



Research Article

# The Impact of Corporate Social Responsibility on Customer Citizenship Behavior: The Mediating Role of Customer-Company Identification and the Moderating Role of Generation.

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## ABSTRACT

This study investigates the impact of corporate social responsibility (CSR) on customer citizenship behavior in the hospitality industry. Further, it explores the mediation effect of customer-company identification and the moderating role of generation in the CSR-customer citizenship behavior relationship. Data from 430 customers have been collected from five-star hotels in North Cyprus and the structural equation model has been employed to test the study hypotheses. The results revealed that CSR has a strong impact on customer citizenship behavior. Further, customer-company identification partially mediated the positive relationship between CSR and customer citizenship behavior. Moreover, generation moderates CSR and customer citizenship behavior relationship

## KEYWORDS

Corporate social responsibility, customer citizenship behavior, generation, customer-company identification, hospitality

## ARTICLE HISTORY

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## 1. Introduction

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) has been increasingly investigated in the literature and its positive consequences on consumer behavior and corporate performance have been well-documented (Hur et al., 2018; Karaosmanoglu et al., 2016; Sen & Bhattacharya, 2001). It has been found that engaging in CSR initiatives leads to increased customer satisfaction (Lee & Heo, 2009), customer loyalty (Pérez & Bosque, 2013), and strength of a company's competitive advantage (Du et al., 2011). It has been defined as a corporate obligation toward the community that is not required by the law (Brown & Dacin, 1997; Kostera, 2008). Some example of CSR initiatives includes donating to charities, producing environmentally friendly products, and protecting animals from extinction.

In the hospitality industry, CSR has perceived great attention from scholars due to the characteristics of such an industry. It has been argued that the hospitality industry consumes nature sources, energy, water consumption which may have negative environmental consequences (Kotler et al., 2017). Hotels for instance have been considered one of the top fine in terms of energy consumption (World Tourism Organization, 2011). Many studies have been conducted in the hospitality industry to measure the effectiveness of CSR on consumer behavior. For instance, by conducting 451 questionnaires from three hotels in China the study of Su et al. (2017) revealed that CSR positively affects perceived corporate reputation and customer satisfaction, which in turn,

positively enhances customer commitment and



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behavioral intentions such as loyalty intention and word-of-mouth. Similarly, the study of [Sung et al. \(2020\)](#) found that CSR messages have a significant effect in enhancing brand equity and trustworthiness between customers and the company. Despite the increasing intention of scholars in examining the consequences of CSR initiatives on customer behavior, little attention has been conducted to examine the effect of CSR initiatives on consumers' voluntary behavior toward companies such as customer citizenship behavior in the hospitality industry. Customer citizenship behavior defined as "helpful, constructive gestures exhibited by customers that are valued or appreciated by the firm, but not related directly to enforceable or explicit requirements of the individual's role" ([Gruen, 1995](#), p. 461). Moreover, it is unclear how CSR initiatives affect customer citizenship behavior. Customer-company identification (C-C identification) was one of the critical variables in the previous study that explain how CSR initiatives affect consumer behavior. For instance, the study of [Sen and Bhattacharya \(2001\)](#) argued that the congruency between customer and company plays a significant role in explaining how CSR initiatives affect consumer behavior such as an increased purchase intention and corporate evaluation. In this study, we argue that C-C identification has a significant role in explaining how CSR initiatives lead to customer citizenship behavior by invoking C-C identification as a mediator variable between CSR initiatives and customer citizenship behavior. Further, little attention has been paid to the role of generation in the relationship between CSR initiatives and consumer behavior, particularly in the hospitality industry. In this study, we examine the moderating effect of three types of generations namely; generation X, generation Y, and generation Z, and the relationship between CSR initiatives and customer citizenship behavior.

In sum, this study aims to investigate the relationship between CSR and customer citizenship behavior and understanding how such a relationship occurs by examining the mediation effect of C-C identification in the relationship between CSR and customer citizenship behavior. Further, it aims to investigate the con-

tingent role of generation in the relationship between CSR initiatives and customer citizenship behavior. The rest of the study is structured as follows. A review of the relevant literature and hypothesized development are provided. This is followed by a detailed description of the research methodology and results of the empirical study. Next, the discussion of the result including theoretical and practical implications is argued. Finally, limitations, suggestions for future studies, and a conclusion are provided.

