

FROM RESPONSIBILITY TO RESILIENCE: HOW CSR SPARKS INNOVATION IN ORGANIZATIONS?

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Purpose: The study aims to identify the role of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in fostering innovation and building organizational resilience. The rationale for research in this area stems from the limited number of academic studies that combine these three constructs.

Design/methodology/approach: The analysis of the issue was carried out based on a review of the literature on the subject, including both international and Polish sources.

Findings: This publication focuses on the links between CSR practices, innovation processes, and organizations' ability to adapt and survive in conditions of uncertainty.

Research limitations/implications: The study highlights the lack of universal definitions of CSR, innovation, and organizational resilience in the literature. Although each of these areas has been studied, relatively few studies examine their interconnections. This article attempts to discuss the relationship between CSR, innovation, and organizational resilience, identifying factors that may strengthen this relationship. It also presents examples of CSR practices that stimulate innovation processes and contribute to building organizational resilience, underlining the importance of a responsible approach to management.

Originality/value: The research in this matter is crucial because CSR increasingly serves not only as a tool for building reputation and trust. It is also treated as a catalyst for implementing innovative solutions within organizations, which leads to an increased ability to cope with crises. Implementing strategies based on social responsibility fosters a culture of continuous improvement, anticipating challenges, and responding flexibly and quickly to change. As a result, organizations can more effectively adapt to a dynamic environment, ensuring stability, competitive advantage, and long-term development.

Keywords: Organisational resilience, innovation, CSR-driven innovation, corporate social responsibility, CSR.

Category of the paper: Literature review.

1. Introduction

The challenges that modern organisations face and operate under include uncertainty, volatility, and increasing stakeholders pressure and expectations. The conventional method of managing an entity may not be enough in light of fast changing social expectations, climate change, and technology advancements. With this in mind, strategies that combine social responsibility with the implementation of innovative solutions that contribute to building organisational resilience are becoming increasingly important.

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) activities undertaken by modern entities not only shape and strengthen their reputation in the market in which they operate, but also build lasting trust among stakeholders. What is more, initiatives of this kind support innovation processes that influence adaptation and resilience to crises and unforeseen challenges that the organisation will have to face in the future. CSR takes into account social, environmental and ethical interests in the functioning of an entity. At the same time, it creates conditions for the development and implementation of innovative solutions. The integration of CSR with the implementation of innovation can strengthen organisational resilience. Entities can gain the ability to anticipate future threats, respond quickly to changes in the environment, and maintain a competitive advantage by cooperating with stakeholders and creating a culture based on responsibility.

The aim of this article is to examine the relationship between CSR, innovation implementation and organisational resilience. This analysis will allow to understand whether the actions taken by entities as part of corporate social responsibility can be considered as a factor stimulating the implementation of innovation and leading to the development of organisational responsibility, which is crucial in conditions of uncertainty and environmental change. The aim is pursued with the following research questions:

- How are the concepts of innovation, CSR-driven innovation, corporate social responsibility, and organizational resilience defined and interpreted in the literature?
- What is the role of corporate social responsibility in fostering innovation processes?
- How can CSR practices influence an organization's ability to adapt and survive under conditions of uncertainty?
- What are the conceptual connections between corporate social responsibility, innovation, and organizational resilience?

The questions are addressed through a literature review of international and Polish sources.

2. Methods

The literature review focused on determining the role of CSR in stimulating innovation and building organisational resilience. The review was based on a systematic literature review (Czakon, 2020), which aimed to identify the level of knowledge in the presented subject areas. As part of this method, basic literature on the subject was selected using databases such as Scopus and Web of Science.

The next step was to select publications, taking into account the following keywords: ‘innovation’, ‘CSR’ and ‘organisational resilience’. The list of publications was supplemented using the ‘snowball’ method. The criteria for selecting the literature were the language of the publication (Polish and English) and the time period of publication (2004-2024). As a result of this selection, a database of publications was developed. Bibliometric analysis techniques were also used, limiting the analysis to keywords, fields (business, management and accounting, and social sciences) and document type (articles, conference publications, books and book chapters).

Figure 1 presents an analysis of the number of publications from 2004 to 2024 on the construct of innovation, based on the Scopus and Web of Science databases.

