



# Impact of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) on Brand Image and Consumer Preferences: A Case Study in the Automotive Industry

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## ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the effect of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) on brand image and consumer preference in the automotive industry, with a case study of motor vehicle consumers in Pontianak City. CSR is currently not only seen as a company's moral obligation, but also as a business strategy that can shape positive perceptions and create competitive advantages. This research uses a quantitative approach with a total of 100 respondents selected through purposive sampling technique. The research instrument was arranged in the form of a Likert scale closed questionnaire and analyzed by multiple linear regression. The results show that CSR has a significant effect on brand image and consumer preference, both directly and through brand image as an intervening variable. Brand image plays a strong mediating role, suggesting that consumer perceptions of corporate social responsibility shape loyalty and purchase intentions. Consumer preference is not only built through product features or price, but also through the emotional connection and social value built by companies through CSR programs. The implication of this study suggests that automotive companies in Pontianak and other regions make CSR a strategic part of brand management and market winning efforts. Consistent, authentic, and communicative CSR implementation can increase positive perceptions of the brand and strengthen the psychological bond between companies and consumers. Thus, CSR becomes an important element in modern sustainable marketing strategies.

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## INTRODUCTION

In the era of globalization and increasingly fierce business competition, companies are required to not only focus on financial benefits, but also pay attention to their social responsibilities. Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is one of the strategies used by companies to demonstrate their commitment to social and environmental issues. CSR covers a wide range of activities, from environmental programs, education, health, to community empowerment. By implementing CSR, companies hope to build better relationships with the

community and improve their reputation in the eyes of the public. According to Singh and Misra (2021), well-executed CSR can strengthen a company's image and increase consumer loyalty. This suggests that CSR is not only a tool to fulfill social obligations, but also an effective business strategy. In this context, it is important to understand how CSR affects consumers' perceptions of brands and their preferences in choosing products or services.

The automotive industry is one of the sectors that has a significant impact on the environment and society. Greenhouse gas emissions, energy consumption, and high use of natural resources are the main challenges faced by this industry. Therefore, automotive companies need to take proactive measures to reduce these negative impacts through CSR initiatives. For example, by developing green technologies, supporting recycling programs, or investing in social projects. Araújo et al. (2023) emphasize that sustainability-focused CSR initiatives can enhance brand image and strengthen relationships with consumers. CSR is thus an important tool for automotive companies to demonstrate their commitment to social and environmental issues, while building consumer trust.

Brand image plays a crucial role in influencing consumer purchasing decisions. A brand with a positive image is more likely to be trusted and chosen by consumers than a brand with a negative or unknown image. Effective CSR implementation can strengthen brand image by showing that the company cares about social and environmental issues. Brahmi et al. (2025) found that positive perceptions of automotive companies' CSR significantly improved brand image, which in turn influenced consumer preferences. This suggests that CSR can be an important differentiation factor in a competitive market. By building a strong brand image through CSR, companies can attract and retain more socially conscious consumers.

Consumer preference for a brand is not only influenced by product quality or price, but also by the values held by the company. Consumers are increasingly paying attention to how companies contribute to society and the environment. CSR is one of the indicators used by consumers to assess company values. Wang et al. (2021) showed that consumers' perceptions of a company's CSR influence their trust in the brand, which in turn affects preferences and purchasing decisions. Thus, companies that are active in CSR activities have a greater chance of attracting consumers who care about social and environmental issues. This is becoming increasingly important in the context of an increasingly competitive market and consumers who are increasingly aware of corporate social responsibility.

In Indonesia, consumer awareness of the importance of CSR in purchasing decisions is increasing. Consumers not only consider the functional aspects of the product, but also the ethical and social values represented by the company. Waluya et al. (2019) found that product quality and brand image directly influence customer satisfaction, which in turn influences purchasing decisions in the automotive sector. This suggests that CSR can be a determining factor in consumer preference for a particular automotive brand. Companies that successfully integrate CSR into their business strategies can build stronger relationships with consumers and increase their loyalty. Thus, CSR is not only a tool to fulfill social responsibility, but also an effective business strategy to improve the competitiveness of the company.

