

Beyond Business: How Corporate Social Responsibility Shapes Brand Trust—A Case Study of Pang Dong Lai

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ABSTRACT: This study aims to explore the impact mechanism of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) on brand image building, with a focus on Pang Dong Lai as a case study. The study adopts a qualitative case study approach, utilizing content analysis to interpret official and public textual materials, and integrates stakeholder theory and brand personality theory for analytical framework. Pang Dong Lai (PDL) deeply embeds CSR into its strategic management, transcending economic and legal obligations to attain higher levels of ethical and philanthropic responsibilities, thereby realizing the synergistic coexistence of economic and social value. Specifically, its CSR initiatives effectively drive sales growth by enhancing brand reputation and strengthening consumer trust and loyalty. More importantly, PDL constructs a dual-cycle pathway of "internal empowerment-external resonance," successfully converting CSR into brand equity, shaping a "warm" brand personality, and forging a brand Trust of "business for goodness." This study enriches the theoretical system of CSR and brand image, and provides practical implications for enterprises to internalize social responsibility as core brand assets and achieve sustainable development.

KEY WORD: Corporate Social Responsibility; Brand Image; Brand Trust; Pang Dong Lai (PDL)

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I. INTRODUCTION

With the deepening of economic globalization and the disruptive advancement of information technology, market boundaries have become increasingly blurred. The competition faced by enterprises has evolved from local, product-centric competition to global, brand-driven comprehensive competition. In this context, brands have emerged as core intangible assets for enterprises to occupy consumers' minds and gain sustainable competitive advantages. Traditional competitive levers such as price, channels, and functional differentiation are experiencing diminishing marginal returns, while brand image—carrying cultural, emotional, and value commitments—has increasingly become a key determinant of consumer decision-making. This implies that the essence of modern corporate competition lies in brand power rivalry. How to construct a unique, robust, and resilient brand image is a pivotal question that Chinese enterprises with long-term aspirations must address.

Amid intensifying brand competition, public consumption awareness and social expectations are undergoing profound transformations. Stakeholders including consumers, employees, and investors no longer focus solely on a company's financial performance and product functionality but increasingly emphasize the social value and ethical orientation underlying its business operations. Consequently, CSR has evolved from a marginalized philanthropic activity to an indispensable core dimension of strategic management. Proactive CSR practices can effectively convey strong signals regarding a company's quality, values, and reliability to the market, enhance brand reputation, build consumer trust, foster brand loyalty, and provide valuable "reputational insurance" during crises. Therefore, internalizing CSR as a strategic asset in brand building has become a critical pathway for modern enterprises to establish brand advantages.

In China's highly homogenized retail industry plagued by price wars, Pang Dong Lai Group Co., Ltd. (hereinafter referred to as "PDL") has established a strong brand barrier through its distinctive business model and CSR practices, forming the widely discussed "PDL Phenomenon." Its uniqueness and research value are primarily reflected in three aspects (Pang Dong Lai Company, 2025):

Atypical Practice Model : Unlike most enterprises that treat CSR as an auxiliary marketing tool or marginal charitable activity, PDL deeply integrates CSR concepts into all aspects of strategic and daily

operations, forming a unique model centered on the dual cores of "employee well-being" and "customer trust." Its "high salary, high welfare, high care" employee policies, and uncompromising pursuit of product quality and after-sales service even transcend the economic and legal responsibility categories of Carroll's Pyramid Model, reaching higher levels of ethical and philanthropic responsibility, and realizing the coordinated development of economic and social benefits.

Cross-regional Brand Influence: Although PDL's physical operations have long been confined to a few cities in Henan Province (e.g., Xuchang and Xinxiang), its brand reputation has broken geographical boundaries, gaining widespread dissemination and discussion nationwide through social media. It has earned titles such as "Haidilao of the retail industry" and "China's top supermarket." This strong brand reputation and organic consumer advocacy driven by excellent CSR practices provide an invaluable sample for studying brand image building.

