike in 1996 and Danone in 2001). Similarly, a customer who is satisfied with a corporate societal engagement implementation is a customer who is reassured and motivated to be "well buyer" and "better customer" in order to enhance corporate image and make its commercial performance sustainable. From this observation, the general problematic of this

research turns around the following questions: Does the customer's purchasing decision play a mediating role between societal engagement, corporate image enhancement and commercial performance? To what extent does trust moderates the relationship between societal engagement, customer's buying decision and, indirectly, corporate image enhancement and commercial performance?

In order to provide some answers to these questions, the aim of this research is to establish a theoretical model in which the customer's buying decision plays a mediating role in the relations between societal engagement, corporate image enhancement and commercial performance and further examine the moderating role of trust in the aforementioned relationships.

Specifically this main objectives aims:

- to determine the direct link of societal engagement and customer's buying decision
- to show the indirect relationship between societal engagement and corporate image enhancement – to show the indirect relationship between societal engagement and corporate commercial performance,
- to study the positive relationship between customer's buying decision and corporate image enhancement,
- to study the positive relationship between customer's buying decision and corporate commercial performance,
- to verify that the customer's buying decision acts as a mediating variable between societal engagement and corporate image enhancement
- to verify that the customer's buying decision acts as a mediating variable between societal engagement and commercial performance,
- to test the mediating role of customer's buying decision in the relationship between societal engagement, and corporate image enhancement through the moderation variable of trust,
- to test the mediating role of customer's buying decision in the relationship between societal engagement and commercial performance through the moderation variable of trust.

### **Contribution of the study**

This study makes the theoretical and managerial contributions:

- For theoretical contributions, although researchers have been interested for several years in the analysis of the link between societal engagement and corporate image, very few researches have shed light on societal engagement and the mechanisms by which it promotes customer's buying decisions and consequently corporate image enhancement and commercial performance (George and Brief, 1992). Moreover, to our knowledge, no empirical study has simultaneously considered in a same model: the societal engagement as an independent variable, the customer's buying decision as a mediating variable, corporate image enhancement and commercial performance as dependent variables, organizational and customer's trust as moderating variables. Conceptually, some research suggests links between these variables, but do not test them within the same study. This study should overcome these gaps in the literature and respond to conceptual ambiguities, in order to improve the understanding of the link between these key concepts.
- For practical contributions, this research will first of all allow customers to be reassured, convinced of the practices of corporate societal engagement, because these have a direct impact on customer's buying decisions and consequently on corporate image enhancement and commercial performance. Secondly, this research will enable

managers to become fully aware of the effects of societal engagement on customer's buying decisions and indirectly on corporate image enhancement and commercial performance. Finally, the originality and the contribution of this research reside in the mobilization of the scientific literature on organizational practices in the understanding of the effects of societal engagement on corporate image enhancement and commercial performance. In addition, customer's buying decision is a fairly innovative subject, because very little research has been applied to study this concept by positioning it as a predominant variable.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW AND RESEARCH HYPOTHESES**

This section presents a definition of concepts, the links between research variables and a conceptual research's model.

### **Definition of concepts**

#### **Societal engagement**

At the level of common sense engagement is defined as "an act by which one is committed or engaged to doing something; a promise, a convention or a contract by which one binds oneself". We can see from this generic definition that engagement encompasses and connects the individual to a given word, a form of implicit or explicit contract that will have consequences for his actions. According to Kiesler and Sakumura (1966), engagement is not the relation that unites the individual to his beliefs, ideas or convictions; but it is the link that unites the individual to his behavioral acts. In addition, corporate societal engagement is a difficult concept to grasp. It is in the 21st century that the term "societal engagement" is born, a more proactive notion where companies link this topic to their strategy. This follows the new vision, which now assumes an expanded responsibility. Recently, the emergence of social entrepreneurs is strengthening the links between the company and the actors of civil society. The progressive evolution of the concept of societal engagement goes from the logic of repairing to the logic of integration.

#### **Customer's buying decision**

The behavioral theory of the decision shows that many seemingly paradoxical and irrational decisions are in fact predictable. They rely on psychological mechanisms such as heuristics of decisions, contextual elements of decision and mental accounting. Thus, an individual who acts as a buyer has only one goal in mind, is to satisfy his needs and desires by acquiring products or services. If he is satisfied with his choice, he will tend, in the future, to repeat his purchase. He will trust the same sources of information; will use the same decision criteria. When the individual buys a product, he seeks to maximize a goal of satisfaction which leads to choosing between several products. He will trust the same sources of information; will use the same decision criteria. When the individual buys a product, he seeks to maximize a goal of satisfaction which leads to choosing between several products.

#### **Corporate image enhancement**

Marion (1989) considers corporate image as a system made of many facets in relation to each other. On the one hand, it are all opinions that are more or less structured, that we meet about it (image filed), on the other hand it are all intentions, that are more or less explicit, which manifest themselves (desired image) and finally, it are all the meanings, that are more or less coherent, conveyed by his speech (the diffused image). Enhancing the organizational image involves creating a portrait of a set of impressions and attitudes people have about the organization (Barich and Kotler 1991, Dichter 1985, Dowling 1986, Kotler 1982). Zimmer and Golden, (1988). Enhancing corporate image can come from buying and consuming experiences

and can be integrated into the company's overall strategy (Andreassen and Lindestad, 1998).

### ***Commercial Performance***

In a simple way, Lorino (1997, quoted by Sogbossi, 2009) defined the notion of performance in these terms: "Is performance in the company, all that only contributes to achieving the strategic objectives .Carrière (1999, quoted by Sogbossi, 2009) concluded that performance can be resumed as a success or an expansion. This notion of performance commonly used in business can be resumed as an idea of success or a success of the company (Bourguignon 1998, Boyer 1999, Mamboundoun 2003), a success that cannot be achieved without market positive sanction (Barillot, 2001). Performance is a concept that has been used in strategy, operations management and marketing. In marketing, researchers are primarily interested in the performance perceived by the customer. Thus, the commercial performance or marketing performance is the performance related to corporate customer's satisfaction (Sogbossi, 2009). This commercial performance or marketing performance is sustainable or lasting if satisfaction is at the heart of the permanent concern of the managers (Bughin, 2006, Ngobo and Ramaroson, 2005).

