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Evaluating the Mediating Effect
of Perception of Corporate
Social Responsibility
Commitment

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ABSTRACT

This paper uses the social identity theory and the theory of planned behavior to explore factors affecting consumer purchase intentions. Additionally, considering the theory of the extended self, this paper tries to (1) evaluate whether consumers' perception of a firm's corporate social responsibility (CSR) commitment has a critical effect on their purchase decisions and (2) test that perception's mediating role in consumers' purchase-decision process. CSR can be defined as the voluntary integration of social concerns into business operations and interactions with stakeholders. Self-reported survey data were obtained from 558 customers of mobile phone stores. Study hypotheses were tested using multiple regression and hierarchical regression. This study found that consumer-company identification has a positive effect on purchase intentions, consumer perception of CSR commitment mediates the relationship between consumer-company identification and purchase intentions, and consumer perception of CSR commitment (economic, legal, ethical, and discretionary responsibilities) has a significant effect on purchase intentions. Social responsibility activity has become a new indicator of consumer satisfaction, and it is also a critical factor in determining consumers' purchase intention. Therefore, the integration of CSR and marketing strategies is indispensable for maintaining and creating competitive advantages. This paper aims to identify determinants of purchase intentions and the role that CSR plays in consumers' purchase-decision process. The results of this paper can be a reference for businesses in devising business strategies based on consumer needs.

Keywords

purchase intention, consumer-company identification, corporate social responsibility

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Introduction

Marketing is mainly intended to influence consumer behavior. The consumer purchase process—from the reception of information, to stimulation, and through to the actual purchase—has always been a primary focus of marketing scholars and practitioners [1–4]. The extant research on consumer behavior has used various models to explore consumer behavior; among these, the Engel–Kollat–Blackwell (EKB) model [5] is the most popular. This model views consumer behavior as a dynamic ongoing process and suggests that a consumer's decision process is influenced by multiple factors, including decisional variables such as beliefs, attitude, and intentions, as well as external factors. It has been empirically shown that in addition to price and quality, most consumers consider their relationship with the company selling the desired product before making a purchase decision [6–8]. Many early theories such as the theory of reasoned action (TRA) [9] and the theory of planned behavior (TPB) [10], as well as recent ones such as the technology acceptance model [11] and the self-categorization theory [12,13], have stated that consumer identification with a company facilitates the establishment of a strong, committed, and meaningful relationship that can further influence consumers' purchase intentions. According to Bhattacharya and Sen [14], consumer–company identification is the primary psychological substrate for the type of deep, committed, and meaningful relationships that marketers seek to build with customers. This type of relationship allows consumers to both identify and satisfy their self-definitional needs. However, in modern Asian markets, the current body of research on consumer–company identification has not probed into whether the relationship between consumer identification and purchase intentions is mediated by any important factor. This paper seeks to answer this question.

In recent years, corporate social responsibility (CSR) has become a popular research topic in Western countries. CSR refers to a business's obligation to make decisions or follow lines of action that are desirable in terms of the objectives and values of society [15]. To show their concern for society, an increasing number of businesses have engaged in CSR activities in recent years [16–18]. Many studies have documented that consumers favor and more positively react to businesses that are committed to CSR [19]. Advocates of CSR believe that businesses can benefit society and also win consumer support by undertaking CSR activities, which is good for the businesses as well. The survey results of Becker-Olsen et al. [20] indicate that over 80 % of the respondents considered it necessary for businesses to undertake CSR activities, 76 % agreed that businesses can benefit from commitment to CSR activities, and 52 % mentioned that they would show their support for socially responsible businesses by buying products from them. From these empirical findings, we can infer that undertaking CSR activity as feedback to stakeholders has become an expectation of modern consumers.

Although practiced in Western nations for a long time, CSR was not emphasized in Asia until recent years. Systematic research regarding the effects of CSR in Eastern nations remains sparse. The purposes of this study were to (1) evaluate whether consumers' perception of a firm's CSR commitment has a critical effect on their buying decision and (2) test its mediating role in the customers' decision process.

Global cooperate scandals such as those of Enron and WorldCom have led to an assessment of business ethics and CSR [21]. These events have also caused academic and business organizations to become increasingly interested in marketing ethics. Early marketing theories focused within the areas of marketing management, advertising, and technological improvement [22,23]. However, there was a lack of attention paid to the buyer-side ethics—that is, consumers' perception of sellers' CSR. Because of economic globalization and the development of information dissemination via networks, business activities are increasingly influenced by consumer values and political, social, and cultural factors. As a result, a business's development and survival in the market rely more heavily on its responsiveness to both internal and external environments. Marketing is an essential part of business management and forms part of a business's response to its operating environment. The effectiveness of marketing efforts directly affects a firm's economic benefits [24,25]. With the advancement of technologies, businesses have to create new and diverse products to meet consumer needs. Capturing consumer preferences and making unique organizational characteristics perceivable to consumers is always critical for marketers and managers alike.

