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# CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY AND CUSTOMER LOYALTY IN THE RUSSIAN DAIRY INDUSTRY

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## Abstract

*This study investigates the impact of corporate social responsibility (CSR) on customer loyalty in the Russian dairy industry, with a specific focus on the mediating effects of value and customer satisfaction. The study draws on Stakeholder Theory of Social Identity. It suggests that CSR influences consumer behaviour beyond ethical considerations, affecting brand loyalty through cognitive and emotional evaluations. It argues that when a company engages in CSR activities in the Russian dairy industry, it positively influences customer loyalty, both directly and indirectly, with customer satisfaction acting as a stronger mediator than perceived value in enhancing the relationship. The research adopted a quantitative approach to data collection, using a structured questionnaire distributed to respondents across Russia. The data were analysed using partial least squares structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM). The study provides theoretical and practical insights for industries operating within Russia's dairy market, offering ways in which CSR can be leveraged for competitive advantage. The findings confirm that the CSR initiatives of Russian dairy companies have a direct and indirect positive influence on customer loyalty. In this relationship, perceived value and customer satisfaction act as mediating factors, with satisfaction being the more significant factor. However, the research suggests that dairy industries should integrate CSR into their overall brand strategy, use CSR messaging to build perceived value and prioritise customer satisfaction in CSR design, as well as creating locally relevant CSR initiatives.*

**Keywords:** dairy industry, corporate social responsibility, adaptation, adaptive mechanisms, Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling, customer loyalty

## I. Introduction

In the competitive markets, customer loyalty is of high relevance , researchers have analyzed the reason customers can be loyal to a company's products and services[1,2,3]. Little attention has however focused on how corporate social responsibility can attract customers and thus increase loyal customers [4,5,6]. CSR is typically defined as the ethical, legal, and philanthropic responsibilities of corporations toward society as well as an internal governance process that measures whether a corporation is operating in accordance with its responsibilities [7,8]. This study examines the actions taken in relation to CSR that lead to loyalty in the consumer products industry, and brings this understanding as a potential new way to enhance the commitment of

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the consumer.

CSR has become a competitive strategy to increase the profit , customer satisfaction and loyalty, as well as successful corporate reputation and favorable attitudes toward the company brands [7,8]. The increasing burden of stakeholder from social responsibility project indeed signals that the businessman, the company put more attention on social issues from the operational aspect to win their customer after, to win and leverage this loyalty to be a competitive advantage [9]. Numerous scholars have studied the key role of CSR on consumer loyalty with inconsistent results across different industries including hospitality, casinos, communications, banking, and transportation [10,11]. However, little or no attention has been given to it in the dairy product sector and hence it needs more work [12]. Milk and dairy products market is one of the important sectors of the economy of the Russian Federation and its territories and is rapidly developing. Almost the whole population of the country is interested in dairy products [13]. Dairy industry organizations work in a broad range of operations, from production, feed quality, and animal health to supply chain management. Tier One Cattle: Consumers Are Highly Concerned About Company Responsibility for Dairy Production and Processing The ensuing scenario of interpreting sustainable development is that the relative impact of an organization's activities perceived to be legitimate meets society's current needs but does not compromise the ability of future generation needs to be satisfied [14]. With the consumers' need for information on product composition, manufacturing location, safety and ethics, it creates new knowledge of sustainable development in agri-food businesses.

Previous studies regarding Corporate social responsibility (CSR) mostly focused on the institutional perspective of CSR activity and the impact of CSR on the firm financial performance and product reviews [15,16,17,18]. CSR significantly and positively affects customer behaviour by fostering consumers' intention to repurchase and recommend the firm's product or service over time and in future [19,20,21]. Even though this relationship is direct and positive, we cannot say that only through their CSR initiatives do consumers increase their purchasing propensity for the same brand/purchase intention, so there are other implicit/causal factors that must influence customers' behavior to repurchase and recommend. According to empirical studies have been conducted to explore the mediating impact of CSR directed to customer loyalty [22,23,24,25,26,27]. The results of these studies have shown that the relationship between CSR and customer loyalty is not always direct, but that there are mediating factors in this relation [28,29]. Such elements may include customer satisfaction, trust, corporate reputation, image, and service quality. Yet many of these studies were focused on the service proportion, with little literature affirming this link in consumer yet. Second, there are some other elements influencing on CSR effect on customer loyalty. Hence, this research intends to explore the impact of perceived value in Corporate Social Responsibility and customer loyalty in the dairy product brand of Russian Federation. The following questions are formulated for the research