### ***Trust***

The concept of trust is relatively complicated and is the subject of much debate among researchers. It is difficult to apprehend his concept for several reasons: Firstly; trust has been studied in other disciplines before being disseminated in the management sciences. In the marketing literature, trust has emerged as important keystone of relational and sustainable marketing. It is from this perspective that trust is analyzed on two levels: trust in inter-organizational and trust in customer behavior which Chouk and Perrien (2003) call the trust in "customer -organization exchanges"), specifying the terms of the latter's exchanges with organizations (companies, institutions ...).

#### **Trust in inter-organizational relations**

The study of trust in inter-organizational relationships revealed two directions: interpersonal trust and institutional trust. While the former focuses on the links between individuals, the second refers to the trust that exists between an individual and an organization as a legal person and is based on the corporate reputation (Young and Wilkinson 1999, Williamson, 2005). According to Benamour (2009) it can be described as "the deliberate will to count on the reliability and benevolence of a party in whom one believes, and in a risky situation".

#### **Trust in customer behavior**

In customer behavior research, trust is an important concept in understanding customer behavior (Gurviez and Korchia, 2006) and plays a key role that explained the decisions of buying and consumption (Laroche and Caron , 2007). Sirieix and Dubois (2004) show, in their study of my fast food, the influence of trust on customer behavior, already suggesting extending the study of trust to other objects than the brand.

### **Research hypotheses and research model**

The relationships between the different variables should be presented, with assumptions about the direct, indirect, mediating and moderate effects between the variables.

#### ***Hypothesis concerning the direct effects between variables***

##### **• Links between the Societal Engagement (SE) and the Customer's buying Decision (CBD)**

In general, we have seen that societal engagement (SE) is likely to influence the Customer's Buying Decision (CBD). The empirical study by Van den Broeck and colleagues (2010) suggests

positive and significant links between societal engagement (SE) and customer's buying decision (CBD). So that there is a direct effect of societal engagement on customer's buying decision. To express this presumed link, it is necessary to recall the instrumental theory of stakeholders Friedman (1970), and the engagement theory of Hillman and Keim (2001), Baron (2001), Husted and Salazar (2006), Porter and Kramer (2006). According to Freeman (1984), when buying a product, the perception of the company's societal engagement by customer is a major concern for many researchers and marketing practitioners in the study of the relationship with the customer. This perception of this societal organizational behavior is a source of satisfaction for the needs and expectations of customer s that could trigger their purchase decision. For these reasons, we propose the following hypothesis:

***Hypothesis 1:*** *The societal engagement is directly and negatively related to customer's buying decision.*

- **Direct link between customer's buying decision , corporate image enhancement and commercial performance of the enterprise..**

The relations between customer's buying decision, corporate image enhancement and commercial performance of the enterprise have been determined in an equivocal way in literature. In practice, it seems that the answer to the question is positive. In theory, we put in consumer's buying decision and commercial performance seems to be logic, our knowledge and our surprise, less study or investigations have observed the same relation between consumer's buying decision , corporate image enhancement and corporate commercial performance. The studies of Little et al., (2011) and of Ttouhskos et al., (2015) proposed positive link between consumer's buying decision, corporate image enhancement and corporate commercial performance.

In that the customer's buying decisions intensify in one hand the enhancement of corporate image and on the other hand its commercial performances. For these raisons, we propose the following hypotheses.

***Hypothesis 2:*** *the customer's buying decisions is linked positively and directly to the corporate image enhancement.*

***Hypothesis 3:*** *the customer's buying decisions is linked positively and directly to the corporate commercial performance.*

### ***Hypotheses concerning indirect effects between variables***

- Link between Societal Engagement (SE) and corporate image enhancement (CIE)

Overall, it was revealed that the societal engagement (SE) influences the corporate image enhancement (CIE). However, the role played by societal engagement (SE) influences the corporate image enhancement (CIE ) is complex (Fritz and Sonnetang, 2006, Zhang et al., 2014). Thus, it makes sense to suggest that societal engagement has often been justified at the level of the literature by improving the image of the company, arguing that creating a strong image can help attract client. Research has represented the company's image through the adoption of CSR as an intangible asset that can reach extremely high values (Fombrun and Shanley, 1990). To explain this connection, we go back to Harrison and Freeman's (1999) theory of engagement, which argues that societal engagement, can help a company to cross national barriers by strengthening its legitimacy, and by allowing it to work better in society.

An external environment. The societal engagement (SE) is a strategic tool to improve the image of the company. It can act as a lever to seduce customer s in their purchasing decision and enable society to contribute to sustainable development while indirectly caring for or improving its image (Orlitzky et al., 2003). In our opinion, it is logical to suggest that by adopting a societal engagement approach the company can improve its image and its relationships with customers, investors, banks, suppliers and sustainably increase the commercial performance of the company 'business. By integrating current social, environmental and economic concerns into their policies, companies affirm their beliefs and look after their corporate image with their partners (McWilliams and Siegel, 1997). These justifications prompt us to propose the following hypotheses:

***Hypothesis 4: The societal engagement is indirectly and negatively related to the corporate image enhancement.***

***Hypothesis 5: The societal engagement is indirectly and negatively related to the corporate commercial performance***

***Hypotheses concerning the mediating effect of the customer's buying decision in the relationship between societal engagement, corporate image enhancement and corporate commercial performance***

