

How CSR communication and value co-creation shape consumer well-being and brand love in the post-COVID-19 pandemic: Evidence from the UK

Abstract

Purpose – Drawing upon the Service-Dominant Logic (S-D Logic) and Elaboration likelihood model (ELM), this paper provides an integrative model to investigate how argument quality and source credibility of CSR communication affects customer value co-creation behavior, resulting in increased brand trust. Additionally, it unveils how brand trust and the perception of COVID-19 risk influence both brand love and subjective well-being.

Design/methodology/approach - The data of this study was collected through survey questionnaire from 304 coffee shop customers using convenience sampling and tested using the partial least squares structural equation modeling technique to validate its model.

Findings – The research findings confirm the positive association between source credibility and customer value co-creation (i.e. customer participation and citizenship behavior). By contrast, argument quality is revealed to have a significantly positive effect on customer citizenship behavior but a non-significant effect on customer participation behavior. Additionally, the study identifies that customer value co-creation behaviour significantly promotes brand trust. Finally, findings indicate that brand trust and the perception of COVID-19 risk significantly influence brand love and subjective well-being.

Originality /value – This study contributes to the literature on CSR communication and S-D Logic and provides new insights for marketers and advertisers to manage brands in the post-pandemic scenario through CSR communications. Furthermore, this study theoretically extends the ELM model to the CSR communication research. Finally, this study expands the relevant literature by clarifying the relationships between the perception of COVID-19 risk, brand love and subjective well-being.

Keywords: CSR Communication; Elaboration likelihood model; Customer Value Co-creation Behavior; COVID-19; Brand love; Well-being.

1. Introduction

Although the extant literature has shown no consensus on the definition of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) since the 1950's, CSR has generally referred to as the extent to which companies' actions meet society's expectations and values (Hayes, Holiday and Park, 2022). CSR has become increasingly relevant because consumers are paying more attention to organizations' engagement in CSR behaviors (Kim, Yin and Lee, 2020), particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2020, WHO declared COVID-19 a global pandemic (WHO, 2020), which resulted in a widespread economic crisis (ONS, 2020) and demanded companies to adapt to the new environment (Taylor, 2020). In this global crisis, it was possible to observe businesses attempting to make their CSR practices known to consumers. One example is Uber in its "Thank you for not riding" communication on YouTube (Uber, 2020a), which thanked customers for not riding with the company during the lockdown. Similarly, in its "No Mask. No Ride" video (Uber, 2020b), Uber communicated that only customers who worn face coverings were allowed to use its services, showing that it prioritized the safety of its drivers. Despite that brands often implemented this type of communication during the global pandemic, a subsequent investigation into the role of CSR communication in improving brand strategies during the pandemic should be conducted.

Extensive research has already been undertaken on CSR, linking CSR practices to organizational benefits (Du, Bhattacharya and Sen, 2010; Yoon, Gürhan-Canli and Schwarz, 2006; Dutot, Galvez and Versailles, 2016), for example, increased customers' purchase intentions, positive word-of-mouth, customers' willingness to pay premium prices, greater financial returns in firms, and enhanced companies' images. However, if stakeholders feel suspicious that CSR activities are not fueled by firms' sincere motives, this can backfire against the brand images of firms (Yoon, Gürhan-Canli and Schwarz, 2006). This highlights the importance of companies not only engaging in authentic CSR, but also effectively communicating these activities to their stakeholders. Moreover, Dutot, Galvez and Versailles (2016) showed that organizations' engagement in online CSR communications relates to their e-reputations, which is crucial in the current context due to increased digitalization as a result of the pandemic (McKinsey, 2020). While the importance of CSR has been extensively documented, CSR advertising research remains largely underexplored (Hayes, Holiday and Park, 2022). The Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM), conceptualized as the dual-route model, has been used to explain the persuasion power of marketing information (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). Nonetheless, empirical evidence on the applicability of ELM in the context of CSR communications remains sparse (Shahab, Ghazali and Mohtar, 2021).

Customers' influence on brands' operations, marketing strategies and firms' competitive advantages cannot be neglected. According to Service-Dominant Logic (S-D Logic), customers are active participants in value creation activities (Svensson and Grönroos, 2008; Vargo and Lusch, 2014). Although the topic of value co-creation has garnered researchers' attention in the last two decades (Shah et al., 2022), studies addressing the link between a firm's CSR campaign and customer value co-creation are very scarce. Additionally, the consequences of value co-creation on brand-related outcomes are overlooked in the literature (Mitrega, Klézil and Spáčil, 2022; Nájera-Sánchez et al., 2022).

Furthermore, while a considerable amount of studies explored the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on consumption patterns specifically during government-imposed lockdown (e.g., Hüttel and Balderjahn, 2021; Omar et al., 2021), and academic research on brand love has been burgeoning (e.g., Ahuvia, Izberk-Bilgin and Lee, 2022; Bıçakcıoğlu, İpek and Bayraktaroğlu, 2016). Nevertheless, scant attention has been paid to the interrelationships between brand trust, perception of COVID-19 risk, brand love and consumers' well-being in the post-pandemic scenario.

To fill these gaps, this research draws on ELM and S-D Logic as theoretical lenses and aims to answer the following research questions by analyzing the quantitative data sample of 304 customers of a service brand in the specific context of the UK: (RQ1) How does the information conveyed in CSR communication impact customer value co-creation? (RQ2) To what extent does customer value co-creation impact brand trust? (RQ3) How do brand trust and perception of COVID-19 risk exert positive influences on brand love and subjective well-being?