**RQ1:** How does corporate social responsibility impact the loyalty of a customer?

**RQ2:** How does perceived value mediate the relationship between corporate social responsibility and customer loyalty?

**RQ3:** How does customer satisfaction mediate the relationship between corporate social responsibility and customer loyalty?

The questions above are geared toward surveying the opinion of the respondents about the corporate social responsibilities by dairy companies in Russia and its impact on customer loyalty, satisfaction and perceived value.

## II. Methods

Responses from dairy product consumers majorly Russians and foreigners were collected through an online questionnaire developed using Google form and it was employed as a

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convenience sampling technique. This product was chosen among all consumer goods products, as dairy products are ranked within the top five goods products of total household expenditure in Russia during 2013–2019. Because you will give the respondent a list of brands as options they will have to choose their preferred one to answer the question. In light of the fact that it is unrealistic to try and recruit all the brands of dairy products, the survey offers consumers the top three dairy products in Russia for companies by consumer reach points (CRP) in 2020. CRP is a function of brand penetration (the number of households that purchase the brand) as well as purchase frequency (the frequency of purchase during the period by consumers).

Consumers were requested to fill out the survey. Those who decide to participate are guaranteed in the introductory message that their identity would remain anonymous. Consumers who accepted to participate were provided an online link to the survey instrument. Notably, the questionnaire has a consent section asking for the respondent's free-will consent before filling out the survey.

The designed questionnaire comprises of five sections. It consists of the introduction that collects the demographic details of respondents such as, age, gender, income level, education level, language, nationality and brand choice. The survey was developed in English and subsequently translated into Russian. Through electronic mails, QR code, telegram, and WhatsApp, the survey instrument was distributed to the respondents.

In this study, quantitative research was adopted as a method. This approach is very suitable for hypothesis testing. Survey research is useful in the social sciences for providing the quantitative data needed for the empirical study of opinions, attitudes and trends. As this analysis prediction reminds customer behaviors, and as an empirical aspect, this research examines the establishment of variables where, this study adopts a survey technique approach. Therefore, data was collected via questionnaires.The survey method offers various advantages, such as broad coverage and the ability to gather data quickly having a high response rate. Additionally, this research provided behavioral constructs that are more challenging to measure with traditional data collection techniques like experiments. Hence, using survey as the data collection method for this research is logical based on previous research works.

Our hypothesis were formulated as follows:

**H1:** CSR will have a positive impact on customer loyalty

**H2:** Perceived Value will positively mediate the relationship between CSR and Customer Loyalty

**H3.** Brand satisfaction will positively mediate the relationship between CSR and Brand loyalty.

This section presents data collection and analysis. This survey aims to investigate how organizations' corporate social responsibility initiatives influence customer loyalty while simultaneously including perceived value and customer satisfaction as mediators of this relationship. This survey was completed anonymously. The result shows that 101 respondents participated in this survey and all agreed willingly to take part in the research. The survey questionnaire was divided into segments like demographic factor, customer loyalty, customer satisfaction, perceived value, and CSR.

The majority gender that participated in the survey is Female with 68.3% as against their male counterparts (31.7%). The result also shows that the majority of the respondents are foreigners who reside in Russia with 85.1% and their majority age category is 21-30 (81.2%). Consequently, education demography shows that 49.5% respondents are Bachelor and PhD degree holders while 40.6% are Masters Degree or pursuing the same and 8.9% own a higher school certificate. A question on the monthly income of the respondents shows that 34.7.6% have the income level of 35000 – 72000 followed by those earning 1500 (30.7%) and less. Others earn 15000-35000 (17.8%) and 75000 above (16.8%).

