Analysing the interrelationship between CSR activities and the value co-creation process to enhance employer branding within the Omani hotel industry

A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

By

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ABSTRACT

Value co-creation enhances employers' branding through the engagement of organisations' corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities and employees' behaviours, such as performance, loyalty and satisfaction. Although a growing body of research has explored the notion of value co-creation, the current understanding of the interrelationship between value co-creation and corporate social responsibility is underdeveloped. There is fierce academic debate surrounding the concept of value co-creation, calling for further theoretical and empirical work on this field. Furthermore, the concept of employer branding is still a nascent area in management and marketing scholarships and requires further conceptual nourishment.

Although significant studies have covered the role of organisations and consumers in value co-creation resulting in employer branding, there has been little research to address the role of employees in value co-creation, dictating further assessment of their role in the process of value co-creation and participation in employer branding in a CSR context. Therefore, this thesis seeks to identify and analyse how, and to what extent, efforts to become socially responsible can co-create value for internal stakeholders and contribute to employer branding.

As such, part of the theoretical foundation for this research is built on CSR. Subsequently, relevant conceptual avenues pertaining to the co-creation of value, corporate branding and employer branding are explored and analysed. An extensive literature review is undertaken to inform the robust development of an initially proposed conceptual framework of the main factors that impact upon this process. The proposed conceptual framework has set a broad guide for the researcher regarding the empirical fieldwork involved. The context for the research explores the notion of value co-creation within employer branding in the Omani hotel sector. To analyse value co-creation in depth, a qualitative interpretive multi-case study approach is adopted. The research also considers

aspects of managerial philosophies and employees' perceptions regarding their organisations' current and future CSR activities, and how these activities impact value co-creation for stakeholders.

The findings indicate that value co-creation has three major elements – it is dynamic and iterative, it requires dialogical interactions among various parties, and it leads to dualistic outcomes. The adoption of CSR increases the employees' satisfaction, whereas a lack of understanding of the CSR activities leads to the co-destruction of value, which in return affects the organisational turn-over in the long run. Therefore, creating awareness about the importance of the implementation of CSR is considered crucial, as it will benefit the organisation and improve the level of performance and loyalty of the internal stakeholders. The researcher proposes an original conceptual model on this tri-partite nature of value co-creation and an analysis of how value co-creation can lead to the development of sustainable and socially responsible employer branding. An employee-oriented perspective towards value co-creation is introduced as an endeavour to enrich the area of research and address current conceptual deficiencies. The research also advances scholarship by critically assessing the role of employees as an independent but integral entity in the value co-creation process, establishing clear and robust links between CSR, value co-creation and employer branding.

Keywords: Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR); Employer branding; Value generation, Value co-creation; Value co-distruction; Hotel industry

Declaration

I hereby declare that the present thesis is entirely my own work and has not been the subject of submission in any other institution. I also confirm that the research and papers used have been properly referenced.

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Zahra Al Habsi

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Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to those I can't thank.....

My late mother: may Allah rest her soul

My late brother Mutab: may Allah rest his soul

My late supervisor Dr. Christina Scandelius, who passed away during my PhD journey: may Allah rest her soul.

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CHAPTER ONE-RESEARCH INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

There is growing demand, from public opinion and governments around the world, for organisations to behave in a socially responsible manner in order to successfully compete in a furious environment. Like many organisations, the operations of hotels and the tourism industry can cause adverse impacts on overall ecosystems and the balance of the environment (Anctil & Le Blanc, 2016). This demand has obliged organisations to adopt and implement corporate social responsibility (CSR) strategies and activities.

For example, Starwood, the renowned global hotelier, initiated a plan for recycling soaps, shampoos, conditioners, lotions and gels. It turned out to be a very expensive and logistically challenging task for the company, as they had to recycle a total of 1.6 million pounds of hotel soaps every year (Financial Times, 2018). For that reason, organisations today seek to optimise value for various stakeholders through a range of CSR measures (Sheehan, 2013; Zayas-Ortiz *et al.*, 2015).

This research aims to establish a clear link between successful implementation of CSR and the co-creation of value, resulting in employer branding being able to potentially contribute to knowledge. In addition, it offers solutions to managerial problems within the hotels industry. Hence many tourism service providers would strive to be more socially responsible and achieve sustainable employer brands (Drumwright, 1994; Brown & Dacin, 1997; Menon & Menon, 1997; Gehrels *et al.*, 2016). This research addresses the concept of CSR, employer branding and value co-creation in the hotel industry in the Sultanate of Oman.

1.2 Research Background

The recent literature shows that, since the beginning of this millennium, CSR has become popular in the agendas of both academic and practical fields (Sen and Bhattacharya, 2001; Luo and Bhattacharya, 2006; Mohan, 2009; Daikova, 2011; Xue *et al.*, 2018). This popularity, according to the above-mentioned

authors, is based on the fact that organisations believe that CSR creates value and benefits, allowing them to stay in the race of progression and development. For the purpose of this research, the researcher will adopt Kottler and Lee's (2004: 7) definition, which states that CSR is an obligation to enhance the community's well-being through flexible business practices and contributions of corporate resources. According to Xue *et al.* (2018), emphasis from corporate stakeholders and society demands greater focus from corporates to include CSR strategies in order to build their competitive advantage, not only on the global scale but also within national arena.

This argument was also supported by Guzmán and Davis (2017) and Daikova (2011), who came to the conclusion that CSR will be more effective by linking it with strong corporate branding, which is defined by Balmer and Gray (2003) as the signs that define and separate one brand from another: i.e. names, symbols or logos. The abovementioned relationship will not only create corporate core competitive advantage and value, but will also make it unique to its stakeholders as well as in the environment in which it operates. Therefore, more corporates have been working on making sure that CSR is connected with corporate branding in order to generate benefits for the corporate as much as possible (Basu and Palazzo, 2008; Bhattacharya, 2017).

This fact leads to the argument put forward by Maneet (2011), who finds that positive CSR activities and practices within corporates are tools for building positive corporate branding. Customers thus prefer to purchase products offered by corporates with high social responsibility. Such facts were also noted by Jones (2005) and presented later by Maneet (2011). In addition to the above-noted advantages, CSR can build corporate competitive advantage and improve profit margins.

The corporate branding idea has been viewed as one of the critical factors in corporate success in many fields, including the hotel industry. Therefore, and according to Burmann *et al.* (2005), CSR adoption has gained importance, and corporates have invested huge amounts of money in developing their corporate branding. Some of these investments, according to Culpan (2011), can reach billions of dollars, as in the case of Apple, which, in 2012, spent approximately

50% of its value, which was $303.4 billion, to enhance its brand. Therefore, and in line with Meffert *et al.*'s (2005) argument, corporate sustainable branding is considered to be an intangible item property.

Hence, it becomes clear that corporate branding in the CSR context, including that of hotels, is of critical importance for corporates. It also becomes clear that corporate branding is linked with other, more complex issues, including economic, social and environmental responsibility. That said, there is a problem in adopting and implementing CSR, as there are some difficulties that hinder the application of CSR strategies, planning and implementation.

Many corporates have faced problems in building their employer branding, which is defined by Ollington *et al.* (2013) as a cognitive management strategy that strives to obtain those who are able and capable to perform and achieve value for the organisation. Therefore, and due to the lack of understanding of the interrelationship between CSR and value co-creation, the researcher argues that there is a need for a critical investigation and analysis of this interrelationship in order to achieve successful employer branding.

1.3 Research Problem

Value was simply defined by Olson *et al.* (1993) and Ravald and Grönroos (1996) as the difference between cost and benefits, but value co-creation is seen more as a concept that was illustrated by two famous models. The first model was developed in 2004 by Prahalad and Ramaswamy. It proposed that value co-creation transforms consumers from isolation to involvement, from unaware to aware, and from passive to active. On the other hand, Payne *et al.*'s (2008) model argues that the customer's involvement is more to do with incremental cognitive, behavioural and emotional elements. More details of the two models will be presented in Chapter Three. The researcher believes that both models address value co-creation from an external perspective, whereas the novelty of this research lies within the idea of considering the internal stakeholders as a separate but integral entity in the organisation.

Recent marketing literature, however, reveals that there is no consistent understanding of value creation and co-creation, indicating the need for further studies (Grönroos & Voima, 2013; Pfisterer & Roth, 2015). Furthermore, the perspective of value has to be considered holistically, such that value is reflected in terms of consumers' roles and experiences, and as a part of an extended social system involving various internal and external stakeholders (Payne *et al.*, 2008; Heinonen & Strandvik, 2009; Epp & Price, 2011; Grönroos & Voima, 2013).

The recently developed consumer-customer dominant logic approach, reinforces the arguments that the employees are part of the organisation (Heinonen *et al.*, 2010; Anker *et al.*, 2015), but empirical studies are required to produce a robust theoretical model to support the above allegations. Indeed, value co-creation from the employees' perspective has not received much research attention. This research considers that employees play a distinct role in the value co-creation process and thus should be separated from the organisational entity while analysing co-creation.

Previous literature has suggested that internal stakeholders' satisfaction and performance are key to developing a sustainable organisational image and employer brand (Epstein & Roy, 2001; Foster *et al.*, 2010). Effective employee-organisation relationship is also considered a key component of the value co-creation process (Frow *et al.*, 2014). Increasing attention on value co-creation, internal marketing and branding underscores the importance of employees' roles in value co-creation for the organisation (Gummesson, 1997; Ramaswamy, 2008; Dey et al., 2011; Näppä *et al.*, 2014; Oh *et al.*, 2015; Jamali, El Dirani & Harwood, 2015).

In addition, this research deals with how employees assess and consider organisational CSR measures which create value for various stakeholders in order to achieve employer branding. Employees' perceptions in a socially responsible organisation need to be assessed to understand the nature of value co-creation, particularly in relation to CSR activities.

Whilst research on organisational endeavours has enriched current management literature in terms of its contribution to employees' satisfaction and personal

development (Business Wire, 2005; Kang *et al.,* 2010), there is a paucity of scholarly works on how the co-creation of value links with CSR strategies and sustainable employer branding. Research examining this issue would greatly contribute to the existing literature on value co-creation and employer branding (Ravald & Grönroos, 1996; Balmer, 2001; Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004; Petkovic, 2008; Ramaswamy, 2008; Dey *et al*., 2013).

Although authors such as Herbert and Schantz (2007), Maneet and Sudhir (2011) and Guzmán and Davis (2017) have shown a connection between corporate branding and CSR in general, there has been limited empirical research to examine and confirm the relationship between them as well as with other important factors that are linked to them. Analysing the relationship between CSR and corporate branding to co-create value is not an easy task, as it has its barriers and challenges in various fields in general and in the hotel industry in particular.

The dynamics related to CSR, value co-creation and employer branding specifically in the hotel industry need further examination due to the nature of the service, the competitive environment and customer demand, which distinguish it from other sectors (Gil *et al*., 2001; Matten & Crane, 2005; Waddock & McIntosh, 2009). It goes without saying that the tourism sector is a priority sector for economic diversification and employment creation (Weidenfeld, 2018). The researcher chose Oman as the context for the present study, since the latter is a tourism-oriented country, where tourism has received growing interest from the government in their strategic plan for 2016-2020, and for the national 2040 vision (KPMG, Oman).

From the above, the researcher noticed multiple problems within the research topic, which can be summarised as follows: First, although the hotel industry's potential benefits in Oman are high, as the tourism industry is seen as a prominent alternative to the oil-based economy (Subramoniam et al., 2010) and is argued to be a target for the long-term socio-economic plan, namely, "Oman 2020" (Mansfield & Winckler, 2007), and the industry's total contribution to GDP approached 7% in 2012, with 77,500 jobs, equivalent to 7% of total

employment (WTTC, 2013), society views this industry with reservations due to customs and traditions.

The second problem facing the research topic pertains to the challenges of adopting CSR strategies in the hotel industry in Oman, as the concept of CSR is relatively new to Oman and needs a fostering environment to flourish and develop, making it a long-term process that requires collaboration from the government and stakeholders. The third problem lays within the idea that value co-creation is seen by many academics and researchers as the relationship between the organisation and the external stakeholders (Payne *et al.*, 2008; Paralad and Ramaswamy, 2004; Lin *et al.*, 2017).

Finally, the main research problem of this thesis can be summarised as the lack of understanding of the magnitude and nature of the role played by internal stakeholders in value co-creation and consequently in employer branding.

1.4 Research Aim and Objectives

The primary aim of this research is to critically analyse the impact of the interrelationship between CSR activities and the value co-creation process to enhance employer branding within the context of Oman's hotels industry. In order to achieve the aim of the research, the following objectives are set:

- To develop a deeper understanding of the value co-creation process.
- To identify and assess the phases of the value co-creation process in order to develop an empirical and conceptual framework based on study cases within Oman's hotel industry.
- To analyse the importance of CSR activities in the value co-creation process leading to enhanced employer branding.
- To investigate the impact of employees' performance, satisfaction, and loyalty on value co-creation.
- To investigate the importance of CSR activities on employees' performance, satisfaction, and loyalty.

1.5 Research Questions

From the earlier sections that presented the research problem and identified the gap in the body of knowledge, four broad and general research questions arise that need to be addressed and discussed. These questions can be best formulated as follows:

- **RQ1:** How is value co-created through employees' performance, satisfaction, and loyalty?
- **RQ2:** What is the impact of the value co-creation process on employer branding?
- **RQ3:** How do the adopted CSR activities affect employees' performance, satisfaction, and loyalty?
- **RQ4:** How and to what extent does the adoption of CSR activities influence the value co-creation process?

1.6 Research Design

This researcher adopted a qualitative multiple case study method. The overall research design, data collection and data analysis were carried out in accordance with Yin (2014). The initial phase of designing the study involved a comprehensive review of the topic's literature to identify both theoretical and practical gaps to provide a theoretical foundation with the assistance of a well-established focal theory. After that, an initial conceptual research framework was developed to illustrate the relationship between different variables.

The researcher elected to create a multiple case study protocol. Following that, a pilot study was conducted to refine the data collection scheme and select the cases that were relevant to the topic of this research. After conducting the required number of cases, an individual report for each case was written. The following step was to conduct a cross-case analysis from which insights were drawn. The next step was to develop a refined conceptual framework derived from both the theoretical and empirical conclusions. Finally, the researcher was

able to draw theoretical and practical conclusions based on the key findings. The following section will discuss the structure of this research.

1.7 Research Structure Plan

This thesis has eight main chapters, as shown in Figure 1, 'Research Structure Plan', and is organised accordingly. Chapter One, which is this chapter, is the introduction chapter that provides the reader with the research background and outlines the field of the study in a broad way. The aim of the chapter is to provide the reader with an overview of the rest of the research thesis. It includes the research background and the problem to be addressed, as well as the research aim and objectives. Additionally, it provides a brief explanation concerning the research methodology, ending with an outline of the thesis.
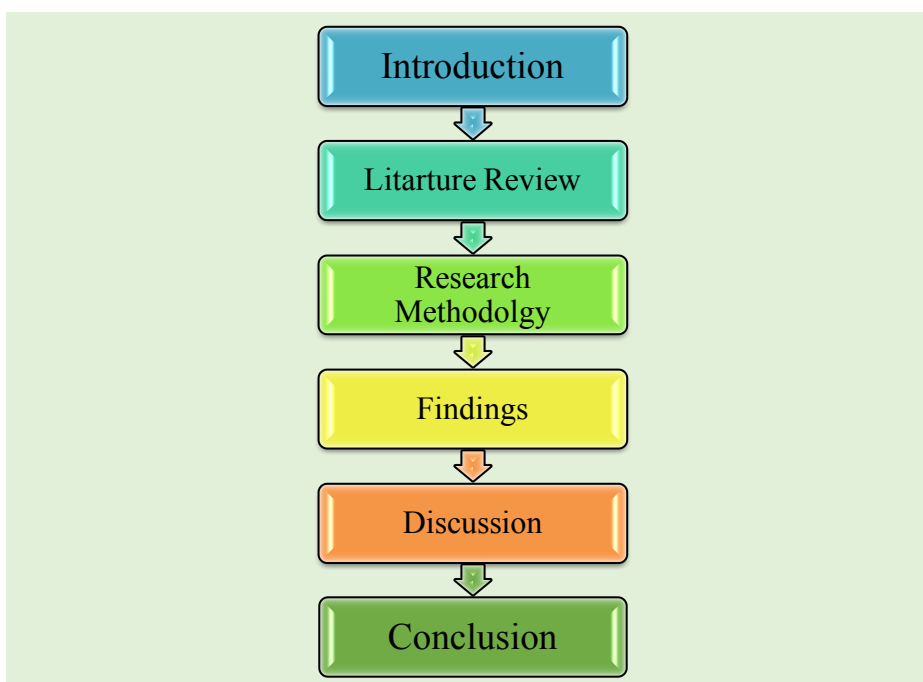
Figure 1.1: Research structure

Chapter Two, the literature review, aims to provide the theoretical foundation for the research by examining the existing literature related to the research topic. It starts with CSR, employer branding and value creation, and ends with an explanation of the theory adopted for this research, namely stakeholder theory. This chapter concludes with the introduction of the conceptual framework on which the empirical research will be designed.

Chapter Three, Research Methodology, aims to provide the research paradigms, research approach and the research design, with a detailed explanation and justification for the adoption of qualitative research, a multi-case study and semi-structured interviews, and ends with the ethical considerations of the research.

Chapter Four, which presents the Findings, aims to present the reader with a brief meaningful background about the context of the research. In addition, it reports the key findings generated from the empirical investigations of each case study separately, offering an overview of the three hotels followed by the case-study analysis.

Chapter Five, the Discussion, provides in-depth interpretation as well as discussion of the results. Based on the interpretation, the holistic framework is revised to add the key factors that led to the success of the adoption of CSR in creating value.

Chapter Six, the Conclusion, is the final chapter of the thesis. The chapter presents an overall summary of the thesis. Furthermore, it provides the theoretical, practical and methodological contributions, followed by recommendations, limitations and suggested future research.

1.8 Chapter Summary

This chapter has presented a brief background of this thesis. Besides, it has illustrated and justified the research problem associated with the research topic. A clear research aim and objectives have been presented. The research design and the research method adopted were clearly stated. Finally, a plan of the whole thesis was drawn.

CHAPTER TWO- LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter highlights and explains the academic literature that discusses some of the most critical aspects relating to this study, drawing upon both previous conceptual and empirical studies. A review of the academic literature will help the researcher to identify literature gaps within current bodies of knowledge in an attempt to contribute to knowledge through generating a new theoretical conceptual framework and qualifying existing theories.

According to Fan (2010), conceptual and empirical studies are needed to help advance the concept of the research. This chapter argues that, although there is a link between CSR and employer branding, there is still unclear understanding and limited research into the value co-creation concept associated with both. Consequently, there is a need for a detailed study which examines these factors and their links and identifies favourable links that should be strengthened, and unfavourable links that should either be analysed and changed if possible or discarded entirely. However, CSR, employer branding and value co-creation are the primary factors of this research literature. The literature examines one core component of CSR through exploring employer branding and the role it plays towards the promotion of sustainability and successful value co-creation for internal stakeholders.

The chapter starts by introducing the concept of CSR and its importance to corporates. This is followed by reviewing various school of thoughts in defining CSR from both organisations' and consumers' perspectives. Moreover, the researcher undertakes a detailed discussion of the theories and models related to CSR. The second part of this chapter discusses corporate branding and its approaches that help to explain employer branding. The third part looks at employer branding as a reflection of CSR implementation. The fourth part of this chapter discusses value co-creation and its effect on employer branding. The following section focuses on value co-creation, along with its definitions, importance and the existing two models. Finally, the researcher identifies the gaps generated by this theoretical foundation, followed by a chapter summary.

2.2 Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)

Corporate social responsibility was first mentioned almost fifty years ago. For example, Barnard (1968) defined CSR as an approach that "*analyses economic, legal, moral, social and physical aspects of the environment"*. Three decades later, Elkington (1998) argued that CSR is referred to in different ways by various scholars. For instance, sustainability, corporate social performance, going green and the "triple bottom line" are all synonyms. He pointed out that most organisations that are following such methods are trying to enhance their long-term financial performance as well as their social and environmental performance.

Almost a decade ago, Chan and Hawkins (2010) argued that a significant number of people believed that it is humans' responsibility to protect the future generations and consider the environmental practice as a means to fulfil their social duty within the community, while other groups believed it was with firms that moral values should lie (Diddi and Niehm, 2017). Organisational responsibility was also identified by Tzschentke *et al.* (2004), who considered that organisations should show grave concern for the environment, not only by being friendly to the environment, but also by being seen to do the right thing by not having a negative impact on it. Galpin *et al.* (2015) stated that, in the new millennium, sustainability became the strategic imperative.

Due to the importance of the issue and the rising popularity of the issue of CSR in the last decade (Popa and Salanta, 2015), Fleacă, Dumitrescu and Fleacă (2014) argue there are copious volumes of literature dedicated to this field. For this reason, the researcher found that there is no unified definition for CSR. Accordingly, it becomes apparent that the idea of achieving a unified concept of CSR is near to impossible. As a result, and to be able to have a clear working identification of the definition, it might be advisable to review different scholars' definitions of CSR: this is done in the next section.

