



# Brand Experience as a Mediating Mechanism Between CSR Initiatives, CSR Supportive Behaviour, and Consumer Brand Loyalty

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Received: 10 October 2025

Accepted: 18 February 2026

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.32479/irmm.22622>

## ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine the relationship between CSR initiatives (CSRI), CSR-supportive behaviours (CSRSB), brand experience (BE), and consumer brand loyalty (CBL), with brand experience as a mediating variable in four major cities of China. A total of 550 respondents has been surveyed and this paper employed structural equation modeling (SEM) for data analysis. The results indicate that CSRI positively influences both CSRSB and BE. Additionally, both BE and CBL are significantly impacted by CSRSB. The mediation analysis confirms that BE partially mediates the relationship between CSRI and CBL in the present study. This indicates that the important role of brand experience in consumer loyalty. While CSR efforts contribute to consumer commitment, a positive brand experience further strengthens this relationship. The findings provide strategic insights for brand managers, recommending enhanced consumer-brand interactions to maximize the impact of CSR.

**Keywords:** CSR Initiatives, Brand Experience, CSR-Supportive Behaviour, Consumer Brand Loyalty, Brand Loyalty Theory

**JEL Classifications:** D12, M14, M31

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has emerged as a strategic imperative for businesses to seek sustainability in the long term. CSR is widely recognized as an important element in enhancing consumer brand loyalty, as it demonstrates business ethics and its commitment to society beyond focusing on profit maximization. Halkos and Nomikos (2021) stated that the companies should not focus solely on financial returns but should also integrate consumer welfare and societal advancement. The existing research on CSR are generally focused on the five key areas which are economic, environmental, ethical, consumer, and corporate governance (Ghoul et al., 2017; Lau et al., 2016; Sen et al., 2016). These areas collectively shape how consumers perceive and interact with a brand. Existing studies suggest that the role of stakeholders is increasing important in influencing CSR initiatives. This is because consumer expectations now extend beyond pricing and product

quality to include corporate ethical responsibility (Carroll, 2015). Therefore, the shift of consumers' expectations require a deeper understanding regarding how CSR strategies influence consumer trust, brand perception, and loyalty directly and indirectly (Latapí Agudelo et al., 2019).

Brand loyalty is the key theme in business marketing and research that related to consumer behaviour. The scholars focusing on a few of factors affecting a consumer's long-term commitment to a brand. Fernandes and Moreira (2019) argue that existing studies mainly focus on consumer-brand interactions through engagement and emotional attachment, however, they generally overlooked the importance role of brand experience as a mediator in examining brand loyalty. Generally, previous research emphasis on post-purchase behaviour including consumer satisfaction, perceived quality, and switching costs (Khamitov et al., 2019). Thus, these studies neglect the pre-purchase phase of the consumers where

their perceptions and experiences regarding the brand image through multiple channels such as social responsibility (CSR) initiatives and CSR supportive behaviours. While previous studies acknowledge the role of CSR in shaping consumer perceptions, the extent to which CSR-driven experiences translate into brand loyalty via brand experience remains an underexplored research area (Khan and Fatma, 2019). Meanwhile, Srivastava (2024) mentioned that CSR initiatives including ethical business practices, environmental sustainability efforts, and community engagement that significantly shape consumer attitudes toward a brand. Brand experience refers to the sensory, affective, cognitive, and behavioral responses that consumers form toward a brand. Unlike traditional marketing elements such as advertising and promotions, brand experience is deeply rooted in consumer perceptions and personal interactions with a brand (Ma et al., 2023).

This paper aims to analyze how consumers perceive sports brands by analysing the extent to which CSR initiatives and CSR supportive behaviour shape brand experience and ultimately drive brand loyalty. By investigating the mediating effect of brand experience, this study fills the research gap in brand loyalty studies, shifting the focus from direct product-based influences on experiential and value-driven engagement.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Consumer brand loyalty has a close relationship with SCR initiatives, however existing literatures are mainly focused on the direct corporate benefits such as reputation, customer satisfaction, and corporate image (Islam et al., 2021; Gürlek et al., 2017). These few factors are identified contribute to consumer loyalty, and other research also suggests that CSR initiatives create emotional engagement, fostering long-term brand commitment (Iglesias et al., 2020). Additionally, Kim and Ham (2016) and Kim and Kim (2016) highlighted that CSR plays an important role in enhancing transparency, trust, and perceived service quality which is crucial in establishing consumer attitudes and behavioural responses. By addressing these gaps, this study tends to provide a more detailed perspective on how CSR initiatives influence consumer brand loyalty through emotional and social dimensions. As the brand reputation and CSR in consumer decision-making are getting importance, CSR initiatives serve as pivotal factor in shaping consumer trust, brand engagement, and long-term brand commitment.

CSR supportive behaviour refers to the extent to which consumers and other stakeholders endorse, promote, or actively participate in a company's CSR initiatives. This behaviour is important in examine the effectiveness of CSR programs and their long-term impact on consumer brand loyalty. The unpredictability of CSR supportive behaviour stems from its broad scope and dependence on individual engagement levels (Li et al., 2020). Lee et al. (2019) mentioned that the consumers with higher engagement levels tend to participate in CSR initiatives than those disengaged individuals tend to exhibit minimal supportive behaviours.

