Ataniyazova *et al.*
Int J Corporate Soc Responsibility (2022) 7:3
https://doi.org/10.1186/s40991-022-00071-3

International Journal of Corporate Social Responsibility

ORIGINAL ARTICLE Open Access

New corporate social responsibility brand evaluation in a developing country: Uzbekistan

Zamira Ataniyazova[1*], Barry A. Friedman[2] and Prabha Kiran[1]

Abstract

Organizations strive to satisfy salient and unmet consumer needs by providing value through their products and services. If environmentally sustainable "green" brands successfully exist by addressing environmental issues in developed countries where environmental consciousness is high, there may be a potential for the existence of newly created CSR brands that aim to deliver socio-economic benefits in developing countries. We empirically tested the potential of a brand that offers socio-economic corporate social responsibility benefits in a developing country- Uzbekistan.

As Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in developing countries is a relatively new concept with little empirical research, this research examined the impact that brands with socio-economic CSR initiatives have on consumers' purchase intentions. In addition, brands with socio-economic CSR initiatives were compared with brands with no CSR initiatives. Drawing on both marketing and psychological theories, we hypothesized that brands with socio-economic benefits would be received more favorably by consumers in developing countries where economic needs are more salient.

To empirically test the hypotheses, 397 Uzbekistan consumers responded to an online survey. The Brand Potential Index indicators were regressed on consumers' purchase intentions to a brand with CSR socio-economic benefits and to a brand with no CSR benefits. Regarding the brand with socio-economic benefits, consumers' perception of brand uniqueness, potential popularity, trust, empathy, and recommendation significantly predicted buying intentions. In contrast, only trust and recommendation significantly predicted buying intention for the brand that lacked socio-economic benefits. While both were significant, the relationship between the BPI indicators was stronger for the brand with socio-economic benefits ($R^2 = .63$ versus .49, $p \leq .001$). Consumers were more willing to pay a price premium for the brand with socio-economic benefits even though they perceived such brands were of lower quality.

The results supported the potential of CSR brands in developing countries that focus on socio-economic benefits. This research adds value to our understanding of CSR in developing countries, and predictors of consumer purchase intentions using theory from both the marketing and psychological literature. Implications for brand management and future research are provided, including the need to target CSR initiatives that are salient to consumers.

Keywords: Corporate social responsibility, Consumer insight, Concept testing, Socio-economic benefits, Brand positioning

Introduction

Branding importance has exponentially increased as the subject matter has moved from an occasionally studied activity to a foremost concern for corporate and civil society (Swaminathan et al., 2020). Product features remain important, but branding strategies now concentrate on building socially responsible brands and creating value (Aslaksen et al., 2021; Golob & Podnar, 2019).

*Correspondence: zataniyazova@wiut.uz

[1] School of Business and Economics, Westminster International University in Tashkent, Tashkent, Uzbekistan
Full list of author information is available at the end of the article

In addition to product features and direct benefits, consumers showed interest in brands that also address societal concerns (Latapí Agudelo et al., 2019; Polonsky & Jevons, 2006). Several studies indicated that consumers choose socially responsible brands, other things being equal and that social responsibility plays a central role in brand differentiation (Hildebrand et al., 2011; Maignan et al., 2005). Brand management started taking social responsibility as a key ingredient in high growth markets (Abid et al., 2020). CSR is believed to help the brand to create a competitive advantage, enable brand differentiation, increase customer loyalty, as well as augment brand value (Bhattacharya et al., 2020; Golob & Podnar, 2019; Hur et al., 2014; Lee et al., 2012; Palazzo & Basu, 2007). Ramesh et al. (2019) recently proved that CSR initiatives strengthen brand image and attitude of consumers towards the brand. Nowadays, more and more practitioners consider social responsibility of a central brand differentiation policy (Hildebrand et al., 2011; Maignan et al., 2005). Consequently, changing consumer demands push brand managers to adopt initiatives that are aligned with the environmental, social well-being of the planet (Abid et al., 2020). Despite, the clear importance of CSR in brand management, and sustainability being a fundamental imperative for the world, the shortage of CSR research that considers the effect of CSR initiatives on consumer behavior in developing countries, necessitates further research (Cambra-Fierro et al., 2020). Moreover, CSR initiatives address a variety of issues salient to consumers, but what is salient to consumers may vary contingent on context (e.g., developed versus developing countries).

CSR emerged in developed countries (e.g., United States, Western Europe, and Australia) where environment protection, human rights and other global issues drew public attention. Governments and the public demanded greater accountability for increased carbon footprints and adverse climate change as factories polluted air and water, automobiles and airlines emissions increased, working conditions violated human rights law, and plastics filled the oceans and harmed sea life. Organizations implemented CSR initiatives to address these issues and developed "green brands" that provide environmental benefits or at least minimize environmental harm (Kazmi et al., 2021). Research supports the assertion that green brands add value (Panda et al., 2020; Symeonidou & Vagiona, 2018; Zaman et al., 2018).

However, Neff (2010) proposed that even though environmental awareness has increased, the purchase of green brands has declined in the United Kingdom following the 2008 economic crisis. Furthermore, Schneider et al. (2010) found that consumers tend to deemphasize environmental concerns in favor of socio-economic issues during economic downturns. These findings suggest that "green brands" have the highest potential in developed countries that enjoy favorable economic conditions (e.g., high per capita income and GDP) where environmental consciousness is high and where socio-economic issues are low. CSR research is predominantly conducted in developed countries that have extensive free market experience. However, the situation is different in developing countries.

As economic conditions are relatively unfavorable in developing countries, businesses strive to maximize profit, while paying less attention to environmentally oriented CSR initiatives (Okafor et al., 2008). The type of CSR depends on the unique social, economic, political, legal, and regulatory conditions of the country (Pohl & Tolhurst, 2010). Relative to their more developed counterparts, developing countries may experience greater political instability, weak regulatory systems, less rule of law and higher levels of corruption (World Governance Indicators, 2021). Under such conditions, companies may perceive CSR less in terms of environmental sustainability and more in terms of socio-economic issues that exist in the country (Amaeshi et al., 2006).

In Uzbekistan, CSR is perceived as corporate philanthropy (Смирнова, 2015). In a study among SMEs, Raimbaev (2009) found that internal motives drive company CSR initiatives (e.g., comply with community and religious norms). On the other hand, companies' external motives include compliance with government programs and contributing through local communities. For example, British American Tobacco in Uzbekistan supports local communities by launching social investment projects (2021). Lukoil Uzbekistan, a large Uzbekistan oil company, does charity and sponsorship in sports, education, and culture related fields (2021). Alternatively, there are few companies that actively communicate environment or sustainability-oriented CSR initiatives (e.g., green products). Numerous companies have declared their commitment to corporate social responsibility; however, awareness of environmental issues is low among consumers in Uzbekistan (UNICE, 2020).

The low level of public environmental awareness does not incentivize companies to integrate environmental aspects into their CSR policies. Therefore, companies have little motivation to develop green brands. A better opportunity may rest with CSR efforts that stress societal and economic benefits. If green brands are successfully sold in developed countries where environmental issues are salient among consumers, then CSR initiatives that target socio-economic benefits may represent a new type of brand in developing countries where socio-economic issues are salient. As a result, our research tests the integration of CSR socio-economic benefits into brand values

in Uzbekistan, a developing country. We propose that this new opportunity be labelled as Yellow Brand. We compared Yellow and Regular Brands. We define Regular Brands as brands whose positioning include functional and emotional benefits that directly meet consumer needs, not society. Yellow brand positioning also provides consumers functional benefits but the emotional benefit is realized through addressing socio-economic problems. Consumers experience emotional benefits by contributing to socio-economic causes. Our research uses concept testing, which is an important tool marketing method to predict future brand success. Concept studies typically contrast concepts, such as comparing different potential concepts or competitor brands. Moreover, developing countries have substantial socio-economic challenges that are exacerbated by disruptive events (e.g., a pandemic). Therefore, we believe that Yellow Brands may ameliorate the socio-economic conditions in developing countries.