Theoretical Verification and Practical Enlightenment: PDL's successful practices offer a vivid Chinese contextual case for testing and advancing theories of corporate social responsibility, stakeholder theory, and brand image. In-depth analysis of how its CSR initiatives are converted into solid brand equity not only reveals the internal mechanism but also provides a feasible pathway for numerous Chinese enterprises at the crossroads of brand transformation to achieve brand upgrading through value co-creation and responsibility fulfillment.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

2.1 Definition of Core Concepts

2.1.1 Corporate Social Responsibility

Carroll (1991) proposed the Pyramid of CSR, defining CSR comprehensively as: "Corporate Social Responsibility encompasses the economic, legal, ethical, and discretionary (philanthropic) expectations that society has of organizations at a given point in time." Freeman (1984) conceptualized CSR as a company's fiduciary duty to its stakeholders, defining stakeholders as: "Any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of a company's objectives."

2.1.2 Brand Image

The concept of brand image was first proposed by Ogilvy (1963), who defined it as: "Brand image is composed of brand attributes, packaging, price, visibility, and advertising elements." Its core tenets are: to create a unique and distinctive brand identity; to establish a brand personality—"personality" refers to an image, where the overall temperament of a brand should differ from others, not merely in product features; and to reflect and influence the audience, which is also a manifestation of brand image.

2.2 Relevant Theoretical Foundations

2.2.1 CSR Pyramid Model

Carroll (1991)'s CSR Pyramid Model comprises four hierarchical components.

Economic Responsibility: The fundamental responsibility of enterprises to ensure their own survival, development, and the satisfaction of customer needs. This includes providing material products, creating employment opportunities, driving economic growth, and paying taxes.

Legal Responsibility: The obligation to fulfill economic missions within legal frameworks, including compliance with national laws and regulations, law-abiding operations, tax payment in accordance with rules, and acceptance of government supervision and legal intervention.

Ethical Responsibility: The duty to act ethically and in line with societal moral norms, including respecting and protecting human rights, adhering to business ethics, maintaining integrity and trustworthiness, and avoiding harm to stakeholder interests.

Philanthropic Responsibility: Voluntary actions beyond legal requirements, including acting as a good corporate citizen, donating resources to communities, and providing disaster relief.

2.2.2 Stakeholder Theory

Systematically proposed by Freeman (1984), Stakeholder Theory emphasizes that enterprises should be accountable not only to shareholders but also to multiple stakeholders such as employees, customers, suppliers, communities, and governments. This theory breaks through the limitations of the traditional shareholder-centric model, providing a theoretical basis for CSR implementation. In corporate operations, identifying and responding to the expectations of key stakeholders is a critical pathway to achieving sustainable management and brand value enhancement.

2.3 Review of CSR and Brand Image Relationship Research

Luo Ziming (2001) argues that brand image is the comprehensive reflection of its constituent elements in consumers' minds and represents consumers' subjective evaluation of the brand. In the process of brand image building, fulfilling social responsibilities functions similarly to advertising communication, effectively influencing consumers' brand perceptions and attitudes. Li Jiang's research indicates that enterprises' proactive fulfillment of social responsibility has a positive impact on consumers: the more actively an enterprise fulfills social responsibility, the more favorable consumers' brand evaluations will be. As a multi-dimensional construct, consumer brand evaluation includes key elements such as brand trust, brand loyalty, and purchase intention. It reflects consumers' overall attitudes formed based on an enterprise's CSR performance, illustrating the dynamic interaction between brands and consumers. Therefore, effective CSR fulfillment can enhance consumers' brand evaluations and establish a positive and stable brand image.

2.3.1 Positive Impact Mechanism of CSR on Brand Image

Trust-Building Mechanism: Honest fulfillment of responsibilities enhances consumers' perceptions of brand reliability and goodwill.

Emotional Connection Mechanism: Ethical behaviors trigger consumers' emotional resonance, fostering brand attachment.

Image Differentiation Mechanism: In fiercely competitive markets, social responsibility becomes an effective element for brand differentiation.

Word-of-Mouth Communication Mechanism: Positive CSR performance amplifies brand reputation through media coverage and public discourse.

2.3.2 Main Views and Achievements of Existing Research

Existing studies generally confirm that CSR exerts a positive impact on brand image, specifically in enhancing brand trust and loyalty (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2004); strengthening brand associations and recognition (Keller, 1993); improving corporate reputation and mitigating the impact of negative events (Coombs & Holladay, 2012); and indirectly reinforcing brand behavioral consistency through employees' organizational identification (Gond et al., 2010).

