

The Relationship Between Corporate Social Marketing Activities and Brand Equity

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: This study investigates the relationship between Corporate Social Marketing (CSM) initiatives and the components of Consumer-Based Brand Equity (CBBE) in Vietnam's instant noodle market. Grounded in the Stimulus–Organism–Response (SOR) model, it examines how CSM affects brand awareness, brand associations, perceived quality, brand trust, and brand loyalty, as well as the causal relationships among these components.

Design/methodology/approach: A structured questionnaire was developed based on validated scales from prior studies, refined through expert consultation, and administered to 600 consumers in Ho Chi Minh City and Hanoi, yielding 552 valid responses. Data were analyzed using SPSS 25 for descriptive statistics and common method bias testing, and SmartPLS 3.0 for measurement validation and structural model assessment, including reliability, convergent and discriminant validity, and hypothesis testing via bootstrapping with 5,000 resamples. **Findings:** All 10 proposed hypotheses were supported at the 1% significance level. CSM was found to positively and directly influence all five CBBE components, with the strongest total effect on brand trust. Moreover, interrelationships among CBBE components were confirmed—brand awareness, brand associations, perceived quality, and brand loyalty significantly influenced brand trust, and perceived quality emerged as the most important driver of brand loyalty. The model demonstrated strong reliability, validity, predictive capability, and goodness-of-fit. **Research limitation/implications:** This study used a non-probability sampling approach focusing on adult consumers in urban areas, limiting the generalizability to rural markets. Future research should adopt probability sampling, consider different demographic segments, and extend the model to other product categories, sectors, and countries. **Originality/value:** This research extends the application of the SOR model to the CSM–CBBE relationship in the fast-moving consumer goods sector, offering empirical evidence from Vietnam's instant noodle industry. It provides actionable insights for managers on how to leverage CSM initiatives to build brand equity while fostering sustainable social behaviors.

Keywords: Brand Trust, Perceived Quality, Consumer-Based Brand Equity, Stimulus-Organism-Response Model, Corporate Social Marketing

INTRODUCTION

The green and sustainable trend requires that marketing, beyond satisfying customers and increasing profitability, also fulfill social responsibilities and promote sustainable social behaviors (Hoeffler & Keller, 2002; Maignan & Ferrell, 2004; Kotler, 2011). Enterprises can achieve this through green marketing and social marketing, both of which are recognized as sustainable marketing approaches (Gordon et al., 2011; Martin & Schouten, 2014).

Corporate Social Marketing (CSM) targets specific stakeholder groups—such as suppliers, partners, customers, and local communities—with the aim of encouraging voluntary behavioral shifts toward sustainable social practices, thereby generating mutual benefits for both business and society (Drumwright & Murphy, 2001; Kotler, 2011; Kotler et al., 2012; Lefebvre, 2012). CSM initiatives have been continuously expanded (Andreasen, 2002; Dann, 2010; Kelly, 2013; Inoue & Kent, 2014; Vo & Nguyen-Anh, 2024) as they are recognized not only as a means of fulfilling corporate social responsibility but also as an effective approach to achieving business and marketing objectives (Lee & Kotler, 2011; Truong et al., 2019).

Consumer-Based Brand Equity (CBBE) reflects the combined perceptions and behaviors of consumers toward a brand (Netemeyer et al., 2004; Keller & Lehmann, 2006) and is the outcome of one or more marketing programs (Stahl et al., 2012; Kotler & Keller, 2016). Numerous research models have been developed to examine the relationship between CBBE and traditional marketing activities (Yoo et al., 2000; Buil et al., 2013; Nguyen-Viet & Nguyen-Anh, 2021) or green marketing (Davari & Strutton, 2014; Nguyen-Viet & Nguyen-Anh, 2022). In practice, given the diversity of contexts, further studies are needed across different countries and industries (Hsieh, 2004; Oliveira et al., 2015).

