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Article

Corporate Social Responsibility's Influence on Brand Image in the Automotive Sector: The Corporate Reputation and Product Quality Role

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Abstract: This study investigates the impact of perceived corporate social responsibility (CSR) on brand image within the automotive industry. It also examines how company reputation (CR) and product quality (PQ) mediate the relationship between CSR and brand image (BI). Utilizing a sample of 243 clients from the Pakistani automotive sector, data were collected through a survey and analyzed using structural equation modeling (SEM) with AMOS version 24.0. The results indicate that perceived CSR positively influences brand image, with both company reputation and product quality acting as significant mediators. This underscores the importance of CSR initiatives for enhancing brand image. The findings have significant implications for auto manufacturers, highlighting the need to integrate CSR into their strategic brand management to improve company reputation, product quality, and, ultimately, brand image. This study expands the conventional understanding of CSR's impact on consumer perceptions and addresses a critical gap in the literature.

Keywords: CSR; corporate reputation; brand image; product quality; automotive sector



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1. Introduction

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) has emerged as a crucial element in shaping brand image (BI), especially within the automotive industry. The objective of this research is to investigate the relationship between perceived CSR and BI, with a particular focus on how company reputation (CR) and product quality (PQ) mediate this relationship. The automotive industry, characterized by its complex manufacturing processes, stringent regulatory environments, and significant environmental impact, provides a unique context for exploring these dynamics. Unlike other sectors, the automotive industry must address multiple facets of CSR, including financial, ecological, ethical, and social dimensions, making it an ideal setting for this study.

Although the concept is contentious and has been disputed in recent years, CSR is viewed as a vital force behind the development of emerging economies since it helps eradicate poverty and promote learning, development, equality, and sustainable development.

Greater acceptance by stakeholders greater purchasing intentions decreased financial uncertainty for businesses, and enhanced monetary value are just a few of the benefits of CSR that have been extensively studied in the literature. Adopting ethical business practices as a fundamental organizational value and utilizing them for branding objectives result in this kind of business success. Consequently, the automotive industry is incorporating socially conscious methods and approaches into its operations. Numerous authors ([Agyei et al., 2021](#); [Ali et al., 2021](#)) have begun to look for business values in socially conscious endeavors and pinpoint noteworthy CSR initiatives that could assist both society and consumers. Even though studies have looked into how CSR initiatives affect businesses' advertising, branding, and PQ, there remain some unanswered questions in the automotive sector. Due to the complexity of the manufacturing and service phenomena offered by this industry, the notion of CSR is particularly relevant to these companies but is widely accepted across a variety of industries ([Almeida & Coelho, 2019](#)). Additionally, it is challenging to assess how customers view CSR initiatives in the automotive industry. CSR initiatives must be extremely delicate and significant in order to influence how consumers view the automobile industry, as they are directly related to the caliber and reputation of a company and its goods. By looking at potential CSR metrics, specifically financial, ecological, and ethical metrics, this investigation aims to comprehend the major determinants of BI in the Pakistani automotive business. Furthermore, the function of PQ and CR as mediating factors in the connection between CSR and BI has not been examined in any previous research. We suggest testing the research model that takes into account how CSR affects brand image through the mediating function of PQ and CR.

The existing literature on CSR has extensively explored its impact in various sectors; however, research specifically focusing on the automotive industry remains limited. Previous studies have highlighted the benefits of CSR in terms of greater stakeholder acceptance, increased purchasing intentions, and enhanced company value. However, the automotive sector's unique challenges and opportunities related to CSR practices have not been comprehensively addressed. Additionally, much of the existing research has been conducted in Western contexts, leaving a gap in understanding CSR's impact in emerging markets like Pakistan.

Consequently, this investigation offers three significant contributions. First, the environmental factor, which may also have an impact on customers' intents, is rarely taken into account in the majority of CSR literature, which focuses on comprehending and evaluating CSR solely in terms of its regulatory and moral components ([Brahmi et al., 2025](#)). This has been seen in many industries where clients, including customers, are inclined to stick with green enterprises. CSR has grown to be extremely common and significant in numerous sectors, especially the automobile sector, despite the fact that research on CSR throughout the automotive industry mostly concentrates on the monetary, legal, moral, and social components of CSR while ignoring the environmental side. Second, in order to clarify its enabling impact on brand, this investigation examines the roles of two significant mediators: PQ and CR ([Aggarwal & Saxena, 2023](#)). Knowing how CR and PQ affect BI development as an outcome of CSR initiatives is important for marketers because it offers guidance for creating CSR policies and initiatives. It also helps determine how much CSR initiatives strengthen or weaken PQ and CR. The majority of previous research was carried out in a variety of fields in western nations. As a result, assessing CSR initiatives in Asian nations like Pakistan has received very little attention so far. Looking at the different facets of CSR may provide a thorough understanding of the automotive industry's durability and efficiency, and these insights could be implemented through the use of the instruments provided by CSR. It has been previously proposed that the automotive industry could

acquire a competitive edge and become more appealing if it was to adopt CSR efforts, which would consequently increase these businesses' worth.

