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How Brand Symbolism, Perceived Service Quality, and CSR Skepticism Influence Consumers to Engage in Citizenship Behavior

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Abstract: Brand symbolism, which stems from the vitality of the brand and feeds self-symbolism and social symbolism, has become an increasingly important strategy for firms to enhance consumer behavior. Building on attachment theory, social identity theory, and cognitive consistency theory, and using data from 439 customers of Starbucks in Lebanon, we used an integrative model to examine how brand symbolism, perceived service quality, and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) skepticism jointly affect two types of Customer Citizenship Behavior (CCB): helping other customers and policing other customers. The findings revealed that brand symbolism has a significant positive impact on CCBs and is a stronger predictor of policing other customers than helping other customers in the hospitality context. Further, perceived service quality acts as a mediator between the brand symbolism and CCB dimensions. This study discovered that CSR skepticism negatively moderates the direct and indirect effects of brand symbolism on CCBs through perceived service quality. The findings contribute to the literature by examining the boundary conditions of how and under what conditions brand symbolism affects CCBs by enrolling perceived service quality as a mediator variable and CSR skepticism as a moderator variable in the brand symbolism–CCB relationship.

Keywords: brand symbolism; perceived service quality; corporate social responsibility skepticism; customer citizenship behavior

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1. Introduction

Coffee shops are a rising star in the hospitality industry. It has been forecasted that the growth rate of branded coffee shops will achieve over 4.6% by 2025 [1]. However, the nature of this industry, which is characterized by the standardization and homogenization of the coffee shops' offerings, makes it difficult to achieve a competitive advantage by using its internal competencies, such as coffee quality [2,3], and to think differently to create value. In this vein, the animism [4], personality [5], and symbolism [6] of a brand have illuminated the vitality of brands in the globalization era of markets. Two schools of thought feed the decisions of consumer behavior: the rational school (consumers' needs are driven by functional/utilitarian motivations) and the emotional school (consumers' needs are driven by symbolic/expressive motivations) [7]. The vast majority of the studies that have been conducted in the hospitality context [8–13] argue that brand image and its echo, "brand symbolism", represent the exceptional importance of service organizations since customers formulate an image of a certain brand as they see the company's various elements, and from which develop their perceptions and subsequent behaviors.

The customer's involvement in voluntary behavior, such as customer citizenship behavior (CCB), has stimulated the attention of scholars in the hospitality context in recent years [14]. Some studies have focused on the antecedents affecting CCB, such

as green image [8], brand attachment [15], brand experience [16], and corporate social responsibility [17]; other research has investigated the indirect mediating role of CCB [18], and yet other studies have examined the consequences of CCBs [14]. Despite the extensive effort of scholars to develop a theory of symbolism, the literature has been rather quiet about brand symbolism as an antecedent of CCB. While several studies have tied brand in its larger domains to consumer behavior and CCB [16], none have attached brand symbolism to CCB, thus prompting this study of the interrelationship between brand symbolism and CCB, specifically within its two dimensions: helping other customers and policing other customers.

Moreover, the mechanism underlying the relationship between brand symbolism and CCB has not yet been investigated. In the hospitality and service context, perceived service quality (PSQ) is considered to influence the customer–company relationship [19]. PSQ has been considered to be one of the most important criteria that customers use to evaluate a brand [20]. Provided that PSQ has been found as one of the key consequences of brand symbolism [21] and a key antecedent of CCB [22,23], this study argues the mediation effect of PSQ in the relationship between brand symbolism and CCB—an effect that has not yet been investigated.

A gap also exists in the literature relating to when consumers are skeptical about a company's corporate social responsibility (CSR) programs in the presence of variables such as brand symbolism, PSQ, and CCB. In the service and hospitality industry, [2] found that the CSR strategy can increase customer loyalty by enhancing customer–company identification, but this only happens for a strong brand like Starbucks. Moreover, CSR can create kinds of identities (e.g., self and social identities) that are capable of triggering customer identification since CSR joins the three elements of the corporate identity mix (symbolism, the behavior of organization members, and communication) [2,24]. From a social constructivist perspective, the consumer is considered an active rather than a passive receiver of information; thus, the strength of some hypothesized effects depends on the consumer's individual beliefs and traits [25,26]. While CSR skepticism is known to have a negative influence on consumer-related outcomes [27], such as negative word-of-mouth, it is unclear whether CSR skepticism weakens the above-mentioned variables [28]. Accordingly, CSR skepticism could affect the building of CCB [29]. Further, it has been well-documented that customers' skepticism about CSR initiatives diminishes the effectiveness of service quality in enhancing customers' attitudes [30]. Thus, it would be logical to say that the effect of brand symbolism on CCB and the mediation role of PSQ on the relationship between brand symbolism and CCB may be contingent on the customer's skepticism of the company's CSR initiatives—an effect that has not been yet investigated in the literature.

Accordingly, this study examined the effect of brand symbolism on CCB and the underlying mechanism of how and under what conditions brand symbolism affects CCB. The research objectives addressing the purpose of this study are based on the assumption that the effect of brand symbolism on CCB in the coffee shop context should be considered along with PSQ, based on the contingent role of CSR skepticism. The results of this study will contribute to the literature, especially in the hospitality sector, in several ways. First, this study fills the gap in the previous literature focused on brand symbolism [31], which neglected to examine its impact on CCB. Second, previous empirical research in hospitality has not examined the potential mediating role of PSQ as a relational construct between brand symbolism and CCB. By doing so, this study identifies the internal "black box" between brand symbolism and CCB from the perspective of PSQ, and enhances our understanding of the true contribution of brand symbolism to CCB. Third, [32] examined and supported that CSR's effects on certain key service indicators are conditional on the ability of the brand to deliver its services. Provided that the previous studies have failed to examine the impact of CSR skepticism on the brand symbolism–consumer behavior relationship in the hospitality industry, this study examined the boundary conditions under which brand symbolism most effectively enhances CCB by invoking CSR skepticism as a

moderator in the direct and indirect relationships of brand symbolism and CCB through PSQ. Thus, this study contributes to sustainable marketing by investigating the role of customers' skepticism about companies' pro-social activities (e.g., CSR) on the relationships among brand symbolism, PSQ, and CCB.

