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Seeding Brand Love through CSR and Consumer Commitment

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Abstract

This study investigates the influence of consumer's perception of corporate social responsibility on brand love. The conceptual model based on social identity theory explains the mediating effect of consumer affective commitment and continuance commitment and the moderating effect of CSR awareness on the relationship between the CSR perception and Brand love. The data is collected from 450 FMCG consumers. Structural equation modelling is used for data analysis. The findings show that affective and continuance commitments fully mediated the relationship between CSR perception and brand love. Also, consumer awareness of CSR amplifies the effect of CSR on brand love. Marketers must focus on CSR activities and consumer commitment because it can generate love for the brand among consumers. It is a pioneer study investigating the mediating role of consumer continuance commitment between CSR perception and brand love.

Keywords: Brand Love; Corporate Social Responsibility; Affective Commitment; Continuance Commitment; Consumer Awareness.

Introduction

Fast-moving consumer Goods (FMCG) are non-durable goods like grocery items, toiletries, and soft drinks that are lower cost and sold quickly (Moolla & Bisschoff, 2012). In the Pakistani market, there are numerous products which are being offered in the category of FMCG. The FMCG category is flourishing in consumption and manufacturing comparatively better than others. An increase in household expenditures has been observed due to miscellaneous goods in contemporary and worldwide contexts. Currently, Unilever is the marketing leader, which is closely being competed by P&G. A recent study reveals there are around 50,000 wholesales in the country, of which approximately 30,000 are associated with the FMCG market (Uzair, 2021).

Asian markets are fundamentally rising and influencing the improvement of the FMCG sector. Overall, 33% of P&G and Nestle sales have improved from 2014 to 2018 due to Asian development. P&G, Nestle, Unilever, Coca Cola and L'Oréal associations were the top-performing worldwide FMCG firms working in Pakistan in 2018 (Khan & Ali). There are many pros and cons for international corporations to operate in Pakistan. The country is highly populated; thus, an

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extended range of products can be sold by genuinely organizing and focusing on this market. Local firms are not competitive because people prefer to spend on global FMCG brands, which paves a path for international companies to enter and position themselves firmly. The lifestyle of people has upgraded over the last few years, and they spend a good amount on FMCG (Khan & Ali).

Now, firms are more concerned than ever about fulfilling the desires and needs of consumers. It requires significant attention to create the desired value. The ultimate way to join with consumers for mutual benefits and value creation passes through relationship marketing (Wijekoon & Fernando, 2020). The premise behind consumer-brand relationships is that brands can be humanized in the consumer's mind. Brand love is found to be a novel contributor while investigating the consumer-brand relationship (Batra et al., 2012; Onwuegbuzie & Collins, 2007). The way people feel intense emotions in interpersonal relationships, they can also have similar intense feelings for the brands. In this age of experience marketing, consumers feel loyal towards a brand when a positive experience provokes a consumer (Wijekoon & Fernando, 2020). A key challenge brands try to overcome is developing an emotional relationship and attachment with the consumers. Such relationship-building between consumers and beloved brands is critical, particularly in the FMCG sector. Consumers interact with their respective FMCG brands regularly compared to other categories of products (Wijekoon & Fernando, 2020).

With little or no difference in the firms' offers, it is hard for them to compete in the market (Shah & Khan, 2020). For this reason, relationship marketing strategies are gaining importance to attain and retain the customer base (Moliner-Tena et al., 2019; Rajaobelina et al., 2018). In the long run, consumer retention has been emphasized in the marketing literature (Ojeme et al., 2016; Rajaobelina et al., 2018), and long-run consumers are treated as a source to maintain a sustainable competitive advantage by implementing CSR initiatives and practices (Arrive et al., 2019). CSR is a strategic advantage when utilized as a positioning tool to attain and retain long-term consumer relationships (Chomvilailuk & Butcher, 2018; Shah & Khan, 2020).

When the competition among the firms is high, CSR practices can be used to differentiate a firm from its competitors. A sector where entry barriers for new entrants and the cost of switching towards rival products are low and high competition among the firms is considered highly competitive (Singal & Gerde, 2015). CSR practices support the firm in building a favorable image and reputation the brand. It can lead to a sustainable competitive advantage (Gupta, 2002).