2.3.3 Limitations of Existing Research and the Entry Point of This Study

Despite the richness of existing literature, limitations persist: Most studies are based on Western contexts, with limited explanatory power for CSR practices in the Chinese cultural context; They focus excessively on consumer-side impacts while neglecting the role of employees as internal carriers of brand image; There is a lack of in-depth exploration of how CSR is transformed into Brand Trust. Taking PDL as a case study, this research attempts to construct an integrated brand image building model from the dual dimensions of internal empowerment and external resonance, addressing the aforementioned research gaps.

III. RESEARCH DESIGN

3.1 Research Method

This study adopts a qualitative case study method to conduct an in-depth analysis of PDL's unique practices and explore the complex intrinsic relationship between its CSR initiatives and brand image construction. Case study methods are particularly suitable for answering exploratory questions such as "how" and "why," facilitating the extraction of theoretical mechanisms from complex phenomena. This study employs content analysis to code and interpret textual materials, with stakeholder theory and brand personality theory (Aaker, 1997) as core analytical lenses.

3.2 Case Selection

3.2.1 Case Selection Rationale: PDL

PDL was selected as the research object due to its outstanding CSR performance and extensive social influence. The relationship between its atypical CSR practices and significant brand effects merits in-depth exploration. Its extraordinary fulfillment of legal and ethical responsibilities provides an excellent sample for studying how CSR reshapes brand image.

3.2.2 Overview of PDL

Founded in March 1995 and headquartered in Weidu District, Xuchang City, Henan Province, PDL Group Co., Ltd. is a member of Henan Sifang Liancai and a renowned commercial retail giant in Henan's business community. Currently, its offline operations are limited to Xuchang and Xinxiang in Henan Province, covering multiple business formats such as department stores, home appliances, and supermarkets. Over the past

25 years, PDL has opened more than 30 chain stores and employs over 7,000 staff. Despite its geographically concentrated operations, it enjoys strong brand influence in these two cities and is the preferred shopping destination for local residents.

3.3 Data Collection and Analysis

3.3.1 Data Collection

The primary data sources for this study are secondary textual materials, including:(1) Corporate official documents (e.g., official website content and CSR reports);(2) Public literature (e.g., academic papers, media coverage, and industry research reports);(3) User-generated content (e.g., consumer reviews on social media platforms such as Xiaohongshu and Douyin);(4) Third-party reports (e.g., corporate credit ratings and consumer research data).

3.3.2 Data Analysis

This study employs content analysis to systematically code the collected textual materials. The coding process integrates deductive and inductive approaches: first, initial framework coding is conducted based on Carroll's (1991) CSR Pyramid Model (economic, legal, ethical, and philanthropic responsibilities); then, core themes are extracted through open coding. To ensure analytical rigor, the coding process undergoes repeated cross-validation among researchers to enhance coding reliability.

3.4 Application of Theoretical Framework

At the theoretical level, this study integrates stakeholder theory and brand personality theory to interpret the CSR practices identified through content analysis. Through these two theoretical lenses, it systematically explains how PDL shapes a unique brand personality by addressing the demands of diverse stakeholders, and ultimately summarizes the internal logic and external implementation pathway of its brand image building.

IV. ANALYSIS OF PAND DONG LAI'S CSR PRACTICES AND BRAND IMAGE SHAPING

4.1 Multi-dimensional CSR Practices of PDL

4.1.1 Economic Responsibility: High-Quality Supply and Value Sharing

Carroll (1991) regards economic responsibility as the cornerstone of the CSR pyramid, emphasizing it as a prerequisite for fulfilling other responsibilities. However, PDL prioritizes extraordinary ethical and philanthropic responsibilities to employees and customers over profit maximization. It is committed to providing essential goods and services to society, covering diverse business formats to meet consumers' heterogeneous needs and continuously responding to their pursuit of healthy and high-quality lifestyles, ensuring that every customer can achieve a satisfactory shopping experience. By expanding its business scale, it creates numerous employment opportunities, with employee salaries ranking among the most competitive nationwide. These measures have yielded extremely high customer loyalty and employee productivity, driving steady sales growth. In 2023, its revenue reached 10.7 billion yuan with a net profit of 140 million yuan, and its turnover in the first half of 2024 had already reached 5.77 billion yuan (Sohu News, 2024). This not only promotes the company's own business growth but also drives the development of upstream and downstream industries such as suppliers, logistics, and advertising, making a positive contribution to regional economic growth.