According to Baron and Kenny (1986), the effect of a mediator variable specifies how a given effect occurs. Some empirical studies have been done to suggest links without linking these four variables in a single model. Although several authors (Maslach and Jackson 1986, Schaufeli et al., 2009a, Schaufeli and Salanova, 2014) have focused their research on the direct effects of customer's buying decisions, there has been little research to observe the decision. Customers by positioning this concept as a predominant variable. In our research, customer's buying decisions are presumed to mediate the relationship between societal engagement, corporate image improvement, and the commercial performance. This predominant variable appears to occupy or play a mediating role in explaining the indirect link between societal engagement, corporate image enhancement, and the commercial performance. We can suggest that, the societal engagement is related to customer's buying decision; the customer's buying decision is in turn related to the enhancement of the corporate image and the company's sustainable business performance; and finally, the societal engagement is indirectly linked to the improvement of the company's image and to the company's sustainable commercial performance via the customer purchase decision. It is therefore coherent to propose that the customer's buying decision has a mediating effect in the relationship between the societal engagement, the corporate image enhancement, and the commercial performance.. As a result, the customer buying decision will act as a partial mediating variable between corporate image enhancement and the commercial performance. We assume that mediation is partial because there are other determinants that can influence this relationship. In other words, it is not just the buying decision of the customer s that can intervene in this relationship. For these reasons, we propose the following hypotheses:

***Hypothesis 6: the customer's buying decision acts as a mediating variable between the societal engagement and the corporate image enhancement.***

***Hypothesis 7: the customer's buying decision acts as a mediating variable between the societal engagement and the corporate commercial performance.***

### ***The moderating role of trust in the relationship between societal engagement, customer's buying decision and indirectly the corporate image enhancement and corporate commercial performance***

Until now, we have hypothesized that customer's buying decision is a predominant or key variable to explain the association between societal engagement, corporate image enhancement and corporate commercial performance. Here, we extend our thinking by taking into account the factors that directly influence the societal engagement, the customer's buying decision and indirectly the corporate image enhancement and the corporate commercial performance. In organizational theories, trust is analyzed as a way to reduce uncertainty and risk in buyer-seller relationships (Lane and Bachmann, 2009). In the marketing literature, trust is analyzed at two levels: inter-organizational trust and trust in customer behavior (Chouk and Perrien, 2003). It is considered a moderating signifier in the relationship between Here we present the arguments underlying the hypothesis of moderation of inter-organizational trust and trust in customer behavior in the relationship between societal engagement, customer's buying decision and indirectly the corporate image enhancement and corporate commercial performance. In our view, the consequences of societal engagement would be moderated by levels of trust (inter-organizational trust and confidence in customer behavior). These two levels of trust are at the heart of the customer's buying decision and indirectly corporate image enhancement and corporate commercial performance. Thus, the more a company that invests in societal engagement and the more it creates within stakeholders a trust (either inter-organizational or customer ) that acts as a "moderating" variable in the direct relationship between societal engagement and customer's buying decision and indirectly corporate image enhancement and corporate commercial performance. For these reasons, we propose the following four hypotheses:

***Hypothesis 8:*** *The indirect effect of the societal engagement on the corporate image enhancement through the customer's buying decision is moderated by the trust in inter-organizational relation*

***Hypothesis 9:*** *The indirect effect of the societal engagement on the corporate image enhancement image through the customer's buying decision is moderated by the trust in customer behavior*

***Hypothesis 10:*** *The indirect effect of societal engagement on the firm's sustainable business performance through the customer's buying decision is moderated by the trust in inter-organizational relation*

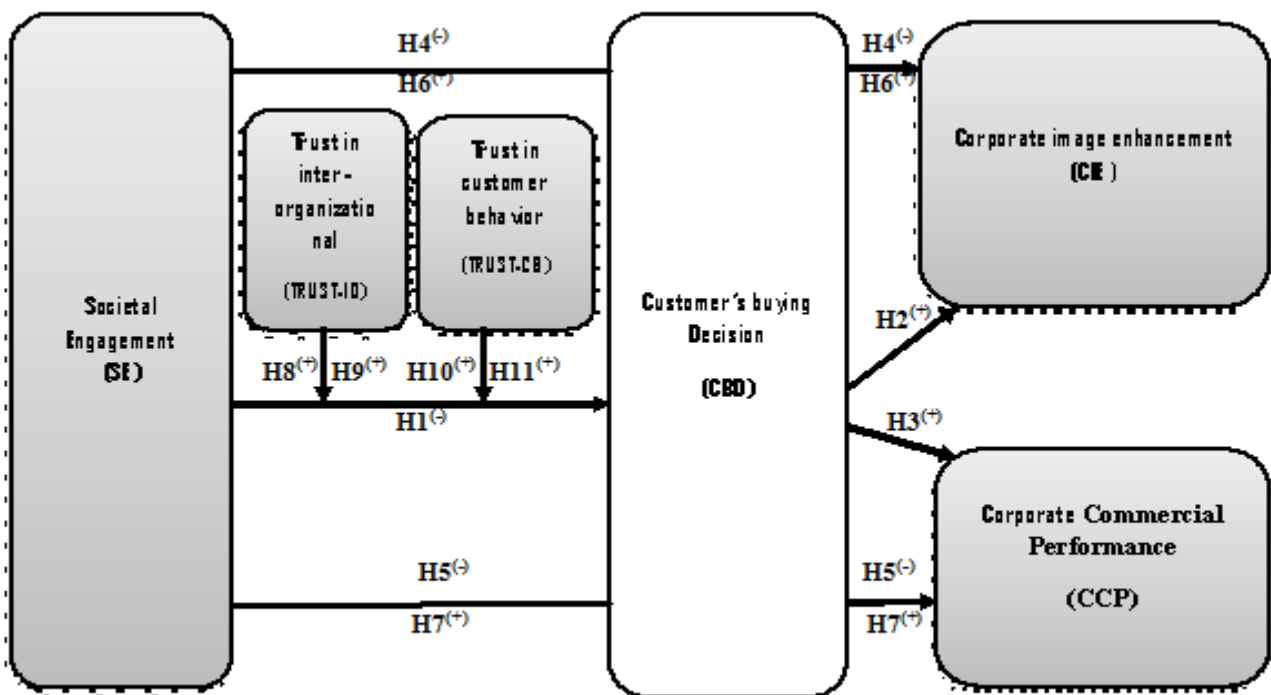
***Hypothesis 11:*** *The indirect effect of societal engagement on the corporate commercial performance through the customer's buying decision is moderated by the trust in customer behavior.*

#### ***Theoretical Model***

We organized our theoretical model of research based on the literature review. In this case, we assume that the societal engagement (independent variable) is able to influence three variables: the customer's buying decision (mediating variable), the corporate image enhancement and the corporate commercial performance of firms (dependent variables). However, we suggest that this relationship between variables is influenced by a moderating mechanism, namely the perception of the role of trust.

