

Impact of perceived corporate citizenship on purchase intention: across the fear of COVID-19 during the COVID-19 pandemic

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Abstract

Purpose – This paper examines the direct relationship between perceived corporate citizenship (CC) and purchase intention. This study also tests the mediating role of brand trust (BT), consumer–brand identification (CBI) and the moderating effect of personal norms and fear to coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) by contributing social exchange theory (SET), brand relationship theory, social cognitive theory (SCT) and fear appeal theory.

Design/methodology/approach – Quantitative research was carried out by means of a survey with a sample of 411 regular consumers who work for national retail brands, where the unit of analysis was an individual. The study analysed the data to test the research hypotheses using SPSS and SMART partial least squares (PLS).

Findings – This study found a significant positive impact of perceived CC on purchase intention (direct path), and furthermore, a partial mediation was shown for the indirect approach. In addition, personal norms and fear to COVID-19 have a significant impact on the relationships between perceived CC on purchase intention, BT on purchase intention and CBI on purchase intention.

Practical implications – This study provides useful insights for managers to implement CC strategies to enhance consumer purchase intention and brand relationship in the retail sector within the COVID-19 pandemic.

Originality/value – The current study is perhaps the first to investigate the impact of perceived CC on purchase intention across BT, CBI, personal norms and fear to COVID-19 in the retail industry, period of COVID-19 pandemic. The study also makes some significant theoretical contributions and previously did not shed light on customer behaviour in this context.

Keywords Perceived corporate citizenship, Purchase intention, Brand trust, Consumer–brand identification, Personal norms, Fear to COVID-19, Retail, Social responsibility

Paper type Research paper

1. Introduction

The retail industry is the most active and energetic and the most complex and demanding (Cervantes and Franco, 2020). The unprecedented coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19)



worldwide pandemic outbreak is affecting consumer intent retail (Vakharia, 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic also affects retail customer buying habits globally (Goswami and Chouhan, 2021; Fernandes, 2020). Because corporate citizenship (CC) lowers obstacles and delivers services and products to people in need, companies embrace it. It is time to double down on CC with the present COVID-19 epidemic (SemiColonWeb, 2021; Peters, 2020). When it comes to COVID-19, CC initiatives must have the correct approach and tone (Peters, 2020). CC reflects that an increasing number of firms engage in CC and consider it a strategic cornerstone for an organisation's sustainability (Lin and Liu, 2017a, b; Newman *et al.*, 2014).

Since CC is referring to "a company's social obligations", it involves corporate social responsibility (CSR) and how well they satisfy shareholders' legal, ethical and economic obligations (Hayes, 2021). CC and CSR are synonyms (Tsai *et al.*, 2014; Hayes, 2021). Social responsibility activities impact consumer behaviour (Fernández-Ferrín *et al.*, 2020) and hence purchase intention (e.g. brand trust (BT) and brand identification) (Marin and Ruiz, 2007; Vlachos *et al.*, 2008; Tsai *et al.*, 2014).

Based on social exchange theory (SET) (Emerson, 1976), this paradigm explains reciprocal interactions between engaging parties (Prentice *et al.*, 2019). SET is the outcome of an exchange procedure. We want to maximise advantages and reduce expenditures (Cherry, 2020). Unfortunately, academic studies have not sufficiently theoretically contributed to explaining the link between SET and CC. Also, it lacks theoretical accuracy, limiting SET usefulness (Cropanzano *et al.*, 2017). Based on the current literature, this study's research question is:

RQ1. Does perceived CC affect purchasing intent during the COVID-19 pandemic?

Among the important mediators between CC and purchase, intention is consumer–brand identification (CBI) and BT. Because past research shows that organisations benefit from creating consumer trust and identification, which in turn influences behavioural intentions (Keh and Xie, 2009). This study's secondary hypothesis is consumer–brand relationship theory (CBRT). We view CBI as the amount to which the customer cognitively sees a relationship between his/her personal identity and the brand's identity (Davvetas and Diamantopoulos, 2017; Kumar and Kaushik, 2018).

Personal norms impact the charitable dimension, consumer–brand identity and purchase intention, according to Abid *et al.* (2019). Personal norms influence customer purchasing intention, according to Chatzidakis *et al.* (2014). Furthermore, social responsibility was found to be a pre-cursor to improving personal norms of behaviour and a favourable buying attitude (Rahimah *et al.*, 2018; Wang and Chou, 2020). Personal standards may influence consumer social responsibility and buying intention. The social cognitive theory (SCT) described human behaviour by examining environmental, psychological and behavioural variables (Bandura, 1991, 1999, 2001). Few research studies have examined the impact of personal norms and consumer purchasing intent (Wang and Chou, 2020). To fill up the gaps in the current literature, the following research question was developed:

RQ2. Do the BT and consumer–brand identification have a mediated influence on RQ1 and personal norms is moderating impact on RQ1 relationship?

Meanwhile, anxiety and stress have been linked to people's fears about the possibility of COVID-19 infection (Ahorsu *et al.*, 2020). Stress, anxiety and depressive disorders are on the rise as more individuals become infected with coronavirus due to an increasing number of instances of fear of COVID-19 (FCV-19). A lack of psychological well-being results from this (Satici *et al.*, 2020). The increased level of FCV-19 is related to low level of job satisfaction, high level of psychological distress and consumer behaviour (El-Bardan and Lathabhavan, 2021). Therefore, few scholars are addressed to the above empirical gap and following research question was developed:

RQ3. Does the FCV-19 have a moderating impact on RQ1's relationship?