To conclude, the study makes several contributions to the literature and practice. First, this study extends the theoretical body of knowledge in CSR communication and S-D logic by unpacking the effects of CSR campaigns on customer value co-creation. Second, this study extends previous studies by determining how customer value co-creation impacts brand trust, and how COVID-19 risk affects brand love and subjective well-being. Third, the findings of this study will help guide marketers and advertisers in making informed decisions regarding brand management through CSR communications after the pandemic.

The rest of the paper is organized as follows. We conduct a critical review of the relevant literature of the constructs used in this study, followed by hypotheses development. Subsequently, the research methodology and results from the data analysis are presented. The last section includes discussion of findings, implications for theory and practice, limitations and future research directions.

2. Theoretical background and hypothesis development

2.1 CSR communication

With the emergence of CSR in organizations' communications (Mögele and Tropp, 2010), CSR has been widely debated (Gatti et al., 2019). This study follows Carroll's (2016) thought, in which CSR is a multidimensional concept that involves the expectations that society has on organizations' conducts regarding environmental, social, economic, stakeholder and philanthropic dimensions.

CSR communications are highly important, as they enable organizations to be portrayed as socially responsible to their stakeholders (Farache and Perks, 2010). With the prevalence of social media for disseminating about CSR campaigns (Martínez et al., 2020), the power of these communications in impacting consumers' feelings about brands must not be underestimated. Kim (2019) acknowledged that CSR communications have positive effects on brand trust and perceived reputation when brands do not communicate with excessively promotional tones. Likewise, CSR messages from a corporate source, framed with value-driven motives, improve corporate reputation and encourage positive word-of-mouth (Dalla-Pria, and Rodríguez-de-Dios, 2022). However, consumers often deem CSR communications as greenwashing information (e.g., Jahdi and Acikdilli, 2009). Therefore, CSR communications must convey credible messages that generate consumer trust, and companies must communicate their engagement in CSR without evoking further stakeholder scepticism (Moreno and Kang, 2020) to generate consumer trust. Taken together, message characteristics play a crucial role in determining the persuasiveness of CSR communication due to consumers' disbelief or doubt about a firm's pro-social activities (e.g., Dalal and Aljarah, 2021). For example, the narrative-based communication and storytelling can effectively reduce CSR skepticism and is a powerful CSR communication strategy (Xu and Kochigina, 2021). While the literature of CSR communication has grown considerably (e.g., Crane and Glozer, 2016), the mechanisms by which CSR communication influences customers' behavioral psychology are still under-researched (Cao et al., 2024). Thus, this study attempts to advance the body of knowledge on CSR communications by examining how customers processing in CSR messages leads to brand love and subjective well-being through customer value co-creation behavior and brand trust in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic. The UK was chosen as a study context. This is because the pandemic has had a significant cultural and economic impact on this country's approach to CSR, demonstrating a growing awareness from

consumers, corporations, and the government about the importance of ethical and sustainable practices towards the communities, society and environments (e.g., Singh et al., 2022).

2.2 ELM

The ELM is referred to as a dual-process model for explaining attitude and behavioral changes through information processing, in which two main types of thinking occur: the central and the peripheral routes (Petty and Cacioppo, 1986). In the central route, systematic thinking and a high level of elaboration take place by carefully scrutinizing issue-related arguments, while in the peripheral route less cognitive efforts may be made based on heuristic cues due to lack of motivation and/or cognitive ability (O’Keefe, 2008). The degree to which an individual engages in elaboration relates to the relevance of the topic, the “need for cognition”, – or how much an individual enjoys engaging in the thinking process – and the presence of distractions (O’Keefe, 2008). When the argument is of high quality and with strong messages, it can influence the success of message persuasion (O’Keefe, 2008). In ELM, the source credibility can refer to the peripheral route of information processing whereas the argument quality can represent the central route of information processing (Petty and Cacioppo 1986). In the same vein, this study applies the ELM model to explicate how the CSR communication stimulates customers’ value co-creation behavior.

2.3 Customer value co-creation

Value co-creation has been coined as a main notion in the S-D Logic (Vargo and Lusch, 2008), and deemed as a customer-centric approach (Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004). Vargo and Lusch (2008) acknowledged that co-created value is catalyzed by customer interactions with the firm and other stakeholders. Customer value co-creation is a complex process (Yi and Gong, 2013), which entails customers actively creating value in their relationship with brands (Svensson and Grönroos, 2008; Vargo and Lusch, 2014). Yi and Gong (2013) asserted that value creation is composed of two dimensions: customer participation behavior (CPB) and customer citizenship behavior (CCB), with the theoretical foundation of S-D Logic. CPB is defined as in-role behavior imperative for successful service creation, which encompasses customers looking for information and sharing it, engaging in responsible behavior and in interactions with other stakeholders (Yi and Gong, 2013).

CCB refers to customers’ voluntary extra-role behavior, where they engage in the actions during the service process in a way that exceeds their role as customers (Hur, Kim and Kim, 2018). These actions include providing feedback to brands, advocacy through

recommendations, assisting other customers and tolerance when businesses do not meet customers' expectations (Yi and Gong, 2013). Hur, Kim and Kim (2018) found CCB to be positively triggered by consumers' perceptions of CSR initiatives, as CSR is a way for consumers to engage in value co-creation. To this end, CPB and CCB can drive positive customers' attitudes and improve the organisational performance (Revilla-Camacho, Vega-Vázquez and Cossío-Silva, 2015).

2.4 Effect of argument quality on customer value co-creation

Drawing on the ELM, argument quality reflects how people evaluate the persuasive strength of arguments embedded in the contents of the messages. Strong and cogent arguments evoke favorable thoughts, as opposed to weak arguments which generate negative ones (Petty and Cacioppo, 1986), implying that a strong argument quality may be logical and convincing. Customers consider high quality messages in the communication process as useful and helpful in their decision making. Similarly, CSR communications may increase customers' in-depth understanding of the firm's business, which triggers customers to share ideas through active participation. Communications with compelling arguments may draw individuals' attention and promote value co-creation between any brand and customers, as they may help generate more engagement from customers in the service process. Thus, we put forth the following hypotheses:

H1: Argument quality of CSR communication positively influences CPB.

