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The Mediating Effects of Brand Image and Brand Love on the Relationship Between Corporate Social Responsibility and Consumer Loyalty

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Abstract

This study analyzes the complex relationship between Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and Brand Loyalty (BLY) among consumers of mobile phone services, particularly examining how Brand Image (BIM) and Brand Love (BLV) act as mediating factors in this relationship. Quantitative research with a correlational scope and cross-sectional design was conducted among 296 consumers of mobile phone services. A questionnaire comprising 26 questions was administered, with responses quantified using a five-point Likert scale. The results were processed using Confirmatory Factor Analysis and partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM). This study revealed that CSR alone does not have a direct and significant association with BLY; however, it is associated with BIM and BLV. Furthermore, BIM and BLV were also found to be associated with BLY, demonstrating that the link between CSR and BLY is indirectly built by strengthening BIM and BLV, rather than directly. The originality of this research stems from its concurrent incorporation of BIM and BLV as mediating variables in the link between CSR and BLY.

Keywords: Corporate Social Responsibility; Brand Image; Brand Love; Brand Loyalty



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1. Introduction

In contemporary business contexts, BLY has become a primary research objective for companies seeking to maintain a sustainable advantage in the market [1]. According to Parris and Guzmán [2], BLY is defined as the commitment a consumer makes to a specific brand, manifested through repeat purchases and positive brand recommendations to others. In this sense, BLY goes beyond mere product satisfaction, sometimes encompassing an emotional bond and a perception of added value that the consumer associates with the brand [3]. Several researchers agree that the growth of competition and consumer demands

are key factors that companies must closely monitor [4–7], compelling organizations to devise strategies that allow them to retain customers and ensure the survival of the company [8]. Therefore, BLY must be constantly analyzed, as failing to understand what drives BLY can lead to severe consequences such as inadequate marketing strategies; customer loss; decreased market share; and, ultimately, bankruptcy of the company [9–11].

On the other hand, CSR refers to business practices and policies aimed at creating positive associations with society and the environment [12]. These practices include initiatives such as sustainable development, support for local communities, business ethics, and transparency in corporate governance [5,13]. According to Singh and Misra [14], CSR not only strengthens corporate reputation but also exerts a direct impact on consumers' preferences and purchasing decisions. CSR has emerged as a crucial component in shaping and reinforcing a company's BIm [15], as socially responsible practices not only reflect the firm's commitment to ethical conduct and societal well-being but also foster favorable perceptions among consumers [16].

BIm refers to the way consumers perceive a company and the quality of its products or services, which is shaped through direct experiences, company communication, and the opinions of other consumers [2]. This image encompasses a set of tangible and intangible associations, including aspects such as quality [7,17], logo design [18], customer service [6,8], and a company's corporate values [15]. Strong BIm can differentiate a company in a competitive market, generate trust, and build consumer loyalty [19–21].

The effective implementation of CSR initiatives can cultivate a strong sense of BLV—a deep and enduring emotional bond that consumers develop towards a specific brand [22], manifested as a feeling that goes beyond mere satisfaction with products or services [20,23]—which implies an affective connection that translates into loyalty, active advocacy, and a consistent preference for the brand over its competitors [4,10], thereby increasing consumer loyalty [1]. Thus, when customers perceive that a company genuinely cares about the community, environment, ethics, and social equity, they are likely to develop an emotional attachment to the brand [2].

CSR has received growing scholarly attention in recent years because of its strategic relevance in shaping consumer perceptions and behaviors. CSR has been shown to significantly influence BIm, BLV, and BLY. In this regard, the state of the art in this field of knowledge indicates that CSR improves BIm by associating brands with ethical, sustainable, and socially responsible values, thereby increasing consumer trust and differentiating the brand in competitive markets [14,15]. Furthermore, BIm, as a collective perception of a brand's attributes, not only strengthens consumer trust but also fosters long-term loyalty by reinforcing favorable cognitive assessments [2,24]. Therefore, CSR fosters customer loyalty by creating an emotional connection between consumers and the brand, with consumers increasingly aligning themselves with brands that reflect their ethical and social values [1,22]. This emotional attachment drives behaviors such as brand advocacy and resistance to switching, which cements deeper loyalty [2,23,25,26].

In a highly competitive market where choices are numerous and differentiation is essential, CSR initiatives can be a decisive factor in generating BLY among mobile phone service consumers. According to Statista's [27] report on Internet users by country in Latin America, Chile had 17.69 million internet users as of 2023, representing approximately 83.2% of the total population. Moreover, there are 28.84 million mobile phone connections, of which 90.2% of users reported accessing the Internet through their mobile devices [19,28]. However, despite BLY becoming a relevant factor for the telecommunications industry, there is a lack of research identifying the factors influencing BLY among mobile phone service consumers in Chile. This lack of empirical evidence constitutes a research problem that must be addressed to identify the factors that lead a consumer to develop loyalty

to a brand, thus providing information that guarantees appropriate decision-making at the business level. Telecommunications companies seek to leverage their infrastructure and large customer bases to enter the FinTech space and become protagonists in the telecommunications market, with the number of smartphone subscriptions worldwide exceeding 6.9 billion and projected to expand even further and more consistently over the next years [27].

Considering the abovementioned points, the present study seeks to determine the indirect association between CSR and BLY and the mediating roles played by BIm and BLv in the relationship between CSR and BLY. For these purposes, this study aims to address the following research questions: (a) How is CSR associated with BLY among mobile phone service consumers? (b) How is CSR associated with BIm and BLv among mobile phone service consumers? (c) How are BIm and BLv associated with BLY among mobile phone service consumers? (d) How do BIm and BLv mediate the association between CSR and BLY among mobile phone service consumers?

This study provides important findings for the business field of mobile telephone service provision in Chile and highlights the indirect effect of CSR on BLY, demonstrating that BIm and BLv are required as mediators for this relationship to materialize. These findings provide empirical evidence that facilitates business decision-making within telecommunications contexts and provides answers regarding the necessity of identifying relationships with CSR in emerging economies [16], how corporate responsibility actions are linked to BIm [15] and BLv [29], and how these are further associated with BLY [10,30].

