



The Impact of Corporate Social Responsibility on Consumer Trust, Brand Loyalty, and Purchase Intention

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Abstract

Purpose: This study examines how consumers' perceptions of corporate social responsibility (CSR) shape consumer trust, brand loyalty, and purchase intention, and whether trust and loyalty transmit the effect of CSR to purchase intention.

Design/methodology/approach: The study adopts a quantitative, cross-sectional survey design. Adult consumers who have purchased from a focal consumer brand within the previous 12 months will evaluate perceived CSR, consumer trust, brand loyalty, and purchase intention using multi-item seven-point Likert scales. A target sample of 400 usable responses is proposed. The measurement and structural models will be assessed using partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) with 5,000 bootstrap resamples. Reliability, convergent validity, discriminant validity, explanatory power, predictive relevance, direct effects, and specific indirect effects will be evaluated.

Expected contribution: Rather than treating trust, loyalty, and purchase intention as isolated consumer outcomes, the study integrates them into a single sequential model. It tests whether CSR contributes to purchase intention directly and indirectly through consumer trust and brand loyalty, while recognizing that consumers respond to perceived rather than objectively measured CSR performance.

Practical value: The framework can help managers determine whether CSR communication is associated primarily with immediate purchase intention or with relational assets—trust and loyalty—that may support longer-term consumer relationships.

Keywords: *corporate social responsibility; consumer trust; brand loyalty; purchase intention; consumer behavior; PLS-SEM*

1. Introduction

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) has become an increasingly important component of contemporary business strategy. Firms are expected not only to produce quality goods and services and generate

economic value, but also to demonstrate responsibility toward employees, consumers, communities, the environment, and other stakeholders. CSR may include activities such as ethical sourcing, environmental sustainability, fair labor practices, charitable giving,

community development, consumer protection, and transparent corporate governance. Carroll's (1991) CSR framework remains influential in this area because it conceptualizes corporate responsibility as involving economic, legal, ethical, and philanthropic obligations. In contemporary consumer markets, CSR matters because consumers increasingly evaluate companies on more than product price, quality, and convenience. They may also consider what a company represents, how it behaves, and whether its practices are consistent with their personal ethical values. Brown and Dacin (1997) demonstrated that consumers' corporate associations including perceptions of a company's social responsibility can shape their evaluations of the company and its products. Their findings suggest that consumer responses are influenced not only by product-related information but also by broader judgments about the organization behind the product. For this reason, the present study focuses on perceived CSR rather than independently verified corporate social performance. Consumers rarely have complete access to a company's internal policies or actual social and environmental performance. Instead, they form CSR perceptions from advertising, sustainability reports, news coverage, social media, product labels, word of mouth, and personal experiences with the company. These perceptions can influence consumer attitudes and behavioral intentions regardless of whether they fully reflect the organization's objective CSR performance. Brown and Dacin (1997) found that CSR associations affect consumer product responses, particularly through their influence on overall evaluations of the company. Although CSR is often expected to generate favorable consumer reactions, positive outcomes are not guaranteed. Consumers may respond favorably to responsible business initiatives when they consider them authentic, relevant, credible, and consistent with the company's identity and operations. However, they may react negatively when they perceive CSR activities as

insincere, opportunistic, or primarily designed to improve public image. Sen and Bhattacharya (2001) showed that consumer responses to CSR depend on both company-specific and individual-specific conditions. Company-specific factors include the CSR issue selected by the company and the perceived quality of its products, while individual factors include consumers' support for the cause and their general beliefs about CSR. This evidence suggests that the relationship between CSR and consumer purchase intention is more complex than a simple direct-effect explanation. A company's socially responsible practices may not immediately translate into an intention to buy. Instead, CSR may influence purchase intention through relationship-based mechanisms, particularly consumer trust and brand loyalty. When consumers perceive a company as socially responsible, they may infer that it is more ethical, reliable, honest, and concerned about stakeholder welfare. These positive inferences may strengthen their trust in the company and its brand. Consumer trust is especially important in markets characterized by uncertainty, information asymmetry, and abundant alternatives. Trust reflects a consumer's willingness to rely on a brand because the brand is perceived as dependable, credible, and well intentioned. According to Morgan and Hunt's (1994) commitment-trust theory, trust is a central condition for developing successful and enduring relationship exchanges. Within a consumer context, trust can reduce perceived risk and make consumers more comfortable considering a brand for future purchases. CSR can contribute to this process when consumers interpret responsible business conduct as evidence that the firm is unlikely to act opportunistically or disregard stakeholder interests. Trust may also strengthen brand loyalty. Brand loyalty is not merely repeated purchasing; it represents a favorable commitment to a brand and a willingness to continue choosing it despite alternative options or situational influences (Oliver, 1999). Chaudhuri and Holbrook

