# THE ROLE OF BRAND QUALITY IN MEDIATING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY AND CONSUMER PREFERENCE

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Abstract: The biggest concern about the role of the company in serving the community is by increasing the sensitivity and concern for the environment and ethical issues. Corporate social responsibility in the form of environment, community, and stakeholders are some efforts to build customer relationships at Holiday Inn Benoa Bali Hotel. The purpose of this study is to explain the effect of corporate social responsibility (environment, community, and stakeholders) on consumer preferences, and test the quality of the brand as its mediation. Direct impact test results found that environmental responsibility, community responsibility, and stakeholder responsibility have a positive and significant impact on consumer preferences. Other results also have community and stakeholder responsibility positively affecting brand quality, but environmental responsibility is found to have no effect on brand quality. The quality of brand also has a positive and significant impact on consumer preferences. The results of mediation tests indicate that brand quality only mediates the relationship between stakeholder responsibilities to consumer preferences, but not on the relationship between environmental and community responsibility to consumer preferences.

Keywords: Social responsibility, brand quality, consumer preferences.

# I. INTRODUCTION

Social responsibility can be used as a strategy for companies. A strategy, in ordinary terms, implies something planned, formed and designed in such a way. So a CSR strategy, like other strategies, is a series of stages designed to achieve certain results or the strategic end of the company (Marques and Mitzberg, 2015). When companies operate socially and are accountable to the environment, the community, to the stakeholders, they also do it transparently, it helps their success, especially through encouraging the value of product quality. While in China, research by Liu et al. (2014) states that consumers in the hospitality industry feel the role of corporate social responsibility through perceived quality and make preference for hotel brands. The perceived quality of the brand in the study has not been fully tested and its role measured so that it is still questionable. In the study of Sung and Dae (2016) designed something different by making CSR and quality a separate factor in creating satisfaction with consumer loyalty.

The hospitality industry is indeed one of the most recent types of industry implementing CSR in creating corporate image in the eyes of consumers and as an identity in the competitive level of competition (Martinez et al., 2014). CSR ideas have gained a reaction in the hospitality industry. For example, the eco-friendly program Element Starwood Hotels and Resorts that contributes continuously through the application of 3R practices from reduce, reuse, and recycle (Rivera et al., 2016). Similarly, the Marriott Hotel implements a "Green Program" for hotel operations in conserving and protecting the environment. Leading hotel brands in Asia, Banyan Tree Hotels and Resorts effectively distinguishes itself in the market and enhances brand equity through significant CSR programs and displays in their marketing strategies (Roll, 2014).

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The number of hotel practices in carrying out social responsibility, there are several ways to create and manage organizational identity from (Arendt and Brettel, 2010). One of them, the InterContinental Hotels Group (IHG) Program seeks to realize energy efficiency, water conservation, climate change awareness campaigns and the procurement of coffee (one of the most consumed products in their hotels). As a result IHG won the Eco-Lodging Award at the Investment Summit Hotel. As part of the IHG Group or Intercontinental Hotels Group which has also won an award from The U.N. The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), Holiday Inn Benoa Bali succeeded in establishing its organizational identity based on aspects such as modernity, friendship, innovation, and accessibility. The success built by Holiday Inn Benoa Bali cannot be separated from the arrangement of programs and initiatives of social responsibility.

Holiday Inn Benoa Bali also recognizes the role of organizational identity and corporate image as a strong source of sustainable competitive advantage and an important role of CSR as a very effective attribute for branding strategies (Heikkurinen, 2010). In fact, many Hotel Managers spend time and resources on hotel advertising and its CSR initiatives to make strong brands among competitors. As a result, a company involved in CSR or CSR campaigns can utilize CSR efforts to create a brand that customers want, for example brand preference (Martinez et al., 2014).

Previous research highlights that corporate responsibility is one of the characteristics of a hotel that is considered the most important in influencing consumer preferences (Hung et al., 2012; Chang et al., 2014; Liu et al., 2014). Consumer brand preferences as relative preferences for choosing and using brands. This approach follows Yoo et al. (2000) which measures overall brand equity in this regard. Given the weak relationship between CSR and consumer responses, it is very important for consumers to shape preferences as a consideration in consuming or switching brands (Liu et al., 2014). Therefore, from a hotel point of view, it is important to investigate how CSR can be used as a tool to build consumer brand preferences when faced with many hotel offers.