Research gap and objectives

CSR research has been conducted predominantly in western and European developed countries, resulting in a need for understanding CSR in developing countries (Herbas Torrico et al., 2018; Orazalin, 2019; Pisani et al., 2017; Smirnova, 2012; Tilt, 2016). Moreover, CSR, and brand integration in the context of developing countries has not received adequate attention. The current research addresses this gap and aims to (1) increase CSR knowledge in developing countries (e.g., Uzbekistan), (2) evaluate a novel approach of integrating CSR and brand, (3) identify the impact of factors that influence Yellow Brand purchase intention, and (4) identify areas of competitive advantage of Yellow Brand compared to Regular brand in developing countries where socio-economic issues are addressed by brands. For the purposes of clarity, we used the terms Rational, Emotional and Action-Oriented.

Theoretical framework

Among the most difficult aspects of a new-brand creation process is identifying relevant consumer insights. In classical marketing practice, new brand ideas are based on insights in the form of consumer needs that feed into a future brand positioning. The concept is then tested on potential consumers to determine the brand potential. This research followed the Stimuli - Organism – Response theory (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974) that explored how a new Yellow Brand concept (stimuli) was perceived by consumers (organism) and how likely consumers would purchase the brand (response). We later justified the hypotheses. We begin with consumer insights and needs.

Consumer insights and needs

Moscato (2018) stated that "consumer insight goes beyond numbers to help companies understand consumer motivations and influences" (104). According to Deci and Ryan (2000), the foundation of human motivation can be thought of in terms of unsatisfied needs or problems. That is, unsatisfied needs motivate individuals to behave in ways that satisfy those needs. Therefore, "smart marketers understand their customers' underlying desires - shaping their brand, messaging, and marketing to satisfy those desires "(Sullivan, 2019, p.4).

Among the earliest proposed a hierarchy of five needs within individuals: psychological, safety, love and belonging, esteem, and self-actualization (Maslow, 1943, 1954, 1971). According to this theory, individuals are motivated to satisfy basic needs such as food and shelter before building a network of friends or improving their self-esteem. Nevertheless, some research suggests that despite the income constraints, Bottom of the Pyramid consumer buying habits are more "sophisticated and creative" than suggested by Maslow (Subrahmanyan & Gomez-Arias, 2008). Consumers are motivated not only by survival and physiological needs but seek to simultaneously fulfil higher-order needs such as building social capital. Consequently, consumers in developing countries may aim to satisfy higher-order needs and purchase brands that are socially responsible. Subrahmanyan and Gomez-Arias (2008) also found that firms experience greater success when they offer products that meet higher-order needs such as access to education and better jobs. Moreover, after analyzing multinational enterprises' (MNE) CSR communications in transitioning economics, Achyldurdyyeva et al. (2019) found that MNEs typically emphasize training and educational themes.

For initial concept testing purposes, we designed a hypothetical Yellow Brand that emphasized educational improvements. The Yellow Brand addresses the scarcity of online educational resources in the local language and meets self-esteem needs by supporting a CSR oriented brand that benefits the nation.

Brand positioning concept

Organizations spend a great deal of time and expense positioning their products to address consumer needs (Banović et al., 2016; De Pelsmaeker et al., 2015; Kumar, 2021). Sullivan (2019) described product positioning as first gaining consumer insights into expressed or latent needs and beliefs, presenting a product that possesses features that are perceived as beneficial, and lastly providing reasons to believe (RTB) that the product's benefits are valid. Based on insight, brand benefits and RTB brand positioning concepts were written for

concept testing purposes which provides a full reflection of potential brand positioning. In theory, concepts used for testing can vary from one-line sentences depicting key ideas (stripped description) to embellished descriptions which are written in a commercialized manner with a persuasive tone (Peng & Finn, 2008). The current study compares two brand concepts with embellished descriptions: Regular and Yellow. Each was presented to subjects using written descriptions of the insight, brand benefits as well as RTB. Moreover, the written concepts were supported by visual elements to improve understanding of potential brand positioning.

Concept testing

Tauber (1981, p. 169) described the general procedure of concept testing as "consumers are presented with a stimulus (concept) and measures of reaction are taken which the researcher believes are predictive of the behavioral response, such as later purchase". In general, concept testing is an integral component of a larger marketing process that evolves from an idea, assessment of consumer attitudes towards the concept, and ultimately recommendations for potential release for commercialization (Bebko, 2017). Consequently, concept testing can be conducted through qualitative analysis to identify brand positioning improvements (e.g., focus groups) or quantitative research that evaluates numerically the brand potential (e.g., surveys) (García-Milon et al., 2019). In the current study, we have applied a quantitative method to provide empirical evidence regarding Yellow Brand feasibility.

Stimulus-organism-response (SOR) theory

Mehrabian and Russell (1974) first posited that consumers are exposed to many stimuli (S) related to products and services and develop emotional cognitions/responses based on the available information (O), and then act on those emotional responses (R). As reviewed by Zhu et al. (2020), the SOR concept has appeared in the marketing literature to study, among other things, buying intentions, buying decisions, and impulse buying. We applied SOR theory because the brand positioning concept serves as stimuli. The "organism" part refers to individuals' perception, feelings, and thinking derived as a result of being exposed to stimuli (Bagozzi, 1986). Finally, consumers behave based on their intentions to purchase each brand. Figure 1 summarizes our research model.

Hypotheses development

The perceptions and attitudes consist of three facets: rational/cognitive, emotional/affective evaluation, and action-oriented/behavioral (Rahman et al., 2015). The cognitive element is the sum of what an individual knows and believes (Kim, Kim, & Kim, 2021, Rahman et al., 2015; Holbrook & Batra, 1987). Consumer cognitions may be categorized with respect to uniqueness, quality perception, and popularity (Vukasovic, 2009).

Perceived uniqueness helps differentiate brands and reduce consumer cognitive load (Dhar & Sherman, 1996), hence making purchasing decisions easier. In context with many CSR initiatives, differentiation is found to be more difficult (Nardi et al., 2021). In developing countries such as Uzbekistan where few companies implement CSR and few communicate their CSR initiatives, achieving perceived uniqueness is less difficult. Perception of brand uniqueness impacts purchase intention, as when Apple products are considered more unique than competitors and purchase intentions are higher. Therefore, Uniqueness is an important factor to consumers when judging

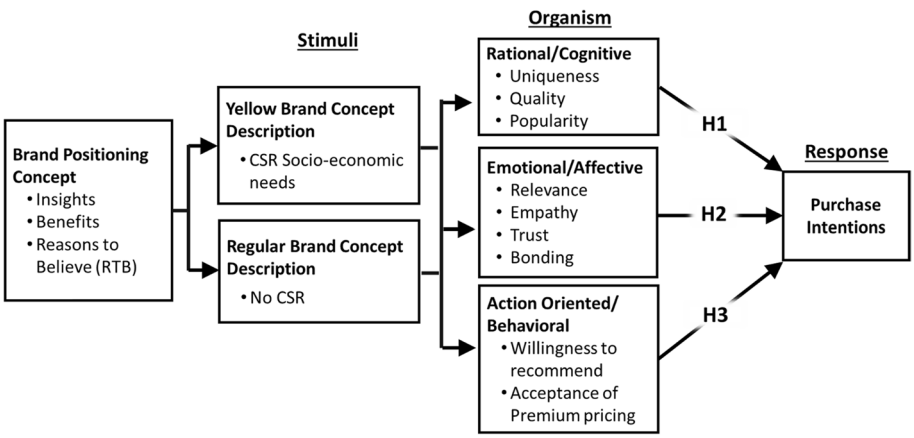

Fig. 1 Stimulus-Organism-Response Model for Consumer Perceptions and Purchase Intentions

the organizational CSR claim authenticity (Moehl & Friedman, 2021).

Perceived quality is a competitive advantage (Aaker, 1989). Several studies indicate that CSR can enhance product quality perception (Banerjee & Wathieu, 2017; Calaveras & Ganuza, 2018). Conversely, a study conducted by Robinson and Wood (2018) showed lower quality perception in firms with high CSR focus, as customers believed that product quality can suffer when companies overemphasize. However, in general, there is an empirically proven impact of perceived quality on the perceived value of the brand and purchase intention (Calvo-Porral & Lévy-Mangin, 2017).