Although Corporate social responsibility and brand love are significant constructs in literature. Brand love is becoming a more critical construct to incorporate multiple behaviors, feelings and comprehensions. The phenomena of consumer brand relationships are complicated and dynamic, highlighting many issues that need to be investigated (Fournier & Alvarez, 2013). Though brand love is widely accepted in marketing literature, it still lacks a widely accepted definition (Batra et al., 2012; Huber et al., 2015).

Commitment is another significant construct that supports a firm in building and maintaining long-

term consumer relationships (Rajaobelina et al., 2018). It implies that consumers also desire to connect with a firm and sustain the relationship for a long time (Atorough & Salem, 2016; Markovic et al., 2018; Yeh, 2015). This significance of the construct of consumer commitment has led to devising strategies that frame commitment in focus. In this regard, it is revealed that CSR positively impacts affective commitment (Markovic et al., 2018). Another study reveals that Consumer identification is created through CSR, which later converts into consumer intention and loyalty (Pérez & Rodríguez del Bosque, 2013). CSR is said to impact behavior of consumers through affective commitment (Hur et al., 2018). It is suggested that social identity theory can explain the relevance between CSR, affective commitment, and brand love.

Conversely, the perceived scarcity of alternative options and the high switching cost lead to the continuance commitment. As CSR is being treated as a critical positioning tool by marketing scholars and practitioners, they shall have a keen interest in understanding the impact of CSR on consumer continuance commitment (Shah & Khan, 2020). Therefore, firms should focus on utilizing consumer's continuance commitment to bind them with the firm in the long run. It is possible to position the firm so that consumers would prefer to continue due to perceived social cost, anticipated lack of alternatives available, scarcity of anticipated choices and anticipated high switching cost (Gustafsson et al., 2005). It is suggested that binding the consumer through such strategies eventually brings a sustainable competitive advantage for the firm over its rivals (Khan et al., 2015). Despite the significance of consumer continuance commitment, research investigating the relationship between CSR and consumer continuance commitment is scarce.

Our study aims to contribute to the CSR literature related to consumers. Therefore, we will examine the impact of CSR on brand love in the FMCG sector of Pakistan. It endeavors to capture the pros of using CSR as a positioning tool in the FMCG sector in the context of marketing. The FMCG sector is quite competitive with homogeneity of products. It provides a suitable situation to position the firm based on CSR practices and gain a sustainable competitive advantage.

The essential questions of this research are: does consumer perception directly impact brand love? It is required to investigate the relationship further as previously there is a scarcity of literature that studies the relationship between CSR and Brand love; Javed and Khan (2022) and Javed and Khan (2023) have studied the relationship between the both; however, they have used brand love as a mediator. Second, this study has employed consumer commitment (affective commitment and continuance commitment) as a mediator between CSR perception and Brand love. No study has investigated the relationship between CSR perception and Brand Love with the mediation role of consumer commitment (Affective commitment and continuance commitment). Few studies studied the construct of continuance commitment as an independent variable and its impact on different outcomes like purchase intentions, satisfaction and retention (Jones et al., 2008; Verhoef, 2003). Shah and Khan (2020) examined CSR as an antecedent of continuance commitment. Thus, the current study aims to examine the impact of CSR on Brand Love with the mediation role of consumer affective commitment and continuance commitment.

Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

The notion of brand love is rooted in interpersonal love theories. Interpersonal love is generated through three components: 1) intimacy, 2) passion and 3) moral determination (Sternberg, 1986). The intimacy component denotes the anticipation of connectedness, bondedness and closeness in a relationship based on love. The passion component denotes the physical desirability and related phenomena that initiate romance into love. The moral determination components refer to maintaining a connection for the long term, even in a situation when there is no intimacy and passion exists in a relationship (Sternberg, 1986; Wang et al., 2019). Interpersonal love has been used to explain the non-human existence of relationships, for instance, a person's feelings towards a brand (Batra et al., 2012; Fournier, 1998).

Brand love is formed through brand identification and a sense of community (Bergkvist & Bech-Larsen, 2010). Brand experience can favorably increase brand satisfaction and brand image with brand love (Correia Loureiro & Kaufmann, 2012). Therefore, interpersonal love is the key to enhancing brand love in industries (Long-Tolbert & Gammoh, 2012; Wang et al., 2019). Another school of thought has investigated brand love without interpersonal theory (Albert et al., 2008; Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006). Brand love includes the association of brands, favorable evaluations, positive emotions and love demonstration (Mody & Hanks, 2020). It further recommends loyalty and intention (Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006).

