



International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research and Growth Evaluation.

CSR, Brand Awareness, and Consumer Trust: Evidence from IKEA

Pin-Yi Li

Department of Business Administration, Minghsin University of Science and Technology, No. 1, Xinxing Rd., Xinfeng Township, Hsinchu County 30401, Taiwan, R.O.C.

* Corresponding Author: **Pin-Yi Li**

Article Info

ISSN (Online): 2582-7138

Impact Factor (RSIF): 7.98

Volume: 06

Issue: 05

September - October 2025

Received: 07-07-2025

Accepted: 09-08-2025

Published: 30-08-2025

Page No: 314-317

Abstract

This study examines how corporate social responsibility (CSR) and brand awareness influence consumer purchase intention, using IKEA as a case study. Survey data from 476 respondents were analyzed through hierarchical regression. Results show that both CSR and brand awareness positively affect purchase intention and consumer trust. Trust also acts as a mediator and moderator, highlighting its central role in linking CSR and branding efforts to consumer behavior. The findings emphasize that while CSR and brand visibility attract interest, authentic trust is essential for converting it into purchase action.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.54660/IJMRGE.2025.6.5.314-317>

Keywords: Brand Awareness, Consumer Trust, CSR, IKEA, Purchase Intention

Introduction

In today's competitive market, a company's success increasingly relies on both brand awareness and corporate social responsibility (CSR) ^[1,2]. As Gen Z and millennials become key consumer groups, their purchasing decisions are not only driven by product quality but also by a company's ethical values and commitment to sustainability ^[3]. This shift highlights the need for companies to build genuine consumer trust, which is often challenged by issues like "greenwashing" ^[4].

This study examines how CSR and brand awareness influence consumer purchase intention, with a specific focus on the mediating role of consumer trust. Using IKEA as a case study, a brand known for its strong global presence and sustainability efforts, this research aims to fill a theoretical gap in understanding the complex interplay between these variables ^[5]. The findings will provide practical insights for businesses to develop effective marketing and brand management strategies that balance promotion with CSR commitments.

Literature Review

This chapter provides a theoretical foundation for the study by reviewing key literature on Corporate Social Responsibility, brand awareness, consumer purchase intention, and consumer trust. It aims to establish the interconnections between these constructs and support the hypotheses of this research.

IKEA as a Case Study

As a globally recognized brand, IKEA's success is rooted in its unique business model and a core identity of "low price and high quality" ^[6]. The company's strategic use of the "IKEA Effect," where consumers emotionally invest in self-assembled products, significantly enhances brand loyalty and perceived value ^[7]. This demonstrates how IKEA's brand strategies have directly contributed to its robust market performance ^[8].

Core Constructs and Relationships

CSR has evolved from a peripheral concept to a core business strategy, as companies are increasingly expected to balance economic goals with social and environmental responsibilities [9, 10]. A strong body of research confirms a positive link between CSR practices and consumer purchase intention [11, 12], showing that ethical corporate behavior enhances brand image and boosts consumer willingness to buy.

Similarly, brand awareness is a critical component of brand equity, simplifying consumer decision-making and reducing perceived risk [13, 14]. High brand visibility is consistently found to have a direct, positive effect on purchase intention [15]. Consumers are more likely to choose brands they are familiar with, making brand awareness a crucial antecedent to purchase behavior [16].

Consumer purchase intention is a key predictor of actual sales, influenced by both internal and external factors [17]. While product quality and price are traditional drivers, research shows that modern consumers are also motivated by values like sustainability and a company's CSR efforts [18, 19]. Finally, consumer trust is the cornerstone of long-term brand-customer relationships [20]. It mediates the relationship between a company's actions and consumer behavior. Trust is built on a brand's reliability and integrity, helping to mitigate perceived risks in purchasing decisions [21]. This study hypothesizes that consumer trust is the critical mechanism that translates a company's CSR and brand awareness efforts into tangible purchase intentions.

Research Methodology

This chapter outlines the research framework and methodology used to test the study's hypotheses. It details the relationships between the constructs, the proposed hypotheses, and the procedures for data collection and analysis.

Hypotheses Development

This study proposes that both Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and brand awareness are key drivers of consumer purchase intention, with consumer trust acting as a crucial link.