The paper is structured as follows: Section 1 presents an introduction to the topic. Section 2 describes theoretical development and hypotheses. Section 3 details the research methodology. Section 4 discusses the results of the data analysis and the testing of the hypotheses. Section 5 elaborates the general discussion and the managerial contributions. Section 6 discusses the limitations of the conceptual model and research methodology and directions for future studies. Finally, Section 7 outlines the conclusion of the paper.

2. Theoretical Development and Hypotheses

2.1. Service-Dominant Logic Framework

In the hospitality industry, service-dominant logic [33] has been widely used as a framework to explain the importance of facilitating dialogic relationships with and between the hotel company, employees, customers, and all stakeholders, all of whom collectively play a significant role in co-creating the value of the company's brand and differentiating it from others [34]. Brand symbolism stems from the intangible attributes of a brand [35]. Ref [36] showed that a positive consumer evaluation of a brand essentially comes from the positive evaluation of the symbolic association of the brand. PSQ reflects a cognitive evaluation of intangible aspects of service delivery [37], which has been seen as a vital consequence of a customer's overall assessment of a service provided by a firm [38]. Service-dominant logic uses the view that intangible attributes are significantly more important in value creation than tangible attributes as a framework for advancing the understanding of intangible attributes within the hospitality industry [34]. Customers choose brands based on their perceptions of the brands' symbolic value parallels with the Foundational Premise 7 of service-dominant logic, where the focus of brand value creation is on the creation of a symbolic brand image [39]. Thus, brand symbolism and PSQ are related concepts in the sense that they both represent intangible aspects and consumers' overall assessments of stimulated value creation (i.e., CCB). Based on the service-dominant logic framework and the theoretical promises of attachment theory [40], social identity theory [41], and cognitive consistency theory [42], the research conceptual model is presented in Figure 1.

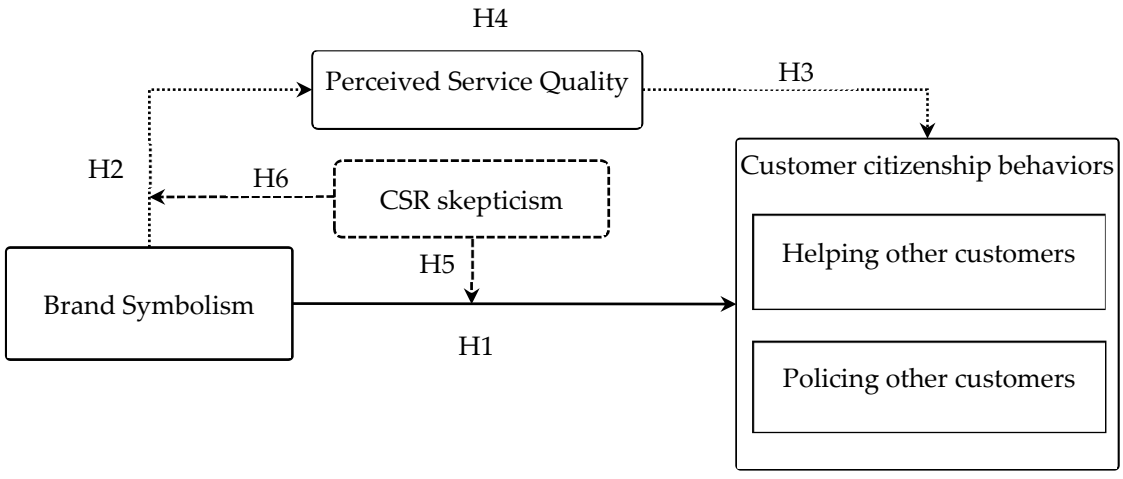


Figure 1. Research model.

2.2. Brand Symbolism and CCB

Consumption results from highly symbolized relationships between objects and humans (individually and collectively) [43]. Symbolism represents the potentiality of a brand because it considers important resources of construction to culture, values, quality, interre-

lationships, and self-identity. Brand symbolism thus has a twofold construction comprising social symbolism (extrinsic) and self-symbolism (intrinsic) [44]. Symbolic brand values refer to the identity of a person, representing self-expression and social expression (one's social position or group membership) [45]. Brand symbolism refers to the image of the product, encompassing the abstract ideas and associations with the product, and the beliefs about the kinds of people who use the product [31]. Ref. [46] defined symbolic needs as desires or wishes for brands that accomplish internal consumer needs for a self-image or self-concept, a membership or desired group, and a position role.

CCB refers to discretionary, voluntary, and optional customer behaviors that represent positive extra-role behaviors toward the organization [47]. The study of [47] classified the behavior of employees and customers who engage in service delivery into two directions: (1) work-oriented or employee behavior, including in-role behavior (e.g., task performance) and extra-role behavior (e.g., organizational citizenship behavior (OCB)), and (2) customer-oriented or customer behavior, including in-role behavior (e.g., customer coproduction) and extra-role behavior (e.g., CCB). In the hospitality context, CCB has been operationalized in different ways. For instance, the study of [17] classified CCB into two main behaviors, firm-oriented CCB and customer-oriented CCB, while the study of [8] argued four types of CCB: feedback, advocacy, helping, and tolerance behavior. Similarly, in the study of [48], three dimensions of CCB have been examined; recommendations, helping behavior, and feedback. Other studies in the hospitality context argued the concept of CCB as a unidimensional construct [49]. This study investigates two types of CCB: helping other customers and policing other customers, which is highly relevant in the hospitality sector because the behavior of one customer may directly affect the experience or behavior of another given the shared environment and the co-creation of experience [50].