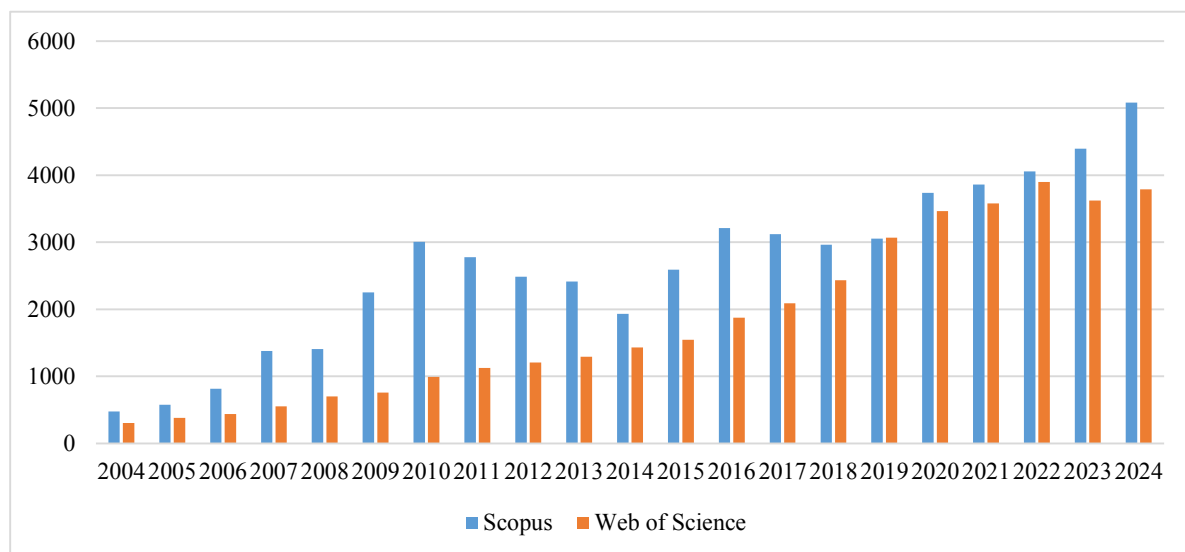


Figure 1. Number of publications on innovation from 2004 to 2024.

Source: Scopus and Web of Science databases.

Based on Figure 1, an upward trend in interest in innovation among researchers can be observed from 2004 to 2024. A steady upward trend can be observed in both databases, but the increase in publications varies from year to year. In the Scopus database, the number of publications in the field of innovation increased from 476 in 2004 to 5083 in 2024. This indicates a more than tenfold increase during the period analysed. The Web of Science database also recorded a significant increase, from 306 publications in 2004 to 3788 in 2024. It should be noted that between 2004 and 2010, the growth rate of publications was higher in

the Scopus database. In contrast, in the Web of Science database, the number of publications began to grow steadily from around 2012. This has led to a reduction in the difference between the databases. The largest increase in publications in the databases can be seen in the Scopus database in 2009-2010 and 2023-2024, while in the Web of Science it occurred in 2017-2020.

Figure 2 shows an analysis of the number of publications in the period 2004-2024 on the concept of CSR, based on the Scopus and Web of Science databases.

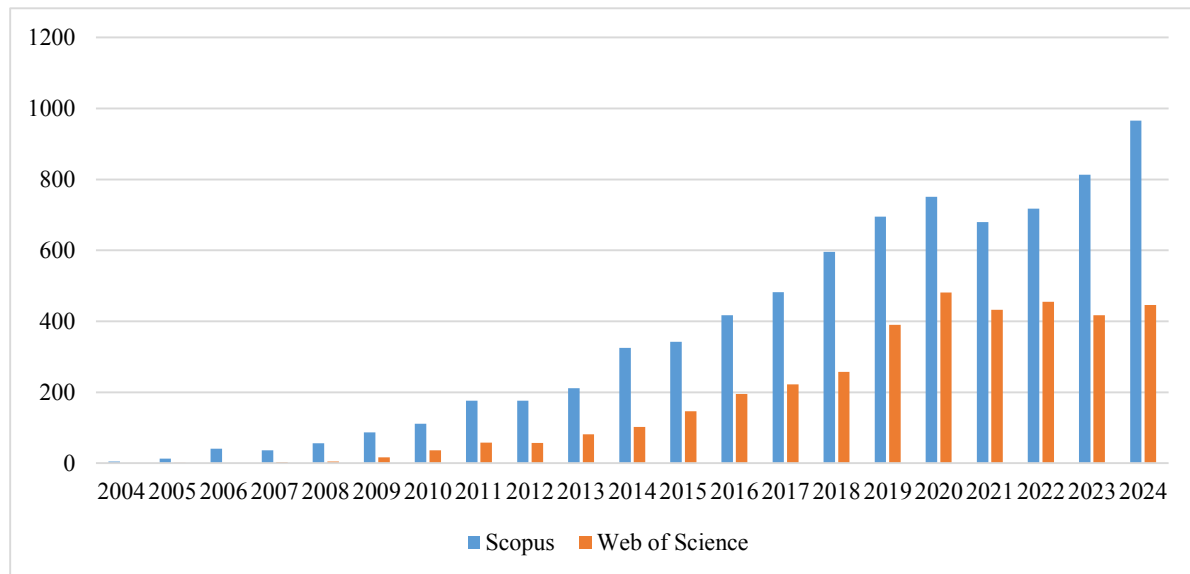


Figure 2. Number of publications on Corporate Social Responsibility from 2004 to 2024.

Source: Scopus and Web of Science databases.

Based on Figure 2, there is a clear increase in interest in the concept of corporate social responsibility among researchers. In the Scopus database, the number of publications rose from just 5 in 2004 to as many as 966 in 2024. A similar trend can be observed in the Web of Science database, although the initial number of publications was significantly lower. Initial interest in CSR can be observed in the years 2004-2007, when the increase in publications was quite slow. In the Scopus database, a significant increase in published works has been visible since 2009, with a clear interest in the period 2014-2020. The highest growth rate of publications in the Web of Science database occurred between 2015 and 2020, followed by a stabilisation of published studies between 2021 and 2024. Analysis of Figure 2 leads to the conclusion that CSR can be considered an increasingly important area of scientific research. This proves not only the growing interest in CSR, but also its importance in the activities undertaken by organisations and the role of this construct in their strategies.