Thus, the two perceptions of the role of trust studied (ie trust in inter-organizational and trust in customer behavior) will act as a moderator between the societal engagement, the decision to purchase customers and indirectly the image of the company. . Finally, the decision to buy customer s seems to be crucial to explain the relational dynamics between these variables. Not only is it considered a central variable in our study; but it is also presumed to act as a mediating variable in the relationship between societal engagement, the corporate image enhancement and the corporate commercial performance. It acts hypothetically as a mediating variable between societal engagement, the corporate image enhancement and the corporate commercial performance. Our reading review presented various explanatory theories as well as various links between the variables of our study. These arguments from the literature allowed us to justify the hypotheses of possible relationships. All of these assumptions led to this conceptual model represented in the figure below.

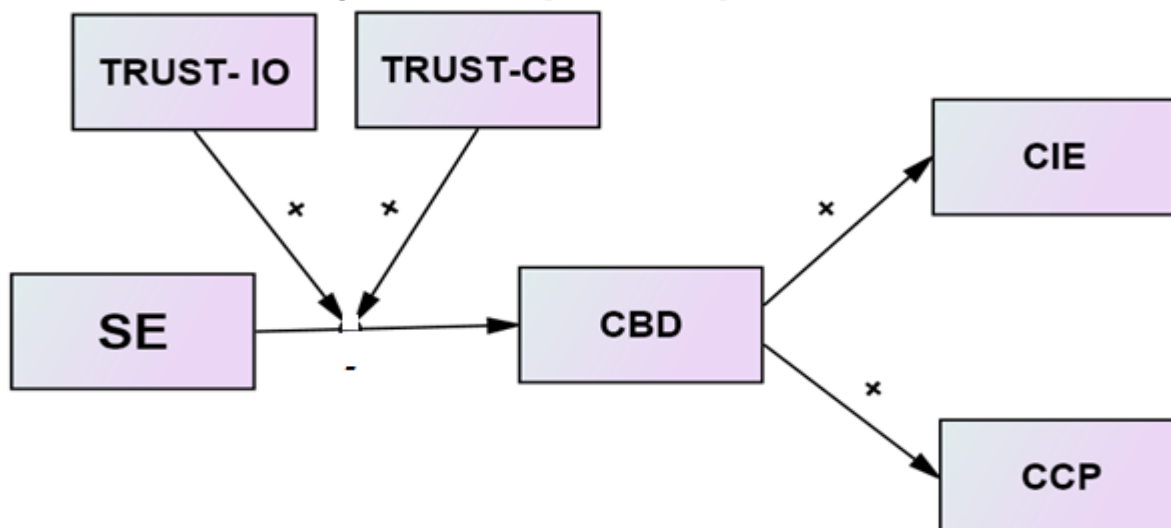
Figure 1: The Theoretical Research Model



In this model, we suggest that societal engagement has a negative effect on customer’s buying decisions and indirectly on corporate image enhancement and corporate commercial performance. In turn, we assume that the two trust levels will mitigate the negative effects of societal engagement on the customer’s buying decision and indirectly on corporate image enhancement and corporate commercial performance. In this sense, the above conceptual model derived from the analysis of the exploratory study is re-schematized for the rest of our research in the simplified figure below.



**Figure 2: The Simplified Conceptual Model**



**METHODOLOGY OF THIS STUDY**

In this section, we will describe the research methodology adopted starting with a brief presentation of the choice and measurement of the variables, a description of the data collection tools, the sample, the profile of the respondents, the reliability of the instruments of measurement of variables collected as well as methods of analysis and data processing retained.

**Choice and measurement of variables**

The documentary review revealed several dimensions or variables. This research is based on six variables:

Variables	Code	Nature of variables
Societal Engagement	SE	Independent variable
Customer's Buying Decision	CBD	Intermediary or Mediation variable
Corporate image enhancement	CIE	Dependent variables
Corporate Commercial Performance	CCP	
Trust in Inter-Organizational	TRUST-IO	Mediation variables
Trust in Customer's Behavior	TRUST-CB	

These dimensions or variables are measured with a Likert scale. This scale, by which respondents express their degree of agreement or disagreement with the statement, usually includes five or seven answer choices that qualify the degree of agreement (Laflamme & Zhou, 2014). . We favored a scale of 5 points ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree, for the majority of our indicators.

1.Strongly disagree	2.Disagree	3.Neutral	4.Agree	5.Strongly agree
---------------------	------------	-----------	---------	------------------

**Data collection**

The data used to study this research were collected through a questionnaire survey, administered face-to-face with a target population of 1,800 current Togolese customers.

**Sampling technique**

This study uses a non-probability sampling technique that relies on the judgment sampling technique. Of the 1800 subjects to whom we sent our questionnaire, we removed from our sample those who did not complete the questionnaire.

**Table 1: Determination of sample size using the standard error of proportion**

Table1 below shows the determination of sample size using the standard error of proportion.