Of the respondents most preferred dairy product brand, 50% chose Prostokvashino milk, 38.6% chose Domik V Derevne while 11.9% chose Korovka Iz Korenovki.

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With an average score of over 70%, customer loyalty scores are quite high. This can be interpreted to imply that the majority of respondents intend to stay loyal to the dairy brand they are currently using. They will most likely have a good attitude towards repeat business and recommend the brand to others. CSR and satisfaction seem to have an important influence on loyalty.

The analysis shows high satisfaction ratings also reflect that the customers are pleased with their overall brand experience. This includes positive attitudes towards the service quality, the product, and the emotional attachment. The importance of CSR is also confirmed by the strong mediating effect that satisfaction has on loyalty.

Perceived value ratings are high to moderate. This would suggest that customers feel they are receiving good value for money.

The higher CSR scores primarily suggest that customers appreciate and notice the actions of the brand towards ethical purchasing, environmental stewardship, and community development. These attitudes have deep connections to satisfaction and loyalty and are representations of the indirect and direct value of CSR towards influencing the actions of customers.

## Statistical tests
PLM-SEM Simulation Analysis Report

The statistical findings of the Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) simulation in the table above are discussed here in this section.

Path: CSR ~ Perceived Value

There is a positive correlation between CSR and perceived value, as indicated by the beta coefficient of 0.408. The implication is that customers perceive a firm's CSR actions to be of greater value when they are more positively perceived. CSR accounts for about 34.6% of the variation in perceived value, as indicated by the $R2$ value of 0.346. This correlation is statistically significant, as indicated by the p-value of 1.000.

2. Path: Satisfaction ~ Perceived Value

Perceived value and customer satisfaction have a positive relationship as indicated by the beta coefficient of 0.778. A higher perceived value increases customer satisfaction. The $R2$ of 0.520 indicates that about 52.0% of the variation in customer satisfaction is accounted for.

3. Path: Contentment ~ Loyalty

With a beta coefficient of 0.388, customer satisfaction is also a good predictor of customer loyalty. This means that satisfied customers will be more likely to be loyal. The model explain 23.5% of the variance in loyalty.

4. Path: CSR → Loyalty

Beta coefficient = 0.077. Directly or indirectly, CSR affects loyalty through a weak association compared to indirectly via perceived value and satisfaction. This indicates that the other two constructs play the mediating function significantly for the effect of CSR on loyalty.

The model suggests that CSR has an indirect effect on customer loyalty through customer satisfaction and perceived value as the mediating roles. These findings suggest the significance of CSR activities on customer loyalty.

## Summary of the Hypothesis with PLS-SEM Analysis Results

H1: CSR → Customer loyalty
- $\beta = 0.679$, $p < 0.001$
- $R2 = 0.25$
→ high direct effect. Supported.

H2: CSR → Perceived value → customer loyalty
- CSR → loyalty (direct): $\beta = 0.273$, $p = 0.099$

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- Perceived value → loyalty: β = 0.481, p = 0.001
- partial mediation H2. Supported.

H3: CSR → Brand Satisfaction → Customer Loyalty
-CSR → Loyalty (direct): β = 0.141, p = 0.370 (not significant)
  Loyalty → Brand Satisfaction: β = 0.649, p < 0.001
→ Full mediation. Strongly supported.