The purpose of this investigation is to ascertain how consumers view corporate social responsibility in the automotive industry. This research particularly aims to determine the following: (1) Is there a relationship between perceived CSR and BI? (2) What actions influence how customers view CSR? (3) How do PQ and CR function as mediators in the relationship between CSR and BI? Even though many academics have examined the connection between CSR and brand loyalty, there is relatively little systematic analysis of how perceived CSR affects BI through CR and PQ, especially in the automotive sector, a gap around which the current research is set up. Out evaluation of the literature and hypothesis creation are presented in the next section, followed by the methodology section, detailing about the approach taken, the outcomes, and the evaluation of our hypothesis assessments. Limitations and future areas of study are presented after the discussion, while the managerial and theoretical consequences of this research are presented in the final section.

2. Theoretical Background

CSR Activities

An organization's efforts to ensure the welfare of society and stakeholders via optional operational procedures and corporate resource donations are commonly referred to as CSR ([Arghashi et al., 2021](#)). The notion of CSR is fairly broad, based on a wide range of endeavors, including charitable contributions, initiatives for underprivileged groups and minorities, and policies which promote ecologically responsible production ([Araújo et al., 2023](#)). [Bianchi et al. \(2019\)](#) indicate that CSR initiatives yield modest but excellent results and gains. CSR also affects the opinions and purchasing patterns of customers. According to [Bhattacharya et al. \(2020\)](#), clients' brand views, brand equity, and financial expenditure are all positively impacted by perceived CSR. [Cowan and Guzman \(2020\)](#) define CSR as the degree to which a company advantages and makes constructive contributions to society. Although CSR and corporate morality are frequently used interchangeably, CSR is a broader definition of a company's societal duties, which includes moral business practices ([Chikazhe et al., 2020](#)). Numerous experimental studies have demonstrated that consumers' views of CSR impact business and product assessments, views, and behaviors ([Y. J. Kim et al., 2021](#)). [Emmanuel and Priscilla \(2022\)](#) demonstrated that views and assessments of products, as well as company reputation, are influenced by corporate competence and CSR perceptions. [Fatma et al. \(2018\)](#) showed similar consequences and that the impacts of CSR on BI and buying intent are moderated by individual traits, including perceived alignment between one's own identity and the business'. When taken as a whole, all of these experimental studies show that, in order to determine the degree, timing, and reasons behind the impact of CSR programs on consumer behavior, separate client-level concepts and assessments are required ([Mohammad Fraihat et al., 2023](#)). CSR has also been examined in a more plausible scenario, where competitive advantages and activities are accepted, considering the growing significance of CSR tactics ([García-Madariaga & Rodríguez-Rivera, 2017](#)). Managers must comprehend how customers view their CSR initiatives, both as another modification to the marketing mix and in light of any competitive CSR activities ([Ghuslan et al., 2021](#)). [Gomez-Trujillo et al. \(2020\)](#) evaluated empirically the advantages that rival companies would experience if they integrated CSR initiatives into their business positioning. They found that the tactics of a CSR brand trickled down to its goods, increasing the probabilities of a customer buying it and fostering ongoing loyalty, and that promoting a brand via CSR could prove especially successful when rivals adopting similar tactics were lacking. Therefore, there may be a favorable correlation between CSR

and PQ (Hengboriboon et al., 2022). However, this is not the topic of our research, which instead focuses on how brand CSR moderates the impact of environmental claims on PQ.

We contend that, when brands with an effective CSR presence provide environmentally friendly goods, the general quality of said items can increase. CSR could help customers feel less apprehensive about PQ (Hafez, 2018), especially when a brand with significant CSR ratings demonstrates ongoing dedication to CSR. In this context, CSR could make unfavorable opinions less apparent during decision making, as it would allow customers to feel less inclined to think that environmental responsibility comes at the expense of product quality. Consequently, sustainability claims would have less of an adverse effect on PQ.