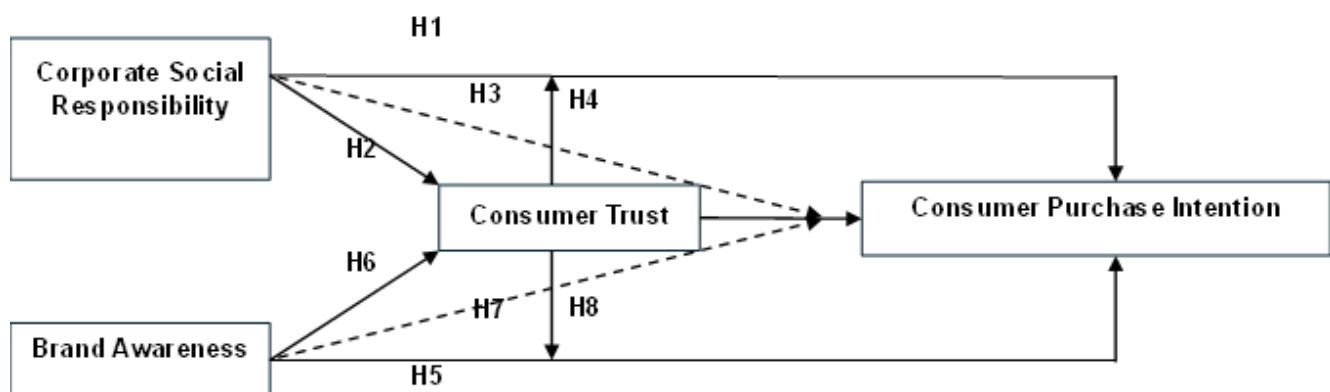
- **CSR and Purchase Intention:** While some studies

suggest a weak direct link, recent literature indicates a stronger connection, especially as consumers prioritize a company's ethical behavior. Therefore, we hypothesize that CSR positively influences purchase intention (H1).

- **The Role of Consumer Trust:** Trust is a critical mediator and moderator in this relationship. We propose that CSR builds consumer trust, which, in turn, boosts purchase intention. We also hypothesize that the effect of CSR on purchase intention is stronger when trust is high.
 - **H2:** CSR positively influences consumer trust.
 - **H3:** Consumer trust mediates the relationship between CSR and purchase intention.
 - **H4:** Consumer trust moderates the relationship between CSR and purchase intention.
- **Brand Awareness and Purchase Intention:** A well-established body of research confirms a direct and positive link between brand awareness and consumer purchase intention. We hypothesize that brand awareness positively influences purchase intention (H5).
- **The Role of Trust in Brand Awareness:** Brand awareness often fosters trust by signaling reliability and quality to consumers. This trust then serves as the bridge that converts awareness into action. Thus, we propose that trust also mediates and moderates the relationship between brand awareness and purchase intention.
 - **H6:** Brand awareness positively influences consumer trust.
 - **H7:** Consumer trust mediates the relationship between brand awareness and consumer purchase intention.
 - **H8:** Consumer trust moderates the relationship between brand awareness and consumer purchase intention.

Research Design and Data Collection

This study will employ a quantitative approach using a survey research method. Data will be collected from a sample of consumers to measure their perceptions of IKEA's CSR, brand awareness, consumer trust, and their personal purchase intentions. The collected data will be analyzed using statistical software to test the proposed hypotheses and the full research model.



Note: Dashed lines represent mediating effects

Fig 1: Research Framework

Research Findings

This chapter presents the statistical analysis of the formal survey data and the key findings from the hypothesis testing.

Sample Description

The study collected 476 valid responses, achieving a 94.63% effective return rate. The sample predominantly consisted of

young, female consumers with low-to-middle average monthly incomes, consistent with IKEA's target market.

Table 1: Respondent Demographics

Category	Item	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	38.66%
	Female	61.13%
Age	21-30	46.43%
Avg. Monthly Income	less than NT\$40,000	67.64%

Note: Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding. Demographic data are based on respondents' self-reported information.

Analysis and Hypothesis Testing

All constructs (CSR, brand awareness, purchase intention, and consumer trust) were found to be highly reliable, with all Cronbach's α values exceeding 0.8. Hierarchical regression analysis was used to test the hypotheses, revealing the following key findings:

- **H1 & H5 Supported:** Both Corporate Social Responsibility and Brand Awareness have a significant positive impact on Consumer Purchase Intention.
- **H2 & H6 Supported:** Both CSR and Brand Awareness also have a significant positive impact on Consumer Trust.
- **H3 & H7 Partially Supported:** Consumer Trust serves as a mediator in both relationships, explaining how CSR and brand awareness influence purchase intention.
- **H4 Partially Supported & H8 Supported:** Consumer Trust also acts as a moderator in both relationships, influencing the strength of the links between the variables. This dual role of trust is a key finding of the study.