4.1.2 Legal Responsibility: Compliant Operations and Trust Asset Construction

PDL consistently prioritizes product quality and safety. The company has established a comprehensive quality management system (QMS) and strict enforcement mechanisms, implementing meticulous management throughout the procurement, quality inspection, and after-sales service processes. It has also invested in building a central kitchen to strictly control food production procedures and ensure food safety. This rigorous oversight of product quality and safety not only constitutes full compliance with laws and regulations but also reflects respect and protection for consumers' health. Meanwhile, in business operations, PDL adheres to the principles of legal operation and integrity in service, openly advocating "genuine products for sincere hearts" and "satisfaction guaranteed or full refund," and strictly implementing these commitments in practice. This strict control over product authenticity and continuous improvement of after-sales service not only win consumers' trust and loyalty but also reflect PDL's transformation of legal responsibility from passive compliance to active brand commitment, thereby converting compliance costs into valuable trust assets (Pang Dong Lai, 2025).

4.1.3 Ethical Responsibility: People-Centered Practices

Valuing Employees: PDL adheres to the philosophy of "people-oriented, employees first," focusing on employee growth and development. Through standardized management processes, competitive compensation and benefits, and employee self-improvement programs, it stimulates employee motivation and enhances job satisfaction, thereby enabling employees to provide superior shopping experiences for customers and realize value co-creation. Additionally, PDL implements a high-salary policy: since 2000, it has distributed 90% of its profits to employees annually. On the basis of basic salary guarantees, it allocates a portion of net profits to employees and management, a portion to shareholders, and a portion to the company for sustainable operations. Contrary to leading to poor management, this practice has driven consecutive years of growth in sales and profit margins. PDL also established a "grievance compensation system" for employees: if an employee is wronged due to customer misunderstandings during work, management promptly provides corresponding subsidies and emotional support, making employees feel the company's care and respect (Pang Dong Lai, 2025). This measure not only alleviates employees' negative emotions but also strengthens their organizational commitment and loyalty.

Valuing Customers: PDL adheres to the principle of "customer first, sincere service," focusing on user needs, experiences, and interests to provide meticulous services. For example, it has set up nursing rooms, children's restrooms, and senior-friendly shopping carts to meet the needs of diverse customer segments (NetEase, 2025). In terms of after-sales service, PDL actively listens to and addresses customer feedback, offering over a hundred free services and prioritizing customer satisfaction (Sohu News, 2023). In business operations, it consistently upholds the philosophy of "PDL with love," striving to provide excellent shopping experiences while integrating "people-centered" values into all aspects of operations (CSDN, 2024). A typical example is the well-known "rolled noodle skin incident": when a food safety hazard was exposed due to hygiene issues in the noodle skin processing area, PDL did not evade or shift responsibility but proactively took accountability and implemented immediate compensation measures. It awarded 100,000 yuan in cash to the customer who uncovered the major food safety hazard; for customers who purchased noodle skin or spicy noodles from the catering departments of two PDL stores in Xinxiang within 10 days, it processed full refunds and provided 1,000 yuan in compensation per customer, totaling 8.833 million yuan (Global Times, 2024). This timely and sincere response mechanism enhances customers' positive experiences, reflects the company's sense of social responsibility and corporate mission, and contributes to a leapfrog improvement in brand influence.

Valuing Business: Partners as a local retailer, PDL attaches great importance to cooperation with suppliers. It has established the "Sifang Liancai" alliance with three other leading local chain enterprises (Xinyang West Company, Nanyang Wandelong Company, and Luoyang Dazhang Company), enhancing bargaining power and market competitiveness through joint procurement and development. Large-scale unified procurement and distribution have significantly reduced procurement costs, expanded brand influence, and further consolidated its market position. Additionally, PDL provides drivers with shower facilities, toiletries, hairdryers, and non-slip mats. If deliveries are delayed, it offers free meals and accommodation, with private rooms equipped with air conditioning, sofas, and refrigerators stocked with food (Pang Dong Lai, 2025). These actions demonstrate PDL's active fulfillment of ethical responsibilities and commitment to maintaining cooperative relationships with business partners.