Brand popularity refers to consumers' belief that a brand will be attractive in the current market. Moreover, perceived brand popularity is an advertising cue that increases consumer attention and familiarity (Kim et al., 2019). Brand popularity appears to be more important in collectivistic societies. Chinese consumers tend to choose popular brands as social norms and group conformity are salient in collectivistic societies (Filieri et al., 2019; Markus & Kitayama, 1994). Given its historical Soviet roots, Uzbekistan is likely a collectivistic country where groups and others' opinions may 'urge' consumers to prefer brands they perceive to be popular (Filieri et al., 2019). Furthermore, Safari and Chetty (2019) found that consumers tend to purchase products based on the brand's popularity as it lowers the purchasing risk. The importance of brand potential popularity when purchasing Yellow Brands in developing countries has yet to be explored.

This study evaluated the potential of the Yellow Brand in comparison to a Regular brand. With respect to consumers' cognitive perceptions of uniqueness, quality perception and popularity, the following hypotheses are offered below.

> *H1a: Consumers' Rational perceptions (*i.e.*, quality, uniqueness, and popularity) of the Yellow Brand will significantly predict purchase intentions.*

For comparative purposes, we have constructed the same type of hypothesis for the Regular brand.

> *H1b: Consumers' Rational perceptions (*i.e.*, quality, uniqueness, and popularity) of the Regular Brand will significantly predict purchase intentions.*

Moreover, statistically significant differences between the Yellow and Regular Brands appear in the next hypothesis.

> *H1c: Consumers Rational perceptions (*i.e.*, uniqueness, quality, potential popularity) of Yellow Brands will be significantly greater than their Rational perceptions of Regular Brands.*

The emotional aspect consists of brand trust, relevance, bonding as well as empathy (Vukasovic, 2009). Brand trust is "the willingness to rely on the ability of the brand to perform its stated function" (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001, p.2). It has been proven in past research that if the trust is developed, there will be an increase in the purchase intention (Aydin & Taskin, 2014; Sanny et al., 2020) As in the concept we have provided the description of the brand benefit, it is important to check how the message is believable, credible. It is important to note that, as the brand does not exist yet, some respondents might have some biased opinion (or doubt credibility). Importantly, brand credibility was identified to be even more important for countries with collectivist roots (e.g., Uzbekistan). Moreover, studies show credible brands receive higher quality ratings (Erdem et al., 2006).

When a new brand is tested potential relevance becomes important too as if the brand does not adhere to the personal values and norms of individuals, it becomes irrelevant. Brand relevance is one of the key ingredients when bonding emotionally with the consumer, (LLoyd, 2019), it helps the brands to develop an engaging and strong tie with the customer (Kupchella, 2018), and is identified to influence purchase intention (Hammerschmidt & Donnevert, 2007). To win consumers over, brands must first be relevant (Aaker, 2010). The relevance of the Yellow Brand is created by addressing socio-economic issues. Once sufficient brand relevance is identified in the testing stage, then it can be further enhanced.

Brand bonding is an emotional bond that could exist between an individual and a brand. Brand bonding has derived from the theory. According to Scannell and Gifford (2010), bonding attachment is about how affection can bond a person and a brand. Moreover, social ties and brand trust are related to brand attachment (Hemsley-Brown & Alnawas, 2016). Brand empathy, the degree that consumers identify or sympathize with the brand, impacts purchase intention (Anaza et al., 2018; Yang & Yen, 2018; Zerbini et al., 2019). Brand trust, relevance, bonding as well as brand empathy comprise the emotional element. We, therefore, offer the hypotheses below.

> *H2a: Consumers' Emotional perceptions (*i.e.*, relevance, trust, bonding, empathy) of the Yellow Brand will significantly predict purchase intentions.*
>
> *H2b: Consumers' Emotional perceptions (*i.e.*, relevance, trust, bonding, empathy) of the Regular Brand will significantly predict purchase intentions.*
>
> *H2c: Consumers Emotional perceptions (*i.e.*, relevance, trust, bonding, empathy) of Yellow Brands will be significantly greater than their Rational perceptions of Regular Brands.*

Action-Oriented/Behavioral elements are what individuals do based on the rational/cognitive and emotional elements. The action-oriented elements are willingness to recommend the product to others and acceptance of premium pricing. Brand perceived uniqueness, separating the brand from the competition, provides an added value to consumers, thereby affecting consumers' willingness to pay a price premium (Netemeyer et al., 2004). Anselmsson et al. (2014) found that uniqueness is among the strongest determinants of a price premium. Willingness to recommend a product to others is influenced by CSR initiatives, which in turn is associated with purchase intentions (Deng & Xu, 2017). Willingness to recommend is a customer satisfaction metric associated with a strong marketing brand advantage (Nyagah et al., 2021). It is therefore an important variable of interest. Consequently, we proposed the hypotheses below.

*H3a: Consumers' Action-Oriented perceptions (*i.e.*, willingness to recommend to others, pay a price premium) of the Yellow Brand will significantly predict purchase intentions.*
*H3b: Consumers' Action-Oriented perceptions (*i.e.*, willingness to recommend to others, pay a price premium) of the Regular Brand will significantly predict purchase intentions.*
*H3c: Consumers Action-Oriented perceptions (*i.e.*, willingness to recommend to others, pay a price premium) of Yellow Brands will be significantly greater than their Rational perceptions of Regular Brands.*

Research methodology

The current study empirically tested a new brand type in Uzbekistan, which extends our understanding of CSR brand modelling in developing countries. Specifically, two possible brand types: Regular and Yellow (described below) were empirically compared with respect to consumer perceptions and purchase intentions. We did not apply traditional concept testing which could have tested only Yellow Brand in isolation, instead, we have applied conjoint concept testing which includes another potential brand (Regular). Conjoint concept testing is considered a more structured and reliable approach to testing new brands (Green & Srinivasan, 1990).

To test the Yellow Brand idea, a concept was created that reflected insight, functional, emotional benefits as well as reasons to believe in the brand. The Yellow Brand functional benefit empathized quality, as product quality should be acceptable to consider other brand benefits. English language education is presented as a socio-economic benefit. A second concept was created which reflected a Regular Brand whose similar functional benefit highlighted quality but no CSR benefits at all. The description of Yellow and Regular Brand concepts may be found in Appendix 1. Study variables were derived from the Brand Potential Index developed by *GfK*, a leading indicator of future brand success (Vukasovic, 2009). Bottled water was chosen as a hypothetical example for this study because the water market in Uzbekistan is highly competitive and water is viewed as a commodity by consumers. Therefore, product taste does not impact preference. Consequently, pure brand positioning ideas can be evaluated more objectively.

A questionnaire (Appendix 2) was developed based on the ten BPI attributes, and selected demographic variables: age, gender, education, and family income. The questionnaire was offered in the three languages common to Uzbekistan: English, Russian, and Uzbek. Respondents rated two brands, Regular and Yellow on the same ten attributes (repeated measure). Likert scales were used to identify personal attitudes and perceptions (Allen & Seaman, 2007).

Sample

The questionnaire link was distributed through email and social media (i.e., Facebook) to a convenience sample. The required sample size at the confidence level of $p \leq .05$, and the estimated proportion of the attribute present in the population was determined using the Cochran formula (Cochran, 1963). Cochran's formula is considered especially appropriate in situations with large populations. Given a 34 million Uzbekistan population, the suggested representative sample size was 385. A total of 405 responses were received, eight responses were deleted after the data was cleaned, resulting in 397 acceptable responses. The sample size was adequate for the current study.

The sample was evenly split between females (48.9%) and males (51.1%), was predominantly educated at the bachelor level, and between 18 and 39 years of age (81.1%). Respondents reported their family income as sufficient to afford daily necessities and home appliances (e.g., TV, refrigerator, computer). Sample demographics may be found in Appendix 3.

Analysis

Multiple regression analyses were conducted to ascertain the relationship between brand potential indicators of regular and yellow brands and their relationship with intention to purchase. Subjects rated the Yellow and Regular Brands on the same BPI elements and intention to purchase; that is, a repeated-measures experimental

design was deployed (Greenwald, 1992). Error variance reduction and increased statistical power are advantages of the within-subjects methodology (Charness et al., 2012). The BPI elements were regressed on the intention to purchase, once for the Yellow Brand then separately for the Regular Brand. Paired t-tests were conducted for each BPI element to determine if subjects perceived the Yellow Brand more favorably than the Regular Brand.

