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# The Impact of Corporate Social Responsibility Authenticity on Brand Authenticity in the Sustainable Fashion Industry in Hanoi

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**ABSTRACT:** This study examines the impact of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) authenticity on brand authenticity in the sustainable fashion industry in Hanoi. Drawing on a quantitative research approach, data were collected from 205 respondents, with 197 valid responses used for analysis. CSR authenticity is conceptualized as a multidimensional construct, including community link, reliability, commitment, and congruence, while brand authenticity is measured through continuity, originality, and naturalness. The data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) to test the proposed hypotheses. The findings indicate that CSR authenticity has a positive and significant impact on brand authenticity. In particular, different dimensions of CSR authenticity contribute to enhancing consumers' perceptions of brand authenticity to varying degrees. This study contributes to the literature by providing empirical evidence on the role of CSR authenticity in shaping brand authenticity in the context of sustainable fashion, particularly in an emerging market like Hanoi. The findings also offer practical implications for businesses in developing more authentic CSR strategies to strengthen brand positioning and consumer trust.

**KEYWORDS:** CSR authenticity, brand authenticity, sustainable fashion

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has become an increasingly important strategy for businesses, particularly in industries that are closely associated with environmental and social concerns, such as sustainable fashion. However, as CSR initiatives become more widespread, consumers have also become more critical and skeptical about the true intentions behind these activities. Many consumers now question whether CSR efforts are genuinely driven by ethical values or simply used as marketing tools to enhance brand image. As a result, the concept of CSR authenticity has attracted growing attention in both academic research and business practice.

Despite this growing interest, several gaps remain in the existing literature. First, many previous studies have examined CSR in a general sense, focusing on its overall impact on consumer attitudes and behavior, rather than specifically addressing the concept of CSR authenticity. However, recent research suggests that consumers are increasingly concerned with the authenticity of CSR activities, not merely their existence (Alhouti et al., 2016). This highlights the need to further investigate CSR authenticity as a distinct and multidimensional construct (Joo et al., 2019).

Second, although brand authenticity has been widely studied, limited research has explored its relationship with CSR authenticity. Existing studies tend to focus on factors such as brand heritage, storytelling, or marketing strategies, while the role of CSR, particularly its authenticity, remains underexplored (Morhart et al., 2015; Napoli et al., 2014).This creates a gap in understanding how CSR-related factors contribute to shaping brand authenticity.

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Third, in the context of sustainable fashion, most prior research has focused on environmental sustainability, ethical consumption, or supply chain practices, with relatively little attention given to psychological constructs such as authenticity. As noted by Joy et al. (2012), the sustainable fashion industry is complex and value-driven, yet there is still a lack of research examining how consumers interpret and evaluate authenticity in this context.

Finally, most empirical studies on CSR and brand-related perceptions have been conducted in developed countries, while emerging markets remain relatively underexplored (Du et al., 2010). Consumer perceptions of CSR authenticity may vary across cultural and economic contexts, highlighting the need for more localized research.

To address these gaps, this study aims to examine the impact of CSR authenticity on brand authenticity in the sustainable fashion industry in Hanoi. Specifically, the research seeks to (1) investigate the impact of CSR authenticity on brand authenticity, (2) provide empirical evidence on how consumers in Hanoi perceive CSR authenticity and how it influences their evaluation of brand authenticity, and (3) propose managerial implications for sustainable fashion brands in enhancing brand authenticity through more effective and authentic CSR practices. By doing so, the study contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of how different dimensions of CSR authenticity shape consumer perceptions in an emerging market context.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1. Sustainable fashion

Sustainable fashion is generally understood as an approach that aims to reduce negative impacts on both the environment and society throughout the entire life cycle of a product, from design and production to distribution, consumption, and disposal. Compared to fast fashion, which focuses on speed and low cost, sustainable fashion places more emphasis on ethical values, environmental protection, and long-term development.

From another point of view, sustainable fashion can also be seen as a system that seeks to maintain ecological balance while promoting social fairness across the fashion supply chain (Fletcher, 2014). In this sense, sustainability is not only about environmental issues but also about ensuring fair working conditions and responsible production practices.

The United Nations Environment Programme highlights that sustainable fashion involves reducing pollution, using natural resources more efficiently, and maintaining ethical labor standards within the industry (UNEP, 2020). As the fashion sector is considered one of the major contributors to environmental problems such as water pollution and carbon emissions, the need for more sustainable practices has become increasingly urgent (UNEP, 2020).