Pontianak, as the capital city of West Kalimantan Province, has experienced significant economic growth in recent years. This growth is supported by infrastructure improvements, urbanization, and increased purchasing power. The automotive industry in Pontianak has also shown positive growth, with increasing demand for motorized vehicles. However, this growth also brings challenges, especially related to environmental and social impacts. Therefore, it is important for automotive companies in Pontianak to implement sustainable and socially responsible business practices. The implementation of CSR can assist companies in addressing these challenges, while building better relationships with local communities. However, not many studies have examined the impact of CSR on brand image and consumer preference in Pontianak. This study aims to fill the gap and provide deeper insights into the role of CSR in the local context.

Consumers in Pontianak show a tendency to choose products that are not only of high quality, but also come from socially responsible companies. This reflects the changing values and preferences of consumers who increasingly prioritize ethical and sustainable aspects in their purchasing decisions. Companies that are active in CSR activities tend to be more trusted and valued by consumers. Shaikh et al. (2022) emphasized that CSR can increase organizational identification and employee commitment, which in turn has a positive impact on customer satisfaction and loyalty. Thus, effective CSR implementation can provide a competitive advantage for automotive companies in Pontianak. However, to achieve this, companies need to understand the needs and expectations of local consumers and customize their CSR strategies according to the local context.

Effective CSR implementation can increase consumer loyalty and strengthen brand position in the market. With increasing competition in the automotive industry, companies need to utilize CSR as a strategic tool to differentiate themselves from competitors and build stronger relationships with consumers. Lho et al. (2019) found that sustainability-focused CSR initiatives can enhance brand image and strengthen relationships with consumers. CSR is thus an important tool for automotive companies to demonstrate their commitment to social and environmental issues, while building consumer trust. However, to achieve optimal results, companies need to design and implement CSR programs that are relevant and in line with the needs and expectations of local consumers.

This study aims to analyze the impact of CSR on brand image and consumer preference in the automotive industry in Pontianak. By understanding this relationship, companies can design CSR programs that are more targeted and effective in improving consumer perceptions and driving purchasing decisions. Nguyen and Pham (2018) showed that consumers' perceptions of a company's CSR influence their trust in the brand, which in turn influences purchase preferences and decisions. Thus, this study is not only academically relevant, but also has significant practical implications for automotive companies in Pontianak. The results of this study are expected to provide theoretical contributions in the fields of marketing and CSR, as well as provide practical guidance for companies in developing CSR strategies that are aligned with the needs and expectations of consumers in Pontianak.

The results of this study are expected to provide theoretical contributions in the fields of marketing and CSR, as well as provide practical guidance for automotive companies in developing CSR strategies that are aligned with the needs and expectations of consumers in Pontianak. Thus, this research is not only academically relevant, but also has significant practical implications. Companies can use the findings from this study to design CSR programs that are more effective and appropriate to the local context, so as to improve brand image and consumer preferences. In addition, this study can also serve as a basis for future research that examines the role of CSR in the context of different industries and regions. Thus, this research is expected to contribute CSR in the context of the automotive industry also has strategic value that can strengthen the company's position in local and national competition. In Pontianak, which is one of the centers of economic growth in West Kalimantan, consumers are increasingly selective in choosing automotive products that are not only efficient but also come from companies that have high social responsibility. Automotive companies that are able to demonstrate harmony between business performance and social contributions tend to have a better place in consumers' hearts. CSR, if executed authentically and consistently, can create emotional branding that is difficult to compete with. According to Pritchard and Wilson (2018), consumer responses to green products and corporate social programs can create strong and positive brand perceptions. Therefore, CSR needs to be positioned not just as a corporate obligation, but as a sustainable source of added value for the brand itself.

In the digital era, information about CSR has become more accessible to the general public. Consumers can now quickly find out whether a company is actually implementing its CSR programs consistently or just for the sake of image. This phenomenon creates a new challenge for companies, which is to maintain the authenticity and sustainability of CSR initiatives. If CSR programs are perceived as a formality, they can damage brand image and reduce consumer trust. According to Suki and Suki (2019), transparency in CSR communication has a major influence on corporate reputation and consumer purchasing decisions. Therefore, in implementing CSR, automotive companies must prioritize integrity, consistency, and active community involvement as a form of social accountability.