2.2.1 Definitions of CSR

In order to explain the role of CSR, it is worthwhile to look at the various definitions of CSR in different fields. For the purpose of this section, it is

agreed that CSR has numerous different synonyms, as mentioned in section 2.2, so all the definitions mentioned below are meant to explain the meaning of CSR and its synonyms. Sustainability definitions can be traced back to 1987, when the UN Environment and Development Brundtland Commission Report defined sustainability as *"meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of the future generations to respond to their needs".* The EU Commission (2002) elaborated on the definition of CSR as a *"concept that integrated social as well as environmental concerns in their business activities and their interactions with their stakeholders on a voluntary basis".*

Another aspect of CSR was presented by Kastenhofer and Rammel (2005), who used three pillars on which sustainability rests – *environment, economy, and society* – as the primary pillars of sustainability. Meanwhile, according to Zimmerman (2005), the USA Environmental Protection Agency has utilised three similar pillars, namely *People, Prosperity, and Planet,* whereas Koehler and Hacht (2006) used a three-pillar model based on environmental protection and social being, as shown in Figure 2.1
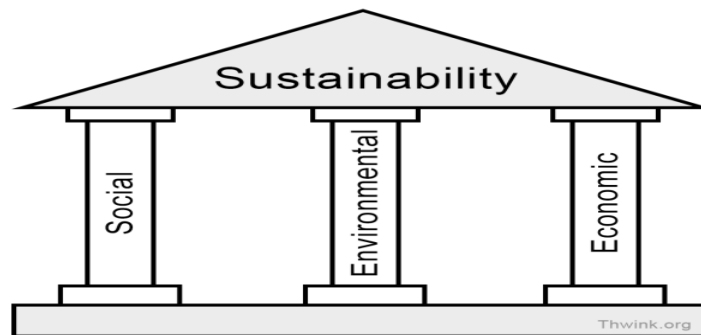
Figure 2.1: Three Pillars

In addition, Clough *et al.* (2006) agreed with the UN definition of CSR and added that sustainability is *"a process that helps create a vibrant economy and high quality of life, while respecting the need to sustain natural resources and protect the environment".* Moreover, they argue that sustainability protects the principle that future generations should live in the world that the present generation has enjoyed, but not diminished.

On the other hand, scholars like Adam (2013) emphasised that sustainability is a process and presented it graphically with three rings overlapping each other, where these rings are considered to be reinforcing each other, and represent "environment, society and economy" as the primary factors in the sustainability process. According to this model, an imbalance in any of the three above-mentioned factors could affect the whole system and generate chaos. These factors have been used in the development of different standards to include the Triple Bottom Line Standards. However, recently, White (2013) presented a four-pillar model, adding "future generation" as an important factor, as shown in Figure 2.2.
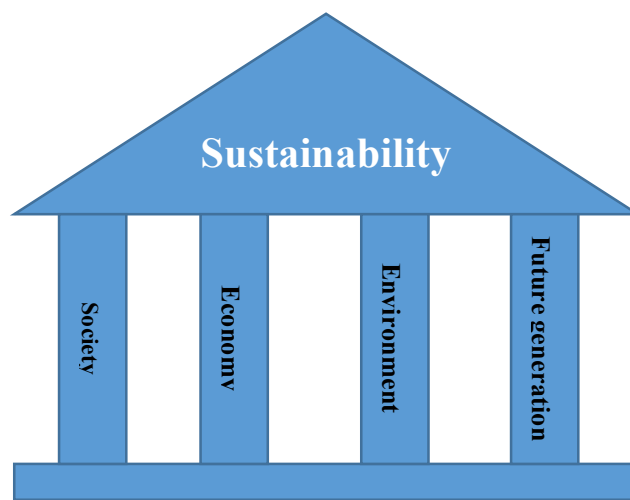
Figure 2. 2: White's model

It is thus difficult to find a unified definition of CSR. Having analysed these definitions, the researcher concludes that all of the above-mentioned definitions have three major conceptual components: needs of the organisation or the country; resource limitation; and efficiency of resources utilisation.

As a result of the above review, the researcher notes that the varied definitions have helped to advance the discourse and principles of CSR, particularly in providing solutions, as well as policy prescriptions and understanding of the problems encountered (Miller, 2013). Freeman (1984) argued that CSR concepts aim to sustain the environment for all stakeholders in terms of profit as well as minimising the negative impact on the planet as a result of introducing

business conducts based on ethics and value creation, not only for shareholders but also for all stakeholders.

The four pillars of White's (2013) model will be utilised in the analysis of the social, economic, environmental and future generation effects to assess CSR implementation. Differences in definitions are endemic, which is why the researcher has to select a definition to utilise in this research. Due to their relative adherence to the topic of the research, the Brundtland definition, the White (2013) definition and that of Moldan and Dahl (2012) will be used to construct the meaning of CSR in this thesis. The next section will review some of the most prominent theories of CSR.

2.2.2 Theories of CSR

The corporate social responsibility domain has become increasingly important around the world (Golob and Bartlett, 2007). Society's perceptions of organisations' role and corporate activities have gone through several changes over the last two decades. Increased awareness of the effect of business and its interaction with social and environmental issues has arisen. Corporates are obliged to make an effort and bear some responsibilities toward the society in which they operate (Hopkins, 2016). The most basic responsibilities are laws and rules that they have to follow and serve under.

Organisations today are required to show that their business stands for more than just profits, and that their activities create some value, or at least do not damage the environment around them (Ledwidge, 2007). CSR is a concept that has diverse definitions and is growing in the corporate world today. What does CSR mean? Van Marrewijk, (2003) defined CSR as the remedy which will solve the global poverty gap, social exclusion and environmental degradation.

On the other hand, Bear *et al*. (2010), based on Boyd *et al*. (1990), defined CSR as a general sense that echoes obligations to society and stakeholders within societies impacted by the organisation. Likewise, theories of CSR have varied, and for this study, the researcher will look into three such theories, as discussed below.

2.2.2.1 Shareholder value theory

The shareholder value theory is a standpoint represented by the Nobel Laureate Milton Friedman (1970), who argues that the only social responsibility of a business is to cultivate its profits while following rules and regulations. Modern economists such as Hayek (1989) emphasise that the role of business is an activity that contributes to the community and at the same time to the economy, but that is not to be confused with other functions made by non-profit organisations, governments and NGOs (non-governmental organisations). Economists like agency theorists believe that the corporation owners are its managers, and stakeholders as agents have an obligation to serve the shareholders' interest rather than any others. Although cultivating shareholders' profit is acceptable as the most important or as a sole corporate responsibility, corporate social obligations are often regarded as strategic instruments for the corporate's competitive benefit and for increased profit gain (Hayek, 1989).

According to Saint and Tripathi (2006), shareholder value theory's main defence is that the notion that corporates exist to generate and increase the profits of shareholders is socially deep-rooted into the financial community, and many believe it to be an undisputed truth. It takes form in business school, proliferates and is reinforced in practice, and is justified through other sources, from the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission (Levitt and Dubner, 2006) to the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences and the Bank of Sweden, who award the Memorial Nobel Prize in Economics.

The work of the Nobel laureates in financial theory (under the field of economics) accepts shareholder wealth cultivation as a given assumption (Markowitz, 1952; Modigliani & Miller, 1988; Sharpe, 1964). They concluded that dominant views on corporate power and the syllabuses of most business schools advocate the perspective that the sole purpose of business in our community is business. Business acting beyond its economic concerns is at best misguided (Jensen, 2001), and is misallocating and/or misappropriating societal resources (Easterbrook & Fischel, 1991; Friedman, 1970; Sternberg, 1997). Business adds value to the economy through the efficient delivery of goods and

services. Social and environmental concerns are related to business through the marketplace and governmental regulations.

2.2.2.2 Business ethics theory

In contrast to shareholder value theory, the business ethics theory is built on wider social duty and the moral duty that business has towards the community (Wadley and Bigg, 2004). This theory validates CSR on three diverse yet interconnected ethical bases: shifting and growing social responsiveness and social expectations to particular social challenges; permanent or inherent ethical values, always inspired by Kantian ethics theory during the eighteenth century and denoted as some normative and universal principles, such as social justice, fairness and human rights; and organisation citizenship: i.e. the corporation as a better citizen in the community to contribute to social wellbeing.

According to Frederiksen and Nielsen (2013), the main characteristic of business ethics theory is its focus on ethical aspects rather than on maximising profit from CSR. Advocates of this approach trust that organisations should engage in CSR because it is the morally right thing to do. In general, supporters of this approach agree that CSR might not always be the most profitable approach. In a conflict between the organisation's narrow view of economic interest and moral considerations, the moral considerations on some issues should take precedence over generating profit. However, it is a misunderstanding of the ethical approach to say that moral CSR necessarily can cause loss to the organisation. Hence, taking an ethical approach to CSR entails that corporates accept potential loss of profit, and that this (eventual) loss of profit is accepted for moral reasons, because sometimes ethical demands such as a concern for the interests of other parties override the demand for profit.

2.2.2.3 Stakeholder theory

Since the 1990s, stakeholder theory has become renowned as a direct alternative and challenge to shareholder value theory (Freeman 1984) and as the absolute opposite to business ethics theory. Rahul (2012) argues that the number of stakeholder pressure groups has developed widely since the 1960s, and that the influence of stakeholder forces on business must not be underestimated. The

stakeholder theory emphasises on social aspect rather than any other unrelated to the corporation. Thus, CSR is denoted as a company stakeholder responsibility.

Saint and Tripathi (2006) noted that the purpose of stakeholder theory is to propose an alternative purpose of the firm. Stakeholder theory advocates that the purpose of the organisation is to serve broader societal interests beyond economic value creation for shareholders alone. This is becoming increasingly important to the role of business in the community. The concept of stakeholder theory is attributed to Freeman (1984), whose original idea was that managers have a moral obligation to consider and appropriately balance the interests of all stakeholders.

Evan and Freeman (1993) stated that, *"A stakeholder theory of the firm must redefine the purpose of the firm…the very purpose of the firm is…to serve as a means for coordinating stakeholder interests"* (pp. 102-103). Stakeholder theory thus carries the idea that organisations are dependent on stakeholders for success and that stakeholders have some stake in the organisation. Stakeholder theory is now foundational to business ethics courses in MBA programs (Carroll & Buchholtz, 2006; Carter & Jennings, 2002). Schneider (2002) posits that stakeholder theory extends the concept of ownership of the firm beyond that of the traditional legal or economic owners of the firm, who become stakeholders by the contribution of capital or other means that result in equity ownership.

Although stakeholder theory began as a substitute for shareholder value theory, it has deviated along two paths: normative and instrumental. The normative stakeholder path continues in the tradition of a view of the firm in relation to its various stakeholders, with no stakeholder having supremacy. The instrumental path, however, attempts to connect stakeholder management to wealth generation. In doing so, instrumental stakeholder theory becomes a subset of shareholder value theory (Berrone *et al.*, 2014).

Saint and Tripathi, (2006) asserted that Goodpaster (1991) builds on the work of Freeman (1984) and subdivides stakeholder theory into three approaches: strategic, multi-entrusting, and a synthesis approach. The strategic approach to

stakeholder theory views stakeholders instrumentally: that is, stakeholders are used as a means to generate a profit for shareholders. The multi-entrusting approach sees the corporate as having a credible responsibility to all stakeholders, not just shareholders. The concerns of the broader community of stakeholders are taken into account, and no one stakeholder is assumed to be dominant. The synthesis approach combines elements of both: in this view, the corporation has a moral and ethical duty to stakeholders, but the credible responsibility remains solely to shareholders.

2.3.3.5 Stakeholder Theory as the Focal Theory

This section will simply focus on defining and understanding core principles of stakeholder theory as explained by scholars in various academic literatures. The theory forms a vital part of this research simply because it creates a basis upon which to argue. Stakeholder theory focuses on stakeholder management and the value addition to both internal and external stakeholder groups.

Stakeholder theory is one of the most widely used approaches when considering social, environmental, and sustainability management research: this was identified by numerous authors, and it continues to be used in present works (Kytölä & Naaranoja 2016; Frynas & Yamahaki, 2016; Montiel & Delgado-Ceballos, 2014). However, stakeholder theory cannot be considered as one single theory, but rather is a set of theories for the management of stakeholders (Donaldson and Preston, 1995).

Some academics have tested the notion of adopting stakeholder theory when looking specifically at sustainability. Studies by Austin and Seitanidi (2012) and Schaltegger *et al.* (2014) found that following ongoing changes in business environments and businesses views on external stakeholders, there has been a notable change in the way businesses choose to implement sustainable strategies that benefit numerous stakeholder groups. Moreover, Mainardes *et al.* (2011) argue that many market-based organisations adopted stakeholder theory principles from an initial strategic perspective.

Pfarrer (2008) stated that stakeholder theory has expanded the role and the responsibility of the organisation but has not changed its core purpose, which is

the improvement of the organisation's profit through inclusion of different stakeholders, and as a result, strengthening and improving the organisation's competitive advantage position, thus maximising shareholders' wealth in an efficient way. Friedman (1984) pointed out that although organisations are required to build their competitive advantage and profit, their business strategies, processes and procedures must be inclusive of different stakeholders and must be realised on the moral, ethical and legal fundamentals and boundaries of the society, the creation of which is the responsibility of the government and citizens.

Philips *et al.* (2003) categorised stakeholders into two categories. Primary stakeholders are engaged in the direct economic transaction of the organisation and have a direct effect on the organisational performance: they include shareholders, employees, suppliers and partners. Secondary stakeholders are those who do not directly engage with the organisation or its economic transactions but can influence or sometimes be influenced by the organisation's activities: they include government and media organisations, the community and special interest groups. In general, Philips argues that there is interdependency between organisations and multiple groups, which he named stakeholders.

According to Freeman (2008) and Harrison *et al.* (2010), organisations must not only manage their organisations for shareholders, but should also manage them for stakeholders. This argument is also reflected by Sachs and Ruehli (2005), who argue that the managers must "create value for stakeholders", and not only for shareholders.

The concept of stakeholders is considered by the researcher to be a fundamental departure from shareholders, which, according to Freeman *et al.* (2010) and Stout (2012), could be traced back to Smith's (1776) Wealth Nations World, where the main purpose of the organisation according to the shareholder concept lies in generating profit and increasing shareholders' wealth, on the basis of the assumption of the existence of a social contract towards society which clearly defines the rights and responsibilities of the shareholders or owners (Speckbacker, 1997). Consequently, according to its proponents, including

Hayek *et al.* (1906), this concept is based on three canons: free market, natural market regulation and self-interest of the investor.

Mainardes *et al.* (2011) stated that stakeholder theory was developed by Freeman, and it was considered as a proposal for the strategic management of the organisation in 1984. However, this theory gained more attention over time, with the key works by Clarkson (1994, 1995), Donaldson and Preston (1995), Mitchell *et al.* (1997), Rowley (1997) and Freeman (1999) supporting both greater theoretical depth and development. Now, what is the stakeholder concept? Who are the stakeholders?

This idea was also noted by Donaldson and Preston (1995), who argued that the different interests were seen by organisations to be important to address. These include, for example, the reciprocal relationship between the management and employers, community, special interest groups, government, media, environment, suppliers, employees, competitors, and customers. Therefore, it becomes clear that stakeholder theory concept is important for organisations to take into consideration in management as well as in CSR strategies (Edmondson & Carroll 1999; Friedman 1984; and Philips *et al.*, 2003). Pfarrer (2010) stated that it is vital to recognise the importance of the creation of wealth and its relationship with different actors within the process – not only shareholders but also competitors, employees, customers, suppliers, regulators and local communities – as well as the impact of the organisation on the environment. Therefore, the next section will discuss the main focuses of this theory.

With regards to stakeholder theory, Donaldson and Preston (1995) argue that the concept has been taken up by management schools because of its descriptive accuracy, instrumental power and normative validity. They held a firm belief that the concept is capable of describing how the organisation manages different stakeholders within day-to-day operations and they recognised that stakeholders' interests in organisational operations varied and remained largely dependent on the personal interests embedded within the individuals within each stakeholder group: for example, employees have an interest in the survival of the organisation as well as organisational performance, as their interests focus on salaries, job security and pensions etc. Secondly, according to Moneva *et al.*

(2007), the concept is pragmatic in nature and has instrumental value, since its underpinning argument is based on the idea of different groups' interests in an organisation: therefore, attending these interests will lead to improvements in the organisation's performance in terms of profit increase.

From the above-stated reasons, the researcher concurs with Wolcutch (2007) that the stakeholder concept is capable of dealing with differences concerning ethical issues presented by different groups to the organisation and is effective as an instrument in realising organisational goals. This concept fits the idea of CSR, since the stakeholder concept fits the view of the role of the business of organisation, propagated by the CSR concept, that the societies in which the organisation is situated are part of the organisation. Consequently, organisations have to operate in an ethical manner, taking into consideration the society in which they operate. There are a multitude of ethical issues, including issues such as promoting the inclusion of environmental integrity, economic development, and social justice in the organisation's strategy.

Moreover, Argandona (2008) argued that stakeholder theory assists organisations in creating value for different stakeholders, and noted that these values could be categorised into six categories, namely (1) economic extrinsic value created by the collaboration of the employees; (2) intangible extrinsic value provided by the organisation, such as recognition, training and status; (3) Psychological intrinsic value, such as satisfaction with work done; (4) Intrinsic value that takes the form of operational learning; (5) Transcendent value, which includes evaluative learning; (6) Positive and negative externality value, which that is felt by those who have no direct relationship with the business transactions.

Hörisch *et al*. (2014) stated that the stakeholder theory has been developed in the last three decades to solve specific problems. These problems can be broken down into the following three categories:

   I.   Issues surrounding value creation and trade.

  II.   Issues surrounding ethics and capitalism,

 III.   Issues related to managerial discourse.

Laplume *et al*. (2008) stated that stakeholder theory is still at the adolescent stage, which encourages lots of research to be conducted. They expressed the belief that profit is still the main managerial concern within organisations, and for stakeholder theories to be fully applied, management concerns need to focus on numerous other factors. Laplume and colleagues found that dominant institutions and organisations still have a lot to learn regarding the consideration of stakeholders. This was justified through reference to increasing reports of ethical, financial and environmental misconduct where businesses were concerned mainly with profitability.

The application of stakeholder theory is crucial to building the foundation for this thesis, as it looks at the ways in which companies can use employer branding in the co-creation of value. Employer branding is a subject area that is heavily geared towards various stakeholder groups, with its main concern being employees. It is important to note that the effects of employer branding combined with CSR strategies will effectively serve value co-creation for external and internal stakeholders, which further justifies the use of stakeholder theory as an integral part of this research. Throughout the literature review, numerous references are made to stakeholder groups who are affected through various practices adopted by businesses, such as employer branding and CSR. It is vital to understand the important role of stakeholder management and where the practices discussed within this thesis fall in terms of servicing particular stakeholder groups. The next section will provide further discussion on corporate branding. The process will include the examination of the hotel industry's capability to assess the formulation of its sustainable strategies and activities in terms of branding.

2.2.3 CSR in the Hospitality Sector

According to Bohdanowicz and Zientara (2009), the hospitality industry has major benefits for economic, environmental, social and cultural resources, since it creates job opportunities and helps to develop and improve the infrastructure of any country that aims to utilise this industry as a source of wealth creation for the country. The hospitality industry is now considered to be one of the fastest growing sectors in the world and it plays a major role in tourism

(Grosbois, 2012). Consequently, CSR in the hotel industry has a unique feature, namely a mix of tangible resources, such as buildings and facilities, and intangible resources, including the services presented to customers.

Fentaw (2016) claims that short-term profitability generation in the hospitality industry seems to be a management discourse that is slowly changing, with hotels beginning to adopt sustainable practices in order to provide benefits for their external stakeholders. The growing recognition of businesses that understand consumers who believe in social equity has given rise to sustainable practices within the hospitality sector.

Swarbrooke (1999) noted that hotels engaging in CSR practices have two main motivations: increased publicity and cost cutting. In addition, Liu (2003) argues that the industry has been criticised for unsustainable actions, mainly through negative environmental practices such as dumping garbage or poor clean-up efforts and the exploitation of local workers and indigenous tribes.

Due to the fragmented nature of the hospitality industry, it is difficult to understand and implement CSR practices (Jones *et al.*, 2016). For example, numerous visitors to hotels are foreign, and for that reason, there is a small degree of connectedness between guests and local communities. Since the hotels may not service local customers as much as they do foreign ones, this creates a lack of connectedness, resulting in misunderstanding of the effects of decisions or activities on external stakeholders compared to the local community. This can only be changed by increasing awareness of hotel practices among tourists (Roberts and Tribe 2008).

Roberts and Tribe (2008) believe that socio-cultural sustainability should focus more on developing relationships between guests and local communities in order to create a better integration between hotels and the surrounding communities; they also believe that this sort of integration can generate monetary value, as it simply adds to the existing tourist experience. Moreover, Budeanu (2016) argues that socio-cultural sustainability entails social interaction, relational management and the sharing of value between people, which has risen in importance within the hospitality sector because it gives a

focus on developing guest-employee relationships, aiming to provide guests with a better stay. This can be especially important in terms of value addition and to services within the hospitality sector. Due to the effect of socio-cultural sustainability on profitability, it is heavily applied within the hospitality sector, as it is directly concerned with guests.

According to Aragon-Correa *et al*. (2015), environmental sustainability is also useful to the hospitality sector in terms of creating value and positively benefiting stakeholders. The hospitality sector has strived in terms of environmental soundness in some markets where the latest energy saving equipment is used and hotels actively take part in environmental conservation activities. In a study conducted in London by Knowles *et al*. (1999), over 85% of London's hotels were found to be taking some form of action to reduce their environmental damage. Although those hotels were actively engaged in sustainable activities, some academics believe hotels take part in the most "visible" means of environmental conservation in order that customers will see those activities, and utilise them as a marketing strategy to depict themselves as environmentally responsible businesses. Hobson and Essex (2001), for example, found that hotels claimed to have positive intentions for the environment, but that most hotels only implemented energy-saving strategies that were aimed mainly at cost reduction rather than as environmental benefits.

There is no doubt that satisfying the growing need of hotel guests has generated different challenges in the form of negative effects such as air and noise pollution, waste generation, non-compliance with fundamental labour standards and the growth of prostitution (Chan, 2011). Consequently, CSR orientation has become one of the important strategic components not only of the hospitality industry, but also of every hotel organisation, to compromise the negative effects mentioned above the natural, cultural and social environment (Chan, 2011).

For this reason, and because the hotel industry is huge and continuously developing, it becomes difficult to cover and monitor the whole sector. Due to this, researchers in the field, such as Singal (2014), have categorised the hospitality industry based on ownership. Hotel firms were divided into two main

categories, namely Family vs. Nonfamily firms, and in terms of financial and CSR effects, CSR was found to be more likely to be more salient in service-related firms, especially when the service is experienced by the customers directly.

Singal's (2014) study also found that CSR performance was used to differentiate between the ethical practice of family and nonfamily firms, where the family firms had a long-term orientation due to their greater investment in CSR, but there was no difference between the family and nonfamily organisations in terms of their investment towards CSR. Consequently, Singal (2014) concluded that CSR in this type of organisation (i.e. hotels) should have a CSR strategy that is independent from the financial strategy but complementary to it.