From the consumer perspective, sustainable fashion is closely related to ethical consumption. Consumers today are more aware of the consequences of their purchasing decisions and are more likely to choose products that reflect their personal values and sense of authenticity, especially in an industry like fashion where self-expression plays an important role (Hagtvedt & Patrick, 2009).

In practice, sustainable fashion includes a variety of activities such as using eco-friendly materials, encouraging recycling and upcycling, reducing waste, and improving transparency in supply chains. However, achieving sustainability in this industry is not simple, as it requires joint efforts from businesses, consumers, and regulatory bodies (Joy et al., 2012).

Overall, sustainable fashion can be seen as a comprehensive concept that brings together environmental, social, and economic aspects. It not only encourages businesses to operate in a more responsible way but also reflects a gradual change in consumer behavior toward more conscious and value-driven consumption.

### 2.2. Corporate Social Responsibility authenticity

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) authenticity generally refers to how consumers perceive a company's CSR activities as genuine and sincere, rather than being carried out purely for image or marketing purposes. In today's context, this aspect has become increasingly important as consumers are more aware and critical of superficial CSR efforts.

In many cases, people do not only look at what companies do, but also consider the intentions behind those actions. When CSR initiatives are seen as coming from real concern for social and environmental issues, they tend to be evaluated more positively. On the other hand, if there is a gap between what a company claims and what it actually does, consumers may become skeptical and question the credibility of those activities (Alhouti et al., 2016).

Another important aspect of CSR authenticity is consistency. When a company's values, communication, and actual practices are aligned, it becomes easier for consumers to trust the brand. In contrast, inconsistent messages or exaggerated claims can weaken trust and even lead to negative perceptions (Morhart et al., 2015).

From the consumer's point of view, CSR authenticity can influence both attitudes and behavior. People are more likely to support and develop positive feelings toward brands that show a genuine commitment to social responsibility. This is especially relevant in industries such as sustainable fashion, where ethical values and transparency play a key role in shaping consumer decisions (Alhouti et al., 2016).

Although different studies approach CSR authenticity in various ways, it is often described through aspects such as sincerity, transparency, and credibility (Joo et al., 2019). These elements reflect how consumers interpret and evaluate CSR activities in practice.

Overall, CSR authenticity is an important factor that affects how CSR efforts are received by consumers. It not only helps build trust but also creates a foundation for strengthening brand authenticity, particularly in the context of sustainable fashion.

### 2.3. Brand Authenticity

Brand authenticity refers to the extent to which a brand is perceived as genuine, real, and true to its values. In an increasingly competitive market, consumers are not only interested in product quality but also in whether a brand appears honest and consistent in what it represents.

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From a general perspective, brand authenticity is often linked to the idea that a brand stays true to its identity over time. When a brand communicates clearly and behaves consistently with its stated values, it is more likely to be perceived as authentic. In contrast, brands that frequently change their image or send mixed messages may be seen as less trustworthy (Morhart et al., 2015).

Another important aspect of brand authenticity lies in how consumers interpret and experience the brand. Authenticity is not something a company can fully control, but rather something that is formed through consumers' perceptions and interactions with the brand. This means that even well-designed brand strategies may not be effective if they are not perceived as sincere or believable.

From the consumer's point of view, brand authenticity plays a key role in shaping attitudes and behavioral intentions. Consumers tend to develop stronger trust and emotional attachment toward brands that they perceive as authentic. As a result, authenticity can influence important outcomes such as brand loyalty and purchase intention (Napoli et al., 2014).

In addition, brand authenticity is often associated with several dimensions, including sincerity, credibility, and consistency. These dimensions help explain why some brands are able to build long-term relationships with consumers, while others struggle to gain trust (Morhart et al., 2015). In industries like sustainable fashion, where ethical values are highly emphasized, authenticity becomes even more important in influencing consumer perceptions.

Overall, brand authenticity can be seen as a key factor in building strong and lasting relationships between brands and consumers. It not only enhances trust and emotional connection but also plays an important role in determining how consumers respond to CSR activities.

### 2.4. Development of hypothesis

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) authenticity has been widely recognized as a key factor influencing consumers' perceptions of brands. In particular, when CSR activities are perceived as genuine and sincere, they can enhance positive brand evaluations and strengthen perceived authenticity (Alhouti et al., 2016). In the context of sustainable fashion, where ethical values and transparency are highly emphasized, different dimensions of CSR authenticity may play important roles in shaping perceived brand authenticity.