CSR can also be an effective tool in building strong customer engagement, especially in local markets such as Pontianak that have high social closeness between communities. Involving local communities in CSR activities, such as job training programs, environmental conservation, or vocational education, can create an emotional connection between companies and consumers. Thus, consumers not only buy products because of functional needs, but also because they feel part of the company's social values and mission. Araújo et al. (2023) asserted that community involvement in CSR significantly increases brand value and consumer purchase preferences. Therefore, strengthening these social relationships needs to be an important element in the CSR strategy of the automotive industry in the region.

In several studies, it was found that companies that consistently implement CSR show more stable financial performance in the long run. This shows that there is a correlation between corporate social responsibility and business sustainability. CSR is not a financial burden, but a social investment that generates consumer trust and market loyalty. Consumers who have a positive perception of CSR tend to be more tolerant of higher prices, as they value social and ethical value added as part of that price. Wang et al. (2021) explain that consumer perceptions of CSR have a direct effect on purchase intentions, especially if CSR is perceived to have a real impact on society. Therefore, automotive companies need to position CSR as part of their value strategy, not just an operational support program.

Based on these various considerations, it is very important to conduct this research to examine more deeply how CSR carried out by automotive companies in Pontianak has an impact on brand image and consumer preferences. This research will provide theoretical contributions in the development of social responsibility-based marketing literature, as well as practical contributions in the formulation of more strategic and targeted CSR policies. With an in-depth understanding of the relationship between CSR, brand image, and consumer preferences, companies can design initiatives that not only improve reputation but also expand market share in a sustainable manner. Hopefully, the results of this study can be used as a reference by automotive industry players in Pontianak and other regions to increase the effectiveness of CSR as an integral part of marketing strategies and brand building.

## METHODOLOGY

This study uses a quantitative approach with an associative type of research that aims to test the influence between the independent and dependent variables empirically. This approach is considered appropriate because this study wants to measure the relationship and influence of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) on brand image and consumer preferences in the automotive industry in the Pontianak area. The objects in this study are consumers of two-wheeled and four-wheeled motorized vehicles who have purchased or used products from automotive companies that have CSR programs in Pontianak City. The determination of this location is based on the consideration that Pontianak is one of the developing cities with significant growth in the automotive industry and increasing consumer awareness of corporate social responsibility. The population in this study are all automotive consumers in Pontianak who know or have felt the impact of automotive companies' CSR programs. The sampling technique used purposive sampling method, which selects respondents based on certain criteria such as a minimum age of 18 years, domiciled in Pontianak, and knowing the CSR activities of automotive companies. The number of samples was determined using the Slovin formula approach, so that 100 respondents were obtained as adequate representation for statistical analysis. Data collection was carried out through distributing closed questionnaires using a Likert scale of 1-5, with statement items developed based on indicators of each research variable. Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) variables were measured based on three main dimensions: economic, social, and environmental responsibility as developed by Singh and Misra (2021) in a contemporary study on CSR and corporate reputation. Meanwhile, brand image is measured through the dimensions of brand awareness, brand association, and loyalty, as described by Wang et al. (2021) in a study on CSR perception and brand equity. Consumer preference in this study includes indicators of purchase intention, satisfaction with the brand, and consumer loyalty, as used in the model by Araújo, Pereira, and Santos (2023), which examines the relationship between CSR, brand image, and consumer purchase decisions.

The data obtained will be analyzed using the help of SPSS software version 26. Validity and reliability tests were carried out first to test the feasibility of the instrument. Next, multiple linear regression analysis was conducted to determine the simultaneous and partial effects of CSR on brand image and consumer preference. In addition, the coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ) test, t test (partial), and F test (simultaneous) were conducted to test the significance of the research model. This research is expected to provide empirical contributions related to the importance of CSR implementation in shaping positive perceptions of brands and their influence on consumer purchasing behavior. The validity of the methodology used in this study supports the reliability of the results obtained and can be used as a basis for social responsibility-based marketing strategies in the automotive sector.