On the other hand, the case study by Hoeffler and Keller (2002) illustrated that CSM programs are positively associated with various specific components of CBBE. However, given that CSM is inherently characterized by its aim to induce social behavioral change at the individual level (Drumwright & Murphy, 2001; Lee & Kotler, 2011; French & Gordon, 2015), it is essential to conduct research based on individual responses (Hoeffler et al., 2006; Gordon et al., 2016; Truong et al., 2019).

Corporate social marketing (CSM) can offer brands the crucial advantage they need to capture both the minds and hearts of increasingly skeptical consumers in today's complex and highly competitive marketplace (Hoeffler et al., 2006). Examining the influence of CSM on consumer-based brand equity (CBBE) and the causal relationships among its components (Lehmann et al., 2006; Buil et al., 2013) not only helps firms better understand their customers but also enhances consumer awareness and fosters positive behaviors toward the brand (Christodoulides & Chernatony, 2010; Keller & Swaminathan, 2019). Building on this perspective, the present study draws on responses from adult consumers to evaluate how CSM shapes each component of brand equity, focusing on the instant noodle market in Vietnam as a representative case.

In doing so, the study integrates theoretical insights with empirical evidence to clarify the mechanisms through which CSM affects brand equity, thereby providing a foundation for developing more targeted and socially impactful marketing strategies. This leads to the formulation of a theoretical framework that links CSM initiatives to consumer cognition, affect, and behavior within the Stimulus–Organism–Response (SOR) paradigm.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

Understanding the pathways through which corporate social marketing (CSM) influences consumer-based brand equity (CBBE) requires a solid theoretical foundation that captures both the cognitive and affective dimensions of consumer response. The Stimulus–Organism–Response (SOR) model, originally proposed by Mehrabian and Russell (1974), offers a suitable lens for this purpose. Within this framework, CSM initiatives serve as the *stimulus*—deliberate marketing efforts embedding explicit social objectives—while the *organism* represents the consumers' internal processes, including brand awareness, brand associations, perceived quality, and brand trust. These internal states ultimately generate the *response*, reflected in consumer behaviors such as brand loyalty. By situating CSM within the SOR paradigm, the study not only explains how socially oriented marketing activities affect individual perceptions and emotions, but also clarifies their role in fostering sustainable consumer–brand relationships.

The study adopts the Stimulus–Organism–Response (SOR) model to investigate how CSM influences consumers, thereby shaping CBBE. In a marketing context, as noted by Jacoby (2002), the SOR framework conceptualizes the process based on the interaction between environmental stimulus (S), the organism affected (O), and the organism's response (R) to the stimulus. SOR has been applied to examine the relationship between marketing activities and CBBE across diverse contexts, demonstrating that marketing activities (stimulus) influence

the organism's cognitive processes (brand awareness and brand associations) and affective states (perceived quality and brand trust), which in turn lead to responses (behavioral intentions/actions or brand loyalty) (Kumar et al., 2018; Sarker et al., 2019; Nguyen-Viet, 2022; Guleria et al., 2023; Jiang & Lyu, 2024).

In prior research, Vo and Nguyen-Anh (2024) employed Ajzen's (1991) Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) to examine the impact of CSM on CBBE, describing how attitudes translate into intentions or predict behaviors. However, given that CSM is inherently characterized by its focus on altering individual behavior (Lee & Kotler, 2011; Gordon et al., 2016), further theoretical models and empirical evidence are needed to capture individual responses to CSM stimulus. Building on these propositions, this study applies the SOR framework to model the simultaneous effects of CSM on consumers' cognitive processes, affective states, and behavioral responses, as manifested through the components of CBBE.

CBBE is considered the added value that a brand contributes to a product (Aaker, 1996) and reflects consumers' knowledge, emotions, and behaviors toward comparable brands within the same product category (Yoo et al., 2000; Keller & Lehmann, 2006; Stahl et al., 2012).

