

The impact of digital social responsibility on brand equity in the beverage industry: A survey of consumers in Ho Chi Minh City

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History

- Received: 21-10-2025
- Revised: 11-03-2026
- Accepted: 07-07-2026
- Published Online: 10-08-2026

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.32508/vnuhcmj-ebl.v10i3.1755>



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ABSTRACT

In the context of robust digital transformation, corporate social responsibility is extending its scope to the online environment, giving rise to the critical concept of digital social responsibility. This research addresses a contemporary gap by assessing the influence of digital social responsibility on brand equity among beverage companies in Ho Chi Minh City. Furthermore, the study meticulously investigates the sequential mediating roles of customer trust, brand reputation, and customer participation, as well as the simultaneous moderating role of customer participation in the relationship between digital social responsibility and brand equity. Employing a rigorous quantitative research design, data were gathered from 315 valid consumer responses through an online survey instrument. The data analysis utilized a sophisticated suite of statistical techniques, including Cronbach's Alpha, EFA, CFA, SEM, Bootstrap, and the PROCESS macro, implemented in SPSS 20.0 and AMOS 24.0. The empirical findings yield several crucial insights. The results unequivocally demonstrate that digital social responsibility exerts a positive and statistically significant effect on brand equity, which is manifested both directly and indirectly through the significant mediating variables of customer trust, brand reputation, and customer participation. Critically, the study also establishes that customer participation acts as a significant moderator, amplifying the beneficial impact of digital social responsibility initiatives on brand equity. These compelling findings underscore the necessity for corporations to strategically implement and effectively communicate their social responsibility endeavors on digital platforms to boost overall brand value. Based on these outcomes, the research culminates in proposing actionable managerial implications that guide businesses in seamlessly integrating digital social responsibility into their core marketing strategies, actively cultivating customer participation, and substantially strengthening their brand reputation within the dynamic digital landscape.

Key words: Digital social responsibility, brand equity, customer trust, brand reputation, customer participation

INTRODUCTION

In the era of digital transformation, businesses are facing unprecedented challenges balancing economic performance and social responsibility. The rise of online platforms such as Facebook, TikTok, and YouTube has not only revolutionized the way firms communicate with consumers but also redefined how they engage in socially responsible activities. Traditional corporate social responsibility has evolved into digital social responsibility, emphasizing the use of digital technologies to promote ethical, environmental, and community-oriented values¹. This transformation highlights how organizations can leverage digital tools to reinforce public trust and build sustainable brand value.

Vietnam, as one of the fastest-growing digital economies in Southeast Asia, provides fertile ground for studying this phenomenon. With more than 70 million social media users, Vietnamese consumers

are increasingly influenced by digital communication and online engagement². The beverage industry, in particular, is highly competitive and sensitive to changes in consumer perception and behavior. In this context, digital social responsibility activities - such as digital campaigns promoting environmental protection or social welfare - have become crucial instruments for enhancing corporate image and fostering stronger customer relationships.

Empirical evidence highlights the financial and reputational benefits of corporate social responsibility and digital social responsibility. Specifically, a research found that over 56% of online shoppers are willing to pay more for products from socially and environmentally responsible companies³, while another one reported that nearly 90% of consumers expect businesses to prioritize social action over profit generation⁴.

A notable Vietnamese case demonstrating successful digital social responsibility is the “Sữa KUN cho em”

Cite this article : Truong Q H. **The impact of digital social responsibility on brand equity in the beverage industry: A survey of consumers in Ho Chi Minh City.** *VNUHCM J. Econ. Bus. Law.* 2026; 10(3):6929-6942.

milk campaign by IDP, which committed a product donation for every social media share. This initiative was aimed at enhancing brand awareness and corporate reputation rather than immediate sales. The campaign's success, evidenced by the accumulation of 450,000 shares, underscores the significant potential of digital social responsibility in building brand equity⁵. Consequently, the implementation of digital social responsibility has become a critical strategic imperative for maintaining consumer trust and competitive advantage.

While digital social responsibility has attracted scholarly attention worldwide, empirical research in emerging markets such as Vietnam remains limited. Most existing studies primarily focus on traditional corporate social responsibility and its effect on financial performance or customer loyalty, with minimal consideration of the digital dimension. Furthermore, the mechanisms through which digital social responsibility influences brand equity have not been sufficiently clarified. Previous research⁶⁻⁸ has indicated that corporate social responsibility activities can enhance brand equity by fostering customer trust and brand reputation. However, little is known about whether these mediating effects remain valid in a digital environment and how customer participation moderates the relationship between digital social responsibility and brand equity. Addressing this research gap is critical, given Vietnamese consumers' increasing reliance on online interactions and the growing demand for socially responsible brands. Therefore, this study aims to examine the impact of digital social responsibility on brand equity in the Vietnamese beverage industry, focusing on the mediating roles of customer trust, brand reputation, and customer participation as well as its moderating role. The study targets consumers in Ho Chi Minh City - a dynamic urban market representing modern consumption trends and high digital engagement levels. By integrating concepts from corporate social responsibility, relationship marketing, and digital engagement literature, this research seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of how digital responsibility initiatives contribute to brand value in a technology-driven context.