Table 1. Operationalization of Research Variables:

Variables	Dimensions	Indicator	Source
CSR (X)	a. Economic Responsibility	Financial transparency Regulatory compliance Economic well-being of the community	Singh & Misra (2021)
	b. Social Responsibility	Social activities (education, health)- Employee welfare Community involvement	Araújo et al. (2023)
	c. Environmental Responsibility	- Emission reduction Waste management Use of renewable energy	Wang et al. (2021)
Brand Image (Z)	a. Brand Awareness	Brand familiarity – Ease of brand recall – Brand recognition Wang et al. (2021)	Wang et al. (2021)
	b. Brand Association	- Perceived social value- Positive association- Brand differentiation	Araújo et al. (2023)
	c. Brand Loyalty	- Willingness to recommend- Repeat purchase intention Commitment to the brand	Singh & Misra (2021)
Consumer Preferences (Y)	a. Purchase Intention	- Desire to buy Commitment to a particular brand Interest in the product	Wang et al. (2021)
	b. Brand Satisfaction	- Satisfied feeling towards the brand Expectation match Positive experience	Araújo et al. (2023)
	c. Consumer Loyalty	- Repeat purchase Loyal attitude towards the product Tendency to choose the same brand	Singh & Misra (2021)

Table 2. Research Hypothesis Table

Code	Hypothesis
H1	CSR has a significant effect on consumer Brand Image in the automotive industry in Pontianak.
H2	Brand Image has a significant effect on Consumer Preferences in the automotive industry.
H3	CSR has a significant effect on Consumer Preferences in the automotive industry in Pontianak.
H4	Brand Image mediates the influence of CSR on Consumer Preferences.

This study adopts a theoretical framework that links Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), Brand Image, and Consumer Preference. CSR is positioned as the independent variable (X), brand image as the intervening variable (Z), and consumer preference as the dependent variable (Y). The framework assumes that CSR initiatives influence how consumers perceive the brand, which in turn affects their preference and purchasing behavior. This framework is based on recent empirical studies emphasizing the strategic role of CSR in enhancing both brand perception and consumer engagement in the automotive industry (Ismail & Mohamed, 2024; Brahmi et al., 2025).

## RESULTS

Validity and reliability testing is an important early stage in the quantitative data analysis process to ensure the accuracy and consistency of data collection instruments. Validity relates to the extent to which the research instrument is able to measure what should be measured. In this study, validity was tested using the item-total correlation technique (Corrected Item-Total Correlation), which shows the extent to which each question item has a relationship with the total score of the variable being measured. An item is declared valid if the correlation value is more than 0.30 (Sugiyono, 2021), which indicates that the item is relevant and represents the variable construct as a whole.

Meanwhile, reliability shows the level of consistency of the research instrument in producing stable and reliable data if repeated measurements are made. Reliability testing in this study was carried out using the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient. A high Cronbach's Alpha value (above 0.70) indicates that the items in the questionnaire have good internal consistency. If a variable has a Cronbach's Alpha value of more than this threshold, it can be concluded that the instrument is reliable or suitable for further analysis such as regression and SEM tests.

By conducting thorough validity and reliability testing, researchers can ensure that the data collected is accurate and reflects the reality being measured. In the context of this research, validity and reliability are tested for each variable, namely Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) as the independent variable, Brand Image as the intervening variable, and Consumer Preference as the dependent variable. The results of these tests will be the basis for proceeding to the regression analysis stage to test the influence between variables that have been determined in the research model.

Table 3. Validity Test Table (Corrected Item-Total Correlation)

No	Statement (Indicator)	Corrected ItemTotal Correlation	Description
1	CSR supports community education programs	0.684	Valid
2	CSR helps environmental development	0.721	Valid
3	CSR improves employee welfare	0.642	Valid
4	Consumers know the brand extensively	0.697	Valid
5	Brands are associated with positive values	0.755	Valid
6	Consumers are satisfied with the product purchased	0.682	Valid
7	Consumers are loyal to a particular brand	0.701	Valid
8	Corporate CSR influences purchase decisions	0.701	Valid

Table 4. Reliability Test Table (Cronbach's Alpha)

Variables	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha	Description
Corporate Social Responsibility (X)	3	0.802	Reliable
Brand Image (Z)	2	0.781	Reliable
Consumer Preferences (Y)	3	0.812	Reliable