Brand love is the degree to which the satisfied consumer passionately and emotionally connects with a specific brand or firm (Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006). However, this notion of brand love is unidimensional, and it cannot measure the complexity of the phenomena because love is usually considered a multi-dimensional construct (Albert et al., 2008; Batra et al., 2012). It is required to investigate the concept of brand love through the lens of social identity theory. Prior research recommends that brand love is not limited to consumer satisfaction and expands as a construct with global behavior (Bagozzi et al., 2017; Burnasheva et al., 2019). It has been investigated in numerous contexts. Brand love is mainly connected with the premium price and word of mouth (Albert & Merunka, 2013). It is suggested that usually, brand love is generated after a long-term relationship with a particular firm or brand. It is connected with the identity of the individual, which is the opposite of transactional outcomes (Bagozzi et al., 2017; Batra et al., 2012; Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006; Kumar et al., 2021).

Brand love is constructed with multiple aspects, including the behaviors, emotions and cognitions organized as “mental prototypes” by the consumers (Batra et al., 2012). From the consumers' viewpoint, brand love denotes brand experiences in a positive, effective and intimate term (Gómez-Suárez et al., 2017). From the brand's viewpoint, the brand love notion goes beyond the product's durability and quality. In order to evoke favorable feeling for a brand, it requires a holistic effort by the brand. Brand relationships, consumer experiences and brand promotion play a vital role in developing brand love (Joshi & Garg, 2021; Robertson et al., 2022).

The social identity theory claims that an individual who favors a specific brand may cultivate a sense of belonging to society (Kuo & Huo, 2017). The notion is widely recommended that various features contribute to drawing individuals' self-concepts. These features may include personal and numerous social identities from their social group (Rakotonirainy et al., 2009). These social identities widely build emotions when belonging to a community (Bhattacharya et al., 1995). It is revealed that social identity can support the development and growth of robust brand relationships (He et al., 2012). Social identity has been divided into three categories. 1) cognitive, 2) affective and 3) evaluative (Vernuccio et al., 2015). The cognitive aspect refers to self-categorization, which mainly depends on awareness of an individual's membership in a group. Emotional connection also exists in network communities and possesses a negative or positive value implication (Burnasheva et al., 2019; Vernuccio et al., 2015). The sense of community can be compared to the dimension of self-categorization for social identity (Bergkvist & Bech-Larsen, 2010).

CSR and Brand Love

It is reasonable and rational that stakeholders, including shareholders, society and regulators, emphasize and pressure the firms to engage in CSR initiatives. It refers to their aim to elevate communities (La & Choi, 2019). CSR initiatives support the firm in developing favorable consumer attitudes by using CSR practices as an effective marketing tool (Kim et al., 2019). Therefore, Firms consider CSR practices a sustainable competitive advantage to develop consumer perception and spend massive budgets on CSR initiatives (Abbas, 2020; Park et al., 2019; Pérez & Rodríguez del Bosque, 2013). When consumers are aware of the CSR initiatives of a firm, they develop an association with that firm (Javed & Khan, 2022). According to social identity theory, consumers prefer associating with socially responsible firms, consequently garners a favorable consumer perception (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). Such CSR initiatives by the firm become crucial to developing favorable consumer perception (Turker, 2009). In order to distinct itself from the competition, a firm must indulge in CSR initiatives that bring a positive attitude of the consumer towards the firm.

Further, committing a firm towards prosocial initiatives can enhance its engagement, which may later be converted into social identity (Baena, 2018; Khan et al., 2015). The identity will become significant once consumers identify with a firm because of its prosocial attitude. Consumers identify and associate with those firms who engage in socially responsible practices, for instance, supporting underprivileged people or a noble cause. These practices demonstrate that firm is benevolent towards the society and fosters a favorable attitude among consumers, which fosters a love for the brand. CSR has been identified as a key driver of brand love (Baena, 2018; Javed & Khan, 2022). Nevertheless, it is required to investigate further, particularly in the FMCG sector. Thus, it is proposed that.

H₇: CSR perception positively influences Brand love.