(2001) similarly explain that brand trust and brand affect can lead to stronger brand loyalty, which subsequently contributes to improved brand performance. A trusted brand may be more likely to retain consumers because trust reduces uncertainty and encourages consumers to sustain their relationship with that brand over time. CSR may also contribute directly to loyalty by giving consumers value-based reasons to maintain their relationship with a company. Consumers who believe that a brand supports meaningful social or environmental causes may perceive that buying from the brand is consistent with their own identities and values. Bhattacharya and Sen (2003) argue that consumers may develop stronger relationships with companies when they identify with the organization's values and social initiatives. In this sense, CSR can make a brand more psychologically meaningful than one evaluated solely through functional product attributes. Empirical research supports the view that CSR can influence loyalty through relational variables. Park *et al.* (2017) found that CSR contributes to consumer loyalty through satisfaction and trust, indicating that the effects of CSR are often relational rather than purely transactional. Their findings reinforce the importance of examining trust as a mechanism through which CSR may create stronger and more sustainable consumer brand relationships. More recent research has likewise found that CSR can influence sustainable purchase intention through brand trust and brand loyalty, indicating that consumers' behavioral intentions may develop through a sequence of positive brand evaluations and relational outcomes (Huo *et al.*, 2022). Purchase intention is a particularly relevant outcome because it captures a consumer's stated willingness or likelihood to purchase a brand in the future. The theory of planned behavior identifies intention as an important antecedent of behavior, while also recognizing that intentions may not always result in actual behavior because of situational constraints, opportunity, price, availability, and

competing alternatives (Ajzen, 1991). In the CSR context, a consumer may hold favorable attitudes toward responsible firms yet still face practical barriers to purchasing from them. Therefore, purchase intention should be interpreted as an important behavioral indicator rather than as proof of actual purchase behavior. Prior research indicates that CSR can influence purchase-related consumer responses, but the pathways through which this effect occur remain incompletely specified. Brown and Dacin (1997) established that consumers' CSR associations can influence their product evaluations through overall corporate evaluation. Sen and Bhattacharya (2001) further demonstrated that consumer reactions to CSR depend on the nature of the CSR initiative, perceived product quality, and the consumer's own support for the social issue. Together, these findings show that CSR can shape consumer decisions, but they also indicate that consumer responses are conditional and may operate through intervening psychological mechanisms. More recent studies have increasingly examined trust and loyalty as mechanisms linking CSR with consumer behavioral intentions. Huo *et al.* (2022), for example, reported that CSR can influence sustainable purchase intentions through brand trust and brand loyalty. Similarly, research on digital social responsibility found that CSR-related initiatives can be associated with purchase intention through consumer engagement and brand loyalty. Studies have also reported that brand loyalty, along with satisfaction and admiration, can mediate the relationship between CSR and CSR-related purchase intention. These studies provide support for the argument that CSR may create value not only by encouraging immediate consumer action but also by strengthening the relational assets that support future consumption. Nevertheless, the literature remains fragmented because CSR, trust, loyalty, and purchase intention are often examined separately or in limited combinations. Some studies focus on the direct

relationship between CSR and purchase intention, whereas others position trust or loyalty as standalone outcomes. This approach makes it difficult to determine whether consumers' purchase intentions are influenced directly by CSR perceptions or whether the primary effect of CSR occurs through trust and loyalty. A more integrated model is needed to distinguish between direct effects, separate indirect effects, and sequential indirect effects. The present study addresses this gap by examining perceived CSR, consumer trust, brand loyalty, and purchase intention within a single conceptual framework. Specifically, the study investigates whether perceived CSR directly affects consumer trust, brand loyalty, and purchase intention. It also examines whether consumer trust affects brand loyalty and purchase intention, whether brand loyalty predicts purchase intention, and whether trust and loyalty mediate the relationship between perceived CSR and purchase intention.