The mobile phone is one of the most crucial information and communication technology applications for government and business. Relative to other information–communication technologies, mobile phones play a more significant role in our daily lives. In the past, both research and practice focused on upgrading technology and research and development, but evaluations of the social images of mobile phone providers were deficient. This article introduces a CSR conceptualization that emphasizes the role and potential contribution of the marketing discipline. The objectives of this paper are (1) to evaluate the effects of consumer–company identification on purchase intentions, (2) to investigate whether consumer perceptions of corporate commitment to CSR (economic, legal, ethical, and discretionary responsibilities) affect purchase intention, and (3) to test whether consumer perceptions of corporate commitment to CSR mediate the relationship between consumer–company identification and purchase intentions. Research participants were selected from consumers who wanted to buy a new mobile phone and were found outside mobile phone stores. Using an effective survey, we attempted to identify determinants of purchase intentions and the role that CSR plays in consumers' decision process. The results of this study can be a reference for businesses in devising marketing strategies based on

consumer needs and help them create maximum competitive advantages.

Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

PURCHASE INTENTION

Purchase intention is defined as the consumer's readiness and willingness to purchase a certain product or service. It is usually viewed as a determinant of consumer buying behavior [26]. From the perspective of social psychology, explaining human behavior is a very complicated task. Both TRA and TPB [27] propose that effective prediction of individual intention and behavior requires consideration of three major factors: attitude toward behavior, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control [28].

Consumers' purchase intention is affected by numerous factors [29,30]. According to the EKB model, consumer behavior is dominated by three clusters of factors: individual differences, environmental impacts, and psychological processes. In addition, many empirical studies [31–34] have shown that product price, quality, individual differences, and value perceptions are determinants of purchase intentions. Parasuraman et al. [35] proposed that if a company offers excellent services, consumers will have a positive intention to purchase products from that company. That is to say, consumers have stronger purchase intentions when they perceive desired values as being delivered by the company.

CONSUMER-COMPANY IDENTIFICATION

Consumer-company identification is defined as a subjective and sensitive attitude toward an organization. It is a psychological linkage between a person's self-concepts and an organization's corporate identity [36]. Consumer-company identification can be viewed as the overlapping element of the consumer's self-concepts and the company's identity. The larger the overlapping element, the more the consumer identifies with the company. However, this type of identification is mainly based on an affective linkage rather than a rational one [37,38].

The concept of consumer-company identification emerged from the social identity theory [39] and the self-categorization theory. It implies a sense of oneness and belonging. Consumer-company identification can change a person's beliefs, attitude, and identity, and therefore plays a very important role in consumer behavior. Consumers demonstrate their identification with a company through their behavior [40–42]. Therefore, after winning consumer identification, businesses can influence consumers' beliefs and further affect their buying behavior.

EFFECTS OF CONSUMER-COMPANY IDENTIFICATION ON PURCHASE INTENTIONS

Consumer-company identification works according to the think-feel-do model [43]. According to self-categorization

theory, consumer-company identification entails consumers' categorization of the self as a member of the company. When consumers have positive perceptions of a company, their behavioral response will show their psychological state. It will be very easy for the company to directly influence the behavioral intentions of these consumers [44,45].

Ajzen's TPB also offers some explanation for the relationship between consumer-company identification and purchase intention. TPB proposes that intention is the main driver of behavior. That is, a person is more likely to perform a behavior when he or she has a stronger intention to do so [46]. Intention is dominated by three primary factors: attitude toward behavior, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. If we assume that all human behaviors are rational, we can say that people will conduct an adequate and rational assessment before undertaking any behavior based on collected information. Consumer-company identification is a concept derived from psychology, and it is a subjective and sensitive attitude. From the perspective of TPB, identification is an approach to influencing behavior intention. Thus we can infer that consumer-company identification influences consumers' affective response to a company and will further affect their purchase intention.

To sum up, through the processes of observation, cognition, thinking, and evaluation, consumers will generate positive beliefs regarding a company when they perceive oneness with or belonging to the company. As they continue to receive new information about the company that reaffirms their beliefs, a strong and positive attitude toward the company will emerge and further influence their behavior intention. In other words, greater consumer-company identification leads to a stronger purchase intention. Therefore, we propose the following hypothesis:

H1: Consumer-company identification has a positive effect on purchase intentions.

CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

CSR refers to a business entity's attention to and fulfillment of responsibilities to multiple stakeholders who exist at various levels [47]. It involves conducting a business so that it is economically profitable, law abiding, and ethically and socially supportive. CSR as a topic continues to receive increased attention from scholars and practitioners in the management field, from the perspectives of both social issues [48,49] and stakeholder management [50]. In terms of the internal aspect, firms with a good social responsibility reputation may attract better employees or increase current employees' motivation, morale, commitment, and loyalty to the firm. In addition, they also may improve relations with external stakeholders such as customers, investors, bankers, suppliers, and competitors. Disclosure of information about a firm's behaviors and outcomes regarding

social responsibility may help build a positive image for stakeholders [51,52].

This paper employs the CSR pyramid model proposed by Carroll [47]. The pyramid consists of four dimensions, namely, economic, legal, ethical, and philanthropic responsibilities. Economic responsibilities refer to the production of goods that can meet consumer needs and maintain the company's economic growth. Legal responsibilities refer to fulfilling the economic responsibilities within the boundaries set by the legal system; in other words, businesses have to ensure the legal compliance of every activity they undertake in society. Ethical responsibilities refer to all activities and practices that are expected or prohibited by society or have not been codified into law. Philanthropic responsibilities are those that contribute to society voluntarily based on moral requirements and society's expectations of organizations [47].

EFFECTS OF CONSUMER PERCEPTIONS OF CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY COMMITMENT ON PURCHASE INTENTIONS

The stakeholder theory states that consumers are the largest stakeholder group. Corporate profits mainly come from consumer purchases. With the rise of consumer awareness, businesses can hardly motivate consumer buying if they do not align their actions with consumer expectations. The relationship between consumer–company identification and purchase intentions can be explained by the social identity theory, self-categorization theory, and TPB. In developing a relationship with a company, consumers will compare and their self-concepts with the company's perceived corporate identity. When they recognize any match or overlap between the two, they will form a closer relationship with the company, and their attachment to that company will be reflected in their behavior intention. However, many researchers [53] have pointed out that these theories are based on an ideal context, and it is hard to explain how identification induces changes in behavioral intentions in real-life situations. Ellemers et al. [54] mentioned that individuals decide their behavior based on various factors not limited to perceived category or sense of belonging. Therefore, we speculate that the relationship between consumer–company identification and purchase intentions is mediated by one or more important factors.

CSR advocates believe that a business can benefit society as well itself by undertaking CSR activities [55–57]. Webster and Frederic [58] have shown that consumers will consider the effects of their individual buying behavior upon society or attempt to change society by changing their buying behavior. In other words, corporate ethical behavior affects not only consumers' evaluations, but also their purchase intentions. Creyer [59] mentioned that consumers reward or punish a company based on their expectation of the firm's social responsibility and its actual ethical behavior; that is, consumers increase their

intention to buy products from a company if the company's behavior meets their expectations and decrease their purchase intention otherwise. Many subsequent studies obtained similar findings: consumers use their actions to reward socially responsible businesses; corporate dedication to environmental protection and ethical responsibilities are important factors that consumers consider when making a buying decision [60,61]. Therefore, we propose the following hypothesis:

H2: Consumer perception of the company's CSR commitment has a positive effect on purchase intentions.

MEDIATING EFFECT OF CONSUMER PERCEPTION OF CSR COMMITMENT

The theories and discussions presented above suggest that both consumer–company identification and perceptions of CSR may affect consumers' purchase intentions. How does the perception of CSR mediate the relationship between the consumer–company identification and purchase intentions? We believe that this dynamic can be better and more reasonably explained if we incorporate the theory of extended self [62] into our research model. Purchase behavior is both a presentation and a reflection of the consumer. Consumers will involve their expectations and considerations in decision making, and the effects of their sense of self will be extended to evaluations of the company and the company's actions [63]. As consumers pay more and more attention to CSR, it might not be sufficient for a company to use only the traditional 4P marketing strategies (i.e., product, price, place, and promotion), because consumers' expectations and perceptions of corporate CSR performance will be reflected in their attitude and beliefs, which in turn affect their buying behavior [64].

With the rise of consumer awareness, in addition to traditional factors such as price and quality, consumers will also take into account a company's CSR actions before buying any of its goods. If the company meets social expectations in terms of its economic, legal, ethical, and discretionary responsibilities and has made voluntarily efforts, as suggested by the theory of extended self, consumers will take actions to support and reward the company and show their identification with the company. In other words, consumers' identification with a company influences their purchase intentions under the mediation of their perception of the company's CSR actions. Therefore, we propose the following hypothesis:

H3: The relationship between consumer–company identification and purchase intentions is mediated by consumer perception of the company's CSR commitment.