CSR initiatives are not always received strong support although its positive impact on the brand loyalty. Certain groups of

consumers remain skeptical, especially when CSR efforts appear performative or insincere (Kim and Ferguson, 2018). Therefore, effective CSR communication strategies are essential to link this perception gap to ensure that CSR initiatives genuinely align with consumer values. Research shows that effective CSR strategies can enhance consumers' quality of life, increase perceived benefits, and encourage stronger engagement, all of which help strengthen their long-term loyalty to the brand (Lee et al., 2018). This study extends previous studies by estimating how CSR supportive behavior mediates the relationship between CSR initiatives and brand loyalty. Since CSR engagement often serves as a social signal in affecting consumer trust and advocacy. Thereby, an in depth understanding of this dynamic offers deeper insights into how CSR strategies foster long-term consumer-brand relationships.

The present paper aims to investigate CSR supportive behaviour as consumers' endorsement of sports brands' CSR efforts. Effective CSR communication plays a key role in fostering public engagement. However, consumer perception of CSR initiatives may not always translate into active participation. This is likely due to consumer's relationship with the brand in shaping the CSR supportive behaviour. Eisingerich et al. (2014) stated that CSR supportive behaviour is influenced by three perspectives including word of mouth, commitment, and consumer engagement by using ten indicators.

Brand experience refers to the sensory, emotional, and behavioural perceptions consumers develop through direct and indirect brand interactions (Ebrahim et al., 2016). Cheung et al. (2020) stated that a positive brand experience from the consumers promotes stronger emotional connections, thus increase consumer satisfaction and loyalty. The brand experience is categorized into four key dimensions by the existing studies. The sensory experience involves the physical and visual appeal of a brand, shaping how consumers perceive it through sight, sound, touch, or other senses. The emotional experience reflects the feelings and emotions arise during brand interaction, contributing to the depth of the consumer-brand relationship. The behavioural experience relates to the actions, participation, and physical engagement consumers display toward a brand. Lastly, the intellectual experience involves the cognitive engagement, curiosity, and problem-solving aspects that stimulate consumers' thinking (Kang et al., 2017). The combination of these dimensions creates a holistic framework for understanding how brand interactions influence consumer perceptions and loyalty.

Few studies including Coelho et al. (2020), Yasri et al. (2020) and Zollo et al. (2020) highlighted the brand experience as a key mediating variable linking functional brand attributes to consumer loyalty. It also demonstrating its influence on perceived value, brand equity, and decision-making processes. However, while prior studies emphasise on how brand experience shapes satisfaction and commitment, limited attention has been given to how CSR initiatives specifically translate into enhanced brand experiences that drive brand loyalty. This research gap motivates the present study to position brand experience as a mediator in the CSR model to examine their loyalty relationship and offering a more comprehensive view of how CSR efforts foster loyalty beyond transactional interactions. In this study, brand experience

is conceptualised as consumers' internal responses that closely link to sensory, emotional, and behavioural elements when interacting with sports brands that measured across three dimensions and seventeen indicators adapted from Kang et al. (2017).

This study is constructed based on Brand Loyalty Theory, which conceptualizes brand loyalty as a multidimensional construct encompassing on affective, behavioural, and evaluative dimensions. According to Brand Loyalty Theory, consumers develop brand loyalty through a combination of emotional attachment, habitual purchasing behaviour, and rational evaluation of brand attributes (Kaur et al., 2020). Previous studies mainly applied this theory by emphasize on the direct relationship between brand and consumer loyalty. This study extends its framework to examine how CSR initiatives and CSR supportive behaviour shape brand experience, which in turn fosters brand loyalty. Loyal customers exhibit a deep affiliation with the brand and advocate for it among their social networks. Chan and Mansori (2016)'s study evaluated on consumer brand loyalty through four dimensions that are brand image, perceived quality, consumer satisfaction, and brand loyalty by using twenty indicators.

Figure 1 illustrates the relationships between CSR initiatives, CSR supportive behaviour, brand experience, and consumer brand loyalty. The conceptual model proposes eight hypotheses. The first three hypotheses are CSR initiatives influence CSR supportive behaviour ( $H_1$ ), brand experience ( $H_2$ ), and consumer brand loyalty ( $H_3$ ). Besides that, brand experience influences consumer brand loyalty directly ( $H_4$ ). Additionally, CSR supportive behaviour positively affects brand experience ( $H_5$ ) and consumer brand loyalty ( $H_6$ ). Lastly, the model positions brand experience as a mediating variable, and expecting to mediate the effects of CSR initiatives ( $H_7$ ) and CSR supportive behavior ( $H_8$ ) on consumer brand loyalty. Thus, while CSR initiatives play a foundational role, CSR supportive behavior acts independently to enhance both experiential and loyalty outcomes among consumers.