CSR and Consumer Affective Commitment

According to social identity theory, the perception of people who they are is founded on the sense

of belongingness and group membership of themselves in a social world (Tajfel et al., 1979). Thus, while developing an argument on this basis, marketing researchers have recognized favorable influence of CSR perception on consumer behavior. However, it is argued that consumers only identify with firms with common and attractive shared values (Scott & Lane, 2000). This notion identifies a novel stream of research to study the CSR perception influence on consumer affective commitment. For instance, it is revealed that affective commitment is influenced by the consumer perception of the corporate ethicality of a firm (Markovic et al., 2018).

Further, another research states that CSR expectations are favorably relevant to the robust emotional connection to a firm (Mandhachitara & Poolthong, 2011). It is also found that consumer emotions are impacted by the CSR image of a firm (Pérez & Rodríguez del Bosque, 2013). Another study reveals the positive association of CSR perception with consumer affective commitment (Shah & Khan, 2020). Brand Love is “the degree of passion and connection that a satisfied consumer has with a brand” (Carroll & Ahuvia, 2006). Marketing theorists still struggle to define and elaborate on what type of love an individual can possess for a brand. However, there is a consensus on brand love because some brands attract more brand loyalty than others (Batra et al., 2012). Affective commitment is expected to develop and build brand relationships (Rodrigues, 2022). The affective and emotional commitment provides the feeling of loving a partner, a firm, and having a sense of belongingness (Morgan & Hunt, 1994); (Geyskens et al., 1996). Prior research reveals that brand love influences affective commitment (Mittal et al., 2022). However, the influence of affective commitment on brand love has yet to be established. Therefore, from the social identity theory perspective, it is believed that firms provide the consumer with a sense of belongingness and fulfilment in the brand industry. CSR provides the reason to affiliate with benevolent brands, remain emotionally committed and fall in love with that brand. Therefore, it is proposed that:

H₂: Affective commitment mediates the relationship between perceived CSR and Brand Love.

CSR and Consumer Continuance Commitment

After incorporating the notion of commitment into marketing literature, a reasonable comprehension of the notion of continuance commitment is developing among scholars and practitioners regarding the impact on marketing relationships. The extent to which a consumer feels himself/herself bound towards a relational partner is known as continuance commitment (Bansal et al., 2004; Fullerton, 2011). It is founded on the feeling of switching costs and dependence (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Many prior researches have focused on continuance commitment and its impact on different outcome variables—customer loyalty, advocacy intention and satisfaction. However, there are inconsistencies found in the outcome. For instance, one study on numerous service domains argues that continuance commitment destroys consumer advocacy intention (Fullerton, 2011). However, another study claims that the continuance commitment favours consumers' word-of-mouth intention (Ranaweera & Menon, 2013).

Similarly, research found a positive impact of the continuance commitment on consumer's advocacy intention (Khan et al., 2015). Several other significant variables can impact continuance commitment, such as packages, discounts, perceived switching costs, and scarcity of alternatives (Fullerton, 2011). Packages and discounts positively and directly impact continuance commitment, leading to a favorable consumer advocacy intention (Khan et al., 2015). Based on this argument, it can infer that consumer's CSR perception can influence continuance commitment. The rationale behind this is that there is a recognized agreement that stakeholders demonstrated interest in maintaining relationships with the firms involved in CSR practices (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003; Pérez & Rodríguez del Bosque, 2013; Pratihari & Uzma, 2018). CSR perception is anticipated that the socially responsible attribute of a firm can perform as an antecedent to impact consumer's perception towards a firm. The consumer's desire to develop long-term relations with a firm provides the psychological calculation to terminate such a relationship (Meyer & Allen, 1991). It may later generate an anticipated lack of attractive options (Boichuk & Menguc, 2013; Han et al., 2018). Shah and Khan (2020) investigated the relationship between CSR perception and Continuance Commitment. This relationship is significant because the CSR practices make the firm responsible and attractive to the consumers and support building long-term relationships. It implies that CSR performs as a restriction when there is any chance of relationship termination due to high switching costs (Shah & Khan, 2020). Marketing practitioners firmly believe that CSR image is an attractive attribute to positively impact a consumer's attitude towards a firm. In support of this belief, there is an argument that it is a privilege and status symbol for consumers to do business with a socially responsible firm. In case of terminating the business, the consumer may face a loss of this privilege (Becker, 1960). Thus, a favorable perception regarding the CSR practices of a firm may stimulate the anticipation of higher switching costs and dependence that eventually enhances consumer's continuance commitment (Shah & Khan, 2020). It implies that favorable consumer perception regarding CSR provides the consumer with status and privilege in society, which shows the affection and intimacy of the brand; it allows the consumer to fall in love with that brand. Therefore, it is proposed. **H₃**: Consumer continuance commitment mediates the relationship between CSR perceptions and Brand love.