2. Literature Review

2.1. Oliver's Loyalty Model

Oliver's loyalty model [31] conceptualizes loyalty as a hierarchical process that evolves through three stages—cognitive, affective, and conative—ultimately culminating in action loyalty. The cognitive stage is based on the rational evaluations consumers make about the perceived attributes of the brand, such as its quality or functionality. In the affective stage, emotions and feelings towards the brand solidify, creating a deeper emotional bond. The conative stage involves the consumer's intentional commitment to continue choosing the brand, despite external influences or competition [32]. This model provides a framework for understanding how consumers transition from valuing functional brand attributes to forming emotional attachments and eventually adopting consistent loyal behaviors [33]. In this sense, BIm, BLv, and BLY align directly with this model: BIm contributes to cognitive loyalty by shaping positive perceptions of the brand; BLv drives affective loyalty by building emotional connections; and BLY represents the final outcome of this process, where consumers demonstrate enduring commitment to the brand.

From the perspective of Oliver's model, CSR can act as a key driver at every stage of the loyalty hierarchy [34]. In the cognitive stage, CSR initiatives enhance BIm by associating the brand with ethical and sustainable values, thus improving consumers' perceptions of the brand's reliability and quality [35]. In the affective stage, CSR fosters BLv by resonating with consumers' personal values and creating a profound emotional connection, as they perceive the brand as sharing their dedication to community development and environmental welfare [36]. Finally, in the conative stage, CSR practices strengthen consumers' intentions to consistently support the brand by creating a positive narrative that motivates long-term loyalty [37]. In summary, CSR not only enhances brand perception and emotional attachment but also establishes the foundation necessary to transform these factors into loyal behaviors, making BLY more sustainable in all competitive contexts.

2.2. Brand Loyalty

Consumers experience many things while using a product or service; through these lived experiences, a brand can foster or influence customer loyalty [38–41]. In this sense, BLy is conceptualized as an indicator that reflects the extent of emotional attachment a consumer has towards a particular product, service, or company [7,17,20,21]. According to Oliver's Loyalty Model, to ensure consumer loyalty, a company must develop actions to promote: (a) cognitive loyalty, which refers to the image that the brand conveys through the evaluation of attributes perceived by a consumer; (b) affective loyalty, which is the emotional bond and degree of sympathy a consumer has towards the brand; and (c) conative loyalty, which denotes the extent of a consumer's commitment toward the brand. Therefore, proper articulation of these three types of loyalty generates action loyalty, which is responsible for stimulating purchase intention [31].

Analyzing BLy from the perspective of CSR actions is crucial for understanding whether these practices impact consumer perceptions and behaviors. According to Mahmood and Bashir [24], CSR actions enhance corporate image by demonstrating a genuine commitment to society and the environment. For Bapat and Thanigan [42], these actions also increase feelings of attachment to the brand, generating deep commitment and promoting conative loyalty, which translate into higher purchase intention and frequency [1,14].

2.3. Corporate Social Responsibility

CSR constitutes a comprehensive strategic approach enabling companies to manage environmental and social issues in various contexts and cultures in which they operate [13]. This approach not only encompasses compliance with legal regulations but also implies proactivity in improving the natural and social environment [15,16]. Therefore, companies adopt practices such as reducing pollutant emissions [43], ensuring efficient resource use [12], and supporting local communities [44] to balance economic growth, sustainability, and social acceptance [5,13]. According to Singh and Misra [14], CSR has become a critical element for organizations that wish to consolidate their reputation and legitimacy in the global market, adapting to the growing expectations of consumers.

According to Lee et al. [45], the influence of CSR on BLy is significant because a company's responsible and transparent actions can strengthen the positive social perception of the company, increasing consumer trust and loyalty [16]. In this sense, companies that demonstrate genuine commitment to sustainability and social equity often succeed in differentiating themselves from their competition, creating a competitive advantage [1]. Similarly, Adwiyah et al. [46] highlighted that in an interconnected world, good CSR practices can rapidly go viral through media and social networks, amplifying their impact and enhancing brand reputation. Therefore, the public recognition of corporate efforts can build a solid and favorable image, attracting consumers who value and support these initiatives [47,48].

Moreover, the emotional bond that consumers develop with responsible brands is based on trust and identification with the values that these brands promote [4,10,22]. In other words, when a company demonstrates a genuine commitment to CSR, it not only gains respect from its customers but also evokes a feeling of affection and admiration [2]. BLy translates into repetitive consumption behaviors and recommendations to others, creating a community of brand advocates [16].

Within the mobile telecommunications sector, consumer behaviors exhibit distinctive patterns that differ from those observed in other service industries. Mobile phone services operate in a high-involvement technological environment where consumers evaluate brands based on network reliability, perceived service quality, pricing structures, digital ecosystem compatibility, and switching barriers [32]. Prior studies have shown that loyalty

formation in this industry is heavily influenced by functional perceptions such as call quality, data speed, and customer service responsiveness, making the sector particularly sensitive to BIm and emotional attachment [4,9]. Furthermore, given the intensity of competition and low differentiation between service providers, brands increasingly rely on symbolic, emotional, and sustainability-driven attributes to create long-term relationships with users [20,26].

Recent research has also emphasized that mobile phone consumers develop loyalty primarily when they perceive a strong alignment between brand values and their own identity, making this industry especially relevant for studying constructs such as BIm and BLv [23,35]. Additionally, CSR initiatives in telecommunications, such as digital inclusion, privacy protection, environmental impact reduction, and community support programs, have been found to shape consumer perceptions by signaling corporate responsibility and ethical commitment [43,45]. These sector-specific dynamics reinforce the relevance of examining the mediating roles of perceptual and emotional constructs when assessing the influence of CSR on consumer loyalty within the mobile service context.