On the other hand, Collier and Esteban (2007) looked at the customer perceptions and employee commitment to the work, as well as the organisation's strategies and policies, and argued that hospitality and tourism firms were very concerned about the formation of consumers' perceptions of quality as well as their employees' commitment, which would lead to customer satisfaction. For this reason, it is very important to include well-designed strategy initiatives in CSR in organisation strategy (Taylor and Baker, 1994).

Others have examined CSR in term of customer loyalty, like Martinez and Bosque (2013), who confirmed the presence of significant direct effects for CSR identification on the traditional antecedents of hotel customer loyalty. Furthermore, Han *et al.* (2011) confirmed that customer satisfaction, and customer trust, had a significant impact on customer loyalty at times when the hospitality industry was facing high levels of business competition coupled with rising customer expectations.

CSR activities in the hotel industry include all activities which lead to the customer's satisfaction and in turn to his loyalty. This fact is represented by Xu and Gursoy (2015), who examined the sustainability issue in relation to hospitality from the perspective of supply chain management. In addition, they

discussed the three dimensions of sustainability in the hospitality industry in order to establish a framework for a sustainable hospitality supply chain.

Other researchers such as Popa and Salanta (2015) have argued that, in order to be effective in developing CSR strategies for tourism in general and hotels in particular, detailed studies are required to compensate for the lack of empirical testing of both CSR and corporate social irresponsibility (CSI), which, according to them, represents not only a lack of understanding but also a gap in terms of theoretical knowledge in CSR and CSI practices. The next section will discuss the second element of the literature that CSR affects: corporate branding. Table 2.1 below presents the literature's findings and gaps on CSR in the hospitality sector.

Literature	Findings	Gap
Grosbois (2012)	The hospitality industry is a mix of tangible and intangible resources.	The hospitality industry is a mix of products and services.
Martinez and Bosque (2013)	There is a direct effect of CSR practices on consumers' loyalty.	Further research is required to understand the effect of CSR practices on internal stakeholders' loyalty.
Fentaw (2016)	Believes that the role of consumers is growing in maintaining sustainability.	The study ignores the role of internal stakeholders in maintaining sustainability.
Jones et al. (2016)	The hospitality industry suffers from fragmentation due to less connectiveness with local communities.	The uniqueness of the environment of a country requires further research.
Budeanu (2016)	The growing role of socio-cultural sustainability entails social interaction.	The role of internal stakeholders' interaction in socio-cultural sustainability requires research.

Table 2. 1 CSR in the Hospitality Sector: Summary of gaps in the Literatures

From the above, the hospitality industry is a mix of products and services and therefore further research is required to understand the effect of CSR practices on internal stakeholders' loyalty. In addition, Fentaw (2016) ignores the role of internal stakeholders in maintaining sustainability. Moreover, the uniqueness of

the environment of a country requires further research due to different regulations and traditions. Finally, the role of internal stakeholders' interaction in socio-cultural sustainability requires research.

2.3 Corporate Branding

According to the American Marketing Association (1960), a brand can be defined as a name or identity, term, design, symbol or any other features that distinguishes the product or service of one seller from another. The legal term for any brand is a trademark that helps to protect a product or corporate's legal rights. Wood (2000) argued that brands should be managed as long-term corporate assets: hence, they are critical to companies' success, as they provide a primary point of offering that differentiate a company or a seller from its competitors.

The idea of corporate brands was first introduced in 1995 by Balmer (Gupta *et al.*, 2015). Moreover, brands have been classified and managed at two levels: one is at the organisational level, which is corporate branding [for example, Proctor & Gamble and Unilever], while the other level is the individual product: that is, product branding [for example, Head & Shoulders and Lipton's Tea] (Xie *et al.*, 2006; Khojastehpour *et al.*, 2014). This classification has been highlighted due to the weight of globalisation from product to corporate branding (Douglas *et al.*, 2001; Xie *et al.*, 2006; Hirsch and Shaukat, 2008; Khojastehpour *et al.*, 2014). As a result, corporate branding has received wide attention at the domestic level as well as the multinational level in establishing a competitive position and reputation in the marketplace (Foreman and Argenti, 2005; Hirsch and Shaukat, 2008; Khojastehpour and Johns, 2014).

Furthermore, over the last few decades, corporates have become more sensitive to doing well by trying to meet customers' expectations and acting in more socially responsible ways (Brown and Dacin, 1997; Bodur *et al.*, 2015). As a result, green branding has been defined by different authors as a set of benefits and features of the brand that are related to reducing the environmental impact and being environmentally friendly (Hartmann *et al.*, 2005).

Furthermore, the brand's identity should provide a set of benefits to those customers who are more concerned about the environment (Roozen and De Pelsmacker, 1998; Hartmann *et al.*, 2005). Some studies have considered the value of environmentally sound product attributes, but the role of emotional benefits in the case of green brands remains largely unassessed. On the other hand, from a different point of view, human capital is the most valuable resource for any company: therefore, attracting "the best and the brightest" is vital for the company's existence and development (Fishman, 1998; Xie *et al.*, 2015).

In parallel to the above, in recent years corporate branding has grown in popularity, with companies increasingly turning to sustainability and CSR activities to form the face of more customer-friendly brands. Nikkhah *et al.* (2015) highlighted the importance of environmental complexity for domestic corporate brands and multinational corporate brands, and identified the factors that contribute to this complexity, including strategic role, organisational structure, organisational culture, knowledge, positioning and extended responsibilities.

Thesleff *et al.* (2011) noted that in order to put the corporate brand strategies into practice, multinational companies (MNCs) are required to adopt and integrate the complexity in order to ensure that the local (domestic) firms are equally living the brand. In addition, MNCs have to be aware of the complexity of positioning their brand globally across the market, as it might be viewed in different ways by different stakeholders, leading to a wrong corporate image (Light, 2013).

Corporate branding in both domestic and multinational companies is dominant in the development of a strategic competitive advantage and corporate reputation. However, multinational corporations may need a different set of strategies in the construction of the corporate brand when compared to local, smaller companies (Nikkhah *et al.*, 2015).

According to Abratt and Kleyn (2012), there is little agreement as to what is required to found and establish a corporate brand. Balmer and Gray (2003) argue that corporate brands are the marks denoting ownership: image-building,

symbols associated with the key values of the corporate, which help to bridge the gap between the corporate and the consumers either as individuals or channels. Knox and Bickerton (2003, p. 1) defined a corporate brand as *"a visual as well as a verbal and behavioural expression of an organisation's unique business model"*.

In addition, when trying to figure out the differences between constructs of corporate brand and corporate reputation, according Corkindale and Belder (2009), it should be clear that corporate branding is about building focus on relevancy to the customers, whereas corporate reputation is mainly concentrated on the legitimacy of the organisation with respect to the stakeholders.

However, Abratt and Kleyn (2012) argue that the corporate brand is essential in building corporate reputation not only with customers, but also across the stakeholders. Besides, Hatch and Schultz (2001) state that the corporate brand not only contributes to the customer-based image of specific firms, but also to the image formed and held by all the stakeholders of the firm. From the above and for the purpose of this research, the author believes that Knox and Bickerton's definition is the most suitable, as it includes the tangible and intangible aspects of the corporate. This definition will thus be the one that will underpin the subsequent sections.

2.3.1 Approaches towards Corporate Brand

Numerous studies in the existing literature explore approaches to branding. Some do so from the management perspectives, examining branding approaches that include economic, identity, consumer, personality, relational, community and cultural approaches (Raab *et al*., 2009). Others view branding from marketing perspectives, such as corporate branding (Balmer and Gray, 2003) and brand stakeholders (Jones, 2005).This research is largely concerned with the marketing literature related to branding approaches, which are valuable to explore.

In the past two decades, marketing scholars have experienced significant interest in corporate brand literature (Balmer and Wang, 2016). This research will explore five main approaches: the first is the Corporate Reputation Chain

approach, developed by Davies *et al*. (2003); whereas the second approach is by Hatch and Schultz (2001), which is the alignment of strategic stars for the corporate brand. The third approach is the Brand Value Chain approach suggested by Keller and Lehmann (2003) and the fourth is the MODEL of the role of brand representative approach by Gupta *et al*. (2008). The fifth approach is The *Four* Cs of branding approach, developed by Schroeder (2017)**.**

2.3.1.1 Corporate Reputation Chain approach

As shown earlier, corporate branding is an umbrella term which has different dimensions: for example, the corporate identity, corporate image, corporate culture and corporate reputation. However, the reason for choosing to explore the corporate reputation chain is that it focuses on two main internal and external stakeholders. Based on Davies *et al*. (2003), the stakeholders are both employees and customers. Figure 2.3 illustrates this approach.
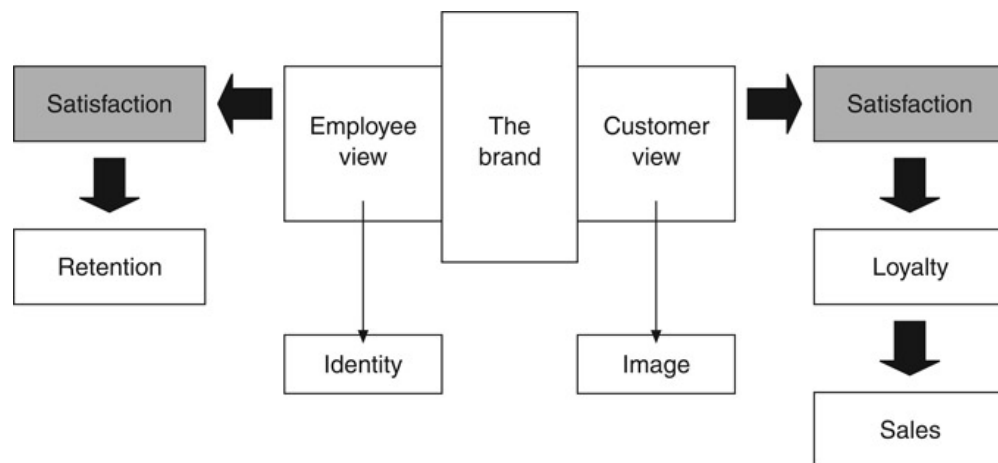
Figure 2. 3: The Corporate Reputation Chain by Davies *et al.* (2003)

The corporate reputation chain approach involves managing the organisation's brand, and depends more on the emotional attachment held by both employees and customers towards the organisation. This approach aims to create harmony of what and how the employees value their corporate brand with other stakeholders' groups (Davies *et al*., 2003).

Indeed, this approach can help any organisation to maintain a positive image among its stakeholders. Davies *et al*. (2003) argue that it is important to consider

the new issue that the corporate has to pay attention to factors such as the auditing of social and environmental reports, and other reports, to achieve CSR and corporate citizenship. This debate has arisen due to the controversy surrounding business ethics and organisations' primary concern, which is no longer to satisfy the shareholders, but rather to satisfy stakeholders.

2.3.1.2 The Strategic Stars for the Corporate Brand approach

To achieve an effective corporate brand, executives need to identify the stars of the organisation's strategy, as shown in Figure 2.4 (Hatch and Schultz, 2001). Hatch and Schultz (2001) argue that the organisational vision, culture and image need to be revealed and to be aligned together. However, the relationship between the manager and employees needs to be understood, as it reflects the organisational vision and culture.

Figure 2. 4: Strategic Stars for Corporate Brand

Source: Hatch and Schultz (2001) p.4

Hatch and Schultz (2001) have classified the potential gaps in this model into three main categories. The first is the vision-culture gap, which happens when

senior management shift the organisation's strategic direction without considering whether the employees understand or support such movement. The second is the image-culture gap, during which there is a misalignment between the organisational image and the culture, resulting in conflict among customers and misunderstanding of what the organisation stands for (Hatch and Schultz, 2001). Finally, in the image-vision gap, the organisation must consider outsiders' images and management strategic vision: hence, sometimes this misalignment creates obstacles for the corporate brand (Hatch and Schultz, 2001).

2.3.1.3 Brand Value Chain approach

A brand value chain is an approach that consists of four main phases: marketing program investment, customer mind-set, brand performance and shareholders' value (Figure 2.5). Besides, there are three multipliers: program quality, marketplace conditions and investor sentiment (Keller and Lehmann, 2003).

- The marketing program focuses on expenditure, which should be directed towards product research and design and marketing communication. In order for a marketing program to affect the customer mind-set, the first multiplier should be introduced, namely the program's quality (Keller and Lehmann, 2003).

- Customer mind-set: this includes everything that exists in the mind of the customer, such as thoughts, feelings, beliefs, attitudes etc. (Keller and Lehmann, 2003).

- Brand performance: affected by five significant aspects, namely price premium, price elasticities, market share, expansion of success and brand profitability (Keller and Lehmann, 2003).

- Shareholders' value: based on available information about a brand: for example, stock price, price earning ratio and market capitalisation (Keller and Lehmann, 2003).
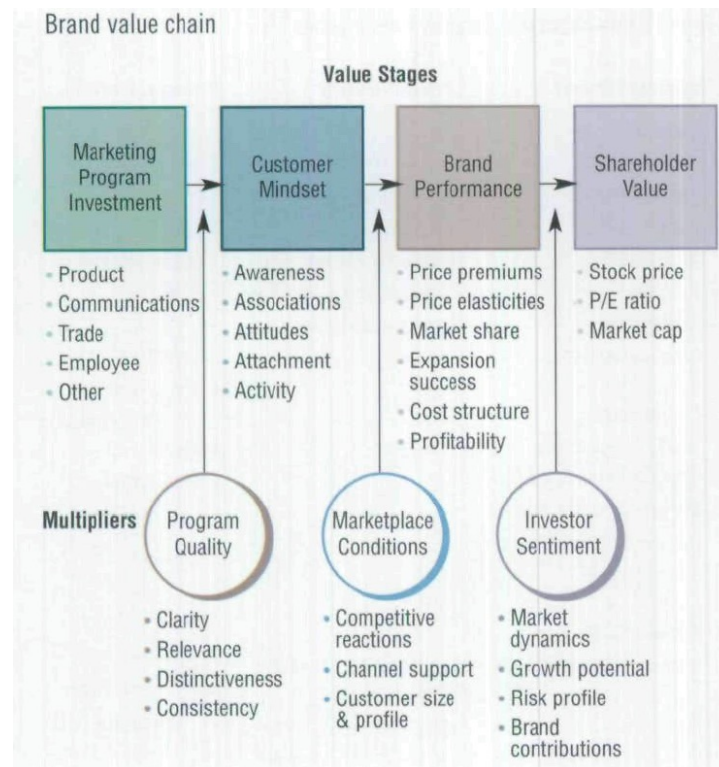
Figure 2. 5: Brand Value Chain Approach

Source: Keller and Lehmann (2003)

From the above, the value chain approach focuses more on the shareholders' value, and the gap between other stakeholders and the value created needs further details and investigation. Such stakeholders are the internal stakeholders (employees) and external stakeholders (environment and local economy).

2.3.1.4 Model of the role of brand representative approach

Gupta *et al*.'s (2008) theoretical model (Figure 2.6) illustrates the relationships between the brand and the reseller/customer and how it is affected by the brand representatives being the moderator in this case.
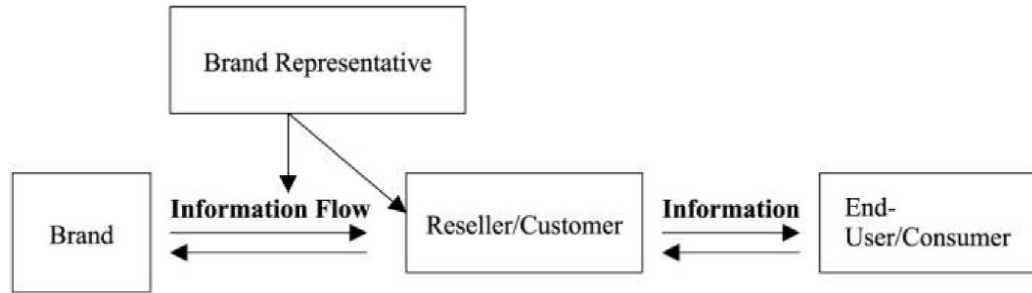
Figure 2. 6: Model of the role of brand representative Source: Gupta *et al*. (2008)

Gupta *et al*. (2008) suggest that the brand representatives have four roles.

The roles of relationships: This is the process of forecasting the future performance of the organisation. This depends mainly on timely exchange of information between the brand and resellers/customers.

The role of communication: Gupta and her colleagues emphasise the importance of communication between the brand and resellers/customers. The brand representatives integrate the interests of the two entities (company and resellers).

The role of marketing: The importance of marketers shapes their ability to influence the brand. The success of the brand representatives depends on their ability to interact and socialise with stakeholders such as distributors or resellers.

The role of information technology: The latest advancements in information technology have augmented the ability to make quick and accurate decisions concerning organisational efficiencies in the competitive marketplace. In such an environment, the speed of decision-making plays an essential role in the growth of the company. Furthermore, Gupta *et al*. (2008) mentioned that technology helps to create a direct relationship between the company and its customers and allows for quick and transparent feedback.

Overall, Gupta *et al*. (2008) highlight the capabilities of the personal human relationships to understand the emotions of the resellers to facilitate the flow of

information. However, this will depend on the personality of the brand representatives and how they can interact with resellers/customers.

The researcher suggests that brand representation could play the role of a moderator between the brand and the reseller/customer, but the brand representative has less effect on the end user of the brand, as he receives information only from the reseller and customer.

2.3.1.5 The 'Four Cs of Branding' approach

Researchers argue that to understand both the brand and branding, one requires awareness of the context of management and the cultural process, which includes the historical context, ethical concerns, consumer responses and regulation (Fournier, 1998; Holt, 2002; Kornberger, 2010; Schroeder, 2005; Schroeder, 2017). Due to this, Schroeder (2017) has identified the four branding typology perspectives – corporate perspective, consumer perspective, cultural perspective and critical perspective – under the title of 'Four Cs'. Schroeder has built this typology based on prior studies (Aaker, 1991; Balmer, 2012; Balmer and Gray, 2003; Kornberger, 2010), where the brand must have an extensive number of stakeholders and consider the social and ethical aspects of the brand (Balmer, 1998, 2011; Balmer and Greyser, 2003; Borgerson *et al.*, 2009; Jeanes, 2013).

The first 'C' is for corporate perspective, which focuses on the brand's strategic point of view. The central focus of the corporate perspective is on the model of brand identity, image, value and equity, which are considered as brand DNA (Schroeder, 2017). The key concepts of a corporate brand were first introduced by Balmer (1995, 1998, 2011; Balmer and Gray, 2003; Urde *et al.*, 2007), whereas the notion of brand culture and how it aligned with brand value was developed by He and Balmer (2007), and the way in which employees reflect the corporate operational identity was discussed by Borgerson *et al.* (2009). According to Schroeder (2017), many of the world's biggest companies and high-end brands are seen as corporate brands and not as a corporate identity. Such companies, like Apple, Google and Mercedes, tolerate the value of the intangible attributes of the brand and its assets.

The second 'C' is the consumer perspective. Schroeder (2017) suggested that the brand values can be understood via the cultural, political and ideological forms. He went on to suggest that the visual aspect, including photography, films and videos, represents a critical element that requires more research into how it will reflect the corporate brand. Furthermore, the co-creation of the brand as well as measuring brand value is crucial to investigations from the corporate branding and corporate marketing perspectives.

Argenti and Druckenmiller (2004) state that by and large, corporate branding is engaged when the company wants to market itself. Besides, they noted that when the company keeps its promises, this helps to strengthen its reputation. Moreover, Balmer and Thompson (2009) argue that the corporate brand is multidisciplinary in scope and strategic in nature, and it must be underpinned by brand promises and aligned with corporate identity. In parallel, Lehner and Halliday (2014) argued that the importance of the role of branding in creating informal institutional arrangements is that it allows the corporate to engage with sustainability, which helps to develop the notion of creating value by examining the relationship between brands and sustainability in business practices.

The third 'C' is the cultural perspective, which sees brands as fragments of culture rather than predominantly as management tools. This emphasis on culture is part of a larger movement within the brand research norm, supporting a basic premise that culture and history can offer the necessary context for corporate perspectives of the interaction of branding with consumers and the community (Cayla and Eckhardt, 2008; Hémar-Nicolas and Rodhain, 2017; Gaski, 2015; Schroeder and Salzer-Mörling, 2006; Schroeder, 2009; Urde *et al*., 2007).

Brand research from a cultural perspective subjugates the theoretical space between strategic concepts of brand identity and consumer interpretations of brand image, highlighting the gap between the corporate and consumer approaches (Schroeder *et al*., 2015). The cultural perspective often emphasises brand heritage, history and legacy, and how these create associations, meaning and value (Balmer, 2013; Balmer and Chen, 2015; Conejo and Wooliscroft, 2015; Schroeder *et al*., 2015).

The final 'C' is the critical perspectives, which provide a significant reflective point of view, showing the ways in which brands are considered as ethical, ideological and political objects. The critical perspective on brands serves as an important perspective to understand the strong roles of corporate brands in consumers' and employees' lives and in cultural discourse, for researchers as well as managers.

There is wide disagreement on brands' likeability, and the internet offers a prepared forum for expressing concern and discontentment, as well as passion. Brand critique often emphasises advertising imagery, as this represents the most visible aspect of many corporations (Bell *et al.*, 2014). An additional line of criticism fears the expansion of brands and corporate branding logic into a wide array of institutions, including hospitals, national politics, universities and personal lives (Jeanes, 2013). Moreover, social media tends to encourage branding in one's own online life, such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and other platforms.

To conclude, Abratt and Kleyn (2012) argue that corporate brand identity is a company's internal strategic decision and corporate brand mechanism that allows for matching between desired identity and how stakeholders see and think of the corporate identity. Moolla and Bisschoff (2013) mentioned that the emergence of brand loyalty has led to a growing interest in the way in which branding is managed. This led to several studies investigating the influences of brand loyalty in various segments, such as healthcare, fashion and publishing. However, Christina (2015) suggested that there is little evidence of brand loyalty research strictly on hospitality firms' green orientation and its impact on loyalty. From the review above, it is important to explain the CSR phenomena that organisations have to consider in their strategy as employers.