CBBE is a multidimensional construct (Bick, 2009). A substantial body of theoretical and empirical research identifies four core components of CBBE—perceived quality, brand awareness, brand associations, and brand loyalty (Aaker, 1996; Yoo et al., 2000; Washburn & Plank, 2002; Pappu et al., 2005; Buil et al., 2013). Moreover, one of the primary functions of a brand, namely reducing perceived purchase risk and fostering consumer–brand relationships, is embodied in brand trust (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001). Numerous scholars have affirmed brand trust as a key component of CBBE (Burmman et al., 2009; Atilgan et al., 2009; Nguyen-Viet & Nguyen-Anh, 2021). Drawing on the literature review and expert consultations, this study conceptualizes CBBE as comprising five components.

Brand Awareness (BAW) refers to the ability of a buyer or user to recognize and recall a specific brand (Aaker, 1996), as well as the awareness of the brand when prompted with the product category it represents (Netemeyer et al., 2004). BAW is regarded as a resource that drives consumer behavior (Nguyen et al., 2011; Keller & Swaminathan, 2019).

Brand Associations (BAS) are considered as any attributes or elements linked to a brand that consumers retain in their memory (Aaker, 1996; Wood, 2000). These may include product attributes, brand personality, and corporate characteristics (Yoo et al., 2000; Pappu et al., 2005; Buil et al., 2013). BAS reflects the extent to which consumers internalize images, feelings, experiences, and beliefs about a given brand (Keller & Swaminathan, 2019).

Perceived Quality (PQ) represents consumers' unique perceptions of a brand's quality attributes (Netemeyer et al., 2004). PQ serves as the basis for consumers' purchase decisions as well as for making comparisons with other brands within the same category (Nguyen et al., 2011).

Brand Loyalty (BL) reflects the willingness to prefer and repurchase a brand, even in the presence of contextual factors and/or marketing stimulus that might otherwise influence the consumer's purchase decision (Oliver, 1999; Yoo et al., 2000). BL is also manifested through a strong commitment between the buyer and a specific brand (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001), representing the sole choice within a set of substitutable brands (Keller & Swaminathan, 2019).

Brand Trust (BT) is described as the confidence in a brand's ability to deliver on the promises communicated to buyers (Burmman et al., 2009). BT provides consumers with a sense of security when purchasing and using the brand (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001; Kumar et al., 2013) and fosters a willingness to pay a premium price based on the belief that the company owning the brand acts responsibly toward them (Delgado-Ballester et al., 2003).

Corporate Social Marketing (CSM) originates from the concept of social marketing (Kotler & Zaltman, 1971) and has been extended to the corporate context (Drumwright & Murphy, 2001; Lee & Kotler, 2011; Dann, 2010; Lefebvre, 2012). CSM can be broadly defined as corporate marketing initiatives that incorporate explicit social objectives (Drumwright & Murphy, 2001). It involves a company voluntarily engaging in, sponsoring, or implementing programs aimed at addressing one or more social issues—such as expanding access to education, improving community healthcare, ensuring social welfare, protecting ecosystems, and enhancing societal well-being—thereby fostering desired social behaviors among target audiences or the general public. In doing so, CSM contributes both to increasing societal benefits and to achieving marketing objectives (Drumwright & Murphy, 2001; Kotler et al., 2012).

CSM is an effective instrument for realizing corporate social responsibility commitments as well as achieving a firm's marketing objectives (Maignan & Ferrell, 2004; Lee & Kotler, 2011; French & Gordon, 2015; Deshpande, 2016, 2019). CSM campaigns enhance societal benefits and promote social prosperity by fostering desired social habits and behaviors, which can be evaluated based on measurable changes in individuals' perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors (Andreassen, 2002; Dann et al., 2010; Gordon et al., 2016).