4.1.4 Philanthropic Responsibility: Social Contribution and Responsible Citizenship

Corporate social responsibility requires enterprises to actively safeguard and promote public interests while pursuing economic benefits. As a socially responsible enterprise, PDL has long been committed to social welfare undertakings. During the 2003 SARS outbreak, it donated 8 million yuan to support anti-epidemic efforts; in the aftermath of the 2008 Wenchuan Earthquake, it delivered nearly 100 million yuan in funds and relief supplies to the disaster-stricken area; during the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic, it donated 50 million yuan to Wuhan. During the recent severe floods in Zhengzhou, Henan, PDL led its employees to participate in frontline relief efforts (thepaper, 2021). This proactive commitment to social responsibility not only enhances PDL's social image and reputation but also fosters a sense of identification and belonging among employees and customers. Beyond responding to major social events, PDL actively participates in public welfare projects in poverty alleviation, educational donations, and environmental protection. Through direct procurement of agricultural products from poverty-stricken areas, it helps increase farmers' incomes, improves their living standards, and provides customers with fresh and safe ingredients. Recognizing that corporate development is inseparable from social support, PDL has always regarded embodying corporate citizenship through practical actions as its core mission, embodying corporate responsibility through practical actions.

4.2 Positive Impact of PDL's CSR on Brand Image Shaping

4.2.1 Establishing a Positive Reputation and Enhancing Brand Equity

Through proactive CSR fulfillment, PDL has achieved economic success while establishing a responsible and accountable social image, earning widespread public acclaim. By focusing on product quality and service standards while fulfilling responsibilities to society, the environment, and employees, the company conveys positive cultural values and spiritual connotations, enabling consumers to associate the brand with positive social values and form favorable brand perceptions. These measures effectively enhance PDL's brand reputation, strengthen brand extensibility, and secure a good reputation and widespread recognition in fiercely competitive markets.

4.2.2 Strengthening Consumer Trust and Fostering Brand Loyalty

In an increasingly competitive market, PDL consistently adheres to a customer-centric approach, winning consumer trust through high-quality products and services while actively communicating corporate culture and values. Beyond product quality, the company focuses on building emotional connections with consumers, enabling them to perceive the company's sincerity and responsibility during the purchasing process. This trust-based relationship, rooted in CSR practices, not only enhances consumers' brand identification but also effectively improves brand loyalty, establishing a solid customer base for PDL.

4.2.3 Driving Sales Growth and Achieving Sustainable Development

Through CSR fulfillment, PDL has not only shaped a positive corporate image but also realized the coordinated development of economic and social benefits. Its high-salary policies and employee development mechanisms fully stimulate employee potential, providing talent support for sustainable growth; meanwhile, active participation in public welfare undertakings and social repayment create a favorable external development environment. These measures not only enhance the company's social reputation but also drive steady sales growth, laying a solid economic and social foundation for sustainable development. While pursuing economic benefits, PDL balances the demands of stakeholders, achieving coordinated development between the company, society, and the environment, and enhancing its comprehensive competitiveness and sustainable development capabilities.

V. MECHANISM ANALYSIS OF PDL'SCSR IMPACT ON BRAND IMAGE

5.1 Internal Mechanism: From Employee Empowerment to Brand Personification

PDL's internal CSR practices construct a complete value transmission loop, externalizing internal management behaviors into brand images with distinct personality traits through dual pathways of institutional incentives and organizational identification.

5.1.1 Material and Spiritual Incentives: Building Employee Well-being

PDL's "high salary + high welfare" policy establishes an industry-leading material security system. On one hand, it directly improves employees' quality of life; on the other hand, the external competitiveness of income enhances employees' sense of pride and identification. More strategically, the design of the "grievance compensation system" and extra-long paid leave essentially reshapes the traditional labor-capital relationship, transforming the company's role from a labor buyer to a co-creator of employee well-being. This institutional arrangement translates the "people-oriented" organizational value from a conceptual statement into tangible behavioral experiences, fostering deep organizational identification and emotional commitment among employees.

5.1.2 Organizational Citizenship Behavior: Employees as Brand Ambassadors

Based on enhanced well-being and identification, employees spontaneously exhibit multi-level organizational citizenship behaviors: in service scenarios, employees evolve from standard process executors to "service co-creators," capable of flexibly adjusting service strategies based on customer needs; in social contexts, employees become "organic communication carriers" of the brand, with their authentic work narratives serving as more credible brand information sources than commercial advertisements. Notably, these behaviors are sustainable and genuine because the company creates a "psychological safety zone" for employees—employees do not face risks for exceeding standard service but are instead incentivized for creative value creation.