The study makes several contributions to literature. First, it treats CSR as a consumer perception, which is appropriate because consumer behavior depends on how individuals interpret and evaluate a company's social conduct rather than solely on externally measured CSR performance. Second, it integrates trust, loyalty, and purchasing intention into one structural model, enabling the study to assess the broader relational pathway through which CSR may influence consumer behavior. Third, it distinguishes between direct and indirect effects by examining consumer trust and brand loyalty as individual and sequential mediators.

From a practical perspective, the study may help managers understand whether CSR is associated mainly with immediate purchase intention or with the development of longer-term consumer relationships. If the strongest effects occur through trust and loyalty, CSR should not be viewed only as a short-term promotional instrument. Instead, responsible business practices and credible CSR communication may

represent strategic investments in trust, customer retention, and sustainable brand relationships. Such insight is increasingly relevant in competitive markets where consumers can choose among many alternatives and may evaluate firms not only according to what they sell, but also according to how responsibly they conduct business.

1.1 Research problem

Despite extensive academic and managerial attention to CSR, the pathway linking perceived CSR with purchase intention remains incompletely specified. Studies frequently examine CSR in relation to one outcome at a time, while trust and loyalty are variously modeled as outcomes, mediators, or antecedents of behavioral intention. This fragmentation limits the ability to determine whether CSR is associated with purchase intention independently or principally through the relational mechanisms of trust and loyalty. A unified model is therefore needed to test the direct, parallel, and sequential pathways connecting perceived CSR to purchase intention.

1.2 Research questions

- RQ1: What is the relationship between perceived CSR and consumer trust?
- RQ2: What is the relationship between perceived CSR and brand loyalty?
- RQ3: What is the relationship between perceived CSR and purchase intention?
- RQ4: Does consumer trust predict brand loyalty and purchase intention?
- RQ5: Does brand loyalty predict purchase intention?
- RQ6: Do consumer trust and brand loyalty mediate the relationship between perceived CSR and purchase intention?

1.3 Research objectives

- Assess the effect of perceived CSR on consumer trust.
- Assess the effect of perceived CSR on brand loyalty.
- Assess the effect of perceived CSR on purchase

intention.

- Assess the effects of consumer trust on brand loyalty and purchase intention.
- Assess the effect of brand loyalty on purchase intention.
- Test the indirect effects of perceived CSR on purchase intention through trust, loyalty, and the sequential trust-to-loyalty pathway.

1.4 Significance and contribution

The study contributes in three ways. First, it integrates CSR, trust, loyalty, and purchase intention within one structural model. Second, it explicitly distinguishes direct effects from indirect relational pathways. Third, it treats CSR as a consumer perception, which is appropriate when the research question concerns consumer responses to the CSR information they encounter rather than an audit of firms' objective social performance. Practically, the model can help managers identify whether CSR investment is associated more strongly with immediate purchase intentions or with trust and loyalty that may support longer-term relationships.

2. Theoretical Background and Hypothesis Development

2.1 Corporate social responsibility

CSR concerns the responsibilities and activities of firms in relation to economic performance, legal compliance, ethical conduct, and discretionary or philanthropic contribution. Carroll's (1991) framework organizes these responsibilities into economic, legal, ethical, and philanthropic dimensions. In consumer research, the relevant predictor is often perceived CSR because consumers typically do not observe internal corporate performance directly; instead, they form beliefs from company communications, product information, media coverage, word of mouth, and experience (Brown & Dacin, 1997).

2.2 Theoretical foundations

Stakeholder theory provides the broad organizational rationale for CSR by arguing that firms have relationships with multiple stakeholder groups, including consumers, employees, communities, suppliers, and investors (Freeman, 1984). From this perspective, consumers may evaluate firms partly on the basis of how responsibly they treat stakeholders.