Helping other customers refers to a customer assisting another customer within a service process [47], this may include assisting other customers of a company if they seem to have problems such as helping a customer to get the WiFi password of the coffee shop, while policing other customers refers to when a customer observes and reacts to another customer's behavior to ensure that suitable behaviors occur and unsuitable behaviors are discouraged [50]. This may include taking steps to prevent problems caused by other customers, such as discouraging the opportunistic behaviors of other customers [51]. According to [52], policing other customers involves voluntary effort exercised by a customer to ensure that other customers show appropriate and suitable behaviors. Meanwhile, [53] claimed that consumer behaviors like policing other customers and positive word-of-mouth are categorized as benefits for other customers. Helping other customers is considered one of the three main important categories of CCB [47], while policing other customers is considered a personal motive, with the customer as the essential beneficiary of CCB [50].

Based on attachment theory [40], consumer research suggests that the strength of the relationship or bond between the consumer and the firm's brand can define a consumer's willingness to make sacrifices (i.e., CCB) for the brand or firm [50]. The brand has a positive impact on consumer behavior in choosing a product/service and motivates consumers to use techniques such as CCB to discuss the characteristics of products that they have bought [54]. Brand symbolism represents a dimension in increasing emotional brand attachment and word-of-mouth [25]. Marketing managers should construct a high level of brand–customer relationships to enhance CCB [16]. Brand symbolism, as a product's symbolic meaning, motivates consumers to (1) satisfy knowledge about their social world and (2) boost and express their self-identity and values [55]. Given that brand symbolism plays an important role in the consumer's evaluation, [36] showed that a positive consumer evaluation of the brand essentially comes from the positive evaluation of a brand's symbolic associations. Therefore, consumers who are attached to a brand will be more likely to shift from an egocentric to a reciprocal state within a brand relationship [56].

In keeping with the study's conceptualization of CCB, this study argues that when a brand gains symbolic value, it affects the policing and helping of other customers. When consumers offer human characteristics to the brands that enhance their self-concept and

social concept, the dyad relationship partner between the customer and the brand is a voluntary union and based on a reciprocity principle; hence, such a relation is expected to promote voluntary behaviors [4] that could be in the form of helping other customers and/or policing other customers. While symbolic consumption occurs frequently in all walks of life, regardless of social status or income [21], brand symbolism reflects social symbolism and self-symbolism, which are considered to be part of possession [44]. Since possessions have been considered to be a part of the self, it follows that an unintentional loss of possessions should be viewed as a lessening or loss of self [57]. Thus, any threat that is directed at such possessions will be considered as a threat to the self [58]. Thus, individuals will seek to observe others' behaviors and discourage inappropriate behaviors that are directed at the brand. That is, self-symbolism leads to the policing of other customers. In the same vein, the social self-concept refers to the image of the self that a person hopes others will perceive [59]. Customers may use the social symbolism characteristics of a brand or company to enhance their self-concepts and social approval, in which customers of a highly social symbolism may help other customers because doing so empowers them to represent altruistic behaviors—that is, social symbolism leads to the helping of other customers.

In summary, brand symbolism improves CCB in the form of helping and policing other customers. Therefore, we propose the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1. *Brand symbolism has a positive effect on CCB by (a) helping other customers and (b) policing other customers.*

2.3. The Mediation Effect of Perceived Service Quality

Delivering and perceiving superior service quality is considered a prerequisite for survival and succeeding in business [60]. PSQ—the result of the consumer's comparison between the perceived and expected services—represents customers' overall assessments of the superiority or excellence of the service [38]. Scholars have used social identity theory (SIT) [41] to establish customer—company identification, which can satisfy the need for self-definition and social identity [61]. SIT has been used widely in hospitality and tourism research and serves as an underpinning theory to study customer–brand identification and customer behavior [62]. According to SIT, consumers with higher brand identification are more likely to engage in pro-brand tasks, such as supporting the company and its goals and brands and protecting its reputation [63]. Consumers use brands to construct their sense of identity [64], and brand symbolism enables consumers to maintain, express, and enhance their personal and social identities [31]. Service firms have to invest in the domain of a brand identity (e.g., symbolism), in which it is capable of reducing the risks of intangibility and volatility of service and enhancing consumers' confidence in service consumption [32]. According to [65], if a consumer trusts in a restaurant's services but suddenly finds that it is not perfect, they may still consider the perceived service satisfactory since the image of their favorable restaurant will make them find excuses for these negative experiences. However, if they feel repeatedly disappointed, their image of the restaurant will deteriorate. Consequently, both brand symbolism and PSQ are crucial components for increasing and enhancing CCB. We argue that PSQ is a significant factor as an intermediate process through which brand symbolism affects CCB levels.

We consider that brand symbolism affects the level of PSQ. Symbolic interactionism affects the purchasing of both goods and services [55]. However, since services are harder to differentiate than goods due to the intangibility characteristic of service, the symbolic meanings play a more important role in the purchasing of services than physical goods, which could add perceived tangibility and essence to the service offering to differentiate it from competitors [21]. In the hospitality industry, consumers or patrons seek stimulation (i.e., brand symbolism) that lets them attain a satisfying psychological response while consuming the service [2]. Moreover, companies must present their products and services in an environment that enables consumers' identities and includes the sensations associated

with the company's identity [66]. Credible brand symbolism positively affects PSQ [67] and has high importance in service firms since customers' evaluations build on their perceptions of the service and good interactions with service providers [10]. At customer service coffee franchises, [12] found that an affective or emotional experience is more significant than a cognitive or functional experience. Additionally, from a symbolic perspective, a brand name is an important indicator of the quality dimensions that affect the inferences of consumers about PSQ [68]. We, therefore, posit the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 2. *Brand symbolism has a positive effect on perceived service quality.*

We consider that a high level of PSQ is beneficial for CCB. According to [69], customer satisfaction, customer commitment, and perceived support for customers are antecedents of voluntary customer performance. The service is considered a central point of interest in a customer exchange that could engage a customer's voluntary and discretionary helpful behaviors [70]. The service climate in hospitality and tourism has empirical evidence on employee empowerment and citizenship behavior for customer service quality [71]. Based on substantial evidence in the existing marketing literature examining the influence of PSQ on CCB [70,72], we posit the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 3. *Perceived service quality has a positive effect on CCB.*