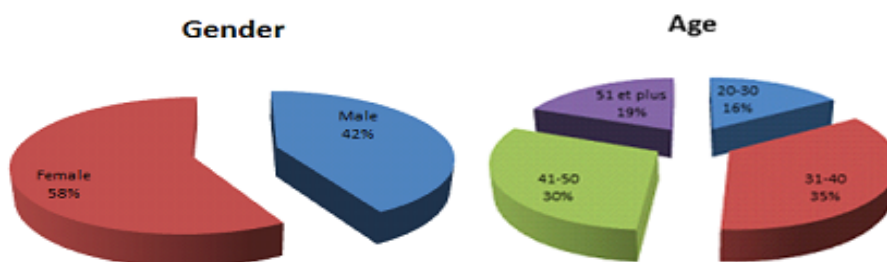
STEP	DETERMINATION
1. Population size (N)	N= 1800
2. Estimation of margin of error (e)	$e = p - \pi = +/- 0,05$
3. Specification of confidence level (CL)	CL = 95%
4. Z value associate	Z = 1,96
5 Evaluation of the population proportion (p)	p= 40 %
6. Determination of initial sample size (no)	$n_o = \frac{z^2 p H_1 - p H_1}{e^2}$ $n_o = (1,96)^2 * 0,40(0,60) / 0,05^2$ $n_o = 369$
7. Final randomly selected (nf)	$N * 10\% < n_o$ Or $1800 * 10\% = 180 < 369$ → <b>nf= 369</b>

Thus, estimating a margin of error of  $e \pm 0.05$  with a 95% confidence level and a proportion of the population (p) of 40% and z (1, 96); we obtain an initial sample size (no) of 369 which represents more than 1/10 of respondents ( $369 > 180$ ). According to Naresh Malhotra et al. (2007), this initial sample size must not be corrected. This allowed us to conclude that the final sample size (n) selected for our research and analysis is 369.

**Typology of respondents**

After unveiling the method of data collection, the following figure shows the distribution according to the age and sex variables.

**Figure 3: Overview of respondent characteristics**



Source: By the author

As shown in Figure 3 shown above, the sample is composed of men (58%) and women (42%). 16% of respondents are between 20 and 30 years old; 35% are between 31 and 40 years old; 30% are between 41 and 50 years old and 19% are between 51 and over.

### Reliability of measuring instruments

In order to be consistent with what we proposed above, we present in Table2 the results of Cronbach Alpha.

**Table 2: Results of the analysis of the reliability of measurements**

Variables	Code	Number of Items	Cronbach Alpha
Societal Engagement	SE	3	0.83
Customer's Buying Decision	CBD	4	0.87
Corporate image enhancement	CIE	3	0.85
Corporate Commercial Performance	CCP	4	0.96
Trust in Inter-Organizational	TRUST-IO	3	0.85
Trust in Customer's Behavior	TRUST-CB	4	0.92

**Source: By the author**

If each measurement scale has an alpha above 0.70 our questionnaire is therefore considered reliable. In this table 2, our variables all show a coefficient above 0.80 which is excellent in terms of internal consistency.

### Method of analysis

In order to validate our research hypotheses and taking into account the confirmatory nature of our study, we have chosen three complementary methodological approaches: The first is the Confirmatory Factorial Analysis (CFA) method to evaluate the discriminatory validity of our variables. The second is related to the Structural Equation Method (SQS) to model the complex relationships between observed variables, to check the estimated correlation coefficients (Grenon and Viau, 1999) and to measure both the estimated influence of a determinant (SE) on several consequences (CIE and CCP) through the alleged role mediator CBD. The last approach is that of Preacher and Hayes' (2004, 2008) Multiple Regressions (or Bootstrap) to validate our hypotheses.

### Treatment of data

To process our data, we used AMOS 23 software and SPSS 23 software. This software is used to test the validity of our research hypotheses.

## STATISTICAL ANALYSIS RESULTS

This section aims at presenting the results of the statistical analysis, carried out within the framework of this study. To this end, we propose the tests guiding the different results obtained: the results of the confirmatory factor analysis, those of the structural analysis as well as those of the multiple regressions which will enable us to justify the final model retained and to verify the validation of our hypotheses.

### Results of Confirmatory Factor Analysis

To evaluate the discriminant validity of our measurement scales, we performed a confirmatory factor analysis of our theoretical six-factor model (SE, CBD, TRUST-IO, TRUST-CB, CIE and CCP) in addition to testing five alternative models (M1, M2, M3, M4, M5). This step aims to evaluate the fit of the measurement models and to distinguish between the variables of our study. In the case of our research, the alternative models that are nested in our theoretical model allowed us to determine the results of confirmatory factor analyzes by comparing the chosen adjustment indices (Table 3).

Table 3 below presents the results of confirmatory factor analyzes by comparing the chosen adjustment indices. In comparison with the other models, the results of the fit indices of the theoretical model are satisfactory. The six-factor model is significantly different from alternative models and offers the best fit with the data in our sample.

**Table3: Confirmatory Factor Analysis Results: Adjustment Index**

Test of model	$\chi^2$	DL	GFI	TLI	CFI	RMSEA	AIC	BIC
Theoretical 6 factors model	640.80	175	0.88	0.91	0.92	0.08	752.80	978.65
M1 at 5 factors (CBD + CIE)	1196.25	180	0.74	0.80	0.83	0.12	1298.25	1503.93
M2 at 5 factors (SE + CBD)	1086.66	187	0.68	0.69	0.73	0.15	1907.98	2085.44
M3 at 4 factors (CBD + CIE + CCP)	1819.98	187	0.68	0.69	0.73	0.15	907.98	2085.44
M4 at 3 factors (SE + CBD + TRUST + CIE + CCP)	2012.52	186	0.63	0.65	0.70	0.15	2102.52	2284.04
M5 at 1 factor	3269.51	189	0.49	0.42	0.48	0.20	3353.51	32522.90

*Notice: N (Sample size) = 369;  $\chi^2$  = R Square of model; GFI = goodness of fit index; TLI = Tucker-Lewis index; CFI = Comparative fit index; RMSEA = root-mean-square error of approximation; AIC = Akaike information criterion; BIC = Bayesian information criterion*