The findings of this research are expected to make both theoretical and practical contributions. Theoretically, it extends existing corporate social responsibility frameworks by incorporating the digital perspective, offering insights into the interplay between social responsibility, trust, and brand equity in the online sphere. Practically, it provides managerial implications for firms seeking to enhance brand value

through socially responsible digital practices. In particular, businesses can leverage digital social responsibility to build stronger customer trust, reinforce their brand reputation, and stimulate active participation in digital platforms. These insights are particularly valuable for marketing managers and policymakers aiming to align corporate responsibility strategies with the evolving expectations of digital consumers in Vietnam.

THEORETICAL

Research Concepts

Digital Social Responsibility (DSR)

The emergence of digital platforms has reshaped the ways organizations engage in socially responsible behavior. The rise of digital technologies and social media has enabled firms to implement social responsibility initiatives more effectively and interactively [9]. DSR refers to the execution of corporate social responsibility (CSR) through digital means - such as social networks, online campaigns, and websites - aimed at creating ethical, environmental, and social value¹. The digital transformation has not only altered consumer lifestyles but also encouraged companies to integrate technological tools into their CSR strategies⁹. In this sense, DSR extends traditional CSR by leveraging digital channels to reach broader audiences, reduce communication barriers, and enhance transparency. Activities such as online fundraising, social awareness campaigns, and digital environmental pledges demonstrate how technology can bridge companies and communities while promoting positive brand associations.

Brand Equity

Brand equity represents the value added to a product or service through its brand name or symbol¹⁰. It reflects the degree to which a brand can attract and retain customers by evoking favorable perceptions, loyalty, and emotional attachment. Brand equity can be examined from two perspectives: a financial perspective, which views the brand as an intangible asset that generates monetary value, and a consumer-based perspective, which focuses on how customers perceive and respond to the brand¹¹. In consumer-based brand equity, customers' awareness, associations, perceived quality, and loyalty contribute to the overall value of the brand¹². In the beverage industry, brand equity is particularly critical because products are highly substitutable. A strong brand enables consumers to easily recognize and prefer a specific beverage among numerous alternatives, thereby strengthening loyalty and word-of-mouth advocacy.

Together, these two constructs - DSR and brand equity - form the central axis of this research. DSR represents an organizational behavior that builds social and ethical meaning, while brand equity captures the outcome of consumer perceptions shaped through these behaviors.

Related Theories

The research framework integrates Motivational Affordance Theory, Social Exchange Theory (SET), and Customer-Brand Relationship Theory to explain the multifaceted impact of DSR on brand equity. Motivational Affordance Theory clarifies how digital platform features actively enable and motivate consumer participation in DSR campaigns. Social Exchange Theory justifies the reciprocal consumer response to the firm's non-material social contributions. Finally, Customer-Brand Relationship Theory positions the resulting consumer trust and engagement as key elements that strengthen the enduring customer-brand relationship, which is vital for building brand assets.

Motivational Affordance Theory

Motivational Affordance Theory posits that individual behaviors are driven by internal and external motivational factors¹³. Applied to DSR, this theory suggests that digital CSR campaigns can trigger psychological motivation among consumers by satisfying their intrinsic desire to contribute to social causes. When consumers are exposed to interactive DSR activities - such as sharing posts, donating online, or participating in brand-led social challenges - they perceive themselves as part of a meaningful action, which enhances their satisfaction and engagement. The sense of contribution strengthens emotional bonds with the brand and fosters positive brand evaluation. This theory supports the link between DSR, customer participation, and brand equity, emphasizing how digital affordances encourage active consumer involvement in socially responsible initiatives.

Social Exchange Theory (SET)

Social Exchange Theory explains social interactions as reciprocal exchanges where individuals act based on perceived rewards and mutual trust¹⁴. In the context of DSR, when firms engage in socially responsible digital activities, consumers perceive these efforts as acts of goodwill that benefit society. In return, consumers are inclined to reward the firm through trust, loyalty, and positive word of mouth. SET provides a strong explanation of the mediating role of customer

trust in the DSR-brand equity relationship. It assumes that trust is built over time through consistent, transparent, and beneficial exchanges. When companies demonstrate authenticity and integrity via online social initiatives, consumers reciprocate by supporting the brand, thereby enhancing its equity.

Customer-Brand Relationship Theory

The theory explores the dynamic and emotional relationship between consumers and brands¹⁵. It proposes that brands, like people, can form relationships characterized by trust, affection, and commitment. A brand with a strong reputation and consistent social engagement can foster a deep, enduring connection with its consumers. In the digital age, these relationships are intensified by the continuous interactions facilitated by social media and online communities. When firms conduct DSR activities that resonate with consumers' personal values, they create shared meaning and identification. Consequently, customers feel more involved and are motivated to participate in brand-related activities, thereby strengthening brand equity.

RESEARCH MODEL AND HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

Digital Social Responsibility and Brand Equity

DSR refers to integrating CSR activities into digital platforms, emphasizing transparency, ethical communication, and community engagement in the digital environment⁶. When firms demonstrate genuine concern for social and environmental issues via digital media, they enhance customer perceptions of their values and credibility. This positive perception strengthens emotional connection and customer loyalty, leading to improved brand equity^{16,17}.