H2: Argument quality of CSR communication positively influences CCB.

2.5 Effect of source credibility on customer value co-creation

Based on the ELM, source credibility refers to the extent to which the source of the communication is perceived to have expertise and trustworthiness (Goldsmith, Lafferty and Newell, 2000). Two dimensions operate in source credibility: the source expertise and trustworthiness of the brand that communicates the message (Yilmaz et al., 2011). Source credibility can reduce consumer scepticism, enhance communication persuasiveness, engender positive attitudes towards brands and increase purchase intention (Lafferty, Goldsmith and Newell, 2002; Pérez, 2019; Yilmaz et al., 2011). Salmones and Perez (2018) affirmed that brands' ethical reputations can generate positive outcomes of CSR advertisements e.g., positive word-of-mouth and loyalty. Sussman and Siegal (2003) also proved that source credibility affects information usefulness. Consequently, the following hypotheses are developed:

H3: Source credibility of CSR communication exerts a positive effect on CPB.

H4: Source credibility of CSR communication exerts a positive effect on CCB.

2.6 Effect of customer value co-creation behavior on brand trust

Value creation is widely accepted to entail customers as active participants in creating value in their relationship with brands (Svensson and Grönroos, 2008; Vargo and Lusch, 2014). Customers have been transformed from passive to active players in the value creation-process (Payne, Storbacka and Frow, 2008). Choi and Hwang (2019) pinpointed that customers may have satisfying feelings with the service after they perform CCBs. Similarly, positive brand-customer interactive experiences play extremely important role in creating trust (Delgado-Ballester and Munuera-Aléman, 2005; Huang, 2017). Therefore, we posit:

H5: CPB exerts a positive effect on brand trust.

H6: CCB exerts a positive effect on brand trust.

2.7 Effects of brand trust on brand love and subjective well-being

Trust is defined as the confidence that one party has in another to not exploit one's vulnerability (Delgado-Ballester and Munuera-Aléman, 2005). Trust presupposes the expectation of positive outcomes for customers, which is developed through customers' past experiences with companies (Delgado-Ballester and Munuera-Aléman, 2005). Additionally, trust is the most relevant attribute in developing successful relationship marketing (Morgan and Hunt, 1994; Delgado-Ballester and Munuera-Aléman, 2005).

Carroll and Ahuvia (2006) conceptualised brand love as a strong mode of satisfaction which may encompass attachment, positive emotions and the willingness to declare love for the brand. Subsequently, brand love can be deemed as the degree of emotional attachment consumers have for a particular trade name, which often results from a long-term relationship with the brand (Carroll and Ahuvia, 2006). Albert and Merunka's (2013) highlights the importance of trust in nurturing brand love, which can fortify the bonds between brands and customers.

Subjective well-being depicts a long-term state of well-being, consisting of both affective and cognitive (life satisfaction) dimensions (Ahuvia and Friedman, 1998). In other words, it encompasses people's cognitive assessments of their lives as satisfactory and their

positive affects (Diener,1984). In online environment, affective trust in e-tailers positively contributes to consumers' well-being by online shopping (Nghia, Olsen and Trang, 2020).

Based on these arguments, we postulate:

H7: Brand trust exerts a positive effect on brand love.

H8: Brand trust exerts a positive effect on subjective well-being.

2.8 Effects of perception of COVID-19 risk on brand love and subjective well-being

Tong, Xie and Xiao (2021) highlighted that companies' CSR practices during the COVID-19 pandemic could result in higher purchase intentions towards their products. Accordingly, consumers who are more anxious about COVID-19 are more likely to have positive attitudes toward companies that actively conduct CSR activities. Although previous research has acknowledged negative impact of COVID-19 on well-being (e.g., Carnevale and Hatak, 2020; Brodeur et al., 2021; Zacher and Rudolph, 2021), some scholars (Ekici and Watsonprove, 2022) argue that individuals become more positive about their lives as they seek emotional support from their social networks and religion, which in turn improve their life-satisfaction during COVID-19 pandemic. Similarly, Zheng, Ruan and Zheng (2021) indicated that individuals developed resilience gradually by getting accustomed to the pandemic, which resulted in an improvement in well-being in comparison to the lockdown period. Thus, the following hypotheses are considered:

H9: Perception of COVID-19 risk exerts a positive effect on brand love.

H10: Perception of COVID-19 risk exerts a positive effect on subjective well-being.

Based on the discussion above, Figure 1 exhibits the proposed conceptual framework.

[Insert Figure 1 here]