*\*p < 0.05 ; \*\*p < 0.01*

**Source: By the author**

Indeed, the fit indices GFI, TLI and CFI are closest to 1. Among all the models proposed, the RMSEA index of our theoretical model is the one that comes closest to 0.08. This means that the fit of our model is between strong and moderate. However, the lowest chi-square comes from our theoretical model and shows a better fit of the data. Other statistical indices such as BIC and AIC suggest that our theoretical model is the most parsimonious, as our BIC and AIC indices represent the lowest values. In this sense, we can affirm that taking into account the

statistical indices and the comparison of the chi-square, all the measures of the theoretical model will be retained, because of its satisfactory results. If we had grouped the measurement items, the adjustment would have been smaller. The model selected is therefore the most parsimonious because of the indices of adjustment.

### Results of validation tests of research hypotheses

Before any test of validation of the hypotheses of research, we will establish the correlation of the descriptive statics.

**Table 4: Descriptive Statistics and Correlation**  
Mean, standard deviations and correlations for study variables

Mean scores of components			Correlation Matrix					
Variables	M	ET	SE	CBD	CIE	CCP	TRUST-IO	TRUST-CB
SE	4.82	2.36	1					
CBD	5.67	2.11	-0.57**	1				
CIE	6.39	1.75	-0.34	0.54**	1			
CCP	6.01	2.05	-0.05	0.11**	0.45**	1		
TRUST-IO	4.98	1.23	-0.27	0.44**	0.35	0.08	1	
TRUST-CB	5.98	2.23	-0.42**	0.51**	0.38**	0.18*	0.32*	1

*Notice: Sample size N= 369 ; M = Mean; ET = Standard deviation ; \*p < 0.05. \*\*p < 0.01 (*

Source: By the author

As can be seen in Table 4.2, SE is negatively correlated to the CBD ( $r = -0.57^{**}$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), TRUST-IO ( $r = -0.27$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), at the TRUST-CB ( $r = -0.42^{**}$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), at the CIE ( $r = -0.34$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) and proposes a non-significant correlation with the CCP ( $r = -0.05$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). As for the CBD this variable is positively correlated with the TRUST-IO ( $r = 0.44^{**}$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), the TRUST-CB ( $r = 0.51^{**}$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) with the CIE ( $r = 0.54^{**}$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) and CPDE ( $r = 0.44^{**}$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). It should also be noted that TRUST-IO is positively correlated with TRUST-CB ( $r = 0.32^{*}$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) and CIE ( $r = 0.35$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). The correlational relationship between TRUST-IO and CCP is not significant ( $r = 0.08$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Finally, TRUST-CB is positively correlated with CIE ( $r = 0.38^{**}$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) and CCP ( $r = 0.18^{**}$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ).

### Validation of assumptions about direct effects

**Table 5: Direct Test Results**

Path	Hypotheses	Coefficient Y	T-value	P	Results
SE → CBD	H1	-0.56**	3.2	<0.01	Accepted
CBD → CIE	H2	0.53	3.8	<0.01	Accepted
CBD → CCP	H3	0.12	2.4	<0.05	Accepted

\*\*p < 0.01 ; \*p < 0.05

Source: By the author

The results of the direct test show, firstly, that the societal engagement (SE) is negatively related to the customer's buying decision (CBD): (H1:  $\gamma = 0.64$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Secondly, that the customer's buying decision (CBD) is positively related to the corporate image enhancement (CIE): (H2:  $\gamma = 0.70$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Finally, the customer's buying decision (CBD) is linked to the corporate commercial performance (CCP): (H3:  $\gamma = 0.57$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Given these results of the direct test, we can conclude that the hypotheses H1, H2 and H3 are confirmed.

### Validation of hypotheses concerning indirect effects

**Table 6 a: Mediation - indirect effect of the SE on the CIE and CCP through the CBD**

Path	Hypotheses	Indirect effect	Confidence Interval	Results
SE → CBD → CIE	H4	0.003	[0.001; 0.005]	Accepted
SE → CBD → CCP	H5	0.16	[0.12; 0.19]	Accepted

Source: By the author

In addition, in table 6a, the mediation test between the SE, the CBD and the CCP is significant and estimated at 0.16 with a confidence interval of [lower bound = 0.12; upper bound = 0.19] which does not include zero. The mediation test between the SE, the CBD and the CIE is significant and estimated at 0.003 with a confidence interval of [lower bound = 0.001; upper bound = 0.005] does not include zero as well, so the two indirect effects are considered significant. This suggests that SE has a significant indirect effect on CIE via CBD and that CBD has a full mediating effect between SE and CIE. Similarly, indirect effects are therefore considered significant. Similarly, the SE has a significant indirect effect on the CCP via the CBD and the CBD has a full mediating effect between the SE and the CCP. Thus, the hypotheses 4 and 5 have been taken into account.

**Table 6b: Assumptions about the mediating effect of DAC on the ES / AIME relationship**

Path	Mediator effect	Coefficient	T-value	Results				
SE → CBD CBD → CIE SE → CBD → CIE	Condition 1: SE/ CBD	-0.56**	3.2	H6 Accepted				
	Condition 2: CBD/ CIE	0.53**	3.8					
	Condition 3: SE* CBD* CIE	0.30*	12.16					
	Mediation value (h)	6.12						
	Correlation (r)	0.732**						
	R Square	0.807						
	Sign F Change	0.027						
Indices adjustment								
Test of model	X <sup>2</sup>	DL	GFI	TLI	CFI	RMSEA	AIC	BIC
Theoretical model	302.56	102	0.87	0.85	0.87	0.076	473.56	610.68
Notice: N (Sample size)= 369; X <sup>2</sup> = R Square of model; GFI = goodness of fit index; TLI = Tucker-Lewis index; CFI = Comparative fit index; RMSEA = root-mean-square error of approximation; AIC = Akaike information criterion; BIC = Bayesian information criterion *P< 0.05 ; **P< 0.01								

Source: By the author

Table 6b below shows the result of the CBD mediating influence test on the SE / CIE relationship. The results of this test show a mediator value ( $h = 6.12 > 1.96$ ,  $p < 0, 05$ ) at the 5% level of significance. In addition, the model adjustment indices (GFI, AGFI, CFI, NFI) are above 0.9 and close to the value of 1 and the residuals (RMSEA) are close to 0.8. We can therefore say that the adjustment values of the causal model are satisfactory. So there is a mediation of CBD in the indirect effect of SE on CIE. Hypothesis H 6 is accepted.