Prior research substantiates the strategic role of CSR and its digital extension, DSR, in competitive advantage and brand valuation. CSR serves as a source of intangible competitive advantage through its impact on brand equity¹⁸. Furthermore, they underscored the need to align DSR activities with overall corporate strategy to fully realize the potential benefits for brand equity. Another group of authors provided empirical support, confirming that limited deployment of DSR led to a decline in brand equity among small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs)¹⁹. Fundamentally, firms strive to build brand equity for their products by making them distinctive, readily recognizable, high-quality, and reliable²⁰. Consistent with

this, earlier studies have repeatedly highlighted a positive relationship between CSR engagement and brand equity^{1,2}.

H1: Digital social responsibility has a positive effect on brand equity.

The Mediating Role of Customer Trust

Customer trust is generally defined as the cognitive, affective, or behavioral manifestations that occur when customers perceive that a supplier or firm is reliable, as established through the organization's prior commitments regarding quality and price²¹. In the marketing context, trust is typically linked to consumer expectations regarding a company's competence in fulfilling its obligations and keeping its promises¹.

Customer trust reflects consumers' confidence in a brand's integrity, reliability, and honesty²². According to Social Exchange Theory¹⁴, trust develops through repeated, reciprocal interactions in which both parties perceive mutual benefit. When firms actively engage in DSR activities, they convey sincerity and reliability, which enhances consumers' trust²³. Empirical evidence indicates that CSR and DSR initiatives increase consumer trust^{24,25}. In turn, trust serves as a foundation for long-term customer relationships, loyalty, and brand equity. The ultimate objective of marketing is to establish a strong bond between consumers and brands, and that trust constitutes a core component of this relationship¹⁹. Consistent with this view, prior studies have consistently affirmed that customer trust is essential and positively related to brand equity^{7,26}. Therefore, customer trust is expected to mediate the relationship between DSR and brand equity².

H2a: Digital social responsibility has a positive effect on customer trust.

H2b: Customer trust has a positive effect on brand equity.

H2c: Customer trust mediates the relationship between digital social responsibility and brand equity.

The Mediating Role of Brand Reputation

Brand reputation is conceptualized as an outcome of a firm's past actions and management²⁶. Consequently, engagement in CSR activities serves as an effective mechanism for enhancing this reputation. When consumers face an overwhelming, fragmented volume of information in the marketplace, they tend to seek cues that help them distinguish between responsible and irresponsible brands²⁷. Therefore, DSR activities can function as a means to improve corporate image. Numerous studies have observed a direct

positive impact of perceived DSR on brand reputation^{26,27}.

Brand reputation represents the collective judgment of stakeholders regarding a brand's performance, responsibility, and credibility²⁸. According to Social Exchange Theory¹⁴, firms can use socially responsible communication to signal ethical commitment and reliability. In digital contexts, DSR enhances transparency, thus strengthening the firm's reputation⁸.

A positive reputation enhances consumer trust and brand preference, thereby strengthening brand equity²⁷. Companies engaging in online social initiatives, such as environmental campaigns or digital donations, are perceived as credible and benevolent, enhancing brand reputation and, consequently, brand equity²⁹.

H3a: Digital social responsibility has a positive effect on brand reputation.

H3b: Brand reputation has a positive effect on brand equity.

H3c: Brand reputation mediates the relationship between digital social responsibility and brand equity.

The Mediating Role of Customer Participation

Customer participation refers to the degree of consumer involvement in brand-related activities, such as sharing, commenting, or contributing content online⁸. Motivational Affordance Theory¹³ posits that digital tools encourage active participation, allowing consumers to engage directly in value co-creation with brands. When firms run DSR campaigns on digital platforms, consumers are more likely to engage with them if they align with personal values or social interests.

Such engagement deepens emotional connections and enhances perceptions of brand authenticity². Active participation in DSR initiatives not only reinforces consumers' identification with the brand but also strengthens their loyalty and advocacy - key components of brand equity. Therefore, customer participation is expected to mediate the effect of DSR on brand equity.

H4a: Digital social responsibility has a positive effect on customer participation.

H4b: Customer participation has a positive effect on brand equity.

H4c: Customer participation mediates the relationship between digital social responsibility and brand equity.

The Moderating Role of Customer Participation

In addition to its mediating role, customer participation may also serve as a moderator, strengthening the impact of DSR on brand equity. High levels of participation amplify consumer exposure to DSR messages and increase perceived authenticity of corporate actions. When customers are actively involved in DSR-related interactions - such as sharing brand campaigns, discussing social topics, or contributing feedback - they internalize the brand's values and view the brand as more socially responsible¹⁶.

Conversely, when participation is low, DSR messages may not reach sufficient consumer attention or engagement, reducing their effectiveness in shaping brand perceptions⁸. Therefore, it is hypothesized that customer participation strengthens the relationship between DSR and brand equity.

H5: Customer participation moderates the relationship between digital social responsibility and brand equity, such that the relationship is stronger when customer participation is high.