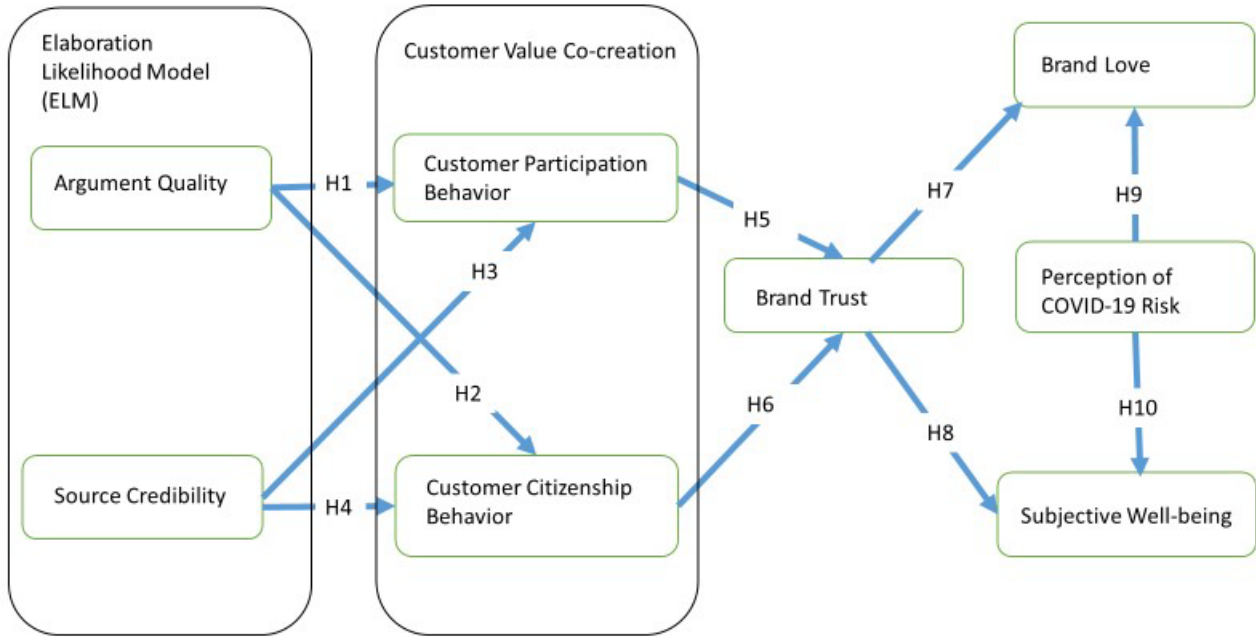


Figure 1: Proposed Research Model

3. Methodology

3.1 Sample and data collection

We addressed the research questions by conducting a quantitative approach. Convenience sampling was adopted to collect data via self-administered survey questionnaire in the Post Covid-19. To ensure data quality, participants who were 18 years old or older (i.e. adult consumers) were asked to answer the screening question if they had ever visited Starbucks within the past three months (yes/no) in the beginning of the questionnaire. Those who answered YES to the screening question were qualified for the sample of the study. Subsequently, to provide respondents with an understanding of CSR communication, the participants were required to view a short CSR video (i.e., ‘Caring for Our Planet & Our People’ campaign posted in Starbucks Coffee’s official YouTube channel)¹, which lasted 114 seconds. We chose an existing YouTube video of a real CSR campaign to increase the external validity of this study (Xu and Kochigina, 2021). The Starbucks Coffee brand was selected due to its high popularity and intensive distribution in the UK, with the 3rd largest market share in the UK coffee shop chains business (Statista, 2022). Notably, Starbucks is not only a good example of a CSR-oriented brand providing sustainable services that support or promote environmental initiatives (Li, 2022), but also has actively invested on ESG management (Moon, Tang and Lee, 2022). Similarly, Papagiannakis et al. (2024) indicated that Starbucks, one of the major restaurant brands in the hospitality sector, has followed greenwashing

regulations by prioritising CSR actions rather than merely promoting their social responsibility initiatives. Afterwards, the participants were asked to answer a series of questions related to the measures of all constructs from the research model. At the end of the questionnaire, they were inquired with several questions on the demographic information.

The survey was mainly distributed online, through Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk) and several social media platforms. Prior studies have acknowledged MTurk as a reliable data collection platform (e.g., Kees et al., 2017; Walter et al., 2019). MTurk workers were allowed to participate in the survey if they resided in the UK. Additionally, a link to the survey was posted on Facebook groups, Twitter and Instagram, and WhatsApp. Lastly, respondents were approached in person in Starbucks' physical shops and one university campus in London and completed the survey on their devices after scanning the QR code of the survey to avoid physical interactions. To reduce the sample bias, survey data was acquired through both online and offline sources.

A total of 396 responses were obtained, out of which 92 were discarded such as those completed in shorter than 2 minutes and those with too much missing data. The final sample consisted of the 304 usable responses, reaching an 76.7% effective response rate. Among them, 50% were male, 46.4% were female, and 3.6% were other genders. The majority of participants were 25-34 years old (50.3%) and 53.9% had a university/college degree a university/college degree. Table 1 displays the demographic profiles of participants.

[Insert Table 1 here]

Table 1 Demographic profile (N = 304)

Characteristic	Category	Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	152	50%
	Female	141	46.4%
	Other	11	3.6%
Age	18-24	67	22.0%
	25-34	153	50.3%
	35-44	49	16.1%
	45-54	21	6.9%
	55-64	13	4.3%
	65 and above	1	0.3%
Education	Below High School	2	0.7%

	High School	25	8.2%
	University/College Degree	164	53.9%
	Master's Degree	107	35.2%
	PhD	5	1.6%
	Other	1	0.3%

3.2 Measures

The measurement items of all constructs were taken from pertinent literature with minor modifications to fit into the context of the study to ensure content validity. All constructs were measured by multiple-item reflective scales. More specifically, 5 items adapted from Xu and Yao (2015) and Bhattacharjee and Sanford (2006) were used to measure argument quality. 5 items employed to measure source credibility were developed by MacKenzie and Lutz (1989) and Bhattacharjee, and Sanford (2006). Three-item measures proposed by Yi and Gong's (2013) were utilised to assess customer citizenship behavior. A five-item scale derived from Chan, Yim, and Lam (2010) was used to assess customer participation behavior. Four-item scales adapted from Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001) were employed to measure brand trust. Subsequently, 5 items borrowed from Carroll and Ahuvia (2006) were used to measure brand love. 5 statements were adapted from Diener et al., (1985) to measure subjective well-being, which has been extensively supported by empirical research (e.g., Liu, Dalton and Mukhopadhyay (2024)). Finally, a total of seven indicators employed by Brewer and Sebby (2021) were used to measure perception of COVID-19 risk. Seven-point Likert scales are used to measure all constructs, with the response 1 representing "strongly disagree" and 7 representing "strongly agree". Prior to the distribution of the questionnaire, a pilot test with 30 participants was performed to verify that there were no issues with the readability and clarity of the survey and CSR video content. The results of the pilot test confirmed the reliability of all measures because Cronbach's alpha values were higher than 0.70. All measurement items and literature sources are exhibited in Appendix A.