Results

Table 1 contains the Yellow and Regular Brand regression analyses results. The Rational, Emotional, and Action-Oriented BPI elements accounted for significant amounts of purchase intention dependent variable variance ($R^2 = .634$, $p \leq .001$ and $R^2 = .494$, $p \leq .001$) for the Yellow and Regular.

Brands, respectively. Beta weights for five BPI elements were significant for the Yellow Brand: uniqueness, potential popularity, trust, empathy, and recommendation to others. In contrast, only two Regular Brand BPI element Beta weights were significant: trust and recommend to others.

Table 2 contains the paired *t*-test results for the Yellow and Regular Brands. The quality, uniqueness, potential popularity, and price premium elements significantly differed of the two brands. The other Yellow and Regular BPI elements mean values did not significantly differ. Yellow Brand uniqueness achieved the highest mean value indicating its relative importance among BPI elements. Perceived quality and potential popularity resulted in a negative *t* value indicating that the Regular Brand was viewed more favorably than the Yellow Brand. Respondents were significantly more

Table 1 Yellow and Regular Brand BPI Attributes Regressed on Purchase Intention

		***Yellow Brand*[a]**			***Regular Brand*[b]**		
		$R^2 = .634^{***}$			**$R^2 = .494^{***}$**		
Brand Potential Index Elements		*B*	***t***		*B*	***t***	
Rational	Quality	.031	.923		.025	.582	
	Uniqueness	.186	4.873	***	.016	.336	
	Popularity	.138	2.910	**	.088	1.732	
Emotional	Relevance	.068	1.614		.027	.565	
	Trust	−.108	−2.167	**	.266	5.030	***
	Bonding	.072	1.833		.070	1.447	
	Empathy	.169	3.847	***	.064	1.074	
Action Oriented	Recommendation	.453	9.927	***	.367	6.677	***
	Premium Pricing	−.001	−.029		−.042	−.860	

Dependent variables: [a]Intention to purchase Yellow Brand, [b]Intention to purchase Regular Brand

** $p \leq .01$, *** $p \leq .001$

Table 2 Yellow and Regular Brand T-tests for Brand Potential Index Elements

		Yellow Brand		**Regular Brand**			
Brand Potential Index Elements		**Mean**	**SD**	**Mean**	**SD**	***T***	
Rational	Quality	3.37	.993	3.58	.804	−3.856	***
	Uniqueness	3.65	1.041	3.03	1.114	9.508	***
	Potential Popularity	3.28	.924	3.39	.817	−2.392	**
Emotional	Relevance	3.30	1.008	3.37	.954	−1.383	
	Trust	3.43	.928	3.46	.832	−.708	
	Bonding	3.37	1.011	3.42	.886	−1.223	
	Empathy	3.46	.957	3.43	.836	.733	
Action Oriented	Recommendation	3.39	1.001	3.44	.856	−.955	
	Price Premium	3.18	1.269	2.86	.941	5.325	***
	Purchase Intention	3.64	.928	3.68	.768	−1.163	

** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

willing to pay a price premium for the Yellow in comparison to Regular Brand.

Discussion

The current study compared two brand positioning ideas using the concept testing method: a Regular Brand with no CSR benefits, and a Yellow Brand that provided socio-economic societal benefits. Purchase intention drivers were identified with respect to nine attributes: quality, uniqueness, potential popularity, relevance, trust, bonding, empathy, willingness to recommend to others, and acceptance of premium pricing. Additionally, significant differences between the two brands were examined along with the BPI elements.

When the BPI elements were regressed on purchase intention, the amount of variance accounted for by the Yellow BPI elements was larger. The standardized beta weights were also higher for the Yellow Brand, indicating a stronger relationship between the BPI elements and purchase intention. These findings reinforce past research reviewed earlier that consumer purchase intentions are generally enhanced when brands are perceived to be unique, and that consumers are more willing to pay a price premium (Anselmsson et al., 2014; Dhar & Sherman, 1996; Netemeyer et al., 2004). The present study demonstrated that this relationship may be stronger for Yellow Brands in developing countries where socio-economic needs are greater.

Rational elements included quality perception, uniqueness, and potential popularity. There was a statistically significant difference between Yellow and Regular Brand with respect to quality perception and uniqueness. Yellow Brand Purchase intention was positively impacted by the perception of uniqueness, popularity, empathy, and willingness to recommend. Adversely, brand trust had a negative impact on purchase intention.

Quality perception

The surprising finding is that the Yellow Brand was perceived to be of lesser quality than the Regular brand. This result contradicts previous research that reports a positive influence of CSR activities on perceived quality (Banerjee & Wathieu, 2017; Calaveras & Ganuza, 2018). In the current study, this may be due to different" reasons to believe" (RTB) used in the concept description for the two brands: "water quality is ensured under German quality control" (Yellow) and "water from Tyan Shyan mountains, …. new water enriched with microelements" (Regular). The Yellow RTB only covers the water production method of water; however, the Regular RTB included the source of water and other information (e.g., microelement). The Yellow RTB did not include product source, ingredients and other information that would have increased quality perceptions. Robinson and Wood (2018) evaluated the influence of CSR activities of new brands in a developed country and found that lower quality performance and high CSR focus are associated as customers believed that product quality suffers when companies overemphasize CSR. Importantly, the author suggests that this negative impact could be reverted to a positive one if the focus is explicitly drawn to both products as well as CSR. Consequently, we can conclude that lower quality perception of Yellow Brand or any brand that aims to provide socio-economic benefit to the society is not a significant drawback and could be amended if necessary.

Uniqueness

The perception that the Yellow Brand was more unique was expected as brands in Uzbekistan do not typically include social impact. Furthermore, there are few companies that integrate CSR into their corporate strategies. A website search found only six Uzbekistan companies that contained even minor information about CSR activities even though such information would potentially be a competitive advantage. This finding is in line with the study conducted by Nardi et al., 2021, which identified the more CSR initiatives in the industry, firms have lower chances to stand out in the competition. Moreover, Keller et al., 2002, p. 6) stated that "strong, favorable, unique associations that distinguish a brand from others in the same frame of reference are fundamental to successful brand positioning". Within a product category, a brand can potentially differentiate itself, increase brand awareness level, increase Top of Mind, and ultimately influence product sales in the Fast-Moving Consumer Goods product category. The uniqueness of the Yellow Brand may be a short-term competitive advantage, as additional Yellow Brands enter the market and other companies might do more CSR initiatives. Nevertheless, clear brand positioning in combination with strategic CSR integration might grant uniqueness perception to remain long-term.

Potential popularity

In the present study, the Yellow Brand popularity was perceived as significantly lower than the Regular Brand popularity. The novelty of Yellow Brands in Uzbekistan

may have lowered the perception of potential popularity in comparison to Regular Brands. However, Yellow Brand potential popularity had a significant positive influence on purchase intention, which is in line with other studies that underlined the importance of brand popularity for the consumer (Filieri et al., 2019; Markus & Kitayama, 1994; Safari & Chetty, 2019). Increasing the perceived popularity of Yellow brands represents a marketing opportunity as this element is associated with purchase intentions.

Trust

The Yellow and Regular Brand trust element did not significantly differ. However, in the regression, it is evident that brand trust is impacting negatively on the purchase intention. One possible explanation for this could be that respondents may doubt whether such novel brands could exist in Uzbekistan. Nevertheless, the literature suggests that brand trust builds over a long period of time of demonstrated brand value which in large part is in the hands of brand and product managers (De Morais Watanabe et al., 2020). In this research, Trust was significantly related to buying intentions for the Regular brand that respondents are more familiar with and perceived to be less novel. Therefore, a significantly lower score for the Yellow brand may develop over time and the marketing functions' ability to deliver the goods or services that are credible and worth trusting. Moreover, the regression analysis shows the negative impact of the brand trust on the purchase intention of the Yellow Brand, consequently, it is important to keep track of the brand trust association after Yellow Brand is launched, like the quality perception attribute that was discussed above.

Brand empathy

Consistent with previous research (Kotler et al., 2019), the Yellow Brand empathy beta weight was significant ($\beta = 0.165$, $p \leq .001$), indicating that affective feelings towards brands is an important element in consumer purchase decision-making. Brand empathy was insignificant for the Regular Brand.