Proposed research model as below (Figure 1)

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a quantitative design to examine the impact of DSR on brand equity, with customer trust, brand reputation, and customer participation as mediating and moderating variables, based on prior literature.

Data were collected through convenience sampling of beverage consumers in Ho Chi Minh City via an online questionnaire distributed through universities, companies, and student groups. Measurement scales (Table 1) were adapted from established studies and translated into Vietnamese to ensure reliability and clarity.

Data were analyzed using SPSS 20.0 and AMOS 24.0. Reliability was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha, followed by exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to confirm construct validity. Structural equation modeling (SEM) was employed to test the proposed hypotheses and the overall fit of the research model. Participation was voluntary, and all respondents were informed of their anonymity and data confidentiality before completing the survey.

DATA ANALYSIS & RESULTS

Descriptive Statistics

Table 2 presents the demographic characteristics of the respondents. Among the 315 participants, 57.1%

were male, and 42.9% were female, indicating a relatively balanced gender distribution. In terms of age, most respondents were between 18 and 22 years old (34.6%), followed by those over 22 (37.8%) and under 18 (27.6%). Regarding monthly income, 35.6% of respondents earned below 10 million VND, 33.7% earned between 10 and 20 million VND, and 30.8% earned above 20 million VND. Overall, the sample represents a diverse demographic profile, suitable for analyzing the impact of digital social responsibility on brand equity within the beverage industry context in Ho Chi Minh City.

Reliability and Validity Analysis

Reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha coefficients, all constructs achieved Cronbach's alpha values above 0.7³², confirming internal consistency. The corrected item-total correlations for all items exceeded 0.3³³, demonstrating adequate reliability across all measurement scales. After conducting the Cronbach's Alpha reliability test, two observed variables, EQUI2 and EQUI5, were removed because their corrected item-total correlations were lower than 0.6. The results after item elimination are presented in Table 3.

Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was conducted to examine the latent structure of the measurement model (Table 4). The KMO value was 0.886, and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was significant ($p < 0.001$), indicating data suitability. All factor loadings were greater than 0.6, confirming convergent validity³⁴.

Based on the CFA results (Figure 2), the Chi-square/df (χ^2/df) = 2.256 (< 3.0) indicates an acceptable model fit³⁵. The CFI = 0.952 exceeds the 0.90 threshold, reflecting a good level of fit³⁶, while GFI = 0.895 is slightly below 0.90, suggesting a moderate fit³⁷. The RMSEA = 0.063 falls within the range of 0.05-0.08, indicating a reasonable fit of the model³⁸. However, PCLOSE = 0.004 < 0.05 shows that the model does not achieve a "close fit," meaning there remains a significant approximation error between the model and the observed data³⁹.

For convergent validity, all variables in the model demonstrated Composite Reliability (CR) greater than 0.70 (the minimum CR value is 0.864, belonging to the TRUS variable) and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) greater than 0.50 (the minimum AVE value is 0.562, belonging to the TRUS variable). These results confirm that the proposed variables in the model possess convergent validity (Table 5). Overall, the CFA model demonstrates an acceptable level of fit, which can be considered adequate for further analysis when supported by a strong theoretical foundation.

Table 1: Variables measurement

Variable	Label	Code	Measurement questionnaire item	References
Digital Social Responsibility (DSRE)	DSRE	DSRE1	This beverage brand always fulfills its commitment to social responsibility through community-oriented activities.	30
	DSRE	DSRE2	This beverage brand performs voluntary social responsibility activities on digital platforms.	
	DSRE	DSRE3	This beverage brand actively uses digital platforms to communicate its social responsibility commitments.	
	DSRE	DSRE4	This beverage brand effectively integrates social responsibility activities into its digital business operations.	
Customer Trust (TRUS)	TRUS	TRUS1	The products or services of this beverage brand make me feel a sense of security.	6
	TRUS	TRUS2	The products or services of this beverage brand are a quality assurance.	
	TRUS	TRUS3	I trust on the quality of this beverage brand.	
	TRUS	TRUS4	This beverage brand is interested in its customers.	
	TRUS	TRUS5	This beverage brand is honest with its customers.	
Brand Reputation (REPU)	REPU	REPU1	The products or services of this beverage brand are quite well-known.	26
	REPU	REPU2	The products or services of this beverage brand have a good reputation.	
	REPU	REPU3	The products or services of this beverage brand have a fair and positive reputation.	
	REPU	REPU4	I am familiar with the products or services of this beverage brand.	
Customer Participation (PART)	PART	PART1	I am very interested in the products or services of this beverage brand.	31
	PART	PART2	I enjoy being involved with this beverage brand's products or services.	
	PART	PART3	I feel a sense of connection when interacting with this beverage brand.	
	PART	PART4	This beverage brand frequently engages me in its activities effectively.	
Brand Equity (EQUI)	EQUI	EQUI1	I perceive that this beverage brand is better than other brands.	10
	EQUI	EQUI2	When thinking of this product category, this brand immediately comes to my mind.	
	EQUI	EQUI3	I can easily recognize this beverage brand compared to others.	
	EQUI	EQUI4	I can quickly recall the logo or symbol of this beverage brand.	
	EQUI	EQUI5	The digital social responsibility activities of this beverage brand encourage me to continue using its products or services.	
	EQUI	EQUI6	Even if there are other attractive brands, I will still choose this beverage brand because of its digital social responsibility activities.	
	EQUI	EQUI7	I would recommend this beverage brand to others due to its digital social responsibility initiatives.	