The outcome suggests that environmentally conscious CSR practices significantly enhance consumer motivation to support CSR efforts (Romani et al., 2016). When consumers perceive a brand's CSR initiatives as authentic and aligned with their values, they are more likely to exhibit supportive behaviors, such as word-of-mouth promotion, participation in CSR campaigns, and purchase intentions toward sustainable products. Based on these insights, the study proposes the following hypothesis:

- $H_1$ : CSR initiatives positively influence CSR supportive behavior.

CSR initiatives such as sustainability-focused product lines and fair labor policies have been shown to improve consumer-brand

interactions and reinforce brand experiences in sport industry (Gilal et al., 2021). This study, therefore, proposes the following hypothesis:

- $H_2$ : CSR initiatives positively influence brand experience.

CSR efforts strengthen consumer-brand relationships by creating emotional and ethical connections between brands and consumers. Research in the sports apparel industry found that CSR initiatives significantly impact consumer loyalty by fostering positive brand perceptions and strengthening customer satisfaction (Rivera et al., 2019). Given this relationship, the study proposes the following hypothesis:

- $H_3$ : CSR initiatives positively influence consumer brand loyalty.

Brand experience plays a crucial role in determining consumer attachment, emotional engagement, and purchasing behavior. Studies suggest that consumers with positive brand experiences are more likely to exhibit long-term loyalty (Drennan et al., 2015). Based on this insight, the study proposes:

- $H_4$ : Brand experience positively influences consumer brand loyalty.

Studies indicate that consumers who endorse CSR initiatives experience a greater sense of psychological and emotional fulfillment, leading to an improved brand experience (Li et al., 2020). Supportive behaviors, such as promoting CSR messages, participating in sustainability campaigns, and purchasing CSR-driven products, reinforce consumer trust and brand perception. Given the strong correlation between CSR engagement and brand experience, this study hypothesizes:

- $H_5$ : CSR supportive behavior positively influences brand experience.

CSR supportive behavior contributes to brand loyalty by fostering social identity and a sense of ethical responsibility (Martínez and Rodríguez del Bosque, 2013). Consumers who perceive CSR initiatives as authentic and impactful tend to remain loyal to brands that align with their values. Based on these findings, this study proposes:

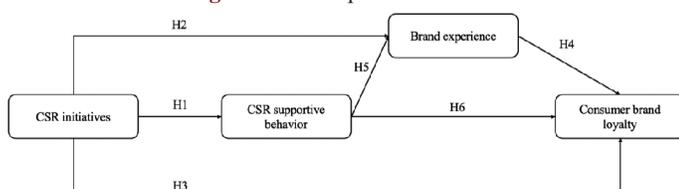
- $H_6$ : CSR supportive behavior positively influences consumer brand loyalty.

CSR initiatives enhance consumer engagement, trust, and brand experience, all of which contribute to long-term brand loyalty (Khan and Fatma, 2019). A positive brand experience strengthens the emotional connection between consumers and brands, leading to higher retention rates and stronger consumer loyalty. Therefore, the study hypothesizes:

- $H_7$ : Brand experience mediates the relationship between CSR initiatives and consumer brand loyalty.

CSR supportive behavior fosters stronger consumer-brand interactions, leading to an enriched brand experience (He and Lai, 2014). When consumers actively engage in CSR initiatives, they develop a deeper emotional and psychological connection with the brand, increasing their commitment and loyalty. Based on this, the study hypothesizes:

**Figure 1:** Conceptual Framework



- H<sub>8</sub>: Brand experience mediates the relationship between CSR supportive behavior and consumer brand loyalty.

### 3. METHODOLOGY

This study employed a quantitative research design using a structured questionnaire to examine the relationships among CSR initiatives, CSR supportive behaviour, brand experience, and consumer brand loyalty. Table 1 shows the latent construct, sub-construct, and number of items in the measurement model, along with their respective sources. To ensure relevance, the target population was restricted to urban areas with significant economic development and consumer purchasing power. Specifically, the research focuses on four major Chinese cities: Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, and Shenzhen. These cities were selected due to their advanced infrastructure, technological progress, and high socioeconomic status, which contribute to their prominence in the national and global market.

The target population consists of consumers who have an active interest in sports brands and have demonstrated purchasing behavior in the sector. The study includes individuals who have made at least four online purchases of sports-related products, ensuring that they possess adequate familiarity and experience with brand loyalty. The study is limited to individuals aged 18 to 34, as this demographic represents the primary market segment for sports apparel and related products. To encourage participation, the survey was administered via an online Chinese survey platform, with monetary incentives provided to respondents upon completion.

The sample size was determined based on established statistical principles. According to Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) sampling table, for a population exceeding one million, a sample size of 384 is considered adequate. Research suggests that the appropriate sample size for SmartPLS-based SEM studies ranges from 200 to 460 (Wolf et al., 2013). To balance accuracy and sensitivity, the study controlled the sample size within a range of 384 to 399 participants. However, considering potential data attrition and invalid responses, an additional 40% sample increase was applied, leading to a final sample size of 550 respondents.

