Impact of corporate social responsibility practices on consumer purchase intention of apparel products with mediating role of consumer-retailer love

Tak Jie Chan, Norazah Mohd Suki, Phoebe Suet Yin Ho and Muhammad Farooq Akhtar

Abstract

Purpose – Companies with corporate social responsibility (CSR) practices care about customers, society, the environment and workers. This study aims to examine the impact of CSR practices (i.e. economic CSR, environmental CSR and societal CSR) on consumers’ purchase intention of apparel products, with the mediating role of consumer-retailer love on this relationship.

Design/methodology/approach – Data gathered using purposive sampling technique from 300 young online consumers using purposive sampling were analyzed using partial least squares structural equation modeling via SmartPLS3.0.

Findings – The results reveal that CSR practices (i.e. environmental CSR and societal CSR) have a positive influence on purchase intention for apparel products. Moreover, consumer-retailer love mediates the relationship between CSR practices (i.e. economic CSR and environmental CSR) and consumers’ purchase intention for apparel products.

Practical implications – Apparel retail marketers should focus on key determinants when designing CSR campaigns and communicating these CSR initiatives in social media and annual reports. They should also focus on their service quality to create a good perception (images) that helps measure the emotional response (love) between the retailer and consumers.

Originality/value – By applying the triple bottom line framework and the stimulus-organism-response model in a single framework, this study is unique and highlights the role of consumer-retailer love as an important mediator on the impact between CSR practices (i.e. economic CSR, environmental CSR, societal CSR) and consumers’ purchase intention of apparel products. The findings represent a new contribution to the existing literature, as there has been very limited research on this relationship in a developing nation context.

Keywords Corporate social responsibility (CSR), PLS-SEM, Apparel industry, Sustainable marketing, Purchase intention, Consumer-retailer love

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

Companies with corporate social responsibility (CSR) practices care about customers, society, the environment and workers (Hsu and Bui, 2022; Mahmood and Bashir, 2020; Narayanan and Singh, 2023; Quezado et al., 2022b; Silva et al., 2020). CSR practices are critical to a company’s survival and sustainability as the company must meet the various interests and needs of a wide range of stakeholders in a competitive business environment (Castro-González et al., 2021; Chen et al., 2021; Pflajfar et al., 2022; Quezado et al., 2022b; Silva et al., 2020; Žukauskas et al., 2018). The sustainability of the textile and apparel industry has had a positive impact on environmental and socioeconomic dimensions.
According to Statista (2023), the apparel market will generate revenues of US$5.23bn in 2023, with a projected annual growth rate of 5.79% (CAGR 2023–2027). Women’s apparel is the largest segment of the market, with a market volume of US$2.27bn in 2023 and nonluxury goods accounting for 92% of sales. However, the apparel industry faces challenges as it has been labeled an “unclean” industry due to its rapid production and overconsumption (Williams, 2022). The apparel industry is responsible for about 10% of carbon emissions (Dewanto and Belgiawan, 2020) and about 165 chemicals are considered hazardous and have negative environmental impacts (Liang and Mangharam, 2019).

CSR practices adopted by the company have changed customers’ perceptions of the company, with consumers becoming more aware and knowledgeable (Hsu and Bui, 2022). Companies that engage in CSR practices attract consumers to buy brands with social responsibility (Hassan et al., 2022). Moreover, Chan et al. (2023) and Ramany et al. (2022) avowed that environmental consciousness and purchase intention have a significant relationship, whereas Bhalla and Overton (2019) found opposite findings, which makes the findings inconsistent. The relationship between CSR activities and purchase intentions was investigated in various industries, for instance, the food and beverage industry (Chang et al., 2019; Harun et al., 2018), coffee retail store (Chan and Saad, 2019), the telecommunication industry (Lacap et al., 2021) and organic apparel (Tong and Su, 2018). However, Thorisdottir and Johannsdottir (2020) and Vishwakarma et al. (2022) stressed that there is a dearth of research on CSR and consumer purchases in the apparel industry. Moreover, several studies conducted in the USA and developing countries found that CSR has a positive relationship with purchase intention (Chang et al., 2019; Harun et al., 2018); however, there is a limited study that looks into Malaysia setting, a developing country (Yeo et al., 2018), hence justifying research in this context.