Methodology and Measurements

SAMPLES AND PROCEDURE

Unlike previous studies, this work considers the effects of consumer perceptions of CSR commitment in an attempt to

capture a full picture of the relationship between consumer–company identification and purchase intentions. This study focused on mobile phones to explore this relationship. With the advancement of technology, a variety of mobile communication devices have been developed. Today, mobile phones are indispensable devices that people use for communication and entertainment. To many people, their phone is also a symbol of fashion and taste. With the stable increase of Taiwan’s economy and improvements in mobile communication technology, Taiwan’s mobile phone market has substantial growth potential; that is, consumers’ behavior in relation to their mobile phones should not be ignored. Because a mobile phone is a consumer product that can represent a person’s taste and shopping habits, it is a very suitable subject of our research. We directly surveyed consumers entering mobile phone stores. These consumers had evident intention to buy a mobile phone, so we could better capture the factors affecting their purchase intentions. At the top of each questionnaire, a line stated, “Please answer the following questions based on the brand of the mobile phone you are going to buy.”

To ensure the content validity of the measurement instrument, we developed the questionnaire in two stages. First, an initial questionnaire was designed based on a review of the literature followed by a discussion with experts in marketing and business management. These experts assessed the wording, logic, and appropriateness of the draft. Second, the revised version was modified based on the pre-test to ensure that each item was suited to this research and was interpreted as expected. We distributed a total of 600 questionnaires. After excluding 42 responses that had some columns left blank or were otherwise incomplete, we obtained 558 valid responses. **Table 1** shows the demographics of respondents.

MEASURES OF CONSTRUCTS

According to Fishbein and Ajzen [9], purchase intention is the strength of one’s belief that he or she will perform a buying behavior. A famous work on measuring purchase intention was conducted by Putrevu and Lord [65]. The items in that questionnaire included the following: (1) “It is very likely that I will buy (brand),” (2) “I will purchase (brand) the next time I need a product,” and (3) “I will definitely try (brand).” On the questionnaire’s 5-point Likert scale, 1 denoted “highly disagree,” 2 denoted “disagree,” 3 denoted “neutral,” 4 denoted “agree,” and 5 denoted “highly agree.” A higher score indicated a stronger intention to purchase the product.

From the perspective of Mael and Ashforth [66], consumer–company identification is the consumer’s feeling of oneness with the company. In the consumer–company identification scale developed by Mael and Ashforth, there are six questions to measure consumer–company identification on a 5-point Likert scale. In this scale, 1 denotes “highly disagree,” 2 denotes “disagree,” 3 denotes “neutral,” 4 denotes “agree,” and 5

TABLE 1 Respondent demographics.

	Frequency	Respondent Percentage, %
Gender		
Male	234	42
Female	324	58
Age		
11–20	100	18
21–30	385	69
31–40	28	5
41–50	28	5
Above 50	17	3
Marital status		
Unmarried	502	90
Married	56	10
Education		
Ph.D.	18	3
Graduate	84	15
Undergraduate	367	66
High school	89	16
Annual income		
Under 500 000	418	75
500 001–1 000 000	112	20
Above 1 000 000	28	5

N = 558.

denotes “highly agree.” A higher score indicates a stronger identification with the company.

Carroll [47] identifies four dimensions of CSR: economic, legal, ethical, and discretionary responsibilities. Based on the CSR scale developed by Maignan et al. [63], we included 16 questions to measure CSR on a 5-point Likert scale. In this scale, 1 denoted “highly disagree,” 2 denoted “disagree,” 3 denoted “neutral,” 4 denoted “agree,” and 5 denoted “highly agree.” A higher score also indicated a higher perception of the company’s CSR commitment.

Most marketing scholars view perceived price and perceived quality as two fundamental factors affecting consumer buying behavior. Therefore, we included these two variables as control variables in our model. Perceived price was measured by five questions adapted from the work of Ailawadi et al. [67] and Burton et al. [68]. Perceived quality was also measured by five questions adapted from a study by Ailawadi et al. [67]. A higher score indicated that the respondent considered the price (or quality) factor to be more important. Other control variables in the model included gender, age, marital status, education, and annual income [69,70].

Empirical Results

RELIABILITY AND DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

To justify the use of factor analysis in this situation, we applied the Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) test. The KMO measure of

sampling adequacy is an index to examine the appropriateness of factor analysis [71]. In this study, the KMO value of purchase intention was 0.70, and the value of consumer–company identification was 0.84. For CSR elements, the KMO value of economic responsibility was 0.67, the value of legal responsibility was 0.79, the value of ethical responsibility was 0.83, and the value of discretionary responsibility was 0.74. The overall KMO test indicated that the sample was adequate and therefore fit for factor analysis.

The results of factor loading and the percentage of variation are explained as follows: Regarding purchase intention, each factor loading was greater than 0.837, and this factor explains 79.867 % of the variance in the initial questionnaire. The overall factor loading was between 0.636 and 0.927, and these values indicated that no initial questionnaire should be thrown out. To test the reliability of the instrument, Cronbach's α relating to all variables was computed. The Cronbach's α values for the individual variables of purchase intention (0.871), consumer–company identification (0.848), economic responsibility (0.683), legal responsibility (0.818), ethical responsibility (0.876), and discretionary responsibility (0.793) indicated that the measure was compositely reliable and internally consistent as recommended by Nunnally [72].