PSQ has been empirically confirmed as a mediator variable between corporate positive attributes and customer pro-social behaviors (e.g., CCB) [17]. Brand symbolism is considered to be a distinctive attribute that customers favor seeing in any preferable company [73]. When consumers perceive the distinctiveness of a firm, they identify with it [74]. Driven from the social identity theory, an identification with a company generates positive evaluations of the firm's outcomes [63], which, in turn, gives customers a sense of obligation to reciprocate with company-favoring behavior, such as customer citizenship behavior [17]. In the hospitality industry, consumers seek stimulation (i.e., brand symbolism) that lets them attain a satisfying psychological response while consuming the service [2]. When a customer recognizes service employees to be responsive and helpful, the greater levels of pleasure-feeling will be induced toward the company and service encounter [67]. Thus, when guests positively perceive symbolism and associations with the brand, these perceptions affect customers' perceptions toward the output of a firm (e.g., PSQ) [75], which, in turn, encourages them to engage in voluntary behaviors such as CCB [76]. All things considered, we expect that PSQ positively mediates the effect of brand symbolism on CCB and, thus, propose the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 4. *Perceived service quality mediates the relationship between brand symbolism and CCB.*

2.4. The Moderating Effect of CSR Skepticism

Companies drive CSR to improve the well-being of societies and to build positive consumer behaviors [77–79]. In the chain restaurant sector, for a strong coffee brand (i.e., Starbucks), its patrons tend to think that its CSR activities are based on altruism [2]. CSR skepticism refers to the paradox between the main goal of the company to increase profits and the nature of the CSR domain, which is the voluntary commitment of the company to promote the well-being of society [80].

Ref. [80] defined CSR skepticism as distrust and disbelief toward the company's CSR outcomes, CSR motives, and the appeal of social responsibility. Hence, CSR skepticism could strengthen barriers to creating and maintaining a positive relationship with consumers. At the institutional level of analysis, [81] claimed that the relationship between CSR programs and outcomes varies mainly due to moderating effects related to the stakeholders, the company environment, and the industry. Consumers in the hospitality sector tend to have a more positive evaluation of a brand [2]. Restaurants' CSR efforts have

a positive and significant direct effect on customers' behavioral responses in terms of citizenship behavior, and have a sequential mediation mechanism through service quality [82]. Additionally, [83] claimed that brand image and CSR are inseparably tied, and [84] considered that high levels of skepticism increase consumers' negative attitudes toward the restaurant and decrease favorable evaluation. Given that the impact of brand symbolism on CCB may differ substantially depending on CSR skepticism, we posit that CSR skepticism weakens the positive relationship between brand symbolism and CCB. Therefore, higher CSR skepticism is detrimental to the company because it weakens the ability of brand symbolism to enhance CCB. Hence, we propose the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 5. *CSR skepticism negatively moderates the direct effect of brand symbolism on CCB, such that the effect will be weaker when CSR skepticism is greater.*

In coffee shops, CSR has an important impact on customer citizenship behavior [85], and the perceptions of customers about CSR initiatives have a significant role in affecting how they perceive the output of the coffee shop, which, in turn, affects their attitudes toward it [11]. Cognitive consistency theory [42] is based on the premise that when a customer faces psychological discomfort, he/she strives to seek psychological harmony among his or her beliefs and behavior. When consumers perceive the skepticism of a firm's CSR initiatives, they develop a belief-consistent idea about the brand, which, in turn, negatively affects their overall evaluation of the brand [86]. Empirical findings seem to support this idea. For instance, the study of [87] revealed that the negative effects of CSR may be more profound than previously recognized, where increases in consumer skepticism seem to have a negative and direct influence on both internal (i.e., PSQ) and behavioral (i.e., CCB) consumer responses.

All things considered, as CSR skepticism may moderate the relationship between brand symbolism and CCB (H5), and that the relationship between brand symbolism and PSQ may also be affected negatively by CSR skepticism, the indirect effect of PSQ on the relationship between brand symbolism and CCB could be moderated by CSR skepticism. In other words, when customers perceive the skepticism value of a firm's CSR initiatives, the indirect effect of PSQ on the relationship between brand symbolism and CCB will be diminished. Hence, we propose the following hypothesis;

Hypothesis 6. *CSR skepticism negatively moderates the indirect impact of brand symbolism on CCB via perceived service quality, such that the impact will be weaker when CSR skepticism is greater.*

3. Research Methodology

3.1. Sampling and Data Collection Procedures

Coffee shops have received substantial importance in the hospitality and tourism literature [88]. We used Starbucks customers in Lebanon as the research objects because Starbucks represents the largest share of the coffee market and is the mainstream brand in the United States [12]. Starbucks is the world's leading branded coffee shop [2] and is known as a legendary brand for boosting coffee from a general product to a premium cultural product [13]. Starbucks is also the most known coffee shop chain in Lebanon, with 34 branches distributed in different locations across the country [89]. To ensure the content validity and clarity of items, the preliminary questionnaire was submitted to a panel of four academics in hospitality management. The preliminary questionnaire was revised and improved, mainly in the areas of item adequacy and wording clarity based on feedback from the panel. A pilot test was conducted using a convenience sample of 20 customers of Starbucks; their responses have been excluded from the final study. The results of the pretest showed that the questions that measure CSR skepticism and the term "Corporate Social Responsibility" (CSR) were not clear to a few of the participants. Thus, the researchers added an operational definition to the term "CSR" before responding to any item related to CSR. The questionnaires were distributed to Starbucks customers within