Besides that, as past studies mostly focused on brand love on examined the relationship between CSR and various outcomes (Amegbe et al., 2021; Kim et al., 2020; Quezado et al., 2022a), this study contributes to advancing the knowledge by examining the consumer-retailer love (Ortiz and Harrison, 2015; Vlachos and Vrechopoulos, 2012). Indeed, Ho’s (2017) study has highlighted the lack and urged more studies to consider this construct rather than brand love, where the study also justified that the consumer-retailer’s love as a potential mediator for consumers to repeat the patronage and willingness to pay.

Consequently, this study provides an answer to the following research question:

**RQ1.** Do CSR practices (i.e. economic CSR, environmental CSR and societal CSR) impact consumers’ purchase intention of apparel products, with the mediating role of consumer-retailer love on this relationship?

The integration of the triple bottom line (TBL) framework of Elkington (1998) and the stimulus-organism-response (S-O-R) model of Mehrabian and Russell (1974) into a single framework is unique and advances extant research on the impact of CSR practices on young consumer purchase intention of apparel products, with the mediating role of consumer-retailer love on this relationship in a developing nation context. Previous studies have used Carroll’s (1979) pyramid of the CSR model as their underpinning theory, which focused on economic, legal, ethical and philanthropy responsibilities (Al-Alawi et al., 2023; Ijabadeniyi and Govender, 2019; Nurunnabi et al., 2020). Besides, the empirical findings are vital to broadening the methodology used by the scholarly works of Tong and Su (2018) that focused on US college students.

The study contributes in a practical way by providing policymakers and marketers with empirical data regarding the impact of CSR practices (i.e. economic CSR, environmental CSR and societal CSR) on consumers’ purchase intention of apparel products, with the mediating role of consumer-retailer love on this relationship in the context of Malaysia. Apparel retail marketers should focus on key determinants when designing CSR campaigns.
and communicating these CSR initiatives in social media and annual reports. They should also focus on their service quality to create a good perception (images) that helps measure the emotional response (love) between the retailer and consumers.

The following section presents the literature review and the methodology used is explained in the third section. The results are presented in Section 4 and the findings are discussed in Section 5. In the concluding section, the contributions of the study are highlighted and directions for future research are furnished.

Literature review

Triple bottom line framework and stimulus-organism-response model

The TBL framework of Elkington (1998) and the S-O-R model of Mehrabian and Russell (1974) were used as underlying theories. The TBL model states that companies measure their success based on three domains: social, environmental and economic (Elkington, 1998). These domains contribute to sustainability but also enable sustainable development. The TBL framework can show companies that these areas of responsibility are relevant factors in their financial reports and that this can be beneficial to the company (Tashiba, 2014). The S-O-R model states that the environment acts as a stimulus (S), which contains a series of signals that cause an internal evaluation of someone (O), resulting in positive or negative responses (R). Liu and Zheng (2019) emphasize that the S-O-R model helps explain the relationship between environmental stimuli and consumers. The S-O-R model has been used by many researchers in the field of marketing to understand customer responses. Latif et al. (2020) used CSR as stimulus, service quality, satisfaction, image and reputation as organisms and customer loyalty (response). CSR marketing was used as a stimulus, resulting in attitude, values, personal norms, environmental self-identity (organism) and green adoption behavior (response) (Amaya Rivas et al., 2022), further supporting Wu et al.’s (2022) view of perceived environmental CSR as a stimulus. Based on the above concept, this study considered CSR practices (i.e. economic CSR, environmental CSR and societal CSR) as a stimulus, love between customer and retailer as an organism and purchase intention as a response.

Corporate social responsibility practices and purchase intention

CSR initiatives such as economic, ethical, legal and philanthropic responsibility have a significant impact on consumers’ conscious purchasing behavior (Yeo et al., 2018). Similarly, Ali and Sohail (2018) highlighted that CSR initiatives (i.e. public awareness, social value creation, customer focus, green environment and philanthropy) influence customers' purchase intention. This also supports Camilleri’s (2017) view that environmental CSR is mostly characterized by the goal of reducing the company’s environmental impact throughout the product life cycle. Jha et al. (2022) found that perceptions of CSR have a positive influence on price fairness (economics) and purchase intention in the fast-food industry, confirming that the economics of CSR is significantly related to purchase intention.