## 2. Theoretical background

### 2.1. Customer citizenship behavior

Previous research has established that there is significant attention to the concept of customer citizenship behavior. Customer citizenship behavior is still a popular matter these days ([Bettencourt, 1997](#)). According to the study of [Bove et al. \(2009\)](#), there are two types of customer behavior in the service delivery process. The first is the required behavior that is needed to complete the success of production or service delivery, while the second behavior is voluntary (e.g., customer citizenship behavior). Customer citizenship behavior has been defined as voluntary behavior that is not required by consumers and performed voluntarily that helps in increasing the organization's performance ([Groth, 2005](#)). Example of customer citizenship behavior in the hospitality industry includes providing constructive feedback during the check-out process, recommending other customers to use the services of a hotel, responding to the surveys conducted by the hotel staff, and explaining the services that the hotel provides to other customers. It has been argued that customers can increase organizational productivity through providing crucial mental and physical inputs; they can be an important source of new ideas for business strategies, can help and guide other customers, and serve as "organizational consultants" by sharing their experiences with managers ([Jüttner & Wehrli, 1994](#)). In addition to other examples, customers sometimes share their positive experiences with others, pleasingly treating employees, reporting the problems they face to employees ([Bettencourt, 1997](#)).

## 2.2. Corporate social responsibility

CSR is a process of developing sources and marketing initiatives that save social welfare and carry out environmental advantages (Roberts, 2003). Several studies have considered CSR that firms must define their place in the community and apply social and moral standards. CSR became a grown important issue then moved from ideology to reality (Lichtenstein et al., 2004).

CSRs include a kind of voluntarism as a fundamental component. Therefore, if consumers are aware that the company has selfish intentions behind CSR initiatives, they may reduce their cooperation with the company (Lange & Washburn, 2012). In Europe, CSR was related to the activities of businesses that have the intention to improve the quality of life, financial, and other sides (Kostera, 2008). Whereas CSR image is the awareness and knowledge and social stakeholder obligations (He & Li, 2011). However, there is a kind of pressure on the companies during CSR implementations because of the ethical and moral issues that have a large impact on customer behavior and business performance. The concepts of CSR from a wide view is “actions that appear to further some social good, beyond the interests of the firm and that which is required by law” (McWilliams & Siegel, 2001), to one that narrow sight on increasing shareholder profits (Goodpaster, 1991). Smith and Ward (2007) discussed how the early initiatives are simply as cheques at times to build strategic projects are influencing society and discussed firms’ CSR behavior are directed by the local culture which reflects respect to social and environmental performance (Ringov & Zollo, 2007). Furthermore, the marketing literature mentioned customers as human resources while the organizational theorists discussed that customers are an important element of the firm’s (Larsson & Bowen, 1989).

## 2.3. Customer-company identification

Social identity theory proposes that people express a sense of self and self-concepts through developing a social identity (Turner & Tajfel, 1986). C-C identification has defined a feeling of the relationship between a customer and a company (Dutton et al., 1994). The consistency between the value and characteristics of the company and customers leads to customer

self-estimation and C-C identification (Scott & Lane, 2000). The company can develop a long-term relationship with customers through emotional and social grounds to enhance customer loyalty (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988). Along this line, CSR impressions can positively impact the identification of the individuals (del Mar García de los Salmones et al., 2005). Customers are more able to identify with companies that filled their self-needs and trust them (Pratt, 1998).

According to social identity theory, customers not only consider themselves as part of the company if they identify with, but also seek to help the company achieve its goals (Brewer, 1991). In the C-C identification context, some authors write that customer like to use company identification to express themselves socially. Company identification achieved when a customer connects with a company and has a kind of personal definition with the company (Bhattacharya et al., 1995). Because of all that has been mentioned so far we can give a simple example, “customers who identify with other researchers who say, is socially responsible, I am socially responsible, so I would like to keep buying from it” (Lichtenstein et al., 2010).

## 2.4. Generation

Eyerman and Turner (1998) described a generation as a group of people who share common habits, purposes, culture, and history, the thing that gives them collective memory over a specific period. Other literature described the generation gap as a conflict between the division of the society depending on ages, and they considered it as a part of human society. Late researches have publicized the increased interest in the generation gap because each generation has many features that they described these features “unique”. This differentiation will appear in their history, their expectations, their experiences, their lifestyle, and their demographic features. For the businesses, it is required to perceive this gap about generations because this gap affects purchasing behavior (Williams & Page, 2011). In the 1960s generation gap was an essential topic to be published in mass media like the New York Times in the 1960s and the beginnings of the 1970s, in addition to academic journals like social science journals. At that time was the first wave of knowledge of the gap (Esler, 1984).