Table 2: Summary of Research Findings

Hypothesis	Result
H1: CSR has a positive influence on purchase intention.	Supported
H2: CSR has a positive influence on consumer trust.	Supported
H3: Trust mediates the CSR-purchase intention relationship.	Partially Supported
H4: Trust moderates the CSR-purchase intention relationship.	Partially Supported
H5: Brand awareness has a positive influence on purchase intention.	Supported
H6: Brand awareness has a positive influence on consumer trust.	Supported
H7: Trust mediates the brand awareness-purchase intention relationship.	Partially Supported
H8: Trust moderates the brand awareness-purchase intention relationship.	Supported

Note: Results are derived from hierarchical regression analysis. "Supported" indicates that the hypothesized relationship was statistically significant ($p < .05$), while "Partially Supported" denotes that the relationship showed limited or partial significance across the tested regression models.

Conclusion and Managerial Implications

This chapter summarizes the study's findings, provides a practical interpretation of the results for companies like IKEA, and outlines directions for future research.

Conclusion

This study provides an integrated analysis of the complex relationships between Corporate Social Responsibility, Brand Awareness, Consumer Trust, and Purchase Intention, using IKEA as a case study.

- **CSR's Dual Impact:** IKEA's CSR initiatives, such as using FSC-certified wood and promoting circular economy practices, positively influence consumer purchase intention (H1) by enhancing brand image. Our findings confirm that consumer trust is a key **mediator** in this process (H3). However, the study also reveals a crucial **moderating** effect (H4): when consumers already have high trust in a brand, additional CSR efforts might not further boost purchase intention. Consumers may perceive these efforts as expected rather than as a value-add or even be skeptical of "greenwashing."
- **Brand Awareness's Complex Role:** IKEA's strong brand awareness, built on consistent brand identity and high-value products, significantly increases purchase intention (H5). Consumer trust acts as a **mediator** (H7), translating brand recognition into purchase behavior. However, this study also found that trust **moderates** this relationship (H8). For highly trusted brands, the influence of brand awareness can diminish, as consumers rely more on their existing trust and experience than on marketing or brand recognition.

In essence, while CSR and brand awareness are vital for attracting consumer interest, trust is the critical bridge that converts this interest into actual purchases. Businesses must ensure their CSR efforts are transparent and authentic to build this trust, as simply increasing visibility can be counterproductive without a solid foundation of consumer confidence.

Managerial Implications

The findings of this research offer clear, actionable insights for brand managers and businesses.

1. **Prioritize Trust Above All:** Don't rely solely on brand awareness or CSR messaging. Building and maintaining consumer trust is the most effective way to secure long-term purchase intent and customer loyalty.
2. **Integrate CSR Authentically:** CSR should be a core business strategy, not just a marketing tactic. In a high-trust environment, a company's actions speak louder than its claims. Businesses should focus on transparency and verifiable results to build trust.
3. **Optimize Messaging for Trust Levels:**
 - **For low-trust segments:** Aggressively communicate your CSR initiatives to build a foundation of trust.
 - **For high-trust segments:** Shift the focus from basic CSR claims to showcasing innovation, product quality, and functional value. Overly emphasizing social responsibility can be seen as redundant or even disingenuous by highly loyal customers.
4. **Manage Brand Perception:** A high level of brand visibility is a double-edged sword. While it can drive initial interest, it can also lead to skepticism if not backed by consistent quality and ethical behavior. Companies must ensure that their brand reputation is supported by tangible actions to prevent trust erosion.

Limitations and Future Research

This study's primary limitation is its regional focus on Taiwanese consumers. The findings, while robust for this demographic, may not be generalizable to consumers in different cultural or geographical contexts.

Future research should expand the scope to include a more diverse, cross-cultural sample. This would allow for a comparative analysis of how cultural values and social norms influence the roles of CSR, brand awareness, and consumer trust on purchase behavior. Such studies would enhance the external validity of these findings and provide a broader understanding of global consumer psychology.