3. Hypothesis Development

3.1. CSR and Product Quality

CSR encompasses the responsibilities, commitments, and obligations that businesses undertake to meet the expectations and demands of the general public. It involves ethical practices, sustainable development, and contributions to societal well-being. PQ refers to the entirety of a product's attributes, from marketing to design, manufacturing, and maintenance, ensuring that said product meets customer demands (Hien et al., 2024; Islam et al., 2021). It is defined as "the sum of characteristics indicating the ability of products to satisfy explicit and implicit expectations," highlighting the utility and practicality of products (Y. Kim et al., 2023). Product quality is considered a fundamental manifestation of CSR in sustainability initiatives undertaken by companies as it directly influences customer satisfaction and loyalty (Y. Kim & Ferguson, 2019). The existing literature suggests that CSR positively impacts PQ, which, in turn, has a significant effect on brand image (BI) and customer loyalty (H. H. Kim & Han, 2020). When consumers are satisfied with the quality of a product, they are more likely to continue purchasing and using it, developing trust in the brand and exhibiting loyalty. This loyalty extends to recommending the product to others (Lho et al., 2019). Therefore, adhering to CSR principles is essential for organizations to provide high-quality products, as it positively influences customer loyalty (S. Lee et al., 2020). Several studies have also highlighted the favorable and substantial effect of CSR initiatives on PQ (C. Y. Lee et al., 2017). Based on the aforementioned clarifications and the established relationships between CSR, PQ, and BI, the following hypothesis can be proposed and examined for reliability:

H1. *Consumer perception of CSR has a positive influence on product quality.*

3.2. CSR and Corporate Reputation

CSR and CR are positively correlated (Le, 2023). The relationship between confidence and views on CSR is facilitated by the concept of social exchange (J. Lee & Lee, 2018). CR may be used to describe each stakeholder's general perception of a business and their degree of confidence (Liu et al., 2024). Because good CSR is a sign of excellent management, stakeholders are more inclined to trust businesses that have solid CSR (Mahmood & Bashir, 2020). Consumers' assessments of a company's reputation have a positive relationship with their opinions of its CSR initiatives (Nguyen & Pham, 2018). Customers' perceptions of companies' CSR are correlated with the degree of organizational dedication, which improves evaluations of the reputation of said companies (Narteh & Braimah, 2020). Philanthropic endeavors are among the business tactics used to improve a company's standing with its top executives (Özcan & Elçi, 2020). According to the concept of social exchange, consumer reactions may be governed by custom (Pritchard & Wilson, 2018). Customers are more inclined to have faith in a business when they believe that said business has acted in such a way as to safeguard the interests of everyone

involved and is, therefore, deserving of their trust (Ramesh et al., 2019). By concentrating on appropriate CSR initiatives and ways to communicate, companies can improve their corporate reputation (Suki & Suki, 2019). Based on the signs they obtain from a company, stakeholders assess said company's corporate reputation (Singh & Misra, 2021). Yang and Basile (2019)'s work centered on CSR's charitable ideals, which, alongside a business' management and financial achievements, enhance people's views of said business' CSR. A company's revenues, client devotion, BI, and CR are all enhanced by CSR, as is its ability to draw in and keep clients. CSR enhances CR. According to Van Doorn et al. (2020), improved job fulfillment and lower staff turnover are linked to a favorable CR. Customs and dedication are the glue that keeps communities connected. Therefore, we developed the following hypothesis using reasoning from existing studies.

H2. *Consumer perception of CSR has a positive influence on corporate reputation.*

3.3. Corporate Reputation and Brand Image

As previously mentioned, brand image is the first impression that consumers have of an organization. Conversely, an enterprise's reputation reflects an appropriate judgment regarding its qualities (H. M. Wang et al., 2021). While BI may be created faster with well-thought-out communication programs, business reputations usually develop gradually, as a consequence of ongoing success supported by successful communication (C. C. Wang, 2020). Businesses aim to present a true and favorable image to their clients. Additionally, they strive for a positive reputation among stakeholders (S. Wang et al., 2021). As a result, corporations value their reputation and image among their clients. Clients, suppliers, sellers, vendors, collaboration partners, banks, experts, stockholders, government regulators, advocacy groups, consumers, and staff members are the main stakeholders that most large businesses need to be mindful of (Yang & Basile, 2019). To thrive in the fierce market rivalry brought about by globalization and advances in technology, businesses (Nese et al., 2025) need to place greater emphasis on their interactions with customers, with a particular focus on their reputation and BI (Zhao et al., 2021). Therefore, a key element that affects a company's BI is its reputation. Reputation may assist a company in finding a competitive edge that sets it apart from its rivals, helping customers decide to purchase said company's item or service (H. M. Wang et al., 2021; Yang & Basile, 2019). Consumer demands and desires have a substantial influence on BI and CR, leading to improved company attempts to meet customer expectations (Yang & Basile, 2019). On the one hand, consumers' opinions and perceptions of a company's products and services are favorably affected by its reputation and BI (Zhao et al., 2021). On the other, a company's reputation greatly influences consumer behaviors towards it, in turn improving the BI (Díaz et al., 2006). We therefore propose the following hypothesis:

H3. *Corporate reputation has a positive influence on brand image.*

3.4. Product Quality and Brand Image

PQ is the state of an item's or service's appearance, functionality, and traits, stemming from standards of quality, including longevity, accuracy, dependability, ease of use, product maintenance, and additional features, set to satisfy and meet the requirements of clients; specifically, PQ corresponds to societal perception of the sector and its output (Grayson & Hodges, 2017). A business can benefit from a positive perception of its products by customers unintentionally comparing them to others (Matten & Moon, 2008). Customers' opinions regarding quality may additionally set apart a brand from its rivals and offer value by encouraging repeated purchases (Carroll, 1999). However, if customers have a negative opinion of a product, they can also inform others of it. The majority of individuals is more

familiar with and appreciates businesses that have been around for a while or are renowned for their brand (Porter & Kramer, 2006). Therefore, it is crucial to produce high-quality items in order to gain trust from individuals and engage customers (McWilliams & Siegel, 2001; Joshi & Brahma, 2023).

This may be accomplished by interacting with the community, running advertisements, and making sure that the goods manufactured are useful and required by others (Freeman, 2010). Customers who purchase high-quality products from a business with a positive public perception of its brand are more likely to be satisfied, which fosters client dedication to the business' offerings (Kotler & Lee, 2008). Client happiness is impacted by brand perception and PQ. The decision to buy a product is directly impacted by brand perception and PQ (Crane et al., 2014). PQ is an essential precursor of BI, which reflects that a valued and appealing brand can improve customer confidence in the goods and services linked to that brand (Smith, 2003). BI has the power to generate brand views, which, in turn, generate connections, and the final purchase of a brand's product and the desire to repurchase said product are triggered by these attitudes (Sen & Bhattacharya, 2001). One definition of brand perception is the general customer's assessment of said brand. Depending on the customer's understanding or expertise, this could have a beneficial or negative effect (Maignan & Ferrell, 2004). There is a good link between BI and confidence (Donaldson & Preston, 1995; Lindgreen & Swaen, 2010; Waddock, 2008). This is also consistent with studies by Werther and Chandler (2010). Our fourth hypothesis may, therefore, be stated as follows, in light of earlier research:

H4. *Product quality has a positive influence on brand image.*

3.5. CSR and Brand Image

The term "BI" explains the attributes of a business that set it apart from others present in the marketplace (Clarkson, 1995), as well as how customers view the related brand and/or products, as evidenced by connections ingrained in their memories (Mitchell et al., 1997). The significance and substance of a brand are reflected through its image, which is inseparable from the brand's identity and is associated with a number of connotations (Campbell, 2007). Bansal and Roth (2000) examined the emotional and cognitive aspects of brands in relation to BI: the cognitive aspect is linked to the emotional aspect, expressed through sentiments and views towards the business, whereas the functional component is related to observable qualities which are easily quantifiable (Garriga & Melé, 2004; Tripathy et al., 2025). It is essential note that the current paper's foundation was the examination of these two aspects in order to gauge the BI. Numerous studies have linked CSR and BI. Consumers prefer the goods and services offered by firms that practice CSR via initiatives that improve the planet, the lives of staff members, and the community (Bowen, 2013), because CSR actions have an effect on the BI of said products and services. BI (Dahlsrud, 2008) and customer retention significantly improve as a result of CSR, indicating consumer intent to remain loyal to the brand (Scherer & Palazzo, 2008), as well as additional behaviors and intentions, such as renewing purchase intentions, giving referrals, and being prepared to pay more for the same product. When a business understands how to establish credibility, encourage confidence, and cultivate a positive reputation in the minds of others, CSR enhances BI (Garriga & Melé, 2004), impacting both mental and emotional dimensions (Godfrey & Hatch, 2007). In turn, BI has an impact on client fulfillment and contributes to CSR. CSR improves CR among stakeholders and customers, so businesses should develop outreach strategies that assist CSR initiatives and, with them, their reputation (Vogel, 2007). Given the above considerations, the following hypothesis emerged:

H5. *CSR practices have a positive direct influence on brand image.*

3.6. CSR Influences Brand Image via Corporate Reputation and Product Quality

According to the concept of social exchange, CSR activities foster trust and confidence among stakeholders, which, in turn, enhance corporate reputation (Shaikh et al., 2023). A positive correlation has been established between CSR and CR, as CSR initiatives signal excellent management and ethical practices, leading stakeholders to perceive a company more favorably (Song et al., 2019). Studies have shown that consumers' evaluations of a company's CSR efforts are strongly linked to their perception of the company's reputation (Nguyen & Pham, 2018). When companies engage in CSR activities, they not only fulfill ethical and social responsibilities but also build a stronger, more credible brand image, as perceived by their customers (Hengboriboon et al., 2022). Regarding product quality, CSR plays a significant role in ensuring high standards across the production and service spectrum. The concept of PQ encompasses all product attributes, from marketing and design to manufacturing and maintenance (Krishnan et al., 2025; Aldieri et al., 2021), ensuring that the product meets and exceeds customer expectations (Gomez-Trujillo et al., 2020). Research indicates that CSR positively impacts PQ, leading to higher customer satisfaction and loyalty (Chikazhe et al., 2020). When companies adhere to CSR principles, they are more likely to produce high-quality products, which enhances brand image and fosters customer loyalty (Y. Kim et al., 2023; Jain et al., 2024; Kaushik et al., 2024). Customers who perceive a strong alignment between a company's CSR activities and the quality of its products are more inclined to trust and remain loyal to the brand (H. M. Wang et al., 2021).

Additionally, CSR initiatives encompassing financial, ecological, and ethical metrics contribute to elevating both CR and PQ (Godfrey & Hatch, 2007; Brahmi et al., 2024). Companies that implement comprehensive CSR strategies often witness a symbiotic improvement in their reputation and product quality, further reinforcing their brand image (H. M. Wang et al., 2021). The combined effect of enhanced CR and PQ, driven by robust CSR activities, significantly boosts the overall brand image, creating a positive feedback loop which benefits both the company and its stakeholders. Based on these findings, the hypothesis that CSR has a positive indirect influence on brand image via CR and PQ is strongly supported by the existing literature (Missaoui & Brahmi, 2025), highlighting the critical role of CSR in shaping consumer perceptions and brand loyalty.

H6. *CSR has a positive indirect influence on brand image through corporate reputation (a) and product quality (b).*

4. Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework (cf. Figure 1) presents the combination of our hypotheses (H1–H6), the dependant variable and independent variables. In the Table 2 the variables' Items will be described and analyzed.

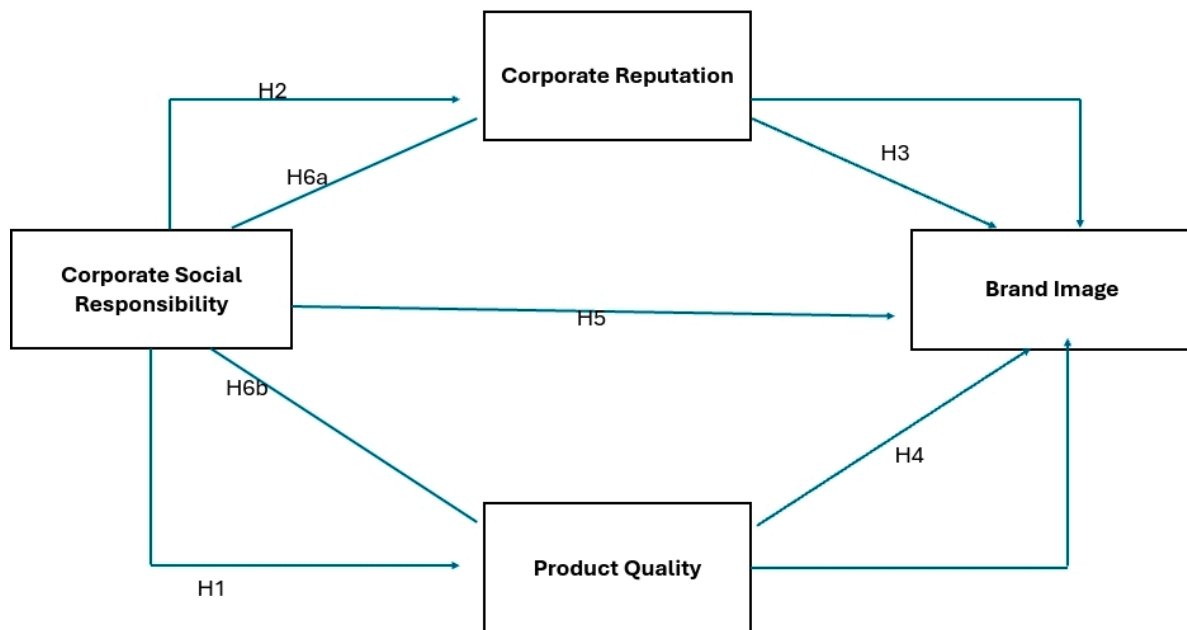


Figure 1. Conceptual Farmework.