I. CSM programs are believed to enhance brand awareness, impressions, and emotions (Hoeffler & Keller, 2002; Vo & Nguyen-Anh, 2024); foster a positive corporate image and expand the customer base (Lichtenstein et al., 2004; Lee & Kotler, 2011); stimulate purchase and usage, thereby creating opportunities to increase business

profitability (Kotler et al., 2012); encourage brand experience and improve perceived quality (Du et al., 2008; Vo & Nguyen-Anh, 2024); build trust and loyalty (Hoeffler et al., 2006); and strengthen brand associations and brand commitment (Hoeffler & Keller, 2002; Inoue & Kent, 2014; Truong et al., 2019). Based on these findings, the following hypotheses are proposed:

- H1: CSM has a positive effect on brand awareness
- H2: CSM has a positive effect on perceived quality
- H3: CSM has a positive effect on brand associations
- H4: CSM has a positive effect on brand trust
- H5: CSM has a positive effect on brand loyalty

Hypotheses on the Relationships Among CBBE Components

CBBE characterizes the consumer journey of internalizing, experiencing, and forming special, meaningful, and enduring connections with a brand through one or more specific marketing activities (Hsieh, 2004; Keller & Swaminathan, 2019; Christodoulides & Chernatony, 2010). In CBBE research, an important task is to understand the causal relationships among its components (Lehmann et al., 2008), as this provides valuable guidance for managers in optimizing their efforts to build and enhance CBBE (Buil et al., 2013).

From marketing stimulus (CSM programs), consumers become aware of and recognize the brand (Oliver, 1999), thereby increasing their knowledge, engagement, and loyalty (Aaker, 1996; Keller & Swaminathan, 2019). Through brand associations (BAS), consumers are more likely to decide to purchase or repurchase and to initiate brand commitment (Aaker, 1996; Atilgan et al., 2009). Brand trust (BT) serves as a driver for consumers to make purchase or repurchase decisions and to maintain long-term brand usage (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001; Keller & Swaminathan, 2019), as trust in a brand leads to loyalty (Kumar et al., 2013). Through experience, consumers develop positive perceived quality (PQ) and build BT (Keller & Swaminathan, 2019; Kumar et al., 2013), while PQ also acts as an antecedent to BT (Yoo et al., 2000; Buil et al., 2013). Based on these rationales, the following hypotheses are proposed:

- H6: Brand awareness has a direct positive effect on brand loyalty
- H7: Brand associations have a direct positive effect on brand loyalty
- H8: Brand trust has a direct positive effect on brand loyalty
- H9: Perceived quality has a positive effect on brand loyalty
- H10: Perceived quality has a direct positive effect on brand trust

METHODOLOGY

The questionnaire was adapted from relevant prior studies. The author translated the items from English into Vietnamese before conducting discussions with experts and consumers to ensure semantic accuracy. These experts were experienced researchers and managers in the instant noodle and fast-moving consumer goods sectors in Vietnam. Based on the draft results, the study refined the observed variables used to measure the six research constructs to ensure their suitability for the research context.

The measurement scales were adapted from previous studies, specifically: BT from Yoo et al. (2000); BAW and BAS from Washburn & Plank (2002) and Netemeyer et al. (2004); PQ from Netemeyer et al. (2004); BT from Atilgan et al. (2009); and CSM from Vo & Nguyen-Anh (2024). The process of developing and refining the questionnaire ensured quality and rigor, providing a solid foundation for the accurate and reliable collection of data to comprehensively capture the relationship between CSM and CBBE in the Vietnamese context.

During the research process, a direct questionnaire survey method was employed to test the proposed hypotheses. Data were collected from popular shopping locations (supermarkets, convenience stores, and grocery shops) across all districts of Ho Chi Minh City and Hanoi. A total of 552 questionnaires were distributed, exceeding the minimum of 270 surveys recommended by Hair et al. (2021). To minimize duplication, the survey intentionally limited participation to no more than ten respondents at any single retail location.