In another study, Nosi et al. (2020) found that aspects of environmental well-being, political values and consumers’ perceived CSR at the point of sale influenced consumers' willingness to purchase organic quinoa-based foods in Italy. They also found that CSR has a significant and positive influence on attitudes toward purchasing organic quinoa-based foods. In addition, Zarif Sagheb et al. (2020) found that legal CSR supports customers' intention to purchase foreign foods. The results suggest that Iranian consumers prefer legal brands (against smuggling) and environmentally friendly brands and pay more attention to companies that maintain friendly relations with their country and avoid hostility. In addition, Kim and Lee (2023) found that environmental awareness has a significant influence on consumers’ purchase intention, which is consistent with the studies of Siyal et al. (2021) and Zhuang et al. (2021). The empirical study by Nguyen et al. (2021) also suggests that most
major fashion brands use environmental CSR activities to improve consumer purchase intention. This is also consistent with the study of Olsˇanová et al. (2022), in which they found that social/environmental CSR significantly influences the purchase intention of luxury brands, but economic CSR does not. Based on the above, this study hypothesizes the following:

\( H_1 \). Economic CSR practices have a positive effect on consumers’ purchase intention of apparel products.

\( H_2 \). Environmental CSR practices have a positive effect on consumers’ purchase intention of apparel products.

\( H_3 \). Societal CSR practices have a positive effect on consumers’ purchase intention of apparel products.

**Corporate social responsibility and consumer-retailer’s love**

A marketing concept uses the pull strategy to identify consumer needs and develop products accordingly in the age of digital advancement (Kotler et al., 2023). The company tries to understand consumers before developing the strategy for a product, price, place, promotion, people, process and physical evidence. The concept of consumer-retailer love is based on the principle of marketing. The company’s efforts to provide more value than price is appreciated by consumers, which creates consumer-retailer love relationship (Kotler et al., 2023).

Economic CSR refers to the fairness of prices to consumers to achieve the company’s business objectives (Hatane and Sharon, 2014). Existing literature discusses the company’s economic efforts to make consumers love retailers. Liao et al. (2020) investigated the influence of perceived price fairness on consumer-retailer love. The results of the study show a significant influence of perceived price fairness on consumers’ brand loyalty. Customers are more likely to choose products from socially responsible companies, which leads to higher sales and profits (Karlsson and Åkerhag, 2022; Mahmood and Bashir, 2020). As a result, customers develop greater customer love toward the company and are willing to pay a premium for its products or services.

Environmental CSR refers to the efforts of companies to reduce the impact of product life cycle processes on the environment, such as pollution and global warming (Sughra and Crowther, 2015). The world is facing many environmental challenges that require companies to take corrective actions. In this context, companies that care about the environment are better received by consumers. Existing literature discusses the environmental CSR efforts of companies that make them popular among consumers as retailers. The study by Lee et al. (2022) explains how service experience, environmental CSR, brand love and reuse intention are related. The study shows that there is a positive relationship between environmental CSR and consumer love for retailers. Consumers of the digital age are very aware of environmental issues and their impact on human life. Considering this scenario, companies have started to work to protect the environment and think about environmentally friendly products (Huang et al., 2022).

Societal CSR refers to the company’s efforts for the welfare of society, people and culture (Khurana and Ricchetti, 2016). The previous marketing concept was concerned with how the company provides benefits to the consumer and receives them in return. Fashion brands are facing intense competition, which has increased the demands on the social marketing concept (Kotler et al., 2023). This concept requires societal CSR activities in addition to consumer and corporate benefits. In the context of retailing, the study by Vlachos and Vrechopoulos (2012) discussed that societal CSR contributes significantly to the consumer-retailer love. The study therefore hypothesized that:
**H4.** Economic CSR practices have a positive impact on consumer-retailer love toward apparel products.