Figure 3 shows an analysis of the number of publications in the period 2004-2024 on the organisational resilience, based on the Scopus and Web of Science databases.

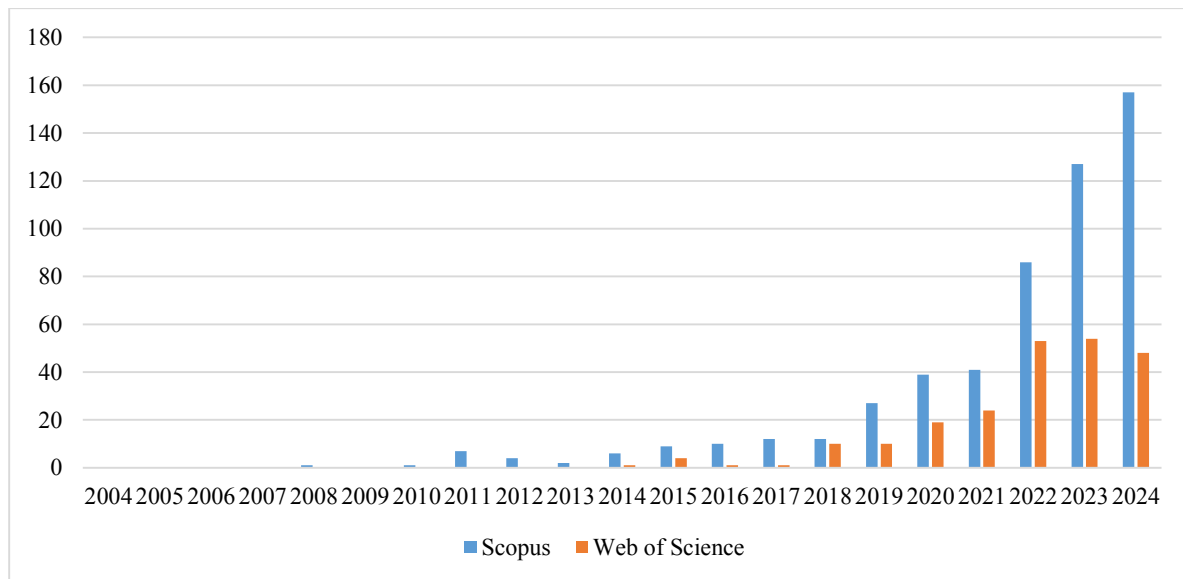


Figure 3. Number of publications on organisational resilience from 2004 to 2024.

Source: Scopus and Web of Science databases.

An analysis of the data presented in Figure 3 indicates that interest in organisational resilience among researchers, within the search criteria used, has grown in recent years. Based on an analysis of publications in the Scopus database, it can be concluded that the number of studies has increased significantly over the last decade. It should be noted that publications on this topic appear sporadically in the Web of Science database. It can be seen that the largest increase in the number of studies published in the Scopus database dates back to 2019-2024, and in the Web of Science database to 2018-2022. This indicates that organisational resilience is becoming an important area of scientific research. This is particularly important given the global uncertainty faced by economic entities and the associated need to adapt to change.

3. Results

3.1. Corporate Social Responsibility as a Strategic and Cultural Driver

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has undergone a paradigmatic shift, evolving from a peripheral organizational function to a central determinant of strategic orientation and cultural foundation (Porter, Kramer, 2019). This transformation reflects the growing recognition that sustainable corporate performance is intrinsically linked to responsible business practices (Eccles et al., 2014). CSR has multidimensional nature and it is important in generating organizational capital (Fatima, Elbanna, 2022), and enhancing adaptive capabilities through improved stakeholder responsiveness (Du et al., 2023).

The conceptualization of CSR has progressed through distinct developmental phases, marking a clear transition from a peripheral, supplementary activity to a core strategic component. The Evolutionary Development commenced with philanthropic and ethical frameworks, where CSR represented discretionary charitable activities or moral obligations. This progressed toward strategic integration models, positioning CSR as instrumental for achieving competitive advantage through alignment with business objectives (Porter, Kramer, 2019). The contemporary perspective advances a transformative paradigm, wherein CSR becomes embedded within fundamental business models as a necessity for addressing systemic global challenges (Bocquet et al., 2023). This evolution directly informs the strategic dimension of CSR, which serves as a mechanism for proactive risk mitigation and opportunity identification. It necessitates comprehensive environmental scanning to anticipate regulatory shifts, supply chain vulnerabilities, and evolving market expectations toward sustainability (Eccles et al., 2014). This forward-looking approach enables organizations to minimize potential disruptions while accessing emerging markets for environmentally and socially preferable offerings (Nidumolu et al., 2009), with the fundamental strategic objective of dissociating economic growth from adverse socio-environmental impacts, thereby ensuring long-term viability (Khan et al., 2021).