The aforementioned RQ1, RQ2 and RQ3 research questions will be the research goals. To attain this goal, the current study employed SET, CBRT, and social cognitive theory (SCT) and fear appeal theory. The social exchange hypothesis was utilised to establish the link between CC, BT and purchase intent. The influence of CBI as a mediator of the CC and purchasing intention (PI) is introduced to consumer–brand relationship theorists. Also, personal norms and buying intention are explained by SCT and fear to COVID-19 is repressing of fear appeal theory.

This study adds four valuable features. A direct association between perceived corporate citizenship (PCC) and retail sector is well supported, as is the mediation mechanism between PCC and PI and the moderating influence of personal norms. Finally, a theoretical point. Unfortunately, numerous empirical research studies have not sufficiently contributed to our knowledge of how CC affects customers' purchase intention (Lantos, 2001; Husted and Allen, 2007; Tsai *et al.*, 2014). So, this essay will first explore the research on the impact of CC, BT, brand identity, personal norms and fear to COVID-19 on purchase intentions in the COVID-19 epidemic. Very little empirical evidence are related to PCC and PI during the COVID-19 pandemic and in addition to, addressed to impact of fear to COVID-19 is unique of this study. To propose a conceptual model and research hypotheses, the methods and data analysis will test these hypotheses. Finally, we will explore the ramifications, conclusions and future work.

2. A survey of the literature and theoretical discussion

2.1 Corporate citizenship

There is a new term for business–society interactions of PCC which is becoming a popular phrase in business and academic literature (Jhingan, 2018). Globally, CC has grown into a set of business practices helpful to both society and businesses (Maignan and Ferrell, 2000; Arachchi, 2022). CC is often referred to as CSR, corporate duty or ethical business. Since it is a sort of corporate self-regulation that is integrated into a company strategy (Lin *et al.*, 2010), however, when considering the more “social” aspects of corporate responsibility, CC is regarded more accurate (Waddock and Smith, 2000).

CC has five dimensions, and these dimensions are critical for studying CC because five dimensions can articulate a very clear economic position (that corporations are capable of assuming economic responsibilities), a legal position (that corporations are capable of assuming legal responsibilities), and a philosophical and normative undertone (that these responsibilities should extend beyond the mere generation of wealth) (Küskü and Zarkada-Fraser, 2004; Tasi *et al.*, 2014).

CC has garnered both academic and practitioner interest in recent decades (Lin and Liu, 2017a, b), yet there is less empirical evidence relating to CC. However, little empirical evidence contributed to our understanding of the COVID-19 pandemic's implications for CC and the retail sector.

2.2 Corporate citizenship and the impact of COVID-19 on the retail sector

COVID-19's substantial alterations to the external environment have had a variety of effects on the retail industry's operations globally (AbeamConsulting, 2021). At the time of writing, the UK, Asia and several European Union (EU) member states have placed significant portions of their economies under lockdown. Service industries such as retail (Fernandes, 2020), hospitality and tourism will be badly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic (Dolnicar and Zare, 2020; Fernandes, 2020). COVID-19, as a pandemic, has the potential to influence the development of social responsibility actions in marketing, and it represents an excellent opportunity for

businesses to embrace more genuine and authentic social responsibility and contribute to resolving urgent global social and environmental challenges (He and Harris, 2020).

As a result of the global COVID-19 problem, social responsibility campaigns are emphasising the relevance of all donations. However, not every company can afford to provide the above-mentioned monetary present. The possibilities are endless, from product contributions to community assistance through counselling and at-home activities, to providing material on fun ways to utilise your brand's products at home (Shapiro, 2021). The "new role for retailers in society" will also enhance retail BT, identity and purchase intention (Pantano *et al.*, 2020).

2.3 Brand trust

BT has emerged as a vital component of the retail business, during the COVID-19 crisis. It helps create an emotional relationship between the brand, society and the client (MacKenzie and Rathore, 2020). Brand trust is "a psychological state that comprises a set of accumulated presumptions about the brand's validity, integrity and goodness" (Gurviez and Korchia, 2002). CC has been found to influence trust (Tsai *et al.*, 2014) but not BT. Trust seems to be required for long-term consumer–brand relationships (Abid *et al.*, 2019). Corporate brands must be trusted not to abuse vulnerable customers (Anderson and Weitz, 1992). As a two-party transaction, trust is a relational market-based asset (Sichtmann, 2007; Delgado-Ballester and Munuera-Aleman, 2005).

A customer's faith in a corporate brand shows that the brand will benefit the consumer (Delgado-Ballester and Munuera-Aleman, 2001). As a result, when people buy, corporate BT is vital (Goldsmith *et al.*, 2000). Also, consumers choose reliable brands. Customers who trust a brand have positive feelings about its goodness, honesty and integrity. This strengthens the brand's relationship with the consumer and their purchase intent (Frasquet *et al.*, 2017). Socially responsible acts also assist customers build BT and CBI (Du *et al.*, 2007; Coelho *et al.*, 2018) due to the fact that customer brand recognition is a critical component of this study.

2.4 Identification of consumer brands

How, when and why organisations help consumers articulate their identities is crucial to CBI (Stokburger-Sauer *et al.*, 2012). Consumers' self-concept is developed in several ways by brands (Johnson *et al.*, 2011; Ma, 2020). Consumers are more likely to create and sustain relationships with brands that provide them a feeling of self, as well as social and psychological benefits (Park *et al.*, 2010; Elbedweihy *et al.*, 2016). Brand awareness or brand recognition does not directly correlate with purchase intentions affects purchasing intent in consumers with poor brand recognition (Marin *et al.*, 2018). According to several empirical studies, brand recognition does not directly correlate with purchase intentions (Becerra and Badrinarayanan, 2013). Brand social benefits are expected to be a driver of CBI, according to Stokburger-Sauer *et al.* (2012).