2.3.2 Corporate Sustainable Branding

Recently, there has been a growth in the notion of corporate green branding by exploring and investigating the topic and how it has been managed and employed in different firms and countries worldwide (Cherian and Jacob, 2012). As a result, a number of researchers have explored the opportunities, the sustainability (green initiatives) and the challenges of corporate sustainable

branding. This section will provide both a conceptual review and an empirical review of the literature on corporate sustainable branding.

According to Arvidsson (2008), the most important and fundamental trend in today's consumer society is the progressive presence of customers in the process where value is created around products and brands. Due to this, according to Cova *et al*. (2011), a large number of firms involve customers in their production of their brands, experiences, design, marketing strategies, and finally product development.

Consequently, according to Arvidsson (2008), this trend has become very important as internet access spreads across the world and the use of digital technology brings things closer, which in turn allows companies to pay more attention to their social activities towards society and protect their brand image by being sustainable, contributing to the creation of customer value by not harming either society or the environment.

Kapferer (1986) stated that *"A brand is both tangible and intangible, practical and symbolic, visible and invisible under conditions that are economically viable for the company."* Furthermore, Roozen and De Pelsmacker (1998) and Hartmann *et al*. (2005) argue that the brand identity should provide a set of benefits to those customers who are more concerned about the environment.

The importance of this fact has been noted by Keller and Lehmann (2006), who argued that that in the last few decades, the importance of branding and managing brand equity has increased dramatically. As a result, corporations have considered Brand as their primary capital: hence, it is the source of their most valuable intangible assets.

A decade ago, Bemporad and Baranowski (2007) argued that there are five principles, designed to illustrate how values-driven (Figure 2.7) branding can improve not only benefits but also corporate sustainability programs, as well as create opportunities for business innovation and drive value to the triple bottom line. The five principles, as stated by Bemporad and Baranowski (2007), are:

- **Integration**: bring practice into line with the promise. As consumer behaviour has changed with the use of technology, they are becoming

savvy and looking beyond firms-issued advertising to share information on their own. In addition, their expectations have increased, as has visibility: it is not what the firms say but what they do that matters. Due to this, branding has come to represent the full strategic integration of sustainability and brand, which means that every decision in the lifecycle of a product or service from the stage of designing to development and delivery is now a brand decision. Therefore, sustainable strategy and brand strategy are created in tandem (External consumer promises are associated with the internal practices) (Bemporad and Baranowski, 2007).

- **Co-ownership**: leveraging stakeholders to create value. The brand is not owned only by the companies, but is co-owned by a group of stakeholders who progressively test, challenge and validate brand promises. Nielsen Buzz Metrics argued that 25% of research results on Google for the world's top brands are linked to consumer-generated content. Consequently, opportunities are created for multiple stakeholders to shape, realize and share the benefits of a product or service based on an effortlessly integrated business and sustainability strategy (Bemporad and Baranowski, 2007).

- **Triple value proposition:** delivering practical, social and tribal benefits. Bringing all these advantages together to offer a combination of product performance, social promise and personal purpose. Leveraging the triple value proposition indicates that consumers will not have to seek out the company's sustainability performance in a CSR report because sustainability will emerge in every product, service, action, and micro-interaction (Bemporad and Baranowski, 2007).
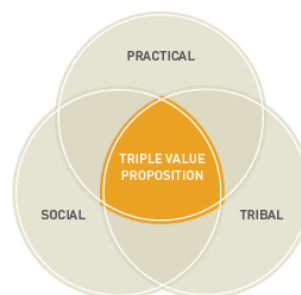
Figure 2. 7: Triple Value proposition. Source: Bemporad and Baranowski (2007)

- **Inside-out:** sharing an authentic brand story. This is about how to send not only the right marketing message but also illuminating facts with truthful, emotionally resonant stories. Moreover, building mutual, honest and transparent relationships that represent the brand cover its influence and impact (Bemporad and Baranowski, 2007).

- **Empowering:** realising best selves and society. Sustainable brands educate, engage and empower the customers, as they are the ones who deliver ideas, experience and opportunities to address the issues that matter most to the society (Bemporad and Baranowski, 2007).

Further to the principles noted above, some authors have identified brand to be a key factor locally or internationally, and it is thus important to take brand into consideration when dealing with branding strategies. This fact was noted by Khojastehpour *et al.* (2015), who highlighted the importance of environmental complexity for domestic corporate brands and multinational corporate brands and identified the factors that contributed to this complexity, including strategic role, organisational structure, organisational culture, knowledge, positioning and extended responsibilities.

As a result of this, Thesleff *et al.* (2011) argue that by explaining the corporate brand strategies in practice, multinational companies (MNCs) must adopt and integrate the complexity in order to ensure that the local (domestic) firms are equally living the brand. They went on to note that MNCs have to be aware of the complexity of positioning involved because globalising their brand across the market might be viewed in different ways by different stakeholders, which might lead to a wrong or undesirable corporate image (Light, 2013).

As a result of these facts, other authors have examined the relationship between constructing corporate branding and corporate reputation. According to Corkindale and Beldar (2009), corporate branding is about building a focus on

relevancy to the customer, whereas corporate reputation is mainly concentrated on the legitimacy of the organisation with respect to the stakeholders. However, Abratt and Kleyn (2012) do not distinguish the two and argue that the corporate brand serves to construct the corporate reputation with its stakeholders.

This view is also reflected by Hatch and Schultz (2001), who argue that the corporate brand does not only contribute to the customer-based image of specific firms, but also to the image formed and held by all the stakeholders of the firm. The next section of this literature review will focus on employer branding and how internal stakeholders help in creating value, and how those internal stakeholders enhance the corporate image and employer branding.

2.4 Employer Branding

The first authors to bring employer branding to the surface were Barroa and Ambler (1996). They defined employer branding as *"the package of functional, economic and psychological benefits provided by employment, and identified with the employing company"*. Employer branding falls within the broader school of study surrounding strategic human resource management (Panczuk and Point 2008). It is a deeply sought-after solution to talent management systems within human resource marketing and is used within communications strategies that aim to attract candidates that fit into an organisation's culture and perform well within the organisational setting (Philippe 2004).

The link between the human resource topic and value is generated through a focus on value co-creation and competitive advantage. Employees make up a part of a firm's intellectual property, while a brand becomes an asset. The value of the intangible asset – the brand – is based on many components, one of them being employees (Martin *et al*., 2005).

Whilst it is argued that brand reputation, rewards and remuneration, job roles, responsibility and future development opportunities are essential for employer branding (Panczuk & Point, 2008), their inter-relationship with organisational identity, culture and brand loyalty have also been pronounced in contemporary scholarly works (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). The notion that lowered staff

turnover and increased performance are directly linked to successful employer branding strategies (Chauvin & Guthrie, 1994) can also be complemented by the argument that employer branding often leaves positive impressions with customers (Levering *et al*., 1984; Sullivan *et al*., 2002). This in turn increases the value of the brand. Thus, employer branding can be considered a talent management strategy aimed at acquiring candidates who are able to deliver and create value for institutions. While the view surrounding the role of employer branding within corporate strategies is split into numerous sub-sections, a clear and concise definition can be agreed for the term itself; it is used to describe an organisation's attitude towards its employees (Ollington *et al*., 2013).

2.4.1 The Effect of Internal Branding on Employer Branding

Yang *et al*. (2015) explored the notion of the effect of internal branding and employer brand commitments on employee brand behaviour in the hospitality industry. They suggest that the branding cycle goes through internal brand, brand commencement and brand behaviour. Yang *et al*. (2015) suggest that value is created internally among employees, as their results show that the impact of internal branding is consistent across employees' age groups, whereas its impact varies between employee BC (business-to-consumer) and employee BB (business-to-business).

It is also argued that employer branding strategies and CSR initiatives have a positive impact on employee recruitment (Turban & Greening, 1997; Brammer *et al*., 2007; Petkovic, 2008; Galbreath, 2010; Lin *et al*., 2012), and on employee retention and development (Maier *et al*., 2001; Cable & Graham, 2000). The use of employer branding in CSR strategies can successfully communicate CSR activities to stakeholders indirectly, while creating internal business value, such as staff retention and increased performance. While employees' commitment to an organisation can be considered as an essential aspect of value co-creation, this is also intertwined with strong employer branding. Hence, conceptually, employer branding and value co-creation have a reciprocal inter-relationship, which has not been properly addressed in the academic literature.

Furthermore, in the last decade, the topic of environmental sustainability has undoubtedly attracted considerable attention (Paillé and Raineri, 2015). Different scholars have studied factors of consumers' pro-environmental behaviour, causes of corporate environmental market responsiveness and other issues. However, in comparison, few studies have focused on what drives employee to engage in pro-environmental behaviour in corporate settings (Paillé and Raineri, 2015). As a result, Paillé and Raineri (2015) conducted research to examine the linkages between the corporate environmental policies, corporate support and employees' eco-initiatives.

Paillé and Raineri (2015) tested the indirect effect of organisational support on the relationship between perceived corporate environmental policies and eco-initiatives and the moderating effect of perceived psychological breach on the relationship between organisational support and eco-initiatives. They found that low organisational support had a negative effect on employees' willingness to perform eco-initiatives. In comparison, among employees who received more support from their organisation, willingness to perform eco-initiatives was more positive.

However, Paillé and Raineri (2015) suggested that research is still required to explain the underlying process pertaining to why employees are willing to engage in behaviour intended to influence the corporate or the organisation when they perceive that the organisation that they belong to is committed to harming the environment as little as possible. They also suggested that future studies should focus more on recognition of non-financial rewards for employees.

In parallel with this, Blok *et al*. (2015) set out to identify the internal and external factors that could predict pro-environmental behaviour in the workplace. The internal factors that were identified were social factors (social norms, personal norms), cognitive factors (environmental awareness, intention to act, perceived behavioural control) and affective factors (values and attitudes towards the environment). However, Blok *et al*. (2015) argued that environmental value only has a significant positive effect on personal norms at

the internal factor level and therefore an indirect effect on the intention to act in an environmentally friendly way in the workplace.

Blok *et al*. (2015) claimed that households have more freedom to choose whatever they value, whereas employees are required to comply with corporate rules and routines, which results in value destruction, contradicting corporate expectations. On the other hand, Blok *et al*. (2015) argued that leaders have a significant impact on employees' intention to act in an environmentally friendly manner. For example, new behaviour adopted by managers may help to change employees' perceptions towards the environment.

Internal branding can be defined as a set of strategic processes that align and empower employees to deliver the applicable customer experience in a reliable fashion (MacLaverty *et al*., 2007). Brexendorf and Kernstock (2007) argued that when the employee's behaviour is aligned with the corporate brand values, this will help to minimise the discrepancies between brand promise and brand delivery, thus eventually contributing to a holistic brand experience and satisfaction for customers (Burmann & Zeplin, 2005). As a result, Shaari *et al*. (2015) consider the issue of employer branding as a critical issue that the corporate has to take into consideration to achieve the organisation's overall brand performance.

2.4.2 The Roles of Employer Branding

Equally important to employer branding is the role of employees' brand behaviour, which, according to Morhart *et al*. (2009), is twofold. The first role is their ability of the employees to meet the standard that has been set by the organisation or the employer. The second is extra-role behaviour, which describes employees' commitment to enhance the brand performance of the organisation. Moreover, King and Grace (2008) pointed out that extra-role brand behaviour is more closely related to non-prescribed employee behaviour that is consistent with the brand values of the organisation. In addition, Khalique *et al*. (2015) agree that the extra-role behaviour mentioned above is found to be more meaningful for the brand of the organisation.

Khalique *et al*. (2015) suggested that hotels' internal stakeholders (employees) learn their attitudes and behaviour through their leaders. This statement is in line with the suggestions of Vallaster and de Chernatony (2006), Burmann *et al*. (2008), Morhart *et al*. (2009) and Thorbjornsen and Supphellen (2011), who argued that the importance of brand leadership has a huge impact on encouraging employees' brand-consistent behaviour (BCB). Moreover, considering leaders as role models, by arousing personal involvement, teaching and coaching their employees, will help to stimulate employees' BCB. Khalique *et al*. (2015) added that the fulfilment of the truism of "employees' willingness to become brand champions" depends on employees' confidence in their leadership.

In some cases, where employees perceive weakness in their leadership, this can discourage the employees' psychological attachment and their willingness to live the brand (Thomson *et al*., 1999). Therefore, according to Vallaster and De Chernatony (2006), the concept of internal branding means that the leadership influences brand commitment and consequently brand-supportive behaviour, by acting as role models for behaviour and consistently communicating the brand values.

However, Khalique *et al*. (2015) argued that it is important to identify the style of leadership adopted by employers to figure out the relationship between the employees' behaviour and brand loyalty. They concluded that understanding the internal influence created on their employees will clarify the employees' loyalty towards the value created by the brand.

Yang *et al*. (2015) explored the notion of the effect of internal branding and employee brand commitments on employee brand behaviour in the hospitality industry. Their research framework presents mainly the branding cycle shown in Figure 2.8, which consists of: internal brand, brand commitment and brand behaviour.
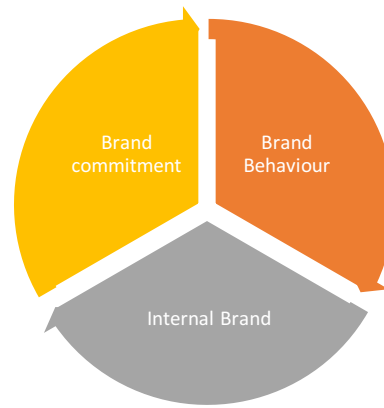
Figure 2. 8: Branding cycle

Yang *et al*. (2015) concluded in their research on the value created internally among employees that employees' age groups had no influence on internal branding, but had a significant effect on employee BC and employee BB. In addition, by examining the years of employment, the results showed that there was no impact on IB (internal brand), but years of employment had a significant influence on both BC (brand commitment) and employee BB (brand behaviour). Yang *et al.*'s. (2015) findings indicate that the higher the level of education of the employees in the hotel industry, the less they feel stuck in their jobs, as their qualifications tend to give them confidence in their own ability and they are less likely to worry about how to get the right position within the organisation.

Moreover, Yang *et al*. (2015) suggested that it is highly recommended that corporates design an alternative brand of internal marketing to educate their employees. Their study showed that younger employees with higher levels of education and shorter duration of employment are less responsive to branding. Therefore, it is highly important to adopt different methods of branding to target these employees by giving them long-term training or allocating challenges, and setting up a reward-feedback system to assess and supervise them.

Although there is an effect on both internal branding and brand commitment and employee brand behaviour, it is the manager's task to shape the employees' attitudes and behaviour through internal branding (Yang *et al*., 2015). It is their duty to inform the employees about the brand image expected by consumers and how to convey the brand vision and values through their behaviour.

On the other hand, Yang *et al*. (2015) argued that good service cannot be achieved through instructions alone, but can be achieved with the right guidance and proper supervision. De Chernatony (2006) explained that brand management requires managers to act as intermediaries, passing the role of the brand among their employees, which can help to influence employee brand behaviour. However, Yang *et al*. (2015) advised that it is necessary to expand the research on internal branding in terms of evaluating and assessing employees' performance and to understand the effect of internal branding in employees' branding and whether this can be understood by the customers. Consequently, to get more accurate results and objective data, longitudinal studies should be carried out, including the long-term follow-up on the brand or interviews with relevant personnel. Furthermore, brand education should be assessed in light of geographical and cultural aspects.

2.4.3 Employer Branding in the Hotel Industry

Chang and Ma (2015) adopted the institutional theory to explore how hotels use their resources-based advantages, such as service brand value, top management team leaders and service culture, to promote the quality of employee services. The findings were that the leadership style used by global brand hotels tends to empower employees to solve and deal with customers' complaints immediately and rewards employees for excellent service (Chang and Ma, 2015). This employee confidence not only helps the customers but also helps to create value for the employees as well. Additionally, Chang and Ma (2015) suggested that it is necessary to conduct more empirical studies in this field, as research is currently limited to the Chinese situation and interviews must be conducted in different hotel, firms and countries around the world.

Manhas and Tukamushaba (2015) pointed out that in order to provide excellent quality service, the value incorporated in the vision and mission in particular hotel establishments should be observed by every employee in the hotel. This is intended to create a service culture aimed at creating and managing first impressions, which are important in creating a moment of truth. This will help to motivate employees to improve their performance and create a better work environment.

In addition, Manhas and Tukamushaba (2015) suggested that it is required to assess the hotel's brand image and customer satisfaction with the performance of employees, as this is associated with the guest experience, which has an impact on the marketing decision-making process for managers.

Martilla and James (1997) asserted the importance of performance analysis as a valuable tool that helps managers to easily view the attributes of their corporate. This analysis is equally important for customers and reveals how the corporate is performing from the customers' point of view. In addition, it is important to evaluate different marketing strategies, as this makes analysis easier to interpret.

Apart from employee performance and its importance in the corporate, creativity is also vital: it plays an essential role in obtaining an international competitive advantage, as it is the manifestation of the wisdom and knowledge of human capital, which transforms creativity into value creation for both individuals and organisations, providing a sustained competitive advantage (Richards, 2011; Lin *et al*., 2014). With the high growth and development of tourism industry, the demands of novelty are highly needed and new ideas are warmly welcomed by corporates in this sector. As a result, organisations are keen to develop employees' creative motivation and provide incentives to develop creativity and innovation to attract tourists and develop a distinction (Jara´bkova´ & Hamada, 2012; Moscardo and Pearce, 2004; Zukin, 2010).

Tsai *et al*. (2015) adopted the componential theory of creativity in measuring employees' creativity in the context of the tourism industry. However, the Tsai *et al*.'s (2015) results illustrate that linking the main attributes of creativity to the marketing 4Ps (People, Place, Product and Process) in the setting of tourism and hospitality organisational environments can amalgamate the creative process. Moreover, Tsai *et al*. (2015) provide evidence that employees' personality, the creative process and a positive workplace lead to employees' creativity, satisfaction and creative performance in their work, predominantly creating value for the internal stakeholders.

Therefore, in order for this sector to cover the changing demand of the market tourism and hospitality entities, it should enhance creativity by selecting

individuals who are willing to demonstrate a proactive personality alongside their other criteria (Gong *et al*., 2012). Tsai *et al*. (2015) argued that proactive individuals engage in more informational exchange, which will lead to the creation of a healthy and friendly work atmosphere.

Not surprisingly, employees in tourism and hospitality experience high levels of work stress compared with other industries (Ross, 1997). Therefore, it is important for the corporate to select the right candidate: they have to consider employees who have a positive work attitude, not only to encourage trust-based relationship between employees (Zhu *et al*., 2013) but also to motivate them to solve different tasks, thereby improving the organisational performance (Kamdar & Dyne, 2007).

On the other hand, Tsai *et al*. (2015) pointed out that the significance of paths from the individual's personality to the creative process and the workplace in the tourism and hospitality industry does not mean that employee creativity and satisfaction can be improved only after consideration of personality factors. Furthermore, they argued that the possibility of a reverse path from the workplace does not conflict with individuals' differences or creative processes. As a result, the organisation is required to provide more training to improve creativity for their employees to improve the quality of human capital. Tsai *et al*. (2015) suggested that it is necessary to explore the employee participation plan or more information exchange mechanisms to improve the quality of employees as capital for the organisations.

Panczuk and Point (2008) believe that in order to develop suitable employer branding, there is a need to combine four key factors: the brand reputation, rewards and remuneration, job roles and responsibility, and future development opportunities. However, it is believed that these four principles have diminished in value over time as numerous large institutions compete to attract the best candidates for employment, creating a situation where firms need to further broader motivational factors to add value to employee offerings. In recent times, numerous popular magazines such as Forbes have started to release "Best Employer" ratings that seek to inform candidates on what companies can potentially be a good choice for a place of work. Retaining a place within these

rankings means that firms must constantly improve their working conditions and the general working environment (Chauvin and Guthrie, 1994).

It is a popular belief amongst some authors that employer branding is simply a marketing tool used by companies to indirectly target consumers by allowing them to understand that employment conditions are good while trying to justify good quality products (Levering *et al*., 1984). However, this argument has been countered by scholars who set out to prove that lowered staff turnover and increased performance are directly linked to successful employer branding strategies (Chauvin & Guthrie, 1994).

O'Sullivan (1998) believes that a successful employer branding strategy will attract and retain high quality employees while also increasing the value of a brand in the eyes of its consumers. This in turn increases the value of the brand. He describes employer branding as a talent management strategy aimed at acquiring candidates who are able to deliver and co-create value for institutions. While the view surrounding the role of employer branding within corporate strategies is split into numerous subsections, a clear and concise definition can be agreed for the term itself: it is used to describe an organisation's reputation towards its employees. Table 2.2, below, illustrates the gaps in the literature concerning employer branding in the hospitality sector.

Literature	Findings	Gap
Panczuk and Point (2008)	The role of the brand reputation, rewards and remuneration, job roles and responsibility and future development opportunities in achieving employer branding.	Although employer branding depends on the factors mentioned in the paper, the article disregards the role of employees' integration with their local communities in achieving employer branding.
Chang and Ma (2015)	The leadership styles of globally managed hotels affect the empowerment of employees	Despite the important role of management style in achieving employer branding, the paper ignores the role of local government in empowering local employees through initialization and protecting the environment as a part of overall employer branding.
Manhas and Tukamushaba (2015)	The importance of employees' awareness of the vision and mission of the establishment in achieving better service quality	Although the paper stressed the role of employees' awareness, the role of performance, loyalty, and satisfaction of employees in attaining employer branding was absent, as these traits significantly affect service quality and in turn employer branding.
Tsai et al. (2015)	The role of personal creativity of employees in achieving employer branding.	Beside personal creativity, other considerations like attitude towards local communities and its effect on employer branding require further research. CSR activities can include charity work, involvement in celebrations and religious understanding from the organizations

Table 2. 2: Employer Branding Literature Gap

Although employer branding depends on reputation, rewards and remuneration, job roles and responsibility and future, the role of employees' integration with their local communities in achieving employer branding has not been covered. Although the role of management style in achieving employer branding is important, the role of local government in empowering local employees through nationalisation and protecting the environment as a part of overall employer

branding has been ignored. Another gap was the role of performance, loyalty, and satisfaction of employees in attaining employer branding

2.5 Value Co-creation

Despite the importance of stakeholder theory in adding value for all stakeholders, little attention has been given to the concept of what is meant to create value and what are the criteria for assessing it (Harrison and Wicks, 2013). Moreover, the academic literatures on value still contains extensive debate on what is meant by value, as different authors state different criteria and definitions. This necessitates a thorough understanding of value. Marketing is no exception to this: it also reveals the inextricable relationship between consumer value and other relevant concepts. Therefore, understanding the underlying relationship between marketing activities and perceived values helps to enhance the marketing activities (Park *et al.*, 1986).