Source: Authors, 2025

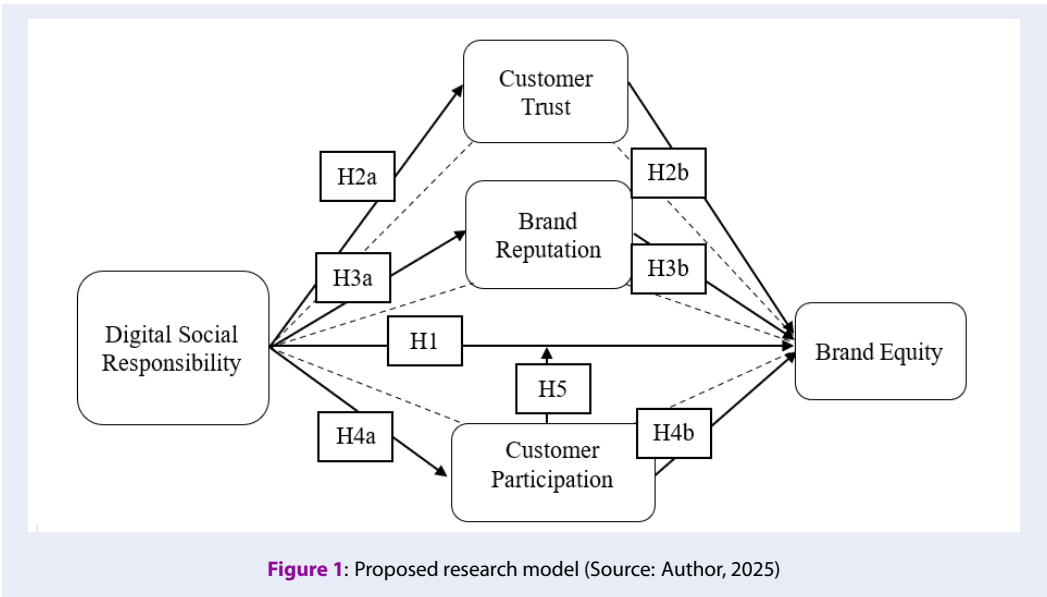


Table 2: Frequency Analysis

Information		Frequency	Per cent
Gender	Male	180	57.1
	Female	135	42.9
Age	<18	87	27.6
	18-22	109	34.6
	>22	119	37.8
Monthly income	Under 10 million VND	112	35.6
	10 – 20 million VND	106	33.7
	Over 20 million VND	97	30.8
Total		315	100

Source: Authors, 2025

Table 5: Convergent validity results from CFA

Variables	CR	AVE
EQUI	0.932	0.732
TRUS	0.864	0.562
DSRE	0.914	0.728
PART	0.911	0.720
REPU	0.888	0.665

0.943, GFI = 0.885, RMSEA = 0.068). DSR exerted a significant positive influence on brand equity ($\beta = 0.296, p < 0.01$), supporting H1. DSR also positively affected customer trust ($\beta = 0.344, p < 0.01$), brand reputation ($\beta = 0.361, p < 0.01$) and customer participation ($\beta = 0.480, p < 0.01$), supporting H2a, H3a and H4a. Both customer trust ($\beta = 0.233, p < 0.01$), brand reputation ($\beta = 0.178, p < 0.01$) and customer participation ($\beta = 0.274, p < 0.01$) significantly influenced brand equity, confirming H2b, H3b and H4b.

Structural Model Testing

Structural equation modeling (SEM) was then applied to test the hypotheses (Figure 3). The structural model achieved satisfactory fit indices ($\chi^2/df = 2.464$, CFI =

Mediation Effects

Mediation analyses using 5,000 bootstrap samples confirmed the indirect effects (Table 6). Customer trust partially mediated the relationship between DSR and brand equity (indirect effect = 0.081, $p < 0.01$,

Table 3: Reliability Test Results

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
Digital Social Responsibility: Cronbach's Alpha = 0.892				
DSRE1	6.43	5.583	0.728	0.875
DSRE2	6.51	5.518	0.796	0.849
DSRE3	6.62	5.433	0.781	0.855
DSRE4	6.49	5.748	0.784	0.867
Customer Trust: Cronbach's Alpha = 0.871				
TRUS1	10.97	7.458	0.673	0.851
TRUS2	10.87	7.422	0.710	0.841
TRUS3	10.92	7.515	0.721	0.838
TRUS4	11.05	8.048	0.688	0.847
TRUS5	11.02	7.837	0.702	0.843
Brand Reputation: Cronbach's Alpha = 0.877				
REPU1	7.83	4.238	0.691	0.859
REPU2	7.80	3.963	0.721	0.849
REPU3	7.77	4.320	0.693	0.858
REPU4	7.79	3.824	0.841	0.799
Customer Participation: Cronbach's Alpha = 0.902				
PART1	7.10	5.438	0.754	0.883
PART2	7.05	5.409	0.759	0.882
PART3	7.04	5.256	0.772	0.877
PART4	7.03	4.926	0.841	0.851
Brand Equity: Cronbach's Alpha = 0.922				
EQUI1	10.26	7.233	0.772	0.910
EQUI3	10.37	7.717	0.696	0.924
EQUI4	10.36	7.180	0.820	0.900
EQUI6	10.26	7.106	0.839	0.896
EQUI7	10.31	7.006	0.865	0.891

supporting H2c. Similarly, brand reputation partially mediated this relationship (indirect effect = 0.077, $p < 0.01$), supporting H3c. Customer participation also had a significant mediating effect (indirect effect = 0.141, $p < 0.01$), supporting H4c.