5. Methodology

5.1. Data Collection

A customized survey was used to collect data for the current study. Among the participants were the clients of two significant Pakistani automakers. The criteria used to select the respondents included an age equal to or over 18 years. The main CSR initiatives mentioned by the chosen automotive companies (such as aiding flood relief, skill-building initiatives, building educational facilities, developing rural areas, etc.) were known to many stakeholders, including consumers. The businesses examined in the study sample were actively involved in CSR activities. To gather data, a no-probability sampling technique was used. Visits to the many automobile dealers in Karachi and the surrounding area were used to gather data. Automotive industry clients filled out 249 questionnaires in total. The age, gender, and economic status of the participants were all spread proportionately (Khoa et al., 2023). According to our initial analysis, 36% of the participants were women, and 64% of the participants were men. The age distribution of the participants was as follows: 30.1% were between the ages of 18 and 35; 36.1% were between the ages of 26 and 35; 24.1% were between the ages of 36 and 45; and 9.6% were 46 years of age or older. According to the data in Table 1 regarding income distribution, the participants' median income was between 25,000 and 35,000 PKR.

Table 1. Demographic background.

Demographics	Categories	Frequency	Percentages (%)
Age	18–25 years	75	30.1%
	26–35 years	90	36.1%
	36–45 years	60	24.1%
	46 years and above	24	9.6%
Gender	Male	130	52.2%
	Female	119	47.8%

Table 1. *Cont.*

Demographics	Categories	Frequency	Percentages (%)
Monthly Income	Less than 20,000	80	32.1%
	25,000–35,000	100	40.2%
	45,000–55,000	50	20.1%
	Above 60,000	19	7.6%

Source: Authors' compilations.

5.2. Measures

The seven values on the Likert scale for all the measurement items ranged from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree” (Joshi & Brahmi, 2023). A second-order reflective element with three dimensions—economic, ecological, and ethical—was used to quantify how consumers felt about CSR. Previous CSR studies provided the scale items employed to determine these aspects (Hafez, 2018). The measurement of CR utilized the five-item measures extracted from Almeida and Coelho (2019). Van Doorn et al. (2020) provided the four-item scale used to gauge PQ. Song et al. (2019)'s four-item scale was used to gauge BI.

5.3. Measurement Model Assessment

The concepts' validity and reliability were assessed using AMOS 24.0 and confirmatory factor assessment (CFA). BI, PQ, CR, and perceived CSR were all included in the evaluation methodology (Joshi & Brahmi, 2023). According to earlier conceptualizations, the perceived CSR was defined as a significant structure with three facets: ethical, ecological, and economic. The measurement framework provided the subsequent indicators—NFI = 0.921, CFI = 0.952, GFI = 0.918, and RMSEA = 0.58—indicating an adequate model fit. By computing the AVE and construct reliability (Hafez, 2018), validity and concept reliability were subsequently evaluated. All the components in Table 2 show reasonable assumptions for reliability and convergent validity by surpassing the suggested thresholds of 0.70 for cumulative reliability and 0.5 for AVE. Additionally, as indicated in Table 3 (Mohammad Fraihat et al., 2023), the Pearson correlation coefficient values between each pair of concepts were less than the squared root of AVE across all concepts, verifying the discriminatory validity. The present research data might have been susceptible to common method bias because the data for both IVs and DVs were gathered from identical participants. The common method bias was evaluated using principal component evaluation and Harman's single-factor test, which only accounted for 22% of the variation (proving the premise that common method bias did not exist). The lack of common method bias received additional backing by the fact that the average across all latent variables was 63.21.

Table 2. Scale item and component assessment.

Items	Standardized Loadings	AVE	CR	α
Perceived CSR		0.708	0.896	0.911
CSR (Economic)		0.606	0.911	0.909
EC- CSR1	0.746			
EC-CSR2	0.906			
EC-CSR3	0.876			
EC-CSR4	0.863			

Table 2. *Cont.*

Items	Standardized Loadings	AVE	CR	α
CSR (Environmental)		0.666	0.902	0.893
EN-CSR1	0.952			
EN-CSR2	0.804			
EN-CSR3	0.874			
CSR (Ethical)		0.595	0.846	0.847
ET-CSR1	0.826			
ET-CSR2	0.838			
Corporate Reputation		0.716	0.946	0.943
CR1	0.886			
CR2	0.923			
CR3	0.781			
CR4	0.966			
CR5	0.883			
Product Quality		0.678	0.926	0.903
PQ1	0.883			
PQ2	0.756			
PQ3	0.933			
PQ4	0.803			
Brand Image		0.673	0.853	0.861
BI1	0.964			
BI2	0.803			
BI3	0.793			
BI4	0.823			

Source: Authors' compilations.