First, community link represents the extent to which a firm actively contributes to and connects with local communities. When companies demonstrate genuine involvement in social and community development, their actions are more likely to be perceived as value-driven and sincere. Such engagement can strengthen consumers' emotional connection with the brand and enhance perceptions of authenticity (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2004).

**H1:** Community link in CSR activities has a positive impact on brand authenticity.

Second, reliability refers to the consistency and dependability of CSR activities over time. When firms maintain stable and trustworthy CSR practices, consumers are more likely to perceive their actions as credible and sincere. This perceived reliability contributes to stronger evaluations of brand authenticity (Alhouti et al., 2016).

**H2:** The reliability of CSR activities has a positive impact on brand authenticity.

Third, commitment reflects a firm's long-term dedication to CSR initiatives. Companies that demonstrate sustained efforts and serious investment in social responsibility are more likely to be perceived as genuinely concerned about societal issues. This long-term orientation enhances the perceived naturalness and authenticity of the brand (Du et al., 2010).

**H3:** A firm's commitment to CSR initiatives has a positive impact on brand authenticity.

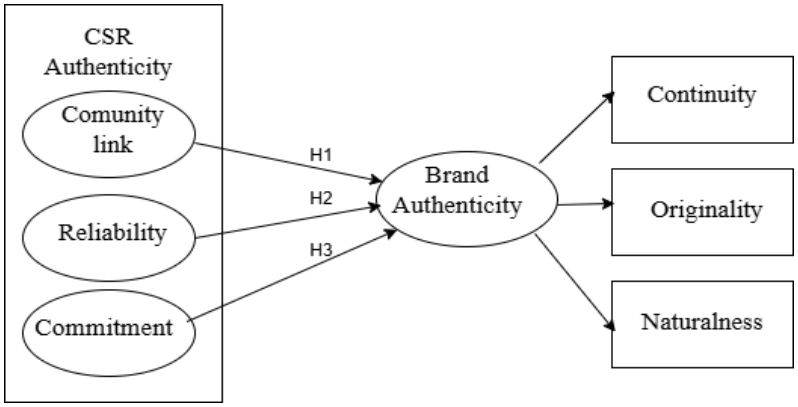



**Figure 1. Proposed conceptual model of the study**

## 3. METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a quantitative research approach to examine the impact of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) authenticity on brand authenticity in the sustainable fashion industry in Hanoi. A survey method is employed to collect data from consumers who have experience or awareness of sustainable fashion brands.

### 3.1. Research Design

The research is designed as a cross-sectional study, aiming to capture consumers' perceptions at a specific point in time. A structured questionnaire is developed based on existing validated scales from previous studies, ensuring both reliability and validity of the measurement items.

### 3.2. Sampling and Data Collection

The target population of this study consists of consumers in Hanoi who are interested in or have purchased products from sustainable fashion brands. A non-probability sampling method, specifically convenience sampling, is used due to time and accessibility constraints.

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Data are collected through an online survey distributed via social media platforms and online communities related to fashion and sustainability. The study follows Hair et al. (2017), which suggests a minimum sample size of $n \geq 10 \times m$. With three hypotheses, the minimum required sample is 30. In this study, 205 responses were collected, with 197 valid, exceeding the requirement and ensuring reliable results.

### 3.3. Measurement Scales

All constructs in this study are measured using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

CSR authenticity is conceptualized as a multidimensional construct, including four dimensions: community link, reliability, commitment, and congruence. The measurement items are adapted from prior studies on CSR authenticity (Joo et al., 2019).

Brand authenticity is measured as a multidimensional construct consisting of continuity, originality, and naturalness, based on established scales in the literature (Bruhn et al., 2012).

### 3.4. Data Analysis Method

The collected data are analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). This method is chosen due to its suitability for complex models with multiple constructs and its ability to handle small to medium sample sizes.

The analysis process includes two main stages. First, the measurement model is assessed to evaluate reliability and validity, including Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability, and average variance extracted (AVE). Second, the structural model is evaluated to test the proposed hypotheses by examining path coefficients, t-values, and p-values.

## 4. RESULTS

### 4.1. Descriptive Statistics

The demographic profile of respondents indicates that the sample is largely composed of young individuals, with the majority aged between 18 and 25 years old (69.0%). This suggests that the study primarily reflects the perceptions of Generation Z consumers, a key target group in the sustainable fashion market due to their increasing awareness of environmental and social issues.