The mean level of purchase intention was 3.635, indicating that most respondents were very likely to purchase mobile phones carrying the same brand in the future. The mean level of consumer–company identification was 2.964, indicating that most respondents felt mid-level identification with their current mobile phone company. The mean levels of perception of CSR commitment in the four dimensions were 4.379, 3.868, 3.542, and 3.657, respectively, and the overall average was 3.861. The level in the economic dimension was notably higher, meaning that most respondents agreed that their mobile phone makers had fulfilled their economic responsibilities. See Table 2 for details.

CORRELATION AND REGRESSION ANALYSIS

The correlations among purchase intention, consumer–company identification, and perceptions of CSR commitment were evaluated using Pearson's product-moment correlation

coefficient. As shown in Table 2, consumer–company identification was significantly and positively correlated with purchase intention ($r = 0.406$, $p < 0.005$). This finding confirms that stronger consumer–company identification leads to greater purchase intention. In addition, all four dimensions of CSR were significantly and positively correlated with purchase intention (ranging from 0.507 to 0.593; $p < 0.005$). It can be inferred that consumers are more likely to purchase products from a company that they perceive as committed to CSR. Among these dimensions, ethical responsibility had a relatively higher coefficient, suggesting that consumers' perception of corporate commitment to ethical responsibility has a relatively stronger impact on their purchase intention. Finally, all four CSR dimensions were also significantly and positively correlated with consumer–company identification (ranging from 0.220 to 0.344; $p < 0.005$). This result suggests that consumers are more likely to identify with a company when they perceive greater CSR commitment from the company. Among these dimensions, ethical responsibility had a relatively higher coefficient with consumer–company identification. In other words, businesses can more effectively win consumer identification by making greater efforts to fulfill and demonstrate their ethical responsibility.

EFFECTS OF CONSUMER-COMPANY IDENTIFICATION ON PURCHASE INTENTION

We further conducted multiple regression analysis to evaluate the effects of consumer–company identification on purchase intention. In the regression model, perceived price, perceived quality, and demographic variables including gender, age, marital status, education, and average annual income were set as control variables. As shown in the left side of Table 3, the adjusted R^2 of the model was 0.406, which reached the level of significance ($F = 48.624$; $p < 0.005$). The standardized regression coefficient for consumer–company identification was 0.392, which also reached the level of significance ($p < 0.005$), indicating that consumer–company identification led to stronger purchase intention. Therefore, H1 was supported.

The regression coefficients of education (-0.321 , $p < 0.005$) and income (-0.082 , $p = 0.019$) were negative, indicating that

TABLE 2 Mean, standard deviation, and correlation of variables.

	Mean	Standard Deviation	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1 Purchase intention	3.635	0.915	1						
2 Consumer–company identification	2.964	0.657	0.406 ^a	1					
3 Corporate social responsibility	3.861	0.581	0.675 ^a	0.323 ^a	1				
4 Economic responsibility	4.379	0.593	0.507 ^a	0.230 ^a	0.710 ^a	1			
5 Legal responsibility	3.868	0.760	0.556 ^a	0.273 ^a	0.904 ^a	0.537 ^a	1		
6 Ethical responsibility	3.542	0.750	0.593 ^a	0.344 ^a	0.872 ^a	0.406 ^a	0.799 ^a	1	
7 Discretionary responsibility	3.657	0.680	0.590 ^a	0.220 ^a	0.830 ^a	0.508 ^a	0.625 ^a	0.632 ^a	1

$N = 558$.

^a $p < 0.005$.

TABLE 3 Effect of consumer–company identification and CSR commitment on purchase intention.

Variable	Identification → Purchase Intention			CSR → Purchase Intention		
	β	p	Variance Inflation Factor	β	p	Variance Inflation Factor
Intercept	2.202	0.000		0.213	0.581	
Identification	0.392	0.000	1.129			
CSR				0.573	0.000	1.563
Gender	0.042	0.210	1.042	0.050	0.109	1.034
Age	−0.017	0.625	1.193	−0.023	0.481	1.192
Marital status	−0.166	0.000	1.312	−0.063	0.076	1.338
Education	−0.321	0.000	1.334	−0.081	0.032	1.507
Income	−0.082	0.019	1.138	−0.047	0.152	1.152
Price	0.014	0.685	1.051	−0.065	0.039	1.070
Quality	0.194	0.000	1.195	0.141	0.000	1.232
Adjusted R^2	0.406			0.481		
F	48.624	0.000		65.578	0.000	

$N = 558$. Two-tailed directional tests were used to test coefficients.