Willingness to recommend

Willingness to recommend a product or service to others is associated with purchase intention (Chen, 2020). Brand perceived value-added influences consumer behavior, and this research suggests that Yellow and Regular Brands have a significant impact on purchase intentions (Swoboda & Sinning, 2020). Consumers are also willing to recommend increased premiums for certified and conventional products, in our case it was water which is a regular everyday used product (Oesman, 2021). Willingness to recommend the product to others is also influenced by product knowledge, purchasing power, packaging, age, gender. Social status, and the economic conditions of the country (Kucher et al., 2019).

Price premium

Compared to the Regular Brand, Yellow Brand consumers reported greater premium pricing acceptance. This finding is reasonable if consumers associated the brand with the added satisfaction of benefiting society. For example, Pampers has collaborated with UNICEF since 2006 to overcome consumers' perception that Pampers products were equivalent to its competitors. Pampers offered one tetanus shot for each diaper pack sold, a significant societal benefit especially during a pandemic in a developing country. Pampers, therefore, provided a reason for price premium acceptance. A study conducted by Anselmsson (2014, p. 1) supports this finding and confirms that the strongest determinants of price premium are social image and brand uniqueness. On the other hand, consumers in developing countries may be price elastic due to low earnings and even though they may report "premium pricing" acceptance this does not guarantee that they would be able to pay the price premium. Moreover, it is important to point out that even though there was a statistically significant difference between Regular and Yellow brands with respect to acceptance of premium pricing, the overall mean value is considerably lower in comparison to the other nine BPI attributes. Therefore, in comparison to the regular brand, respondents perceived the Yellow Brand to be worth the additional price. Moreover, Öberseder et al. (2011) found that only a minority consider company CSR activities in their purchasing decisions even though many claims that they care about CSR and that CSR influences their purchase intention. Nevertheless, if given a choice, consumers prefer socially responsible brands over brands that are not (Hildebrand et al., 2011; Maignan et al., 2005).

Managerial implications

As competition increases, change accelerates, and socioeconomic support becomes more vital in developing countries, our findings suggest that organizations consider Yellow Brands as part of their overall marketing strategy. Companies should strategically choose their

CSR initiatives when expanding both domestically and internationally. For example, environment-oriented CSR initiatives that organizations deploy in developed countries may be perceived differently by consumers in developing countries where environmental issues may be seen as less important than the socio-economic challenges faced by consumers.

The value of concept testing should extend beyond product features into exploring different types of CSR initiatives. For example, insights can be ascertained using questionnaires and focus groups that pertain to various types of CSR initiatives. The saliency of different types of CSR can be determined contingent on consumer needs on a micro level and country needs on a macro level. The usefulness of the BPI elements was demonstrated presently, and the approach may provide actionable information for decision-making purposes.

The finding that product quality perceptions decreased with the Yellow Brand underscores the need for organizations to communicate their CSR initiatives in a fashion that not only does not adversely impact perceived product quality. On the contrary, when communicating information about Yellow Brands, information about product quality should be emphasized so that consumers do not assume that CSR comes at the expense of other organizational efforts. For example, the deep consumer insight finding that a disturbingly low percentage of women worldwide believe that they are beautiful has pushed organizations to launch campaigns aimed to make women feel more beautiful. Dove, Inc.'s "Real Beauty" campaign (Dove, 2021) in conjunction with generic ads underline product quality, and such an approach is suggested for the Yellow Brand as well. Similarly, organizations can devise self-funding CSR strategies that do not impact product manufacturing or research and development funding. For example, allowing employees to devote a designated percentage of their time to CSR efforts without lowering performance expectations would implement CSR without impacting manufacturing budgets. Such initiatives may have the added benefits of retaining millennials, increasing employee satisfaction, improving organizational image, and building constructive community connections (iHire, 2021). Organizations such as Xerox offer paid time off programs whereby employees can engage in CSR initiatives. Since 1974, Xerox Corporation has implemented the Xerox Community Involvement Program whereby employees volunteer in community improvement projects (Xerox, 2021).

Study limitations

As with all research, the present study has limitations. First, a convenience sample was used using social media. Convenience samples are deployed when sampling randomly is logistically difficult. Such samples are increasingly being used because respondents are recruited quickly, reduces costs and allows for snowballing (Jager et al., 2017; Stokes et al., 2019). This convenience sample has several advantages over a more traditional probability sample in that they are less expensive, more efficient, and easier to implement (Bornstein et al., 2013).

The Yellow and Regular Brand concepts were fictitious brands based on concept testing principles. Generalizability may also be limited as only two brands were studied rather than multiple brands each with additional information. This increased information may better reflect the complexity of consumer purchasing decision-making. The findings are also limited to Uzbekistan.

Future research

Future research should increase the number of brands, reasons to believe and CSR approaches (e.g., environmental, human rights, and economic benefits). Environmental sustainability (green), socio-economic (Yellow) and a control brand with no CSR information can be contrasted in future research. Developing and developed countries may also be compared. For example, consumers in developed countries may have greater price premium acceptance than consumers in undeveloped countries because they can afford to subordinate socio-economic benefits to environmental needs as their per capita income is higher. That is, the socio-economic needs are satisfied whereas the environment needs improvement (possibly because of advanced industrialization). Future research should be extended to developing countries in Central Asia and other regions.

In conclusion, the perception of socio-economic benefit was examined in a developing country where few CSR practices exist. A brand positioned to benefit society was perceived to be more unique, worth a premium price, but of less quality and popular. Where the purchase intention for the Yellow Brand is positively impacted by the perception of uniqueness, brand empathy and willingness to recommend, and negatively impacted by brand trust. Brands with socio-economic benefits may therefore be considered by brand managers that wish to differentiate their brands in developing countries.

Appendix 1

Yellow and Regular Brand Concepts

Appendix 2

Table 3

Table 3 Brand Potential Index (BPI) Elements and Questionnaire Items

Brand Potential Index Elements		Description	Questionnaire Items[a]
Rationale	Uniqueness	Degree to which the brand concept is perceived as new, fresh, and unique	This bottled water idea is unique
	Quality	Rating of quality perception of brand	This bottled water seems to be of a good quality
	Popularity	Assesses the potential popularity and whether the product will be attractive in current market	This bottled water will become popular
Emotional	Relevance	Degree of relevance of brand positioning	This bottled water idea is aligned with my values and beliefs
	Trust	Degree of consumer brand trust and credibility	I trust this bottled water idea
	Bonding	Extent to which it will be possible to build a strong brand-consumer relationship	If a person would have characteristics of this water, I would be friends with him/her
	Empathy	Level of sympathy to the brand	It is worth loving this water brand
Action Oriented	Willingness to recommend	Level of perceived benefit (functional and emotional) and how likely the brand will be recommended	I would recommend this bottled water
	Acceptance of premium prices	Degree of acceptance of price, which is higher than the market average (i.e., worth paying more)	It is worth paying more for this water
	Purchase Intention	Level of purchase intention	If this bottled water is available, I would buy it

[a] Consumers responded on a Likert scale: (1) Strongly disagree, (2) Disagree, (3) Neither agree nor disagree, (4) Agree, (5) Strongly agree

Appendix 3

Table 4

Table 4 Sample demographics: Gender, Education, Age, and Family Income

		N	Percent
Gender	Female	194	48.9
	Male	203	51.1
Education	Secondary (high school)	61	15.4
	Higher (bachelors)	189	47.6
	Masters/PhD	135	34.0
Age	13–17	10	2.5
	18–23	105	26.4
	24–30	117	29.5
	31–39	96	24.2
	40 +	57	14.4
Family Income	Daily necessities (food, clothes)	92	23.2
	Daily necessities and home appliances (TV, refrigerators, computer)	155	39.0
	Daily necessities and home appliances, and new vehicle	63	15.9
	Daily necessities and home appliances, new vehicle, and apartment	50	12.6

Abbreviations

BPI: Brand potential index; CSR: Corporate Social Responsibility; RTB: Reason to Believe; SOR: Stimulus-Organism-Response.

Acknowledgements

No acknowledgements. Not applicable.