The study employed SPSS 25 software to conduct descriptive statistics of the research sample and to test for method bias. Subsequently, SmartPLS 3.0 software was used to assess the measurement scales (examining convergent validity, reliability, and discriminant validity of the research constructs), as well as to evaluate the structural model and test the hypotheses.

RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Statistical Description

Out of a total of 552 valid survey responses collected for dataset analysis, Ho Chi Minh City accounted for 50.72% and Hanoi for 49.28%. Females made up the majority with 66.67%. The largest education group was college and university graduates, representing 52.17%, while the most common income group was from 11 to 20 million VND, accounting for 49.83%.

Measurements

Table 1: Statistical Description

Sample Characteristics		Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	184	33.33
	Female	368	66.67
Ages	From 18 to 29 years old	159	28.80
	From 30 to 39 years old	194	35.14
	From 40 to 49 years old	116	21.03
	Over 50 years old	83	15.03
Income	Under 11 millions VND/month	178	32.24
	From 11 to 20 millions VND/month	275	49.83
	Over 20 millions VND/month	99	17.93
Education level	Below university level	178	32.25
	College and university education level	288	52.17
	Postgraduate education level	86	15.58
Regions	Ho Chi Minh City	280	50.72
	Hanoi Capital	272	49.28

Source: author's

The data were assessed for reliability, validity, and discriminant validity using various indices and methods, including Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability, average variance extracted (AVE), standardized factor loadings (SFL), and comparison of the square root of AVE values with the corresponding construct pairs.

Table 2. Results of Convergent Validity and Reliability Testing of the Measurement Scale

Variables	Measurements	OL	CA	CR	AVE
Brand Awareness	BAW1	0.791	0.862	0.903	0.645
	BAW2	0.825			
	BAW3	0.822			
	BAW4	0.798			
	BAW6	0.772			
Brand Associations	BAS1	0.811	0.883	0.909	0.671
	BAS2	0.862			
	BAS3	0.788			
	BAS5	0.831			
	BAS7	0.823			
Perceived Quality	PQ1	0.811	0.810	0.871	0.632
	PQ4	0.812			
	PQ5	0.795			
	PQ6	0.773			

Brand Loyalty	BL1	0.735	0.833	0.882	0.595
	BL3	0.791			
	BL4	0.781			
	BL5	0.753			
	BL6	0.778			
Brand Trust	BT1	0.823	0.839	0.894	0.678
	BT2	0.829			
	BT3	0.811			
	BT4	0.812			
Corporate Social Marketing	CSM1	0.885	0.886	0.920	0.743
	CSM3	0.847			
	CSM5	0.876			
	CSM7	0.844			

Note: OL: factor loading coefficient; CA: overall Cronbach's alpha coefficient; CR: composite reliability; AVE: average variance extracted.

Source: author's

The scales had overall Cronbach's Alpha coefficients (CA) ranging from 0.810 to 0.883, while the composite reliability (CR) of the constructs varied from 0.871 to 0.920, exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.7 (Hair et al., 2021). The outer loadings (OL) of the items ranged from 0.735 to 0.885, above the recommended minimum of 0.5. The average variance extracted (AVE) values ranged from 0.595 to 0.743, exceeding the required threshold of 0.5 (Hair et al., 2021).

Table 3. Results of Discriminant Validity Testing (HTMT ratio)

	BAS	BAW	BL	CSM	BT	PQ
BAS						
BAW	0.529					
BL	0.539	0.624				
CSM	0.166	0.225	0.211			
BT	0.623	0.588	0.623	0.277		
PQ	0.525	0.455	0.539	0.178	0.616	

Note: HTMT ratio: Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio; BAS: brand association; BAW: brand awareness; BT: brand trust; CSM: corporate social marketing; BL: brand loyalty; PQ: perceived quality

Source: author's

Table 3 shows that the HTMT coefficients are less than 0.9, indicating discriminant validity between the latent variables (Henseler et al., 2015). Therefore, the conceptual scales achieved discriminant validity.