Although prior literature has demonstrated that the interrelations among CSR, BIm, and BLv reinforce the connection between firms and their consumers [2,5,13,15,46,49], other studies contend that a firm's foremost obligation is to maximize returns for its shareholders, suggesting that CSR initiatives may divert the company's economic interests, which might not be reflected in an improvement in the company's reputation [50,51]. To examine the relationships among the aforementioned variables and reconcile these divergent viewpoints in the academic literature, this study advances the following hypotheses:

H1. *CSR is associated with mobile phone service consumers' BLY.*

H1a. *CSR is associated with mobile phone service consumers' BIm.*

H1b. *CSR is associated with mobile phone service consumers' BLv.*

2.4. Brand Image

BIm is conceptualized as the collective perception consumers hold regarding a company and the products or services it offers [2]. Several scholars agree that BIm is a set of perceptions formed in consumers due to positive interactions with a brand [52], where product and service quality, coherent communication with the community, and corporate responsibility actions lead consumers to associate positively with a brand [53–56]. In this sense, the importance of BIm lies not only in its ability to differentiate in competitive markets but also in its capacity to increase perceived value; build trust and credibility; and, above all, foster customer loyalty [7,57,58].

Over time, several scholars have evidenced the relationship between BIm and consumer loyalty, confirming that BIm enhances consumer loyalty by promoting commitment and consequently motivating frequent consumption of a brand [19,20,59,60]. However, according to Cuesta et al. [61], consumers are increasingly attracted to new brands at present; demonstrating that even though consumers may be satisfied with a brand, their loyalty is not entirely guaranteed. Therefore, it is necessary to identify whether consumers' perceptions of BIm influence their loyalty [30]. In light of the foregoing, the following hypothesis is put forward.

H2. *BIm is associated with BLY of mobile phone service consumers.*

CSR initiatives likewise play a pivotal role in shaping and enhancing BIm. [15]. Although CSR involves the implementation of sustainable and ethical practices that benefit

society and the environment [5], these actions not only fulfill an ethical function for the company but also positively influence consumers' perception of the brand [16]. Therefore, companies that achieve a positive BIm can enjoy benefits such as customer loyalty [13], where consumers not only repeatedly choose their products but also act as brand ambassadors, recommending them to others and defending the company's social responsibility actions [14]. Although Rasoolimanesh et al. [25] demonstrated that BIm serves as a mediating mechanism in the relationship between CSR and BLy within the educational sector, studies on the relationships between these variables in the telecommunications field are scarce [62]. Furthermore, Le et al. [15] concluded that examining the relationships among CSR, BIm, and BLy in sectors beyond the food industry is essential. Based on this premise, the present study aims to evaluate the following hypothesis.

H2a. *BIm mediates the relationship between CSR and BLy of mobile phone service consumers.*

2.5. Brand Love

BLv refers to the emotional connection that consumers show towards a specific brand [63], a phenomenon resulting from the satisfaction levels a consumer has with a product or service [64], leading to the generation of long-lasting and mutually beneficial relationships between the brand and consumer [16]. According to Misra et al. [49], consumers who experience BLv are not only more likely to make repeat purchases but also act as advocates and promoters of the brand, share their experiences with their peers, and recommend the brand to other consumers, thus contributing to its long-term sustainability.

According to Santos and Schlesinger [34], consumers tend to purchase brands toward which they feel affection. Research conducted in the cosmetics sector has demonstrated that BLv is positively associated with BLy [65,66]. Likewise, studies carried out among smartphone users have confirmed the link between BLv and consumer loyalty, suggesting that brands that evoke memorable experiences become consumers' preferred choice at the moment of purchase [38,40,41]. Although prior academic literature has established the relationship between BLv and BLy, empirical evidence examining this association within the telecommunications sector remains limited; notably, Bae and Kim [10] emphasized the need for additional studies exploring this relationship in this specific industry. To address this gap, the present study advances the following hypothesis:

H3. *BLv is associated with BLy of mobile phone service consumers.*

It is clear that BLv plays a fundamental role in generating BLy [1,67,68]. However, for some consumers, the love generated towards a brand is not based on a process acquired fortuitously; rather, this emotional bond derives from fulfillment of the company's social responsibility promises and sustainability actions [69,70]. Although numerous studies have identified a direct association between BLv and BLy [10,34,39,65,71], other studies have determined that BLv alone is insufficient to influence BLy [72], indicating that the transition from BLv to BLy is not instinctive but requires other precedents [10]; as such, BLv alone is insufficient to maintain consumer loyalty [70,73–75]. According to Khalid et al. [29], there remains limited research examining the antecedent factors that shape BLv. Considering the aforementioned contradictions, this study aimed to test the following hypothesis:

H3a. *BLv mediates the association between CSR and BLy of mobile phone service consumers.*

2.6. Research Model

To examine the mediating roles of BIm and BLv in the relationship between CSR and BLy, this study aimed to evaluate the model outlined below (Figure 1).

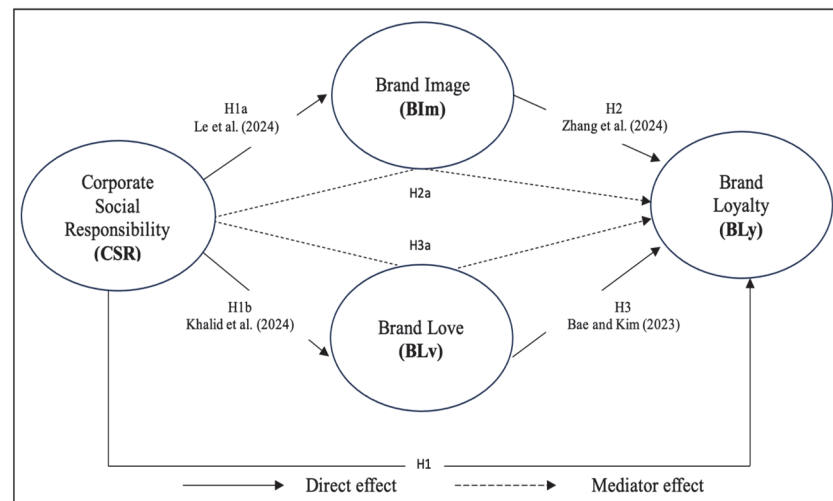


Figure 1. Hypothesized model [10,29,30,45].