**Table 6c: Hypotheses concerning the mediating effect of CBD on the SE / CCP relationship**

Path	Mediator effect	Coefficient	T-value	Results				
SE → CBD CBD → CCP SE → CBD → CCP	Condition 1: SE/ CBD	-0.56**	3.2	H7 Accepted				
	Condition 2: CBD/ CCP	0.12*	2.4					
	Condition 3: SE* CBD* CCP	-0.0672	7.68					
	Mediation value (h)	4.162						
	Correlation (r)	0.712**						
	R Square	0.802						
	Sign F Change	0.003						
Indices adjustment								
Test of model	X <sup>2</sup>	DL	GFI	TLI	CFI	RMSEA	AIC	BIC
Theoretical model	305.2	102	0.97	0.95	0.87	0.078	443.12	732.86
<i>Notice: N (Sample size)= 369; X<sup>2</sup>= R Square of model; GFI = goodness of fit index; TLI = Tucker-Lewis index; CFI = Comparative fit index; RMSEA = root-mean-square error of approximation; AIC = Akaike information criterion; BIC = Bayesian information criterion</i> * $P < 0.05$ ; ** $P < 0.01$								

**Source: By the author**

Table 6c above shows the result of the test of the mediating influence of the CBD on the SE / CCP relation. The results of this test present a mediator value ( $h = 4.162 > 1.96$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) at the 5% level of significance. In addition, the model adjustment indices (GFI, AGFI, CFI, NFI) are above 0.9 and close to the value of 1 and the residuals (RMSEA) are close to 0.8. We can therefore say that the adjustment values of the causal model are satisfactory. There is therefore a mediation of CBD in the indirect effect of SE on CCP. Hypothesis H 7 is accepted.

***Hypotheses concerning the moderating effect***

For the moderation hypothesis, the regression model must predict a direct relationship between the independent variable (SE) and the mediating variable (CBD).

**Moderation test**

**Table 7: Results the moderation test**

In this table below, adding the moderator variable at different levels does not change the link between the SE and the CBD.

First path: SE; CBD and CIE			Second path: SE; CBD and CCP		
Different level of TRUST-IO	Effect	P	Different level of TRUST-CB	Effect	P
Low level of TRUST-IO	0.0035	ns	Low level of TRUST-CB	0.0062**	< 0.01
Average level of TRUST-IO	0.0064	ns	Average level of TRUST-CB	0.0064*	< 0.05
High level of TRUST-IO	0.0067	ns	High level of TRUST-CB	0.0067*	< 0.05
Non validation of complete moderation			validation of complete moderation		

Source: By the author

Therefore, TRUST-IO does not have a direct moderating effect in the relationship between SE and CBD; and the complete moderation is therefore not validated. By contrast, adding the moderator variable TRUST-CB at different levels changes the link between the SE and the CBD. Therefore, the TRUST-CB has direct moderating effect in the relationship between the SE and the CBD; and complete moderation is thus validated. We can say before the moderate mediation test that the CBD is more pronounced when the TRUST-CB is high.

**The moderate mediation test**

With respect to moderate mediation, we examined whether this is significant, using the Hayes (2011) procedure that combines moderation and mediation to validate this moderate mediation hypothesis, the regression model must predict an indirect relation between the independent variable (SE) and the dependent variables (CIE and CCP) via the moderator variable (TRUST-IO and TRUST-CB). These results are illustrated in Table 7.

**Table 8: Moderate Mediation Test for the First and Second Path**

Variables	First path: SE; CBD and CIE		Hypotheses
SE x TRUST-IO	Index	Confidence interval	H 8 rejected
ES x TRUST -CB	0.0000	[-0.0001; 0.0001]	H9 Accepted
Variables	0.0000	[0.0001; 0.0001]	Hypotheses
	First path: SE; CBD and CCP		
	Index	Confidence interval	
SE x TRUST-IO	0.0003	[-0.0005; 0.0004]	H10 rejected
ES(VD) x TRUST -CB	0.0003	[0.0003; 0.0004]	H11 Accepted

Source: By the author

Table 8 above presents the results of the moderate first and second path mediation tests. With respect to moderate mediation for the first path (ie SE, CBD and CIE), the table shows that the indirect index of TRUST-IO is estimated at 0.0000 with a confidence interval whose two bounds include zero [lower bound = -0.0001; upper bound = 0.0001] therefore Hypothesis 8 which states that TRUST-IO moderates the indirect effect of SE on CIE is rejected. The indirect index of the TRUST-CB is estimated at 0.0000 with a confidence interval whose two bounds do not include zero [lower bound = 0.0000; upper bound = 0.0001]. Consequently, hypothesis 9, which states that the TRUST-CB moderates the indirect effect of SE on CIE is supported. With respect to moderate mediation for the second path (ie SE, CBD and CCP), the table also shows that the indirect index of the TRUST-IO is estimated at 0.0002 with a confidence interval of which both terminals include zero [lower bound = - 0.0005; upper bound = 0.0008]; therefore, Hypothesis 10 which states that TRUST-IO moderates the indirect effect of SE on CCP is rejected. Since the two bounds do not include zero, we can therefore conclude that the CONF-