The study utilizes convenience sampling, a widely used non-probability sampling method. Convenience sampling was chosen

for its efficiency, cost-effectiveness, and feasibility in reaching a targeted consumer segment. The study employs the Likert scale for measurement, a widely used psychometric scale in consumer behavior research (Allen and Seaman, 2007). The Likert scale provides a reliable means of assessing subjective opinions by allowing respondents to indicate varying degrees of agreement or disagreement. A five-point Likert scale was utilized, ranging from (1) Strongly Disagree to (5) Strongly Agree. This format is commonly applied in studies examining consumer brand loyalty, CSR activities, and brand experience. The survey was designed in both English and Mandarin, ensuring that respondents could complete it in their preferred language. Given that the survey was conducted in China, the Mandarin version was essential to optimize comprehension and response accuracy.

The collected data were coded and analyzed using SPSS v27 and SmartPLS 4, ensuring compliance with statistical and methodological standards. SPSS v27 was used for initial data preparation, while SmartPLS 4 facilitated SEM analysis. The use of SEM allowed for the examination of complex relationships among variables, ensuring robust and reliable findings. By adopting a comprehensive methodological framework, this study ensures the accuracy and relevance of its findings, contributing valuable insights into consumer behavior, social media influence, and brand loyalty in China's sports apparel market.

### 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The questionnaire was distributed to 137 consumers in Beijing and Shanghai and 138 sets to those in Shenzhen and Guangzhou. Over a 2-month data collection period, all 550 questionnaires were successfully collected, resulting in a 100% response rate. Consequently, the entire dataset of 550 responses was considered valid for analysis.

Skewness and kurtosis were assessed to examine the normality of the dataset. Table 2 shows that the kurtosis values range from 0 to +0.469, while skewness values range from 0 to -0.886. Both measures are close to zero, indicating that the data conforms closely to a normal distribution. This suggests that the variables exhibit no significant deviations from normality, ensuring their suitability for further statistical analysis.

**Table 1: Latent construct, sub-construct, and number of items in the measurement model**

Latent construct	Previous Cronbach's alpha value	Source	Sub-construct	Number of items
CSR Initiatives	0.806	Abu Zayyad et al. (2021)	CSR to Environment	6
			CSR to Society	3
			CSR to Stakeholders	5
CSR Supportive Behavior	0.932	Lee et al. (2019)	Word of Mouth	3
			Commitment	3
			Consumer Participation	4
Brand Experience	0.881	Kang et al. (2017)	Sensory Experience	5
			Affective Experience	6
			Behavioral Experience	6
Customer Brand Loyalty	0.804	Chan and Mansori (2016)	Brand Image	4
			Perceived Quality	5
			Consumer Satisfaction	5
			Brand Loyalty	6

**Table 2: Skewness and Kurtosis Results for All Constructs (n=550)**

Construct (s)	N	Mean	Skewness	Standard error	Kurtosis	Standard error
CSRI	550	3.347	0.336	0.104	-0.659	0.208
CSRSB	550	3.324	0.293	0.104	-0.886	0.208
BE	550	3.324	0.344	0.104	-0.752	0.208
CBL	550	3.354	0.469	0.104	-0.690	0.208

**Table 3: Demographic profile of respondents**

Item	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Female	283	51.5
Male	267	48.5
Age		
Under18 years	66	12.0
18-24 years	82	14.9
25-30 years	133	24.2
31-40 years	96	17.5
41-50 years	61	11.1
51-60 years	54	9.8
Above 61 years	58	10.5
Social Economic Status (RMB)		
Under 3,000 a month	105	19.1
3,000-5,000 a month	152	27.6
5,000-8,000 a month	92	16.7
Above 8,000 a month	201	36.5
Academic qualification		
Junior high school	49	8.9
Undergraduate	107	19.5
University college	123	22.4
High school/Junior college/Technical school	231	42.0
Master’s Degree and above	34	6.1
Primary schools and below	6	1.1
Frequency of use of social media		
At least once a day	203	36.9
Once a month	2	0.4
Once a week	25	4.5
At least once an hour	320	58.2
Online shopping frequency		
1-4 times/month	76	13.8
Once a month	296	53.8
<1 time/month	150	27.3
More than 4 times/month	28	5.1

**Table 4: Mean, standard deviation, standard error and variance for variable**

Variable	Mean	SE	SD	Variance
CSR Initiative	3.346	0.031	0.744	0.555
CSR Supportive Behavior	3.323	0.033	0.785	0.618
Brand Experience	3.323	0.032	0.754	0.569
Consumer Brand Loyalty	3.354	0.029	0.702	0.493

**Table 5: Correlation analysis**

Variable	1	2	3	4
CSR initiative	1			
CSR supportive behavior	0.666**	1		
Brand experience	0.676**	0.657**	1	
Consumer brand loyalty	0.651**	0.671**	0.676**	1

**4.1. Descriptive Analysis**

A comprehensive summary of the demographic characteristics of all participants is presented in Table 3. Among 550 participants,

36.5% reported monthly expenditure exceeding 8,000 RMB, while 19.1% spent <3,000 RMB. The remaining participants were distributed between 3,000–5,000 RMB (27.6%) and 5,000-8,000 RMB (16.7%). Social media usage was highly prevalent, with 58.2% engaging online at least once per hour, while only 0.4% reported minimal usage. This underscores the importance of social media influencers’ credibility in shaping consumer behavior. Despite widespread interest in sportswear, 53.8% of participants purchased sports apparel only once a month, while 27.3% bought it even less frequently.