3. Methodology

3.1. Instrument Design and Data Collection

To empirically validate the proposed hypotheses, a quantitative, deductive, and exploratory study was carried out. An instrument consisting of 26 questions was used for data collection. Prior to data collection, the survey instrument was subjected to expert validation by two marketing specialists and two research scholars, who thoroughly reviewed and approved the questionnaire. In order to ensure the clarity and validity of the instrument of the study, a pilot test was conducted with 40 participants to identify potential comprehension issues and adjust any aspects of the questionnaire, as necessary.

A total of 320 respondents were initially enrolled using probabilistic sampling techniques to ensure representativeness. The G*Power 3.1 program was used to calculate the sample size with a 95% confidence level, which indicated that 320 surveys would provide an appropriate sample for the study. The target population included residents of Antofagasta, Chile, who were users of mobile phones. This city was selected due to its high mobile connectivity rate and technological penetration, which makes it a relevant context for examining consumer perceptions in emerging telecommunications markets. Individuals were required to meet two inclusion criteria: (a) having an active mobile phone plan and (b) being at least 18 years old. Data collection was conducted via Google Forms to ensure accessibility and convenience for the participants. After the data screening process, 24 questionnaires were removed due to incomplete or inconsistent responses, yielding a final sample of 296 valid cases for statistical analysis.

The final questionnaire consisted of three sections: (a) informed consent, ensuring that participants were fully apprised of the study's purpose and the confidentiality of their responses; (b) demographic information to capture essential respondent characteristics; and (c) 26 items designed to measure the four core variables of the hypothesized model (CSR, BIm, BLv, and BLy). All items were measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 ('Strongly Disagree') to 5 ('Strongly Agree'), allowing respondents to express varying degrees of agreement with each statement. Additionally, a preliminary reliability assessment was performed using the pilot test data to verify the adequacy of the measurement instrument. The results of this analysis indicated that three items (BLv4, BLv6, and BIm6) exhibited low factor loadings and reduced internal consistency across their respective constructs. Consequently, these items were removed to enhance the psychometric robustness of the scale, strengthen construct reliability, and ensure a more accurate model fit for the subsequent analyses. The cross-sectional design offers a snapshot of the relationships be-

tween variables at a specific moment, allowing the identification of key patterns within the sample. Additionally, careful data screening and iterative refinement of the measurement instrument strengthen methodological rigor, enhancing both the reliability of the measures and the generalizability of the findings.

3.2. Measures

About the items for the measures model, six items were employed to assess the CSR construct, five to measure BLY, and nine to evaluate BLV, all of which were adapted from Amegbe et al. [22]. In addition, six items were used to capture BIm, drawing on the scale developed by Sultan and Wong [48]. To examine the internal consistency of these items, Cronbach's alpha coefficients were calculated. The results of this analysis indicated the need to remove three items (BLv4, BLv6, and BIm6, as previously noted) in order to enhance the model's overall goodness-of-fit and strengthen the psychometric properties of the measurement instrument (Review Appendices A and B).

4. Results

4.1. Demographic Characteristics

With respect to the sample's demographic profile, Table 1 shows that among the 296 participants, 60.1% were men, 39.5% were women, and 0.4% identified as non-binary. The mean age was 25 years, with ages ranging from 18 to 37. In terms of educational attainment, 59.8% reported having a university-level education, 16.1% had completed technical studies, 23% had finished secondary education, and 1.1% held only basic education. Moreover, 77.7% of respondents indicated that they had a personal telecommunications plan, whereas the remaining 22.3% stated that their plan was provided by their employer.

Table 1. Demographic characteristics.

Characteristics	Category	n	%
Gender	Male	177	60.1
	Female	118	39.5
	Non-binary	1	0.4
Education level	University	177	59.8
	Technical	48	16.1
	Secondary	68	23.1
	Basic	3	1
Types of contracted plan	Personal Plan	230	77.7
	Business Plan	66	22.3

n = 296 (Average age: 25 years old).

4.2. Measurement Model Estimation

To assess the presence of common method variance, Harman's single-factor test was employed. This procedure, which evaluates potential common method bias through an exploratory factor analysis, revealed that the variance explained by the first unrotated factor was below the critical threshold of 50%. Specifically, the statistical examination of the proposed model indicated a common variance of 49%, remaining within acceptable limits as suggested by prior methodological guidelines [76–78]. In addition to this assessment, further reliability and validity checks were conducted. Cronbach's alpha, Composite Reliability (CR), and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) were calculated to evaluate the internal consistency and convergent validity of the measurement model, thereby ensuring that the constructs were measured with sufficient accuracy and robustness.

The results obtained from the Cronbach's Alpha and CR assessments surpassed the 0.70 benchmark widely accepted in the literature. Similarly, all standardized factor loadings for the indicators exceeded the 0.70 criterion [79,80], offering additional support for the reliability of the variables measured. Convergent validity was established by verifying that AVE values were greater than 0.50. As noted by Fornell and Larcker [81], this threshold represents the minimum level required to ensure acceptable convergent validity. Recent studies have further indicated that when AVE values exceed 0.50 and remain lower than the CR values, convergent validity is additionally reinforced [82]. On the other hand, while Harman's single-factor test indicated that common variance did not exceed 50%, this procedure alone may not fully address concerns related to common method bias [77]. To complement this evaluation, this study followed the recommendations of Henseler et al. [83] and assessed the full collinearity variance inflation factors (VIFs) for all constructs. The results showed that all VIF values were below the conservative threshold of 3.3, suggesting that common method bias was unlikely to significantly affect the study's findings. Therefore, the results indicated robust internal consistency for the variables and satisfactory convergent validity (Table 2).

Table 2. Convergent validity results.

Variable	Item	Loading	Alpha	Rho_A	CR	AVE
Brand Loyalty (BLy)	BLy1	0.813	0.911	0.912	0.934	0.738
	BLy2	0.823				
	BLy3	0.893				
	BLy4	0.863				
	BLy5	0.899				
Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)	CSR1	0.809	0.882	0.889	0.910	0.628
	CSR2	0.771				
	CSR3	0.778				
	CSR4	0.753				
	CSR5	0.804				
	CSR6	0.837				
Brand Image (BIm)	BIm1	0.787	0.840	0.846	0.887	0.612
	BIm2	0.793				
	BIm3	0.681				
	BIm4	0.836				
	BIm5	0.805				
Brand Love (BLv)	BLv1	0.877	0.924	0.927	0.940	0.690
	BLv2	0.868				
	BLv3	0.888				
	BLv5	0.774				
	BLv7	0.762				
	BLv8	0.831				
	BLv9	0.795				

Alfa total: 0.87; VIF values: CSR (1.81), BIm (2.91), BLv (2.79), BLy (3.22).