levels of education and income led to negative purchase intentions. We infer that mobile phones are not limited to communication devices and also are applicable in entertainment, Internet fields, etc. today. The users or consumers of mobile phones are mostly teenagers. Relative to the group of all respondents, teenagers as a group had lower education and income levels; thus, these findings show that lower income (or education) leads to greater purchase intention. The regression coefficient of quality was 0.194 ($p < 0.005$), indicating that mobile phone quality leads to positive purchase intentions. This finding is consistent with normal consumer behavior. Consumer age had no significant effect on purchase intention ($p = 0.625$). We infer that both rough scale and overly concentrated samples could be the cause of the lack of significant effect. In the age scale, 1 denoted 11–20 years old, 2 denoted 21–30 years old, 3 denoted 31–40 years old, 4 denoted 41–50 years, and 5 denoted an age of more than 50 years. As we did not ask for precise ages, the regression analysis could not accurately display the variance of different ages. Therefore, we could find only that consumer age had no significant effect upon purchase intention in our research.

EFFECTS OF CONSUMER PERCEPTIONS OF CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY COMMITMENT ON PURCHASE INTENTIONS

We also conducted multiple regression analyses to evaluate the effects of consumer perceptions of CSR commitment on purchase intentions. In the regression model, perceived price, perceived quality, and some demographic variables including gender, age, marital status, education, and average annual income were set as control variables. As shown in the right of **Table 3**, the adjusted R^2 of the model was 0.481, which reached the level of significance ($F = 65.578$; $p < 0.005$). The standardized regression coefficient for consumer perception of CSR commitment was 0.573, which reached the level of significance

($p < 0.005$), indicating that consumer perception of CSR commitment led to stronger purchase intention. Therefore, H2 was supported.

MEDIATING EFFECTS OF CONSUMER PERCEPTIONS OF CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY COMMITMENT

Following the theory of extended self, we included a more tangible and measurable factor, namely, consumer perception of CSR commitment, in our model to test whether this factor mediates the relationship between consumer–company identification and purchase intentions. To test this hypothesis, we relied on Baron and Kenny's [73] calculations for mediation. They suggested that a variable may be considered a mediator to the extent to which it carries the influence of a given independent variable (IV) to a given dependent variable (DV). Generally speaking, mediation can be said to occur when (1) the IV significantly affects the mediator, (2) the IV significantly affects the DV in the absence of the mediator, (3) the mediator has a significant unique effect on the DV, and (4) the effect of the IV on the DV shrinks upon the addition of the mediator to the model. Therefore, first, we examined the effects of consumer–company identification on consumer perception of CSR commitment. As shown by model 1 in **Table 4**, the adjusted R^2 of the model was 0.437 and reached the level of significance ($F = 54.955$; $p < 0.005$). In this model, consumer–company identification had a standardized regression coefficient of 0.309, and the coefficient was significant ($p < 0.005$). This finding confirms that higher consumer–company identification can lead to stronger perception of CSR commitment. We then examined the effects of consumer–company identification on purchase intentions. As shown in **Table 3**, consumer–company identification had a standardized regression coefficient of 0.392 ($p < 0.005$). Finally, consumer–company identification, perception of CSR commitment, and purchase intention were entered into the regression

TABLE 4 Mediating effects of consumer perception of CSR commitment.

Variables	Model 1: Dependent Variable = CSR			Model 2: Dependent Variable = Purchase Intention		
	β	Standard Error	p	β	Standard Error	p
Intercept	2.659	0.229	0.000	0.247	0.368	0.502
Identification	0.309	0.030	0.000	0.248	0.046	0.000
CSR				0.467	0.061	0.000
Gender	0.026	0.039	0.417	0.029	0.056	0.322
Age	0.047	0.028	0.179	-0.039	0.040	0.218
Marital status	-0.158	0.054	0.000	-0.092	0.078	0.007
Education	-0.379	0.034	0.000	-0.144	0.054	0.000
Income	-0.099	0.038	0.004	-0.036	0.055	0.253
Price	0.125	0.037	0.000	-0.045	0.054	0.140
Quality	0.213	0.035	0.000	0.095	0.052	0.004
Adjusted R^2	0.437			0.528		
F	54.955		0.000	70.292		0.000

$N = 558$. Two-tailed directional tests were used to test coefficients.

analysis. As shown by model 2 in **Table 4**, the adjusted R^2 of the model was 0.528, which reached the level of significance ($F = 70.292$; $p < 0.005$). In this model, consumer perception of CSR commitment had a standardized regression coefficient of 0.467, and the coefficient was significant ($p < 0.005$); consumer-company identification had a standardized regression coefficient of 0.248, and the coefficient was also significant ($p < 0.005$). If we compare this to the value in **Table 3**, we see that the standardized regression coefficient of consumer-company identification dropped from 0.392 to 0.248. Based on Baron and Kenny's [73] calculations for mediation, this difference indicates that the relationship between consumer-company identification and purchase intention is partially mediated by consumer perception of CSR commitment. Therefore, H3 was supported.