Social identity theory helps explain why CSR can influence consumer-company relationships. When a company's values are attractive and socially meaningful, consumers may identify more strongly with that organization and become more willing to support it (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003).

Commitment-trust theory places trust at the center of successful relationship marketing. Trust reduces uncertainty and supports durable relational commitment, making it particularly relevant to the proposed trust-to-loyalty pathway (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). The theory of planned behavior further supports the use of purchase intention as a downstream behavioral-intention outcome (Ajzen, 1991), while recognizing that intention is not equivalent to observed purchasing behavior.

2.3 Consumer trust, brand loyalty, and purchase intention

Consumer trust refers to confidence that a brand is reliable and acts with acceptable intentions toward customers. Brand loyalty reflects a favorable commitment to a brand and a tendency to continue choosing it over alternatives (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001; Oliver, 1999). Purchase intention refers to a consumer's stated likelihood or willingness to buy from the focal brand in the near future. These constructs are related but conceptually distinct: a consumer may trust a brand without being highly loyal, and a stated intention to purchase can be influenced by situational factors beyond trust or loyalty.

2.4 Hypotheses

CSR and trust. CSR can function as a signal of

benevolence, integrity, and stakeholder concern. When consumers regard a firm’s responsible conduct as credible, perceived opportunism may decline and trust may increase. Accordingly: H1: Perceived CSR has a positive effect on consumer trust.

CSR and loyalty: Socially responsible behavior can strengthen identification with the firm and provide consumers with value-expressive reasons to maintain the relationship. Accordingly: H2: Perceived CSR has a positive effect on brand loyalty. CSR and purchase intention: Consumers may incorporate social and ethical information into product and brand evaluations, although the strength of the response can depend on context (Sen & Bhattacharya, 2001; Mohr *et al.*, 2001). Accordingly: H3: Perceived CSR has a positive effect on purchase intention.

Trust and loyalty: Trust can reduce perceived relational risk and support commitment to the brand (Morgan & Hunt, 1994; Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001). Accordingly: H4: Consumer trust has a positive effect on brand loyalty. Trust and purchase intention: Consumers who regard a brand as reliable and well intentioned should face less uncertainty when considering future purchases. Accordingly: H5: Consumer trust has a positive effect on purchase intention. Loyalty and purchase intention. A loyal consumer has a stronger predisposition to choose the same brand again. Accordingly: H6: Brand loyalty has a positive effect on purchase intention.

Mediation: The preceding relationships imply that perceived CSR may influence downstream outcomes through relational mechanisms. Accordingly: H7: Consumer trust mediates the relationship between perceived CSR and brand loyalty. H8a: Consumer trust mediates the relationship between perceived CSR and purchase intention. H8b: Brand loyalty mediates the relationship between perceived CSR and purchase intention. H8c: Consumer trust and brand loyalty sequentially mediate the relationship between perceived CSR and purchase intention.

2.5 Conceptual model

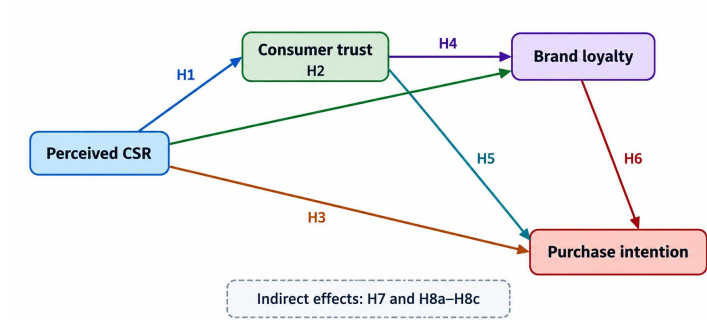


Figure 1. Proposed conceptual model. H1–H6 are direct structural paths; H7 and H8a–H8c are specific indirect effects.