To assess discriminant validity, the criteria proposed by Fornell and Larcker [81] and the HTMT ratio [83] were used. According to Fornell and Larcker, the square root of the AVE of each variable must exceed its correlations with the other variables, while Henseler et al. [83] determined that the maximum acceptable value for the HTMT ratio is 0.90 (Table 3).

Table 3. Discriminant validity results.

	BLy	CSR	BIm	BLv
BLy	0.859	0.59	0.895	0.791
CSR	0.537	0.793	0.623	0.723
BIm	0.789	0.550	0.782	0.772
BLv	0.730	0.655	0.687	0.831

Fornell and Larcker values displayed on the diagonal; HTMT ratios positioned above the diagonal (all remaining below 0.90); and correlation coefficients reported below the diagonal.

4.3. Model Fit and Hypothesis Testing Through Structural Equation Modeling

The bootstrap method, R^2 , Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR), and values obtained through PLS-SEM are essential for evaluating and validating the research model. By generating multiple samples, bootstrapping allows for estimation of the precision of coefficients and statistical significance, thus strengthening the robustness of the model. The R^2 coefficient assesses predictive ability, reflecting the proportion of variance in the dependent constructs accounted for by the independent constructs. The SRMR evaluates overall model fit and helps prevent specification problems. Finally, standardized coefficients (β) and p -values enable assessment of the strength, direction, and significance of relationships, facilitating the acceptance or rejection of hypotheses and validating the proposed theoretical relationships. These tools ensured a solid and reliable model for measuring the study variables.

After examining the psychometric characteristics of the instrument, the structural model was estimated using SmartPLS 4 software. The bootstrap technique was applied with 5000 subsamples to assess the causal paths and their statistical significance [84]. Likewise, the software provided estimates of the variance in the dependent variables attributable to the explanatory construct and other relevant predictors [82]. To determine the predictive ability of the structural model, the R^2 values were first reviewed in accordance with the criteria proposed by Falk and Miller [85], who argue that R^2 values must exceed 0.1 to be deemed acceptable; when they fall below this threshold, even if statistically significant, they fail to meet the required standards and do not exhibit predictive power.

Additionally, the SRMR was computed, given that it represents a goodness-of-fit index in PLS-SEM that assists in detecting potential model misspecification [83]. For this indicator, values lower than 0.08 are generally regarded as evidence of an adequate model fit [79]. Although the SRMR value obtained in this study (0.08) was located at the upper limit of the recommended threshold, it remains within the acceptable range for PLS-SEM models, according to Henseler et al. [83] and Hair et al. [79]. Values equal to or slightly below 0.08 indicate an adequate level of model fit and do not necessarily imply misspecification when supported by additional evidence of convergent and discriminant validity. Complementarily, the Normed Fit Index (NFI = 0.91) and RMS_theta (0.11) also fell within the acceptable limits, reinforcing the robustness of the structural model. Together, these indicators confirm that the proposed model achieves a satisfactory fit and predictive accuracy, consistent with the standards established for variance-based SEM approaches.

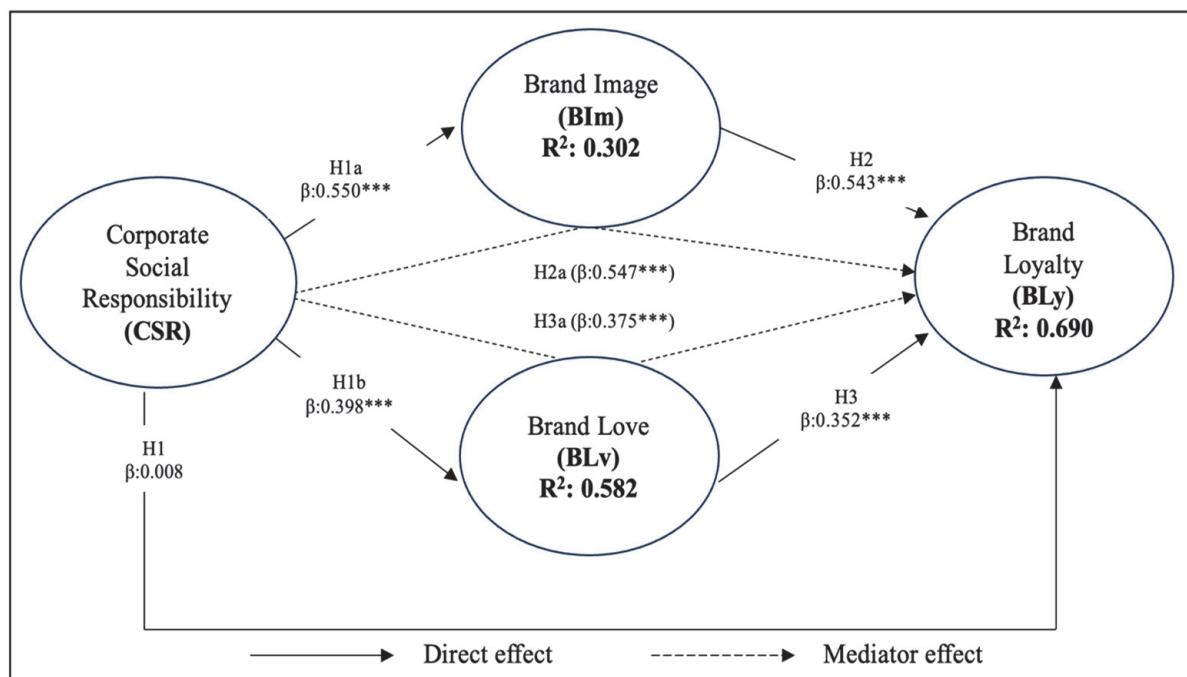
Moreover, the outcomes derived from the relationships among the four variables in the proposed model enabled the acceptance of six out of the seven hypotheses formulated in this research. The parameter estimates generated through PLS-SEM revealed that CSR ($\beta = 0.008$, $p > 0.862$) is not associated with BLy, but is directly associated with BIm ($\beta = 0.550$, $p < 0.001$) and BLv ($\beta = 0.398$, $p < 0.001$); meanwhile, BIm ($\beta = 0.543$, $p < 0.001$) and BLv ($\beta = 0.352$, $p < 0.001$) were associated with BLy. Furthermore, BIm ($\beta = 0.547$, $p < 0.001$) and BLv ($\beta = 0.375$, $p < 0.001$) were found to mediate the relationship between CSR and BLy (Table 4).