Consumer Awareness as Moderator

In order to differentiate and position the brand based on CSR in a successful manner, it is required to make consumers aware of the CSR program. Conversely, consumers may purchase a similar product that lacks these attributes (Pomeroy & Dolnicar, 2009). Many studies have emphasized the research about the degree to which consumers are aware of firm's CSR endeavors and the social issues that are engaged through these endeavors. Though the information regarding a firm's CSR performance is significant, it would not generate a positive response from consumers towards the firm (Maignan, 2001; Mohr et al., 2001). The evaluation of consumers of CSR initiatives relies upon the information they receive, regardless of the actual CSR performance of a firm (Maignan & Ferrell, 2001). Thus, CSR information is required to communicate at a larger scale. It provides

an opportunity for marketers to shape the belief of the brand. One of the strategies of marketing differentiation would be prosocial marketing endeavors (McWilliams & Siegel, 2000, 2001). Unfortunately, all firms do not understand the significance of differentiation strategy (Servaes & Tamayo, 2013). The outcome of consumers not being aware of the firm’s CSR initiatives is eliminating ethical aspects. Thus, the firms must step forward, reduce the harm, and focus on enhancing value creation (Jamali & Mirshak, 2007). Supporting the individual generates affective commitment (Grant et al., 2008). Individuals' participation is called “prosocial sense-making” and leads to enhanced affective commitment. It alters the anticipation of self and anticipation about a firm's identity. Therefore, a personal identity based upon prosocial can be generated at the personal level. It can be achieved by grabbing the “do good” opportunity (ter Hoeven & Verhoeven, 2013). As consumers get awareness regarding “do good”, they will perceive and interpret it as an act of benevolence by the firm (Grant et al., 2008). Consumers get attracted towards these firms, and it is a matter of pride for them to associate with them (ter Hoeven & Verhoeven, 2013). Thus, researcher found it interesting to investigate the moderating role of CSR awareness between CSR perception and consumer Affective commitment. Further, no study has used consumer awareness as a moderator in the relationship between CSR perception and Consumer Continuance Commitment. Thus, it is proposed that. **H₄**: Consumer awareness moderates the relationship between CSR perception and Consumer Affective Commitment; **H₅**: Consumer awareness moderates the relationship between CSR Perception and Consumer Continuance Commitment.

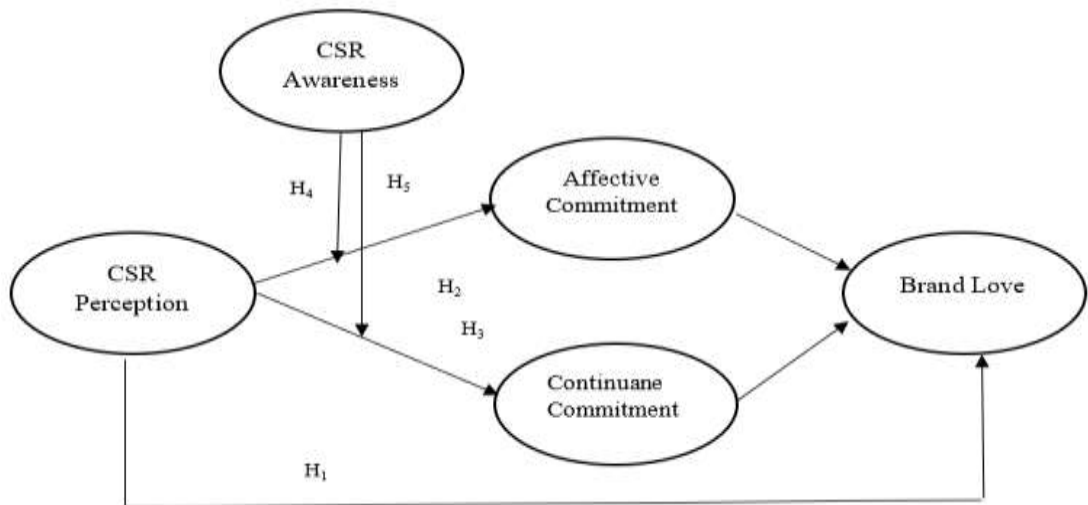


Figure 1: Conceptual framework of the study

Methodology

Data Collection and Sampling Procedure

Data was collected through a survey conducted in two major cities of Pakistan, Lahore and