Parallel to its strategic function, the normative dimension of CSR finds its foundation in stakeholder theory (Freeman, 2010), which asserts corporate accountability to all entities affected by organizational operations. This extends to principles of corporate citizenship, positioning corporations as societal actors with inherent responsibilities toward the public good. This ethical underpinning provides legitimate justification for CSR initiatives beyond purely instrumental rationales (Gillan et al., 2021). The practical convergence of these strategic and normative views is crystallized in the interconnection with ESG and sustainability. While CSR establishes the philosophical groundwork for corporate citizenship, Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) criteria provide a standardized framework for performance measurement and evaluation by investors and regulators (Brook, Oikonomou, 2018). Collectively, they operationalize the principles of sustainable development—satisfying present requirements without compromising future generational capacities (Brundtland Report, 1987). Thus, ESG constitutes the operational pathway through which corporations contribute to sustainable economic systems (Dong, 2023).

CSR functions as a critical source of intangible yet essential organizational assets that underpin long-term success. As an articulator of organizational values, CSR, when authentically institutionalized, translates ethical principles into a concrete organizational value system that guides managerial decision-making and operational conduct (Maon et al., 2017). This value infrastructure addresses fundamental questions of organizational purpose beyond profit maximization, actively shaping the firm's ethical climate (Simha, Cullen, 2012). For organizational members, this process cultivates a shared purpose and collective identity, which serve as powerful motivational drivers that enhance talent attraction and retention,

particularly among employees who prioritize social consciousness (De Roeck, Farooq, 2018; Glavas, 2016). The values solidified through CSR directly contribute to the Foundation of Organizational Legitimacy, which represents the generalized perception that organizational actions conform to socially constructed norms, values, and belief systems (Suchman, 1995). Through demonstrable commitments to social and environmental welfare, organizations establish pragmatic legitimacy (by providing stakeholder utility), moral legitimacy (through ethical conduct), and cognitive legitimacy (via institutional alignment) (Bitektine, 2011). Consequently, robust CSR implementation is a primary mechanism for securing and maintaining an essential social license to operate, a critical factor for ensuring long-term resource access and organizational survival (Fatima, Elbanna, 2022).

Furthermore, the legitimacy and value-system fostered by CSR act as a Catalyst for Relational Trust, which embodies the willingness to accept vulnerability based on positive expectations of another's behavior (Mayer et al., 1995). Through consistent, transparent, and ethically grounded interactions with diverse stakeholders, CSR generates relational trust, which acts as a protective buffer in organizational crises and enhances resilience.

A genuine commitment to CSR fundamentally enhances organizational capabilities for environmental adaptation and internal transformation by necessitating systematic stakeholder engagement processes (Greenwood, 2007). This ongoing dialogue functions as an advanced sensing mechanism, providing early detection of emerging social trends, potential conflicts, and evolving expectations (Du et al., 2023). Organizations proficient in stakeholder dialogue develop heightened dynamic capabilities for environmental scanning, enabling agile adaptation of products, policies, and processes in response to external changes (Mkonda, 2022).

The complex nature of CSR challenges organizational insularity by necessitating cross-sector collaboration with NGOs, government entities, and industry partners (Selsky, Parker, 2005; Sharma, Bansal, 2017). It breaks down internal silos and exposes organizational members to diverse perspectives and knowledge systems, fostering absorptive capacity—the ability to recognize, assimilate, and apply external knowledge (Bridoux, Stoelhorst, 2022). Internally, the pursuit of CSR objectives requires employee empowerment for sustainable innovation, fostering cultures of psychological safety where challenging established paradigms and proposing novel solutions becomes institutionalized (Edmondson, 2018). This cultural permeability establishes the necessary preconditions for organizational learning and adaptation that underpin sustained resilience (Williams et al., 2023). Essentially, a CSR-oriented culture functions as a learning organization, continuously evolving through interaction with its broader ecosystem (Hsu, Lamb, 2020).

In summary, CSR constitutes not an ancillary function but a pervasive influence that shapes strategic direction, defines cultural parameters, and generates essential intangible capital. By fostering cultural permeability and enhancing environmental responsiveness, CSR establishes the foundational conditions that initiate the causal sequence progressing through innovation toward organizational resilience.

3.2. CSR-Driven Innovation and Organizational Resilience

In the past, CSR could be treated by companies as limited solely to charitable activities or appropriate image management. Nowadays, CSR activities go beyond ensuring compliance with applicable laws. This concept can be seen as the main driver of organisational strategy and innovation. This is because the business models of entities focus on achieving competitive advantage and thereby creating long-term economic, social and environmental value for the entity. Therefore, it can be considered that they act as a catalyst for innovation processes (Zhou et al., 2020; Khan et al., 2021). This may be mainly related to the multidimensional challenges faced by modern organisations, which go beyond issues of competition or profitability.