Table 4. Results of hypothesis testing.

Hypothesis	Relation	β	t-Statistics	p-Values	Results
H1	CSR–BLy	0.008	0.174	0.862	Not Accepted
H1a	CSR–BIm	0.550	11.989	***	Accepted
H1b	CSR–BLv	0.398	9.169	***	Accepted
H2	BIm–BLy	0.543	10.753	***	Accepted
H2a	BIm (CSR–BLy)	0.547	11.371	***	Accepted
H3	BLv–BLy	0.352	6.900	***	Accepted
H3a	BLv (CSR–BLy)	0.375	8.034	***	Accepted

R^2 (BLy): 0.690; R^2 (BIm): 0.302; R^2 (BLv): 0.582; SRMR: 0.08; *** $p < 0.001$. Note: Given that the direct effect of CSR on BLy was not significant (H1), while both indirect paths through BIm (H2a) and BLv (H3a) were significant, the results indicate full mediation for both BIm and BLv. This confirms that CSR affects Brand Loyalty exclusively through its influence on these mediating constructs.

Statistical analyses revealed that CSR fails to exhibit a direct relationship with BLy, but does have relationships with BIm and BLv. Furthermore, it was confirmed that BIm and BLv are related to BLy. In light of these results, the present research shows that CSR is related to BLy through a relationship fully mediated by BIm and BLv (Figure 2).

**Figure 2.** Values in the hypothesized model. *** Significance at the 0.001 level.

5. Discussion

To respond to the research questions guiding this study, the discussion of results is organized into four sections addressing the following: (a) How is CSR associated with BLy among mobile phone service consumers? (b) How is CSR associated with BIm and BLv among mobile phone service consumers? (c) How are BIm and BLv associated with BLy among mobile phone service consumers? (d) How do BIm and BLv mediate the relationship between CSR and BLy among mobile phone service consumers?

5.1. Association Between CSR and BLy Among Mobile Phone Service Consumers

The outcomes of the statistical examinations indicated that CSR is not associated with BLy among consumers. Therefore, H1 was rejected. This demonstrates that practices aligned with environmental sustainability, community support, and transparency in cor-

porate actions are not factors directly associated with BLY among mobile phone service consumers. This result is consistent with earlier research demonstrating that no meaningful direct association exists between CSR and BLY, demonstrating that consumer perceptions of CSR do not always translate into greater BLY, especially if consumers perceive CSR actions as self-indulgent or not aligned with product quality [86,87]. This suggests that some companies prioritize financial performance by leveraging CSR actions to enhance brand impact on consumers [50,51]. However, this result contrasts with the academic literature, which indicates that CSR has a significant positive effect on BLY [1,45,88,89]. The lack of a direct association between CSR and BLY is theoretically meaningful, and deserves further consideration. While prior research has frequently reported positive effects of CSR on consumer loyalty, many of these studies were conducted in industries where CSR initiatives are highly visible and directly linked to consumer experience (e.g., food, hospitality, and retail). By contrast, the telecommunications sector is characterized by low emotional involvement, functional service expectations, and consumer perceptions that prioritize quality, network coverage, and pricing over ethical or sustainability considerations. This suggests that CSR may operate as a secondary cue in this industry, being insufficient on its own to generate loyalty unless it first enhances consumers' perceptions of BIm or strengthens their emotional connection to the brand.

5.2. Associations of CSR with BIm and BLv Among Mobile Phone Service Consumers

This study demonstrated that the implementation of CSR practices and policies enhanced both BIm and BLY. This finding demonstrates that activities oriented towards ethics, well-being, and social responsibility favor BIm, allowing consumers to identify with a brand and cognitively reinforce its positioning. Thus, H1a is accepted. This finding aligns with Iglesias et al. [47] and Sultan and Wong [48], who stated that the public recognition of a company's responsible actions builds a solid and favorable image; furthermore, it supports the view that CSR plays a vital role in enhancing a company's image [24,42,90]. Moreover, the study identified that companies' responsible actions stimulate consumers' emotional feelings towards a brand. Therefore, H1b was accepted. This finding demonstrates that CSR generates a feeling that goes beyond mere satisfaction with the company's products or services, and supports researchers who have determined that when consumers perceive that a company contributes to the community, environment, ethics, and social equity, they develop an emotional bond with the brand [1,2], creating a deep attachment [22] that surpasses consumption expectations [20,23] and leads consumers to resist adopting new brands [4,10]. Although the academic literature in this field was thoroughly explored, no studies contradicted the associations of CSR with BIm and BLv.

5.3. Associations of BIm and BLv with BLY Among Mobile Phone Service Consumers

This study showed that consumers' perceptions of BIm are fundamental in promoting loyalty. Thus, H2 is accepted. This result demonstrates that BIm allows an organization to differentiate itself in a competitive market, increases brand value, and strengthens consumer trust in the brand, aligning with previous studies that have demonstrated the relationship between BIm and BLY [7,15,54–58]. Additionally, the study results identified that the emotional connection consumers show towards a brand enhances their loyalty. Therefore, H3 was accepted. This finding supports several studies that have evidenced the relationship between BLv and BLY [26,38,40,41], showing that brands that are memorable to consumers promote emotional attachment [38,40,41] and that the more intense the BLv, the greater its influence on consumer loyalty [91]. This contradicts the views that BLv alone is insufficient to influence BLY [72] and that BLv is not sufficient to maintain consumer loyalty [70,73–75].