5.1.3 Value Externalization: Shaping a "Warm" Brand Personality

The core of this mechanism lies in realizing the cross-level transformation from "institutional design → employee behavior → brand perception." When consumers consistently encounter proactive service and emotional investment from employees, they engage in attribution—tracing individual benevolent behaviors back

to organizational institutional design. Thus, internal human resource policies are externalized into brand personality traits of "sincerity" and "warmth" through employees as intermediaries, forming a differentiated competitive advantage rooted in organizational ecology that is difficult for competitors to replicate.

5.2 External Mechanism: From Emotional Resonance to Brand Trust

PDL's external CSR practices construct a progressive pathway for brand value sublimation, ultimately achieving a leap from a commercial brand to a cultural symbol.

5.2.1 Moral Credibility: Perception of Extraordinary Altruism

In product quality incidents such as the "rolled noodle skin incident," PDL's response transcended conventional crisis public relations logic. Its immediate product recall, full refund, in-depth investigation, and transparent disclosure of the process created a strong contrast in consumer perceptions: while industry norms tend to "minimize losses," PDL chose to "maximize responsibility." This extraordinary practice was interpreted by the public as an ethical responsibility action rather than instrumental crisis management, thereby accumulating profound moral credibility for the company.

5.2.2 Emotional Resonance: Value Voting in Consumer Behavior

Based on solid moral credibility, the relationship between consumers and the brand undergoes a critical transformation: from a transactional relationship to an identity-based relationship. At this stage, consuming at PDL carries dual meanings—it is both an economic behavior to satisfy practical needs and a public expression of support for the value of "business for goodness." Consumers achieve "value voting" through their purchasing behavior, gaining social identity from moral expression while obtaining functional product value. This model of linking consumption with values constructs a highly resilient customer relationship.

5.2.3 Brand Sanctuary: The Formation of Brand Trust

When the brand's accumulated moral credibility reaches a certain threshold, a unique "brand sanctuary" effect emerges, manifested in two aspects: Consumers are willing to provide reasonable explanations for the brand's "imperfections," forming a spontaneous tolerance mechanism; The brand acquires social mobilization capabilities, with consumers voluntarily becoming defenders and disseminators of brand values. Ultimately, PDL transcends the traditional role of a retailer, evolving into a cultural symbol of "business for goodness"—people not only shop here but also seek an ideal model of business ethics, achieving the ultimate sublimation from trust to belief.

5.3 Mechanism Integration: Dual Cycle of Strategic CSR and Brand Equity

In summary, PDL's success lies in constructing a dual-cycle pathway of "internal empowerment—external resonance." The internal pathway shapes the brand's "personality warmth" through the transmission mechanism of "institutional incentives → organizational identification → citizenship behavior"; the external pathway establishes the brand's "ethical height" through the sequence of "moral credibility → emotional identification → symbolic sublimation." These two pathways are not isolated but mutually reinforce and empower each other in "employee-customer" interactions, collectively converging into powerful brand equity. The essence of this mechanism is the repositioning of CSR from a marginal charitable activity to a core strategic asset of the enterprise. It indicates that in modern business competition, the deepest level of brand image building is no longer one-way information dissemination but is achieved through sincere and continuous CSR practices, building an emotional community and a community of shared destiny with internal and external stakeholders, thereby forming an unshakable sustainable competitive advantage.

VI. IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR BRAND IMAGE SHAPING FROM A CSR PERSPECTIVE

6.1 Implications for Other Enterprises

6.1.1 Integrate CSR into Corporate Culture to Achieve Value Co-creation

Enterprises should internalize social responsibility as a core component of corporate culture rather than merely using it as an external promotional tool. By integrating CSR concepts into corporate values, codes of conduct, and strategic planning, enterprises can continuously practice social responsibility in daily operations, thereby enhancing brand value while fulfilling social obligations. Specifically, enterprises should balance the relationship between CSR fulfillment and brand value enhancement: on one hand, proactive CSR fulfillment can enhance consumers' trust and identification, improving brand reputation; on the other hand, enhanced brand value provides stronger resource and capability support for CSR initiatives, forming a virtuous cycle. For example, PDL integrates the values of "sincerity, responsibility, and win-win" into its corporate culture, not only

strengthening employees' sense of belonging and mission but also winning emotional identification from external consumers, achieving the joint growth of corporate and social value.