The study employed Harman's single-factor test to examine common method bias, with the result being 47.577%, indicating that this study is not affected by common method bias (Podsakoff et al., 2003).

Table 4. Hypothesis Relationship Testing

Hypothesis	Relationship	β -standardized coefficient	P-value	Conclusion
H1	CSM -> BAW	0.199	0.000	Supported
H2	CSM -> BAS	0.149	0.000	Supported
H3	CSM -> PQ	0.149	0.002	Supported
H4	CSM -> BT	0.113	0.006	Supported
H5	CSM -> BL	0.098	0.003	Supported
H6	BAW -> BL	0.177	0.000	Supported
H7	BAS -> BL	0.247	0.000	Supported
H8	BT -> BL	0.193	0.000	Supported
H9	PQ -> BL	0.230	0.000	Supported
H10	PQ -> BT	0.425	0.000	Supported

Source: author's

The structural equation model was evaluated using multiple relevant indices. The Q^2 values for the dependent variables BAW, BAS, PQ, BL, and BT were 0.025, 0.015, 0.013, 0.121, and 0.303, respectively—all exceeding the threshold of 0—indicating the model's satisfactory predictive capability. The SRMR value was 0.042, below the 0.08 benchmark, while the d_ULS, d_G, Chi-square, and NFI indices were 0.682, 0.243, 744.753, and 0.891, respectively, demonstrating a good model fit (Hair et al., 2021). The results also indicated no multicollinearity,

with VIF values ranging from 1.000 to 1.605 (Hair et al., 2021).

The study employed bootstrapping with 5,000 resamples based on 552 survey responses. As presented in Table 4, the results supported all 10 hypotheses, with p-values for hypothesis testing being less than 0.01, meeting the recommended significance level (Hair et al., 2021). Hypothesis H1 was supported, as the direct effect of CSM on BAW was significant ($\beta = 0.199$). Hypotheses H2, H3, and H4, concerning the effects of CSM on BAS, PQ, and BL, were also significant, with β values of 0.149, 0.149, and 0.113, respectively. CSM had a positive direct effect on BL, with $\beta = 0.098$. All four components—BAW, BAS, BL, and PQ—directly influenced BT, supporting hypotheses H6 through H9, with β values of 0.177, 0.247, 0.193, and 0.230, respectively. Hypothesis H10, with $\beta = 0.425$, indicated that BL was most strongly influenced directly by PQ.

The scale validation results indicate that all factors in the research model achieved reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity, aligning well with the research context of CSM and CBBE in the instant noodle industry in Vietnam.

As shown in Figure 1, the research findings reveal that CSM exerts the strongest total effect on BL compared with its effects on BAW ($\beta = 0.199$), BT ($\beta = 0.113$), and BAS and PQ (both $\beta = 0.149$). This further highlights that the impact of CSM on consumers' or the public's perceptions and emotions (Martin & Schouten, 2014; Saunders et al., 2015) serves as a powerful driver in transforming purchase intention into actual usage or individual behavior (Gordon et al., 2011, 2016; Kotler et al., 2012).

Consumers tend to develop BAS in response to a company's concern for social welfare (BAS5) and its image as an environmentally friendly and health-conscious brand (BAS2), and to form BL through trust in the company (BL3, BL4, BL6). This indicates that CSM has contributed to positioning the brand and the company as trustworthy and socially responsible—an observation widely noted by scholars (Maignan & Ferrell, 2004; Lee & Kotler, 2011; Inoue & Kent, 2014; Deshpande, 2016, 2019).

The results support and extend prior research, demonstrating that CSM helps forge a strong connection between the brand and consumers (Hoeffler & Keller, 2002; Inoue & Kent, 2014; Vo & Nguyen-Anh, 2024); enhances trust and loyalty (Hoeffler et al., 2006; Kotler et al., 2012); improves both experiences and PQ (Du et al., 2008) as well as marketing and business performance (Lichtenstein et al., 2004; Truong et al., 2019); and fosters sustainable social behavior while encouraging corporate adoption (Andreasen, 2002; Kelly, 2013; Truong et al., 2019).