4. Data analysis and results

We analyzed the data following a Partial Least Square-Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) approach via SmartPLS 3.3.7. PLS-SEM was selected because of its suitability for exploratory models, which aim to examine new paths between constructs for theory building (Hair et al., 2022). Additionally, the PLS-SEM technique is useful for examining relatively complex models (Hair et al., 2019b), as is the case in our study. Furthermore, the sample size

of 304 is smaller than the ten samples per indicator required for covariance-based SEM (Hair et al., 2019a), hence we chose PLS-SEM. Prior to formal data analysis, data normality was examined using values of skewness and kurtosis. The data were normally distributed as the kurtosis ranged between -1.369 and 1.952 , and the skewness ranged between -1.092 and 1.084 , which had all fallen between -2 and 2 (Hair et al., 2022). The sample size of 304 established adequate statistical power, greater than the minimum sample size of 172 computed by G*power, with a power level of 0.95, and an effect size of 0.15.

A potential threat for common method bias (CMB) may exist due to the self-reported and cross-sectional data of this study. To detect the severity of CMB, we undertook Harmon's single-factor test to analyze the unrotated solution through the exploratory factor analysis (Podsakoff et al., 2003). The results show 5 factors with Eigenvalues greater than 1, which explain 69.5% of the total variance. Specifically, the first factor variance accounts for a value of 44.5%, less than the recommended limit of 50%. Therefore, CMB is not a problem in our model. No correlation among constructs was higher than 0.90, substantiating that common method bias was a nonissue in the current study (Pavlou et al. 2007).

4.1 Measurement model

A two-stage analysis procedure was performed to evaluate measurement model and structure model. The reliability and validity of all measures for the measurement model were undertaken using the PLS algorithm. The results of the measurement model assessment are illustrated in Table 2. The internal consistency reliability analysis for the constructs' reliability was carried out using Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability (CR). Cronbach's α values of all constructs are between 0.758 and 0.938, exceeding the threshold of 0.60. CR values range from 0.858 to 0.960, above the minimum value of 0.7. Consequently, all Cronbach's α and CR values confirm good reliability of all constructs (Hair et al., 2022).

Validity was assessed through both convergent validity and discriminant validity of constructs. One measured indicator (BT2) was removed to improve the discriminant validity. The factor loadings of all measures are significantly greater than 0.708 at a $p < 0.001$ level and the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values of all constructs are above 0.6, representing a good convergent validity (Hair et al., 2022). The square root of the AVE of each construct is higher than the correlations between that construct and any other construct (see Table 3), establishing adequate discriminative validity (Hair et al., 2022). All variance inflation factor (VIF) values for all reflective constructs are from 1.12 to 2.19, significantly lower than the threshold of 5 (Hair et al., 2022), supporting no multicollinearity issue in this study.

[Insert Table 2 here]

Table 2. Measurement model statistics

Constructs and items	Loadings	Mean	Standard Deviation	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability (CR)	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Argument Quality (AQ)		5.56	1.16	0.838	0.885	0.607
AQ1	0.789					
AQ2	0.706					
AQ3	0.716					
AQ4	0.833					
AQ5	0.841					
Source Credibility (SC)		5.19	1.42	0.874	0.909	0.668
SC1	0.802					
SC2	0.795					
SC3	0.73					
SC4	0.882					
SC5	0.868					
Customer Participation Behavior (CPB)		4.26	1.89	0.948	0.96	0.829
CPB1	0.901					
CPB2	0.906					
CPB3	0.911					
CPB4	0.917					
CPB5	0.917					
Customer Citizenship Behavior (CCB)		5.04	1.53	0.758	0.858	0.67
CCB1	0.865					
CCB2	0.855					
CCB3	0.728					
Brand Trust (BT)		5.40	1.38	0.898	0.936	0.83
BT1	0.898					
BT2	Deleted					
BT3	0.903					
BT4	0.877					
Brand Love (BL)		5.04	1.65	0.938	0.953	0.801
BL1	0.895					
BL2	0.864					
BL3	0.914					
BL4	0.904					
BL5	0.896					
Subjective Well-being (SWB)		5.03	1.54	0.899	0.925	0.713
SWB1	0.856					
SWB2	0.874					
SWB3	0.87					
SWB4	0.816					

SWB5	0.803						
Perception of COVID-19 Risk (PCR)		4.29	1.91	0.922	0.937	0.681	
PCR1	0.757						
PCR2	0.805						
PCR3	0.839						
PCR4	0.846						
PCR5	0.799						
PCR6	0.863						
PCR7	0.863						

[Insert Table 3 here]

Table 3. Fornell-Larcker Criterion

Constructs	AQ	BL	BT	CPB	CCB	PCR	SC	SWB
Argument Quality (AQ)	0.779							
Brand Love (BL)	0.597	0.895						
Brand Trust (BT)	0.625	0.856	0.911					
Customer Participation Behaviour (CPB)	0.44	0.736	0.617	0.911				
Customer Citizenship Behaviour (CCB)	0.651	0.762	0.73	0.705	0.819			
Perception of COVID-19 Risk (PCR)	0.271	0.392	0.274	0.542	0.391	0.825		
Source Credibility (SC)	0.737	0.77	0.795	0.589	0.742	0.322	0.817	
Subjective Well-being (SWB)	0.463	0.578	0.575	0.582	0.587	0.42	0.523	0.84

Note: Diagonal cells represent the square root of the average variance extracted.