2.5.1 Importance of value in the marketing field

According to Born and Bachmann (2006) and Lassoued and Hobbs (2015), the best options for corporates to establish themselves on the market are with niche products and/or services that create customer values. Adding value to the products and services permits small and medium corporates to compete on the market. According to Born and Bachmann (2006), it is conceivable to price niche products or services with valuable assets at least 30 percent higher than similar products or services without these added values. In order to distinguish itself from similar businesses, the corporate has to implement an entrepreneurial approach (Dhliwayo, 2014). Entrepreneurship is an important part of the strategy for many organisations, and it is the right way to remain competitive.

Collis and Montgomery (2008) and Dhliwayo (2014) noted that markets are growing bigger and changing faster, so innovation and the ability to adapt is the corporates' key to success and competitive advantages. Utilising the valuable resources efficiently is part of the entrepreneurial strategy, according to Morgan *et al.* (2010). Based on Dhliwayo (2014), corporates that adopt entrepreneurial strategies are more likely to seize potential opportunities, allocate resources and develop services and/or products that achieve customers' satisfaction.

Consequently, value addition increases customers' trust and loyalty, which enhances corporate branding.

2.5.2 Value Definitions

There are many definitions for value in the literature. This section will discuss a number of them to identify the most suitable for this research. Customer value is defined as the difference between the total utilities customers obtain from a product and the total costs they pay (Olson *et al*., 1993; Ravald & Grönroos, 1996). Holbrook (2006) suggests that consumer value is the result of an interaction between a subject and an object; the subject-object relationship is relativistic and dependent on contextual variables. The definition and the concept of value can be multifaceted; however, there is a consensus among researchers that value should be assessed in terms of the difference between the utility and cost.

In addition to value definitions, the author looked at forms or types of value. Generally speaking, the creation, delivery and utilisation of value are evidently not a linear process (Humphreys & Grayson, 2008). According to Grönroos (2008) and Vargo and Lusch (2008), there are two forms of value that have been identified and defined in the economics and marketing literature: value-in-exchange and value-in-use. Value-in-exchange is realised during the point of sale, while value-in-use derives from the extent to which customers satisfy their requirements.

Value-in-use depends upon customers' perceptions, abilities, skills and knowledge, and is perceived by customers in their internal processes, through their interaction with the suppliers or service providers and/or while consuming the product. Another dimension to value creation is co-creation of value, which is applicable more to value-in-use, as it considers the actual consumption experience rather than financial worth (Grönroos & Voima, 2013). Hence, a customer needs to have information, knowledge, skills and other resources to gain the optimum outcome from the use of a product (Normann, 2001). From the above, the researcher opted to consider the definition proposed by Grönroos

and Voima (2013) as the focal definition, as it includes the types of value and the concept of value creation and co-creation.

2.5.3 Value Co-Creation Models

The business management literature was the first to introduce the value co-creation concept, in the work of Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004, cited in Alves *et al*., 2016). Indeed, the role of value and co-creating value is critical for any industry, not only for service marketing and business management (Alves *et al*., 2016; Saarija¨rvi *et al*., 2013): it is also a common term that involves a more participative process that considers both organisations and people to generate the meaning of value (Ind & Coates, 2013). However, since this research focuses on the employer marketing perspective, it is highly important to present the two models of value co-creation in order to clarify the understanding of the co-creation concept. The following subsection presents an explanation of two models in the value co-creation: the first is the DART model (Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004), followed by Payne *et al*.'s (2007) model.

2.5.3.1 DART Model of Value Co-creation

Taghizadeh *et al*. (2016) argue that organisations are co-creating value with their customers in different ways. The organisations work along with their suppliers to learn more about consumers in order to finalise the design of the product by adding the new ideas they gain through the consumers (Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004). Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004) argue that the consumers have more influence in choices that risk reducing or negatively affecting consumer satisfaction. Prahalad and Ramaswamy proposed new references for value co-creation where the consumers are transformed from being isolated to involved, from unaware to informed and from passive to active. For those reasons, they proposed the DART model, which consists of four blocks: Dialogue, Access, Risk Assessment and Transparency. This is illustrated in Figure 2.9.
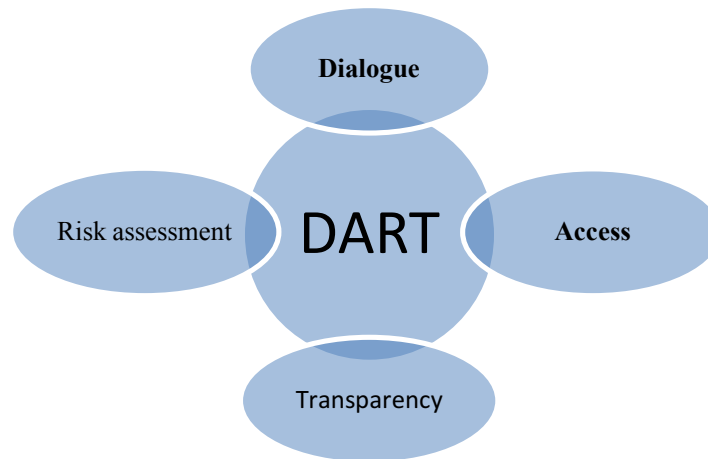
Figure 2. 9: DART Model. Source: Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004)

The model mainly illustrates that the consumers are part of the value creation, leading to a new concept, namely "Value Co-Creation". The idea of value co-creation came from involving the consumer in value creation (Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004). The four blocks are:

Dialogue: the engagement of consumers and ability to co-create the value of the company, leading to an integrated loyal community between the organisation and consumers (Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004).

Access: allows the information of the production process to be disseminated among consumers. This leads to a reduction in the investment required to effectively participate in the organisation field of business (Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004).

Risk assessment: risk here refers to the possibility of negatively affecting the consumers. The benefits of risk assessment are that the consumers will be considered as part of the assessment, whereas the drawbacks are that full awareness of consumers might lead to scaring the consumers. In contrast, consumers who are more aware of risk became more proactive in value co-creation (Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004).

Transparency: In the past, organisations tended to conceal information from the consumer, but due to the spread of information, this is no longer possible. The level of transparency on the DART model not only means access to information,

but throughout the cycle of production, cost assessment and settlement, making consumers more interested in investing in the organisation (Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004).

Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004) explained that combining the four blocks of the DART model would lead to the following:

- ❖ Access with Transparency: allows the organisation to improve the consumer's ability to make more informed decisions.
- ❖ Access with Dialogue: enhances the formation of harmonising communities (consumers and organisations).
- ❖ Transparency with Risk Assessment: leads to building trust between the organisation and consumers.

To summarise, the outcome of the DART model is that the organisation realises that the conventional way of value creation is obsolete, and these outcomes are already tested by combining the four blocks of the model (Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004).

2.5.3.2 Payne et al.'s (2008) model

Payne *et al.*'s (2008) conceptual model aims to create a process-based framework to understand and develop the concept of value co-creation within the context of service domain logic. Their article followed a systematic approach, starting with the general idea of value co-creation, followed by presenting the key components of value co-creation and discussing how they are integrated into the proposed framework. Finally, Payne *et al.* (2008) backed up the framework by using field-based research to review and improve the theoretical framework. The framework proposed by Payne *et al.* (2008) consists of three major components, as illustrated in Figure 2.10.
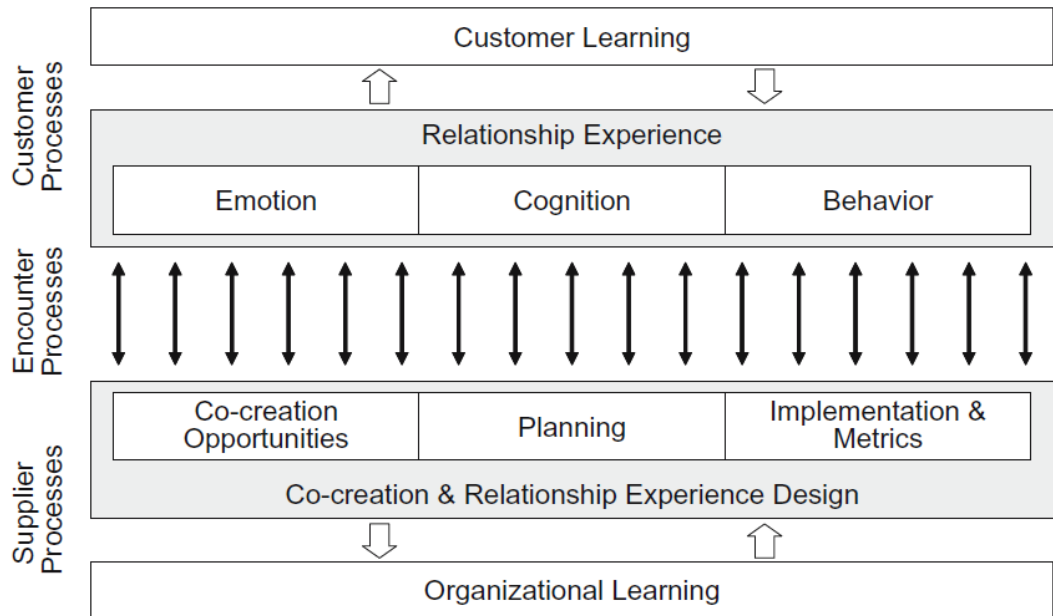
Figure 2. 10 Payne *et al.*'s Model*:*

Source: Payne et al. (2008, p. 92)

The customer value co-creation process is based on the business-to-customer relationship, in which processes, resources and practices are utilised to manage customers' behaviour.

The supplier value co-creation process is also used to manage the business-to-business/customer relationship through practices, resources and processes.

Encounter processes are based on the interaction and exchange of information that exists between customers and suppliers to produce adequate value co-creation opportunities.

Payne *et al*.'s (2008) model shows that the customer's experience is shaped by accumulative cognitive, behaviour and emotion elements. These elements are the basis of the customer learning block on the model. The organisational role in this relationship is to provide the customers with experience that shapes the encounter processes between the two entities.

Organisational learning is based on the service domain logic. Payne *et al.* (2008) conducted interviews with managers that showed considerable tacit knowledge

of their customers based on research about customers' behaviour, strategies, plans and policies of consumer behaviour.

The encounter process is basically where the suppliers are continuing to support and serve the achievement of the customer's goals, from defining the goals until the feedback phase. Figure 2.11 shows the mapping of customers and suppliers in the encounter phase as an example of encounter process activities.

From Payne *et al*.'s (2008) point of view, value co-creation is the result of the encounter process in the relationship between customers and suppliers. Payne *et al*.'s (2008) model depends on how successfully the suppliers can affect consumer behaviour through a successful communication plan and marketing programs. As a result, the value co-creation is a reaction of customers' behaviours. Therefore, suppliers co-create value through controlling customer behaviour.

Customer processes

Goals in life	Travel plans	Decision making	Preparations	Journey	Follow-up
• Relaxation • New experiences • Holiday plans • Keeping up friendships • Social intercourse • Developing hobbies • Keeping up language skills	• Deciding time & destination • Checking financial situation • Collecting info • Applying for credit card, passport • Deciding number of participants • Considering age of children, health, safety, insurance	• Applying for vacation • Choosing destination • Informing the family • Booking • Booking someone to take care of the house, flowers, dog • Making use of benefits	• Paying • Insurance & vaccinations • Currency, passport, visa • Luggage acquisition • Preparations for journey • Packing • Buying film • Gathering info • Getting babysitter	• Wakingup& transportation • Airport transportation • Finding the hotel • Accommodation • Buying a map • Buying duty-free • Destination services • Participating in trips on site • Send postcards	• Giving feedback • Laundry, un-packing • Giving souvenirs • Groceries • Informing relatives • Personal follow-up (solarium, sickness) • Currency exchange • Taking care of mail and bills

Encounters

• Advertisement • Direct mail (letter) • Contact request	• Discussing plans • Budget proposal • Brochure • Direct mail (letter) • Good to know - document • Who are we - advertisement	• Brochure • Sales call (phone or meeting) • Application forms	• Billing • Ticket • Good-to-know document • Discussions about arrangements • Insurance • We're-on-holiday postcard	• Check list for those at home • Check calls • Escort/guides • Map • Good-to-know document	• Feedback form • Feedback discussions • Welcome home letter/package • Offering • Credit note / additional bill • Home transportation

Supplier processes

Support of guidelines	Planning support	Support of decision making	Preparation support	Implementation support	Follow up support
• Supporting the mission of customers that want to travel • Improving brand recognition • Attractive marketing commincation	• Planning budget • Own contact person at travel agency • Travel consulting • Updating customer information • Sending offering • Sending Good-to-know material • Checking customer is timetable	• Consultative sales • Information support • Idea generation	• Taking care of travel documents • Exchanging currency • Booking tickets • Insurance informing • Insurance acquisition • Sending Good-to-know material • Sending checklist	• Informing, sending material • Copying maps • Giving contact information • Organizing airport transportation	• Welcome home - letter • Airport transportation • Contacting • Taking care of feedback • Billing / crediting

Figure 2. 11: *Source:* Payne *et al.* (2008) p. 92

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2.5.4 Value Co-creation in the Hotel Industry

Value co-creation has been discussed in many conceptual articles and empirical work. The following will present some of these papers, illustrating the authors' views along with the researcher's argument. Most of the studies in the presented literature view value co-creation as a process, but each views this process from a different perspective. For example, Cabiddu et al. (2013) looked at value co-creation from an information technology aspect and noted that IT permits value co-creation in the tourism and hotel industry. They concluded that operators who achieve better performance in terms of value co-creation are those who have embedded IT activities in their value co-creation strategies to allow better interaction with other members of the industry. The researcher agrees that the role of IT in value co-creation is an important one, especially when adopting CSR strategies in the hotel industry, as these strategies will reflect on the brand image of the organisation. However, unlike the present study, Cabiddu et al. (2013) hardly mention the role of internal stakeholders in achieving value co-creation.

Another value co-creation aspect was mentioned by Shaw et al. (2011), who aimed to present the concept of service-dominant logic as a research model in marketing management and revealed the importance of service-dominant logic in recognising the role played by co-production and co-creation in the tourism and hotel industry. The authors focused on the fact that the small group of case studies presented in their research advocate that hotels which strive to develop through product/service innovation are certainly strongly reliant on implementing co-creation strategies with customers. The research views value co-creation from an S-D logic perspective, neglecting the fact that the hotel industry is a two-faced coin, providing both services and products. The article cemented the researcher's work through asserting that hotels that consider value co-creation in their plans are more likely to succeed in value creation and improve their brand image.

Chathoth et al. (2013) were more academic in their work: they presented a co-production to co-creation matrix and suggested three propositions. The first is that the concepts of co-production versus co-creation create a range rather than

a contrast. The second is that service novelty production is perceived as two-faced, and lies somewhere between co-production and co-creation in this range. The final proposition is that the main issues that define the nature of service production include the primary value-creation driver and customer involvement. The paper concluded that there may be distinctions within a hotel organisation concerning their co-creation orientation, dependent on management levels. The co-creation end of the range always seems to be a predecessor of competitive advantage in today's dynamic environment. Chathoth et al. (2013) also noted that organisational strategies and initiatives impact each other in the co-creation process and eventually in the creation of value for consumers. This article offers views on how to distinguish between value co-production and value co-creation and claims that organisations that lean towards value co-creation are more successful, as they include customers in the process. However, the article again neglected the role of internal stakeholders (employees) in the value co-creation process, making the researcher's work more credible in terms of knowledge contribution. In addition, this article emphasises the importance of marketing strategies and managerial skills in the process of value co-creation.

Lin et al. (2017) viewed the issue from another aspect. In their paper, they tried to develop tourism value co-creation to encompass resident-tourist social interactions and found through empirical work that residents' life satisfaction has the strongest effect on value co-creation, demonstrating that residents are more willing to interact with tourists to co-create value if they are feeling happy with their life in general. This interesting article presents the role of local employees in hotels in creating value, making the claim that the social stability of the service provider reflects on his performance and his contribution to value co-creation. This paper takes into consideration the role of internal stakeholder, but only from social stability perspective, whereas the work of the current thesis is more holistic and considers satisfaction, loyalty and performance.

On the other hand, a conceptual paper by Prebensen and Foss (2011) tried to explore how tourists handle and co-create experiences in numerous situations and with different people during a vacation. The paper resulted in three main

conclusions. First, it advances the question of the role that hotels and service providers have in emotional work. Second, the hotel industry should distinguish that tourists adopt different roles in different situations. Finally, the remarks of this study display that the narrator prefers a slower time-scale, being able to cope, co-create and participate in producing the experience. Although this article presents an important question on the role of the host in value creation, it remains incomplete, since it is based on a conceptual ground, whereas this thesis's empirical findings assert the importance of the host in the value co-creation process.

Prebensen and Xie (2017), in an empirical study, noted the importance of tourists' inclusion as a value co-creation resource. In addition, they asserted that satisfaction in the hotel industry develops through tourists' participation in creating value from the experience. This study touches one part of the researcher's work but from an external stakeholder perspective. Finally, Rihova et al. (2015) said that "value-in-social-practice is a dynamic, multi-levelled, inter-subjective and embedded in tourists' social practices". The idea of the shared images and social structures that are present in many hotels therefore becomes fundamental for a full understanding of customer-to-customer value co-creation, as it reflects the shared, socially constructed nature of reality in which tourists' practices are embedded. Again, this study focuses on the role of the customer as an external stakeholder in co-creating value but neglects the role of the internal stakeholders (employees) in VCC, making this thesis unique.

2.5.5 Gaps in the Value Co-Creation Literature

Value co-creation should be characterised by the role of both the customer and the organisation, and the recognition of the value spheres that each present (Grönroos & Voima, 2013). Indeed, co-creation occurs when two or more groups influence or interact with each other (Grönroos & Voima, 2013). This process of marketer-customer collaboration for improved innovation, design and development of products has defined the co-creation of value. Contemporary scholarly works in this field further support this notion and seek to establish this holistic understanding of customers' involvement in the value

creation and co-creation processes (Ravald & Grönroos, 1996; Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004; Ramaswamy, 2008).

However, both consumer-dominant and service-dominant logics fail to clearly pronounce the importance of employees in the value co-creation process. Employees are considered as part of the organisational entities that engage with customers. Employees (internal stakeholders) make up a part of an organisation's intellectual property, while the brand they produce becomes an asset. Hence, the value of the brand is made up of many components, one of them being employees. While the multi-stakeholder models of co-creation bring the employee component into the mix (Payne *et al.,* 2008; Frow et al., 2014), they still do not spell out how employee-organisation and employee-customer relationships are shaped, defined and developed during the value co-creation process.

Evidently, value co-creation remains an elusive concept (Dey *et al.,* 2013). While scholars in this field hold different opinions regarding the nature and modality of value co-creation, existing models offer a wide range of perspectives on this process (e.g. Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004; Chen & Nath, 2004; Andersson et al., 2007). The DART model, suggested by Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004), provides a foundation in this regard and suggests dialogue, access, risk reduction and transparency as the four necessary conditions for value co-creation. Payne et al. (2008), on the other hand, suggest a process-based framework by identifying three major processes in value co-creation: the customer value-creating process, the supplier value-creating process and the encounter process.

Value can also be co-destructed. Due to contextual limitations, resource constraints (both operant and operand) at the customer end, or inappropriate design/marketing strategies by the producers, the value-in-use of a product may be diminished (Plé & Chumpitaz Cáceres, 2010; Smith, 2013). Lack of technical knowledge and financial constraints, for instance, have been identified as major impediments to technology use by poor villagers in developing countries (Dey *et al.,* 2013). More recent empirical work suggests that value co-creation and co-destruction should both be considered (Dey *et al.,* 2016), as the process

progresses in a dialectic manner. The structuration theory has been incorporated in the study of value co-creation to highlight the iterative nature of the process, and how it relates to the structures and systems of interaction between an organisation and its external stakeholders. However, this work does not explain the internal dynamics within an organisation that may well have a direct or indirect impact on their interaction with external stakeholders.

Despite the rich and diverse literature on value, further research needs to be conducted to shed the light on existing gaps in the field. Table 2.3 summarises the above literature on value to present the contributions of related work and show the theoretical gap and scope of advancement that led to the research framework for this thesis.

Article references	Contribution	Scope for advancement
Lenka, Parida & Wincent (2017)	Adopted Grönroos and Voima's (2013) framework and highlighted the importance of interaction between service providers and customers to enhance the value creation process.	The framework does not exhibit a dynamic nature of value co-creation
Dey *et al.* (2016)	Examined value co-creation for mobile telephone use. Value co-creation and co-destruction are considered by the authors to be a dialectic phenomenon.	The study does not specify the role of employees in the value co-creation process.
Ranjan & Read (2016)	Value co-creation was aligned and assessed with co-production. The semantic debate surrounding creation and production was extended by identifying co-creation as a function of co-production. The conceptual framework draws constructs and measurement scales for value co-creation, typically researched through qualitative enquiries.	While the paper is not based on empirical data, the fundamental assumption is driven by a goods-dominant perspective, as the framework does not consider service dynamics for production and consumption.
Mostafa (2015)	Value co-creation has been discussed as a factor contributing to competitive advantage. Co-creation is defined to involve partner engagement, co-reflection and co-design	Due to the quantitative nature of this paper, it fails to capture the iterative influence and interaction between value co-creation and organisational culture/structure. The role of employees also demands much attention.
Grönroos & Voima (2013)	The paper highlights customers' engagement in the value co-creation process. In so doing, the paper identifies various spheres of value co-creation and explicates customers' roles and involvement in these phases.	By delineating three distinct spheres for value co-creation, the paper considers the process as a dyadic phenomenon between customer and organisation, and does not capture the roles of other stakeholders. Employees are considered an integral part of the value-providing organisation.
Grönroos (2011)	The paper offers critical perspectives to analysing service domain logic and suggests that customers are not always co-creators of value, indicating the roles of situational and contextual variables and factors that may determine the locus and nature of value co-creation	The paper is built upon the fundamental assumption that value co-creation is a result of a dyadic interaction between customers and service-providing organisations.
Plé & Chumpitaz Cáceres (2010)	The interaction between service systems does not necessarily result in value co-creation; it may also lead to value co-destruction	This is a conceptual paper - further empirical studies on value co-distracted is needed to solidify the conceptual premises.
Payne *et al.* (2008); Frow *et al.* (2014)	The authors widened the concept of value co-creation and highlighted the roles of stakeholders other than customers. Latter work (Frow *et al.*, 2014) further delineates the roles of multiple stakeholders in the co-creation of value. Unlike Grönroos *et al.*, they base their concept on the service domain logic and focus on the operant and operand resources in the co-creation process.	Again, the works do not take into account the possibility of value co-destruction and how that can be tackled/minimised.