Oblinger has confirmed the problem about the generation and the technology, he criticized this understanding of the technology doesn't mean the understanding of the quality of information although the "New Gen" is more able to use and easily practice a diversity of IT devices and the Internet because they are using IT and the Internet without directions (Oblinger et al., 2005). Younger generations usually see new values and different attitudes, in the end, there is a large impact on the communities (Roberts & Manolis, 2000). The literature argued three main types of generations. Generation X; Generation Y, and Generation Z. According to the study of Kohnen (2009), the Xers generation has born from 1965 to 1980; this is about 46 million segments of the workforce in general. According to the same study, the Xer generation is sceptical, very resourceful, and tends to be independent. They put more faith in the individual, believe in themselves more than in any organization, can balance work with life, informal, practical in their work, and tend to use the latest technology. Generation Y, also called Millennials, are born in the period between 1981 and 1999 (Kapferer & Michaut-Denizeau, 2020). They are more likely to buy environmentally friendly products (D'Acunto et al., 2020). They give value to diversity, favor collaboration, optimistic outlook, self-assured, and can pragmatically solve problems (Kohnen, 2009). Generation Z is the generation that has started its life of opening its eyes to the digital world and the internet (Kavalci & Ünal, 2016). It is the generation who was born in the mid-to-late 1990s, while consensus has not been reached on the ending birth years (Strauss & Howe, 1991). Generation Z prefers online shipping more than offline shopping (Kavalci & Ünal, 2016). Generation Z is one of the big challenges for marketers and managers due to the reason that they prefer buying products and services according to their appearance and they are less loyal to brands (Veiga-Neto et al., 2018).

### 3. Hypothesis development

#### 3.1. CSR and customer citizenship behavior

Previous literature perceived the value of customers as human resources. Many organizational researchers argue that customers are the most important element for the environment of firm's (Larsson & Bowen, 1989).

Provided that consumers value a firm that supports the community and offers social programs, this means that CSR activities power consumer behavior including consumer citizenship behavior indirectly (Levy, 1999). Depending on these considerations, companies realize that CSR initiatives and programs show a "win-win" scenario between the community and companies (Lindgreen & Swaen, 2010). Thus, customers as a part of the community tend to reward companies that engage in CSR initiatives. In this study, we suggest that CSR has a positive effect on customer citizenship behavior. Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1. CSR has a strong impact on customer citizenship behavior.

#### 3.2. CSR and C-C identification

C-C identification refers to the congruency between the customer's self-definition and his/her perceived traits of a firm (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003). Moral companies or those that behave socially responsible and trustworthy will a positive evaluation from customers (Brown & Dacin, 1997). Consumer judgments and responses are affected by the corporate image positively (Aaker & Keller, 1993), which in turn, are driven by CSR initiatives (Menon & Menon, 1997). Several studies have argued that one's view of the firm image leads to identification (Dutton et al., 1994). Not all companies are attractive to the customers, they just identify with firms whose identity looks attractive to them and let them sense close to them and there are common values, principles, and identity in general between customers and firms (Scott & Lane, 2000). The customers' feelings and a sense of connection are stronger in identification with companies that have a CSR image (Salmones et al., 2009). CSR image directly and positively affects the C- C identification (Pérez & Bosque, 2013). The evidence presented in this section suggests the second hypothesis of the paper:

H2. Corporate social responsibility positively affects customer-company identification.

#### 3.3. C-C identification and customer citizenship behavior

C-C identification helps to explain the importance of CSR image to attain customer loyalty for the brand. Companies nowadays have focused more attention

on this context of C-C identification, because of its effects on the decision-making process of serving customers (Pérez & Bosque, 2013). Many studies have proven that the customer tends to the companies that have a reputation for their ethical identity. Customers who identify with a company due to CSR initiatives are more willing to engage in voluntary behavior (Karaosmanoglu et al., 2016). Customer citizenship behavior supports the company identity (Bergami & Bagozzi, 2000), as mentioned before the importance of emotional connection that leads to a customer's positive behavior (Bove & Robertson, 2005). Consumers may consider themselves as part of the company if they sense a high level of C-C identification. For example, they present positive behavior and positive attitudes to help the firm achieve goals and more efficient implementation of CSR. Because of all that has been mentioned so far, one may suppose the third hypothesis of this study:

H3. Customer-company identification positively affects customer citizenship behavior.