Authors' contributions

Zamira Ataniyazova – research idea development, concept creation, data gathering, writing, editing. Barry A. Friedman – data analysis, interpretation, writing, editing. Prabha Kiran – shaping theoretical framework, data analysis, writing, editing. The author(s) read and approved the final manuscript.

Authors' information

Zamira Ataniyazova is a Senior Lecturer at Westminster International University in Tashkent. She teaches modules in Marketing, such as Managing brands, Marketing research and others. She also has industry experience as a marketing research specialist that has undertaken great number of new brand concept testing for international FMCG company. She is also freelance marketing research consultant that analyses qualitative and quantitative data for International FMCG companies.

Barry A. Friedman received his Ph.D. degree from the Ohio State University, USA. He teaches courses in Human Resource Management and Organizational Behavior. He has 25 years of industry experience with ExxonMobil, Xerox, and Harris Interactive where he served in various positions, including Director of Training and Development, Internal Consultant and Human Resource Manager. Dr. Friedman currently teaches and conducts research in the USA and Germany, and has taught in Singapore, Turkey, China, and Japan. He is the founder and chair of the Human Resource Center for Excellence.

Dr. Prabha Kiran is a Senior Lecturer at Westminster International University in Tashkent. In past has worked as Assistant Professor at School of Business and Management, CHRIST Deemed to be University, Bangalore. She is an academician by choice and researcher by heart. She has completed her Bachelor of Engineering specializing in Electrical and Electronics Engineering (MVJCE-VTU Bangalore, India, MBA in Marketing in Systems from CBSMS- Bangalore University, India. She has a PhD in Digital Marketing, from Vels University, Chennai, India. She has 8 years of research experience and has worked extensively on Government funded projects in the area of Digital Marketing and Food technology.

All authors have approved the submitted version.

Funding

No funding. Not applicable.

Availability of data and materials

Primary data was gathered by the authors and can be requested from same.

Declarations

Competing interests

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

Author details

[1]School of Business and Economics, Westminster International University in Tashkent, Tashkent, Uzbekistan. [2]School of Business, State University of New York at Oswego, Oswego, USA.

Received: 14 October 2021 Accepted: 12 June 2022
Published online: 11 July 2022

References

Aaker, D. A. (1989). Managing assets and skills: The key to a sustainable competitive advantage. *California Management Review*, *31*(2), 91–106. https://doi.org/10.2307/41166561.

Aaker, D. A. (2010). *Brand relevance: Making competitors irrelevant*. Wiley.

Abid, T., Abid-Dupont, M. A., & Moulins, J. L. (2020). What corporate social responsibility brings to brand management? The two pathways from social responsibility to brand commitment. *Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental Management*, *27*(2), 925–936. https://doi.org/10.1002/csr.1856.

Achyldurdyyeva, J., Jaw, B. S., & Wang, C. Y. P. (2019). Foreign companies' CSR themes and objectives in Central Asia. *Journal of Eastern European and Central Asian Research (JEECAR)*, *6*(2), 331–343. https://doi.org/10.15549/jeecar.v6i2.279.

Allen, I. E., & Seaman, C. A. (2007). Likert scales and data analyses. *Quality Progress*, *40*(7), 64.

Amaeshi, K. M., Adi, B. C., Ogbechie, C., & Amao, O. O. (2006). Corporate social responsibility in Nigeria. *Journal of Corporate Citizenship*, *2006*(24), 83–99.

Anaza, N. A., Inyang, A. E., & Saavedra, J. L. (2018). Empathy and affect in B2B salesperson performance. *The Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing*, *33*(1), 29–41. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-658-28672-9_25.

Anselmsson, J., Bondesson, N. V., & Johansson, U. (2014). Brand image and customers' willingness to pay a price premium for food brands. *The Journal of Product and Brand Management 23* (2), 90–102.

Aslaksen, H. M., Hildebrandt, C., & Johnsen, H. C. G. (2021). The long-term transformation of the concept of CSR: Towards a more comprehensive emphasis on sustainability. *International Journal of Corporate Social Responsibility*, *6*(1), 1–14. https://doi.org/10.1186/s40991-021-00063-9.

Aydin, G., AR, A. A., & Taskin, C. (2014). The role of Brand Trust on parents purchase intentions of baby-care products. *Dogus Universitesi Dergisi, 2*(15), 165–180. https://doi.org/10.31671/dogus.2018.84

Bagozzi, R. P. (1986). Principles of marketing management. *Science Research Associates, Chicago, IL*. https://doi.org/10.12691/jbms-2-3-1.

Banerjee, S., & Wathieu, L. (2017). Corporate social responsibility and product quality: Complements or substitutes? *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, *34*(3), 734–745. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijresmar.2017.06.006.

Banović, M., Krystallis, A., Guerrero, L., & Reinders, M. J. (2016). Consumers as co-creators of new product ideas: An application of projective and creative research techniques. *Food Research International*, *87*, 211–223. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.foodres.2016.07.010.

Bebko, C. P. (2017). Implications of the unique characteristics of social causes. *Journal of Business and Behavioral Sciences*, *29*(1), 18.

Bhattacharya, A., Good, V., & Sardashti, H. (2020). Doing good when times are bad: The impact of CSR on brands during recessions. *European Journal of Marketing*, *54*(9), 2049–2077. https://doi.org/10.1108/EJM-01-2019-0088.

Bornstein, M.H., Jager, J. & Putnick, D.L. (2013). Sampling in developmental science: situations, shortcomings, solutions, and standards. *Developmental Review, 33*(4), 357–370

British American Tobacco (2021). Social responsibility. https://bat.uz/doings/soczialnaya-otvetstvennost/. Accessed 31 Dec 2021.

Calaveras, A., & Ganuza, J. (2018). Corporate social responsibility and product quality. *Journal of Economics and Management Strategy*, *27*(4), 804–829. https://doi.org/10.1111/jems.12264.

Calvo-Porral, C., & Lévy-Mangin, J. P. (2017). Store brands' purchase intention: Examining the role of perceived quality. *European Research on Management and Business Economics*, *23*(2), 90–95. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.iedeen.2016.10.001.

Cambra-Fierro, J. J., Flores-Hernández, J. A., Pérez, L., & Valera-Blanes, G. (2020). CSR and branding in emerging economies: The effect of incomes and education. *Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental Management*, *27*(6), 2765–2776. https://doi.org/10.1002/csr.2000.

Charness, G., Gneezy, U., & Kuhn, M. A. (2012). Experimental methods: Between-subject and within-subject design. *Journal of Economic Behavior and Organization*, *81*(1), 1–8. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jebo.2011.08.009.

Chaudhuri, A., & Holbrook, M. B. (2001). The chain of effects from brand trust and brand affect to brand performance: The role of brand loyalty. *Journal of Marketing*, *65*(2), 81–93. https://doi.org/10.1509/jmkg.65.2.81.18255.

Chen, B. (2020). When foreign brands appear local, and local brands appear foreign: The asymmetric effects of foreign branding in developing countries. *Asia Pacific Journal of Marketing and Logistics*, *33*(1), 145–161. https://doi.org/10.1108/APJML-06-2019-0396.

Cochran, W. G. (1963). *Sampling Techniques*, (2nd ed.,). Wiley. https://doi.org/10.4236/jep.2011.24038.

De Morais Watanabe, E. A., Alfinito, S., Curvelo, I. C. G., & Hamza, K. M. (2020). Perceived value, trust and purchase intention of organic food: A study with Brazilian consumers. *British Food Journal*. https://doi.org/10.1108/REGE-01-2018-0010.

De Pelsmaeker, S., Gellynck, X., Delbaere, C., Declercq, N., & Dewettinck, K. (2015). Consumer-driven product development and improvement combined with sensory analysis: A case-study for European filled chocolates. *Food Quality and Preference*, *41*, 20–29. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.foodqual.2014.10.009.

Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (2000). The 'what' and 'why' of goal pursuits: Human needs and the self-determination of behavior. *Psychological Inquiry*, *11*, 227–268. https://doi.org/10.1207/S15327965PLI1104_01.

Deng, X., & Xu, Y. (2017). Consumers' responses to corporate social responsibility initiatives: The mediating role of consumer-company identification. *Journal of Business Ethics*, *142*(3), 515–526. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-015-2742-x.