Moderation Effect of Customer Participation

The moderating role of customer participation was tested using PROCESS v4.2 by Andrew F. Hayes. The

interaction term (DSRE $\times$ PART) was positive and significant ($\beta = 0.1223$, $p < 0.05$), supporting H5. This indicates that the influence of DSRE on brand equity is stronger for customers who are more actively involved in brand-related digital activities.

Summary of Hypothesis Testing

Eleven hypotheses (H1–H5, including sub-hypotheses) were supported. The findings confirm that DSR positively affects brand equity directly and indirectly through customer trust, brand reputation,

Table 4: Exploratory Factor Analysis Results

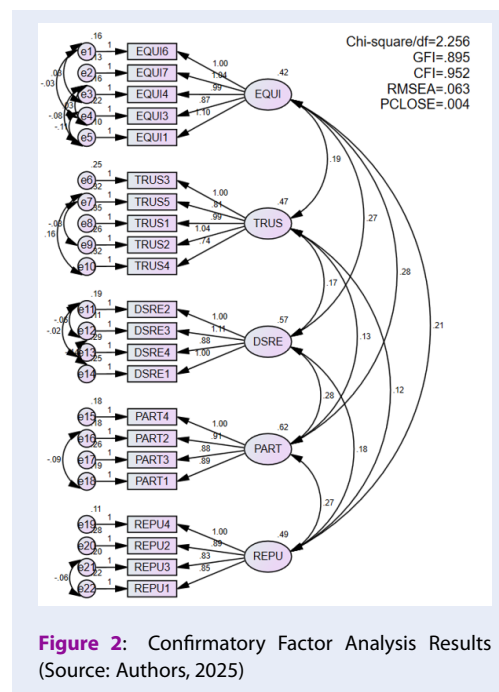
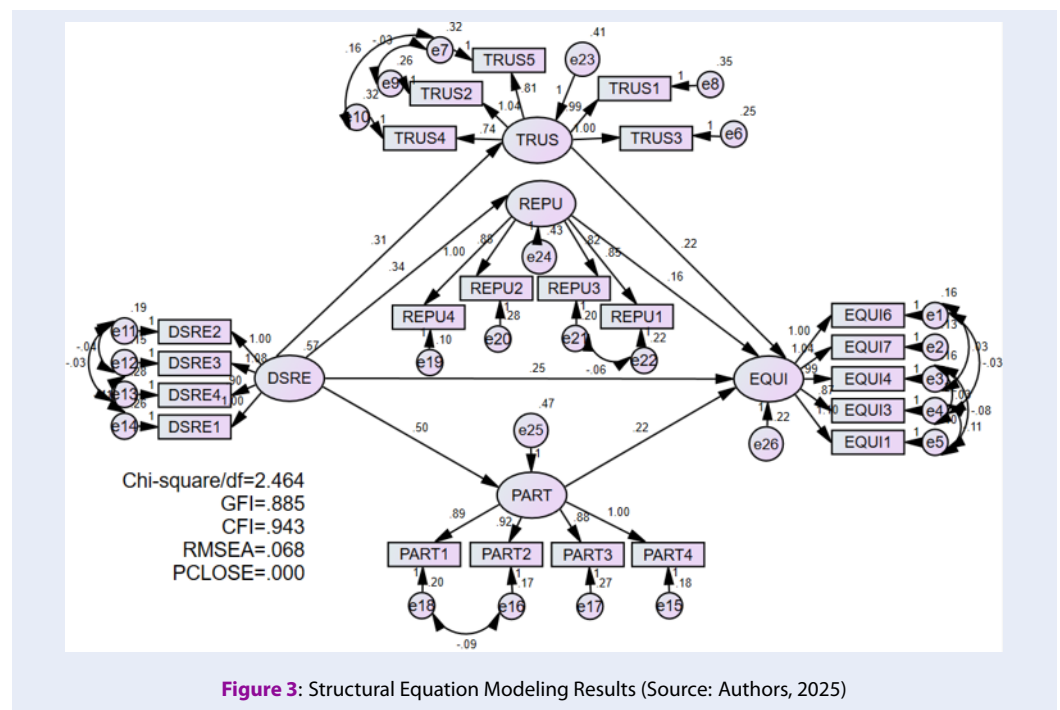
	Factor				
	1	2	3	4	5
EQUI6	0.910				
EQUI7	0.901				
EQUI4	0.866				
EQUI3	0.802				
EQUI1	0.779				
TRUS3		0.830			
TRUS5		0.827			
TRUS1		0.808			
TRUS2		0.801			
TRUS4		0.797			
DSRE2			0.894		
DSRE3			0.873		
DSRE4			0.869		
DSRE1			0.781		
PART4				0.924	
PART2				0.860	
PART3				0.850	
PART1				0.814	
REPU4					0.925
REPU2					0.839
REPU3					0.820
REPU1					0.801