Lebanon, simultaneously, at the 3 most crowded shopping malls. Due to the difficulty of getting responses from all Starbucks branches in Lebanon, a convenience sampling method was used by selecting the 3 largest Starbucks branches by sales volume in Lebanon. All customers who were at any of the 3 selected branches at the time of collecting data were targeted. There were 500 questionnaires distributed targeting 2 major audiences inside each selected coffee shop: customers who were waiting in line for their orders and customers who had already received their orders and were on site. Because of the different nationalities that visit Starbucks in Lebanon, the questionnaire was generated in 2 different languages, English and Arabic. The aims of the research were explained to the participants and then they were given the survey to answer. To reduce the respondents' possible fears, the confidentiality and anonymity of the responses were ensured. Further, the questions of the survey were randomized to avoid inference regarding cause–effect relationships among the constructs. We received 465 questionnaire responses. After removing the questionnaires that were invalid due to missing data and unengaged responses, 439 complete and valid questionnaires were obtained, giving a response rate of 87%. The majority of respondents were aged 18–24 years (42.9%). Respondents were slightly more likely to be male (56.7%), and the majority of respondents were local customers (78.1%). In terms of monthly income, the majority earned less than USD 1000 (50.0%), followed by those who earned USD 1000–1999 (43%), USD 2000–2900 (26.4%), and over USD 3000 (16.7%). The majority of participants held bachelor's degrees (38.5%), followed by high school degrees or equivalent (31.1%), and graduate degrees (20.2%). Only 10.2% of participants held a degree lower than high school.

3.2. Measurements

This research adopted a well-designed questionnaire from previous studies and used a 5-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). The brand symbolisms were measured by adopting 6 items from the studies of [7,45]. The policing of other customers was measured using 3 items adapted from [70]. Helping other customers was measured using a 3-item scale developed by [90]. The PSQ was measured by adopting 6 items from the study of [91], which was originally adopted from [60]. CSR skepticism was measured by adopting 3 items from [92]. Table 1 shows the items of each construct in detail.

Table 1. Summary of the measurement model.

Latent Variables	λ
CCB	
Helping other customers (α = 0.90, CR = 0.88, AVE = 0.72)	
- Assist other customers of Starbucks if they need my help.	0.75
- Help other customers of Starbucks if they seem to have problems.	0.85
- Teach other customers to use the services provided by Starbucks correctly.	0.94
Policing other customers (α = 0.87, CR = 0.86, AVE = 0.68)	
- Take steps to prevent problems caused by other Starbucks customers.	0.85
- Inform Starbucks if I become aware of inappropriate behavior by other customers.	0.81
- Give advice to other Starbucks customers.	0.70
Brand Symbolism (α = 0.90, CR = 0.88, AVE = 0.56)	
- Starbucks products provide status and prestige.	0.69
- The brand of Starbucks is more important to me than its functional qualities.	0.62
- People use Starbucks products as a way of expressing their personality.	0.73
- Starbucks is for people who want the best things in life.	0.81
- Starbucks users stand out in a crowd.	0.81
- Using Starbucks says something about the kind of person you are.	0.81

Table 1. *Cont.*

Latent Variables	λ
CCB	
PSQ (α = 0.88, CR = 0.84, AVE = 0.52)	
- Starbucks has modern-looking equipment.	-
- When Starbucks promised to do something by a certain time, it did it.	0.76
- Starbucks provides its services at the time it promises to do so.	0.69
- Staff at Starbucks are able to tell patrons exactly when services will be performed.	0.71
- The staff of Starbucks has the knowledge to answer customers' queries.	0.72
- The staff of Starbucks understands the specific needs of their customers.	0.72
CSR skepticism (α = 0.87, CR = 0.89, AVE = 0.73)	
- I do not trust Starbucks to deliver on its social responsibility promises.	0.80
- Starbucks is usually dishonest about its real involvement in social responsibility initiatives.	0.91
- In general, I am not convinced that Starbucks will fulfill its social responsibility objectives.	0.86

4. Results

4.1. Validity and Reliability

This study employed the statistical software IBM SPSS 23 and IBM SPSS Amos 24 to perform the statistical analyses. A confirmatory factor analysis was conducted to estimate the validity of the measurement model. As shown in Table 1, the proposed research model demonstrates a sufficient fit to the data (×2 fit statistic = 430.52 with 149 df (chi-square/df = 2.88); root mean squared error for approximation (RMSEA) = 0.07; comparative fit index (CFI) = 0.95; goodness fit index (GFI) = 0.91; root mean square residual (RMR) = 0.04), confirming the instrument validity of the research constructs [93]. Further, the factor loading for each item is greater than 0.65, the composite reliabilities (CR) values are above 0.7, and the average variance extracted (AVE) for each construct is greater than 0.50 (Table 1), thus satisfying the recommended threshold value of convergent validity [94]. Table 2 illustrates that the square roots of the AVE values of each construct are higher than the correlation coefficient between the constructs, proof of discriminant validity [95]. Cronbach alphas range from 0.83 to 0.90, thus demonstrating the reliability of the construct [96].

Table 2. Discriminant validity.

	CR	AVE	BS	HOC	PSQ	CSR	POC
Brand symbolism (BS)	0.88	0.56	0.75				
Helping other customers (HOC)	0.88	0.72	0.46	0.84			
Perceived service quality (PSQ)	0.84	0.52	0.57	0.42	0.72		
CSR skepticism (CSR.S)	0.89	0.73	−0.51	−0.50	−0.36	0.85	
Policing other customers (POC)	0.86	0.68	0.48	0.747	0.37	−0.46	0.82

Note: AVE = average variance extracted; CR = composite reliability; diagonal values in bold represent the square root of the AVE.

4.2. Hypotheses Testing

The structural equation model method was employed to examine the first three hypotheses (Table 3), using statistical software IBM AMOS 24. Assumptions (e.g., multi-collinearity issue) were checked before the analysis; none were violated. The proposed research model demonstrated a sufficient fit to the data (×2/df =2.41, $p < 0.05$; GFI = 0.92 > 0.90; CFI = 0.94 > 0.90; NFI = 0.92 > 0.90; RMSEA = 0.07< 0.08; RMR = 0.05 < 0.08). As shown in Table 3, brand symbolism is a significant predictor for policing and helping other

customers' behavior (β = 0.28, $p < 0.05$; β = 0.20, $p < 0.05$, respectively), thus strongly supporting Hypothesis 1. PSQ relates significantly to policing and helping other customers (β = 0.15, $p < 0.05$; β = 0.22, $p < 0.05$, respectively), thus supporting Hypothesis 3. The results also indicate that brand symbolism is a significant predictor of PSQ (β = 0.57, $p < 0.05$). Thus, Hypothesis 2 is fully supported.