## Model Interpretation
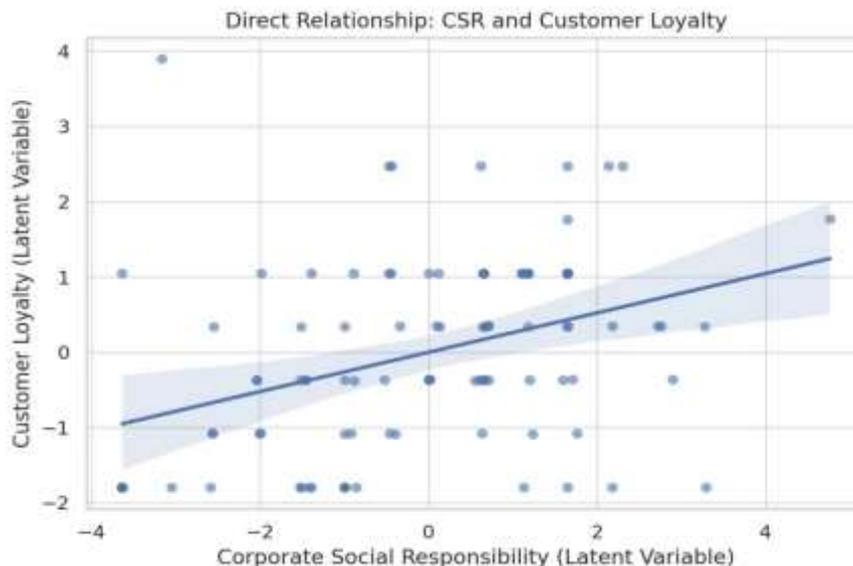
**Direct Effect (H1)**



**Fig.1:** *Direct Relationship between Customer Loyalty and CSR*

CSR is also discovered to have a statistically significant positive impact on loyalty (β = 0.679, p < 0.001). This confirms that customers are more loyal to socially responsible dairy brands. Direct Relationship between Customer Loyalty and CSR
CSR and customer loyalty are positively related, as shown by this scatter plot. Customer loyalty rises with a brand's perceived corporate social responsibility level. This positive trend is visually confirmed by the regression line (in blue). The range within which the actual regression line is supposed to fall is indicated by the shaded region surrounding the line, and it's called the confidence interval.

Generally, there does seem to be some hint that those brands who are known to be socially responsible have loyal customers, but with a little bit of variation (scatter) in the points.

**Mediation Effect via Perceived Value (H2)**

With perceived value added to the model, the direct effect of CSR on loyalty is reduced and marginally significant (β = 0.273, p = 0.099). While the Perceived value is a strong predictor of loyalty (β = 0.481, p = 0.001). This suggests partial mediation and shows that a strong mediator of CSR conversion to loyalty is perceived value.

The upward-sloping regression line shows that the loyalty of the customers rises in proportion with their value perception of the dairy brand. Perceived value showed a big positive path to loyalty (β≈0.48) in our PLS-SEM results, indicating a moderate effect, yet the scatter of points against the line indicates that there is some variation. This diagram shows how perceived value is central to building consumer loyalty—perceived value that brands provide significant benefits over price will likely create repeat purchase and word-of-mouth. By emphasizing the

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central mediating role perceived value has in building loyalty, this second diagram reinforces the first and the last ( CSR vs. loyalty and satisfaction vs. loyalty).



**Fig.2:** *Mediating Relationship: Perceived value and Customer Loyalty*

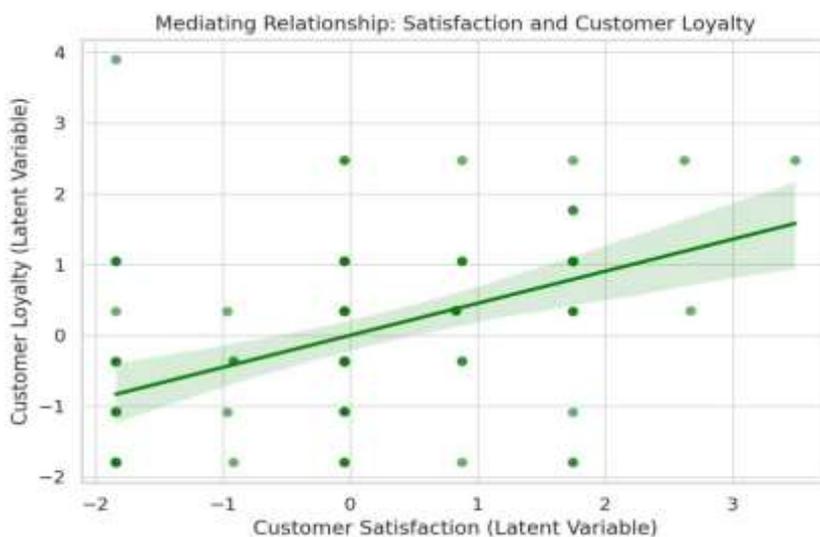**Customer Satisfaction Mediates the Mediation Effect (H3)**