4.2 Structural model

The first research question was answered by testing the H1 to H4 hypotheses. The second research question was answered by testing the H5 and H6 hypotheses. The third research question was answered by testing the H7 to H10 hypotheses. A bootstrapping procedure with 5000 resamples was employed to test the hypothesised paths proposed in the research model. The path coefficients show the strength and the direction of the hypothesised relationships. Table 4 exhibits the results of hypotheses testing. Nine of the ten hypotheses were supported. Specifically, argument quality is not related to CPB ($\beta = 0.013$; $p = 0.831$). Therefore, H1 is not supported. Argument quality is positively related to CCB (H2: $\beta = 0.228$, $p < .001$), supporting H2. Source credibility has a positive effect on both CPB and CCB (H3: $\beta = 0.58$, $p < .001$; H4: $\beta = 0.574$, $p < .001$), and thus H3 as well as H4 are supported. Besides, CPB and CCB positively influence brand trust (H5: $\beta = 0.282$, $p < .001$; H6: $\beta = 0.553$, $p < .001$). Therefore, H5 and H6 are accepted. On the other hand, the relationship between brand trust and brand love is positive and significant (H7: $\beta = 0.851$, $p < .001$), supporting H7.

Moreover, the positive relationship between brand trust and subjective well-being is significant (H8: $\beta = 0.521$, $p < .001$). Therefore, H8 is confirmed in our research model. Finally, perception of COVID-19 risk can also positively affect brand love and subjective well-being (H9: $\beta = 0.119$, $p < .001$; H10: $\beta = 0.253$, $p < .001$), providing support for H9 and H10. Figure 2 presents the results of the structural model assessment.

The R^2 values demonstrate the predictive power of research model. The model explains 80.4% of the variance in brand love, 60.5% of the variance in brand trust, 57.4% of the variance in CCB, 34.7% of the variance in CPB, and 42% of the variance in subjective well-being. Hence, the R^2 scores supported that the predictive power of the proposed model was satisfactory. Using a blindfolding procedure, the Stone-Geisser (Q^2) values were 0.636, 0.463, 0.372, 0.286 and 0.292 for brand love, brand trust, CCB, CPB and subjective well-being respectively, revealing adequate predictive relevance of the research model (Hair et al., 2022).

[Insert Table 4 here]

Table 4: Results of hypotheses test

Hypothesis	Path Coefficient (t-value)	Results
H1. Argument Quality -> Customer Participation Behavior	0.013 (0.212) ^{n.s.}	Not supported
H2. Argument Quality -> Customer Citizenship Behavior	0.228 (3.889) ^{***}	Supported
H3. Source Credibility -> Customer Participation Behavior	0.58 (9.705) ^{***}	Supported
H4. Source Credibility -> Customer Citizenship Behavior	0.574 (10.041) ^{***}	Supported
H5. Customer Participation Behavior -> Brand Trust	0.282 (5.1) ^{***}	Supported
H6. Customer Citizenship Behavior -> Brand Trust	0.553 (10.485) ^{***}	Supported
H7. Brand Trust -> Brand Love	0.851 (40.501) ^{***}	Supported
H8. Brand Trust -> Subjective Well-being	0.521 (9.408) ^{***}	Supported
H9. Perception of COVID-19 Risk -> Brand Love	0.119 (4.067) ^{***}	Supported
H10. Perception of COVID-19 Risk -> Subjective Well-being	0.253 (4.473) ^{***}	Supported

Note: n.s. Not supported, *** Significant at $p < 0.001$ level.

[Insert Figure 2 here]

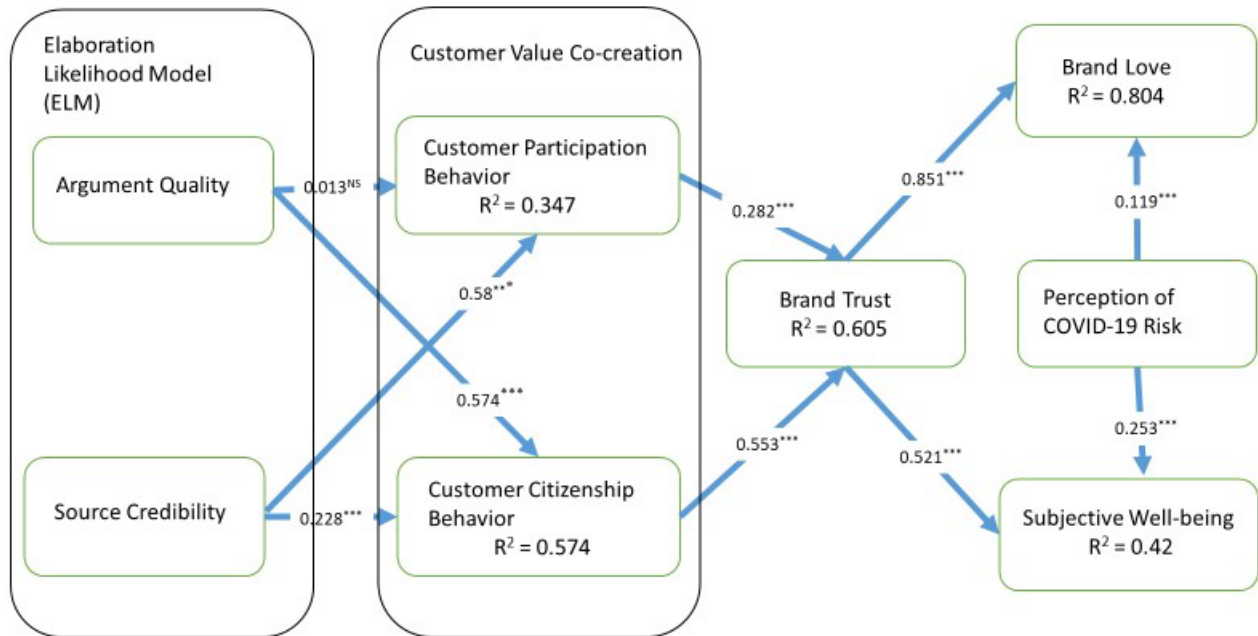


Figure 2: Structural model. Notes: ns, non-significant; significant at *** $p < .001$