Education levels were evenly distributed, with the largest group (42%) having completed high school, junior college, or technical school, while only 1.1% had primary education or below. Undergraduate and university college graduates comprised 19.5% and 22.4%, respectively, whereas junior high school graduates (8.9%) and those with a master’s degree or higher (6.2%) were less represented. Gender distribution was balanced, with 51.5% male and 48.5% female respondents. The most represented age group was 25–30 years (24.2%), while other age categories were relatively evenly spread, each comprising approximately 10–15% of the sample.

Table 4 presents the summary statistics for CSR Initiative, CSR Supportive Behavior, Brand Experience and Customer Brand Loyalty. The standard error (SE) and standard deviation (SD) indicate a high degree of normality, confirming that the data is stable and suitable for analysis.

Table 5 demonstrates the correlation analysis between variables. CSR Initiative is highly correlated with CSR Supportive Behavior ( $r = 0.666$ ), Brand Experience ( $r = 0.676$ ), and Consumer Brand Loyalty ( $r = 0.651$ ). Similarly, CSR Supportive Behavior correlates strongly with Brand Experience ( $r = 0.657$ ) and Consumer Brand Loyalty ( $r = 0.671$ ), while Brand Experience and Consumer Brand Loyalty also exhibit a high correlation ( $r = 0.676$ ). These findings highlight the significant role of CSR initiatives in enhancing brand experience and consumer loyalty, either directly or through CSR Supportive Behavior. The strong correlations emphasize the importance of brand experience in fostering consumer commitment to socially responsible brands.

**4.2. Composite Reliability and Convergent Validity**

Furthermore, the appropriateness of the measurement model has been evaluated using Composite Reliability and Convergent Validity. A Cronbach’s alpha value of 0.70 was employed as the threshold in this study, deemed statistically sufficient (Nunnally et al., 1978). Table 6 displays the factor loadings, Cronbach’s alpha, and composite reliability (CR) for the revised measurement model. Findings revealed that the composite reliability (CR) values for all variables in the measurement model (0.909, 0.889, 0.923,

**Table 6: Factor loadings, Cronbach's alpha, and composite reliability**

Construct	Item	Factor loading	Cronbach's alpha	CR (above 0.7)
CSRI	CSRI1	0.730	0.892	0.909
	CSRI2	0.745		
	CSRI3	0.762		
	CSRI4	0.772		
	CSRI5	0.730		
	CSRI6	0.707		
	CSRI7	0.731		
	CSRI8	0.766		
	CSRI9	0.697		
	CSRI10	0.724		
	CSRI11	0.754		
	CSRI12	0.758		
	CSRI13	0.771		
	CSRI14	0.758		
CSRSB	CSRSB1	0.797	0.861	0.889
	CSRSB2	0.712		
	CSRSB3	0.782		
	CSRSB4	0.651		
	CSRSB5	0.788		
	CSRSB6	0.718		
	CSRSB7	0.727		
	CSRSB8	0.728		
	CSRSB9	0.729		
	CSRSB10	0.713		
BE	BE1	0.747	0.911	0.923
	BE2	0.742		
	BE3	0.737		
	BE4	0.742		
	BE5	0.739		
	BE6	0.748		
	BE7	0.719		
	BE8	0.713		
	BE9	0.764		
	BE10	0.748		
	BE11	0.745		
	BE12	0.770		
	BE13	0.705		
	BE14	0.779		
	BE15	0.736		
	BE16	0.737		
	BE17	0.757		
CBL	CBL1	0.729	0.907	0.919
	CBL2	0.737		
	CBL3	0.704		
	CBL4	0.773		
	CBL5	0.757		
	CBL6	0.742		
	CBL7	0.727		
	CBL8	0.751		
	CBL9	0.750		
	CBL10	0.754		
	CBL11	0.754		
	CBL12	0.756		
	CBL13	0.770		
	CBL14	0.783		
	CBL15	0.736		
	CBL16	0.756		
	CBL17	0.748		
	CBL18	0.767		
	CBL19	0.749		
	CBL20	0.771		

0.919) above the acceptable threshold of 0.70. These experiments demonstrate that the final measurement model possesses sufficient

convergent validity.

Convergent validity denotes the extent to which indicators of a specific construct converge or exhibit a significant degree of shared variance (Carlson and Herdman, 2012). Convergent validity is assessed through the items (factor loadings), reliability, and average variance extracted (AVE).