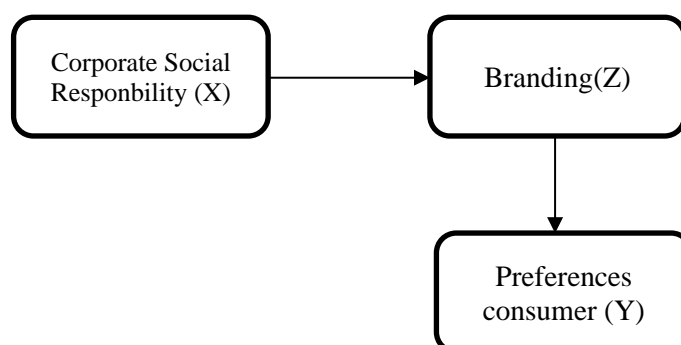


Figure 1. Research Outline

The results of multiple linear regression analysis show that the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and Brand Image variables partially have a significant influence on Consumer Preference, with a significance value of 0.000 ( $p < 0.05$ ), which means that hypotheses H2 and H3 are accepted. The regression coefficient value shows that every one unit increase in CSR perception will increase consumer preference by 0.395, and every one unit increase in brand image will increase consumer preference by 0.521, indicating that the influence of brand image is more dominant. The summary model produces an R Square value of 0.581, which means that 58.1% of the variation in Consumer Preference can be explained by the combination of CSR and Brand Image variables, while the remaining 41.9% is explained by other factors outside the model. The ANOVA test shows an F value of 53,289 with a significance of 0.000, which indicates that the regression model is simultaneously significant and able to explain the effect of CSR and Brand Image on Consumer Preference together.

In addition, the regression results also indicate that brand image plays an important role as a mediating variable in strengthening the relationship between CSR and consumer preference. The higher coefficient value on the brand image variable compared to CSR indicates that although CSR contributes directly to consumer preference, the indirect effect through improved brand image has a greater influence. This is consistent with modern brand equity theory, which states that consumers' perception of a company's social value will be reflected in their perception of the brand as a whole, which then influences purchasing decisions. Thus, a CSR strategy that is effectively communicated and closely associated with brand identity can be an important tool to build consumer loyalty and competitive advantage in the automotive market, especially in a region like Pontianak that shows a trend of increasing awareness of sustainability values.

Table 5. Regression Analysis Result Table

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients (B)	Standard Error	t-value	Sig. (p)	Description
(Constant)	1.243	0.412	3.017	0.003	Significant
CSR (X)	0.395	0.089	4.438	0.000	Significant, H3 accepted
Brand Image (Z)	0.521	0.095	5.484	0.000	Significant, H2 accepted

Table 6. R Square Table

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
0.762	0.581	0.572	0.498

Table 7. ANOVA Test Results Table

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	26.448	2	13.224	53.289	0.000
Residuals	19.078	77	0.248		
Total	45.526	79			

Based on the results of the regression analysis previously presented, the multiple linear regression equation in this study can be written as follows:

$$Y = 1.243 + 0.395X + 0.521Z + e$$

Description:

- Y = Consumer Preference
- X = Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)
- Z = Brand Image
- 1.243 = Constant (Y value when X and Z = 0)
- 0.395 = CSR regression coefficient
- 0.521 = Brand Image regression coefficient
- e = Error (residual variable)

That is, if there is no effect of CSR and Brand Image (X and Z = 0), then the initial value of consumer preference is 1.243. Every 1 unit increase in CSR will increase consumer preference by 0.395 units, and every 1 unit increase in brand image will increase consumer preference by 0.521 units, assuming other variables remain constant. The following is an in-depth discussion of the effect of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) on brand image in the automotive industry.

## DISCUSSION

### The Effect of CSR on Brand Image in the Automotive Industry

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has become an important strategy in shaping a company's brand image, especially in the automotive industry. Effective implementation of CSR can increase consumers' positive perceptions of the brand. CSR activities such as environmental, education, and health programs demonstrate the company's commitment to social responsibility, which in turn strengthens the brand image in the eyes of consumers. This is in line with the findings of Brahmi et al. (Furthermore, company reputation and product quality play a mediating role in the relationship between CSR and brand image. Companies with good reputation and high-quality products tend to gain more trust from consumers. This strengthens the positive effect of CSR on brand image, as explained by the same study. Thus, CSR not only has a direct impact but also indirectly through enhancing reputation and product quality.

The study by Ismail and Mohamed (2024) also supports this view, showing that CSR improves brand reputation and consumer preference. In this context, a positive brand image becomes a valuable asset for companies in building long-term relationships with consumers. Therefore, companies need to design and implement CSR programs that are aligned with their brand values. However, it is important for companies to ensure that their CSR activities are authentic and not simply marketing efforts. Consumers are increasingly savvy and able to differentiate between genuine CSR and those that are just for image. CSR that is inconsistent with a company's business practices can damage the brand image and reduce consumer trust. Therefore, integrity in CSR implementation is crucial.