However, Martínez *et al.* (2014) argued that there had been a dearth of study on CBI and its relationship to other social exchange factors. Do customers truly understand what the firms behind their favourite brands are doing or if they support or oppose social causes? Consumers consider these circumstances, which results in brand identification (Rizkallah, 2012).

2.5 Purchase intention

The COVID-19 pandemic disrupts a consumer's lifestyle and purchasing behaviour (Verma and Naveen, 2021). Additionally, the COVID-19 epidemic has altered the purchasing intentions of consumers worldwide (Intelligence, 2021). However, brand participation in

socially responsible activities results in an induced market downturn against the COVID-19, overcoming the customer's behavioural intention.

Intentions may be defined as "a person's subjective judgements of a certain item to respond with a specific behaviour" (Moon *et al.*, 2017). According to Gordon (2021), CC refers to a corporation's standards to demonstrate its commitment to CSR. It is a critical component of achieving CC. Regarding this, social responsibility activities have a direct and indirect effect on purchasing intention (Lee and Lee, 2018).

Retailers' socially responsible actions have the potential to influence consumer attitudes and behaviour. Consumers may place their faith and confidence in these retailers (Tofighi and Bodur, 2015). Additionally, consumers may have favourable attitudes and hopeful ideas toward these businesses since they feel the latter are attempting to offer them and the entire society goodwill and advantages (Dang *et al.*, 2020). Thus, consumers who have a hopeful outlook and confidence in socially responsible businesses are more inclined to acquire items and services from them (Ailawadi *et al.*, 2014; Louis *et al.*, 2019). Additionally, social responsibility perceptions influence brand images (Souza-Monteiro and Hooker, 2017) and BT (Kim *et al.*, 2018; Arachchi and Mendis, 2021) of retail businesses, which may affect customer purchases and loyalty, hence affecting the financial performance of retail organisations (Souza-Monteiro and Hooker, 2017).

Furthermore, CC is increased of consumer purchase intention significantly (Tsai *et al.*, 2014), and it is evidence of pre-COVID-19. But, COVID-19 pandemic influences the greed purchase behaviour of consumers (Satish *et al.*, 2021). Fear improves encouraging and obedient conduct if the causative component advised the recipient of danger. The parallel response paradigm predicts that the higher the perceived amount of danger, the greater the intent to act to reduce it (Addo *et al.*, 2020) such as the COVID-19 and other public health-related issues. Some studies also associated impulse buying with fear (Lin and Chen, 2012; Addo *et al.*, 2020).

2.6 Personal standards

It is well acknowledged that consumer expectations in terms of social responsibility are far from universal; they differ from one customer to the next (Bhattacharya and Sen, 2004) and assert that these expectations are likely to shape consumer responses to the symbolic components of social responsibility (Abid *et al.*, 2019).

Personal norms are "internalized ideals" (Schwartz, 1977), a sense of moral obligation to behave in accordance with these ideals (Schwartz, 1977). This moral duty usually stems from personal norms (Grankvist *et al.*, 2007). Personal standards have been frequently used in the literature on socially responsible shopping. It explains why certain customers are more inclined than others to make ethical purchases. Personal norms are assumed to have a moderating effect on consumer attitudes regarding CSR. The consumer's personal support for the firm's social responsibility activities is critical (Sen and Bhattacharya, 2001; Davis *et al.*, 2017).

There is a scarcity of scientific information relating to social responsibility, brand relationships and personal norms. Personal norms impacted socially responsible behaviours and associated functions (Abid *et al.*, 2019), as did customers' personal and behavioural processes and enhancement of the shopping experience during the COVID-19 and post-COVID-19 periods (Milakovi, 2021). Personal norms (Chatzidakis *et al.*, 2014) also influence customer buying intention (Wang and Chou, 2020).

2.7 Theory of social exchange

The paradigm for researching corporate social business partnerships combines social exchange and dialectical theory (Domenico *et al.*, 2009). SET assumes that human interaction

and social behaviour include an exchange of physical or intangible activity based on the encounter's advantages or costs (Adongo *et al.*, 2019).

According to Blau (1994), individuals invest in relationships based on the reward–cost ratio. People invest in relationships only when the advantages outweigh the negatives. People are eager to donate to charitable causes and social activities when the advantages outweigh the costs. The former appeals help people justify their donation by demonstrating that it serves their own self-interest (Holmes *et al.*, 2002; White and Peloza, 2009; Kim *et al.*, 2012). Social advantages also increase customer commitment, power and trust (Tyrie and Ferguson, 2013), making altruistic purchase decisions easier to justify (Kim *et al.*, 2012).

2.8 Consumer–brand connection theory

Because the market is becoming more complicated, the notion of CBI has a significant impact in the marketing area (Gronroos, 1997; Gummesson, 2002). Several dimensions are presented in CBRT to describe how people build connections with brands. Some studies concentrate on the emotional attachment to the brand (Malär *et al.*, 2011), the consumer–brand bond as part of the relationship notion (e.g. Batra *et al.*, 2012), and a more cognitive representation of the consumer–brand identity overlap (e.g. Malär *et al.*, 2011; Stokburger-Sauer *et al.*, 2012). According to the latter, researchers define CBI as the degree to which the customer cognitively sees a relationship to the brand's identifications. The benefits of a good consumer–brand relationship may be shown in retail purchasing intentions (Ltd, 2021).