**H5.** Environmental CSR practices have a positive impact on consumer-retailer love toward apparel products.

**H6.** Societal CSR practices have a positive impact on consumer-retailer love toward apparel products.

**Mediating role of consumer-retailer’s love**

An investigation of the impact of consumers’ love for the retailer (brand love) on repurchase intention by Çelik and Topuz (2021) found a significant relationship between consumers’ love for the retailer and purchase intention. Similarly, the study by Kim et al. (2020), which examined the influence of brand love and involvement on the relationship between CSR (ethics and philanthropy) and brand resonance, found the mediating role of brand love and involvement in these relationships. Moreover, Javed and Khan (2023) found that brand love is able to mediate the relationship between CSR and word of mouth in the mobile industry. This is also supported by the study of Quezado et al. (2022a), which confirms that brand love is able to mediate between the perception of CSR and corporate ethics on brand loyalty. In addition, Ho’s (2017) studies show that consumers’ love for a retailer and attitude toward a retailer are the most important mediators of the relationship between CSR associations, environmental awareness and consumers’ behavioral intentions. Based on the above discussion, there is little literature on the mediating role of brand love between the relationship of economic, social and environmental CSR and purchase intention. Based on this idea, the study hypothesized that:

**H7.** Consumer-retailer love mediates the relationship between economic CSR practices and the purchase intention of apparel products.

**H8.** Consumer-retailer love mediates the relationship between environmental CSR practices and the purchase intention of apparel products.

**H9.** Consumer-retailer love mediates the relationship between societal CSR practices and the purchase intention of apparel products.

Based on the aforementioned discussion, Figure 1 displays the theoretical framework of the present study.
Methodology

Sampling procedures

This study used a quantitative research design based on the deductive paradigm associated with the positivist view, in which research begins with a theory about reality and hypotheses (assumptions) are developed based on previous studies and tested through empirical research (Gray, 2014; Johnson, 2012). Accordingly, a survey method was used because it allows the researcher to learn the respondents’ thoughts about a specific topic from a specific group of people (Babbie, 2020). Three hundred self-administered questionnaires were distributed to the target respondents. Nonrandom sampling was used using a purposive sampling technique where samples were selected based on the characteristics of a population and the objectives of the study (Crossman, 2019). The researcher selects consumers in Klang Valley, Malaysia, who have experience purchasing Brand X apparel products and are aware of the company’s CSR activities. This allows the researcher to get more accurate results by including a control question such as “Do you buy product X” in the questionnaire. Those respondents who answered “No” were excluded from the data set to ensure that actual customers of clothing company X were used for data analysis. Of these, 255 meaningful responses were used for data analysis. This sample size is consistent with Roscoe’s (1975) recommendation that sample sizes between 30 and 500 are appropriate for social science studies. Indeed, it exceeds the G-power analysis with (predictors: 7, effect size, 0.15; power: 0.95) (Maccallum et al., 1996), the minimum sample size required for this study is 153. G-power analysis was used to determine the appropriate sample size for this study because the entire list of customers of clothing company X is not available.

Questionnaire development and instrument

The self-administered questionnaire is divided into four sections. Section A asks for answers about the respondent’s demographic profile, such as gender, age, race, education and income. Section B contains questions on the three dimensions of CSR activities, namely, social, economic and environmental, adopted from Elkington (1998) and Gallardo-Vázquez et al. (2013). In Section C, the measures of purchase intentions were adopted from Kumar et al. (2009), and in Section D, the items on consumer-retailer love were adopted from Vlachos and Vrechopoulos (2012). Five-point Likert-type scale was used to measure these variables, ranging from (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree. Appendix provides information on the measurement of instruments.

Common method variance

Harman’s single-factor analysis was used as a statistical and procedural tool to assess the impact of common method variance (CMV) on research constructs (Podsakoff et al., 2003). The result of Harman’s single-factor analysis is that the first factor of this study explained for 43.024% variance, which is below the recommended threshold of 50% (Hair et al., 2017). Thus, it is confirmed that this study is free from CMV problems.

Findings

Table 1 details that of the 225 respondents, 38.4% were male and more than half were female (61.6%). However, the majority of respondents are domestic customers from the age group of 21–25 years old; 16.1% of respondents are between 26 and 30 years old, followed by 6.3% in the under-20 category. In terms of education level, more than half of the respondents have a bachelor’s degree (68.6%). In addition, almost half of the respondents (42.0%) have an income of less than RM 1,000, whereas 5.1% have an income between RM 4,001 and RM 5,000.
Measurement model

In the measurement model stage, convergent validity and discriminant validity of the construct measures were assessed. Convergent validity was ensured by factor loadings greater than 0.600, composite reliability (CR) greater than 0.700 and average variance extracted (AVE) greater than 0.500 (Hair et al., 2017). Table 2 shows that the factor loadings were all greater than 0.600 after the Econ 1 and Soc 5 items were removed because they did not meet this requirement. In addition, CR and AVE were also above the cut-off values. Thus, the criteria for convergent validity were met.