Among these, particular mention should be made of challenges related to the environment and sustainable development (Carmeli et al., 2020; Weber, 2023; Mutua et al., 2025), social issues (Rashkova et al., 2023), ethical issues (Baker et al., 2006; Beerli et al., 2013) and market challenges (Kihlström, Elbe, 2021; Candelo, 2019). Technological changes are also extremely important (Wilson et al., 2020; Imran et al., 2022; Awad, Martín-Rojas, 2024; Sibassaha et al., 2025), cybersecurity threats (Sharif, Mohammed, 2022; Saeed et al., 2023) and organisational and cultural challenges (Yeo, Ajam, 2010; Dong, 2023; Elliott et al., 2023). The uncertainty associated with global crises should also not be forgotten (Mukherjee, D., Mukherjee, D., 2021; Islam, 2023; Newman et al., 2023). Therefore, stakeholder expectations of modern organisations go beyond the provision of products or services or the generation of profits. Stakeholders expect these organisations to take action to balance their profits with social, environmental and ethical outcomes (Axjonow et al., 2018; Fatima, Elbanna, 2022; Awa et al., 2024).

Therefore, it is extremely important to properly manage innovation processes aimed at implementing new or significant changes in the products or processes currently offered by a given organisation (Taylor, 2017; Singh, Aggarwal, 2021; Kochetkov, 2023). It should be emphasised that no universal definition of innovation has yet been developed in the literature on the subject, as this construct is treated very broadly by researchers (Kamiński, 2018; Matysik, 2024). This is mainly due to the fact that various sciences have had a significant influence on the development of this concept. Due to the difficulties associated with clearly defining innovation, researchers distinguish between many types of innovation in the literature. Among the most commonly used typologies in research, the one presented in the Oslo Manual 2018, which takes into account product and business process innovation, should be highlighted (Oslo Manual, 2018). Innovations introduced by organisations are not only about achieving competitive advantage or efficiency. By implementing such solutions, entities seek to secure legitimacy in their social and regulatory environment (DiMaggio, Powell, 1983). It should be emphasised that interest in this construct and the popularity of implementing innovation is constantly growing, as new or improved solutions can be applied in any field.

In the context of stimulating innovation through CSR activities in organisations, in addition to the approximate expectations of stakeholders, regulatory pressure and cross-sector cooperation are also important (Sharma, Bansal, 2017). In this area, trust between partners in cross-sector cooperation, which is considered a constantly evolving feature of every organisation (Malewska, 2010), is extremely valuable. Therefore, it can take on a variety of values (Wicks et al., 1999). Cross-sector cooperation can leverage the unique characteristics that are the strengths of each sector. The private sector can be associated with resources that enable the implementation of innovative solutions (Cankar, Petkovsek, 2013; Hooli, 2021). In turn, cooperation with third sector organisations allows for familiarisation with social needs and expectations, as these entities are characterised by determination in achieving their goals (Teneta-Skwiercz, 2016). The public sector, on the other hand, mainly refers to regulatory and decision-making powers (Wojciechowski, 2007; Kargol-Wasiluk, 2011; Raczyńska, Krukowski, 2020). M. Blowfield and A. Murray (2011) point out that cross-sector cooperation undertaken as part of CSR initiatives promotes greater effectiveness and sustainability of implemented projects. It also increases their scale and overall impact (Blowfield, Murray, 2011). Furthermore, management based on cooperation leading to the achievement of common goals is essential in ensuring stakeholder satisfaction, which leads to long-term success (Fonseca et al., 2016; Maqbool et al., 2020; Derakhshan, Turner, 2022).

The term ‘CSR-driven innovation’ is commonly used in the literature on this subject. It refers to innovations that arise from activities undertaken as part of corporate social responsibility, combining economic goals with social and environmental needs. Table 1 presents selected definitions of CSR-driven innovation.

Table 1.
Selected definitions of CSR-driven innovation

Author/Authors (year)	Definition
A. Little (2006)	Taking into account social, environmental or sustainability aspects in order to create new working methods, new products and services, and processes that enable new international markets to be tapped.
C.B. School et al. (2008)	An innovative process aimed at designing a profitable product or service in an innovative and user-oriented manner that will benefit the environment and society.
S.P. MacGregor, J. Fontrodona (2008)	Creating products and services with a specific social purpose. They are driven by values related to the creation of social products and services.
Nordic Innovation Centre (2010)	An innovative process aimed at designing a profitable product or service that, in an innovative and user-oriented way, can prove beneficial to the surrounding environment and society.

Source: Own study.

Based on the definitions presented in Table 1, it can be concluded that the essence of CSR-driven innovation is primarily a combination of economic and socio-environmental goals. These innovations combine the profitability and competitiveness of an organisation with concern for society and the natural environment. Another feature that can be attributed to

CSR-driven innovation based on the definitions presented is its focus on users and stakeholder needs. The innovations implemented are designed to meet the needs of the community, rather than just drawing attention to technological improvements. Furthermore, social and environmental values can be treated as a source and driving force for innovation aimed at developing new and improving existing products, services and processes. CSR-driven innovation is a process embedded in an organisation's strategy, rather than individual actions in this area. This process not only enables the implementation of innovative solutions, but also the acquisition of new markets and the building of competitive advantage.

It should also be emphasised that CSR-driven innovation leads to strengthening the resilience of organisations in terms of survival and development in a changing environment. Entities that implement CSR-driven innovation in the form of, for example, environmentally friendly products and processes can build their reputation on the market. In crisis situations, this can result in greater support from customers, investors and the local community (Ortiz-de-Mandojana, Bansal, 2015). CSR-driven innovation, which relates to social responsibility and sustainable development, leads to an increase in an entity's adaptability (Klewitz, Hansen, 2013). CSR-driven innovation can also promote long-term responsiveness through early risk identification (Teece et al., 2016). It can therefore be concluded that CSR and innovation can create a synergy effect, in which social responsibility acts as an initiator of innovation creation and implementation, and innovation forms the foundation of organisational resilience (Wereda, Jończyk, 2020).