2.9 Social cognitive theory (SCT)

Recent advances in cognitive psychology, social cognition and research methodologies have allowed cognitive consistency theories to resurface, as discussed below (Russo and Chaxel, 2017). According to cognitive consistency theories, consumers seek balance and harmony between their ideas and sentiments on the one hand and their purchasing behaviour on the other (Mcguire, 1976).

SCT examines environmental, psychological and behavioural elements to explain human behaviour (Bandura, 1991, 1999, 2001). Personal norms (Bandura, 2001; Fishbein and Ajzen, 2011; Thøgersen, 2014) are among the co-determinants discovered by social-cognitive theory. As a result, buyers reject businesses that are incompatible with their own set of beliefs and values, preferring instead to align with firms that mirror their own self-concept and personality (Aaker, 1999). As a result, customer attitudes to social responsibility symbols are impacted by how similar the brand's environmental and societal involvement are to their own. Depending on the consumer's personal social responsibility criteria (Abid *et al.*, 2019), and they influence consumer purchase intention (Wang and Chou, 2020).

2.10 Fear appeal theory (FAT)

'Fear' is fuelled by hedonic and utilitarian causes, and it exists in addition to the actuality of the lethal COVID-19. For a long time, marketing studies heavily relied on the hypothesis of fear appeal, but that looks to be changing (Witte and Allen, 2000; Addo *et al.*, 2020). Furthermore, the fear appeal theory was used to investigate the dynamics of buying behaviour in the aftermath of the deadly 2019 new coronavirus and fear appeal theory is a best theory for study of consumer purchase behaviour during the COVID-19 pandemic (Addo *et al.*, 2020).

3. Hypotheses development

The process of CC is "much more participatory" than earlier types of social responsibility and charity. Companies are developing the capacity to define and shape their obligations and

place a value on their social and environmental duties (Burchell and Cook, 2006). This realisation and care for environmental and societal activities have resulted in purchasing intention, which refers to customers' readiness to purchase relevant products (Joshi and Rahman, 2015). Based on these observations, the following theory is proposed:

H1. Perceived CC is positively related to consumer purchase intention.

CC has a substantial impact on BT, since BT is a calculative process based on an object's or party's ability to perform its duties (i.e. CC) and an evaluation of the costs vs advantages of remaining in the connection (Tsai *et al.*, 2014). Recent empirical research (Tsai *et al.*, 2014) has proven BT's impact on perceived CC. This literature leads to the investigation of the second hypothesis:

H2a. Perceived CC is positively related on BT.

Implementing socially responsible activities results in more visible actions, such as those engaging consumers or the community (Bravo *et al.*, 2011). As the brand outcomes, it leads to CBI (Coelho *et al.*, 2018). According to Stokburger-Sauer *et al.* (2012), brand social benefits are primarily concerned with boosting the social interaction possibilities and rewards given by a brand. Researchers believe brand social benefits are a driver of CBI. On the basis of these observations, the following theory is proposed:

H2b. Perceived CC is positively related on CBI.

BT has a beneficial influence on purchase intention because it fosters highly valued trade interactions. Brands that make customers cheerful, joyous or friendly increase buying intent (Matzler *et al.*, 2008). According to Tsai *et al.* (2014), BT reduces uncertainty and increases customers' purchase intent. As a result, consider the following hypothesis:

H3. BT is positively related on consumer purchase intention.

With CBI, a brand symbolises who I am to a consumer (Johnson *et al.*, 2011; Ma, 2020) and aids in developing his or her self-concept in various ways (Ma, 2020). Marketing scholars agree that consumers are more likely to develop and maintain relationships with a brand if they feel a stronger sense of self and social and psychological benefits from that brand (Park *et al.*, 2010; Elbedweihy *et al.*, 2016) and this increases purchase intention. As a result of the above reasoning, the following possibilities emerge:

H4. Consumer-brand identification is positively related on consumer purchase intention.

According to Hur *et al.* (2013), social responsibility company actions have a considerable and positive effect on one or two dimensions of customers' confidence in a brand (Lindgreen *et al.*, 2008). Furthermore, retailers' social responsibility imitations have a large and favourable impact on customers' trust (Louis *et al.*, 2019), and it influences consumer buy intention in stores (Chen *et al.*, 2015; Frassetto *et al.*, 2017). Taking these works into account, it is proposed that BT has a mediating effect on the link between perceived CC and purchase intention:

H5. The relationship between perceived CC and purchase intention is positively mediated by BT.

Furthermore, the impact of social responsibility ratings on CBI has previously gained empirical support (Du *et al.*, 2007; Lichtenstein *et al.*, 2004). Brand identification provides psychological advantages to customers by increasing self-esteem, making people more likely to form favourable attitudes and behaviours toward the brand (Abid *et al.*, 2019). In this sense, a firm's participation in socially responsible activities may give customers with high self-esteem in terms of their social and ethical image (Agyei *et al.*, 2021) (Kuenzel and Vaux

Halliday, 2008). Taking these reasons into account, the following is proposed as a mediating effect of CBI on the link between perceived CC and purchase intention:

H6. The relationship between perceived CC and purchase intention is positively mediated by CBI.