Islamabad. Both cities have a total population of more than 14 million approximately. Data was collected from the consumers of the FMCG sector. As Pakistan's federal capital, Islamabad signifies socio-political and socio-economic diversity. Lahore, the second largest city in Pakistan, is the provincial capital of Punjab, Pakistan's largest province. Convenience sampling was adopted to select the respondents. The respondents were approached while shopping in Malls, Grocery stores and Superstores. This approach is consistent with prior CSR-relevant studies (Khan et al. (2015). A total of 550 questionnaires were distributed for the survey, of which 483 were returned. Thus, the response rate was 87%. Later, the information was processed, and social desirability bias was considered. In the final analysis, data from 450 valid surveys was included. The data collection process took place between Jan 2023 to May 2023.

The respondents were over 20 and living in the metropolitan cities of Pakistan. The sample contained 56.7% male and 43.3% female. The male ratio is reasonably higher than the females, representing that in Islamic developing economies, male family members mostly carry out out-of-home responsibilities (Shah & Khan, 2020), like grocery shopping. The respondent's age is distributed like 13.3%: 18-25 years; 23.3%: 26-35 years; 43.3%: 36-45 years; 13.3 %: 46-55 years; 6.7%: 55 plus years. The education level was distributed as follows. 13.3% had a higher secondary school certificate or below qualification, Graduation degree holders were 30%, 43.3% had a Master's degree, and 6.7% had a PhD degree.

Measurement Scale

In order to measure the constructs proposed in the model, we used a Likert scale containing five points. For the measure of CSR perception, the scale was adopted from the study of Salmones et al. (2005), Maignan and Ferrell (2001) and Mandhachitara and Poolthong (2011). Brand Love scale was taken from the study of Huber et al. (2010) and Wang et al. (2019). Corporate Commercial Expertise was measured using the scale of Fatma and Rahman (2016). Both continuance commitment and Affective Commitment scales were taken from Meyer and Allen (1991) and (Shah & Khan, 2020), and Consumer Involvement was taken from Fang (2008) and Cui and Wu (2016). Consumer awareness was taken from (Chomvilailuk & Butcher, 2013). Table 1 contains complete details regarding constructs and their respective items.

Common method variance is attributed to the instrument used for data collection. Statistically and procedurally, different methods were used to control common method variance (CMV). For the procedural concern, all the validated scales used for measurement were taken from the prior studies reviewed by the experts. The items measuring a single factor were grouped for consistent response. As far as statistical bias is concerned, Harman's single-factor test was applied. If the data contain CMV, a single factor can emerge as dominant (Podsakoff et al., 2003). In our proposed model, the Harman single-factor test shows that one factor with more than one own significance explains 19.065% of variance. Therefore, Common Method Variance did not demonstrate any problem as the single factor explains less than 40%, a recommended threshold by Fuller et al. (2016).

Results

AMOS v27 was used to build the graphical representation of the SE model. The numerical values given by SEM were used to evaluate the proposed model. SEM is a multivariate statistical method for analyzing hierarchical relationships. In general, SEM includes two models: the Measurement model (i.e., MM) and the structural regression model (i.e., SRM) (i.e., SRM). SEM was used to show the structural relationships between the variables. Skewness and kurtosis values are within the recommended ranges, with the help of which the researcher detects the normality of the data. Kline (2005) suggests the ranges $<\pm 3$, $<\pm 10$, respectively for skewness and kurtoses.

Measurement Model

Hair et al. (2010) have proposed that the values of Cronbach's alpha should be greater than 0.60 for reliable data. On the other hand, several researchers assert that 0.50 Cronbach's alpha is not considered good but agreeable (Hair et al., 2010). Table 1 shows the Cronbach's alpha values by elements of the model under investigation, which was investigated using AMOS27 and was found to be accurate. Table 1 shows that Cronbach's alpha values are internally consistent, suggesting that the overall measurement method is accurate.