Moreover, to estimate mediating effects in a more reliable way, we used the Structural Equation Model. We created a model that included both direct and indirect paths. **Figure 1** shows the path model and standardized regression weights and significance level. A significantly positive correlation existed between consumer-company identification and consumer perception of CSR commitment (path coefficient = 0.280; $p < 0.001$). A significantly positive correlation existed between consumer perception of CSR commitment and purchase

intention (path coefficient = 0.662; $p < 0.001$). We found a significant mediating effect of consumer perceptions of CSR commitment in the relationship between consumer-company identification and purchase intentions. In statistics, the significance of the mediated effect can be tested for with an estimate of its standard error. The most commonly used method is that derived by Sobel. After inputting relevant statistics (a , b , se_a , and se_b), we found that the Sobel test statistic was 4.847 ($p < 0.005$). We also used a bootstrapping method described by MacKinnon [74]. If zero is not within the confidence intervals, it can be claimed that the indirect effect is not zero with a certain percentage of confidence. **Table 5** shows the results of mediating tests. As for the direct effect, the bias-corrected 95 % confidence interval ranged from 0.230 to 0.517, and the percentile 95 % confidence interval ranged from 0.232 to 0.578. As for the indirect effect of the perception of CSR, the bias-corrected 95 % confidence interval ranged from 0.196 to 0.481, and the percentile 95 % confidence interval ranged from 0.199 to 0.485. Because zero is not included between the upper and lower bounds of the 95 % confidence interval, the partial mediating effect of the perception of CSR is established. H3 was supported, again.

ADDITIONAL ANALYSIS

Despite the abundance of research on CSR, the question of whether firms with higher CSR performance can win more consumer support was not addressed until recent years. Although many authors have stated that CSR commitment creates consumer support [75,76], they have not clearly identified which dimension of CSR has a more significant effect on consumer support. Therefore, based on Carrol's methodology [47], we divided consumer perceptions of CSR commitment into four dimensions and used regression analysis to examine their respective effects on purchase intention. Our regression results are shown in **Table 6**.

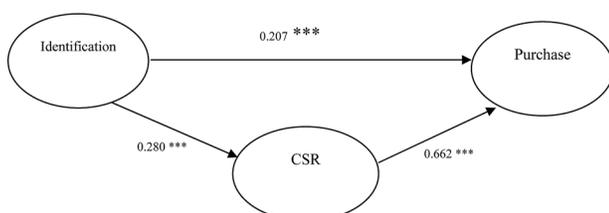
FIG. 1 Path model with standardized regression weights and significance level ($p < 0.005$).

TABLE 5 Result of mediating test by bootstrapping.

Variable	Bias-corrected 95 % CI		Percentile 95 % CI	
	Lower	Upper	Lower	Upper
Identification → purchase (indirect effect)	0.196	0.481	0.199	0.485
Identification → purchase (direct effect)	0.230	0.517	0.232	0.578

2000 bootstrap samples. CI, confidence interval.

The adjusted R^2 of the model was 0.535, which reached the level of significance ($F = 54.444$; $p < 0.005$). In this model, economic responsibility had a standardized regression coefficient of 0.164, which was significant ($p < 0.005$). The coefficient for legal responsibility was not significant ($p > 0.05$). Ethical responsibility had a standardized regression coefficient of 0.246, which was significant ($p < 0.005$). Discretionary responsibility had a standardized regression coefficient of 0.192, which was significant ($p < 0.005$). To sum up, among the four dimensions of CSR, economic responsibility, ethical responsibility, and discretionary responsibility were all found to have significant effects on purchase intention.

Conclusions and Implications

CONCLUSIONS

Drawing on a sample collected from mobile phone consumers, we evaluated the relationships among consumer–company identification, purchase intention, and consumer perception of CSR commitment. We also tested the mediating effect of consumer perception of CSR commitment. From our statistical analysis, we obtained three main findings as follows.

TABLE 6 Effects of each dimension of CSR commitment on purchase intention.

Variables	Dependent Variable: Purchase Intention			
	β	Standard Error	p	Variance Inflation Factor
Intercept	0.061	0.382	0.874	
Economic	0.164	0.062	0.000	1.918
Legal	−0.014	0.064	0.787	3.392
Ethical	0.246	0.063	0.000	3.245
Discretionary	0.192	0.057	0.000	2.130
Identification	0.239	0.046	0.000	1.320
Gender	0.032	0.056	0.279	1.044
Age	−0.034	0.040	0.279	1.207
Marital status	−0.097	0.079	0.005	1.403
Education	−0.129	0.056	0.001	1.712
Income	−0.042	0.055	0.180	1.160
Price	−0.045	0.055	0.146	1.124
Quality	0.087	0.052	0.009	1.318
Adjusted R^2	0.535			
F	54.444		0.000	

$N = 558$. Two-tailed directional tests were used to test coefficients.