5. Conclusions and implications

5.1 Discussion of key findings

The findings provide empirical support for addressing the three research questions. Grounding on ELM and S-D Logic value co-creation perspective, this study is one of the pioneering investigations into disentangling the impact of CSR communications on customer value co-creation behavior (RQ1), and how the latter influences brand trust (RQ2). Furthermore, this research unveiled the influences of brand trust and of perceived risk of COVID-19 on both brand love and subjective well-being (RQ3). After a survey of 304 customers from one service brand (Starbucks), the findings of this study validate the integrated model and all hypotheses, except H1. For RQ1, although the strength of argument quality of CSR messages was found to significantly trigger CCB, it appeared to have non-significant effect on CPB unexpectedly. One possible explanation for this unexpected result could be that message content of CSR appeal is not effective in driving consumer participation in co-creation process despite that the brand's CSR initiatives are society-serving. Thus, this result may imply that the customer participation behaviour could be influenced by other factors (e.g., individual characteristics), which needs further research. The source credibility of CSR communication, however, was found to significantly drive CPB and CCB, supporting that source credibility determines the likelihood of communications' claims being accepted by consumers (Lafferty,

Goldsmith and Newell, 2002) and firm's ethical reputation is vital driver of the communication effectiveness (Salmones and Perez, 2018). Surprisingly, the effects of source credibility (peripheral route) are much higher than those of argument quality (central route) on customer value co-creation behavior.

Moreover, for RQ2, positive relationships between both CPB and CCB and brand trust were confirmed, showing that the more consumers participate in brands' service delivery process, the more they are inclined to trust them. Subsequently, for RQ3, brand trust was found to significantly increase subjective well-being. Consuming trusted brands makes individuals feel happier and safer about their personal consumption choices, which betters their well-being. Consistent with Albert and Merunka (2013), brand trust was found to significantly enhance brand love, which reaffirmed that even in the context of the post COVID-19 pandemic, trusting brands leads consumers to more likely love brands.

The perception of COVID-19 risk was also found to positively associate with both brand love and subjective well-being. The higher risk of COVID-19, the higher the chances that consumers feel positive affection towards brands because of brands engaging in CSR. Considering that the survey of this study took place when lockdown restrictions had already been lifted and vaccination had been rolled-out in the UK, individuals may likely have adapted themselves to cope with negative changes in the external environment and be able to return to normality in their daily lives, eventually promoting their subjective well-being.

5.2 Theoretical implications

This study contributes to the relevant literature in several ways. First of all, although a few studies have coined on the effect of a global pandemic (COVID-19) on well-being (Carnevale and Hatak, 2020; Brodeur et al., 2021; Zacher and Rudolph, 2021), the current literature on the impact of COVID-19 on brand love is very limited. By filling this gap, this study made significant contributions to consumer behavior and brand marketing literature pertaining to post COVID-19 pandemic, because it uncovered the positive interrelations between the perception of COVID-19 risk and brand love as well as subjective well-being.

Secondly, the CSR-related research has been well documented; however, few scholars have yet to advance this field under the adverse effect of the pandemic. We note that previous studies have not explored the linkage of CSR communications and customer value co-creation behaviour. Therefore, this study brings valuable insights into the fields of CSR and S-D Logic research by examining the effects of the argument quality and source credibility of CSR communications on CPB and CCB with theoretical underpinnings of ELM and customer value

cocreation. To this end, this study integrated the ELM framework with the phenomenon of CSR communications under an existing pandemic situation, which promotes research on CSR communications and enhances the applicability of the ELM framework into CSR.

5.3 Practical implications

Our findings also bear important practical implications for CSR communications and branding strategies. First, the study results highlighted the critical role of the argument quality and source credibility of CSR communication in activating customers to co-create value through CPB and CCB with the only exception in the non-significant interrelation between argument quality and CPB. Hence, **brands must create attractive, relevant and valuable messages that should not overlook the importance of transparency and authenticity in the CSR campaigns so as to evoke favorable attitude by customers (Petty and Cacioppo, 1986). Relatedly, brands should not exaggerate their CSR initiatives in the messages, which may be audited by the independent bodies to attenuate customers' skepticism.** In the same vein, by delivering persuasive messages, brands may convince customers to develop voluntary extra role behavior (CCB) (Yi and Gong, 2013). Second, brands may establish themselves as a reputable source when engaging in CSR communications, which can engender the mutual interactions and resource exchanges between the brands and their customers, thus leading to value co-creation by fostering CPB and CCB during the service delivery.

Third, we found that source credibility was more influential than argument quality in reinforcing customer value co-creation behavior, highlighting the important role of credibility in enhancing consumers' attitude toward CSR information. This insight can be quite useful in designing CSR campaigns for service brands. For example, brands should eliminate greenwashing claims to increase consumers' attitudes towards a brand's environmental practices (e.g., Chen et al., 2018). **By the same token, brands may overcome the practical difficulties (e.g., cost and resource constraints) to provide transparent and clear reports regularly on how they achieve their sustainability goals including successes, challenges, and areas for improvement. and avoid overstating the environmental efforts.** Fourth, customer value co-creation behavior has been shown to be an important enabler to increase their trust with brands. Brands should be customer orientated and strive to develop pleasant experiences through intensive interactions with customers (Cambra-Fierro, Pérez and Grott, 2017), which in turn reinforces brand trust.