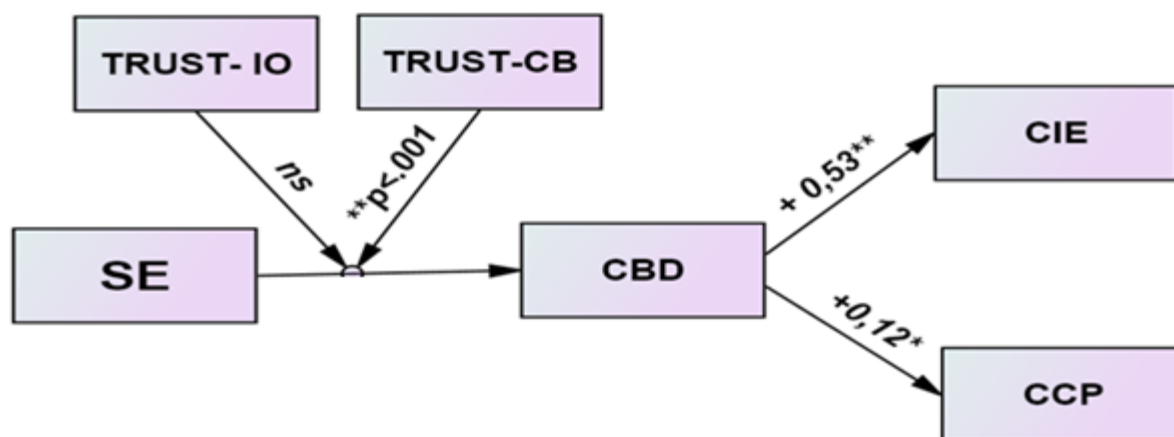
CC moderates via the CBD the indirect effect of SE on the CCP. Hypothesis 11 therefore supported.

In summary, the Table below summarizes the results of the validation of our research hypotheses.

**Table 9: Validation results of our research hypotheses**

To conclude this research, affirm that the theoretical model confirms our hypothesis of mediation and suggested that the CBD acts as a mediating variable between SE, (a) the CIE and (b) CCP. Hypotheses 1 to 7 are confirmed. The mediation effect is complete. Concerning hypotheses 8 to 11 of moderation, hypotheses 9 and 11 are supported while those of moderation (8 and 10) are not supported.

**Figure 4: The final theoretical model**



Source: By the author

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, our first question was to determine the effect of the SE on the CBD and subsequently on the CIE and the CCP. More specifically, our research question highlighted the mediating role of the CBD in the aforementioned relationship. Thus, our second research question was aimed at determining the presumed moderating role of TRUST (TRUST-IO and TRUST-CB) in the relationship between SE, CBD and indirectly CIE and CCP. To answer our two research questions, we performed structural equation and multiple regression tests on a sample of 369 customers in various branches or sectors. We have developed and tested a theoretical model of moderate mediation in which CBD is a mechanism that explains the association between SE, CIE and CCP. We also considered the influence TRUST in the aforementioned relation; to what extent TRUST (TRUST-IO and TRUST-CB) moderates the relationship between SE, CBD and indirectly CIE and CCP. The results of a quantitative study of 369 customer s and managers provide partial support for the proposed model across the CBD dimension. Thus, our results suggest that an SE acts on CIE and CCP via the CBD. As for the TRUST, only the TRUST-CB moderates the indirect relationship between SE; CIE and CCP.

## Theoretical contribution

This study differs from the previous ones and makes important contributions to the literature. To our knowledge, very little research has examined empirically in the same model, the effect of SE on CBD and indirectly, the CIE and the CCP. Thus, it seems to us that this study is one of the few to demonstrate in the same model, that the mediating variable CBD is an important

determinant of the dependent variables (CIE and CCP) thanks to its relation with the SE and that the TRUST-IO and TRUST-CB are moderating variables in the relationship between SE, CBD and indirectly between CIE and CCP. .

### **Practical implication**

In practical terms, this study refers to concrete practical arrangements that managers could put in place. So our findings suggest that managers must perceive the CBD as a customer engagement that can favor CIE and CCP. We believe that managers need to pay particular attention to SE practices in their organizations.

### **Limitation of the study**

The data was collected in a single period of time. Therefore, it is impossible to confirm with certainty the causal relationships. Future studies should favor longitudinal data to further define these relationships.

### **References**

- Baron, R. M., & Kenny, D. A. (1986). The moderator-mediator distinction in social psychological research: Conceptual, strategic, and statistical considerations. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 51 (6): 1173-118.
- Benamour Y. (2000)**, Confiance interpersonnelle et confiance institutionnelle dans la relation client-entreprise de service- une application au bancaire français, Thèse de Doctorat en Sciences de Gestion
- Chouk I., Perrien J. (2003)**, Les déterminants de la confiance du consommateur lors de d'unachat sur un site march and : proposition d'un cadre conceptuel préliminaire, in *Les Actesdu 19ème Congrès de l'AFM, Volume 19, Gammarth*, p. 581-593.
- Dkhili, H et al. (2014), Responsabilité sociétale et performance financière dans les entreprises tunisiennes, *la Revue des Sciences de Gestion*, Vol 3-4, No 267-268, 43-50.
- Filser M. (1998)**, Confiance et comportement du consommateur, *Economies et sociétés,Sciences de Gestion*, Série SG n°8-9/1998, p. 279-294.
- Preacher, K. J., & Hayes, A. F. (2004). SPSS and SAS Procedures for Estimating Indirect Effects in Simple Mediation Models. *Behavior Research Methods, Instruments, & Computers*, 36 (4): 717-731.
- Roussel, P., Durrieu, F., Campoy, E., & El Akremi, A. (2002). Méthodes d'équations structurelles : recherche et applications en gestion. Paris, France: Economica coll. Gestion.
- Zhao, X., Lynch, J. G., & Chen, Q. (2010). Reconsidering Baron and Kenny: Myths and Truths about Mediation Analysis. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 37 (2): 197-206