References

1. Kumaresan C, Chandramohan S. Brand awareness: understanding its role in sales, consumer intentions, and decision making. *Int J Sci Res Eng Dev*. 2024;7(2):579.
2. Chen CC, Khan A, Hongsuchon T, Ruangkanjanases A, Chen YT, Sivarak O, Chen SC. The role of corporate social responsibility and corporate image in times of crisis: the mediating role of customer trust. *Int J Environ Res Public Health*. 2021;18(16):8275.
3. First Insight. Gen Z shoppers demand sustainability. First Insight; 2020. Available from: <https://www.firstinsight.com/white-papers-posts/gen-z-shoppers-demand-sustainability>
4. The Guardian. Energy Australia apologises to 400,000 customers and settles greenwashing legal action. The Guardian; 2025 May 19. Available from: <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2025/may/19/energy-australia-apologises-to-400000-customers-and-settles-greenwashing-legal-action>
5. Islam A. Role of CSR and brand image: a qualitative study on IKEA [thesis]. Växjö (Sweden): Linnaeus University; 2023.
6. Business Model Analyst. IKEA business model [Internet]. Business Model Analyst; 2024 [cited 2025 Sep 5]. Available from: <https://businessmodelanalyst.com/ikea-business-model/>
7. Norton MI, Mochon D, Ariely D. The IKEA effect: when labor leads to love. *J Consum Psychol*. 2012;22(3):453-60.
8. 'Challenging economic times are good times for Ikea': the Swedish giant sweeps into town. *Financial Times* [Internet]. 2025 May 2 [cited 2025 Sep 6]. Available from: <https://www.ft.com/content/2417ccf4-7663-43b1-b64e-1f08db07ef01>
9. Zervoudi EK, Moschos N, Christopoulos AG. From the corporate social responsibility (CSR) and the environmental, social and governance (ESG) criteria to the greenwashing phenomenon: a comprehensive literature review about the causes, consequences and solutions of the phenomenon with specific case studies. *Sustainability*. 2025;17(5):2222.
10. IMD. Learn the 4 types of corporate social responsibility (CSR) strategies and discover key practices to a transformative organizational strategy. *IMD Blog*. ca 1.5 years ago [cited 2025 Sep 6]. Available from: <https://www.imd.org/blog/sustainability/csr-strategy/>
11. Subhani IH, Fan J, Asdullah MA, Watto WA, Nigar F. The relationship between dimensions of corporate social responsibility and consumer's buying intentions in a cross-cultural context. *Future Bus J*. 2024;10:129.
12. Zhang Q, Ahmad S. Linking corporate social responsibility, consumer identification and purchasing intention. *Sustainability*. 2022;14(19):12552.
13. Moisescu OI. The importance of brand awareness in consumers' buying decision and perceived risk assessment. *Manag Mark J*. 2009;7(1):103-10.
14. Zhang X. The influences of brand awareness on consumers' cognitive process: an event-related potentials study. *Front Neurosci*. 2020;14:692.
15. Chen S. The impact of brand awareness on purchase intention: a review. *Highlights Bus Econ Manag*. 2024;30:239.
16. Rose JL. The effects of brand familiarity on perceived risks, attitudes, and purchase intentions toward intimate apparel brands: The case of Victoria's Secret [thesis]. University of Arkansas; 2015.
17. Duche-Pérez AB, Gutiérrez-Aguilar OA, Hillpa-Zuñiga ME, Escobar-Juárez AM, Pazo Romero AVM, García-Toledo LC, Flores-Vilca IV. Predictors of purchase intention mediated by customer satisfaction. *Edelweiss Appl Sci Technol*. 2025;9(3):1189-1201.
18. Li M, Rabeeu A. How corporate social responsibility motivation drives customer extra-role behavior and green purchase intentions: the role of ethical corporate identity. *Sustainability*. 2024;16(13):5611.
19. Li M, Choe YH, Gu C. How perceived sustainability influences consumers' clothing preferences. *Sci Rep*. 2024;14:28672.
20. Braze. Building Long-Term Customer Loyalty: A Research Report. Braze [Internet]. 2025 Jan 24 [cited 2025 Sep 6]. Available from: <https://www.braze.com/resources/articles/building-long-term-customer-loyalty>
21. Castro-González S, Bande B, Fernández-Ferrín P. Influence of companies' credibility and trust in corporate social responsibility aspects of consumer food products: the moderating intervention of consumer integrity. *Sustain Prod Consum*. 2021;28:129-41.