Table 1: Reliability statistics

Variable	Cronbach alpha	No of items
CCE	0.719	04
CSRAW	0.739	04
CI	0.825	04
AC	0.706	04
CC	0.738	04
BL	0.789	12
CSR	0.848	11
Overall reliability	0.906	43

Path Analysis

The hypothesis of the study was tested through a path analysis. The path model variables' direct relationship was tested through the estimated values and significance level at $p < .05$. The indirect relationship of the variables was checked through bootstrapping in the path model. A positive relationship was found between CSR perception and brand love.

Thus, H1 is accepted. A further step is to calculate the CSR (IV) indirect effect on BL (DV) through a mediator (AC), which is called an indirect effect, and the values of the indirect effect are $\beta = 0.123$ and $p = 0.001$. The indirect effect of CSR on BL through a mediator AC is significant, proving full mediation.

Table 2: Path-analysis estimates of structural equation modeling

Hypothesis	Path	β value	p-value	Status
H ₁	CSR → BL	.191	0.000	Accepted
H ₂	AC → BL0	0.135		Accepted

	CSR→AC→BL	0.123	0.001	
H ₃	CC→BL	0.122		Accepted
	CSR→CC→BL	0.141	0.001	
H ₄	CSR*AWR→AC	0.280	0.002	Accepted
H ₅	CSR*AWR→CC	0.148	0.000	Accepted

Similarly, CC mediates the relationship between CSR and BL. According to the estimates reported in Table 2, the values of the indirect effect are $\beta = 0.141$ and $p = 0.001$ for the relationship between CSR and BL is statistically significant. It shows a Full mediation between CSR and BL DV through a mediator CC. For the moderating effect, the results show that CSR awareness (AWR) strengthens the positive relationship between CSR and AC. Similarly, CSR awareness (AWR) strengthens the positive relationship between CSR and CC.

Discussion

This study provides valuable insights into the consumer behavior literature within the FMCG context. It focused on attaining sustainable competitive advantage through positioning strategies prevailing in relationship marketing. For that reason, a competitive sector of FMCG was chosen. This study provides insights into how CSR investment shapes consumer perception regarding brand love. Both forms of consumer commitment (affective and continuance commitment) demonstrated full mediation between CSR and Brand Love. Further, consumer awareness moderated the relationship between CSR-Affective commitment and CSR-Continuance commitment. The consumers who are associated with the firm for the long term prefer to get into a binding relationship when a firm is practicing CSR and spreading its initiatives with long-term consumers. This study shows that CSR initiatives support marketers to achieve sustainable competitive advantage by maintaining a consumer base in the long run.

Concerning the first objective of this study, CSR has established a favorable relationship with brand love. Few studies explored the relationship before, for instance, Javed and Khan (2022) and Baena (2018). However, the mediation role of consumer commitment between CSR and Brand Love was under-explored. While exploring the literature on CSR relevant to consumers, many prior studies investigated the relationship between CSR and consumer commitment. Those studies have considered only one dimension of consumer commitment, mainly affective commitment, for instance, Pérez and Rodríguez del Bosque (2013) and Markovic et al. (2018). This study highlights the mediating role of consumer continuance commitment between CSR perception and Brand Love. This study reveals that consumer continuance commitment fully mediates the relationship between CSR and Brand Love. The relationality behind this relationship explains that when the firms act responsibly, the consumers are attracted towards such firms, and this act of responsibility binds consumers to a long-term relationship (Shah & Khan, 2020). It becomes a hurdle and discourages consumers from terminating a long-term relationship. Thus, it is emphasized that CSR is a supporting tool for marketers to strategically bind the consumers in a relationship that lasts for

a long time and eventually brings sustainable competitive advantage to the firm (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003); (Kotler & Lee, 2005). The high cost of terminating a current relationship to join a new firm and psychological calculation pushes consumers to continue a relationship with a firm in the long term (Khan et al., 2015). The favorable relationship between CSR and Affective Commitment is consistent with previous research (Hur et al., 2018; Shah & Khan, 2020).

Brand love is another understudied construct in the literature on consumer-brand relationships. At the same time, it can be utilized to build consumer relationships with firms sustainably. It is evident from prior research that the perception of firms being socially responsible develops a path for brand love. These outcomes are consistent with the prior literature (Baena, 2018; Javed & Khan, 2022). Consumer affective commitment fully mediates between CSR and brand love. Similarly, consumer continuance commitment also fully mediates between CSR and Brand Love. This complete mediation points towards the highly competitive environment in the market where there is quite a low or no difference in the products, their features or prices. For that, there is no space left for marketers to differentiate themselves from relationship marketing tools such as Brand Love, Consumer commitment and CSR. Social identity theory supports this narrative that Brand love can be developed through CSR investment under the condition that consumers possess any form of commitment, which is affective commitment or continuance commitment.