Based on our assumptions that CSR leads to C-C identification and that C-C identification leads to customer citizenship behavior, we also propose the following hypothesis:

H4. The relationship between corporate social responsibility and customer citizenship behavior is mediated by Customer-company identification.

#### 3.4. Generation as a moderator

The common conditions and experiences leave many effects on the individual characteristics of generations; it is different from generation to other. From this ground, the generation gap started to be remarkable as one of the largest social challenges in the marketing sector (Baycan, 2017). The Younger generations continually go together through new and unique features, attitudes, and values. then the differences of the generations leave a large impact on society (Roberts & Manolis, 2000). Accordingly, the characteristics of every generation different from other generations. In this study, we expect that generation plays a moderating variable between CSR and customer citizenship behavior. Thus, the following is hypothesized:

H5. Generation moderates positively the relationship between corporate social responsibility and customer citizenship behavior.

Figure 1. shows the research conceptual model.

## 4. Methodology

### 4.1. Participants and data collection

This research implemented quantitative techniques and depended on questionnaire tools to collect data. The specific site for data collection for this study was the Merit international Hotel in North Cyprus. The reason behind selecting Merit international hotels is they well engaged in CSR initiatives. The questionnaire has been divided into two sections. The first section included demographic information while the second section includes items that measure CSR, customer citizenship behavior, and C-C identification. A total of 430 valid questionnaires out of 476 distributed questionnaires have been collected and analyzed using the statistical software SmartPLS.

### 4.2. Measurements

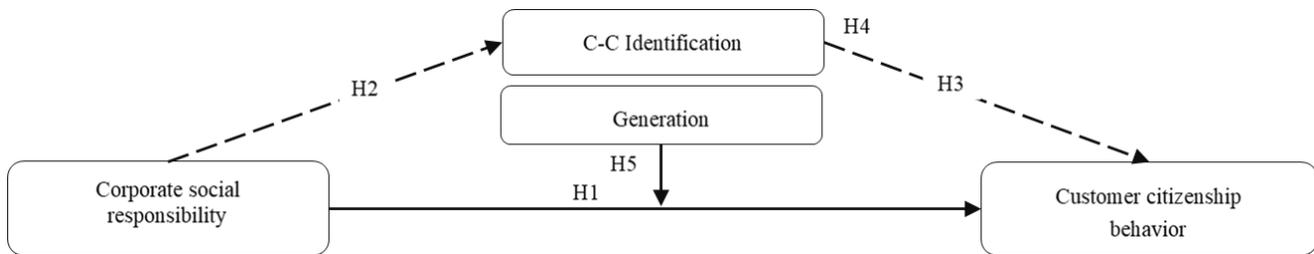
A 5-point Likert scale has been used to measure the constructs of the study. CSR has been measured by adopting a three-item scale from (Du et al., 2007). Customer citizenship behavior has been measured by adopting the scale of Yi and Gong (2008). C-C identification was conducted by adopting the scale of Kang et al. (2015).

## 5. Results

### 5.1. The validity tests

The convergent validity of the questionnaire has been examined by using the average variance extracted (AVE). Fornell and Larcker (1981) set a threshold of 0.5 to have convergence validity. This means the researcher would validate convergence if at least 50% of the variance of the construct is explained. As shown in Table 1, the AVE value for all constructs is above 0.5. Further, the factor loading for each item is above 0.5. Thus, the convergent validity of the measurements is ensured.

Bagozzi et al. (1991) defined discriminant validity as the difference between one latent variable and its measures and another latent variable and its measures. To verify discriminant validity in this research we used two



**Figure 1.** Research conceptual model

measures. The first is [Fornell and Larcker \(1981\)](#) who suggested that the correlation coefficient between two latent variables ought not to be more than the square root of AVE. As shown in Table 2, the results show that all the values are less than the top diagonal element which is the square root of the AVE of each latent variable. According to the outcomes the conclusion that the instruments have discriminant validity. Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio (HTMT) is used to approve discriminant validity. Monotrait correlations should be higher than heterotrait correlations to get a well-fitting model, when this occurs, the value of HTMT should be lower than 0.9 according to [Ringle et al. \(2012\)](#). As shown in Table 3, all HTMT values are less than 0.9. In the end, the measurement model is well-fitting, and the latent variables are measured acceptably and efficiently with valid measures.

### 5.2. Reliability analysis

According to [Garson \(2016\)](#), to ascertain if the constructs are valid and reliable, Cronbach's alpha score must be above 0.7. Cronbach's alpha scores in Table 1 illustrate that the constructs have worth above 0.7 (0.885, 0.922, and 0.939) which reflects the reliability of the constructs.