In this study, all constructs were assessed using validated instruments. The study indicates that the acceptable threshold for factor loading should be 0.5 or higher (Baharum et al., 2023). Nevertheless, the research indicates that any item exhibiting a factor loading below 0.60 and a multiple squared correlation ( $R^2$ ) under 0.40 ought to be excluded from the measurement model. In this investigation, the factor loadings for all items were determined to exceed 0.6, with only two items falling below 0.7. The  $R^2$  for all items exceeded 0.40. Consequently, the model in this investigation was well-suited, necessitating no item removal, and the fitness index satisfied the minimal necessary threshold.

Table 7 indicates that the convergent validity of this study is satisfactory, determined through the unidimensionality of items (factor loadings), reliability, multiple squared correlations ( $R^2$ ), and average variance extracted (AVE). All items in this investigation exhibited factor conformity above 0.6, composite reliability (CR) surpassing 0.8, multiple squared correlations ( $R^2$ ) > 0.4, and average variance extracted (AVE) exceeding 0.6.

Moreover, higher-order constructs (HOC) in SEM provide a broader conceptual framework by integrating multiple lower-order constructs (LOC) (Crocetta et al., 2021). These constructs can be either reflective or formative, depending on their relationship with lower-order components. This study adopts a reflective model, wherein higher-order constructs are indicated by multiple lower-order constructs.

Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was conducted to validate the measurement model and assess whether observed data align with the theoretical constructs. CFA is crucial for ensuring measurement invariance, confirming that constructs are assessed consistently across different groups. The results of CFA, presented in Table 8, demonstrate strong model fit.

The Chi-square statistic (5115.092,  $P = 0$ ) is sensitive to large sample sizes, making reliance on this metric alone insufficient. Instead, Chi-square/df (1.959) falls within the recommended range (<3), indicating a good fit. The RMSEA value (0.042) is below the threshold of 0.06, confirming a well-fitting model. The SRMR score (0.039) is within acceptable limits (<0.08), further supporting model adequacy. Additionally, the CFI (0.901) meets the standard threshold (>0.90), reinforcing model validity. These results confirm that the CFA model exhibits strong goodness-of-fit, supporting the validity and reliability of the higher-order constructs in this study.

### 4.3. Direct Effects Analysis using a Two-Stage Structural Equation Modelling Approach

Table 9 presents the path analysis in SEM to examine the causal

**Table 7: Factor loading, R-square, average variance extracted**

Construct	Item	Factor loading	R-square	AVE	
CSRI	CSRE1	0.730	0.702	0.671	
	CSRE2	0.745			
	CSRE3	0.762			
	CSRE4	0.772			
	CSRE5	0.730			
	CSRE6	0.707			
	CSRS1	0.731	0.470	0.706	
	CSRS2	0.766			
	CSRS3	0.697			
	CSRS4	0.724			
	CSRS5	0.754			
	CSRSB	CSRS6	0.758	0.596	0.686
		CSRS7	0.771		
		CSRS8	0.758		
		CSRS9	0.797		
CSRS10		0.712			
WOM1		0.782	0.533	0.741	
WOM2		0.712			
WOM3		0.782			
CM1		0.651			
CM2		0.788			
BE		CM3	0.718	0.571	0.727
		CP1	0.727		
		CP2	0.728		
		CP3	0.729		
		CP4	0.713		
	SE1	0.747	0.702	0.723	
	SE2	0.742			
	SE3	0.737			
	SE4	0.742			
	SE5	0.739			
	CBL	AE1	0.748	0.637	0.668
		AE2	0.719		
		AE3	0.713		
		AE4	0.764		
		AE5	0.748		
BHE1		0.770	0.595	0.665	
BHE2		0.705			
BHE3		0.779			
BHE4		0.736			
BHE5		0.737			
CBL		BHE6	0.757	0.505	0.705
		BI1	0.729		
		BI2	0.737		
		BI3	0.704		
		BI4	0.773		
	PQ1	0.757	0.548	0.671	
	PQ2	0.742			
	PQ3	0.727			
	PQ4	0.751			
	PQ5	0.750			
	CBL	CS1	0.754	0.492	0.678
		CS2	0.754		
		CS3	0.756		
		CS4	0.770		
		CS5	0.783		
BL1		0.736	0.579	0.672	
BL2		0.756			
BL3		0.748			
BL4		0.767			
BL5		0.749			
BL6		0.771			

connection between variables. Path plotting and path coefficient estimation assist researchers in comprehending and quantifying the

**Table 8: Confirmatory factor analysis**

Item	Estimated model
Chi-square	5115.092
Degrees of freedom	2611
P value	0
Chi <sup>2</sup> /df	1.959
RMSEA	0.042
RMSEA Low 90% CI	0.04
RMSEA High 90% CI	0.043
SRMR	0.039
CFI	0.901

**Table 9: Path analysis**

Causal path	Path coefficients
BE -> AE	0.798
BE -> BH	0.772
BE -> CBL	0.264
BE -> SE	0.772
CBL -> BI	0.711
CBL -> BL	0.761
CBL -> CT	0.702
CBL -> PQ	0.74
CSRI -> BE	0.427
CSRI -> CBL	0.176
CSRI -> CH	0.772
CSRI -> CI	0.838
CSRI -> CS	0.685
CSRI -> CSRSB	0.667
CSRSB -> BE	0.375
CSRSB -> CBL	0.232
CSRSB -> CM	0.755
CSRSB -> CP	0.838
CSRSB -> WM	0.73

impacts of various factors by illustrating the relationships between variables. By graphing the model and conducting linear regression analysis. Utilizing the route coefficients, the researcher can ascertain the magnitude of the correlation between the variables.