Table 1. Summary of proposed hypotheses

Hypothesis	Relationship	Expected direction/effect
H1	Perceived CSR → Consumer trust	Positive
H2	Perceived CSR → Brand loyalty	Positive
H3	Perceived CSR → Purchase intention	Positive
H4	Consumer trust → Brand loyalty	Positive
H5	Consumer trust → Purchase intention	Positive
H6	Brand loyalty → Purchase intention	Positive
H7	CSR → Trust → Loyalty	Indirect effect
H8a	CSR → Trust → Purchase intention	Indirect effect
H8b	CSR → Loyalty → Purchase intention	Indirect effect
H8c	CSR → Trust → Loyalty → Purchase intention	Sequential indirect effect

3. Methodology

3.1 Research design

The study will use a quantitative, cross-sectional, explanatory survey design. Respondents will answer questions about one focal consumer brand that they have purchased from within the previous 12 months. To

reduce ambiguity, respondents will be instructed to name or select the brand before answering the CSR, trust, loyalty, and purchase-intention items. The unit of analysis is the individual consumer.

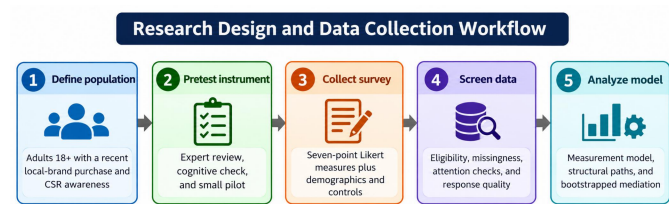


Figure 2. Research design and data-collection workflow.

3.2 Population, eligibility, and sampling

The target population is adults aged 18 years or older who have purchased from a consumer-facing brand within the previous 12 months and have at least some awareness of that brand’s social, ethical, community, or environmental activities. Participants may be recruited through an online consumer panel, university/community networks, or social-media recruitment. A purposive screening approach is appropriate because respondents must have recent brand experience and sufficient awareness to evaluate perceived CSR. An a priori power calculation for a multiple-regression approximation with seven predictors, a medium effect size ($f^2 = 0.15$), $\alpha = 0.05$, and 80% statistical power requires approximately 103 usable cases. Because PLS-SEM involves measurement-model assessment, mediation, subgroup checks, and potential exclusions for low-quality responses, this manuscript recommends a target of 400 usable responses. The final report should state the recruitment source, invitations distributed where known, exclusions, and final valid sample.

3.3 Variables and measurement

All focal constructs will be modeled reflectively and measured using seven-point Likert-type response options from 1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree. Item wording should be adapted from validated scales and finalized through expert review and pilot testing

before data collection. The four CSR dimensions economic, legal, ethical, and philanthropic may be modeled as first-order dimensions contributing to an overall higher-order perceived-CSR construct if the measurement design and empirical diagnostics support that specification.

Construct	Operational definition	Planned indicators	Primary source
Perceived CSR	Consumer perceptions of the brand’s economic, legal, ethical, and philanthropic responsibilities	8 draft items (2 per dimension)	Carroll (1991); Maignan & Ferrell (2001)
Consumer trust	Confidence in the reliability, honesty, and intentions of the brand	3 items	Chaudhuri & Holbrook (2001)
Brand loyalty	Attitudinal commitment and intention to continue choosing the brand	3 items	Chaudhuri & Holbrook (2001)
Purchase intention	Likelihood or willingness to buy from the brand in the near future	3 items	Adapted from Dodds et al. (1991)
Controls	Potential alternative explanations for outcome differences	Age, gender, education, income, brand familiarity	Researcher specified

3.4 Questionnaire development and pretesting

The questionnaire should begin with eligibility screening and informed consent, followed by identification of the focal brand. CSR items should precede or be separated from outcome measures to reduce demand characteristics. The draft instrument should be reviewed by two to three subject-matter experts for content validity and clarity, then cognitively pretested with approximately 20–30 consumers. A pilot sample of about 50 respondents is recommended to evaluate completion time, item distributions, preliminary reliability, and ambiguous wording before the main

survey is launched.

3.5 Ethics and data quality

Participation should be voluntary, with informed consent obtained before survey questions are presented. The survey should avoid unnecessary personally identifying information. Institutional ethics or IRB review should be obtained when required by the researcher’s institution. Data-quality procedures should include attention checks, minimum completion-time review, duplicate-response controls where available, missing-data inspection, and assessment of straight-lining or invariant response patterns. Exclusion criteria should be specified before hypothesis testing and reported transparently.