Overall, CSR plays a vital role in shaping and strengthening a company's brand image, especially in the automotive industry. By integrating CSR into business strategy, companies can build a strong and sustainable brand image. This not only enhances competitiveness but also creates added value for consumers and society at large.

### The Role of Brand Image as a Mediator between CSR and Consumer Preferences

Brand image is an important element that bridges the influence of CSR on consumer behavior. In the context of the automotive industry, consumers not only pay attention to product quality, but also how a brand is associated with social values. Companies that have consistent and impactful CSR programs will more easily gain brand recognition from consumers. A study by Ahn, Kim, and Sung (2022) showed that brand image can strengthen the relationship between CSR and purchase intention because consumers see the brand as a representation of the social values they support.

Furthermore, consumers tend to be more loyal to brands that are perceived to have tangible social contributions. Research by Ferreira and Fernandes (2021) found that in the durable goods sector, perceived CSR has a positive effect on brand image, driving consumer preference and loyalty. Brand image in this case acts as an emotional link between consumers and companies, especially when CSR activities touch on social

issues that are relevant to their daily lives.

In addition, CSR that is strategically communicated through social media or other digital channels also strengthens brand perception in the eyes of the public. D'Souza et al. (2023) in their study explained that positive CSR narratives built through digital communication increase brand credibility, which in turn increases the likelihood of consumers choosing the brand. Therefore, the integration between CSR content and brand messaging is crucial in shaping perceptions that lead to preferences.

However, the success of the mediating role of brand image is also largely determined by consumers' perceptions of the company's honesty and consistency. CSR that seems manipulative or inconsistent has the potential to create skepticism, which damages the overall brand image. Therefore, it is important for automotive companies to align brand values with CSR programs so that the brand image formed truly reflects corporate integrity.

In conclusion, brand image is a key element in linking CSR with consumer preferences. When CSR is able to shape a positive image, consumers tend to have a strong preference for the products or services offered by the company. In the competitive automotive industry, a strong brand image based on social values not only differentiates the company from competitors, but also increases customer retention and loyalty in a sustainable manner.

### **Implication of CSR on Consumer Preferences in the Automotive Industry**

Consumer preference is a form of behavior that shows an individual's tendency to choose a brand over other alternatives. In the context of CSR, these preferences can be formed through consumers' perceptions of the social values that companies carry out. Consumers today are more aware of social and environmental issues, and make social responsibility one of the considerations in purchasing decisions. A study by Park et al. (2020) states that company involvement in CSR significantly increases consumer preferences, especially when consumers feel their personal values are in line with company values.

CSR can create an emotional attachment between consumers and brands. Consumers not only see the functional benefits of a product, but also look for the meaning behind the consumption. In a study by Gatti, Caruana, and Snehota (2019), it was found that CSR increases consumers' perceptions of a company's authenticity and integrity, which in turn strengthens consumers' psychological connection to the brand. In the automotive industry, this can happen when consumers see the company's real efforts in reducing emissions or producing environmentally friendly vehicles.

CSR also acts as an important differentiating element in a competitive market. When product quality and price are similar, consumer preferences tend to favor companies that demonstrate social responsibility and sustainability. Jung and Kim (2016) mention that consistently communicated CSR increases perceived brand value and strengthens loyalty, which is the basis for consumers' long-term preferences. This is particularly relevant in the automotive sector, which is undergoing a transformation towards more sustainable and environmentally friendly practices.

However, the impact of CSR on consumer preferences does not happen automatically. Companies need to build credibility and transparency in implementing CSR programs. Consumers tend to be skeptical of companies that only use CSR for image purposes without any real action. Therefore, companies must convey CSR messages clearly and include tangible evidence of their social engagement. If done right, CSR can be a strategic tool to shape strong and sustainable consumer preferences.

Overall, CSR has significant implications for shaping consumer preferences in the automotive industry. Through a sustainable, transparent and consistent approach, CSR not only increases positive perceptions of the company, but also builds trust and deep emotional connections with consumers. Consumer preferences formed through CSR tend to be more durable and become an important capital in maintaining market position amidst increasingly fierce competitive dynamics.