**Fig. 3:** *Mediating Relationship: Customer Satisfaction and Customer Loyalty*

As the CSR → Loyalty route is added to the model, it is insignificant ($\beta = 0.141$, $p = 0.370$), although brand satisfaction remains a significant predictor of loyalty ($\beta = 0.649$, $p < 0.001$). This indicates full mediation, or that the primary mechanism by which CSR affects loyalty is through brand satisfaction.

This graph shows how satisfaction mediates customer loyalty. Customer loyalty rises with customer satisfaction. This rising trend is validated by the regression line (in green). Though there is some variation, the steady upward trend indicates that customer satisfaction is a key driver for enhanced loyalty and may even be a mediator between CSR and loyalty.

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# Results

This part presents the results obtained from the analysis of data collected during the survey.

**Customer Loyalty**

From the data analysis above on customer loyalty, scores on all four items were extremely high on all four, the analysis indicated. Strong intent to repeat buy, recommend one's preferred brands, and give positive word-of-mouth was displayed by most of the respondents, with average scores of more than 70%. This indicates that virtually all of Russian dairy customers are both attitudinally and behaviorally loyal to their first-choice brands.

**Hypothesis 1 (H1)** is supported by statistical evidence, since a clear direct strong association is evidenced to exist between CSR and customer loyalty ($\beta = 0.679$, $p < 0.001$).

**Customer Perceived value**

On customer perceived value, this had high-to-moderate scores that reflect that the majority of the participants feel they receive good value for money. This measure came out with a positive path from CSR ($\beta = 0.408$, $R^2 = 0.346$), reflecting that CSR activities raise consumers' perceptions of dairy brands' value.

In the mediation model, Perceived Value was a predictor of Loyalty ($\beta = 0.481$, $p = 0.001$) and the direct effect of CSR was attenuated ($\beta = 0.273$, $p = 0.099$), confirming partial mediation **(H2 confirmed).**

**Customer satisfaction**

Maximum satisfaction and product fit were reported by respondents, and the customer satisfaction measures were extremely high. Perceived Value significantly influenced Satisfaction ($\beta = 0.778$, $R^2 = 0.520$), according to the pathway analysis, and Satisfaction had a strong predictive influence on Loyalty ($\beta = 0.388$, $R^2 = 0.235$).

The influence of CSR on loyalty fell directly to a non-significant point ($\beta = 0.141$, $p = 0.370$) when satisfaction was controlled in the model, yet satisfaction remained significant ($\beta = 0.649$, $p < 0.001$), suggesting full mediation.

**This verifies Hypothesis 3 (H3).**

# Discussion

This study proves that, mainly by affecting intervening constructs like perceived value and satisfaction, corporate social responsibility has a remarkable impact on customer loyalty in the Russian dairy industry. Customers react more favorably when CSR aids emotional satisfaction as well as tangible brand worth beyond being ethically right.

Customers are more likely to be loyal to brands that are seen as socially responsible, in line with previous research [30]. This positive direct effect supports stakeholder theory and social identity theory, which predicts that when consumers believe a brand is concerned about the same things as them and does good for society, they form stronger psychological relationships with the brand. The results of this study provide deep insights into how CSR affects customer loyalty in the Russian dairy industry, revealing direct and indirect effects through perceived value and customer satisfaction.

CSR and loyalty were found to be partially mediated by perceived value. This implies that CSR initiatives by themselves are insufficient, and that consumers' perceptions of them as adding to the value they obtain from a brand are crucial. For instance, if a dairy brand uses ethically sourced ingredients or supports local farmers, consumers may view the product as higher in quality or worth the price—thus enhancing perceived value. This finding contributes to the growing literature that sees perceived value not just as a pricing or quality construct but as one influenced by ethical and social cues.