Fifth, brand trust positively relates to brand love and subjective well-being, as is also the case with the perception of COVID-19 risk. Therefore, it is recommended that CSR

campaigns are implemented in ways that heighten the brand trustworthiness, which in turn nurtures the customers' level of trust in the brand. As a result, brand love and subjective well-being will be increased. Trust can be generated by implementing CSR as core organisational practices, not only during times of crisis, because brands' engagements in CSR should not be half-heartedly but authentic (Alhouti, Johnson and Holloway, 2016) and establish message credibility. By engaging in genuine actions, organizations will enable customers' willingness to trust brands, and more likely to love brands.

Sixth, this study provides important guidance for crisis management by indicating how the COVID-19 pandemic affects the way individuals feel about brands and life satisfaction. It is worth noting that people have adjusted themselves to become resilient and accustomed to the pandemic (Zheng, Ruan and Zheng, 2021), which has likely led their well-being to progress over time. Thus, brand marketers should constantly re-evaluate the influences of COVID-19 crisis on the effectiveness of marketing communications, particularly in the field of CSR campaigns. For example, brands should ensure CSR communications align with rising consumer expectations (Kim, Yang and Yim, 2023).

5.4 Limitations and future research directions

Although this study has produced significant results, it holds some limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the results cannot be generalized as the data were limited to the context of one service brand and collected using convenience sampling within the UK in the post COVID-19 pandemic crisis. It is important for future research to extend this research by taking different contexts (other brand types) and other cultures into account. For example, examining the moderating role of culture in our proposal model may provide interesting insights. Second, despite that a survey provided an effective way for data collection, other methods are encouraged. Specifically, future studies are encouraged to consider a qualitative method, multi-case study or longitudinal study for a more in-depth understanding of the influence of CSR communications. Third, given that different generational cohorts seem to have different sensitivities of customer value co-creation, we encourage future researchers to consider how various cohorts affects co-creation of value. **Fourth, future studies can seek to understand the underlying factors that influence consumers to judge the quality of arguments. Finally, CSR-related brand communications may face the challenges due to growing activism, and this work can inspire future research to explore how activist behavior impacts the effectiveness of CSR-related content.**

Notes

1. The key messages of video demonstrate that Starbucks takes care of the planet, farmers, partners, and customers, e.g., the reduction of landfill waste and environmental pollution by 50 percent by 2030, the sale of green food, the donation of 100M disease-resistant coffee trees by 2025. This chosen video used value-driven messages, as well as rational and emotional appeals in a narrative format to communicate its sustainability initiative, which is considered as a powerful CSR communication strategy (Xu and Kochigina, 2021; Dalla-Pria, and Rodríguez-de-Dios, 2022)

Appendix A. Constructs and items

Construct	Item	Source
Argument Quality	The statement of this CSR message is accurate. The statement of this CSR message is informative. The statement of this CSR message is persuasive. The statement of this CSR message is helpful. The statement of this CSR message is valuable.	Xu and Yao (2015); Bhattacharjee and Sanford (2006)
Source Credibility	The brand presenting this CSR message is believable. The brand presenting this CSR message is convincing. The brand presenting this CSR message is unbiased. The brand presenting this CSR message is trustworthy. The brand presenting this CSR message is credible.	MacKenzie and Lutz (1989); Bhattacharjee and Sanford (2006)
Customer Participation Behavior	I spent a lot of time sharing information about my needs and opinions with the staff during the service process. I put a lot of effort into	Chan, Yim and Lam (2010)

	<p>expressing my personal needs to the staff during the service process.</p> <p>I always provide suggestions to the staff for improving the service outcome.</p> <p>I have a high level of participation in the service process.</p> <p>I am very much involved in deciding how the services should be provided.</p>	
Customer Behavior	<p>Citizenship</p> <p>If I have a useful idea on how to improve service, I will inform the employee of this service brand.</p> <p>I will say positive things about this service brand and the employee to others.</p> <p>I will help other customers if they seem to have problems.</p>	Yi and Gong (2013)
Brand Trust	<p>I trust this brand.</p> <p>I rely on this brand.(*)</p> <p>This is an honest brand.</p> <p>This brand is safe.</p>	Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001)
Brand Love	<p>This is a wonderful brand.</p> <p>This brand makes me feel good.</p> <p>I love this brand.</p> <p>I am passionate about this brand.</p> <p>I am very attached to this brand.</p>	Carroll and Ahuvia (2006)
Subjective Well-being	<p>In most ways my life is close to my ideal.</p> <p>The conditions of my life are excellent.</p>	Diener et al. (1985)

	<p>I am satisfied with my life.</p> <p>So far, I have gotten the important things I want in life.</p> <p>If I could live my life over, I would change almost nothing.</p>	
Perception of COVID-19 Risk	<p>I am afraid of catching COVID-19.</p> <p>It makes me uncomfortable to think about COVID-19.</p> <p>I am afraid of losing my life because of COVID-19.</p> <p>When watching news and stories about COVID-19 on social media, I become anxious.</p> <p>I have difficulty sleeping because I'm worrying about getting COVID-19.</p> <p>I hesitate to go outside because I am afraid of catching COVID-19.</p> <p>I avoid meeting with other people because I don't want to catch COVID-19.</p>	Brewer and Sebbby (2021).

Notes: * removed item

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