Table 3. Results of direct, mediation, and interaction effects.

From→To (β)	Helping Other Customers	Policing Other Customers	PSQ
Independent variables			
Brand symbolism	0.20 ***	28 ***	0.57 ***
PSQ	0.22 ***	0.15 *	-
CSR skepticism	−0.87 ***	−0.55 *	-
Interaction effect	β	CI ^{low}	CI ^{High}
BS*CSR.S→HOC	0.16	0.071	0.261
BS*CSR.S→POC	0.10	0.009	0.185
Mediation analysis			
Direct effects			
BS→HOC	0.40	0.295	0.512
BS→POC	0.35	0.256	0.456
Indirect effects			
BS→PSQ→HOC	0.13	0.079	0.185
BS→PSQ→POC	0.08	0.027	0.146

Note: *** = $p < 0.001$, * $p < 0.05$; BS = Brand symbolism; HOC = helping other customers; POC = Policing other customer; CSR.S = CSR skepticism.

The mediating effect was examined by employing Model 4 of the PROCESS macro (Version 3.3) developed by [97]. A bootstrap sample of 5000, based on 439 observations with a 95% confidence interval, was generated [98]. The bootstrapping result indicated that the indirect effect of brand symbolism on the policing and helping of other customers through PSQ is statistically significant (β = 0.08, 95% CI [0.02, 0.14]; β = 0.13, 95% CI [0.07, 0.18], respectively), thus supporting Hypothesis 4. Further, Model 1 of the PROCESS macro was used to examine the interaction effect of CSR skepticism on the relationship between brand symbolism and each CCB dimension. As shown in Table 3, CSR skepticism significantly moderates the effects of brand symbolism on each CCB dimension (β = 0.10, 95% CI (0.00, 0.18) for brand symbolism and policing other customers; β = 0.16, 95% CI (0.07, 0.26) for brand symbolism and helping other customers). Figure 2A,B shows the interaction effect, indicating that policing and helping other customers are high in conditions where there are low levels of CSR skepticism and brand symbolism. Both dimensions of CCB remain high under low levels of CSR skepticism and high levels of brand symbolism.

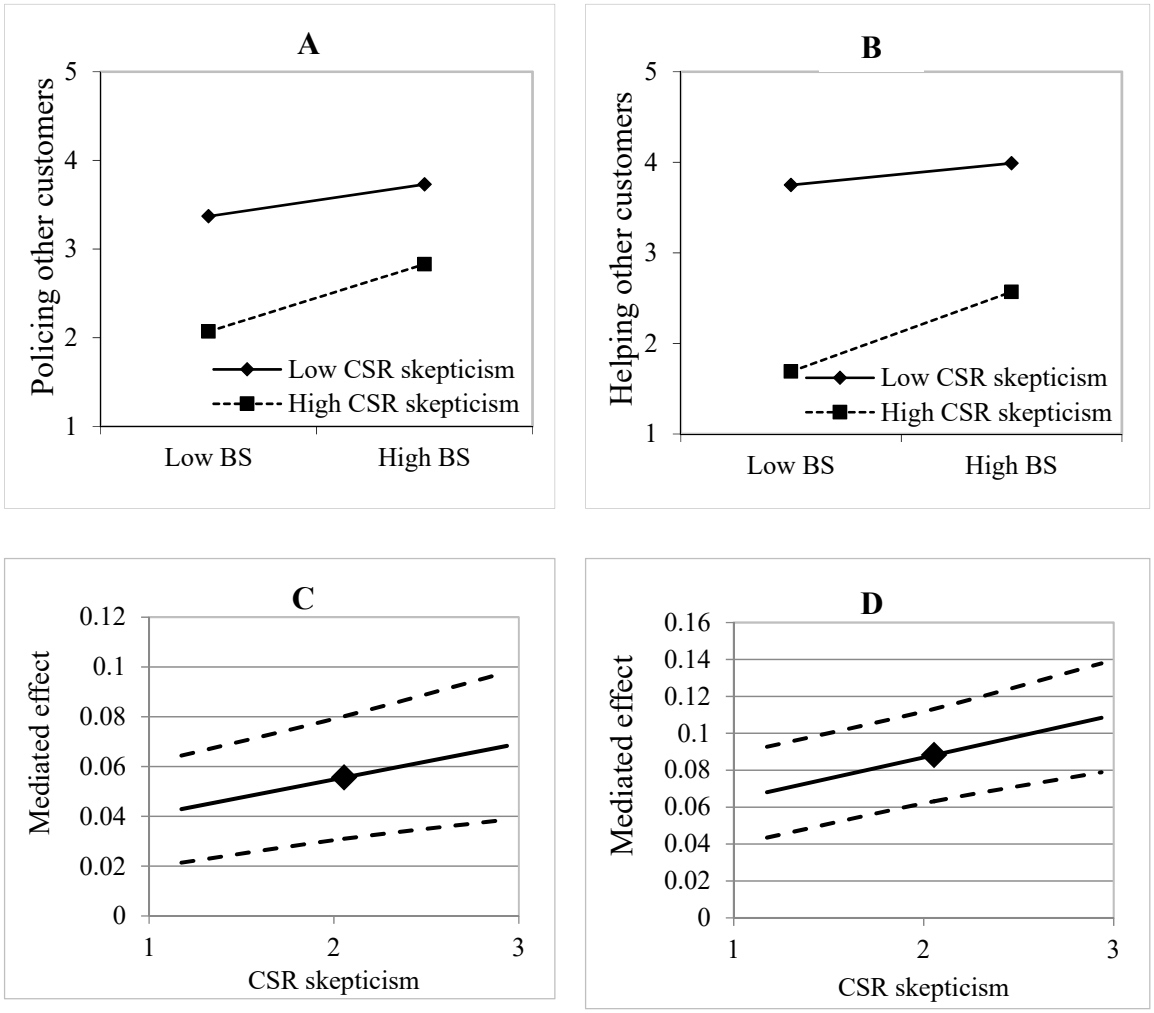


Figure 2. Interaction and conditional indirect effects.