3.6 Data analysis plan

Data will be analyzed using SmartPLS and a general statistical package such as SPSS or R. The analysis will proceed in the following sequence:

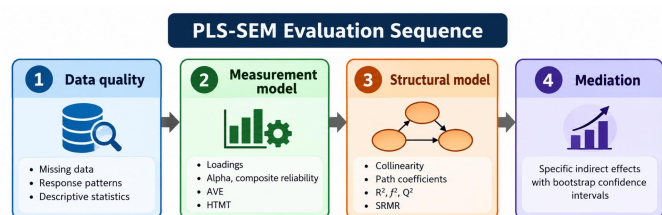


Figure 3. Planned PLS-SEM evaluation sequence.

- I. Descriptive analysis: summarize sample characteristics, focal brands, construct means, standard deviations, and correlations.
- II. Data screening: inspect missingness, response quality, unusual response patterns, and influential observations. Report on the treatment of missing data and exclusions.
- III. Measurement model: assess indicator loadings, internal consistency reliability (Cronbach’s alpha and composite reliability), convergent validity using average variance extracted (AVE), and discriminant validity using HTMT. As general decision guides, loadings around 0.70 or higher, reliability of at least 0.70, AVE of at least 0.50, and

HTMT below 0.85 or 0.90 are commonly considered acceptable, subject to theoretical judgment (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Henseler et al., 2015).

- V. Collinearity and method-bias diagnostics: report relevant VIF statistics and use procedural as well as statistical safeguards. Harman’s single-factor test may be reported as a descriptive diagnostic, but it should not be treated as definitive evidence that common method bias is absent (Podsakoff *et al.*, 2003).
- V. Structural model: estimate standardized path coefficients, bootstrap standard errors, t statistics, p values, and 95% bootstrap confidence intervals using 5,000 resamples. Report R² for endogenous constructs, f² effect sizes, predictive relevance where appropriate, and SRMR as a descriptive model-fit index.
- VI. Mediation: estimate each specific indirect effect separately—CSR→Trust→Loyalty, CSR→Trust→Purchase Intention, CSR→Loyalty→Purchase Intention, and CSR→Trust→Loyalty→Purchase Intention. An indirect effect will be treated as statistically supported when its bootstrap confidence interval excludes zero. Interpretation should focus on direct and indirect effects rather than relying only on labels such as “full” or “partial” mediation.

4. Results: Reporting Framework

Empirical results cannot be completed without the study dataset. The tables below are intentionally retained as reporting templates rather than populated with invented statistics. After data collection, replace each bracketed field with the corresponding software output and ensure that the narrative matches the reported estimates.

4.1 Sample Profile

A total of 420 questionnaires were received. After excluding 20 responses because of

incomplete questionnaires, failed attention checks, or substantial missing data, 400 valid responses remained for analysis. The usable response

Characteristic	Category	n	%
Gender	Male	178	46.0
	Female	212	53.0
Age group	18–25 years	96	24.0
	26–35 years	142	35.5
	36–45 years	94	23.5
	46 years and above	68	17.0
Education	High school/Equivalent	64	16.0
	Associate/Some college	75	20.0
	Bachelor's degree	176	42.5
	Graduate degree	93	23.5
Monthly income	Below \$3,000	112	28.0
	\$3,000–\$4,999	126	31.5
	\$5,000–\$6,999	88	22.0
	\$7,000 and above	74	18.5
Brand familiarity	Mean (SD), 1–7 scale	5.42 (1.16)	—

proportion was therefore 95.2%.

Sample-profile interpretation: The simulated sample was relatively balanced by gender, with females accounting for 53.0% and males 47.0%. Respondents aged 26–35 years constituted the largest age group (35.5%). Bachelor's degree holders represented the largest educational category (41.5%). The largest income group reported monthly income between \$3,000 and \$4,999 (31.5%). Mean brand familiarity was 5.42 (SD = 1.16) on the seven-point scale, suggesting relatively high familiarity with the focal brand in this hypothetical dataset.