In terms of occupation, college/university students account for the largest proportion (36.5%), followed by office staff and freelancers (both 16.2%). This distribution implies that respondents are generally well-educated and actively engaged in modern consumption trends, making them relevant subjects for examining perceptions of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and brand authenticity.

Regarding income, most respondents fall into the low to middle-income groups, with 36.0% earning under 5 million VND and 27.4% earning between 5–10 million VND per month. This reflects a consumer segment that is relatively price-sensitive but increasingly aware of sustainability issues.

Gender distribution is relatively balanced, with females (49.7%) slightly outnumbering males (45.7%). This is particularly relevant as female consumers are often more involved in fashion consumption, thereby enhancing the reliability of responses in the context of the fashion industry.

**Table 1. Summary of Respondents' Demographic Characteristics**

| Criteria | Details | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Gender | Male | 90 | 45.7% |
| | Female | 98 | 49.7% |
| | Other | 9 | 4.6% |
| Age | 18–25 years old | 136 | 69.0% |
| | 26–35 years old | 40 | 20.3% |
| | 36–45 years old | 19 | 9.6% |
| | Above 45 years old | 2 | 1.0% |
| Occupation | Office staff (all levels) | 32 | 16.2% |
| | Engineer/Scientist | 22 | 11.2% |
| | Freelancer | 32 | 16.2% |
| | Specialized professions | 19 | 9.6% |
| | Other non-office workers | 14 | 7.1% |
| | College/University student | 72 | 36.5% |
| | Others | 6 | 3.0% |
| | Under 5 million VND | 71 | 36.0% |

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| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Average monthly income | 5–10 million VND | 54 | 27.4% |
| | 10–20 million VND | 49 | 24.9% |
| | Above 20 million VND | 23 | 11.7% |

### 4.2. Measurement Model Assessment

#### 4.2.1. Reliability and Convergent Validity Assessment of the Measurement Scales

The results in Table 2 indicate that all constructs demonstrate excellent reliability and convergent validity. Specifically, Cronbach's Alpha and rho_A values (ranging from 0.946 to 0.973) exceed the recommended threshold of 0.7, confirming strong internal consistency (Hair et al., 2017). In addition, the Composite Reliability values (0.961–0.975) further support the high reliability of the constructs, as they are well above the acceptable level of 0.7. The Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values, ranging from 0.777 to 0.867, all exceed the minimum threshold of 0.5. This means that the constructs can explain a large proportion of the variance in their indicators, indicating good convergent validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Therefore, all measurement scales are considered reliable and valid for subsequent analysis.

**Table 2. Results of Reliability and Convergent Validity Assessment of the Measurement Scales**

| | Cronbach's Alpha | rho_A | Composite Reliability | Average Variance Extracted (AVE) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **CK** | 0.953 | 0.954 | 0.964 | 0.843 |
| **LKCD** | 0.962 | 0.962 | 0.970 | 0.867 |
| **TC** | 0.946 | 0.946 | 0.961 | 0.861 |
| **XTTH** | 0.971 | 0.973 | 0.975 | 0.777 |

#### 4.2.2. Discriminant Validity Assessment

The results in Table 3 demonstrate that discriminant validity is well established using the Fornell–Larcker criterion. Specifically, the square roots of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE), represented by the diagonal values (CK = 0.918, LKCD = 0.931, TC = 0.928, XTTH = 0.882), are all greater than the corresponding inter-construct correlations. This indicates that each construct shares more variance with its own indicators than with other constructs. Furthermore, although some correlations between constructs are relatively high (e.g., TC and XTTH = 0.801), they remain below the diagonal values, confirming adequate discriminant validity. Therefore, the constructs are empirically distinct from one another, satisfying the recommended criteria for discriminant validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

**Table 3. Discriminant Validity Assessment**

| | CK | LKCD | TC | XTTH |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **CK** | 0.918 | | | |
| **LKCD** | 0.772 | 0.931 | | |
| **TC** | 0.697 | 0.810 | 0.928 | |
| **XTTH** | 0.783 | 0.786 | 0.801 | 0.882 |

### 4.3. Structural Model Assessment

#### 4.3.1. Multicollinearity Assessment

Table 4 shows that there is no issue of multicollinearity in the model. In particular, all Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values are below the recommended threshold of 5 (and ideally below 3.3), indicating that there is no serious collinearity among the predictor constructs. This implies that each independent variable contributes uniquely to the model without redundancy. Therefore, the model satisfies the multicollinearity assumption and is suitable for further structural analysis (Hair et al., 2017).