Table 4 reports the results of the moderated mediation effect. The results show that when the level of CSR skepticism is high, brand symbolism has an indirect effect on the policing of other customers through stronger PSQ (β = 0.06, 95% bias-corrected CI (0.011, 0.128)) compared to when the level of CSR skepticism is low (β = 0.04, 95% bias-corrected CI (0.007, 0.091)). To verify the significance of this difference, we conducted the moderated mediation index using PROCESS. As shown in Table 4, the moderated mediation index reported a positive and significant difference (β = 0.014; 95% bias-corrected CI (0.001, 0.035)). Similarly, when the level of CSR skepticism is high, brand symbolism has a stronger indirect effect on helping other customers through PSQ (β = 0.10, 95% bias-corrected CI (0.051, 0.169)) than when the level of CSR skepticism is low (β = 0.06, 95% bias-corrected CI (0.031, 0.116)). The moderated mediation index reported for a significant difference, as 95% bias-corrected CI, does not include the zero value (β = 0.022, 95% bias-corrected CI (0.003, 0.049)). This means that the importance of PSQ in explaining the nexus between brand symbolism and CCB in the coffee shop context increases simultaneously with the increase in the level of customers' skepticism of the coffee shop's pro-social activities (e.g., CSR). Therefore, Hypothesis 6 is fully supported.

Table 4. Conditional Indirect Effects.

		BS→PSQ→CCB Dimensions			
	Moderator	**Effect**	**Boot SE**	**Boot LLCI**	**Boot ULCI**
Policing Other Customers	Simple paths for low CSR skepticism	0.042	0.021	0.007	0.091
	Simple paths for normal (Mean)	0.055	0.024	0.01	0.107
	Simple paths for high CSR skepticism	0.068	0.029	0.012	0.128
	Index of the conditional indirect effect	0.014	0.009	0.001	0.035
Helping Other Customers	Simple paths for low CSR skepticism	0.068	0.024	0.024	0.121
	Simple paths for normal (Mean)	0.088	0.025	0.040	0.141
	Simple paths for high CSR skepticism	0.108	0.03	0.050	0.168
	Index of the conditional indirect effect	0.0229	0.0119	0.0033	0.0498

5. Discussion

5.1. General Discussion

Brand symbolism is a critical source of a firm's distinctiveness [7]. However, the literature so far has neglected the question of whether brand symbolism can be a significant predictor of voluntary behavior, such as CCB, and how such relationships can be most effectively framed. Particularly, we still know little about how the customers' skepticism of a firm's pro-social activities (e.g., CSR skepticism) and their perception of the firm's internal competencies (e.g., PSQ) could affect the effectiveness of brand symbolism on customer voluntary behavior. This study addressed this gap by empirically examining the relationship between brand symbolism and CCB as well as investigating the mediating role of PSQ and the moderating role of CSR skepticism in the relationship between brand symbolism and CCB in the hospitality context. Consistence with the service-dominant logic that intangible factors are one of the main predictors of customer value co-creation and in parallel with previous studies on the effect of brand symbolism on consumer behavior [35], the findings of this study support the main effect of brand symbolism on CCB in the hospitality context. Moreover, the study empirically supported the responsibility of PSQ in assimilating and exploiting the symbolic value of a brand in coffee shops and converting it into CCB. Further, the findings of this study revealed that the positive effect of brand symbolism on CCB is contingent on CSR skepticism; such an effect tends to be smaller for customers who have a high level of CSR skepticism than for customers that have a less skeptical perception about CSR initiatives.

Several studies that have been conducted about the effectiveness of brand symbolism in enhancing customer responses provided inconsistent findings, reporting positive [43], negative [99], as well as insignificant [100] effects. The findings of this study contribute to the brand symbolism-related studies in clarifying this inconsistency by incorporating the interaction effect of customer skepticism about the company's involvement in pro-social activities (e.g., CSR) with the effect of brand symbolism. Specifically, the result of this study illustrates that the effects of brand symbolism on customer responses (e.g., CCB in this study) diminish when consumers are skeptical of the CSR initiatives and vice versa. The findings of our study are consistent with earlier findings arguing the destructive effect of CSR skepticism on the consequences of corporate positive attributes (e.g., brand symbolism) [77], as well as to the cognitive consistency theory which suggests that the psychological discomfort that a customer faces leads to creating a belief-consistent idea which, in turn, affects their overall evaluation of the company's attributes.

Importantly, the findings contribute to the tourism and hospitality management literature by indicating that brand symbolism is a stronger predictor of policing other customers than helping other customers in the hospitality context. This finding supports the philosophy derived from self-concept theories, where customers use the symbolism characteristics of a brand or company to enhance their self-concepts and social approval [73]. Customers

with high self-symbolism police other customers since possessions are considered part of the self, and any threat directed to the possession is considered a threat to the self. Meanwhile, high social symbolism leads to the helping of other customers, where doing so empowers individuals to represent altruistic behavior.

The findings of this study explain the mechanism of how brand symbolism might be exploited to enhance CCB by positing PSQ as a crucial mediator in this relationship. Hence, the findings of this study contributing to the literature by adopting the customer perception of service quality to explain how corporate intangible assets (e.g., brand symbolism) might be used to enhance customer voluntary behavior by positing PSQ as a potential mediator in the relationship between brand symbolism and CCB. The findings are congruent with the argument of previous studies [65] that PSQ is essential in creating customer–company bonds and enhancing their attitude. Yet, the findings of this study extend the previous studies by providing an interactive model that shows how brand symbolism and PSQ jointly affect CCB.