Discriminant validity is established when all heterotrait-monotrait ratio of correlations (HTMT) values obtained are below the required threshold of HTMT.90, as suggested by Gold et al. (2001). Table 3 shows that all HTMT values are below HTMT.85, which means that discriminant validity is ascertained.

Structural model assessment

In the structural model stage, bootstrapping procedures with a resample of 5,000 were used to assess the relationships between the constructs and their corresponding beta coefficients, t-values and p-values (Hair et al., 2017). Table 4 shows that environmental CSR ($\beta = 0.133$, t-value = 2.827, $p = 0.002$) and societal CSR ($\beta = 0.120$, t-value = 2.855, $p = 0.002$) are positively related to consumers’ intention to purchase apparel products, whereas...
economic CSR ($\beta = 0.027$, $t$-value $= 0.613$, $p = 0.270$) has no significant relationship with consumers’ intention to purchase apparel products. In addition, economic CSR ($\beta = 0.429$, $t$-value $= 6.942$, $p = 0.000$) and environmental CSR ($\beta = 0.268$, $t$-value $= 3.716$, $p = 0.000$) were found to have a positive significant relationship with consumer-retailer love for apparel products. However, societal CSR is not significantly related to consumer-retailer love for apparel products. This is in favor of $H2$, $H3$, $H4$ and $H5$, whereas $H1$ and $H6$ were rejected.
An $R^2$-value of 0.763 indicates that 76.3% of the variation in consumers’ intention to purchase apparel products was explained by the three CSR practices (i.e. economic CSR, environmental CSR and societal CSR). Moreover, these CSR practices could explain 44.6% of consumer-retailer love ($R^2 = 0.446$).

The collinearity issue was evaluated using the variance inflation factor (VIF) with a cut-off value of 3.3, as suggested by Diamantopoulos and Siguaw (2006). The VIF values in Table 5 were all below 3.3, indicating that no collinearity problems were present. Cohen (1988) divided the effect size of $f^2$ into small (0.02), medium (0.15) and large (0.35). Specifically, economic CSR has a medium effect on consumers’ retailer love ($f^2 = 0.209$), whereas environmental CSR and societal CSR have a small effect on consumer-retailer love. Therefore, these CSR practices have a small effect on purchase intention.

Preacher and Hayes (2008) bootstrapping method was used to test the indirect effect of economic, environmental and societal CSR through the mediating effect of love between consumers and retailers. As shown in Table 6, ECO→CRL→PI ($\beta = 0.302$, $p < 0.01$, LL = 0.207 and UL = 0.391), ENV→CRL→PI ($\beta = 0.188$, $p < 0.00$, LL = 0.087 and UL = 0.293) were significant. The confidence interval of these two relationships in Table 6 is not between a value of 0, suggesting that consumer-retailer love mediates the relationships between economic CSR and environmental CSR and purchase intention. Thus, $H7$ and $H8$ were supported. However, consumer love for retailers does not mediate between societal CSR and purchase intention, therefore $H9$ is rejected.

PLSpredict was used to examine the predictive power of the model, where variables can be replaced during the course of the study and the researchers aimed to assess the out-of-sample predictive power (Hair, 2020). The results of the model partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) in Table 7 were compared with the results of the values of LM. The comparison of predictive power (PLS-SEM-LM) is performed using the root mean square error (RMSE), which has high symmetrically distributed prediction errors (Shmueli et al., 2019). When the RMSE values of the model PLS-SEM are compared with the naive values of LM, most indicators show that the RMSE values of PLS-SEM are lower than the RMSE values of the values of LM. Thus, it has high predictive power for consumer-retailer love, whereas it has medium predictive power for purchase intention.