5.4. Mediating Roles of BIm and BLv in the Association Between CSR and BLy Among Mobile Phone Service Consumers

Considering that the findings indicated that CSR is not directly related to consumer BLy, this study delved deeper into the results and found that CSR is associated with BLy through the mediating roles of BIm and BLv. In light of the above, H2a is accepted. This means that BIm mediates the relationship between CSR and BLy among mobile phone consumers, supporting the previous findings that BIm acts as a mediator in the relationship between CSR and BLy [25], and that BIm promotes a positive association between CSR and consumer loyalty [15]. Similarly, H3a is accepted, meaning that BLv also mediates the relationship between CSR and BLy among mobile phone consumers. This finding supports Bae and Kim [10], who determined that BLv can function as a mediator between other variables and BLy. It also corroborates the finding of Amegbe et al. [22], who indicated that BLv results from a company's responsible actions, which favor consumer loyalty. These results contribute to the growing body of literature suggesting that CSR does not translate uniformly into behavioral outcomes. Instead, its influence appears to be contingent upon the development of psychological mechanisms such as consumer identification, emotional attachment, and symbolic value, which transform CSR perceptions into meaningful loyalty behaviors. This reinforces the notion that CSR acts more effectively as a value-based relational signal than as a functional driver of consumer loyalty.

6. Conclusions

First, this study demonstrated that CSR does not have a significant direct relationship with BLy in the context of the telecommunications industry, although this association was indirectly mediated by BIm and BLv. This finding addresses the primary objective of the study and can be partially explained by the nature of the telecommunications industry, in which consumers tend to prioritize factors such as service quality, technological innovation, and competitive pricing over CSR initiatives. Additionally, CSR actions in this sector often tend to be less tangible and visible to end-consumers than in industries such as food or apparel, where initiatives related to sustainability, fair trade, or environmental impact reduction are more apparent and foster stronger emotional connections. This lower visibility and perceived relevance of CSR in telecommunications could diminish its direct relationship with loyalty, relegating it to a mediated role through other constructs, such as brand perception and the consumer's emotional connection to the brand.

Second, this study confirmed that CSR has significant and positive relationships with BIm and BLv. This finding highlights the relevance of CSR initiatives as strategic tools for building and maintaining strong relationships between consumers and brands. Consequently, BIm and BLv represent the deep emotional bond formed between consumers and brands, which fosters customer loyalty and retention. CSR practices significantly contribute to these outcomes by associating a brand's identity with ethical values, sustainability, and social commitment, thereby increasing its credibility and appeal.

Third, this study emphasizes the critical roles of BIm and BLv as key determinants in shaping BLy. For this reason, the understanding of consumer loyalty is expanded beyond functional attributes, such as product quality or price competitiveness, to include the emotional and perceptual dimensions of the brand–consumer relationship. Furthermore, a favorable BIm and strong BLv generate greater consumer commitment to consistently choose the same brand, even when facing competition. Indeed, this insight is particularly relevant in highly competitive industries such as the mobile services sector, where differentiation often relies on emotional connections and brand perception.

Finally, this study's findings underline the role of BIm and BLv as mediators in the relationship between CSR and BLy. In this sense, this mediation effect uncovers the

indirect pathway through which CSR is associated with BLY, suggesting that CSR initiatives influence loyalty by first enhancing the brand's image and deepening emotional bonds. Thus, it is evident that CSR efforts, while not directly tied to increased loyalty, play a crucial role in creating the necessary conditions for loyalty to thrive. Accordingly, by improving brand perception and fostering emotional attachment, CSR establishes a virtuous cycle of engagement that strengthens long-term consumer loyalty. Therefore, for companies aiming to leverage CSR as a strategy to build loyalty, these results emphasize the importance of prioritizing initiatives that resonate with consumers' values and enhance their emotional experiences with the brand.

6.1. Implications

This research adds to the scientific domain by offering theoretical, practical, and societal implications.

From a theoretical perspective, this research offers meaningful contributions to the literature on marketing and brand management by challenging the presumed direct link between CSR and BLY. Although previous studies have suggested that CSR can act as a determining factor in consumer loyalty, the results of this study demonstrate that this relationship is more complex than previously thought. This research highlights the importance of mediators such as BIm and BLV, revealing that future research should consider these variables when studying the influence of CSR on BLY. Furthermore, the study contributes to the sustainability literature by framing BLY not merely as a marketing outcome, but as a behavioral manifestation of consumer alignment with corporate sustainability values. CSR acts as a bridge between ethical corporate practices and consumers' emotional and perceptual engagement with the brand. Therefore, the findings emphasize that sustainable branding strategies must go beyond compliance or philanthropy, embedding CSR principles into brand identity and emotional communication to cultivate enduring, value-driven relationships. This approach positions CSR as a strategic asset capable of generating sustainable consumer loyalty, which aligns directly with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 12: Responsible Consumption and Production) of the United Nations.

From a practical standpoint, this study provides key evidence for strategic decision-making in brand management, particularly in the mobile phone services sector. Companies investing in CSR practices must understand that such efforts alone do not guarantee greater consumer loyalty. Therefore, CSR should be integrated into a broader strategy that includes significant efforts to enhance brand perception and strengthen consumers' emotional bonds. This could involve creating communication initiatives that not only highlight CSR initiatives but also correspond with consumers' values and emotions, thereby optimizing the relationship between CSR and BLY. Nonetheless, it is important to acknowledge that the exclusive focus on the mobile phone service sector limits the generalizability of this study's results to other industries. Although this limitation is addressed in this study, a more thorough analysis of how these findings could be transferred to other contexts—such as the food or apparel industries, where CSR initiatives have greater visibility and resonance—should be carried out. Practically, this means that companies cannot rely solely on CSR reporting or isolated sustainability initiatives. To leverage CSR as a source of sustainable competitive advantage, firms must translate their responsible actions into compelling narratives, symbolic cues, and emotionally resonant brand experiences with which consumers can identify. This aligns with SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production), in that encouraging ethical consumption requires not only responsible corporate behavior but also effective communication strategies that embed sustainability into brand meaning.