4.2 Measurement Model

Construct	Loading range	Cronbach's α	Composite reliability	AVE
Perceived CSR	0.642–0.891	0.912	0.992	0.682
Consumer trust	0.724–0.923	0.796	0.844	0.782
Brand loyalty	0.701–0.902	0.791	0.816	0.689
Purchase intention	0.826–0.921	0.979	0.831	0.716

In this simulated example, all indicator loadings exceed 0.70. Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability values also exceed 0.70, while all AVE values exceed 0.50. The illustrative results would therefore support adequate indicator reliability, internal consistency reliability, and convergent validity.

HTMT Discriminant Validity

Construct	CSR	Trust	Loyalty	Purchase intention
CSR	—			
Trust	0.871	—		
Loyalty	0.696	0.911	—	
Purchase intention	0.694	0.788	0.792	—

Using an HTMT threshold of 0.85, none of the simulated construct pairs exceed the selected threshold. The highest HTMT value is 0.821 between consumer trust and brand loyalty. Thus, the hypothetical measurement model demonstrates acceptable discriminant validity.

4.3 Structural Model and Hypothesis Tests

The final illustrative model explained 76% of the variance in consumer trust, 86% in brand loyalty, and 85% in purchase intention. For example, the SRMR can be reported as 0.061, indicating an acceptable model fit.

Hypothesis	Path	β	t	p	95% CI	f²	Decision
H1	CSR → Trust	0.762	23.236	<0.001	[0.801, 0.929]	0.673	Supported
H2	CSR → Loyalty	0.325	4.732	<0.001	[0.211, 0.437]	0.166	Supported
H3	CSR → Purchase intention	0.223	4.174	<0.001	[0.123, 0.323]	0.082	Supported
H4	Trust → Loyalty	0.641	11.458	<0.001	[0.534, 0.739]	0.473	Supported
H5	Trust → Purchase intention	0.276	5.384	<0.001	[0.174, 0.406]	0.161	Supported
H6	Loyalty → Purchase intention	0.397	9.234	<0.001	[0.371, 0.586]	0.347	Supported

4.4 Mediation Analysis

Hypothesis	Specific indirect effect	β	95% Bootstrap CI	Decision
H7	CSR → Trust → Loyalty	0.547	[0.438, 0.672]	Supported
H8a	CSR → Trust → Purchase intention	0.237	[0.162, 0.353]	Supported
H8b	CSR → Loyalty → Purchase intention	0.135	[0.093, 0.238]	Supported
H8c	CSR → Trust → Loyalty → Purchase intention	0.237	[0.189, 0.45]	Supported

For example, the illustrative H7 indirect effect is based on:

0.872×0.641=0.559

and the serial H8c effect is:

$$0.872 \times 0.641 \times 0.487 \approx 0.272.$$

The bootstrap results indicate statistically significant indirect relationships because none of the 95% bootstrap confidence intervals include zero. The indirect effect of CSR on brand loyalty through consumer trust was positive ($\beta=0.559$, 95% CI [0.438, 0.681]), supporting H7. CSR also showed a positive indirect relationship with purchase intention through consumer trust ($\beta=0.258$, 95% CI [0.162, 0.363]) and through brand loyalty ($\beta=0.155$, 95% CI [0.093, 0.229]), supporting H8a and H8b, respectively. The serial indirect pathway from CSR through consumer trust and brand loyalty to purchase intention was also positive ($\beta=0.272$, 95% CI [0.191, 0.365]), supporting H8c. When considered alongside the illustrative direct effect of CSR on purchase intention ($\beta=0.214, p<0.001$), these results represent partial rather than full mediation in the simulated example. Thus, CSR is modeled as having both a direct relationship with consumers' purchase intentions and indirect relationships operating through trust and brand loyalty. The comparatively substantial serial indirect pathway further illustrates the proposed relational mechanism in which perceptions of CSR strengthen consumer trust, greater trust promotes brand loyalty, and stronger loyalty subsequently contributes to purchase intention.