In terms of social responsibility, personal standards appear to be the primary rationale for individuals' proclivity to support initiatives (Stern, 2000). Consumers with high personal norms of social responsibility in their self-concept will thus perceive greater similarity between themselves and the brand, whether in terms of common attributes or shared prototypes, than consumers with low personal norms of social responsibility (Abid *et al.*, 2019), and this has an effect on consumer purchase intention (Wang and Chou, 2020).

Because identification is motivated in part by the consumer's need to maintain a consistent and good self-image (Dutton *et al.*, 1994). Consumers like to associate with a business whose socially responsible actions align with their personal values (Abid *et al.*, 2019). As a result, individuals have larger personal objections to these activities than they believe society does (Maxwell and Garbarino, 2010). Personal standards are more likely to become behaviour when the consumer has a high degree of confidence in the organisation as well as a sense of personal responsibility (Nowak and Washburn, 2002).

H7a. Personal norms moderate the relationship between perceived CC and purchase intention.

H7b. Personal norms moderate the relationship between BT and purchase intention.

H7c. Personal norms moderate the relationship between CBI and purchase intention.

In contrast to fear control, which directs emotional responses to risk, danger control controls adaptive actions in response to or avoidance of danger, there are a variety of options available to those who are confronted with the inevitable COVID-19, based on the findings of the most recent research and the lack of any conclusive evidence that it can be controlled or cured (Addo *et al.*, 2020). But, lack of empirical evidence related to this study, and the following hypothesis are proposed.

H8a. FCV-19 moderates the relationship between perceived CC and purchase intention.

H8b. FCV-19 moderates the relationship between BT and purchase intention.

H8c. FCV-19 moderates the relationship between CBI and purchase intention.

4. Conceptual framework

Figure 1, presents the conceptual framework of this study, which includes perceived CC, CBI, BT, consumer purchase intention and personal norms. This study presented eight hypotheses related to the proposed structure.

5. Methodology

5.1 General research methodology

To test our research model, we carried out a survey among regular consumers who work with local retail brands. We selected 10 retail (mass and medium level) companies from different retail sectors (textile and foods) based on market share and the number of outlets (Schramm-Klein *et al.*, 2013) in Sri Lanka to ensure that the respondents were familiar with the selected companies, company PCC activities and company communications. It is completely generalisable to consumers with different occupational backgrounds in the Sri Lankan

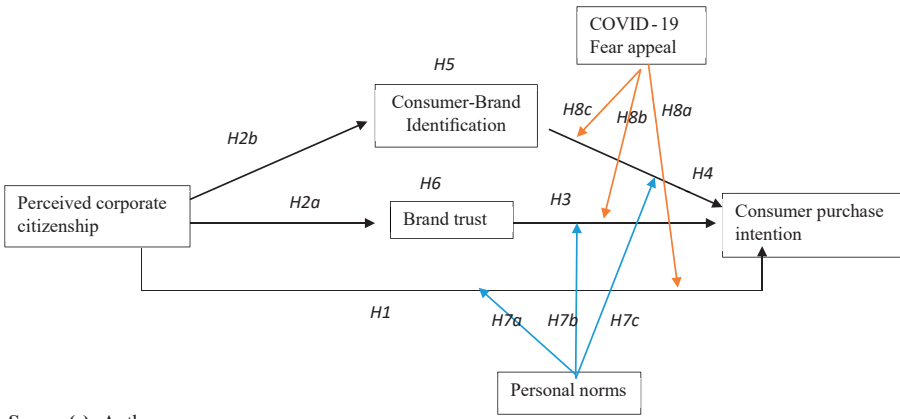


Figure 1.
Conceptual mode

Source(s): Author

retail industry. The current study is grounded on positivism (Saunders *et al.*, 2011a, b) and is a non-contrived study (Saunders *et al.*, 2009). The researcher adopted a quantitative approach as the methodology of the study. A questionnaire was administered to collect quantitative data through the survey method. The data for the study were collected during 2021 and through a well-developed and structured questionnaire. This period has the most arisen COVID-19 pandemic cases in Sri Lanka. The researcher used the self-administered questionnaire method to collect the relevant data through a “stratified random sampling” technique (Gschwend, 2005).

The ideal target population for this exercise would be the whole population of Sri Lanka. The sample size was selected through subjective methods and comprised 500 individuals from Sri Lanka retail consumers. Statistical techniques such as descriptive statistics, common method bias, regression analysis, multivariate assumptions and unidimensionality were performed using SPSS and structural model analysis using SMART partial least squares (PLS).

The unit of analysis in the current study was an individual retail consumer. Out of 500 questionnaires distributed, 451 respondents returned completed questionnaires and these respondents were entered into SPSS and treated for missing values. The effective rate of response after discarding ineligible and unreachable respondents from the sample (Saunders *et al.*, 2011a, b) was 90%. However, 40 outliers were detected via analysis of the residual scatter plot, and 411 ($n = 411$) questionnaires were used for the final analysis as per Krejcie and Morgan estimation (Krejcie and Morgan, 1970).

5.2 Measurements

The measures used in this study were as follows, CC was measured from the five perspectives of economic citizenship, legal citizenship, ethical citizenship, general philanthropic citizenship and strategic philanthropic citizenship, based on the study by Tsai *et al.* (2014), through 20 items. BT was measured from the three perspectives of integrity, benevolence and credibility, according to Abid *et al.* (2019), by using 7 items. CBI was measured using five items based on Davvetas and Diamantopoulos (2017). Referring to a study by Abid *et al.* (2019), personal norms was measured using four items, fear to COVID-19 was measured using five items based on Lins and Aquino (2020) and in addition, purchase intention was measured based on Tsai *et al.* (2014), through four items.