First, consumer–company identification has a positive effect on purchase intentions. Identification is a process of accepting and internalizing the values of a person or organization. When consumers perceive a company as doing good and believe that people important to them also support their view, their belief in this company will further affect their behavioral intention. In other words, consumers' identification with a company has a positive effect on their attitude and will further increase their intention to purchase goods from the company. This finding echoes the results presented by Bhattacharya and Sen [14] and Cornwell and Coote [45].

Second, consumer perception of CSR commitment mediates the relationship between consumer–company identification and purchase intention. According to the theory of extended self, consumers favor products sold by a company they identify with and that reflects their self-image. They view “possession of the company's product” as a means to maintain their positive self-image. Nowadays, consumers pay increasing attention to CSR issues. They believe firms committed to the fulfillment of CSR are better. Under the effect of their extended self, they tend to purchase products whose images match their image and expectations as a way to display their self-concepts. In other words, perception of CSR commitment can help translate consumers' identification with a company into purchase intentions.

Third, consumer perception of CSR commitment has a significant effect on purchase intention. Among the four dimensions of CSR, economic responsibility, ethical responsibility, and discretionary responsibility were found to have significant effects. This finding shows that consumers have stronger intentions to buy products from a company that has fulfilled its economic responsibility while producing products that meet consumer needs, abided by the ethical norms accepted by the society, or voluntarily participated in public and charitable activities. This finding is consistent with the results obtained by Creyer [59] and Sen and Bhattacharya [61]. Because most people hold a positive attitude toward corporate commitment to social activities, corporate commitment to CSR conforms to consumers' expectations and can therefore increase consumer purchase intentions.

IMPLICATIONS

Our results showed that stronger consumer–company identification led to stronger purchase intentions and perceptions of CSR commitment. This implies that the more a person's self-

concept matches a company's identity, the easier it will be to increase a person's belief in, attitude toward, and identification with the company. Thus, businesses can first reinforce consumers' identification to increase purchase intentions. For instance, businesses can use event marketing to increase their exposure and reputation in the market. They can also use creative activities or propaganda to attract positive media reports and consumer participation. In addition, they can build affective bonding with consumers via advertisements to further affect purchase intention. One well-known example is the "Think Different" advertisement that former Apple Inc. CEO Steve Jobs came up with based on the psychological identification strategy to create a linkage between consumers' affections and behavioral intentions. This strategy successfully increased consumers' purchase intention and helped Apple Inc. generate substantial profits and resolve its business crisis. To be succinct, businesses should listen to consumers and interact with them to win their trust and identification. By winning greater consumer identification, they can generate a persistent increase in business performance.

Psychological factors behind purchase intentions are always an important issue for both scholars and practitioners. In recent years, CSR has become an important concept and research topic in the study of organizations [77,78], and consumers' understanding and expectations of CSR have likewise greatly increased. Therefore, in modern change management, incorporating CSR into marketing and making adequate adjustments based on changes in the market environment are imperative tasks for businesses. Consumers' identification with a company is a dynamic, ongoing process that involves numerous factors. In addition to building strong consumer identification, businesses should be dedicated to CSR activities to create positive associations between their image and their products in consumers' minds and transform consumers into champions.

Our empirical findings showed that consumers no longer look at only price and quality when making a purchase decision. CSR commitment is also an important factor they consider. Their perception of a company's CSR commitment will not only directly and positively affect their purchase intentions, but also mediate the relationship between their identification and purchase intentions. Therefore, CSR can be an effective marketing tool, and efforts in economic, ethical, and discretionary dimensions of CSR can more effectively increase consumers' purchase intentions.

CSR incurs a cost for businesses. It is rather impractical to expect all businesses to undertake CSR activities for purely ethical reasons. According to Joseph [79], economic incentives are the fundamental and internal drivers of CSR commitment. If all consumers support businesses committed to CSR and boycott those not committed to CSR, all businesses will be motivated to voluntarily engage in CSR. Research on CSR among Asian businesses is relatively rare compared with research on CSR among

Western firms. In this study, we attempted to conduct an analysis of a CSR issue in an Asian nation. We introduced a concept of CSR that emphasizes the role and potential contribution of a marketing strategy. Our empirical results showed that CSR commitment has become a new indicator of consumer satisfaction and is a critical factor determining consumers' purchase intentions. Therefore, in addition to effective management and the development of core abilities, integrating CSR and marketing strategies is also an indispensable key to being able to create and maintain competitive advantages in business.

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