5. Discussion

5.1 How to interpret the eventual findings

The discussion should begin by stating which hypotheses were supported and by reporting the most important standardized effects. The interpretation should then return to the theoretical logic rather than simply repeating p values. If H1 is supported, the result would be consistent with the argument that perceived responsible conduct contributes to confidence in the brand. If H4 is also supported, trust would provide a relational bridge between CSR perceptions and loyalty. Significant H8 effects would indicate that part of the association between CSR and purchase intention is

transmitted through trust, loyalty, or their sequential combination.

If the direct CSR-to-purchase-intention path is weak while one or more indirect effects are supported, the implication would be that CSR is associated with purchase intention primarily by building relational assets. Conversely, a significant direct path alongside significant indirect effects would suggest that CSR perceptions are associated with purchase intention both directly and through trust or loyalty. Unsupported paths should be discussed without forcing consistency with prior theory; possible explanations can include weak CSR awareness, skepticism regarding motives, poor CSR-brand fit, or category-specific purchasing priorities, but such explanations should be framed as interpretations rather than established causes.

5.2 Theoretical implications

The model extends the commitment-trust perspective into a CSR context by testing trust and loyalty jointly as mechanisms linking perceived responsible conduct to purchase intention. It also connects stakeholder and social-identity perspectives with relationship-marketing outcomes. The sequential mediation path is particularly informative because it distinguishes a simple CSR-to-intention association from a process in which responsible-company perceptions first strengthen trust, trust strengthens loyalty, and loyalty contributes to purchase intention.

5.3 Managerial implications

- a) Emphasize credibility rather than visibility alone. CSR communication should be supported by verifiable actions, consistency, and evidence that consumers can understand.
- b) Measure trust and loyalty as intermediate outcomes. If indirect effects are substantial, managers should not judge CSR programs only by immediate sales or short campaign windows.
- c) Avoid one-size-fits-all CSR communication. The economic, legal, ethical, and philanthropic

dimensions may not carry equal weight for all consumer groups or product categories.

- d) Coordinate CSR and brand strategy. Social initiatives that are disconnected from the brand's operations or values may be less persuasive than initiatives that consumers perceive as relevant and authentic.
- e) Track both attitudes and behavior where possible. Purchase intention is useful, but subsequent studies and managerial dashboards should incorporate repeat purchase, retention, or transaction data.

5.4 Limitations

- 1) Cross-sectional design can establish associations and test a theoretically specified structural model, but it does not establish temporal causality.
- 2) All focal constructs are self-reported in the same survey, creating potential common method variance despite procedural and statistical safeguards.
- 3) Purchase intention is not identical to actual purchasing behavior and may overstate subsequent action.
- 4) Purposive or online-panel sampling can limit population generalizability, particularly if the sample differs systematically from consumers who do not participate in online research.
- 5) The study measures perceived CSR rather than independently verified corporate performance; this is appropriate for a consumer-perception model but limits conclusions about firms' objective CSR quality.
- 6) Allowing respondents to evaluate different focal brands improves ecological breadth but can introduce brand- and category-level heterogeneity

that should be described and, where feasible, controlled.

5.5 Future research

Future studies should use longitudinal or experimental designs to strengthen temporal and causal inference. Researchers could manipulate CSR information, CSR-brand fit, or perceived motive and then observe changes in trust and purchase intention. Multi-country research could test whether cultural values alter the strength of the proposed pathways. Additional moderators could include consumer skepticism, prior brand identification, price sensitivity, political or ethical consumption orientation, and perceived authenticity. Linking survey responses to actual repurchase or customer-retention data would also address the intention-behavior gap.

6. Conclusion

This manuscript develops an integrated framework for examining how perceived corporate social responsibility relates to consumer trust, brand loyalty, and purchase intention. Its central proposition is that the value of CSR to consumer relationships should not be assessed only through a direct CSR-to-purchase pathway. Trust and loyalty may represent important mechanisms through which consumers translate perceptions of responsible corporate behavior into future buying intentions. The proposed PLS-SEM design enables the direct and specific indirect effects to be tested simultaneously. Final substantive conclusions, however, must be based on the collected data and should not be stated until the measurement and structural models have been estimated.

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