Given that SmartPLS is unable to directly compute the significance between variables, it will be computed via Bootstrapping. Subsamples of 5000 will be chosen for parallel processing. Table 10 demonstrates the analysis outcome of structural equation modelling. The path coefficients ( $\beta$ ) represent the standardized magnitude of the impact of the independent factors on the dependent variable. The standard error (S.E.) quantifies the accuracy of estimating the coefficients, and the t-value is employed to evaluate the significance of these coefficients.

The results of the route analysis demonstrated that all paths exhibit a statistically significant positive correlation, supporting the hypotheses and confirming substantial positive associations among the variables.

The CSR Initiative (CSRI) variable had the highest influence on CSR Supportive Behavior (CSRSB), with a standardized path coefficient of 0.667 and a t-value of 27.538 ( $P < 0.001$ ). This indicates that stronger CSR initiatives significantly increase consumer endorsement of CSR supporting behaviors. The findings suggesting that consumers who perceive a brand's CSR activities as authentic and meaningful are more likely to support these

**Table 10: Structural equation modelling**

Causal path	$\beta$	S.E.	t	P values	Status
BE -> CBL	0.264	0.041	6.379	0.000	Significantly positively related
CSRI -> BE	0.427	0.038	11.274	0.000	Significantly positively related
CSRI -> CBL	0.176	0.042	4.223	0.000	Significantly positively related
CSRI -> CSRSB	0.667	0.024	27.538	0.000	Significantly positively related
CSRSB -> BE	0.375	0.038	9.825	0.000	Significantly positively related
CSRSB -> CBL	0.232	0.043	5.425	0.000	Significantly positively related

initiatives through positive behaviors such as advocacy and ethical purchasing. This highlights the role of CSR as a driver of consumer engagement, encouraging individuals to align their personal values with corporate social responsibility efforts.

Furthermore, CSRSB had a strong impact on Brand Experience (BE), with a standardized path coefficient of 0.375 and a t-value of 9.825 ( $P < 0.001$ ). This suggests that consumers who actively support CSR efforts tend to have enhanced brand experiences, reinforcing the role of CSR engagement in shaping consumer perceptions. Similarly, CSR-supportive behaviors were found to enhance brand experience, indicating that when consumers engage in CSR activities, they perceive the brand more favorably, which enhances their interactions with the brand. Lastly, the study established a positive relationship between CSR-supportive behaviors and consumer brand loyalty, confirming that consumers who actively support CSR initiatives are more likely to remain loyal to brands that align with their values.

Additionally, the path coefficient between CSRI and BE was 0.427, with a t-value of 11.274 ( $P < 0.001$ ), confirming that CSR initiatives have a substantial impact on brand experience. This means that firms that prioritize CSR efforts provide consumers with a more immersive and engaging brand experience. The result reinforcing the idea that socially responsible brands enhance consumers' emotional and psychological engagement with the brand. Consumers develop more meaningful connections when they perceive brands as ethical and purpose-driven, leading to an enriched overall experience.

Moreover, the relationship between BE and Consumer Brand Loyalty (CBL) was found to be significant, with a standardized path coefficient of 0.264 and a t-value of 6.379 ( $P = 0.001$ ). This demonstrates that a higher quality of brand experience leads to stronger brand loyalty, reinforcing the argument that positive consumer interactions with a brand contribute to long-term loyalty. Consumers with positive and immersive brand experiences are more likely to develop emotional attachments, fostering long-term brand loyalty.

The indirect effect of CSRI on CBL was also statistically significant, with a path coefficient of 0.176 and a t-value of 4.223 ( $P < 0.001$ ). This indicates that CSR initiatives influence brand loyalty through the mediating effect of brand experience, emphasizing the crucial role of CSR engagement in shaping consumer attachment to brands.

Overall, the findings indicate that CSRI have a direct impact on CBL. Additionally, they indirectly influence brand loyalty

**Table 11: Confidence intervals**

Causal path	Confidence interval
CSRI -> BE -> CBL	(0.076, 0.154)
CSRSB -> BE -> CBL	(0.064, 0.138)

through mediating factors such as improving brand experience. The approaches offer crucial empirical evidence to inform future studies on the correlation between CSR and CBL. In SEM, a direct relationship refers to a link that exists directly between an exogenous latent variable and an endogenous latent variable. Consequently, six hypotheses that align with the research topics has been validated. Overall, CSR initiatives exert substantial direct and indirect influences on CSR supportive behavior and consumer brand loyalty. The effect is further intensified by the mediating roles of brand experience. The brand experience plays crucial roles in fostering consumer brand loyalty. CSR-supportive behaviors significantly influence many routes, including brand experience and consumer brand loyalty.