From a social perspective, this study underscores the indirect role of CSR in building a more responsible and conscious society. By showing that CSR improves BIm and BLV

and that these factors are determinants of consumer loyalty, it suggests that companies committed to CSR can positively influence consumer behaviors, encouraging them to support brands that reflect their ethical values. This can contribute to a society in which CSR is the expected standard for consumers, promoting more sustainable and responsible business practices. Furthermore, this approach can foster a cultural shift towards more conscious and ethical consumption, thus benefiting society as a whole.

6.2. Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

One of the primary constraints of this research stems from its exclusive emphasis on the mobile phone services industry, which may limit the generalizability of the results to other sectors or industries. Although valuable insights have been provided on how CSR, BIm, and BLv are associated with BLy in this context, consumer behaviors may vary significantly in other markets, particularly those with different levels of competition, regulations, or demographic characteristics. Furthermore, it is essential to recognize that the study's cross-sectional design limits its capacity to draw causal conclusions regarding the variables examined. Although the statistical associations identified between CSR, BIm, BLv, and BLy provide valuable insights into their relationships, the directionality of these effects cannot be definitively confirmed. Furthermore, the data were collected exclusively from 296 mobile phone service consumers in Antofagasta (Chile), a city with unique socioeconomic and cultural conditions that may not fully represent the diversity of the national population or consumers from other regions. The sample composition (60.1% male, average age 25 years) may also restrict the generalizability of the findings, particularly regarding the behavioral and perceptual patterns of older consumers or those from different demographic groups. Another constraint is that the research did not include possible moderators or contextual influences such as cultural, economic, or technological factors that could affect the relationships between CSR, BIm, BLv, and BLy, such as the influence of competition, service quality, and consumer expectations. Finally, another methodological limitation of this study is the use of non-probability sampling, which may introduce sampling bias and restrict the representativeness of the findings.

Future research should expand the scope of the study to other sectors and industries to evaluate whether the observed relationships between CSR, BIm, BLv, and BLy remain consistent or vary in different contexts, and analyze the extent to which the type and volume of CSR developed in different industries may affect these relationships. It would also be beneficial to undertake longitudinal investigations that examine how these relationships develop over time, offering a more precise understanding of the causal dynamics at play. Furthermore, future studies are encouraged to include more heterogeneous and geographically diverse samples to enhance the external validity and cross-cultural applicability of the findings. Additionally, it is suggested that the roles of potential moderators—such as service, quality perception, market saturation, organizational culture, and economic or technological factors—are investigated to better understand how they may influence the effectiveness of CSR in building BLy. Finally, integrating qualitative approaches such as in-depth interviews or focus groups could yield a richer and more nuanced understanding of consumers' motivations and perceptions concerning CSR and its influence on BLy.

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Appendix A

Indicator variables (Spanish version applied in the survey).

Variables	Indicators
<p>CSR Adapted from Amegbe et al. [22].</p>	<p>(1) Considero a mi compañía telefónica como una marca socialmente responsable. (2) Mi compañía telefónica es beneficiosa para el bienestar de la sociedad. (3) Mi compañía telefónica me proporciona canales de comunicación transparentes y efectivos cuando se trata de quejas. (4) Mi compañía telefónica respeta y protege mi información personal y mi privacidad. (5) Mi compañía telefónica se esfuerza por resolver mis quejas a tiempo. (6) Mi compañía telefónica me brinda servicios de alta calidad todo el tiempo.</p>
<p>BLv Adapted from Amegbe et al. [22].</p>	<p>(1) Mi compañía telefónica es maravillosa. (2) Mi compañía telefónica me hace sentir bien. (3) Mi compañía telefónica es absolutamente fantástica. (4) Me siento neutral hacia mi compañía telefónica. (5) Estoy enamorado de mi compañía telefónica. (6) No tengo sentimientos particulares sobre mi compañía telefónica. (7) Mi compañía telefónica me da un gran placer. (8) Soy apasionado por mi compañía telefónica. (9) Estoy extremadamente apegado a mi compañía telefónica.</p>
<p>BIm Adapted from Sultan and Wong [48]</p>	<p>(1) En general, la imagen de mi compañía telefónica es buena. (2) El personal de mi compañía telefónica presta mucha atención a los clientes. (3) Mi compañía mantiene estándares éticos. (4) Las prácticas administrativas de mi compañía telefónica son buenas. (5) Mi compañía telefónica cumple con sus responsabilidades sociales. (6) Mi compañía telefónica es innovadora.</p>
<p>BLy Adapted from Amegbe et al. [22].</p>	<p>(1) Soy leal a mi compañía telefónica. (2) Seguiré siendo un cliente de mi compañía. (3) Mi compañía siempre será mi primera opción cuando se trata de compañías telefónicas. (4) Diré cosas positivas sobre mi compañía. (5) Siempre recomendaré mi compañía a mi familia y seres queridos.</p>

Appendix B

Indicator variables (original scales).

Variables	Indicators
CSR Amegbe et al. [22]	(1) I consider my bank as socially responsible brand. (2) My bank is more beneficial to society's welfare (3) My bank provides me with transparent and effective communication channels when it comes to complaints. (4) My bank respect and protect my personal information and privacy. (5) My bank strives to resolve my complaints timely. (6) My bank provides me with high quality services all the time.
BLv Amegbe et al. [22]	(1) My bank is marvelous. (2) My bank makes me feel good. (3) My bank is absolutely terrific. (4) I feel neutral towards my bank. (5) I am in love with my bank. (6) I have no particular feelings about my bank. (7) My bank gives me sheer pleasure. (8) I am so passionate about my bank. (9) I am extremely attached to my bank.
BIm Sultan and Wong [48]	(1) Overall, the image of this university is good. (2) The staff of this university pay a close attention to the students. (3) This university gives me the opportunity to be what I want to be. (4) Overall, the business practice of this university is good (5) This university performs its social responsibilities (6) This university innovative
BLy Amegbe et al. [22]	(1) I am loyal to my bank. (2) I will remain a customer to my bank. (3) My bank will always be my first choice when it comes to banks. (4) I will say positive things about my bank. (5) I will always recommend my bank to my family and love ones.

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