The constructs in this study were measured using seven-point Likert scales drawn and modified from previous literature. The pilot study was done primarily to assess the extent of reliability and validity of the research questionnaire (Kothari, 2004), and it was conducted on 20% of the overall research sample (30 respondents). The pilot test showed that the survey items had reliability scores above 0.70 (as measured by Cronbach's alpha), indicating an acceptable level of internal consistency (Nunnally, 1978) reliability, where the values are 0.890 (perceived corporate citizenship), 0.830 (brand trust), 0.814 (CBI), 0.745 (personal norms), 0.761 (fear to COVID-19) and 0.756 (purchase intention). Some inappropriate items were refined or removed from our questionnaire after the pilot test was analysed using exploratory factor analysis.

6. Result

6.1 Measurement model assessment

Data analysis has started with the data screening process. Elimination of incomplete responses resulted (Lakmali and Kajendra, 2021) in a sample size of 411. Following the check for accuracy and completeness of data, the parametric assumption of normality was measured. To check the assumption conformity, skewness (+3 to -3) and kurtosis (less than the 10) tests were performed. Furthermore, data were tested for common method variance (CMV) and multivariate assumptions, including tests for normality, linearity, homoscedasticity, multicollinearity and heteroscedasticity, before forwarding the measurement model for confirmatory factor analysis via SPSS. In line with Hair *et al.* (2011), items which had factor loading values less than 0.5 were removed (SDC1 and DI2) and the model was re-tested for validity. Thereafter, statistics for validity and reliability were calculated with the standardised factor loadings. The results of the reliability and validity testing are reported in Table 1.

Hair (2010) designated the standards of convergent validity criteria as follows: average variance extracted (AVE) higher than 0.5, and composite reliability (CR) higher than 0.7. Additionally, discriminant validity for all constructs was also established as demonstrated by AVE values exceeding corresponding squared correlations for all construct pairs (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). According to that, all items in the measures of exogenous variables were significantly explained, suggesting that the items were converged to this factor, and, hence, to their corresponding dimensions. Therefore, the scale had convergent validity. Model Fit (SRMR) value was 0.097, and it is less than 0.10. It is an acceptable level (Byrne and Hilbert, 2008). R^2 value is 0.691, and it is substantial (Hair *et al.*, 2019). The Cronbach's alpha of all variables ranged from 0.728 to 0.921, ensuring each construct's reliability.

The analysis revealed that the validation statistics and fit indices were satisfactory, indicating that the measurement model fits the observed data well, and hence can be used in testing advanced hypotheses.

Variable	No. of items	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability	Average variance extracted (AVE)	Discriminant validity			
					CBI	BT	PI	PCC
CBI	5	0.819	0.88	0.607	0.779			
BT	7	0.863	0.907	0.623	0.545	0.789		
PI	4	0.728	0.847	0.654	0.675	0.605	0.809	
PCC	18	0.921	0.934	0.45	0.527	0.838	0.610	0.671

Note(s): CBI = consumer-brand identification; BT = brand trust; PI = purchase intention; PCC = perceived corporate citizenship

Table 1.
Reliability and validity
measurements

6.2 Sample description

The sample's statistical data revealed that 49% of surveyed were male, while 51% were female. Among respondents, 31% belong to the age category of 20–30, followed by 43% belonging to 31 to 40 and 26% belonging to age categories of 41–55. Among respondents, 22% were single, and 78% were married.

6.3 Structural model estimation and hypotheses testing

The hypotheses were tested using partial least squares structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM). The standardised parameter estimates in the structure model were tested for significance level using 0.05 bootstrapping method (Hair *et al.*, 2019). The primary advantages of PLS-SEM include the relaxation of normal distributional assumptions required by PLS-SEM's ability to easily estimate much more complex models with smaller sample sizes (Hair *et al.*, 2019). The above reasons provide contribution to consider the PLS as an appropriate SEM method for this study.

6.3.1 Assessment of direct relationships. First direct effects were tested, and the significance of the direct paths were checked. The direct effect of PCC on PI, BRT on PI, PCC on CBI, CBI on PI and BRT on PI were the direct hypotheses advanced in the study. Standardised regression weight and *p*-value of this direct effect is given in Table 2.

As given in Table 2, *p*-value of direct path (standardised estimates of direct effect) is less than 0.05, and hence, the direct effect is significant. Therefore, the above-mentioned direct effect was found to be statistically significant.

6.3.2 Assessment of indirect relationships – mediation impact. To understand the role of the mediator (full/partial), the significance level of both direct and the indirect effects should be assessed. According to Table 3, the effect of PCC on PI through BT and CBI is significant as the *p*-value is 0.000, which is less than 0.05. Also, as shown in Table 3, the direct effect PCC on PI after inserting the mediator, BRT and CBI are still significant (*p*-value is 0.000, which is less than 0.05). As per Baron and Kenny (1986), stated that if both direct and indirect paths are significant, the variable is a partial mediator. Hence, according to the findings of the analysis, BRT and CBI are found to be a partial mediator. The alternative hypothesis (H5 and H6) are accepted, and it can be concluded that, BRT and CBI significantly mediates the effect of PCC on PI.