### Table 5 $f^2$ and VIF values

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>CRL $f^2$</th>
<th>PI $f^2$</th>
<th>CRL VIF</th>
<th>PI VIF</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CRL</td>
<td>1.160</td>
<td>1.160</td>
<td>1.804</td>
<td>1.804</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECON</td>
<td>0.209</td>
<td>0.002</td>
<td>1.593</td>
<td>1.926</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENV</td>
<td>0.072</td>
<td>0.039</td>
<td>1.801</td>
<td>1.930</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOC</td>
<td>0.005</td>
<td>0.033</td>
<td>1.847</td>
<td>1.857</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Notes:** CRL = consumer-retailer love; ECON = economic CSR; ENV = environmental CSR; SOC = societal CSR

**Source:** Authors’ own creation

### Table 6 Results of mediation analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relationship</th>
<th>Std. beta</th>
<th>Std. error</th>
<th>T value</th>
<th>P</th>
<th>LL (2.5%)</th>
<th>UL (97.5%)</th>
<th>Decision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>H7: ECON → CRL → PI</td>
<td>0.302</td>
<td>0.047</td>
<td>6.480</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.207</td>
<td>0.391</td>
<td>S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H8: ENV → CRL → PI</td>
<td>0.188</td>
<td>0.052</td>
<td>3.648</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.087</td>
<td>0.293</td>
<td>S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H9: SOC → CRL → PI</td>
<td>0.052</td>
<td>0.049</td>
<td>1.070</td>
<td>0.285</td>
<td>−0.043</td>
<td>0.148</td>
<td>NS</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Notes:** UL = upper level; LL = lower level; 2-tailed test; S = supported; NS = not supported; CRL = consumer-retailer love; ECON = economic CSR; ENV = environmental CSR; PI = purchase intention; SOC = societal CSR; *$p < 0.01$; **$p < 0.05$

**Source:** Authors’ own creation
Discussion

This study examined the impact of CSR practices (i.e. economic CSR, environmental CSR, societal CSR) on consumers’ purchase intention of apparel products, with the mediating role of consumer-retailer love on this relationship. The findings of the PLS-SEM approach confirm that CSR practices (i.e. societal CSR and environmental CSR) significantly influence consumers’ purchase intention of apparel products. The findings have supported the study of Lee and Lee (2018), which found that CSR influences customer purchase intention at fashion companies. This also aligns with past studies (Camilleri, 2017; Nguyen et al., 2021; Ošanová et al., 2022). Further examination of the results shows that economic CSR was found to insignificantly impact consumers’ purchase intention, which yielded different results as compared to the past studies (Karlsson and Åkerhag, 2022; Liao et al., 2020; Mahmood and Bashir, 2020; Yeo et al., 2018). The possible explanation for the insignificant results is that the demographic study of the respondents is mainly young adults, where they might be less perceived on the economic aspects. This is congruent with the study, which stated that among all the CSR practices, economics CSR was the least perceived (Al-Alawi et al., 2023). The study by Nurunnabi et al. (2020), disagrees that Carroll’s economic responsibility is the foundational building block of CSR. This was further clarified by Carroll (2021) in the latest development of CSR, where he argued that economic responsibility was not prominent or it is more important than other CSR domains (legal, ethical and philanthropy), as some have misconstrued.

Furthermore, environmental CSR and societal CSR are much more prominent and perceived by customers, which impacts their purchase intention of apparel products. Hence, by this result, the apparel company can enhance the ways to communicate their environmental and philanthropy CSR activities to the customers. These findings were also supported by Harun et al. (2018) and Nosi et al. (2020) that customer support companies that are involved in CSR, particularly environmental CSR influence purchase intention (Ali and Sohail, 2018). Hence, the apparel should construct better CSR activities, for example, to increase customer purchase intention, the apparel company should focus their attention on the environment and community by introducing initiatives such as using recycle bags, collecting second-hand clothes and manufacturing sustainable apparel based on the CSR initiatives, rather than as green-washing strategies to influence the consumer’s purchase intention of apparel products.