Table 2. 3: Summary of seminal articles on value co-creation

Table 2.3 shows that the academic debate and conceptual developments of value co-creation are far from over. While the current literature seeks to establish robust conceptual scaffolding for the value co-creation process, the author can identify conceptual deficiencies that require addressing. There is a lack of empirical works on the value co-creation processes grounded in a solid theoretical framework. Prahalad and Ramaswamy's (2004) DART model spells out the importance of the dialogical relationship between parties involved in value co-creation, while the empirical work of Dey *et al*. (2016) emphasises dialectic inter-relationships. However, none of these concepts in their own right offer holistic perspectives that combine both the dialogical and dialectic aspects.

These studies consider value co-creation either as a dyadic relationship between an organisation and its customers or from a multi-stakeholder perspective. Scant evidence of the assessment of value co-creation from employees' perspective also warrants and justifies further empirical works to include all parties involved in value co-creation.

In parallel, Plé and Chumpitaz Cáceres (2010) explained that the result of value can be either positive or negative in nature, adding a new dimension, which is the dualistic characteristic, whether it is value co-creation or value co-destruction. However, the paper is only a conceptual article that needs to be empirically tested and verified to validate their assumptions of value results. In sum, the gap in research area is both conceptual and empirical and the present study aims to address it.

In addition, this research will look into the relationships between employer branding, CSR (Aggerholm *et al*., 2011) and value, not only from a sustainability perspective (Evans *et al.*, 2017; Warren-Myers 2012), but also from a marketing aspect. Some scholars argue that there may be little that connects the topics; however, in recent years, interaction between the three variables started to surface due to the increased competition and growing awareness of consumers. Value addition can take numerous forms and, as

mentioned earlier, although this research will mainly focus on value created in its non-profit sense, value creation as profit making will be briefly addressed. Value addition can have broader societal implications, such as environmental or social benefits, that may not directly profit the business but will profit the society as a whole.

The creation of value will always need to remain sustainable, and some argue that sustainable value creation must take into account value created for the broader society that benefits external stakeholders of the business. Though works about value addition to external stakeholders focus on sustainability in businesses, there have also been links that connect value addition practices that benefit external stakeholders to value addition that will ultimately benefit the profitability of the business in general. This new view of value creation that ultimately leads to internal value creation allows clearer links to be developed between CSR, employer branding and VCC. In order to properly understand the connection, it is important to take a step-by-step approach. Firstly, links between employer branding and CSR must be identified. Once this is complete, it will be possible to understand the ways in which value is affected, taking into account the views of academic works.

Employer branding is believed to allow businesses to develop more sustainable work forces through decreased staff turnover rates and increased staff retention levels. The ways businesses are able to create successful employer branding strategies are when they are generated to appeal to the sort of staff being sought. The use of employer branding as an HR strategy is not uncommon; however, employer branding has increasingly taken up a role as a marketing activity as well.

One of the main targets set out by successful employer branding strategies is the creation of trust between employees and their respective employers. Barber (1983) believes that trust between employers and employees is achieved when expectations are met. Actors attribute value to themselves or others when the actions chosen are rationally, morally and emotionally effective. Employer branding creates trust by creating a business face to which prospective candidates can relate. This means that a relationship can be built through the

achievement of goals that can be appealing to both the employer and the employee, such as environmental awareness. This relationship that is built through trust in turn allows employees to make rational, behavioural choices that will benefit the employer. A company may promote this relationship through the use of an embedded cultural policy, transparency and increased staff contribution to social decisions and projects.

CSR refers to the roles companies have in the conservation of societal and environmental interests. It can be summarised as social, environmental, ethical, human rights and consumer concerns into business operations and core strategy in close collaboration with their stakeholders (European Union, 2011). Several CSR frameworks pay value to employees to justify the importance of employees in a company's CSR activities.

The attention given to the importance of employees in CSR practices can be seen across business standards, such as the "Labor Practices" section of the ISO26000. Recognition from numerous studies has also shown that CSR has a positive effect on employees' motivation and attitudes towards their workplace. Studies by numerous authors (Turban and Greening, 1997; Brammer *et al*., 2007; Galbreath, 2010; Lin *et al*., 2012; Bustamante, 2014) have all indicated that CSR activities undertaken by a business have become an important criterion in employee job selection. Similar studies conducted by Brammer (2007) have found a positive relationship between CSR and employee commitment while bettering the organisational brand image.

Since the evolution of human resource theories, such as Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, it has been highlighted that positive workplace CSR strategies such as the promotion of the work-life balance motivates employees positively and can increased productivity, and hence deliver value to the business. Workplace CSR has always been used by candidates to compare various employers. However, increased competition for the best candidates has meant that businesses can no longer differentiate themselves solely through the use of effective workplace CSR; this is where external CSR practices can be introduced.

Cable and Graham (2000) found that CSR practices, excluding workplace CSR, are starting to appeal to employees. Social identity as well as social esteem can be boosted for employees when working within a company that treats the interests of external stakeholders as its own. Where employees or potential employees can develop a real link between an employer branding strategy and their personal interests, there is increased participation, trust and commitment, which allows in return an increase in the value delivered to employers by each respective employee. This value can be delivered through increased productivity, or, in the case of the services industry, a better delivery of services and the successful translation of a branding strategy to consumers. Rosenthal (2001) found that employees' personal and ethical morals towards society in general would result in employee dissatisfaction when the business acts negatively towards external stakeholders.

When focusing solely on an employer brand, according to Petkovic (2008), there is a need for employers to differentiate themselves through various employer branding strategies in order to appeal to the feelings of employees that will further strengthen personal identification.

The successful integration of employer branding and CSR will result in value being created in numerous ways. In order to have sustainability, businesses must perform CSR activities. No less important, through retention, a part of sustainability is produced through the long-term emotional commitment of staff, especially when staff are a part of the CSR activities being used. Where CSR activities are properly implemented, there is always the potential to create value.

The motivational factors at play when employees are able to trust employers and fit into a brand culture through the CSR practices will clearly provide a way to achieve increased productivity. The internal factors are fairly clear to see; however, it is important to understand the ways in which employer branding can co-create value to external stakeholders as well.

The next section will summarise the critically analysed literature that constitutes the basis of the gap development. It examines the constructs of the proposed

framework, which helps to fill the gaps in the literature and answers the previously elaborated research problem.

2.6 Theories used in this research

According to Creswell, (2003) theories are normally used in qualitative research as lenses to guide the study and examine significant issues, including marginalisation and liberation. Yin (2015) noted that case study approaches, for instance, requires theory development as a vital part of the inquiry design stage. The role of theory development and use differs according to the methodological strategies used.

On the contrary, grounded theory approaches traditionally avoid theoretical propositions at the outset of a study. In addition, Corbin and Holt (2005) claim that theory helps to construct practice and provide insight and understanding into situations. With specific regard to this, project-based theories are integral to corporates: "Theory is not separate from any stage of the project: from developing questions to choosing data and writing up the data" (Davies & Gannon, 2005, p. 320).

This research illustrates the stakeholder theory used as a foundation to support the research field of marketing and employees as the main concern within this study. This research examines issues related to employer branding and value co-creation in the context of CSR. However, the current academic literature in the field of employer branding is still noticeably limited (Ewing *et al*., 2002; Backhaus and Tikoo, 2004; Melin, 2005) and more oriented to human resource management. This research accordingly aims to use stakeholder theory as the underpinning theory for the development of this study's conceptual framework. The theory was thoroughly discussed earlier in Chapter Two; however, the author judges it relevant to include in what follows a brief overview of what the theory is about as well as the justifications for its adoption, as this will help to introduce the constructs of the conceptual framework discussed later in this section.

2.6.1 Stakeholder Theory

In recent decades, many scholars have discussed the role of stakeholder theory in the relationship between businesses and CSR (Brown and Foster, 2012; Carroll, 1979; Freeman 1984). However, they have considered the ethical aspect as the main component of stakeholder theory, which includes the principles of the corporate right and corporate effect (Evan and Freeman 1988). In addition, there are two types of stakeholders: the first type is the groups that are of crucial importance for the corporation, namely employees and shareholders, whereas the second type is the identity of stakeholders, who have a different relationship to the corporation depending on the communities in which they operate (Russo and Perrini, 2009).

Interestingly, the application of stakeholder identity is also included in the field of branding (Balmer, 2008). Roper and Davis (2010) argued that the emotional response of all stakeholders towards the corporate brand should be considered, and should not be restricted to customers. However, Fiedler and Kirchgeorg (2007) classified stakeholder groups according to the corporate branding target, while Gregory (2007) involved stakeholders in corporate brand development and provided four practical communication strategies for stakeholders in this subject (Freeman *et al.*, 2010).

In parallel to the above, the academic literature on marketing has considered the service sector and thus has examined the interfaces between stakeholders and firms (Jallat and Wood, 2005), which determine the multiplicity and complexity of the relationship between the corporation and the affected stakeholders. Moreover, Luk *et al.* (2005) studied the stakeholder orientation of 193 service companies in China and revealed that stakeholder orientation can be considered as an element in determining a firm's business performance. However, involving multiple stakeholders keeps the managers under pressure due to the complexity of the development process (Freeman *et al.*, 2010).

It should be noted that the stakeholder is no exception to CSR. According to Freeman *et al.* (2010), much of the stakeholder-based work in management journals is either central to stakeholders' discussions or pertains to the

intersection of stakeholder theory. CSR practice is continually evolving and has extended its scope so that it is not limited to the firm itself, but also spreads to the supply chain partners, which include customers and logistic providers (Maloni and Brown, 2006). Yet, business needs to act as a kind of balance alongside self-interest, not only as a constraint upon it, as the views of different stakeholders may vary according to their interests. For example, managers will be seeking a legitimate profit; this can be achieved *"if companies do a positive good by helping the community, sharing a larger part of the pie with workers and making safer and more environmentally safe product to consumers - then the fact that they make money isn't so bad"* (Freeman *et al*., 2010). It is argued that considering stakeholders in businesses' activities leads to the creation of value for all stakeholders (employees, customers, communities, and the environment and future generations) in return. Freeman (2010) also demonstrated that there are four pillars of stakeholder theory, namely the environment, profit, society, and future generations, which, if considered by a corporation, will lead to creating value not only for the current stakeholders, but also for future stakeholders.

Therefore, organisations seek to balance the four pillars of stakeholder theory not only to create value for these stakeholders, but also to gain a long-term profit for the organisation itself.

The following sub-section illustrates the conceptual framework that has been built based on the literature review and its impact on the value co-creation process considered as an outcome of the adoption on CSR within the corporate.

2.6.2 Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)

The movement of CSR has increased noticeably, as it helps businesses to contribute to sustainable development by delivering benefits for all stakeholders. CSR has been defined as a movement that encourages businesses to be more concerned about and aware of the impact of their activities on society, including their own stakeholders and the environment (Financial Times).

The growing body of literature about the importance and adoption of and the engagement with CSR within the corporate field involves current social trends, but very few studies have adequately assessed the value created for the internal stakeholders within the corporation (Waddock & Mclntosh, 2009; Matten & Crane, 2005), so this aspect still needs to be assessed.

Consequently, the concept of CSR has expanded over the last decade, which has resulted in a different understanding of this concept. Therefore, it is very important for businesses to position themselves within society. Hence, a different understanding of CSR exists within the business environment: Backhaus and Tikoo (2004) stated that it is important that CSR has a clear role in the business strategy. They went on to state that corporations can achieve this by using their own expertise to show their contribution and progress to society and the environment, and the benefits to the business itself.

Managers are in positions in which they can influence internal stakeholders, as they are coordinating organisational relationships internally (Hill and Jones, 1992). Therefore, they are more likely to advocate their behaviour as being responsible and claim that they reject irresponsible business behaviour (Maignan and Ferrell, 2005). However, the managers' self-serving interests are more likely to undermine the rationality of all corporate decisions (Maignan and Ferrell, 2005).

Although the marketing literature focuses more on customers, as they are the key stakeholders (Fry and Polonsky, 2004), this does not reflect the needs and demands of all stakeholders (Miller and Lewis, 1991; Maignan *et al.*, 2005). Therefore, Ferrell (2004) stated that organisations must also pay attention to other stakeholders' groups, not only customers, in their marketing strategy. The Marketing Association (2004) stated that marketing is an organisational function and process for creating, communicating, and delivering value to customers and for managing long-term relationships that benefit both the organisation and its stakeholders.

2.6.3 Employer Branding Factors

Balmer and Greyser, (2006) argued that it is employers for corporations to decide whom to consider as stakeholders. However, Freeman (1984) demonstrated that employees form part of the group of stakeholders, as stakeholder theory considers all humans as stakeholders, and so they can affect any business activities. As the present study focuses on internal stakeholders, it will begin with an explanation of the factors linked with employees that help to enhance the employer brand in the subject of CSR, which leads to sustainable business success.

The statement "People and brands instead of machines" created a huge debate in the World Economic Forum in Davos in this century and highlighted the two biggest challenges that businesses will face: these are first, the need to communicate and maintain the brand, and secondly, the need to attract, develop, and motivate talented internal stakeholders (Esch, 2010).

Most of the literature has defined employer branding based on material and monetary rewards (Berthon *et al.*, 2005) and on benefits and bonuses (Rosenthal, 2009; Lievens and Highhouse, 2003). However, while all this creates monetary value, as soon as the employers face other competition regarding payment, then the value will not last for long. Thus, the argument of this research is that employer branding should also consider the direction of the sustainable development so that it creates value not only for the internal stakeholders, but also for the external stakeholders in order to survive in the market place.

Although there are two types of stakeholders in the stakeholder theory, this research focuses only on the internal stakeholders of the organisation; therefore, considering employees as internal customers for the organisation will help to assess the research gap in the area of value co-creation.

2.6.3.1 Internal Stakeholders

In stakeholder theory, all humans and other functional players are considered as stakeholders. However, this research emphasises assessing only the internal stakeholders of the organisation (employees). According to the Business Dictionary, an employee can be defined as an individual who works as either a part-time or full-time worker under a contract of employment, whether oral or written, expressed or implied, and who has recognised rights and duties that lead to achieving the goals and objectives of an organisation (BusinessDictionary Employees, 2017).

In addition, Lin et al. (2017) have conceptualised the value co-creation in the tourism sector between tourists and residents and assessed the life satisfaction of external stakeholders. The reason for choosing employees in this research is that they are involved in the process of value creation for the end users. However, it is important to understand the value that the employees are receiving from their employer and how organisations create value for employees in general, as well as how employers create value when they adopt CSR, and how employees respond to sustainable value other than financial value. The following sub-sections will present the impact of CSR and corporate branding on the internal stakeholder in regard to the following factors.

2.6.3.2 Performance

In the current academic literature, as mentioned in Chapter Two, only a few definitions exist to illustrate employee work performance as it is viewed by different authors (Campbell, 1990; Deadrick & Gardner, 2008; Viswesvaran & Ones, 2000). However, employees' performance leads to overall organisational efficiency performance (Hartog *et al*., 2004). The research's primary aim is related to how an organisation enhances employees' performance via the implementation of a CSR strategy within the organisation in order to increase organisational efficiency and enhance employer brand.

2.6.3.3 Loyalty

There is no doubt that loyalty leads to high organisational profit (Martínez & Rodríguez del Bosque, 2013). However, as mentioned earlier in Chapter Two,

most of the literature focuses on customer loyalty, whereas employees' loyalty to the organisation may also lead to more profit, so this should also be assessed. Hence, organisations are facing a remarkably competitive business environment and ever-growing customer expectations. Furthermore, the concept of CSR helps to change customers' perceptions and can lead to customer loyalty (Han *et al.*, 2011).

2.6.3.4 Satisfaction

If employees feel attached to their organisation, this will ensure a low staff turnover rate for the organisation (Lee *et al.*, 2013). Effective CSR helps towards this end, as positive attention will enhance the reputation of the organisation from the perspective of both current and prospective employees (Turban & Greening, 1996). The more ethical an organisation is, the greater the trust it inspires, especially for the employees (Sims & Keon, 1997). Many studies show that there is a positive relationship between an organisation's ethics and the level of job satisfaction (Viswesvaran & Ones, 2002).

2.7 Proposed Conceptual Framework for the Research

A conceptual framework includes the concepts, assumptions, expectations, beliefs, and theories that support and inform the research (Robson, 2011) that the researcher has designed. Furthermore, as this research mainly depends on an interpretive case study, as stated by Walsham (1995, p. 76), the researcher will initially create a theoretical framework that depends mostly on previous knowledge. Also, a conceptual framework allows the researcher to link the research to the existing knowledge in the chosen area of research (Saunders et al., 2009).

Creating a conceptual framework will help the researcher to make logical sense of the research problem supported by the current academic literature (Sekaran, 2003). Consequently, the conceptual framework is used as a guide to present and explore a possible explanation for the phenomenon of CSR, employer branding and value co-creation, which will be tested in the hotel industry in developing countries, with Oman having been chosen as the case study for this

research. In addition, stakeholder theory is adopted as the focal theory in this research to support the conceptual framework.

The proposed framework illustrates the cycle of value co-creation within the corporate, which includes CSR strategies, corporate branding as input, process represented by the interaction and relationship between the employers and their employees, and finally value co-creation as an output that helps to enhance the employer branding.

Due to the fact that this research is fundamentally based on interpretive philosophy and an inductive approach that primarily depends on a well-established theory, the researcher chose stakeholder theory to be the underpinning theory on which the conceptual framework is built. The stakeholder theory presents solid relationships between the variables in this research that can be divided into three main aspects. From the literature, there is a clear relationship between CSR and corporate branding (Pratihari and Uzma, 2017). On the other hand, according to stakeholder theory, there are two types of stakeholders: internal and external (Freeman, 1984). Moreover, scholars claim that organisations implementing sustainable strategies based on stakeholder theory are more likely to achieve added value (Mellahi *et al.*, 2016).

Through this research, the researcher is trying to bridge the gap in knowledge in establishing a relationship between the abovementioned components – input (CSR and Corporate Branding), process (Internal stakeholders) and outcome (value co-creation) – from a marketing perspective in which employer branding is the focal player within the context of stakeholder theory.

The notion of this research's conceptual framework is focused mainly on the relevance of employer branding in the CSR context and on how this can particularly lead to value co-creation for internal stakeholders. This can be achieved by assessing a set of factors that were generated from the academic literature reviewed in this chapter and investigating whether the adoption of CSR helps in value co-creation and enhancement of employer branding through internal stakeholders. This section will examine all these factors separately. The conceptual framework for this research is presented in Figure 2.12.
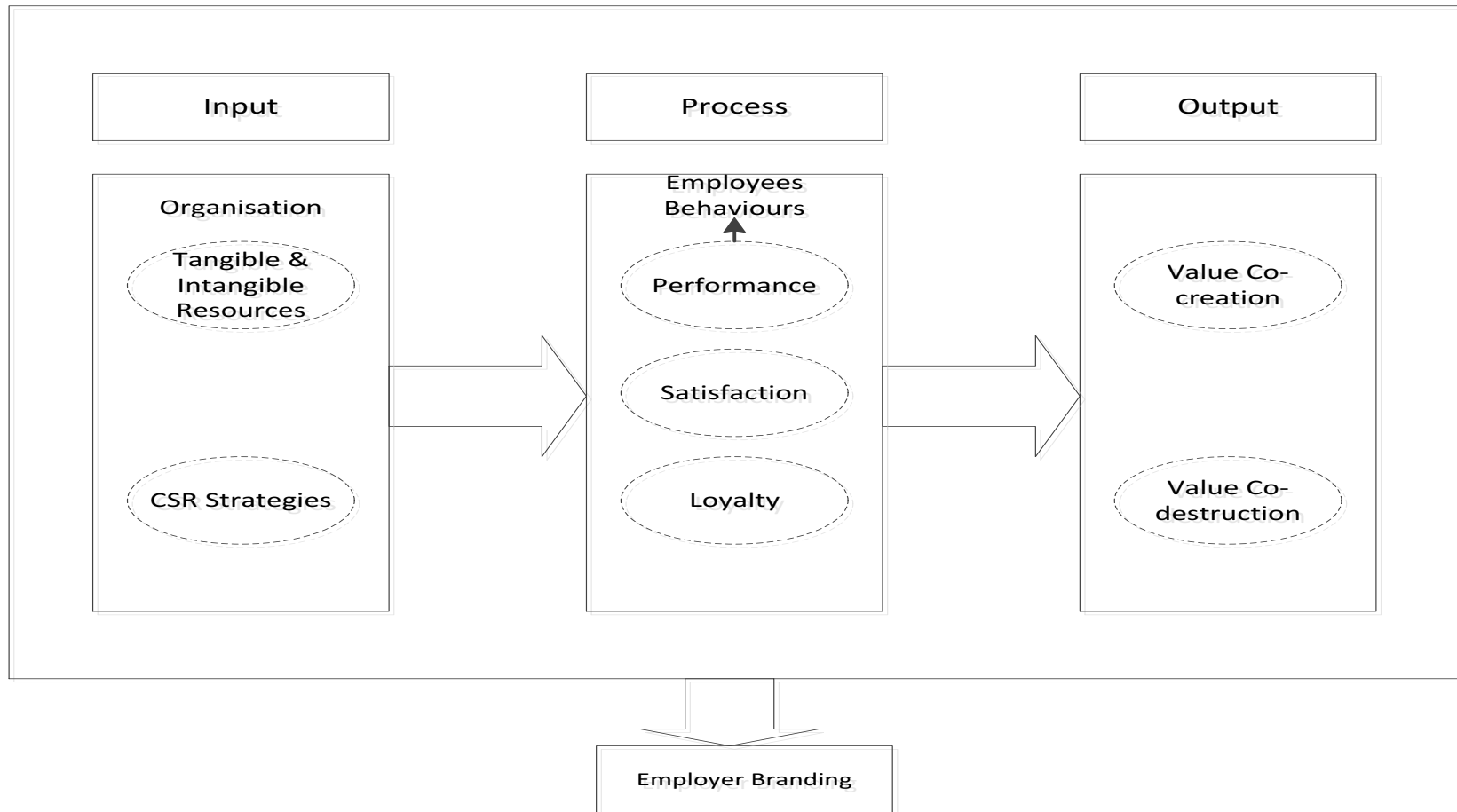
Figure 2. 12: Value Co-creation Process Conceptual Framework

2.8 Value Co-creation Process

The above figure illustrates the process of value co-creation and its significance on employer branding. The process can be divided into three main phases: input, process, and output.