Dhar, R., & Sherman, S. J. (1996). The effect of common and unique features in consumer choice. *Journal of Consumer Research*, *23*(3), 193–203. https://doi.org/10.1086/209477.

Dove (2021). Dove campaigns. https://www.dove.com/us/en/stories/campaigns.html. Accessed 31 Dec 2021.

Erdem, T., Swait, J., & Valenzuela, A. (2006). Brands as signals: A cross-country validation study. *Journal of Marketing*, *70*(1), 34–49. https://doi.org/10.1509/jmkg.70.1.034.qxd.

Filieri, R., Lin, Z., D'Antone, S., & Chatzopoulou, E. (2019). A cultural approach to brand equity: The role of brand mianzi and brand popularity in China. *Journal of Brand Management*, *26*(4), 376–394. https://doi.org/10.1057/s41262-018-0137-x.

García-Milon, A., Martínez-Ruiz, M. P., Olarte-Pascual, C., & Pelegrín-Borondo, J. (2019). Does the product test really make a difference? Evidence from the launch of a new wine. *Food Quality and Preference*, *71*, 422–430. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.foodqual.2018.08.007.

Golob, U., & Podnar, K. (2019). Researching CSR and brands in the here and now: An integrative perspective. *Journal of Brand Management*, *26*(1), 1–8. https://doi.org/10.1057/S41262-018-0112-6.

Green, P. E., & Srinivasan, V. (1990). Conjoint analysis in marketing: New developments with implications for research and practice. *Journal of Marketing*, *54*, 3–19. https://doi.org/10.2307/1251756.

Greenwald, A. G. (1992). Within-subjects designs: To use or not to use? Methodological issues & strategies in clinical research. *American Psychological Association, Washington, DC*, 157–167. https://doi.org/10.1037/10109-021.

Hammerschmidt, M., & Donnevert, T. (2007). Brand efficiency and brand relevance-introducing and linking both concepts. In *AMA winter educators' conference proceedings*, (vol. 20). https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.962240.

Hemsley-Brown, J., & Alnawas, I. (2016). Service quality and brand loyalty: The mediation effect of brand passion, brand affection and self-brand connection. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, *28*(12), 2771–2794. https://doi.org/10.1108/IJCHM-09-2015-0466.

Herbas Torrico, B., Frank, B., & Arandia Tavera, C. (2018). Corporate social responsibility in Bolivia: Meanings and consequences. *International Journal of Corporate Social Responsibility*, *3*(1), 1–13. https://doi.org/10.1186/s40991-018-0029-0.

Hildebrand, D., Sen, S., & Bhattacharya, C. B. (2011). Corporate social responsibility: A corporate marketing perspective. *European Journal of Marketing*, *45*(9/10), 1353–1364. https://doi.org/10.1108/03090561111151790.

Holbrook, M. B., & Batra, R. (1987). Assessing the role of emotions as mediators of consumer responses to advertising. *Journal of Consumer Research*, *14*(3), 404–420. https://doi.org/10.1086/209123.

Hur, W. M., Kim, H., & Woo, J. (2014). How CSR leads to corporate brand equity: Mediating mechanisms of corporate brand credibility and reputation. *Journal of Business Ethics*, *125*(1), 75–86. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-013-1910-0.

iHire (2021). 5 reasons why you should offer volunteer time off. https://www.ihire.com/resourcecenter/employer/pages/5-reasons-to-offer-volunteer-time-off. Accessed 20 Dec 2021.

Jager, J., Putnick, D. L., & Bornstein, M. H. (2017). II. More than just convenient: The scientific merits of homogeneous convenience samples. *Monographs of the Society for Research in Child Development*, *82*(2), 13–30. https://doi.org/10.1111/mono.12296.

Kazmi, S. H. A., Shahbaz, M. S., Mubarik, M. S., & Ahmed, J. (2021). Switching behaviors toward green brands: Evidence from emerging economies. *Environment, Development and Sustainability*, 1–25. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10668-020-01116-y.

Keller, K.L., Sternthal, B., and Tybout, A. M., 2002. Three questions you need to ask about your brand: HBR. Available from: https://hbr.org/2002/09/three-questions-you-need-to-ask-about-your-brand Accessed 3 May, 2021.

Kim, B.J., Kim M.J., & Kim T.H. (2021). The power of ethical leadership': the influence of corporate social responsibility oncreativity, the mediating