### 5.3. Testing the research hypothesis

The results in Table 4 and Figure 2. show that CSR is a major influencer on consumer citizenship behavior with a positive and significant relationship between both ( $\beta = 0.413$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). This result validates hypothesis 1, which states that corporate social responsibility has a strong effect on customer citizenship behavior in the case of Merit International Hotels and Resorts in North Cyprus. Looking at the relationship between corporate social responsibility and customer company

identification, the analysis confirmed that the relationship is positive and significant with the coefficient being the biggest ( $\beta = 0.793$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) which means that CSR affects C-C identification in a great manner and hypothesis 2 that states CSR positively impacts on CC is validated. A relationship between C-C identification and customer citizenship behavior appears that the relationship is positive and significant with a coefficient of ( $\beta = 0.281$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) which confirms the 3rd hypothesis stating that C-C identification has a positive impact on customer citizenship behavior. Constructs trying to explain customer citizenship behavior explained 44.9% of the variation in customer citizenship behavior as the R-square amounted to 0.449. On the other hand, 62.9% of variations in C-C identification were explained by the independent variables as the R-square value for C-C identification is 0.629.

When looking at the relationship between CSR and customer citizenship behavior with C-C identification as a mediator between both, it is clear that the relationship is positive and significant at a 5% level of significance ( $\beta = 0.223$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) which indicates the validity of hypothesis 4 and shows that the positive relationship between CSR and customer citizenship behavior is mediated by C-C identification. As for the relationship between CSR and customer citizenship behavior with age (generation) as the moderator between both, we found that age is acting as a moderator with a negative effect on customer citizenship behavior which means that increase in age will weaken the relationship between CSR and customer citizenship behavior.

**Table 1.** Measurement model

Items	$\lambda$	t-value
Customer citizenship behavior ( $\alpha = 0.88$ , AVE= 0.69, CR= 0.91)		
...say positive things about # to others	0.79*	35.1
...give constructive suggestions to # on how to improve its services?	0.88*	68.4
... to communicate someone in # when you have a useful idea on how to improve service?	0.88*	67.5
... to let someone, know when you experience a problem at # so that they can improve the service?	0.82*	40.5
... to keep the # clean? (e.g., not leaving trash behind)	0.54*	13.7
... you carefully observe the rules and policies of #?	0.71*	23.6
... to do things that can make the # employee' job easier?	0.71*	24.4
Corporate social responsibility ( $\alpha = 0.92$ , AVE= 0.86, CR= 0.95)		
# is a socially responsible company.	0.93*	116.0
# is concerned to improve the well-being of society.	0.91*	46.2
# behaves responsibly towards the environment.	0.94*	120.0
C-C identification ( $\alpha = 0.93$ , AVE= 0.89, CR= 0.96)		
I will tell others that I am proud to be a customer of #.	0.94*	122.9
I feel good to be a customer of #.	0.93*	106.7
# fits me well.	0.95*	149.1

Note: CR= Composite reliability,  $\alpha$  = Cronbach's alpha,  $\lambda$  = Factor loading, \*=  $p < 0.000$ .

**Table 2.** Fornell-Larcker Criterion

Construct	C-C identification	Customer citizenship behavior	CSR
C-C identification	0.944		
Customer citizenship behavior	0.618	0.773	
CSR	0.793	0.647	0.93

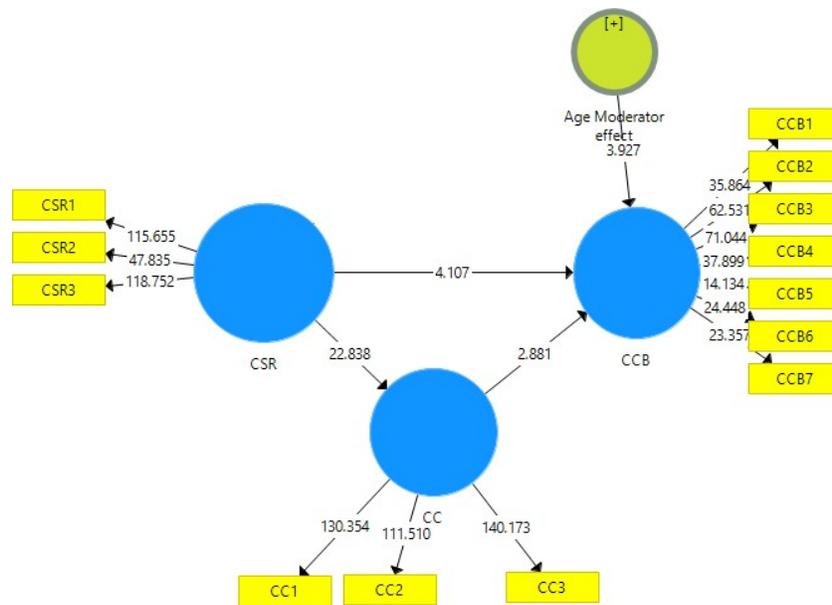
**Table 3.** Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio

Construct	C-C identification	Customer citizenship behavior
Customer citizenship behavior	0.655	
CSR	0.852	0.704

**Table 4.** Direct and indirect effects

Relationship	Mean	SD	T Statistics	P Values
C-C identification > CCB	0.281	0.103	2.720	0.007
CSR → C-C identification	0.793	0.035	22.85	0.000
CSR → CCB	0.413	0.105	3.943	0.000
CSR → C-C -identification → CCB	0.223	0.088	2.525	0.012
CSR* Generation → CCB	-0.140	0.040	3.930	0.000

Note: CCB= customer citizenship behavior, SD= Standard deviation.



**Figure 2.** Structural equation modeling results

### 6. Discussion

The results of this study showed that there is a positive relationship between corporate social responsibility and customer citizenship behavior in the hospitality industry. C-C identification is a significant mediating variable in the main relationship between corporate social responsibility on customer citizenship behavior. Besides, the generation has a negative moderating effect on the relationship between CSR and customer citizenship behavior.

CSR plays an important role to encourage extra-role behavior as an important part of the firm. As mentioned before in the literature review of this study about organizational theorists argue that firms consider customers an essential part of the environment of the organization (Larsson & Bowen, 1989). A strong relationship between CSR and customer citizenship behavior has been reported in the literature by Levy (1999) who reported that the company will be rewarded by consumers for the social program support. Recent empirical studies and other kinds of researchers have discovered the role of CSR on several issues on consumer behavior and reactions, while the present research confirmed such a relation-

ship between CSR and customer citizenship behavior. Besides, it explains the mechanism of the effects of CSR on customer citizenship behavior and highlights the key role of the perceived C-C identification by shaping the success of CSR initiatives and transform them into customer citizenship behavior. According to Scott and Lane (2000), customers choose an attractive company that looks similar to them in common values and principles to identify with. It was agreed with what was hypothesized as a positive relationship, and the results emphasized there was a significant positive correlation between CSR and C-C identification.

This study also contributes to the literature by investigating the association between C-C identification and customer citizenship behavior and its mediating role in the relationship between CSR and customer citizenship behavior. The result of our study was completely consistent with Karaosmanoglu et al. (2016) that a clear ethical attitude of a firm leads the customer to identify with it and promote, as a result, customer citizenship behavior. Further, the findings of this study contribute to the literature by examining the moderation effect of generation in the relationship

between CSR and customer citizenship behavior. Consistent with the argument of Veiga-Neto et al. (2018) that Generation Z does not show a much positive attitude toward a brand, the findings revealed that generation negatively moderated the relationship between CSR and customer citizenship behavior. This means, the younger the generation, the less effect of CSR on customer citizenship behavior is achieved.

Practically, the findings of this study contribute to the hospitality industry in several ways. This study revealed that one of the consequences of CSR is an enhanced customer citizenship behavior. Thus, companies that want to increase the voluntary behavior of their customers have to engage more in CSR initiatives. Also, companies should increase customer awareness about their CSR initiatives such as incorporating CSR initiatives in marketing campaigns and printing brochures that include CSR initiatives, and distribute them to customers on check-in. Further, companies should care about C-C identification as a result of our study showed that it plays a critical role in the relationship between CSR initiatives and customer citizenship behavior.

## 7. Limitations and suggestions for future studies

This study has several limitations. The findings of this study have been conducted with our including any control variables such as gender, number of visits, and relationship length of customers. Future studies may include such variables as a control variable when examining the relationship between CSR initiatives and customer citizenship behavior. Further, data has been collected and analyzed before the Covid-19 Pandemic. Provided that several studies have argued the critical effect of the Covid-19 Pandemic on consumer behavior (He & Harris, 2020), it is important to study the effect of the Covid-19 Pandemic on the relationship between CSR initiatives and customer citizenship behavior.

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## Conflict of interest

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LUMINOUS  
INSIGHTS

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