- Input Phase: within this phase, the organisation's tangible and intangible resources (such as training, education, incentives, technological advancements, and superior management tools) interact with CSR strategies implemented by the organisation management toward its employees (like conservation of energy and water, recycling activities and local community engagement). This interaction leads to the process phase, which affects important traits in the organisation's internal stakeholders (employees).

- Process Phase: the interactions between the elements of the previous phase directly affect some traits or characteristics within the internal stakeholders at different levels of management. These characteristics or traits are performance, satisfaction and loyalty. Well-integrated organisation resources and CSR strategies usually lead to a better performing employee. Likewise, this integration and interaction generate employees' satisfaction with the workplace or the nature of the job. In addition, the positive relationship between the above-mentioned traits will result in the existence of the third trait, namely loyalty, and the combination of these three traits will lead to the birth of the output of this process, which is VCC.

- The output phase: this phase could be a two-faced coin depending on the input and the process phases. For example, well-interacted resources and CSR activities will definitely produce a performing, satisfied, and loyal employee who is capable of co-creating value for the organisation, which in turn improves the employer branding. On the contrary, a dysfunctional relationship between resources and poor CSR strategies will result mostly in inefficient, dissatisfied, and disloyal employees, capable only of value co-destruction, which in turn damages the employer branding.

Finally, the value co-creation process described above has three characteristics of its own. It is dynamic, dialogical, and dualistic. These features are mainly

visible in between phases and could be described as follows. The dynamic aspect is represented in the continuous flow of the process, whereas the dialogical aspect comes from the interaction between elements of the same phase as well as among phases. Finally, the dualistic aspect represents the two possible outputs of the process: value co-creation or value co-destruction.

2.9 Chapter Summary

This chapter has explored and critically reviewed extant literature in the field of marketing in order to build a solid foundation and understanding to help the researcher in finding the research gap. The literature was divided into two main sections: the first section was on CSR, whereas the second section illustrated the corporate branding and employer branding.

During the first section, the researcher explored the extant definitions of CSR to determine the most suitable for the research, which was the definition proposed by White (2013). In addition, the researcher analytically reviewed CSR to understand CSR activities in the hospitality industry. Next, the researcher reviewed the relationship between stakeholder management and CSR.   After that, the author explored the three main theories of CSR. The last part of this section set out to define the most appropriate theory to be used as a focal theory in this research (stakeholder theory).

The second section looked into the available literature on corporate branding, during which the researcher reviewed five approaches to construct the relationship between CSR and corporate branding. This was followed by examining corporate sustainable branding and its five principles in order to examine the relationship between corporate sustainable branding and employer branding. The researcher concluded that studies of employer branding in the marketing literature are scarce.

The third part of this chapter looked at employer branding as a reflection of the implementation of CSR concepts within the hospitality industry, before focusing on value co-creation and its interrelationship with CSR activities in order to draw the research gap and framework.

After that, this chapter looked at the extant literature on value co-creation definitions, models and concepts in order to reach a unified understanding of value co-creation for this thesis. In addition, the researcher discussed the latest studies concerning value co-creation in the hotel industry, as this is the setting for the researcher's empirical work. The chapter allowed the researcher to identify the gaps and areas for potential research.

The final section illustrated the gaps in the value co-creation literature through a summary of the most recent literature, with its contributions and scope for advancement. This chapter furthermore provides solid justifications of each construct within the conceptual framework and theory used as a backbone to support the proposed framework.

During this chapter, the researcher divided the constructs of the research into three main components: input (CSR, employer branding), process (internal stakeholders behaviours i.e. performance, loyalty, and satisfaction), and value co-creation as an outcome that enhances employer branding. The next chapter will present the context, namely, the Sultanate of Oman, as this research is about the hotel industry in Oman as part of the tourism sector.

CHAPTER THREE-RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter presented the background to the context of this research, the aim of which is to explore the role of CSR in value co-creation for internal stakeholders and in developing employer branding. In addition, the justification for this choice of context was presented.

This chapter provides a detailed account of the research method adopted in this thesis and the justification for choosing the case study approach (Bryman, 2008). The chapter also explains how data were gathered and analysed in order to achieve the intended contribution to knowledge by this thesis. Moreover, a clear explanation of the rationale for the adoption of this research methodology is also presented. The chapter is divided into eight sections. Section 3.1 is the introduction to this chapter, followed by a discussion of the research philosophies in section 3.2. Section 3.3 is concerned with the research approach, whereas section 3.4 focuses on the research strategy. Next, section 3.5 focuses on the research design and associated justifications, while sections 3.6 and 3.7 provide data collection techniques and ethical considerations; this is followed by section 3.8, which focuses on the reflexivity of this research. Finally, the chapter conclusion is given in section 3.9.

3.2 Research Philosophies

The 'research onion' developed by Saunders *et al*. (2015) provides a structured and simplified way to understand and develop the idea of a research paradigm, as shown in Figure 3.1
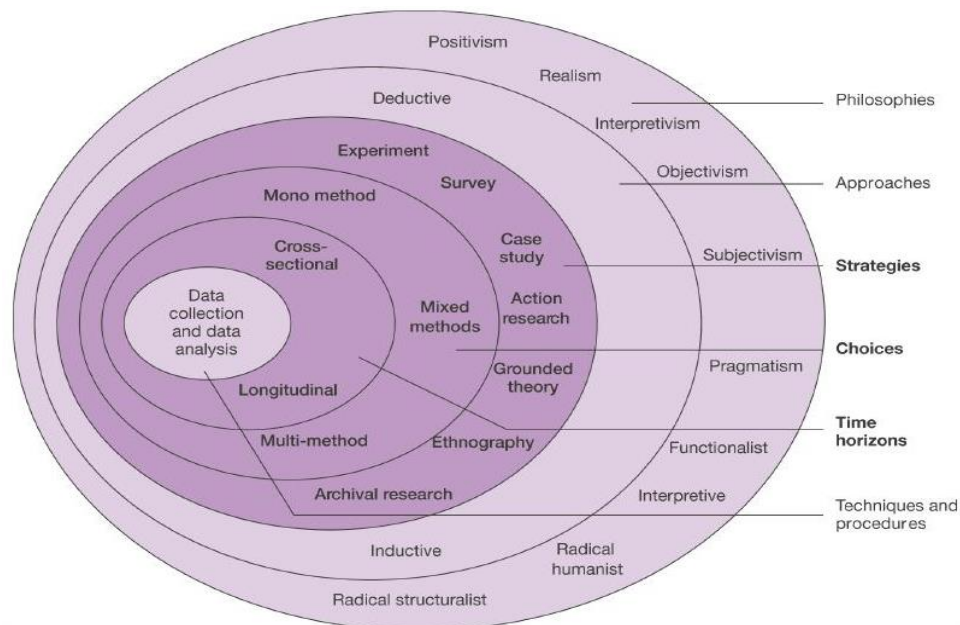
Figure 3.1: The Research Onion

Source: Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2015)

Outlining the underpinning philosophy is an important step within research, as it provides direction for the subsequent steps of data collection, analysis, and narration. Social research can follow two main paradigms – positivism and phenomenology. The first is a widely used approach in the field of natural science. Positivism pursues the investigation of the facts or causes of certain social phenomena with precise measuring tools that are very objective and rigorous (Collis and Hussey, 2003). In addition, positivists claim that the study of human behaviour should be the same as the studies conducted in natural sciences. Positivists start with an assumption that reality is independent of human beings and that it always exists, although sometimes we are not aware of it. For this approach, the ontological argument of the nature of reality is kept separate from the epistemological question of how reality can be found or discovered.

Although positivism is a popular research approach, it is criticised for many reasons, such the lack of flexibility and sometimes failure to effectively seize the processes of how things really are and how things really work (Guba and Lincoln, 1994; Easterby-Smith *et al.,* 2008). Positivism also takes little consideration of observations which can contribute to the formation of

hypotheses and to subsequent data collection. For the above-mentioned reasons, this research elected not to follow the positivist approach, as it deals mainly with the observation and interpretation of collected data based on human experiences.

To the contrary, phenomenology claims that in social science, it is nearly impossible to separate the researcher from what is being researched. Miles and Huberman (1994) position phenomenology as a category of interpretivism. Both phenomenology and interpretivism focus on the use of qualitative techniques. Miles and Huberman (1994) categorise qualitative research into three main categories: interpretivism, social anthropology, and collaborative social research. Interpretivism comprises deliberation of multiple realities, as opposed to the positivistic notion of a single reality. This model reflects social reality to be among us. Studies guided by interpretivism stress the subjective aspects of human activities by focusing on the meaning, rather than the measurement, of social phenomena. Hence, interpretivist research takes account of the contexts of phenomena and uses this contextual understanding in the interpretation of data.

Since interpretivist methodology requires researchers' participation in the investigated field, its method mainly depends on the use of qualitative tools. Peshkin (1993) counts some research objectives that can be effectively addressed and attained by qualitative methods. These are description, interpretation, verification and evaluation. The present research requires both description and interpretation. Its aim is to analyse the processes of value co-creation in the hotel industry from an internal stakeholders' perspective. Interpretivist and qualitative approaches have made significant contributions to consumer research (e.g. Andrews and Boyle, 2008; Hogg and McLaren, 2008; Goulding, 1998; Agafonoff, 2006) and information systems (e.g. Mansourian, 2006; Kawalek and Jayaratna, 2003; Avison and Myers, 1995; Myers, 1999; Suchman *et al.,* 1999; Orlikowski, 1992), which are the two major academic disciplines related to this research. Choosing this particular paradigm and method does not discount the validity and importance of the others, which could have been more appropriate in other contexts.

The selection of an appropriate research methodology needs to be governed by a specific scientific research philosophy that creates an understanding of how the research can be understood and the knowledge gathered, as well as the academic theories that link into the realities that are gathered through primary research methods (Bailey, 2007). In its simplest form, a research paradigm will simply be set out to determine the way in which scientific research needs to be conducted (Mark *et al.*, 2015).

As seen on the outermost layer of the research onion, positivism and interpretivism can be closely related to the subject of this thesis, as they both generate subjective results. Positivism is used to generate research questions, while interpretivism understands that people use their views, along with other people's views, to understand cultural existence and to explore the ideas and opinions that are more meaningful to them (Angen, 2000).

The creation of a new reality that is yet to exist in our knowledge results in the positivist paradigm; it produces an objective reality where researchers can compare key findings and understand truths. The goal is to discover general patterns of cause and effect that can assist research works in creating valid prediction with regard to the objective reality. Empirical verification in the positivist paradigm is based on the assumption that humans can depend on perceptions and existing knowledge to provide accurate data. Where a strict and guided methodological approach is implemented, it is assumed that any biases will not hamper any research that falls within the positivist paradigm, and so the object reality will be better understood (Angen, 2000).

The positivist methodology has been known to bear some particular characteristics that differentiate it from methods that can be applied in other paradigms. Positivist approaches focus on using experimental methods that will ensure that a buffer is created between any biases held by the researcher and the objective reality being studied. This experimental attitude often results in the deployment of quantitative research methods that aim to test generated hypotheses. Qualitative research can be used, but this is less common than quantitative research (Creswell, 1998).

The positivist paradigm is based on the belief that the researcher will be able to identify the objective realities being investigated if the correct research methods are implemented.

3.2.1 Interpretivism

The interpretive paradigm has a heavy reliance on naturalist research methods, which are more precise. As stated by Orlikowski and Baroudi (1991), to increase the level of understanding about particular situation of the phenomenon, it is highly recommended that it be studied in its natural context from the participants' point of view where the research is not based on participants' previous understanding of the phenomenon. This will create room for more dialogue and interaction between the researcher and the participants (Garfinkel, 1967).

Through the use of reality, which cannot be easily changed by our knowledge, the interpretive paradigm believes that the values and beliefs upheld by the researcher will be present in all parts of the research process (Blumer, 1969). The change will come about through the research process. As the research is conducted, findings will be created where various interpretations will be raised. Pragmatic and moral issues will be taken into account, and researchers are encouraged to create deepening dialogues with respondents. These conversations help to create a vision of the social world. Lastly, the interpretations made are based at a particular moment in time and surrounded by a specific situation, and this interpretation may change over time (Berger & Luckmann, 1967).

Interpretivist research positions believe that reality is socially constructed; however, as what we know may change within new settings, such as cultures or relationships with other people, this means that truth cannot be founded on an objective reality, as the truth may be different within different settings (Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2008). Some criteria can be used to evaluate research from an interpretivist view: for example, the development of persuasive arguments, an evaluation of all results, as well as written records of dialogues and adjustments to account for discourses present in the research locations. Hence, the aim of

this thesis is to explore the role of CSR in value co-creation for internal stakeholders and in developing employer branding. To do so, an interpretive approach was followed. This perspective makes it possible to gain new insights by assessing the phenomenon in a new light and describing the relationships between different variables (Robson, 2002). CSR and value co-creation require an interpretive research approach that involves hearing others' views and feelings about the phenomenon, as it is related more to the changing climate.

3.2.2 Justification for using an interpretive paradigm

Beliefs	Research paradigm	
	Positivist	Interpretive
Ontology	Belief in the existence of a single objective reality	Belief in multiple socially constructed realities
Epistemology	The potential research findings can exist independently of researchers	The potential research findings cannot exist independently of the researcher
Methodology	Uses surveys, questionnaires, structured interviews	Uses observation, unstructured interviews

Table 3. 1: Justification for Methodology.

Source: Creswell (2014)

This research uses an interpretive paradigm, as it believes in socially constructed realities that can vary from one individual to another and hence create results that may not form a distinct pattern: something that is necessary to validate a positivist approach. The subject being investigated needs to take into account the discourses present in particular areas; this is important to validate interpretive studies (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The subject is highly subjective: that is, it is based thoroughly on opinions and views, all of which

are constructed by the social realities. It explores values, but as these cannot necessarily be measured, the subjectivity in the topic attached to the value created through employee branding makes the use of a positivist approach difficult, as the positive approach believes in the existence of a single objective reality. The most compatible paradigm to be applied within this study is one that adopts the interpretive view.

Taking into consideration the scope of the research, the interpretive paradigm was adopted, as it will help to understand the phenomenon more in the real world context and will help to draw on the analysis. Hence, the phenomenon of this research has both organisational and social foci; therefore, the interpretive approach was seen as a more appropriate method. Besides, the main philosophical position is from an interpretive point of view, as subjective and shared meaning is the primary concern of this research. Furthermore, Eriksson and Kovalainen (2008) considered the assumptions of the interpretive paradigm to be as follows:

- Relativist ontology – based on the assumption that reality is constructed inter-subjectively through various socially developed meanings and understandings.
- Transactional epistemology – assumes that what we understand and know cannot easily be changed. The researcher will already have certain beliefs about a particular object, and these beliefs may not easily be changed, as they help to form the basis of the researcher's understanding.

In relation to CSR, value co-creation and employer branding, all require participants to be heard and conclusions to be based on their views, which can then be drawn on for the analysis. This is because the phenomenon of CSR is in continuous development, and changes are always expected. Moreover, CSR is concerned with knowing and understanding the social context, as in interpretive research, the research aims not to prove any hypotheses, but to explore and explain factors related to a particular social setting (Oates, 2006).

3.3 Research Approach

Once the research philosophy is decided, the researcher needs to decide on the research approach to be used (Saunders *et al.*, 2015). The two main research approaches commonly used are the deductive approach and the inductive approach (Bryman and Bell, 2007; Collis and Hussey, 2009).

3.3.1 The Deductive Approach

Deductive research means that researchers start with already known information about a phenomenon in order to develop a research hypotheses, which will be examined in an empirical way in the next stage of the research project (Bryman and Bell, 2007; Saunders *et al.*, 2009). If the positivist approach is being followed, the researcher usually depends on the available literature to develop hypotheses and a theory, which need to be verified using appropriate statistical analyses (Collis and Hussey, 2009). Consequently, according to Collis and Hussey (2009), the deductive approach flows from general to specific. Six stages are normally incorporated in the deductive approach: (1) theory, (2) hypothesis, (3) data collection, (4) findings, (5) hypotheses confirmed or rejected, and (6) revision of theory. This process is depicted in Figure 3.2 below:

Figure 3. 2: **Deductive approach**

3.3.2 The Inductive Approach

On the contrary, the inductive approach starts with real life observations on a specific phenomenon to be used to build theory (Bryman and Bell, 2007). According to Collis and Hussey (2009), the inductive approach is a process that follows the sequence of steps shown below in Figure 3.3 – observations, findings, and theory – resulting in a flow from specific to general, which is the complete opposite direction to the deductive approach.

Figure 3.3: Inductive approach

3.3.3 Justification for the approach used

Starting with general observations on CSR activities and their impact on employees' behaviours led the researcher to adopt the inductive approach. Through gathering information from individuals, the researcher will try to identify themes which allow the development of theories inductively (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). In this research, although an inductive approach was followed, the researcher explored existing theories related to the topic in order to solidify her standpoint in building the conceptual model for the study. The researcher began to collect data that is relevant to her topic of interest. Once a substantial amount of data had been collected, the researcher stepped back to extract a general theme on the topic. At this stage, the researcher looked for patterns in the data, working to develop a theory that could explain those patterns. Thus, when researchers take an inductive approach supported by a solid existing theory, some scholars refer to this as an abductive approach (inductive and deductive) (Lipscomb, 2012). The primary approach of this research is inductive, allowing research findings to emerge from the frequent, dominant or significant themes inherent in the raw data, without the restraints imposed by structured methodologies.

3.4 Research Methods

There are two types of research approach: quantitative and qualitative (Firestone, 1987). According to Saunders et al. (2015), differentiating quantitative research from qualitative research involves distinguishing between numeric data (numbers) and non-numeric data (words, pictures, and videos).

The next two sub-sections illustrate both these kinds of data, whereas the final sub-section discusses the justifications for choosing a qualitative research approach.

3.4.1 Quantitative Research

This method usually focuses on creating mathematically measurable results to describe and understand the study results (Saunders *et al*., 2015). Quantitative researchers usually adopt a positivist stance, thus making themselves independent of the research; they also aim to gather mass data for analysis. Quantitative research methods often focus on small data-gathering exercises, such as questionnaires or surveys.

3.4.2 Qualitative Research

In contrast to quantitative data, qualitative data are not based on mathematical results, but instead are based on interpretations of dialogues. These involve small samples of respondents and the aim is to gain in-depth insights into the research topic. Qualitative research is used in instances where relatively new topics are being examined or where there is little knowledge about the area of study (Yin *et al.*, 2014).

This study is based on a research question that can be answered through information gathering and data analysis, and hence it adopts an inductive research position (Gerring, 2007). This means that the research concentrates on qualitative data gathering and the research questions are formed to examine previously developed topics from new angles that may not have been explored within a particular context. Inductive research has one particular characteristic, namely the use of grounded theory. This requires the researcher to work with an open mind and without any biases regarding the results that may be found by the research.

3.4.3 Justification for the use of Qualitative Research

Qualitative data are derived from data collection methods such as interviews; these methods will often create the opportunity for gathering data in a more

holistic way, which helps to create a deeper explanation and method for identifying underlying causes of specific phenomena (Sarantakos, 2012). The exploratory nature of this data collection method often means that there is little existing literature on a specific topic in a particular scenario. As this study was being conducted at a new location, there is little information about some of the topics being explored. Adopting an inductive approach to the study essentially means that research questions are formed to explore the topic in depth to add to the existing body of work regarding this topic. It is not trying to prove the current body of work right or wrong; rather, it is making an attempt to use in-depth analysis to gather new views (Berg, 2009).

Qualitative methods help to attain some of the objectives outlined in the researcher's work; these objectives aim to examine factors that are based solely on opinions, which could invalidate the results of a quantitative study. The study also needs to take into account the participants' varying skill levels and educational backgrounds. While this may influence the way participants interpret the questions in a qualitative study, increased researcher participation means that it is easier for the researcher to guide the participants towards the focal points within a conversation (Creswell, 2009).

3.5 Research Strategy

Various research strategies have been identified by numerous theories from different schools of thought. Though no particular research strategy has been proven to work better than another, all strategies can be seen to have different advantages and disadvantages.

Bryman and Bell (2003) set out to study, in depth, various research strategies, and they concluded that though strategies may not necessarily be better than one another, depending on external influences and the topic being explored, different forms of research strategies may be more efficient. This research has adopted an exploratory research strategy; it helps to identify existing gaps in the current literature and uses primary research methods to add to the existing body of research. Through the identification of gaps in the current literature, a

particular focal point is chosen to address those objectives of this paper which need further reasoning and exploration. A key characteristic of exploratory research is that it seeks to understand and evaluate beliefs, opinions, and attitudes; this ties in with the interpretive research philosophy used within this thesis.

Although the case study approach is the most challenging approach in social science, a thorough literature review generates the research questions or objectives (Yin, 2014). The next sub-section focuses on the different types of case study and the justification for adopting multiple cases.

3.5.1 Case Study

As proposed by Robson (2002), a case study approach is a *"strategy for doing research which involves empirical investigation for a particular phenomenon within its life context using multiple sources of evidence"*, while according to Sounders *et al.* (2015), case studies enable the researcher to answer questions of 'how', 'why' and 'what'. Yin (2014) identified four case study strategies: single, multiple, embedded, and holistic. This enables researchers to collect information from a range of participants with different posts and from different departments to generate the research findings (Yin, 2014). According to Adelman *et al.* (1980), case studies are an attractive approach to research due to their strong basis in reality as well as their embeddedness in social truth.