#### 4.4. Mediating Effect of Employee-Organization Relationship (EOR)

Beyond the direct effects, this study examined whether brand experience mediates the relationships between CSR initiatives, CSR-supportive behaviors, and consumer brand loyalty. This section examines the mediating effects of the latent components of this study: brand experience. This work employed SmartPLS4 structural equation modeling to investigate hypothesis 7 and 8. The bootstrap method was employed in this study to assess the mediation effect. To comprehend the mediating function of brand experience on the influence of CSR activities and CSR supportive behaviors on consumer brand loyalty, distinct indirect effects were examined. Table 11 show the confidence intervals for each indirect effect.

Next, Table 12 presents the comprehensive results for each pathway whereby this study investigated the influence of brand experience as mediating variables by analyzing the direct, indirect, and total effects of CSR activities and CSR-supportive behaviors on consumer brand loyalty.

The confidence interval for the specific indirect effect of CSRI on CBL through BE is (0.076, 0.154). This signifies that the indirect effect is positive and statistically significant, as the confidence interval excludes zero. The direct effect of CSRI on BE and subsequently on CBL is 0.176, with a t-value of 4.223; the indirect effect is 0.113, with a t-value of 5.642; and the total effect is 0.477, with a t-value of 15.002. The P-value is 0, while the VAF is 64%, signifying a partial mediating effect. Consequently, hypothesis H7 was validated.

**Table 12:** Mediation analysis of CSR initiatives and CSR-supportive behaviour on consumer brand loyalty via brand experience

Causal path	Direct effect (t-value)	Indirect effects (t-value)	Total effects (t-value)	P	VAF	Interpretation	Results
CSRI -> BE -> CBL	0.176 (4.223)	0.113 (5.642)	0.477 (15.002)	0	64%	Partial mediation	H7 supported
CSRSB -> BE -> CBL	0.232 (5.425)	0.099 (5.204)	0.198 (7.74)	0	43%	Partial mediation	H8 supported

The confidence range for the specific indirect effect of CSRSB on CBL through BE was (0.064, 0.138), signifying that this indirect effect was both positive and statistically significant. The direct effect of CSRSB on BE and subsequently on CBL was 0.232, accompanied by a t-value of 5.425; the indirect effect was 0.099 with a t-value of 5.204; and the total effect was 0.198 with a t-value of 7.74. The P-value was 0, and the VAF was 43%, signifying a partial mediating effect. Consequently, hypothesis H8 was corroborated.

The findings indicated that BE partially moderated the impacts of CSRI and CSRSB on CBL across all routes. Elevated VAF values further corroborated the existence of a mediating effect, and all hypotheses were validated by statistical significance ( $P < 0.01$ ). The mediation analysis showed that CSR initiatives contribute to positive brand experiences, which, in turn, strengthen consumer loyalty. This suggests that brands must go beyond implementing CSR initiatives; they must also ensure that these initiatives contribute to memorable and engaging brand interactions. Similarly, the findings revealed that CSR-supportive behaviors influence brand experience, which subsequently enhances consumer loyalty. When consumers actively participate in CSR-related activities, such as supporting social causes or promoting sustainability, their engagement with the brand deepens, reinforcing brand commitment.

These findings underscore the importance of brand experience as a key driver of brand loyalty. CSR alone may not be enough to secure long-term consumer commitment, but when paired with a strong brand experience, it significantly enhances brand loyalty. Brands should therefore focus on creating meaningful interactions alongside CSR initiatives to foster deeper connections with consumers.

In summary, CSR initiatives and CSR-supportive behaviors positively impact consumer brand loyalty, but their influence is significantly strengthened when they contribute to a compelling brand experience. This study highlights the need for brands to integrate CSR efforts with consumer engagement strategies to maximize their impact on brand loyalty.

## 5. CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that CSR initiatives and CSR-supportive behaviours play a significant role in shaping brand experience and, ultimately, consumer brand loyalty. The findings confirm that CSR initiatives not only encourage supportive consumer behaviours but also enhance the emotional and experiential engagement consumers develop with a brand. Both CSR initiatives and CSR-supportive behaviours exert direct positive effects on brand loyalty, yet their influence is considerably strengthened when channelled

through a compelling brand experience. The mediation results highlight brand experience as a crucial mechanism through which CSR-driven perceptions translate into long-term consumer commitment. These insights underscore the need for brands, particularly in the sports industry, to align CSR strategies with meaningful consumer engagement efforts to maximise loyalty outcomes.

Despite its contributions, the study is limited by its focus on a narrow set of variables, reliance on quantitative and cross-sectional data, and the contextual specificity of Chinese sports brands. Future research should broaden the model to other industries, adopt longitudinal designs, and incorporate qualitative or mixed method approaches to capture deeper consumer motivations. Further exploration of additional mediators and moderators such as brand authenticity, satisfaction, or digital engagement would provide a more comprehensive understanding of how CSR and experiential branding jointly cultivate enduring consumer loyalty.

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