Regarding the second objective of this study, we investigated the moderating effect of consumer awareness on the relationship between CSR and consumer continuance commitment. This notion is widely accepted that commitment has a key significance for long-term consumer relationships (Ojeme et al., 2016; Rajaobelina et al., 2018). Firms identify outstanding corporate associations' contributions while building long-term consumer relationships (Brown & Dacin, 1997). Outstanding corporate associations tend to reinforce the relationship with consumers by enhancing consumer commitment and amplifying their intent to remain loyal. Firms nowadays are adopting a proactive approach to accomplish their social responsibilities.

Therefore, firms use CSR initiatives to position themselves in the market and acquire a favorable image in society (Podnar & Golob, 2007). It supports the firms subsequently to develop consumer relationships in the long term. Thus, firms prefer to cultivate long-term relationships because long-term consumers demonstrate various behaviors that benefit them (Ranaweera & Menon, 2013; Reinartz & Kumar, 2003).

Consumer awareness moderates the relationship between CSR and consumer continuance commitment. The rationale behind this relationship would be consumer's perception regarding the CSR initiatives of the firm is enhanced through consumer awareness. A favorable perception of CSR amplifies the continuance commitment, reinforced by increased consumer awareness.

Implications

This study puts forward some significant implications critical for marketers and firms. Due to little difference among the products, offers and pricing, firms keep looking for positioning strategies to

help them retain their consumers. A firm is not only supposed to invest in CSR endeavours but also create awareness regarding its initiatives to its consumers. It can develop a consumer perception regarding the efforts which may enhance brand love. This outcome represents that a favorable CSR perception supports the firm in maintaining its relationship with consumers. It ensures profitability for a firm. Thus, firms should concentrate on CSR endeavors that are valuable for society. In this way, firms can use CSR as an advantageous tool during the intense competition prevailing in the market. Favorable perception of CSR will inspire consumers to continue their relationship, which is constraint-based. The rationale behind continuity would be the higher switching cost. The emotional aspect of the consumer also gets affected by a firm. It is required to make considerable efforts to amplify consumers' perception regarding CSR through diverse initiatives, for instance, Rehabilitation programs, donations, Talent-spotting programs, support for sports events, poverty alleviation programs, energy conservation programs, educational programs and women's empowerment programs. Consumers feel committed to such brands that are working for the betterment of them and society. Once that consumer commitment is developed, either affective commitment or continuance commitment, it is easier to attract them to love the brand.

Further, the moderating role of CSR awareness is significant in the relation of CSR with Affective commitment and continuance commitment. It implies that implementing a CSR program alone would not achieve a firm's desired results. Marketers and firms need to focus on creating awareness regarding these endeavors. In this way, consumers will realize the firm's efforts, care and passion towards them and society. It will eventually lead to the development of love by the consumer towards a firm or brand. Once consumers start loving a brand, they develop an emotional bond and do not stop purchasing it.

Limitations and Future Research

This study is conducted in the FMCG sector of Pakistan only. Therefore, it cannot be generalized to other sectors or industries. Lower order construct of CSR and Brand love used. A higher-order construct can be used to investigate the relationship more profoundly. It is a cross-sectional study; however, longitudinal studies can explain brand love's development over time. A comparative study should be taken using this model on both goods and service industries. It will help to comprehend the differences between these two sectors, and it will help to find ways to manage them. Another exciting avenue would be the comparison of cultural differences. A previous study reveals the different behavior of Chinese and American consumers towards these intangible indications (Iglesias et al., 2019). The triangulation method can be deployed in future research to comprehend the CSR and Brand Love connection better. Brand love is not a static notion; it is evolving, and researchers should focus on exploring every facet of this notion. It will bring fruitful insights into consumer-brand relationships. Brand love should be investigated by deploying different moderators and antecedents. It may include several user behaviors and demographics (Palusuk et al., 2019). Limited research has focused on brand love. The rationale behind this would be the construct's unclear definition and ambiguous relevance. Different marketing, business and brand

domains can be deployed to assess brand love and its application in the business world. Further, it would be interesting to use age as a moderator to explore the impact on affective and continuance commitment.

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