This study further established the positive relationship between environmental CSR and consumer-retailer love. The findings concur with Lee et al. (2022) that explain service experience, environmental CSR, brand love and reuse intention are related. However, the present research found that societal CSR does not affect consumer-retailer love. This could be possibly explained by the current demographic, where the study is mainly made up of young adult consumers, where awareness and knowledge on social-related CSR might be low (Periyayya et al., 2016). Besides, it has been argued by Chatzopoulou and de Kiewiet

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 7</th>
<th>PLS predict assessment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Items</strong></td>
<td>$Q^2$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CR1</td>
<td>0.364</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CR2</td>
<td>0.277</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CR3</td>
<td>0.363</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PI1</td>
<td>0.330</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PI2</td>
<td>0.370</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PI3</td>
<td>0.368</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PI4</td>
<td>0.366</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PI5</td>
<td>0.314</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Source: Authors’ own creation
(2021) that activities related to philanthropy (societal CSR) are not trusted by millennials as they believe that companies should be responsible for their domains of activity, which further explains the insignificant results. The consumer-retailer love was also found to mediate the relationship between economic CSR and environmental CSR and purchase intention which also supported love (emotional) act as a significant mediator (Attiq et al., 2022) and could act as the organism (feelings) in the S-O-R model (Koay et al., 2023; Kumar et al., 2021).

Conclusion

In summary, this study discovered a significant relationship between different types of CSR practices (i.e. environmental CSR and societal CSR) and consumer purchase intention for apparel products, with consumer-retailer love playing a mediating role in this relationship. CSR practices in the apparel industry provide a great opportunity to communicate to customers that companies are committed to CSR and can help build good feelings and love that lead to higher purchase intentions. This study contributed to the body of knowledge in the field of CSR by using Elkington's (1998) TBL framework instead of Carroll's (1979) commonly used CSR pyramid. The present study found that environmental CSR and societal CSR are significant determinants. In addition, this study also contributed to the S-O-R model to explain the relationship between variables. This study contributed to customer relationship science by examining consumer-retailer love instead of brand love, which has not been sufficiently explored in the literature in a developing nation context.

As a contribution to practice, the marketing department of the apparel company should launch a CSR campaign to encourage customers to actively participate in programs such as community service for the benefit of society, charitable activities such as donating to children's homes or orphanages, issuing sustainable clothing and other initiatives. In addition, the apparel company should highlight the good deeds it does for society and the environment on social media and in its annual report to effectively communicate with customers as stakeholders. In addition, the management of the apparel company should focus on the quality of customer service by providing clothing at affordable and fair prices and ensuring that the staff treats customers well and handles customer inquiries knowledgeably, to build a good perception and image and strengthen the love between customers and retailers, because the love between customers and retailers is an important mediator and has a positive impact on marketing results.

This study is limited to the view of positivism through deductive reasoning. Therefore, there is an opportunity to extend the methodology and conduct a mixed-methods design to gain deeper insights as consumer attitudes and behaviors change over time depending on context. For future research, it is recommended that the quantitative approach be expanded by adding other moderators or mediators such as trust, CSR communication, CSR skepticism and demographic variables from a larger sample outside the Malaysian context to add more insight and robustness to the current framework/model and contribute to the science of environmental and consumer marketing.

References


Appendix. Measurement of instruments

Economic CSR (adapted from Elkington, 1998; Gallardo-Vázquez et al., 2013)

- X focus on survival in the marketplace. *(removed)*
- X is characterized to have the best relation price to quality.
- X offers customers accurate information about the products/services.
- The respect to consumer rights is a priority in X.
- X offering high-quality products/services to the customers.

Environmental CSR (adapted from Elkington, 1998; Gallardo-Vázquez et al., 2013)

- X cares for the environmental related issues.
- X uses recyclable packing.
- X has positive initiative to produce ecological goods.
- X is in favor of waste products recycling (e.g. second hand clothes).
- X is in favor of carbon gas emission reductions.

Social CSR (adapted from Elkington, 1998; Gallardo-Vázquez et al., 2013)

- X takes community social problems into account.
- X considers the social well-being of society as a whole.
- X actively promotes volunteerism activities within local communities.
- X engages in charitable activities.
- X is committed to provide job opportunities (regardless gender and ethnics). *(removed)*

**Consumer-retailer love (adapted Vlachos and Vrechopoulos, 2012)**
- X is my favorite retailer that I can count on.
- If I were describing myself, shopping at X would likely be something I would mention.
- I always enjoy shopping at X.

**Purchase intention (adapted from Kumar et al., 2009)**
- I plan to buy X products for special occasions.
- I intend to buy X frequently.
- I plan to buy X often.
- I will purchase upcoming new products of X.
- I will purchase X good and services in the future.

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