Table 3. Descriptive statistics.

	Mean	SD	CSR	CR	PQ	BI
CSR	3.47	1.21	..			
CR	4.19	0.91	0.28	..		
PQ	3.89	1.11	0.42	0.34	..	
BI	3.76	1.14	0.45	0.37	0.51	..

Source: Authors' compilations. Notes: CSR—corporate social responsibility; CR—corporate reputation; PQ—product quality; BI—brand image; SD—standard deviation; and ..— $p < 0.05$.

5.4. Hypothesis Testing and SEM Outcomes

To test the hypotheses, a structural framework was examined with AMOS 24.0. The model fitting indexes ($\chi^2 = 432.404$, $Df = 200$, $\chi^2/df = 2.182$; GFI = 0.936; CFI = 0.918; RMSEA = 0.06) showed that the data collected matched the proposed framework well. Table 3 shows the path coefficients in the model. Table 3 supports H1 and H2 by showing that consumer perception of CSR favorably enhances PQ ($\beta = 0.48$, $p < 0.05$) and CR ($\beta = 0.32$, $p < 0.05$). According to H3, customer perceptions of CSR have a substantial effect on BI. H3 is therefore supported. However, as shown in (Suki & Suki, 2019) there was a considerable indirect connection between customer perception of CSR and BI via PQ and CR. Additionally, it was discovered that PQ ($\beta = 0.38$, $p < 0.05$) and CR ($\beta = 0.24$, $p < 0.05$)

significantly improved BI, supporting H4 and H5. For all endogenous factors, the structural framework provided a good explanation of variance ($R^2 = (\text{PQ}) 31\%$, $R^2 = (\text{CR}) 47\%$, and $R^2 = (\text{BI}) 40\%$). Table 4 explains the outcomes of the hypothesis tests.

Table 4. Hypothesis outcomes.

Hypotheses	Correlation	Standardized Coefficients	Results
H1	CSR-PQ	0.48	Supported
H2	CSR-CR	0.32	Supported
H3	CSR-BI	0.34	Supported
H4	PQ-BI	0.38	Supported
H5	CR-BI	0.24	Supported

Source: Authors' contribution.

5.5. Mediation Assessment

We used Hayes' multiple mediator analyses, Model 4, to evaluate the mediation (H6a, H6b). The present research looked at how two factors—PQ and CR—mediated BI. The results supported H6a by showing an important distinction in the indirect influence of perceived CSR on BI via CR ($\beta = 0.0125$). The current study supported H6b by finding an important indirect influence of perceived CSR on BI via PQ ($\beta = 0.0100$). In the context of PQ and CR, the direct impact of perceived CSR on BI was additionally discovered to be substantial ($\beta = 0.0301$). Therefore, we could conclude that the connection between perceived CSR and BI was mediated by CR and PQ. Table 5 shows the results of the mediation study. Perceived CSR had a favorable direct impact on PQ and CR.

Table 5. Mediation outcomes.

Total Impact (CSR > BI)	Direct Impact (CSR > BI)	Connection	Indirect Impact	Confidence, Lower Bound	Interval, Upper Bound	Conclusion
0.0452	0.0301	H6a CSR > CR > BI	0.0125	0.0040	0.0220	Mediation Exists
		H6b CSR > PQ > BI	0.0100	0.0030	0.0205	Mediation Exists

Source: Authors' contribution.

6. Discussion

The current study evaluates how consumers view CSR in terms of enhancing CR, PQ, and BI. The causal connection between BI, PQ, CR, and perceived CSR is examined. Because customers interpret CSR statements as an indication of a brand's legitimacy, this research indicated that CSR initiatives have a beneficial impact on PQ. In turn, customers react more strongly to a brand that offers high-quality products, as these help the company reach greater recognition.

Additionally, BI is benefited by PQ. Customers are, therefore, more inclined to stick with and repurchase a brand if they believe it to be dependable and high-quality. Businesses should thus endeavor to improve the quality of their brand by concentrating on every aspect that influences it (e.g., reliability, pricing, accessibility, ethical behavior, etc.). Customers' perceptions of a brand are greatly influenced by its quality.