Several studies have identified CSR as a group of factors that effect the quality of a company's brand (Chomvilailuk and Butcher, 2010; Chinomona et al., 2013; Liu et al., 2014). From an academic perspective, the value of consumers towards a company is strongly effectd by the quality of the brand consumed. Sahu and Pratihari (2015) determined that positive perceptions of quality contribute to the growth of consumer value towards the brand. Companies increasingly integrate service quality programs into their business strategies in an effort to produce brand benefits. Kolodinsky et al. (2010) found that consumers' positive attitudes toward corporate social activities can effect perceptions of perceived quality. Studies that examine the relationship between CSR and marketing results have recently emerged in the literature; However, some research gaps still need to be bridged.

#### II. LITERATURE REVIEW

# A. Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)

CSR can help build customer loyalty based on typical ethical values. Some companies use their commitment to CSR as a tool for their main positions, such as The Co-operative Group, The Body Shop and American Apparel (Gupta and Hodges, 2012). CSR is considered an important dimension in building a strong corporate brand (Nguyen and Oyotode, 2015). In competitive markets, companies strive to obtain unique market positions that can distinguish them from competitors in the minds of consumers. CSR can play a role in building customer loyalty based on the characteristics of ethical values. This is very important because consumers and society in general are increasingly effected by their desire to identify the values of the company in which they subscribe (Loose and Remaud, 2013). CSR covers at least three aspects of the relationship between the company and the community: How to do business reflects ethical considerations; The extent to which business operations involve social relations; And how business operations affect the environment.

# **B.** Brand Quality

The perceived brand quality is one of the most important elements for consumer preferences in most industries (Kayaman and Arasli, 2007). Brand quality was applied in a number of corporate social responsibility activities related to the service industry that several studies examined, such as Chomvilailuk and Butcher (2010) and Boisvert and Ashill (2011). To learn the relative strengths of social responsibility that affect brand preferences, consumers will feel quality as another predictor. Agrawal et al. (2011) defines brand quality as a "consumer judgment about overall product superiority or superiority" and that is considered a component of brand value. Brand perceived quality, reported as a major influential factor in customer-based brand evaluation (Chomvilailuk and Butcher, 2010), and brand preference seem to be related to brand quality perception (Liu and Smeesters, 2010). Chinomona et al. (2013) stated that the measurement of brand quality consists of high brand quality, brand popularity, brand experience, and brand differentiation.

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#### C. Consumer Preference

Brand preference is identical to buying intentions, and brand preference is a good predictor of purchase (Liu et al., 2014). Brand preference is still regularly applied as a symbolic predictor of consumer purchases. Brand preference is widely used to measure the effect of brand equity and represents the intention to choose and buy a brand (Wang, 2015). Mirabi et al. (2014) suggested that brand preference is the level at which consumers want the services provided by their company today as a comparison of services provided by other companies with a series of considerations. Ardhanari (2008) also mentions that strong brand preferences have a strong degree of consumer preference for a brand. Companies that are able to develop brand preferences will be able to maintain attacks from competitors. Wang (2015) states that the measurement of consumer preferences consists of, being the choice of consumers, consumer loyalty, attractiveness to consumers, and a strong priority for consumers.

#### III. HYPOTHESES

- H1: Environmental responsibility has a significant positive effect on consumer preferences.
- H2: Community responsibility has a significant positive effect on consumer preferences.
- H3: Stakeholders responsibility has a significant positive effect on consumer preferences.
- H4: Environmental responsibility has a significant positive effect on brand quality.
- H5: Community responsibility has a significant positive effect on brand quality.
- H6: Stakeholders responsibility has a significant positive effect on brand quality.
- H7: Brand quality has a significant positive effect on consumer preferences.
- H8: Brand quality in positively mediating significantly the relationship between environmental responsibility to consumer preferences.
- H9: Brand quality in positively mediating significantly the relationship between community responsibility for consumer preferences.
- H10: Brand quality in positively mediating significantly the relationship between stakeholder responsibility for consumer preferences.

## IV. RESEARCH METHODS

The population of this study were guests staying at the Holiday Inn Benoa Bali where the type of population in this study was the unlimited mobile population or population, therefore the population could not be determined with certainty. The sampling technique used in this study is purposive sampling. This means that anyone who meets the criteria can be used as a sample. The criteria in question are respondents who make reservations directly to the hotel. The reason is that the respondent will see, find, and get complete information when the respondent makes a reservation directly to the hotel. This study uses Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) with Partial Least Square (PLS) approach and uses smartPLS 2.0 software.