**Table 4. Results of Multicollinearity Assessment**

| | CK | LKCD | TC | XTTH |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **CK** | | | | 2.568 |
| **LKCD** | | | | 3.836 |
| **TC** | | | | 3.016 |
| **XTTH** | | | | |

#### 4.3.2. Assessment of Direct Relationship Significance

Table 5 presents the results of the direct relationship testing, indicating that all proposed hypotheses are supported. Among the predictors, TC exhibits the strongest effect on XTTH ($\beta = 0.403$, $t = 6.312$, $p < 0.001$), highlighting its dominant role in explaining the dependent variable.

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CK also shows a substantial positive impact on XTTH (β = 0.366, t = 6.244, p < 0.001), confirming its importance in the model. In contrast, although LKCD has a weaker effect (β = 0.176), the relationship remains statistically significant (t = 2.770, p = 0.006). Overall, the statistical significance of all paths (p < 0.05; t > 1.96) confirms that each independent variable contributes meaningfully to XTTH, thereby supporting all research hypotheses (Hair et al., 2017).

**Table 5. Results of Hypothesis Testing for Direct Relationships**

| | Original Sample (O) | Sample Mean (M) | Standard Deviation (STDEV) | T Statistics (\|O/STDEV\|) | P Values |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **CK -> XTTH** | 0.366 | 0.365 | 0.059 | 6.244 | 0.000 |
| **LKCD -> XTTH** | 0.176 | 0.176 | 0.064 | 2.770 | 0.006 |
| **TC -> XTTH** | 0.403 | 0.406 | 0.064 | 6.312 | 0.000 |

### 4.4. Hypothesis Testing

Based on the analysis and evaluation of the measurement scales in the proposed model, the study concludes that three hypotheses are supported and statistically significant. The detailed results are presented in the table below:

**Table 6. Summary of Hypothesis Testing Results**

| Hypothesis | Relationship | Original Sample (O) | P value | Result |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| H1 | Community link → Brand authenticity | 0.366 | 0.000 | Accepted |
| H2 | Reliability → Brand authenticity | 0.176 | 0.006 | Accepted |
| H3 | Commitment → Brand authenticity | 0.403 | 0.000 | Accepted |

## 5. DISCUSSION

This study aims to examine the impact of corporate social responsibility (CSR) authenticity dimensions on brand authenticity in the sustainable fashion industry. The findings reveal that all proposed relationships are statistically significant, providing strong support for the research model. Among the predictors, commitment has the strongest influence on brand authenticity, followed by community link and reliability. These results suggest that consumers are more likely to perceive a brand as authentic when it demonstrates consistent commitment and meaningful engagement with the community.

The findings are consistent with prior studies, which emphasize the importance of CSR activities in shaping consumer perceptions and enhancing brand credibility. In particular, the significant role of commitment highlights the need for firms to maintain long-term, consistent CSR efforts rather than short-term or symbolic actions. Additionally, although reliability has a weaker effect compared to other factors, it still plays a meaningful role in reinforcing trust and authenticity.

Overall, this study contributes to the existing literature by providing empirical evidence on the relationship between CSR authenticity and brand authenticity in the context of sustainable fashion in Hanoi.

## 6. CONCLUSION

This study confirms that corporate social responsibility (CSR) authenticity has a significant and positive impact on brand authenticity in the sustainable fashion industry. All three dimensions, including community link, reliability, and commitment, are found to significantly influence brand authenticity, with commitment emerging as the most influential factor. This suggests that consumers are more likely to perceive a brand as authentic when its CSR activities are consistent, transparent, and genuinely implemented over time.

From a practical perspective, the findings provide implications not only for businesses but also for other stakeholders. For firms, it is essential to develop long-term CSR strategies, ensure transparency in communication, and align actions with stated values to strengthen brand authenticity. For consumers, increasing awareness and critical evaluation of CSR activities can encourage more responsible consumption and support truly sustainable brands. For policymakers and regulatory bodies, establishing clearer standards and monitoring mechanisms for CSR practices can help prevent superficial or misleading claims, thereby enhancing trust in the market. Additionally, communities and social organizations play an important role in collaborating with firms to ensure that CSR initiatives generate meaningful and lasting social impact.

Despite its contributions, this study is limited by its focus on a specific geographical context and sample size. Future research could expand the scope by including a more diverse sample, exploring additional influencing factors, or examining the mediating and moderating roles within the model to provide deeper insights into CSR authenticity and its broader implications.

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