The causal relationship testing results also imply the importance of each component within the CBBE construct in shaping and enhancing BT (Wood, 2000; Buil et al., 2013). These findings align with the recommendation that understanding the interrelationships among CBBE components is a critical task (Lehmann et al., 2008; Buil et al., 2013), consistent with the assertion that “brand value stems from the voices and actions of consumers” (Keller & Lehmann, 2006, p. 14) and significant for managers as it “provides valuable insights for brand building” (Buil et al., 2013, p. 69).

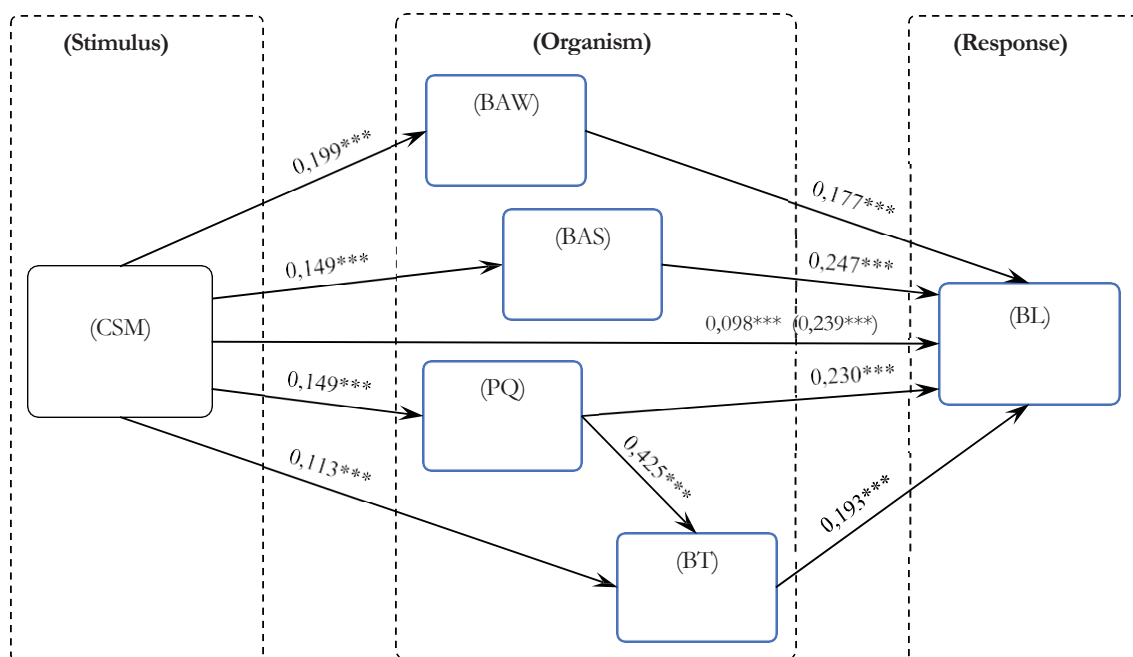


FIGURE 1: RESEARCH MODEL AND RESULTS

Note:***standardized estimate at the 1% significance level

Source: author's proposed model and computed data results

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Marketing has become essential in establishing and enhancing CBBE (Aaker, 1996; Keller & Lehmann, 2006; Nguyen-Viet & Nguyen-Anh, 2021, 2022). Notably, social marketing has attracted significant attention as a tool that delivers business effectiveness while shaping sustainable social behaviors (Lefebvre, 2012; Kotler et al., 2012; Gordon et al., 2016). The present study applied the SOR theory to develop a model, conducted a survey, and obtained 552 valid responses to evaluate the influence and significance of CSM on the five components of CBBE. The findings indicate that brand awareness, brand associations, perceived quality, brand trust, and brand loyalty are directly generated by CSM. Furthermore, consumers' cognition (BAW and BAS) and affect (PQ and BL) toward the brand significantly influence BT; examining the relationships among CBBE components provides managers with valuable insights into understanding customers, thereby improving the efficiency and effectiveness of marketing efforts in building CBBE (Wood, 2000; Buil et al., 2013).