The findings of this study also contribute to the hospitality industry by providing an interactive mechanism of how CSR skepticism affects the relationships among brand symbolism, PSQ, and CCB, which past studies have neglected. The findings reveal that the conditional indirect effect of brand symbolism on CCB through PSQ relies significantly on the level of CSR skepticism that customers have. This study revealed that when the level of CSR skepticism was high, the indirect effect of PSQ better explained the relationship between brand symbolism and each of the CCB dimensions (helping other customers and policing other customers) than when the level of CSR skepticism was low, suggesting that the PSQ of a coffee shop gains more importance in explaining the relationship between brand symbolism and CCB when the level of customer skepticism toward CSR initiatives increases. This finding is in parallel with [101]'s argument that when consumers receive negative information about a firm's social responsibility practices, firms should invest in both CSR and service quality orientation for an effective shield against negative information about the core offerings of the firm. This study extends the understanding of the role of CSR skepticism, confirming it as a crucial moderator in the relationship between brand symbolism and CCB.

5.2. Managerial Contributions

Our research findings have several implications for managers and marketers, especially in the hospitality sector. This study provides insights to the marketers in the hospitality companies that the focus of marketing campaigns should not be only based on the functional and utilitarian needs aspects of their products/services. Rather, they should incorporate the symbolic meaning of their brand in their marketing strategy. By doing so, they can have more customers that defend the brand and police the opportunistic behavior of other customers as well as encourage them to help other customers of the brand. Further, a talented brand management team is needed to develop a strategy that communicates the social and self-symbolism of the brand. By doing so, they can enhance customer positive responses since, according to the findings of this study, customers highly appreciate the symbolic value of the brand and are willing to reciprocate with voluntary behaviors. For instance, coffee shops might deepen memorable and sensual aspects of their brands that might create and enhance self, intimate, and social feelings of the customers which, in turn, feeds self and social symbolism and creates coffee-drinking lifestyles. Integrating coffee-drinking lifestyles and the related activities into customers' daily consumption patterns might lead to a better understanding of the nuances of the lifestyle and customer identity which, in turn, increases their enthusiasm and attachment with the symbolic value of the brand and boosts their voluntary behaviors. Further, managers in coffee shops should increase the publicity of brand symbolism by advertising the symbolic value of their brand in various social media channels to deepen customer's impressions and to attract more customers.

In this context, it is especially important to take into consideration the critical role of customer perception of the service quality offered by a brand. Managers in the hospitality context should consider the joint effect of brand symbolism and PSQ on positive extra-role customer behaviors. Given the potential effect on future customers' behaviors, understanding how customers' overall assessments of service affect CCB has important managerial implications in the present competitive environment. For instance, a company should improve its customer service department by improving the efficiency of the service process, service providers, and handling customers' complaints and comments. Moreover, since social media sites (e.g., Facebook, Twitter) serve as a principal information source for the company and its customers, managers should care about the interaction of company–customers social networks, as customers can provide information about their experiences and ideas about brands and services. Doing so might lead customers to perceive the higher symbolic value of a brand, which positively influences customers' willingness to defend the brand against opportunistic behaviors and to provide support to the customers of the brand.

This finding of the study revealed that CSR skepticism has a destructive effect on the nexus between brand symbolism and CCB. Thus, in keeping with [11]'s view that customers skepticism of the company's pro-social activities has a destructive effect on the consequences of a firm's internal competencies on customer responses, coffee shops should invest in building trust in their CSR initiatives, which, in turn, could increase the effectiveness of brand symbolism and PSQ jointly in generating positive customer responses. Managers should avoid making decisions at the launch of CSR programs that cause consumers' disbelief and doubts and that diminish the effect of brand symbolism on consumer behavior. Understanding and developing strong favorable associations with customers will minimize consumers' CSR skepticism, and adopting governance principles and establishing standard ethical company guidelines could increase consumers' confidence in CSR programs and positively affect society. Further, advertising and communication campaigns should be based on factual and transparent information. Thus, the company should regularly measure public skepticism in its CSR activities to protect its reputation and symbolism. Moreover, managers in the hospitality industry should be aware that the importance of the PSQ in explaining the nexus between brand symbolism and CCB increase simultaneously with the increase in the level of CSR skepticism. Thus, decreasing the CSR skepticism would increase the effectiveness of brand symbolism in generating voluntary behaviors in cases where the firm lacks a good perception of its service quality.

6. Limitations and Directions for Future Studies

This study has several limitations. First, this study applied a convenience sampling method to collect data from only one brand (Starbucks). Future studies could apply the research conceptual model in different context and brands. Second, this study used only two dimensions of CCB; thus, future studies could investigate the effect of brand symbolism on other dimensions of CCB (e.g., customer feedback, customer advocacy). Third, this research centered on the cognitive process for explicating customer approach behaviors (i.e., citizenship behaviors); future studies could incorporate the affective/conative process into the proposed theoretical model. Finally, this research revealed that PSQ exerts a mediating effect on the relationship between brand symbolism and CCBs. However, future studies could consider other mediators, such as brand image, company reputation, customer satisfaction, and perceived quality, or other moderators of the brand symbolism–CCB relationships, such as customer age and customer culture.

7. Conclusions

The current study investigated the effect of brand symbolism on CCB within the coffee shop context, taking into consideration the mediating role of PSQ and the moderating role of CSR skepticism in the brand symbolism–CCB relationship. The study was motivated by the lack of studies, particularly in the hospitality context, that examine brand symbolism as one

of the key antecedents of CCB. The findings of this study confirm the importance of brand symbolism in boosting CCB. Further, PSQ was found to be a variable that is responsible for assimilating and exploiting the symbolic value of a brand in a coffee shop and converting it into CCB. Moreover, for the first time, the contingent role of CSR skepticism on the relationships among brand symbolism, PSQ, and CCB was explored. It is hoped that this work provides insightful contributions, enabling a better understanding of the nature of the relationship between brand symbolism and CCB, as well as the underlying mechanism of why and under what conditions brand symbolism effectively enhances CCBs.

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