#### V. RESULT AND DICSUSSION

Based on PLS calculations, it can be seen the amount of direct effect between variables. Calculation of the effects between variables is explained in Table 1.

**Table 1: Direct Effect** 

Hypotheses	Original Sample (O)	T Statistics ( O/STDEV )	P Values	Description
H7	0,233	2,924	0,004	Sig.
H4	0,175	1,384	0,167	Not Sig.
H1	0,333	5,087	0,000	Sig.
Н5	0,528	6,258	0,000	Sig.
H2	0,618	7,745	0,000	Sig.
Н6	0,645	5,042	0,000	Sig.
Н3	0,217	3,142	0,002	Sig.

Primary Data, 2018

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Hypothesis testing is done by using t-test (t-test) on each path of effect between the independent variable and the dependent variable and between the independent variables with the dependent variable mediated by intervening variables. The calculation results of the path (path) as a whole can be seen in the path coefficients and Total effects. Testing the hypothesis in this study using PLS Smart 3 structural equation model.

Based on Table 1 the results of hypothesis testing show that of the seven direct paths are stated to be significant, only one path that rejects the hypothesis is not significant. This means that the six hypotheses of this study can be accepted because the t-statistic is greater than t-table, namely the statistic-t> 1.96 (the decision to accept or reject the hypothesis by comparing between t-tables and t-statistics at the level ( $\alpha = 5\%$ ).

The mediating effect shows the relationship between the independent and dependent variables through the mediating variable. If the VAF value is above 80 percent, it shows the role of green trust and green satisfaction variables as full mediation. Green trust and green satisfaction variables are categorized as partial mediation if the VAF value ranges from 20 percent to 80 percent, but if the VAF value is less than 20 percent it can be concluded that there is almost no mediating effect. VAF calculation is done with the following equation:

$$VAF = \frac{Indirect \ Effect}{Total \ Effect}$$

Based on Table 2 below explains the results of indirect effects between the Environmental, Community and Stakeholder Responsibility towards Consumer Preference with Brand Quality as mediation.

**Table 2: Indirect Effect** 

Hypothesis	Original Sample (O)
Н8	0,041
Н9	0,123
H10	0,151

Primary Data, 2018

VAF values for testing the mediating effects of brand quality on the relationship of environmental responsibility to consumer preferences, can be calculated in Table 3.

Table 3: Mediation Effects of Brand Quality on the Relationship between Environmental Responsibility and Consumer Preferences Testing Result

Indirect Effect	0,041	
Total Effect	0,374	
VAF	0,109	

Primary Data, 2018

VAF calculation results in which the quality of the brand as mediating the relationship between environmental responsibility and consumer preferences obtained values of 0.109 or 10.9 percent and showed that brand quality is not mediating because VAF value is less than 20 percent.

VAF values for testing the mediating effect of brand quality on the relationship of community responsibility with consumer preferences can be calculated in Table 4.

Table 4: Mediation Effect of Brand Quality on the Relationship between Stakeholder Responsibility and Consumer Preferences

Testing Result

Indirect Effect	0,123
Total Effect	0,741
VAF	0,165

Primary Data, 2018

VAF calculation results in which the quality of the brand as mediating the relationship between community responsibility and consumer preferences obtained a value of 0.165 or 16.5 percent and showed that brand quality is not mediating because VAF value is less than 20 percent.

VAF values for testing the effect of mediating brand quality on the relationship of community responsibility with consumer preferences can be calculated in Table 5.

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Table 5: Mediation Effect of Brand Quality on the Relationship between Stakeholder Responsibility and Consumer Preferences

Testing Result

Indirect Effect	0,151	
Total Effect	0,367	
VAF	0,411	

Primary Data, 2018

VAF calculation results in which the quality of the brand as mediating the relationship between stakeholder responsibilities and consumer preferences obtained values of 0.411 or 41.1 percent and showed that brand quality is a partial mediation because VAF values are between 20 percent to 80 percent.

The estimation results of the structural model as presented in Table 1 shows that testing hypotheses on the effect of environmental responsibility on consumer preferences results in a correlation coefficient of 0.333. The t Statistics value is obtained at 5,087 and the p value of Values is 0,000 (<0,05). These results indicate that environmental responsibility positively has a significant effect on consumer preferences. This means that the better the environmental responsibility, the higher the consumer preference of Holiday Inn Benoa Bali Hotels.