The findings support the recommendation to examine CSM based on individual responses, as emphasized by various scholars in the context of behavioral change (Hoeffler et al., 2006; Kotler et al., 2012; Gordon et al., 2016; Truong et al., 2019). Moreover, this study not only provides empirical evidence in support of the case study by Hoeffler and Keller (2002) but also extends understanding in both practical (instant noodle industry) and theoretical terms (application of the SOR model) when investigating the relationship between CSM and the five components of CBBE. This represents an advancement over the prior study by Vo and Nguyen-Anh (2024), which was conducted in the dairy sector and applied Ajzen's (1991) Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB).

This study demonstrates that CSM should and must become one of the effective and timely marketing tools and strategies for businesses, as it plays a critical role in managing brand equity (Aaker, 1996; Hsieh, 2004; Christodoulides & Chernatony, 2010; Keller & Swaminathan, 2019) and, moreover, meets societal expectations (Lee & Kotler, 2011; Kotler et al., 2012; Lefebvre, 2012; Deshpande, 2019).

The results indicate that consumers-and by extension, society-are willing to embrace CSM programs and acknowledge their efficiency and effectiveness in enhancing CBBE. When implementing CSM to build and maximize CBBE, firms should emphasize safeguarding consumer benefits and addressing their concerns. For instance, Vietnamese consumers tend to choose brands that focus on being "good for health, ensuring safety and hygiene, offering reasonable prices, being trustworthy, sustainable, and environmentally friendly" (Nielsen, 2017; Vietnamplus, 2023). Instant noodle companies should take these preferences into account when formulating strategies and executing CSM initiatives. Specifically, priority should be given to the following forms of CSM-sequenced in order of consumer/public concern: caring for health, nutrition, and food safety (CSM1); protecting the environment (CSM3); contributing to or sponsoring non-profit organizations and social/charitable funds (CSM5); and improving social welfare through healthcare, education, and sustainable poverty reduction (CSM7).

When implementing CSM, to achieve high effectiveness, in addition to selecting the appropriate form of CSM and committing to long-term execution or sponsorship, firms should pay attention to two additional factors (Kotler et al., 2012; Gordon et al., 2016; Deshpande, 2019; Truong et al., 2019): (1) exercising prudence in choosing the lead organization (from the public sector or non-profit organizations) and media sponsorship partners to enhance trust and increase the visibility and publicity of the CSM program; and (2) ensuring that communication activities are closely linked to the brand, creatively designed, and persistently disseminated to drive individual behavioral change. Persuasive communication strategies lie at the core of CSM, with objectives and messages aimed at raising awareness, generating interest in a specific social issue, and encouraging sharing, participation, or the promotion of action (Lee & Kotler, 2011; French & Gordon, 2015).

The present study focuses on the relationship between CSM and CBBE, however, many other marketing activities warrant consideration, as well as the assessment of indirect effects on brand loyalty. A potential research direction is to compare CSM with green marketing, cause-related marketing, experiential marketing, or point-of-sale and packaging strategies, while examining the mediating role of brand trust. The study employed a non-probability sampling technique, surveying adult consumers in urban areas, which does not adequately capture the rural market; it also did not account for differences among consumer groups by age, income, or education. Future research should employ probability sampling methods to ensure objectivity, comprehensive representation, and comparability of responses across different groups. Moreover, extending the research to other product categories, sectors, and countries would further enhance understanding of the impact and role of CSM on CBBE.

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