Source: Authors, 2025

Table 6: Mediation Analysis Results

Indirect Path	Unstandardized Estimate	P-Value	Standardized Estimate
DSRE -> TRUS -> EQUI	0.071	0.000	0.081
DSRE -> REPU -> EQUI	0.068	0.005	0.077
DSRE -> PART -> EQUI	0.124	0.001	0.141

Source: Authors, 2025



and customer participation. Moreover, participation amplifies this effect, emphasizing its dual role as both mediator and moderator (Table 7).

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION, AND MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

Discussion

The findings of this study confirm that DSR has a significant positive effect on brand equity, both directly and indirectly through customer trust, brand reputation, and customer participation. These results are consistent with previous research⁶ and⁸, emphasizing that socially responsible behavior on digital platforms enhances consumer perceptions of brand credibility and emotional connection.

The mediating effects of customer trust and brand reputation indicate that when firms engage in responsible digital practices, consumers perceive them as reliable and ethical, which strengthens both trust and reputation - two essential drivers of brand equity. This finding aligns with the propositions of Social Exchange Theory and Signaling Theory, suggesting that ethical corporate behavior generates reciprocal consumer responses and strengthens relational bonds. Customer participation was found to play a dual role, mediating and moderating the DSR–brand equity relationship. This implies that consumers who actively engage with DSR campaigns not only internalize brand values but also amplify DSR's impact on brand perception and loyalty. The result highlights the importance of fostering interactive, participatory initiatives to strengthen consumer–brand relationships in the digital environment.

Table 7: Summary of Hypothesis Testing Results

Correlation	Original sample	P values	Conclusion
H1: Digital social responsibility has a positive effect on brand equity.	0.296	0.000	Accept
H2a: Digital social responsibility has a positive effect on customer trust.	0.344	0.000	Accept
H2b: Customer trust has a positive effect on brand equity.	0.233	0.000	Accept
H2c: Customer trust mediates the relationship between digital social responsibility and brand equity.	0.081	0.000	Accept
H3a: Digital social responsibility has a positive effect on brand reputation.	0.361	0.000	Accept
H3b: Brand reputation has a positive effect on brand equity.	0.178	0.000	Accept
H3c: Brand reputation mediates the relationship between digital social responsibility and brand equity.	0.077	0.005	Accept
H4a: Digital social responsibility has a positive effect on customer participation.	0.480	0.000	Accept
H4b: Customer participation has a positive effect on brand equity.	0.274	0.000	Accept
H4c: Customer participation mediates the relationship between digital social responsibility and brand equity.	0.141	0.001	Accept
H5: Customer participation moderates the relationship between digital social responsibility and brand equity, such that the relationship is stronger when customer participation is high.	0.1223	0.013	Accept

Source: Authors, 2025

Overall, the study contributes to the growing body of knowledge on DSR by providing empirical evidence from Vietnam’s beverage industry. It underscores that integrating social responsibility with digital engagement is a strategic approach to building sustainable brand equity in the era of digital transformation.

Conclusion

This study investigated the impact of DSR on brand equity in the Vietnamese beverage industry, examining the mediating roles of customer trust, brand reputation, and customer participation, as well as the moderating effect of customer participation. Based on SEM analysis of 315 consumers’ data, the findings support all proposed hypotheses and reveal that DSR exerts both direct and indirect positive effects on brand equity. Customer trust and brand reputation act as key mediators, while customer participation

plays a dual mediating and moderating role, strengthening the effectiveness of DSR initiatives. Overall, the results highlight the strategic importance of integrating social responsibility with digital engagement to enhance brand equity, offering both managerial implications for leveraging digital platforms to build trust and participation, and theoretical contributions by extending CSR research into the digital context through the mechanisms of trust, reputation, and participation.

Managerial implications

The findings offer important managerial implications for firms in the Vietnamese beverage industry aiming to enhance brand equity through DSR. Managers should treat DSR as a long-term strategic investment rather than a short-term promotional tool. Social responsibility initiatives need to align with corpo-

rate values and customer expectations, and be communicated transparently through digital platforms to strengthen credibility and emotional connection. As customer trust mediates the DSR-brand equity relationship, firms must ensure ethical communication, consistent product quality, responsiveness to customer feedback, and authenticity in DSR messaging. Transparent disclosure of CSR outcomes and collaboration with reputable partners can further reinforce consumer confidence and long-term trust. To build brand reputation, companies should maintain continuous digital engagement, highlight social achievements, and demonstrate accountability for environmental and social impacts. At the same time, encouraging customer participation in DSR activities, through co-creation campaigns, online challenges, or donation programs, can enhance brand identification and amplify the perceived impact of social initiatives. Finally, DSR should be integrated into the broader brand management and digital marketing strategy. When consistently linked with brand identity and other branding efforts, DSR can foster stronger trust, reputation, and consumer advocacy, thereby generating sustainable brand equity and competitive advantage in the digital era.