function of psychological safety, and the moderating role of ethical leadership." *International journal of environmental research and public health 18*(6), 2968.
Kim, M.Y., Moon, S. and Iacobucci, D. (2019). The influence of global brand distribution on brand popularity on social media. *Journal of International Marketing, 27*(4), 22–38.
Kotler, P., Kartajaya, H., & Setiawan, I. (2019). Marketing 3.0: From products to customers to the human spirit. In *Marketing wisdom*, (pp. 139–156). https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-10-7724-1_10.
Kucher, A., Hełdak, M., Kucher, L., & Raszka, B. (2019). Factors forming the consumers' willingness to pay a price premium for ecological goods in Ukraine. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, *16*(5), 859. https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph16050859.
Kumar, R., Chambers, Edgar, Chambers, D. H., & Lee, J. (2021). Generating new snack food texture ideas using sensory and consumer research tools: A case study of the Japanese and south Korean snack food markets. *Foods, 10*(2), 474.DOI: https://doi.org/10.3390/foods10020474
Kupchella, R. (2018). Storytelling: How to create brand relevance. Forbes. https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbesagencycouncil/2018/03/01/storytelling-how-to-create-brand-relevance/?sh=1a0c6edf71df
Latapí Agudelo, M. A., Jóhannsdóttir, L., & Davídsdóttir, B. (2019). A literature review of the history and evolution of corporate social responsibility. *International Journal of Corporate Social Responsibility*, *4*(1), 1–23. https://doi.org/10.1186/s40991-018-0039-y.
Lee, E. M., Park, S., Rapert, M. I., & Newman, C. L. (2012). Does perceived consumer fit matter in corporate social responsibility issues? *Journal of Business Research*, *65*(11), 1558–1564. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2011.02.040.
Lloyd, T. (2019). Brand relevance is the new differentiation. Emotive Brand. https://www.emotivebrand.com/brand-relevance-is-the-new-differentiation/
Lukoil Uzbekistan (2021). Social responsibility. https://lukoil-international.uz/ru/Responsibility/Charity. Accessed 2 Jan 2022.
Maignan, I., Ferrell, O. C., & Ferrell, L. (2005). A stakeholder model for implementing social responsibility in marketing. *European Journal of Marketing*, *39*(9/10), 956–977. https://doi.org/10.1108/03090560510610662.
Markus, H. R., & Kitayama, S. (1994). A collective fear of the collective: Implications for selves and theories of selves. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, *20*(5), 568–579. https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167294205013.
Maslow, A. (1971). *The farther reaches of human nature*. The Viking Press.
Maslow, A. H. (1943). A theory of human motivation. *Psychological Review*, *50*, 370–396. https://doi.org/10.1037/h0054346.
Maslow, A. H. (1954). *Motivation and personality*. Harper.
Mehrabian, A., & Russell, J. A. (1974). *An approach to environmental psychology*. MIT Press.
Moehl, S., & Friedman, B. A. (2021). Consumer perceived authenticity of organizational corporate social responsibility (CSR) statements: A test of attribution theory. *Social Responsibility Journal*, ahead-of-print. https://doi.org/10.1108/CCIJ-04-2018-0051.
Moscato, E. M. (2018). A recipe for consumer insight. *Marketing Education Review*, *28*(2), 104–108. https://doi.org/10.1080/10528008.2018.1448285.
Nardi, L., Zenger, T., Lazzarini, S. G., & Cabral, S. (2021). Doing well by doing good, uniquely: Materiality and the market value of unique CSR strategies. *Strategy Science*. https://doi.org/10.5465/AMBPP.2020.163.
Neff, J. (2010). Has green stopped giving. *Advertising Age*, *81*(40), 1–19. https://doi.org/10.35152/snusjb.2017.23.1.004.
Netemeyer, R. G., Krishnan, B., Pullig, C., Wang, G., Yagci, M., Dean, D., … Wirth, F. (2004). Developing and validating measures of facets of customer-based brand equity. *Journal of Business Research*, *57*(2), 209–224.
Nyagah, E., Cole, V., & Mbogo, R. (2021). Satisfaction of international students with their experiences in Kenyan Christian universities, and their willingness to recommend their institutions. *Impact: Journal of Transformation*, *4*(1), 74–86 Retrieved from http://library.africainternational.edu/index.php/impact/article/view/89.
Öberseder, M., Schlegelmilch, B. B., & Gruber, V. (2011). "Why Don't consumers care about CSR?": A qualitative study exploring the role of CSR in consumption decisions. *Journal of Business Ethics*, *104*(4), 449–460. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-011-0925-7.
Oesman, I. F. (2021, January). Consumers' willingness to pay more for eco friendly products (Green products) classification daily needs products. In *INCHES 2020: Proceedings of the 1st international conference on economics engineering and social science, InCEESS 2020, 17–18 July, Bekasi, Indonesia*, (p. 250). European Alliance for Innovation.
Okafor, E. E., Hassan, A. R., & Doyin Hassan, A. (2008). Environmental issues and corporate social responsibility: The Nigeria experience. *Journal of Human Ecology*, *23*(2), 101–107. https://doi.org/10.1080/09709274.2008.11906060.
Orazalin, N. (2019). Corporate governance and corporate social responsibility (CSR) disclosure in an emerging economy: Evidence from commercial banks of Kazakhstan. *Corporate Governance*, *19*(3), 490–507. https://doi.org/10.1108/CG-09-2018-0290.
Palazzo, G., & Basu, K. (2007). The ethical backlash of corporate branding. *Journal of Business Ethics*, *73*(4), 333–346. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-006-9210-6.
Panda, T. K., Kumar, A., Jakhar, S., Luthra, S., Garza-Reyes, J. A., Kazancoglu, I., & Nayak, S. S. (2020). Social and environmental sustainability model on consumers' altruism, green purchase intention, green brand loyalty and evangelism. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, *243*, 118575. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jclepro.2019.118575.
Peng, L., & Finn, A. (2008). Concept testing: The state of contemporary practice. *Marketing Intelligence & Planning*, *26*(6), 649–674. https://doi.org/10.1108/02634500810902884.
Pisani, N., Kourula, A., Kolk, A., & Meijer, R. (2017). How global is international CSR research? Insights and recommendations from a systematic review. *Journal of World Business*, *52*(5), 591–614. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jwb.2017.05.003.
Pohl, M., & Tolhurst, N. (2010). *Responsible business: How to manage a CSR strategy successfully*. Wiley.
Polonsky, M. J., & Jevons, C. (2006). Understanding issue complexity when building a socially responsible brand. *European Business Review*, *18*(5), 340–349. https://doi.org/10.1108/09555340610686930.
Rahman, I., Park, J., & Chi, C. G.-q. (2015). Consequences of "greenwashing". *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, *27*(6), 1054–1081. https://doi.org/10.1108/IJCHM-04-2014-0202.
Raimbaev, A. (2009). Corporate Social Responsibility among SMEs in Uzbekistan. *Global Perspectives on Corporate Governance and CSR*, 187.
Ramesh, K., Saha, R., Goswami, S., & Dahiya, R. (2019). Consumer's response to CSR activities: Mediating role of brand image and brand attitude. *Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental Management*, *26*(2), 377–387. https://doi.org/10.1002/csr.1689.
Robinson, S., & Wood, S. (2018). A "good" new brand—What happens when new brands try to stand out through corporate social responsibility. *Journal of Business Research*, *92*, 231–241. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2018.07.031.
Safari, A., & Chetty, S. (2019). Multilevel psychic distance and its impact on SME internationalization. *International Business Review*, *28*(4), 754–765. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ibusrev.2019.03.001.
Sanny, L., Arina, A. N., Maulidya, R. T., & Pertiwi, R. P. (2020). Purchase intention on Indonesia male's skin care by social media marketing effect towards brand image and brand trust. *Management Science Letters*, *10*, 2139–2146. https://doi.org/10.5267/j.msl.2020.3.023.
Scannell, L., & Gifford, R. (2010). Defining place attachment: A tripartite organizing framework. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, *30*(1), 1–10. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jenvp.2009.09.006.
Schneider, F., Kallis, G., & Martinez-Alier, J. (2010). Crisis or opportunity? Economic degrowth for social equity and ecological sustainability. Introduction to this special issue. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, *18*(6), 511–518. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jclepro.2010.01.014.
Smirnova, Y. (2012). Perceptions of corporate social responsibility in Kazakhstan. *Social Responsibility Journal*, *8*(3), 404–417.
Stokes, Y., Vandyk, A., Squires, J., Jacob, J., & Gifford, W. (2017;2019), "Using Facebook and LinkedIn to recruit nurses for an online survey", *Western Journal of Nursing Research*, *41*(1) 96–110. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1177/0193945917740706
Subrahmanyan, S., & Gomez-Arias, J. T. (2008). Integrated approach to understanding consumer behavior at bottom of pyramid. *Journal of Consumer Marketing*. https://doi.org/10.1108/07363760810915617.
Sullivan, F. C. (2019). Let's talk about brand benefits and a reason to believe. https://medium.com/s/how-to-build-a-brand/lets-talk-about-brand-benefits-and-a-reason-to-believe-37a90fff59d8. Accessed 26 Dec 2021.

Swaminathan, V., Sorescu, A., Steenkamp, J. B. E., O'Guinn, T. C. G., & Schmitt, B. (2020). Branding in a hyperconnected world: Refocusing theories and rethinking boundaries. *Journal of Marketing*, *84*(2), 24–46. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022242919899905.

Swoboda, B., & Sinning, C. (2020). How country development and national culture affect the paths of perceived brand globalness to consumer behavior across nations. *Journal of Business Research*, *118*, 58–73. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2020.05.045.

Symeonidou, S., & Vagiona, D. (2018). The role of the water footprint in the context of green marketing. *Environmental Science and Pollution Research*, *25*(27), 26837–26849. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11356-018-1838-0.

Tauber, E. M. (1981). Utilization of concept testing for new product forecasting: Traditional versus multi attribute approaches. *New Product Forecasting Lexington, MA: Lexington*, 169–178. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0019-8501(98)00027-3.

Tilt, C. A. (2016). Corporate social responsibility research: The importance of context. *International Journal of Corporate Social Responsibility*, *1*(1), 1–9. https://doi.org/10.1186/s40991-016-0003-7.

UNICE (2020). 3rd environmental performance review of Uzbekistan. https://unece.org/info/publications/pub/2183.

Vukasovic, T. (2009). Searching for competitive advantage with the aid of the brand potential index. *The Journal of Product and Brand Management*, *18*(3), 165–176. https://doi.org/10.1108/10610420910957799.

Xerox (2021). 2021 Corporate social responsibility report.

Yang, H. T., & Yen, G. F. (2018). Consumer responses to corporate cause-related marketing: A serial multiple mediator model of self-construal, empathy and moral identity. *European Journal of Marketing*. https://doi.org/10.1108/10610420910957799.

Zaman, S. I., Jalees, T., Jiang, Y., & Kazmi, S. H. A. (2018). Testing and incorporating additional determinants of ethics in counterfeiting luxury research according to the theory of planned behavior. *Psihologija*, *51*(2), 163–196. https://doi.org/10.1080/23311975.2021.1920559.

Zerbini, C., Vergura, D. T., & Luceri, B. (2019). How fair-trade claims and emotional empathy affect the consumer's propensity to buy fair chocolate? *British Food Journal*, *121*(7), 1605–1613. https://doi.org/10.1108/BFJ-07-2018-0417.

Zhu, B., Kowatthanakul, S., & Satanasavapak, P. (2020). Generation Y consumer online repurchase intention in Bangkok: Based on stimulus-organism-response (SOR) model. *International Journal of Retail & Distribution Management*, *48*(1), 53–69. https://doi.org/10.2147/PRBM.S301286.

Смирнова, Е. В. (2015). Социальная ответственность бизнеса в странах Центральной Азии: сравнительный анализ. *Вестник КазНУ (серия экономическая)*, *2*, 108.0.

Publisher's Note