### **The Role of CSR in Increasing Competitive Advantage through Consumer Preferences**

Amidst intense competition in the automotive industry, companies compete not only in terms of product features and price, but also in the values they represent. One strategy that is increasingly relevant is the strengthening of corporate social responsibility (CSR) as a means to build competitive advantage based on consumer preferences. Effective CSR that is integrated with brand values can create differentiation that is not easily replicated. According to Chaudhary (2017), strategically implemented CSR can be a source of competitive advantage by strengthening consumers' emotional connection to the brand. Consumer preferences in the current era are more complex and are based not only on product quality, but also on the company's ethical values.

Consumers identify themselves with brands that demonstrate social and environmental concerns. In this case, CSR not only serves as a tool to fulfill social obligations, but becomes a key strategy to attract and retain consumers. Khan et al. (2023) showed that consumers who perceive companies as socially responsible entities tend to show higher loyalty and increase purchase intention.



CSR implementation can also expand market segmentation by reaching out to environmentally and socially conscious consumers. This strategy not only increases preference for the product, but also creates a superior brand perception compared to competitors. Nguyen and Truong (2020) found that automotive companies in Vietnam that run environmental CSR programs gain higher levels of brand preference and advocacy than companies that focus on price promotion or product innovation alone.

Competitive advantage through CSR is also closely related to the perception of brand authenticity and honesty. Consumers value companies that not only talk the talk, but also actually carry out social activities consistently and sustainably. Therefore, CSR must be delivered with transparency and concrete evidence. CSR that is manipulative or just a campaign will create skepticism, which will weaken consumer preferences and the company's competitive position in the long run.

In conclusion, CSR is no longer just an obligation, but a strategic investment in building competitive advantage through its influence on consumer preferences. When done sincerely, sustainably, and relevant to social needs, CSR can create long-term loyalty, strengthen brand perception, and retain consumers in a dynamic market environment. The automotive industry must make CSR an integral part of its marketing strategy and competitive advantage in an era of increasingly critical consumers.

## CONCLUSION

This study shows that Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has a significant influence on brand image and consumer preference in the automotive industry. CSR that is carried out authentically, sustainably, and relevant to consumers' social values is able to shape positive perceptions of the company. The results emphasize that CSR is not just an additional element in business strategy, but an important foundation in creating consumer loyalty and attraction. Brand image was shown to play the role of a mediating variable in the relationship between CSR and consumer preference. Well-executed CSR improves brand image, and ultimately strengthens purchase intention and customer loyalty. This suggests that consumer perceptions of brands are not only shaped by product attributes, but also by the social values and responsibilities that companies exercise. Consumer preferences in the modern era are increasingly influenced by the value congruence between consumers and companies. Through CSR, automotive companies can expand market segmentation, especially among consumers who are aware of social and environmental issues. Such preferences reflect not only buying tendencies, but also psychological and moral attachments to brands. CSR is also proven to create a sustainable competitive advantage. In a highly competitive environment, companies that are able to demonstrate social integrity have a greater chance of retaining customers and strengthening their market position. This CSR-based competitive advantage is not easily replicated, as it involves values, consistency, and emotional connection with the public. Overall, this research confirms that CSR has a strong contribution in shaping modern marketing strategies. CSR is no longer seen as a passive responsibility, but rather as an integral part of efforts to build healthy, sustainable and profitable relationships between companies and consumers.

## RECOMMENDATION

First, automotive companies in Indonesia, especially in regions such as Pontianak, are advised to design CSR programs that are integrated with brand identity and values. The program should reflect a long-term commitment to social and environmental issues relevant to the local context. Second, in its implementation, CSR needs to be well communicated to consumers. Companies are advised to use various digital platforms and social media to deliver CSR messages transparently and consistently, in order to build positive perceptions and credibility in the eyes of consumers. Third, brand management needs to realize the importance of brand image as a link between CSR and consumer preferences. Therefore, it is necessary to conduct periodic evaluations of consumer perceptions of brands, especially in relation to CSR programs that are being implemented. Fourth, further research is recommended to explore the effect of CSR on other variables such as long-term loyalty, advocacy behavior, or customer satisfaction using a mixedmethod approach so that the results obtained are more comprehensive. Finally, local governments and automotive industry associations are also expected to encourage and facilitate companies to implement CSR in a structured manner. Collaboration between the private and public sectors can expand the impact of CSR on social development and increase consumer preference for local and national brands.

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