Limitation and Future research

First, the research relied on a cross-sectional design and used self-reported data, which may lead to common-method bias and limit the ability to infer causal relationships. Future studies could employ longitudinal or experimental designs to validate the causal nature of the relationships identified in this model.

Second, the adoption of a convenience sampling method and restricting the research scope solely to Ho Chi Minh City constitutes a limitation regarding both methodology and scope, potentially compromising the generalizability of the findings to other regions and industries. Therefore, future research should expand the survey location and prioritize the use of probability sampling methods to enhance the representativeness and external validity of the results.

Third, the study focused solely on four main constructs - DSR, customer trust, brand reputation, and customer participation, while other potential factors were not examined. Future research should consider integrating these additional variables to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the mechanisms linking DSR and brand equity.

Fourth, a low PCLOSE value indicates that the model does not achieve a close fit, suggesting potential influ-

ences from sample characteristics or unobserved factors. Future studies should refine the model by incorporating additional mediators, expanding sample diversity, and applying longitudinal designs to enhance model robustness and fit.

Lastly, qualitative approaches such as interviews or focus groups could be combined with quantitative analysis to capture deeper consumer insights into DSR perceptions and behavioral responses.

ABBREVIATIONS

CSR: Corporate Social Responsibility

DSR: Digital Social Responsibility

SEM: Structural Equation Modeling

EFA: Exploratory Factor Analysis

CFA: Confirmatory Factor Analysis

CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

The author declares that they have no conflicts of interest.

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Ảnh hưởng của trách nhiệm xã hội kỹ thuật số đến tài sản thương hiệu của doanh nghiệp trong ngành hàng đồ uống: Khảo sát người tiêu dùng trên địa bàn Thành phố Hồ Chí Minh

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Lịch sử

- Ngày nhận: 21-10-2025
- Ngày sửa đổi: 11-03-2026
- Ngày chấp nhận: 07-07-2026
- Ngày đăng: 10-08-2026

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.32508/vnuhcmj-eb1.v10i3.1755>



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Bản quyền

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TÓM TẮT

Trong bối cảnh chuyển đổi số diễn ra mạnh mẽ, trách nhiệm xã hội của doanh nghiệp đã mở rộng sang môi trường trực tuyến, hình thành nên khái niệm mới là trách nhiệm xã hội kỹ thuật số. Nghiên cứu này giải quyết khoảng trống trong các công trình hiện tại bằng cách xem xét tác động của DSR đến tài sản thương hiệu của các doanh nghiệp trong ngành hàng đồ uống tại Thành phố Hồ Chí Minh, Việt Nam. Đồng thời, nghiên cứu cũng phân tích vai trò trung gian của niềm tin khách hàng và danh tiếng thương hiệu, cùng với vai trò điều tiết của sự tham gia của khách hàng trong mối quan hệ giữa DSR và tài sản thương hiệu. Nghiên cứu sử dụng thiết kế định lượng, thu thập dữ liệu từ 315 bảng khảo sát hợp lệ thông qua hình thức trực tuyến. Dữ liệu được phân tích bằng các phương pháp thống kê nâng cao như Cronbach's Alpha, Phân tích nhân tố khám phá (EFA), Phân tích nhân tố khẳng định (CFA), Mô hình phương trình cấu trúc (SEM), Bootstrap và mô hình PROCESS Macro trên phần mềm SPSS 20.0 và AMOS 24.0. Kết quả thực nghiệm cho thấy DSR có ảnh hưởng tích cực và có ý nghĩa thống kê đến tài sản thương hiệu, cả trực tiếp và gián tiếp thông qua niềm tin khách hàng và danh tiếng thương hiệu. Ngoài ra, sự tham gia của khách hàng đóng vai trò điều tiết quan trọng, làm tăng cường tác động tích cực của DSR đối với tài sản thương hiệu. Những phát hiện này nhấn mạnh tầm quan trọng của việc triển khai chiến lược DSR một cách có định hướng và truyền thông hiệu quả trên các nền tảng số nhằm gia tăng giá trị thương hiệu. Cuối cùng, nghiên cứu đề xuất các hàm ý quản trị thực tiễn, giúp doanh nghiệp tích hợp DSR vào chiến lược marketing, thúc đẩy sự tham gia của khách hàng và củng cố danh tiếng thương hiệu trong bối cảnh kỹ thuật số năng động.

Từ khóa: Trách nhiệm xã hội kỹ thuật số, tài sản thương hiệu, niềm tin khách hàng, danh tiếng thương hiệu, sự tham gia của khách hàng

Trích dẫn bài báo này: Huy T Q. Ảnh hưởng của trách nhiệm xã hội kỹ thuật số đến tài sản thương hiệu của doanh nghiệp trong ngành hàng đồ uống: Khảo sát người tiêu dùng trên địa bàn Thành phố Hồ Chí Minh. VNUHCM J. Econ. Bus. Law. 2026; 10(3):6929-6942.