6.1.2 Select Optimal CSR Implementation Methods and Focus on Behavioral Utility

An enterprise's CSR capability is positively correlated with its market competitiveness. Only by gaining consumer recognition and improving business performance while fulfilling social responsibility can enterprises sustainably expand their CSR investment. Among three CSR practice types—product-related CSR, charitable giving, and public welfare activities—their impact on consumer brand evaluation decreases sequentially. Therefore, when selecting CSR methods, enterprises should prioritize high-utility initiatives closely aligned with business development to maximize the effectiveness of CSR expenditures. First, enterprises must fulfill the basic responsibility of "providing products that meet or exceed commitments." High-quality products and services are the cornerstone of brand image and the primary CSR obligation. Without reliable products and services, enterprises cannot achieve long-term survival or establish a positive brand image. Research shows that product-related CSR has the most significant impact on consumer brand evaluation: high-quality products drive repeat purchases and word-of-mouth recommendations, while quality issues lead to complaints and negative publicity, directly damaging brand reputation. Second, on the basis of fulfilling basic responsibilities, enterprises can gradually engage in charitable donations and community support, ensuring that these activities are consistent with brand positioning and consumer expectations to avoid being perceived as marketing gimmicks. Finally, although public welfare activities have a relatively indirect impact, long-term and distinctive initiatives can also help shape a responsible brand image.

6.1.3 Strengthen Altruistic Motivation and Uphold the Original Intention of Responsibility

Enterprises' CSR initiatives should be driven by social value rather than merely economic returns. If enterprises view CSR solely as a tool to enhance profits, they are prone to utilitarian tendencies and may even trigger public skepticism about their motives. Conversely, enterprises rooted in sincere altruistic motives—focused on solving social issues and promoting public welfare—are more likely to gain consumers' emotional resonance and long-term support. PDL's practices demonstrate that only by adopting a "responsibility-driven" rather than "interest-driven" approach can enterprises establish a lasting and sincere brand image, achieving dual empowerment of the brand and society through CSR fulfillment.

6.1.4 Maintain Continuous CSR Practices and Accumulate Brand Reputation

CSR is not a one-time public welfare project but a systematic initiative requiring long-term enterprise investment. Short-term and fragmented CSR activities are unlikely to form stable brand perceptions among consumers and may even be questioned for authenticity due to lack of continuity. Enterprises should formulate clear CSR strategies, establish standardized and institutionalized fulfillment mechanisms, and enhance public trust through regular publication of CSR reports and transparent disclosure of progress. Only through continuous and stable CSR practices can enterprises gradually accumulate brand reputation, form a differentiated competitive barrier, and establish a responsible and trustworthy brand image in the public's mind.

6.2 Research Limitations and Future Directions

Research Limitations: The selected case is unique, and the generalizability of conclusions to other industries or enterprises of different scales remains to be verified; Mechanism analysis relies on behavioral inference and lacks direct interviews with stakeholders such as consumers and employees; Cross-sectional research design makes it difficult to dynamically capture the long-term interaction between CSR and brand image.

Future Directions: Introduce quantitative methods to test the dual-cycle mechanism proposed in this study through large-sample questionnaires; Conduct cross-case comparative research to identify CSR strategy differences across enterprises with different attributes; Explore new pathways for CSR communication and brand image construction in the digital era.

VII.CONCLUSION

With the advancement of economic globalization and the advent of the Chinese brand competition era, corporate social responsibility has become a key criterion for evaluating brand image. Through the systematic fulfillment of economic, legal, ethical, and philanthropic responsibilities, PDL has not only established an excellent brand image in regional markets but also constructed a dual-drive mechanism centered on "employee well-being" and "consumer trust." Its successful experience indicates that enterprises should integrate social responsibility into their organizational DNA, achieving brand personification and belief sublimation through continuous, sincere, and altruistic CSR practices. In the future, building brand image on the foundation of social responsibility will be a critical pathway for Chinese enterprises to enhance their sustainable competitiveness.

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