The analysis of the literature on the subject leads to the conclusion that CSR-driven innovation can be considered the foundation of long-term organisational resilience. Table 2 presents selected definitions of organisational resilience.

Table 2.
Selected definitions of organisational resilience

Author/Authors (year)	Definition
D.L. Coutu (2002)	Ability to respond to pressure conditions or changes.
United Nations (2007)	The ability of a system or society that is exposed to a threat to adapt to a new situation through resistance or by introducing changes in order to maintain an acceptable level of functioning.
N. Ortiz-de-Mandojana, P. Bansal (2015)	The company's ability to detect and correct abnormal trends and deal positively with unexpected situations.
L. Xiao, H. Cao (2017)	The ability of an organisation to restore its original state or even develop new skills in disruptive conditions.
A. Williams et al. (2017)	The process by which an individual, organisation or community builds and utilises its capacity to interact with its environment in a way that positively adapts and sustains functioning before, during and after adversity.
S. Duchek (2020)	The organisation's ability to anticipate potential threats, effectively deal with adverse events and adapt to changing conditions.
Organisational Resilience: Good Practice Guide (2024)	Key to adapting to a changing global marketplace and coping with short-term disruptions such as natural disasters, cyber-attacks, physical threats or supply chain issues.
R.K. Dickson (2025)	The ability of an organisation to anticipate, respond to, cope with and adapt to difficulties while maintaining its core functions and achieving its long-term goals.

Source: Own study.

Based on an analysis of the definitions presented in Table 2, it can be concluded that organisational resilience, due to its interdisciplinary nature, can be analysed in various contexts and at various levels (Linnenluecke, 2015). Although the issue of organisational resilience has been the subject of interest among researchers in recent years, no universal definition of this concept has been developed in the literature (Duchek, 2020). This may be due to the complexity of the term and the different factors influencing its interpretation by different authors (Linnenluecke et al., 2011). Based on the definitions presented in Table 2, it should be emphasised that organisational resilience is not limited to returning to the state prior to the disruption. It also includes the ability to develop and learn in the face of challenges faced by the entity. Moreover, resilience is not only a response to crises, but also the ability to identify warning signs. This allows for risk analysis and adequate preparation for potential threats. Organisational resilience is therefore not a one-off activity. It is a process that enables the continuous development of competencies, processes and mechanisms.

In summary, implementing innovation, taking into account CSR-driven innovation and properly managing innovation processes is extremely important in building organisational resilience. This increases an entity's ability to adapt to changing conditions and its operational flexibility.

3.3. CSR as a Catalyst for Innovation and Resilience – case studies

Empirical evidence from leading global companies strongly reinforces the theoretical connection between CSR, innovation, and organizational resilience, demonstrating a universal and applicable virtuous cycle. In this cycle, CSR commitments introduce new constraints and reveal unmet stakeholder expectations, which act as key drivers for innovation across products, processes, and business models. The resulting innovations, as illustrated by the following case studies from diverse industries, generate fresh value offerings and operational approaches that directly strengthen an organization's capacity to anticipate, endure, and adapt to disruptions, thereby building robust resilience (Ortiz-de-Mandojana, Bansal, 2015; Duchek, 2020).

Table 3.

Case studies of CSR-driven innovation and organizational resilience

Company (HQ)	CSR Initiative / Challenge	Innovation Developed	Resilience Outcome
Patagonia (USA)	A key challenge was waste from its own products and the broader apparel industry (Schillmann, 2020).	A dedicated platform for repairing, re-selling, and recycling Patagonia garments – the Worn Wear program (Patagonia, 2023). Patagonia also has developed a unique supply chain for recycled materials, including turning plastic bottles into polyester for fleece and using recycled nylon and cotton (Denkes, 2020).	Built a fiercely loyal customer base and a distinctive, authentic brand identity immune to fast-fashion competition (White et al., 2019). It provides a stable demand even during economic downturns. The circular economy model mitigates long-term risks from virgin material price volatility and supply chain disruptions, future-proofing the business (Bocken et al, 2021).

Cont. table 3.