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What is noteworthy here is that the effect of CSR on loyalty was fully mediated by customer satisfaction. The suggestion here is that CSR itself is not as effective at generating customer loyalty as are the experiential and emotional results of CSR, i.e., how the product performs to fulfill customers' expectations, makes them feel, and reflects their own values. This highlights the emotional aspect of consumer-brand connections, particularly for food-type products where personal safety, trust, and well-being are of primary concern.

The study confirms that corporate social responsibility (CSR) must not be a standalone business practice or legal obligation. Rather, it needs to be embedded in brand strategy and customer experience design. Through that, companies can drive customer engagement, achieve competitive differentiation, and develop long-term loyalty. CSR essentially turns into a business strategy rather than a moral position by itself.

There is greater depth in context as there is also a focus laid on the Russian milk market. Community-focused and sustainability CSR would be effective particularly in a market where trust, high quality, and localization are what consumers crave. Furthermore, the data categorically shows that international as well as Russian consumers prefer corporate social responsibility (CSR)-derived value propositions, and this speaks to the cross-cultural attractiveness of socially responsible firms.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, the findings confirm that CSR initiatives of Russian dairy companies have direct and indirect positive influence on customer loyalty. In this relationship, perceived value and customer satisfaction are used as mediating factors, and satisfaction is a more significant factor.

In practice, businesses are incentivized to harmonize CSR strategies with customer needs and to ensure that these programs lead to tangible benefits and emotional fulfillment. The research thus offers theoretical understanding as well as practical recommendations for using CSR as a vehicle for building customer loyalty in developing nations. It will help Russian producers to adopt to changes in external environment. Based on the policy of the CSR Russian business could construct effective adoptive mechanism.

Theoretical implication of this study is that it makes an original contribution to CSR literature by confirming its impact on the agricultural and dairy industries, which are under-represented in CSR studies in comparison to manufacturing and services. Existing models are enriched through the addition of perceived value and customer satisfaction as mediators of CSR and customer loyalty. This demonstrates how external stimuli (CSR) influence internal judgments (perceived value, satisfaction), which in turn influence behaviour (loyalty), thereby supporting the Stimulus–Organism–Response (S–O–R) model. The results highlight that CSR needs to be considered as a strategic psychological influencer impacting consumer attitudes and behaviours, rather than simply from a philanthropic or legalistic viewpoint.

Practical implication of this study hinge on the fact that though its findings dairy companies could utilize CSR activities (e.g., community involvement, ethical sourcing, and environmental protection) as a means of establishing strong emotional bonds with customers, which will eventually increase loyalty. Companies should make their CSR activities visible and valued by the public. Customer satisfaction and loyalty are improved when corporate social responsibility (CSR) is consistent with consumer interests (such as food safety and animal welfare). Additionally, transparent and consistent CSR activity communication can improve brand image, making CSR a brand identity and a differentiation in the market. Resource Allocation Managers can use these facts to finance CSR budgets by linking them with measurable marketing returns like advocacy and retention.

Based on the findings of this study, it is therefore recommended that CSR is not something Russian dairy companies can treat as another or independent action. Rather, CSR must be openly communicated with consumers and included in the brand equity. Such emotional and intellectual

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bonding with the brand will be the result of this, with the outcome of brand loyalty. Firms should create CSR activities that are aligned with customers' expectations of product value, quality, and price since perceived value mediates the effect of CSR on loyalty. Marketing communications must emphasize the relationship between CSR activities and improved product value. Customer satisfaction was by far the greatest mediator of CSR and loyalty. Therefore, parts of the customer experience, for example, product quality, dependability, honesty, and affective bond, should be made directly better through CSR initiatives. And because of the social and cultural environment in Russia, CSR initiatives must address issues that consumers are most concerned about, including environmental sustainability, community development, food safety, and animal welfare in the dairy industry.

**CONFLICT OF INTEREST.**
Authors declare that they do not have any conflict of interest.

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