6.3.3 Assessment of indirect relationships – moderating impact. As per Table 2, personal norms moderate the relationships between PCC → PI (*p* = 0.000, *p* < 0.05) BRT → PI (*p* = 0.000, *p* < 0.05) and CBI → PI (*p* = 0.000, *p* < 0.05). Respectively, are seen to be positive

Table 2.
Standardised
regression weight and
p-value

Hypothesis		<i>p</i> -value	Decision
PCC → PI	H1	0.000**	Supported
PCC → BRT	H2a	0.000**	Supported
PCC → CBI	H2b	0.000**	Supported
BRT → PI	H3	0.000**	Supported
CBI → PI	H4	0.000**	Supported
MODR PN PCC → PI	H7a	0.000**	Supported
MODR PN BRT → PI	H7b	0.000**	Supported
MODR PN CBI → PI	H7c	0.000**	Supported
MODR CVD PCC → PI	H8a	0.024**	Supported
MODR CVD BRT → PI	H8b	0.021**	Supported
MODR CVD CBI → PI	H8c	0.012**	Supported

Note(s): PCC = perceived corporate citizenship; PI = purchase intention; BRT = brand trust; CBI = consumer–brand identification; PN = personal norms; CVD = fear to COVID-19

and significant. Furthermore, fear to COVID-19 is moderate the relationships between $PCC \rightarrow PI$ ($p = 0.024$, $p < 0.05$) $BRT \rightarrow PI$ ($p = 0.021$, $p < 0.05$) and $CBI \rightarrow PI$ ($p = 0.012$, $p < 0.05$). However, fear to COVID-19 is significantly impact on above relationships.

7. Discussion and implications

7.1 Discussion

Our study is part of a larger investigation of the favourable influence of PCC on PI with the retail business during the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak. It builds on earlier research by employing a triple theoretical framework and considering CC in all of its aspects. To the best of our knowledge, this study has not been studied, despite empirical data and this study being the first to look into the COVID-19 pandemic issue.

PCC has a strong positive direct relationship with PI (H1). This means that firms may engage socially responsible actions to build long-term connections with customers and gain a competitive advantage. Customers desire socially responsible businesses (Agyei *et al.*, 2021). Consumption and social responsibility are defined as an exchange of physical or intangible activity based on encounter incentives (Adongo *et al.*, 2019). According to this claim, social interaction occurs.

Second, PCC had a big and favourable effect on BRT (H2a).

Blau's (1994) understanding of the importance of social incentives like authority and trust above economic concerns has been extended to business partnerships. BT is a calculative process based on an objector party's capacity to execute its obligations and an evaluation of the costs vs benefits of continuing in the relationship, according to Tasi *et al.* (2014). This finding will have the largest future influence on SET.

This study also found a high positive correlation between PCC and CBR (H2b). The CBRT describes how customers form relationships with brands (Malär *et al.*, 2011). Brand social benefits are expected to be a driver of CBI, according to Stokburger-Sauer *et al.* (2012). Overall corporate association for excellent brand recognition (Fatma *et al.*, 2016).

Becerra and Badrinarayanan (2013) claim that BT influences purchase intentions positively, while brand identification does not. However, the study found that BRT and brand awareness boosted purchasing intent (H3 and H4). Because trust allows highly valued trade relationships, and brands that make customers happy, cheerful or loving evoke increased buy intention (Torres *et al.*, 2017; Matzler *et al.*, 2008).

In this study, BRT was regarded as a major partial mediator of the connection between PCC and PI. Furthermore, customers identify with socially responsible enterprises and are motivated to purchase goods and services from them (Dang *et al.*, 2020). Our study found CBI to be a substantial partial mediator of the PCC-PI relationship, hence H5 was approved.

Another major goal of this study was to look at the effect of personal norms on the link between PCC and PI, BRT and PI, and CBI and PI. The current study used SCT to examine the

Hypothesis	Effect	<i>p</i> -value	Decision
PCC → PI	Direct effect	0.002**	Supported
PCC → BRT		0.000**	Supported
BRT → PI	Indirect effect	0.000**	Supported
PCC → CBI	Direct effect	0.005**	Supported
PCC → PT		0.002**	Supported
CBI → PI	Indirect effect	0.000**	Supported

Note(s): PCC = perceived corporate citizenship; PI = purchase intention; BRT = brand trust; CBI = consumer-brand identification

Table 3.
Standardised
regression weight and
p-value

influence of personal norms on influencing consumer PI in the retail industry. According to the findings of the current study, three moderating influences (H7a, H7b, H7c), including (1) PCC PI, (2) BRT PI, and (3) CBI PI, were shown to be significant.

According to [Dickson \(2000\)](#), personal standards and consumer behaviour reveal beneficial correlations between socially responsible behaviours and customers' purchase intentions from retail brands. Furthermore, the philanthropic factor has a stronger effect on CBI and PI ([Abid et al., 2019](#)) for persons with strong personal norms and intents ([Chatzidakis et al., 2014](#); [Abid et al., 2019](#)). Concerns about the environment and social responsibility are having a beneficial impact on consumer-retailers. Furthermore, customers may believe that the shop is doing something good for them on a social and environmental level. Consumers internalise the store's archetypal standards as personal norms after mentally defining themselves as a member of the retailer, revealing positive sentiments about the retailer ([Ho, 2017](#)). Personal norms relate to the moral duty to make or refrain from making a socially responsible purchase in the future ([Golob et al., 2018](#)).

Finally, objective of this study was to look at the effect of fear to COVID-19 on the link between PCC and PI, BRT and PI, and CBI and PI. This study used to examine the influence of COVID-19 on consumer PI in the retail industry. According to the findings of the current study, three moderating influences (H8a, H8b, H8c), including (1) PCC-PI, (2) BRT-PI and (3) CBI-PI, were shown to be significant.