Unilever (UK/Netherlands)	The Unilever Sustainable Living Plan (USLP), launched in 2010, aimed to decouple growth from environmental impact by halving the footprint of its products while improving health and well-being for millions (Unilever, 2021).	Developed concentrated laundry detergents (e.g., Persil Small & Mighty) that require less water, packaging, and energy for transportation. Created water-efficient products like dry shampoo (Unilever, 2022).	By 2020, Unilever's 'Sustainable Living Brands' were growing 69% faster than the rest of the business (Unilever, 2022). This portfolio future-proofed the company against water scarcity regulations and consumer shifts towards eco-friendly products, ensuring market relevance and growth (Eccles, 2014).
Ørsted (Denmark)	Radical transformation from a fossil-fuel-intensive energy company to a renewable energy leader, driven by the ethical imperative to combat climate change (Ørsted, 2022).	Transformed its core business model from fossil fuels to renewable energy, pioneering the commercial-scale development of offshore wind power. This included significant innovations in turbine foundation design and the development of advanced commissioning vessels, which were critical to scaling the technology efficiently and reducing costs (Ørsted, 2022). The company has also been a leader in integrating biodiversity protection into project planning, such as creating artificial reef structures around wind farm foundations to enhance marine ecosystems (Ørsted, 2024).	Successfully navigated the global energy transition. From deriving 85% of its energy from fossil fuels in 2009, it now generates over 90% from renewables (Ørsted, 2022). This pivot shielded it from stranded asset risks and price volatility in fossil fuels.
Tesla, Inc. (USA)	The challenge was making electric vehicles (EVs) desirable and practical, overcoming range anxiety and high costs (Mangram, 2012).	Revolutionized EV battery technology, performance, and software (Over-the-Air updates). Built a proprietary, global Supercharger network to solve the charging infrastructure problem (Kley et al, 2011).	Created an insurmountable technological and infrastructural moat. Dominates the EV market, making it highly resilient to fossil fuel price crises and stringent emission regulations. Its direct-to-consumer sales model also proved resilient during pandemic-related dealership closures (Yang, 2023).
Nike (USA)	"Move to Zero" initiative aiming for zero carbon and zero waste to combat the apparel industry's significant environmental footprint (ThisRock inc, 2024).	Created Nike Grind, a program that recycles old shoes and manufacturing scrap into new products. Developed Flyknit technology, which reduces material waste by an estimated 60% compared to traditional cut-and-sew methods (Nike, Inc., 2025).	Mitigates significant reputational risks related to labor and environmental practices. Secures a sustainable, circular material supply, reducing dependency on virgin materials and insulating against future resource scarcity and cost inflation (Lund-Thomsen et al., 2014).

Source: Own study.

The case studies presented in Table 3 collectively demonstrate a consistent pattern wherein CSR objectives stimulate innovation that directly contributes to organizational resilience. Several key insights emerge from this analysis revealing the mechanisms through which this transformation occurs.

A primary insight is that the nature of innovation varies according to industry context and CSR challenge, yet consistently addresses core vulnerabilities. Patagonia and Nike, operating in the resource-intensive apparel industry, focused on circular economy innovations (Bocken et al., 2021) through their Worn Wear and Nike Grind programs. These initiatives not only reduce environmental impact but also build operational resilience by mitigating dependence on volatile virgin material markets and creating alternative revenue streams. Similarly, Ørsted's business model innovation, transitioning from fossil fuels to renewable energy, directly addresses strategic vulnerability to climate regulations and fossil fuel price fluctuations, future-proofing the company against energy transition risks (Ørsted, 2022).

Furthermore, the resilience outcomes manifest across multiple dimensions simultaneously. Each case shows that CSR-driven innovation builds resilience in an integrated manner. For instance, Tesla's technological innovations created not only competitive resilience through its technological moat but also supply chain resilience by vertically integrating critical charging infrastructure (Kley et al., 2011). Unilever's product innovations simultaneously achieve market resilience through growth in sustainable brands and regulatory resilience by preemptively addressing water scarcity concerns (Eccles et al., 2014). This multidimensional resilience reflects the comprehensive nature of the capabilities developed through CSR-oriented innovative processes.

The pathway from CSR commitment to tangible resilience is characterized by strategic, long-term orientation. The transformations undertaken by Ørsted and Unilever were not quick initiatives but sustained multi-year strategic investments. This extended timeline supports the theoretical proposition that resilience is an emergent outcome of deeply embedded sustainable practices, accruing over time as innovations mature and their cumulative impact is realized (Ortiz-de-Mandojana, Bansal, 2016). Ultimately, these cases powerfully challenge the perceived trade-off between corporate responsibility and competitiveness. They illustrate that CSR-imposed constraints can act as powerful catalysts for innovation, simultaneously generating environmental and social value while building business resilience. By reframing challenges like waste reduction and carbon neutrality as opportunities for value creation, these organizations have turned potential limitations into sources of durable competitive advantage.

In conclusion, these case studies provide empirical evidence that strategically embedded CSR serves as a powerful driver of innovation that builds organizational resilience. They illustrate the theoretical pathway from responsibility to innovation to resilience in practice, showing how companies can convert social and environmental challenges into business opportunities while enhancing their long-term viability in an uncertain world.

4. Discussion

The interplay between CSR, innovation, and organizational resilience can be conceptualized as a logical, causal pathway where each construct enables the next. The sequence ‘Responsibility → Innovation → Resilience’ illustrates that CSR provides the motivational and strategic context stimulating innovation, which then serves as the vehicle through which organizations build the adaptive capacities that constitute resilience (Ortiz-de-Mandojana, Bansal, 2016).

The causal pathway from responsibility to resilience is initiated by CSR as the starting point, which establishes the foundational intentions and cultural context for organizational action (Aguilera et al., 2004). A genuine commitment to social and environmental goals creates a unique set of constraints and challenges. Rather than being perceived as limitations, these challenges, driven by stakeholder expectations and strategic CSR objectives, act as a powerful stimulus for creativity and problem-solving (Nidumolu et al., 2009; Bocken, Geradts, 2019). This ‘CSR-driven’ mindset fosters a culture of openness, where exploring novel solutions to complex socio-business problems becomes institutionalized (Edmondson, 2018; Wu et al., 2021).