Li's findings (2013) show that CSR which consists of environmental components has a significant effect on the feeling of wanting to choose a product for consumers. Likewise, He and Li (2011) found that the advertising effects of corporate responsibility activities on the environment will lead to a positive response to consumer preferences in the brand. Liu et al. (2014) prove that CSR dimensions related to the environment have a significant effect on the preferences of hotel consumer brands in China.

The estimation results of the structural model as presented in Table 1 shows that testing hypotheses on the effect of community responsibility on consumer preferences results in a correlation coefficient of 0.618. The t Statistics value is obtained at 7.745 and the p value of Values is 0.000 (<0.05). These results indicate that community responsibility positively has a significant effect on consumer preferences. This means that the better the community responsibility, the higher the consumer preference of Holiday Inn Benoa Bali Hotels.

Choi and La (2013) show a significant positive relationship between CSR practices and consumer preferences indicating that CSR practices have a positive impact on consumer preferences. The results of Martinez et al. (2014), also shows a significant effect between Community Social Responsibility on consumer preferences. Tian et al. (2011) clarify that CSR related to the community that is considered also felt by consumers has a significant positive effect on consumers preference.

The estimation results of the structural model as presented in Table 1 shows that testing hypotheses on the effect of stakeholder responsibility on consumer preferences results in a correlation coefficient of 0.217. The t Statistics value is 3.142 and the p value of Values is 0.002 (<0.05). These results indicate that the responsibilities of stakeholders positively effect consumers' preferences. This means that the better the community's responsibility, the higher the consumer preference of Holiday Inn Benoa Bali Hotels.

The results of research from Mirabi et al. (2014) shows that CSR programs related to the welfare of stakeholders significantly affect client brand preferences. Evidence on the practice of Social Responsibility service providers will increase not only consumer brand preferences but other important dimensions as well, such as perceived service quality or customer loyalty (Mandhachitara and Poolthong, 2011). Taghipour et al. (2016) also found CSR activities Stakeholders proved to be antecedents of consumer preferences.

The estimation results of the structural model as presented in Table 1 shows that testing hypotheses on the effect of environmental responsibility on brand quality results in a correlation coefficient of 0.175. T Statistics value is obtained at 1.384 and p value of Values is 0.167 (> 0.05). The results show that environmental responsibility does not have a significant effect on brand quality. This means there is no significant effect between environmental responsibility and the quality of the Holiday Inn Benoa Bali brand. Empirical testing cannot prove the effect of environmental responsibility on the quality of the Holiday Inn Benoa Bali hotel brand.

The absence of a significant CSR impact on brand quality can be explained by assuming that most respondents do not pay enough attention to the type of CSR that has been discussed (ie, environmental protection) to consider it in their objectives relating to the quality of service and brand of Holiday Inn Benoa Bali (Berens et al., 2007). The results of this study are in

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line with research by Berens et al. (2007). The explanation is supported also by the research of Feng et al. (2016) who discovered the fact that the effect of CSR information on brand quality evaluation is not a consideration when people consider this information irrelevant to their goals. In practice, consumers at hotels tend not to make green programs at Holiday Inn Benoa Bali, such as green programs and eco-friendly hotel designs as a value for perceived brand quality.

The estimation results of the structural model as presented in Table 1 shows that testing hypotheses on the effect of community responsibility on consumer preferences results in a correlation coefficient of 0.528. The t Statistics value is 6.258 and the p value of Values is 0.000 (<0.05). These results indicate that community responsibility has a significant positive effect on consumer preferences. This means that the better the community's responsibility, the higher the consumer preference of Holiday Inn Benoa Bali Hotels.

The effect of CSR associations can be strengthened if service brands are considered to be better able to provide high quality services (He and Li, 2011). In theory, CSR information can be a guide, for example an activity or company action that helps the community around as much information for consumers. And consumers can assess the quality of the product in the instructions (Li, 2013). Research from Eka et al. (2013) prove that consumer perceptions of companies that implement community responsibility have succeeded in increasing the quality perceived by consumers.

The estimation results of the structural model as presented in Table 1 shows that testing hypotheses on the effect of stakeholder responsibility on brand quality results in a correlation coefficient of 0.645. The t Statistics value is obtained at 5.042 and the p value of Values is 0.000 (<0.05). These results indicate that the responsibilities of stakeholders positively have a significant effect on brand quality. This means that the better the community's responsibility, the higher the consumer preference of Holiday Inn Benoa Bali Hotels.