The results suggest that, although the majority of previous research focused on the impact of affective results, investigators and companies should concentrate on comprehending the cognitive process of consumer building of the CSR image. This research provides

significant knowledge by demonstrating quantitatively how long-term client relationships are influenced by CR and PQ as a consequence of consumer-perceived CSR. Customers are more inclined to identify with a business that engages in CSR initiatives that support their self-worth and personal development. CSR initiatives are a powerful tool for improving CR (Shaikh et al., 2022).

6.1. Theoretical Contribution

Finding the crucial roles that PQ and CR play in the connection between CSR and BI constitutes one of this research's major accomplishments. The present research provides concrete evidence for this concept. The results demonstrate that a customer's perception of a brand is improved when the company maintains a solid reputation for engaging in socially conscious practices. According to the results, CSR initiatives should increase brand awareness among consumers and improve brand quality and perception. This research provides empirical support for the notion that CSR has a beneficial impact on CR within the automotive industry. This implies that a brand's actions benefiting society can affect its CR. Furthermore, the findings imply that businesses can use CR to build their brand image. Similarly, consumers are more inclined to connect with a brand when they observe a match between the brand and their beliefs. This might then lead to an ongoing connection to the brand.

6.2. Managerial Implications

The research results point to important managerial implications. First, given the effect that CSR has on performance, it cannot be viewed as a separate endeavor. Instead, it should be viewed as a fundamental business necessity to which businesses should give due consideration. CSR initiatives must be integrated into a company's core operations for the foreseeable future, which will improve the social and monetary performance of the enterprise. The results hereby presented may be valuable to a business, specifically understanding how perceived CSR can improve the PQ and CR of a brand, which will, in turn, impact its BI. Numerous studies have shown that a customer's favorable opinion of a company's social activities can have a big impact on how they perceive and behave (Shaikh et al., 2023). Therefore, CSR can be interpreted as a company's duty to operate in a way that promotes social welfare and meets the requirements of its stakeholders. According to our report, the automotive industry clients anticipated that this sector would act in a socially conscious manner, which could, in turn, help companies in this sector cultivate a dedicated clientele. Businesses have been found to benefit greatly from their participation in CSR initiatives (Tajpour et al., 2023). These actions have a wide-ranging effect on CR, which, in turn, leads to improved brand dependability and high-quality products, supporting the brand's reputation and, ultimately, influencing the brand's image. Businesses should consider creative methods to invest their funds in CSR initiatives that may have greater effects on society. For instance, funding for these initiatives has surged in Pakistan since the Business Ethics Bill of 2013 was put into effect. Overall, to maximize the funds invested in CSR initiatives, it is important to raise consumer knowledge of them via a variety of interaction channels.

7. Conclusions

CSR offers global corporations an opportunity for equitable and eco-friendly growth. There are, nevertheless, limited data on how socially conscious factors affect the car industry, including how this affects other marketing results. By analyzing the effects of perceived CSR, CR, and PQ on BI in the automotive sector, this paper attempted to close the gap in the conventional understanding of CSR's impact on customers. The theoretical framework

that describes both the direct and indirect connection between consumer views of CSR in the automotive industry and different marketing results, including CR, PQ, and BI, was established and analyzed in this research. By incorporating CR and PQ into the framework, this study established a positive relationship between CSR and BI. The results showed that, while there was a direct impact on PQ and CR, there was no discernible connection between perceived CSR and BI. The automotive industry should take and emphasize numerous CSR measures to improve company relationship with consumers, as customer opinions of CSR can determine CR and PQ.

8. Limitations and Future Research Directions

Aside from the important conclusions reached by this investigation, we should also acknowledge its shortcomings, so that subsequent studies may further our knowledge of this concept. Firstly, the backdrop of this investigation was unique to the automotive industry; this must be taken into account when extrapolating the findings to different industries. Since CSR activities differ between sectors because of the distinct nature of industrial processes, researchers could test the suggested model with additional industries and businesses to increase its generalizability. Second, this research examined how CR and PQ, two indirect (mediating) factors, relate to the relationship between CSR and BI. Nonetheless, under the suggested framework, more factors, like purpose and attitude, might be examined as mediators or moderators. Third, it could be interesting and significant to examine how customer demographics affect the way in which CSR affects consumer–brand interactions. Future studies could examine how various groups of consumers differ according to their age and gender, and the results could be compared. In subsequent studies, demographic characteristics could be used as indicator variables. This would assist the automotive industry in creating future CSR plans that target a particular demographic.

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