The cultural and intentional foundation provided by CSR directly fuels innovation as the mechanism. To meet its responsible objectives, an organization is compelled to develop new dynamic capabilities for learning and resource reconfiguration (Teece, 2022). This necessity leads to tangible innovative outputs across multiple domains, including:

- product innovation, which involves developing goods with reduced environmental impact in response to stakeholder pressures (Varadarajan, 2015),
- process innovation, entailing the creation of more efficient, less wasteful manufacturing methods to achieve circular economy goals (De Marchi, 2012), and
- business model innovation, which involves designing entirely new value creation and delivery systems that embed sustainability at their core (Lüdeke-Freund et al., 2022).

This constitutes CSR-driven innovation directed by a purpose beyond profit, which often leads to more disruptive and sustainable market solutions (Hansen et al., 2009; Boons, Lüdeke-Freund, 2013).

The cumulative effect of these innovation mechanisms culminates in resilience as the emergent effect. The generated innovations represent more than new market offerings. They are manifestations of enhanced organizational capabilities that collectively build resilience. These outcomes manifest in several dimensions:

- operational resilience is achieved through efficient processes and circular models that reduce dependency on scarce resources and mitigate supply chain disruptions (Ivanov, 2023; Geissdoerfer et al., 2017),

- financial resilience stems from diversified revenue streams and strong brand loyalty that provide a buffer during economic volatility (Albuquerque et al., 2020; Eccles et al., 2014),
- reputational resilience is built through a track record of responsibility that creates a reservoir of goodwill and trust, offering protection during crises (Bundy, Pfarrer, 2015),
- adaptive resilience is enabled by the dynamic capabilities developed through continuous, purpose-driven innovation, allowing the organization to anticipate and shape its environment more effectively than competitors (Teece et al., 2016).

In conclusion, CSR provides the "why", in terms of the motivating purpose and cultural foundation. Innovation is the "how", treated as the transformative process that addresses this purpose. Finally, resilience is the "what", so the resulting organizational state of robustness and adaptability that ensures long-term survival and success in a volatile world (Ortiz-de-Mandojana, Bansal, 2015; Duchek, 2020). This causal linkage underscores that building resilience is not an isolated goal but the ultimate benefit of strategically embedding social responsibility into the heart of an organization's innovation activities.

5. Conclusion

Current research indicate the existence of a relationship between Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), the emergence and implementation of innovation, and organizational resilience. CSR has evolved from marginal philanthropic activities to the role of a strategic pillar of competitive advantage. When its principles are permanently embedded in strategy and organizational culture, it becomes a driver of CSR-driven innovation (Carrol et al., 2010; Porter et al., 2019). Activities undertaken in this area relate to the development of new products, processes, and business models that respond to social and environmental challenges. At the same time, they constitute the foundation for building long-term organizational resilience (Teece et al., 20216).

Enterprises engaged in CSR activities perceive social and environmental requirements not as constraints but as stimuli for implementing innovative solutions (Nidumolu et al., 2009; Hansen et al., 2009). Product innovations involve creating sustainable solutions, opening up new market opportunities (Varadarajan, 2017). Process innovations focus on implementing efficient technologies and closed supply chains that reduce waste and lower costs (Ortiz-de-Mandojana et al., 2015). Business model innovations, in turn, consist of designing new ways of creating and capturing value (Lüdeke-Freund et al., 2018).

The result of these activities is the strengthening of organizational resilience. CSR initiatives contribute to reducing operational and financial risk by limiting dependence on rare or unstable resources, thereby minimizing threats related to supply chain disruptions and price fluctuations (Ortiz-de-Mandojana, Bansal, 2015). Moreover, they enable the building of reputation and customer loyalty by creating an ethical brand image, which enhances attractiveness even under crisis conditions (Luchs et al., 2010). They also allow for securing regulatory compliance, as a proactive approach to environmental and social regulations helps avoid costly compliance issues and provides a first-mover advantage (Sharma, Bansal, 2017).

CSR strategies also support revenue diversification and the development of new markets by providing access to socially conscious consumers and ESG-oriented investors. In addition, they foster revenue generation from circular economy models, which increases financial stability (Khan et al., 2021). This study shows that the integration of CSR with key business processes promotes innovation and organizational resilience. In practice, this means that managers should treat CSR as a strategic tool rather than merely a reputational exercise. For organizational leaders, it is crucial to promote authentic values and create an environment that fosters experimentation. From an academic perspective, the results open the space for further research on causal mechanisms and the standardization of organizational resilience measurement.

The analysis presented in this article leads to the conclusion that the integration of CSR with a company's core strategy not only promotes responsible business practices but also stimulates innovations that enhance adaptability and organizational resilience. By developing dynamic capabilities, building stakeholder trust, anticipating risks, and improving operational efficiency, CSR transforms into both a protective mechanism and a growth engine, ensuring long-term competitiveness for enterprises in an environment characterized by volatility and uncertainty.

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