Although there is several recent research on CSR and consumer purchase behaviour ([Gupta et al., 2021](#); [Tong et al., 2021](#)), little is addressed during the COVID-19 pandemic, and limited empirical analysis in the retail industry has been published. In addition to the above, [Donthu and Gustafsson \(2020\)](#) highlights the necessity to study this phenomenon furthermore. Meanwhile, FCV-19 is impact on BT and BT may influence consumers' donation behaviour and their relationship with the related brands ([Huang and Liu, 2020](#)).

7.2 Theoretical consequences

The current research makes the following theoretical additions to the literature.

The first contribution of this work is the use of the BRT, CBI and PI perspectives in PCC research. Many academic research studies have not contributed sufficiently to explain PCC and PI's link ([Tsai et al., 2014](#)). However, nothing is known about the CC and PI as of yet. In particular, insufficient emphasis has been made to the mediating effects of BRT and CBI and the moderating influence of personal norms in explaining the PCC of PI. As a result, the purpose of this work was to contribute to the filling of these information gaps.

Second, and most crucially, the current study found that PCC causes CBI and that CBI can partially mediate the effects of PCC on PI. This has gotten little notice. The current study discusses how CBI mediates the link between PCC and PI by interfering with CBRT.

Furthermore, the researcher uncovered a constraint that is compatible with SET but has not been mentioned previously. SET helps to mediate consumer-brand identity theory. According to this, PCC generates social values, establishes a consumer-brand tie as an intangible, and leads to buy intent as a rewarding. This awarding was motivated in part by customer relationship with brands. Future scholars in this field may incorporate this component into their study.

Furthermore, this study demonstrated that PCC leads to BT and that BT can partially mediate the effects of PCC on PI. This association has already been studied ([Tsai et al., 2014](#)), and this research was studying the advanced relationship of BT with SET. According to this, BT components (integrity, benevolence, credibility) facilitate the exchange of intangible and more gratifying activity between PCC and PI.

Furthermore, individuals often expect reciprocal benefits moderated by personal standards such as personal attachment, trust and brand relationship behaviours. SCT, according to this, underpins SET, fear appeal theory and consumer–brand identity theory.

7.3 Managerial implications

Our research proves the central role played by the marketing function in setting up a social responsibility policy (Maignan *et al.*, 2005) and brand policy (Lindgreen *et al.*, 2008). Consumers take account of social responsibility criteria while evaluating the brands they buy. Studying social responsibility at the brand level is even more necessary in so far as a large number of firms adopt mixed or multi-brand strategies (Abid *et al.*, 2019).

These urgent actions affect the businesses' internal and external environments. Companies have sought to safeguard their employees by allowing remote work, reducing business visits and meetings, and increasing IT usage. They have trained their personnel on COVID-19 prevention as the external environment.

Every American who has had at least one immunisation shot and has a valid vaccination card gets two complimentary Krispy Kreme donuts. It is excellent CC during the COVID-19 epidemic (Tyko, 2021). In that circumstance, managers should invest in all five dimensions of CC and build BT. It gives consumers confidence in the brand's ability to satisfy their demands in different conditions.

Every retail buyer wants rapid decisions, longer returns and better product availability. Consumers benefit from shorter retail wait times and better retail economic citizenship. Moreover, the company has concentrated on product suggestions that provide buyers alternatives and inspiration while improving ethical citizenship.

To increase BT, business managers should help them with their economic, legal and strategic philanthropic citizenship. Retail brands also seek to protect staff and consumers by providing safe health benefits. Affordability of important consumer goods should also be promoted. Retailers can also set up “mobile retail outlets” and “mobile social welfare” services to reduce customer travel during the lockdown and avoid virus transmission.

Meanwhile, firms have to implement campaigns to reduce the fear to COVID-19. It might be brought towards consumers by using proper communication, advertising. Then, reduce the consumer fear about the COVID-19 and enhance the consumer shopping experience.

From the COVID-19 pandemic, CC strategy will boost the future resilience and sustainability of retailers and global peoples. And the epidemic might educate corporations to be great corporate citizens who can help solve global issues.

8. Limitations and suggestions for future research

8.1 Limitations of the study

This study provides several vital research contributions; however, it also has some limitations.

This study has been carried out focussing only on Sri Lankan retail industries. Therefore, the application of the study's outcomes into different geographical contexts could be a limitation. In addition to less empirical evidence related COVID-19 and scale development (Rahman and Arif, 2021) of PCC in retail industry. These limitations might help future researchers to develop a comparison of different countries' perspectives.

Furthermore, a lot of retailers were closed due to the lockdown of the COVID-19 pandemic and it is the impact to sample size.

8.2 Direction for future research

The present research has direction for opening an avenue for a future research study.

First, the present study is based on COVID-19, and future research opportunity has created a study of PCC and consumer PI of post-COVID-19 and how to increase the social values.

Second, to address one of the limitations of taking a sample only from the Sri Lankan due to time limitations and other practical reasons, future research is needed, with a broader sample in the South Asian region.

Third, the study suggests examining the concepts of brand loyalty, brand attractiveness, and brand commitment to see whether they have the same impact on CC and PI. Furthermore, social trust theory and VBN (value based norms) theory can be tested in the above model.

Finally, this study suggests to consider generation's impact and social presence's impact on post-COVID-19 consumer purchase intention.

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