Peloza and Shang (2011) reveal that CSR increases focus on the sources of stakeholder value provided by CSR activities. In particular, focusing on CSR activities as a consumer-oriented source of self-value provides an opportunity for marketers to create differentiation. The hospitality industry understands that it has responsibilities not only to the community but to various stakeholders that can effect or be effected by activities (Martinez et al., 2014). The same thing is also supported by the research of Liu et al. (2014).

The estimation results of the structural model as presented in Table 1 shows that testing hypotheses on the effect of brand quality on consumer preferences results in a correlation coefficient of 0.233. T Statistics value is obtained at 2.924 and p value of Values is 0.004 (<0.05). These results indicate that brand quality has a significant positive effect on consumer preferences. This means that the better the responsibility of the community, the higher the preference of tourists at the Holiday Inn Benoa Bali Hotel.

Relevant findings are Hamid et al. (2012) which states that brand quality has a significant effect on consumer preferences. Other findings found that the dimensions of functional quality values have a positive impact on brand preference without mediation relationships (Akdeniz et al., 2012). The results of research from Mirabi et al. (2014) show that the perception of brand quality greatly affects preferences.

VAF calculation of the mediating effect of brand quality on social responsibility relationships with consumer preferences is 10.9 percent and indicates that brand quality is not capable of being a mediator. Brand quality fails to effect the relationship of environmental responsibility with consumer preferences, thus it can be said that brand quality does not act as a mediator between the relationship of community responsibility and consumer preferences.

The results of this study are in line with Berens et al. (2007) which states that in evaluating quality, the situation is different. Good environmental CSR does not necessarily compensate for good brand quality. When information about brand quality is personally important for consumers, for example when they evaluate the brand quality of a company, personal factors may be a priority, so the CSR factor is not taken into account. In such cases, CSR only has a significant influence on consumer preferences, but does not have a significant effect on brand quality. This shows that brand quality is insignificant mediation. These results are also supported by He and Li (2010) which prove that environmental responsibility and brand quality together are antecedents of consumer preferences.

VAF calculation of the mediating effect of brand quality on the relationship of public responsibility with consumer preferences is 16.5 percent and indicates that brand quality is not capable of being a mediator. Brand quality fails to have an influence on the relationship of community responsibility with consumer preferences, thus it can be said that brand quality does not succeed in being a mediator between the relationship of community responsibility and consumer preferences.

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Liu et al. (2014) show that CSR perception to stakeholders plays a more prominent role in customer preferences. Previously Liu et al. (2014) also prove the responsibility of stakeholders as the strongest domain for consumer brand preferences because hotel guests are one of the stakeholders, hotel CSR to stakeholders is more relevant if mediated with brand quality (Mirabi et al., 2014).

## VI. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Brand quality is found to be unable to mediate the relationship between environmental responsibility and society with consumer preferences, but can mediate positively and significantly the relationship between stakeholder responsibility and consumer preferences. For further research it is recommended to replace brand quality as a mediating variable with other variables, such as brand awareness or brand equity. Also further researchers are advised to focus more on researching the relationship of 3 variables, namely the responsibilities of stakeholders, brand quality, and consumer preferences. Also finding environmental responsibility has no significant effect on brand quality can be a hot topic for researchers - the next researcher.

The Holiday Inn Benoa Bali is recommended to highlight strong indicators from the respondents' descriptions, such as public security programs, welfare campaigns, and consumer rights in social responsibility programs. In addition to improving the social responsibility program, Holiday Inn is recommended to encourage satisfied guests to stay at their hotel to write online reviews. This can help promote hotels and improve the Holiday Inn Benoa Bali brand.

## **Research Limitation:**

This research has been endeavored and carried out in accordance with scientific procedures, however, it still has limitations, namely the factors that influence preferences in this study consist of four variables, namely environmental responsibility, community responsibility, stakeholder responsibility, and brand quality, while still many other factors influence consumer preferences such as product quality and brand equity. There is a limitation of research by using the choice questionnaire that sometimes the answers given by the respondent do not indicate the real situation.

The weakness of the sampling technique in this study is that the selected sample is most likely not representative of the population, because in fact the sample form is an unlimited sample of mobile samples or so the generalization that can be done by the researcher will be limited. This method also tends to have a high bias because researchers determine the respondents themselves with the specified criteria.

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