Case studies, like experiments, are generalisable to theoretical propositions and not to populations or universes. In this sense, the case study, like the experiment, does not represent a "sample", and the investigator's goal is to expand and generalise theories (analytic generalisation) and not to enumerate frequencies (statistical generalisation: Yin, 1994, p 10)

Researchers have no control over the independent variables while conducting the research and this may limit the validity of the conclusion: however, this limitation is not specific to the case study approach. As stated by Humphrey (2001), nothing can be labelled "correct" or "balanced" in a case study, as even if two researchers conduct their research within the same organisation, they can

end up with two different cases. The following subsection explains in greater detail the justifications for adopting this research strategy.

3.5.2 Justifying the Use of Multiple Case Studies

This research has examined case studies in conjunction with the answers provided by participants to explore identified theories and to develop connections between works and scenarios. This has helped to determine the extent to which theories are applicable in different countries and cultures and to pinpoint any differences in theories and case studies with respect to participants' contributions (Easton, 2010). Within the hospitality sector, the use of case study examples makes real contributions to research; the industry itself is international, and it is governed by bodies and standards that aim to create international hospitality benchmarks. It would be harder to use a case study strategy where an industry is not influenced significantly by foreign cultures, and because this study is based on the effects on value as a result of employee branding, it is highly subjective in nature. The subjective nature of the topic and the importance of gaining insights from business professionals will help us to understand the similarities in attitudes towards employee branding in various countries as well as to determine whether the findings of this paper can be usefully applied in different countries (Gillham, 2000).

Case study analysis is carried out using two standard methods:

- **Individual case study analysis**: This is where single case studies are analysed in detail, and the findings are compared with the findings of other case studies. It also helps explain the key factors within a single scenario.
- **Cross case study analysis**: This approach focuses on examining case studies, making comparisons amongst them, and noting the similarities and differences found in different scenarios. These differences can then be used to identify potential patterns that emerge between the case studies and this paper.
- **Single case study vs. multiple case studies**: A single case study analysis normally allows for an in-depth analysis so the underlying causes of specific scenarios can be understood. Single case studies can also be applied in situations where an extreme circumstance or item of data is being studied (Barratt *et al*.,

2011). However, where the topic does not contain an extreme circumstance, it is very likely that using the single case study method will generate bias.

The multiple case study approach allows for cross-case study analysis that, in most cases, will help to eliminate the issue of bias that can be created by a single case study method. It creates a situation whereby a single object can be studied across multiple diverse scenarios, thus helping to pinpoint what has caused the differences and to understand how specific changes have affected objects within these various scenarios (Hartley, 2004). The use of multiple cases also allows study predictions to be made through the identification of patterns in the case studies.

This research has adopted a multiple case study approach. Case studies were provided by organisations within the hospitality industry (hotels), which preferred to remain anonymous. The main reason for a multiple case study approach was to try to eliminate any bias (Gilham, 2000). Using numerous case studies and performing a cross-case study analysis meant that it would be easier to spot patterns in the data, especially because some of the variables within the case study are kept fairly constant: the country of operation, the star rating of the hotels (five stars), the sizes of the hotels, which were all similar, and the fact that all the hotels hosted international guests. By identifying as many constants as possible, identifying potential patterns is made easier, as appropriate changes can be singled out and analysed. The nature of this research also looks at a subjective topic, i.e., value addition, and assessing this within one scenario only may not provide sufficiently accurate results (Yin, 1994).

The limited amount of previous research on this topic in Oman means that using one case study may simply not be enough to gather sufficient data. A cross-case study analysis will usually yield more data than a single case study analysis; it has also been suggested by some scholars that conducting a cross-case study analysis is more beneficial to topics that explore complex social behaviours.

3.5.3 Access to Case Study Organisations

It is of great importance to secure access to the selected organisations, participants, and data in order to deliver a successful research project (Lewis *et*

al., 2003). This, in particular, is crucial for researchers who adopt the case study approach, as they often wish to have control of the time spent with the participants from the targeted organisations (Yin, 2014).

For this research, the researcher started by reading about the selected organisations via their websites and so was able to compare all three cases. Then, through her personal contacts, the researcher emailed the organisations and briefed them about the research topic and objectives. Moreover, showing the importance of this study helped to ensure the maximum co-operation from the organisations. Lewis *et al.* (2003) recommended emphasising why the researcher has chosen the organisation, as this will help and guide the organisations to decide whether to participate in the research (Voss *et al.*, 2002): see the Brunel Headed Letter in Appendix 1. After all these processes, the three organisations showed full support and indicated their willingness to participate in this research.

3.6 Research Design

According to Yin (2009), developing a research design involves taking into account the most suitable approach and the most appropriate method of data collection and data analysis. Case study design requires a careful development of the research design (Yin, 2014), as this allows the researcher to establish the relations between the different variables under investigation (Nachima & Nachima, 1992). The next sub-sections illustrate the plan and the structure that the researcher adopted to investigate the data collection method, as well as the data analysis.

3.6.1 Case Selection

According to Gerring (2007), case selection is of great importance for case study research. Gerring added that if the research is exploratory and aims to build a theory, the researcher has to look for cases that may vary the outcome of the theoretical interest, but that are comparable in terms of contributing to the result. As mentioned earlier, this research focused on the hotel industry, and selected three five-star hotels with different levels of initiative in terms of CSR and

branding. Miles and Huberman (1994) suggested using a checklist to assist in case study selection. This is based on the strategy and information related to the phenomenon to be studied, which helps to generalise the outcome of the research and consider the ethical strategy while comparing the different case studies. Therefore, the researcher created a checklist for this research:

- The three hotels are all based in the Sultanate of Oman and all interact with the political and social environment in Oman, which is the context of this research.
- All three hotels have adopted a CSR strategy and have a strong brand worldwide.
- All the three cases are service providers in the hospitality industry

3.6.2 Pilot Study

To ensure accuracy during questioning, it is crucial to conduct a pilot study, where the questions being asked can be tested to see whether participants understand them and to determine what sort of information these questions will provide (Yin, 2014; Van *et al.*, 2001). This allows for significant improvements to be made to the questionnaire in areas where the answers generated are not in line with the research objectives or where there is a lack of understanding from respondents (Yin, 2014; Morin, 2013). In this research, the researcher conducted a small-scale exploratory pilot study in which four interviews were performed to assess the clarity of the questions and to see whether the answers provided by participants would be suitable in terms of allowing conclusions to be drawn in line with the research objectives.

Once the pilot study had been conducted, changes to the interview questions were made; this involved altering not so much the substance of the questions but more the style of questioning. Some significant changes are listed below:

- Questions were broken down and simplified to obtain more focused answers and provide more flexibility in the way the participants could respond. It was hoped this would allow for more data to be gathered and could uncover the underlying causes of some of the answers to the questions.
- Some questions were rephrased to compensate for language differences; making the questions simpler also helped to make the participants more comfortable

with the study, as the complex wording might left participants feeling uncomfortable or might encouraged biased answers to questions. Respondents also showed haste when answering complex questions, and this might have meant that important findings would have been missed.

- The pilot study also helped to identify unanticipated problems in the interviews; for example, some managers did not understand some of the keywords used in the interview script, so a short brief was given to participants before the interviews were conducted.

3.6.3 Unit of Analysis - the case

The unit of analysis is the level at which the research is conducted and at which objects are researched (Blumberg *et al.*, 2013). This research focuses on the internal stakeholders of the organisations in order to understand how value is co-created via the adoption of CSR activities within the organisation. Stake (1995) considered this to be a crucial element of the unit analysis, and it helped the researcher to understand how the case relates to CSR and employer branding.

3.6.4 Data Collection: *Semi-Structured Interviews*

The qualitative methodology has been widely used since Riley and Love (2000) reviewed the state of tourism research in 1996 and found that qualitative research methods had been adopted for major tourism journals at that time (Puhakka *et al.*, 2013).

Interviews were selected for this research, as they provide in-depth responses and can accommodate follow-up questions as well as analysis. The nature of the subject at hand highlighted the significance of obtaining in-depth views from business professionals within the hospitality sector (Myers, 2009). The use of interviews provided a degree of comfort for participants, and the interviews were used to stimulate discussion rather than as a form of questioning; this allowed participants to develop their answers and add any comments they felt were necessary (Burns, 2000). As with any research, there are often some limitations, and one limitation of this research was identified early in the interview stage through the pilot questioning, which found that some of the

questions were of a very complex nature and needed to be simplified to accommodate any language barriers that might have been present. Simplifying the questions meant that some were less focused and precise; however, through discussions, it was found that leaving a more flexible question in place allowed participants to make comments that could add to the findings of the research.

The semi-structured interview is a very efficient data gathering technique in qualitative research. However, the unstructured interview is the most frequently used type of qualitative research into CSR in general (Myers and Newman, 2007). This is because the unstructured interview method helps to understand the people as well as the social context, as the researcher explores in the data collection (Hermanowicz, 2002). In addition, as stated by Walsham (1995), interviews are the most important sources of evidence in interpretive case studies. Interpretive studies use semi-structured interviewing techniques to enhance the participants' ability to express their views without any influence from the researcher's preconceptions (Doolin, 1996).

The researcher conducted a pilot interview prior to the fieldwork, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, in order to review the questions and make sure they were clear for the participants.

Observation would have been difficult to use in a way that would best exploit the strengths of the method. As the research topic aims to explore a social reality, it is important that communication is used to understand the thoughts of participants. Simple observation may mean that while actions are monitored, thoughts are not understood, which would leave the researcher making numerous assumptions (Boeije, 2010). Another reason why observation may not be compatible with this research is that it simply does not assist in exploring in depth the topic at hand. While using observation is particularly helpful when analysing customer responses to physical items, this research investigates a non-physical item, and so gauging a mental reaction or monitoring a change would be hard, especially since no control is present (Burns, 2000). For example, the control in a grocery store would be other products, and customer reactions could be understood through a change in behaviour while faced with both a control

and the product being observed. However, the researcher had experienced the service of the three hotels and did not consider that observation would be beneficial as the main source of data collection.

Focus groups provide an effective method of gathering information and usually prompt in-depth discussions; however, where there are strong personalities present in a focus group, shy respondents may fail to contribute valuable information to the study. Biases are also common within focus groups, while the presence of the group can influence a member to change their mind (Collis and Hussey, 2009). Though focus groups are helpful for gathering in-depth data and can be used to ask follow-up questions, they would have been particularly impractical for this study, as business professionals may be reluctant to participate in discussions alongside competitors.

Questionnaires are another useful resource when conducting primary research, and usually help the researcher to understand consumers; however, they do not provide deep insights into behaviours and thoughts (Blumberg *et al*., 2011). Instead, questionnaires aim at identifying trends the researcher has already understood before the questionnaire is issued, and the inability to correct questionnaires or to ask follow-up questions deeply hinders the potential findings of any paper that requires detailed explanations and data gathering. The interpretive nature of the current research means that in order for the researcher to understand the object and social realities, deep interactions with respondents were needed: something which questionnaires simply could not provide.

Overall, interviews serve as an efficient and focused means of information gathering and have numerous advantages compared with other methods. The in-depth analysis coupled with the complexity of the topic being discussed means that questionnaires might not have provided the correct type of data, which would have had a major impact on the findings of the research in terms of answering the research questions with the needed depth, while other methods proved to be impractical or unsuitable to gather the type of data needed. The use of interviews also justifies the research paradigm influencing this research, as

the interpretive approach requires in-depth interactions and discussions to understand social and object realities.

3.6.5 Triangulation

Having adopted the case study method, it is important for a researcher to carry out triangulation, as stated by Yin (2009, p. 199), who argued that *"any case study finding or conclusion is likely to be more convincing and accurate if it is based on several different sources of information"*. There are different types of triangulation for use in data collection, as researchers may use different types of data collection techniques (Yin, 2014). According to Flick (2008), using data triangulation improves the quality of the data, leading to better findings and more convincing conclusions (Myers, 2009).

Likewise, triangulation is also useful in data analysis. According to Patton (2002), there are four types of data analysis triangulation that help to validate and verify the qualitative analysis. The four types are: triangulation of methods, in which the researcher opts to use different methods for analysing the same data; triangulation of sources, in which data is collected from different sources; analytic triangulation, in which the researcher uses multiple analysts to validate the same data; and theory/perspective triangulation, where the researcher uses different theories to validate and verify their findings.

This research is no exception, as the researcher used source triangulation, where data was collected from different sources. This approach is recommended by many researchers (Miles and Huberman, 1994), as it increases the level of both the reliability and the validity of the qualitative research. As was mentioned earlier in the 'unit of analysis' section, before conducting the interviews, the researcher had experienced the service of the three hotels and had visited the hotels' websites. This helped the researcher to reduce the bias of interviewing only the prominent individuals in an organisation (Miles and Huberman, 1994).

3.6.6 Data analysis

Concerning data management, to ensure good quality research, the researcher recorded all the interviews to store all the participants' points and their

feedback. With regard to data analysis, after the data collection was completed, each interview transcript was analysed using thematic coding. According to Bryman and Bell (2007), coding is the first step of analysing qualitative data; it is useful, as it helps the researcher to identify and connect different items generated to theoretical ideas.

According to Creswell (2009), in the last decade, there have been huge discussions about the importance of the adoption of computer software in qualitative data analysis. Myers (2009) recommended the use of software such as NVivo and Atlas, as they are reliable tools for qualitative data analysis. NVivo is a computer program that helps to analyse qualitative data; the program can deliver accurate results rapidly by quickly analysing groups of data and identifying any patterns present. The main benefits of using software applications such as NVivo when processing and analysing large sets of quantitative data are the speed at which the data can be processed and analysed, improved consistency in the way in which the data are interpreted, and the quality of the graphical presentations of information, which can be generated more efficiently.

The researcher thus adopted NVivo for data analysis, since the data gathered through the interviews were subjective in nature. The coding process was performed manually via NVivo, which helped in analysing the data. The coding of collected data was done in a deductive manner derived from the literature and in an inductive manner induced from the empirical study: the list of codes is provided in Appendix 2. Many patterns in the data were analysed through the researcher's continuous reading of the responses. Patterns in the data were analysed by the researcher and, where applicable, the relevant theories were used to help understand or link the findings to previous academic works.

3.6.7 Validity and Reliability

There are numerous ways to measure reliability, with many scholars pointing to the consistency of the results as an effective means of assessing both reliability and validity (Csikszentmihalyi and Larson, 2014). However, while this may be

the case for some studies, given the nature of this research, it is not possible to guarantee a consistent result if the same study were to be undertaken after a certain period of time (Noble and Smith, 2015). The decision to adopt an interpretivist view means that the topic explores a current norm or object reality that can change over time, often creating a new scenario, which may cause a future study to yield different results.

Though the reliability of this research may be difficult to determine through the consistency of the results in the future, the researcher employed several measures to make the research more reliable:

1. All results were recorded and transcribed in full to reduce data loss to zero and to allow the researcher to focus fully on the interviews and on asking follow-up questions.

2. Follow-up questions were all noted and were posed to respondents in order to gain an understanding of ideas from all participants.

3. The use of NVivo data processing tools helped to raise awareness of particular results.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

There is no doubt that ethical issues play a significant role in social research in general and in the qualitative research method in particular (Lewis, 2003). Therefore, before conducting any research, it is vital to obtain ethical approval to maintain a high ethical standard for the research project (Broom, 2006). Thus, before starting to collect any data, the researcher must pay attention to the research ethics; this can be achieved by applying to research ethics committees for research approval and to get permission to start the research at the basic level. To achieve this, the researcher has to show the committee the main purpose of the research, the research design, and the steps that will be taken to preserve the confidentiality of the information supplied by the research subjects and respect the anonymity of respondents (Lupton, 2006). Furthermore, as this research adopted the case-study approach and collected data by conducting interviews, it is the researcher's responsibility to ensure that

the participants have a clear idea about the research topic and to clarify the purpose of this research (Broom, 2006).

In this study, the researcher considered these crucial issues, and was awarded approval from the Brunel Business School Ethics Committee (Approval letter - Appendix 3). In addition, a form was designed for the participants to demonstrate their willingness to participate, which was recorded using numerical codes and stored as anonymous data. In addition, the researcher provided a participant information sheet (Appendix 4) and a consent form (Appendix 5) to clarify the research for all participants before the interviews. In parallel with this, as this research is a multiple case study, the researcher labelled the case studies as Case A, Case B, and Case C to maintain the anonymity of each organisation's identity.

3.8 Reflexivity

Use of the term 'reflexivity' has become a common chord among a large number of approaches in qualitative research. Overshadowing differences regarding methods, data, and results is the shared acknowledgement that reflexivity is crucial to human science research. Unfortunately, behind this common chord is an asynchrony of definitions and procedures that make it difficult to discern to what the term 'reflexivity' refers.

The methodological approach of this research involves interpretive multiple case studies, which were employed in three different hotels in the Sultanate of Oman. Still, the researcher faced some common research problems during the data collection. For example, during the interviews, the researcher was required to remain calm and to break the ice so that the participants would feel comfortable and could explore and discuss their ideas.

3.9 Chapter Summary

To summarise this chapter, this researcher adopted an interpretivist philosophy that led to a deductive approach, establishing the framework on an extant theory from the literature. Next, the researcher elected a multiple case study approach to validate the findings and solidify the results, as illustrated in Table 3.2.

Summary of research methodology			
Philosophy	Positivism		
	Interpretivisim		X
Approach	Inductive		
	Deductive		X
Strategy	Case Study	Single Case Study	
		Multiple Case Studies	X
	Survey		
Method	Qualitative		X
	Quantitative		
Time	Cross sectional		X
	Longitudinal		
Technique & Procedures	Data Collection	Questionnaire	
		Interview	X
	Analysis	Software	X
		Manual	
	Triangulation	Methods triangulation	
		Triangulation of sources	X
		Analytic triangulation	
		Theory/ perspective triangulation	

Table 3.2: Summary of the research adopted for this thesis

Due to the nature of the research topic, the researcher opted to use the qualitative method in order to expand and elaborate on the research subject. Due to the nature of this study, the researcher was obliged to select a cross-sectional time study in which a phenomenon is observed over a specific period of time. The use of interviews and the way in which the researcher collected data are all linked to the decision to adopt an interpretivist view.

This was a significant decision, as it ultimately helped to determine that the study needed to obtain highly qualitative results, and hence interviews were used as a primary data collection method alongside multiple case studies. The subjectivity of the topic at hand had a significant effect on the decision-making that has been discussed as part of this methodology section; however, the choices made helped to fulfil the objectives set out at the start of the section.

CHAPTER FOUR-CASE STUDIES: FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction

Whereas the previous chapter presented the research methodology adopted for the data collection, this chapter presents a discussion of the data collected and justifies the methods used for this research. The main purpose of this chapter is to present the findings from the three case studies analysed. It provides a descriptive analysis of each case independently, using what Yin (2014) calls "within-case-analysis". This method of analysis helps to overcome the problems related to studying a massive amount of data by listing each case separately (Eisenhardt, 1989). With regard to presenting the data collected, however, there is no particular format to represent the case study data (Merriam, 1988).

As mentioned in the methodology chapter, the identities of all participants and organisations involved in this research will be kept anonymous. Therefore, the researcher has named the three cases Case A, Case B and Case C and labelled the 35 participants P1-P35. As mentioned earlier, the aim of this research is to relate CSR to both employees and employer branding in creating value in the hotel industry in Oman, which has experienced remarkable progress in the past five years and has just started to grow and contribute to the local economy.

Interviews revealed higher demands for hotels in Oman, as the tourism rate is increasing every year. They also revealed awareness about global warming and the importance of contributing to its prevention. Considering these points, this research contributes to the topic of global warming from a marketing perspective by assessing the CSR from an employer branding perspective in co-creating value for employees as internal stakeholders. Based on the findings, three broad categories were identified: CSR, employer branding and value co-creation. This chapter includes the Case Background [section 6.2], followed by the findings and analysis for Cases A to C in turn, and ends with a chapter summary.

4.2 Research Context and Justifications

The context of any research is as important as the theoretical aspect. This section presents crucial information about the Sultanate of Oman, which is the context of the research, in order to provide the reader with some information about Oman and its citizens. A specific focus is on tourism development and sustainable development in Oman. The Sultanate of Oman is an Arab country which is strategically located in the south-east of the Arabian Peninsula (Al-Gharbi and Ashrafi, 2010; Al-Hamadi *et al*., 2007). Oman shares borders with the United Arab Emirates to the north, Saudi Arabia to the west and Yemen to the southwest (Ministry of Information – Oman, 2011a). The country controls the eastern bank of the Strait of Hormuz (the only way in and out of the Arabian Gulf), while Iran controls the western bank. Oman has an area of 309,500 square kilometres and a population of 2,694,094 (Oman Census, 2011).

4.2.1 Oman's Social and Economic Development

According to Al-Gharbi and Ashrafi (2010) and Al-Lamki (2007), Oman has attained high standards of social and economic development over the past 40 years. Common (2011, p. 215-216) noted, *"Oman's development over the last 40 years has been swift and remarkable"*. Khan and Al-Moharby (2007, p. 372) confirmed that Oman is *"one of the most progressive countries in the Middle East"*. Since 1970, Oman has witnessed important transformations in various walks of life, such as health, education, and road networks (Goveas and Aslam, 2011; Al-Gharbi and Ashrafi, 2010).

Oman's performance indicators, such as the percentage of literacy, the healthcare system, and women's participation in corporate governance, show progressive improvement. Reforms of social development included giving women equal opportunities to contribute to the country's prospects for economic growth (Goveas and Aslam, 2011; Neal *et al*., 2005). Today, more women are entering the labour market (Ashrafi and Murtaza, 2008, Al-Lamki, 2007), and on an official basis, many women hold top government positions such as minsters, ambassadors and MPs (Metcalfe, 2007). Education and health in Oman have received great attention, and according to the United Nations

Development Programme's (UNDP) 2010 Human Development Report, Oman came top of the world's ten leading countries which have made significant progress in the past 40 years in education and public health (Khalil, 2010).

Oman's economy has shown great development and transformation and its performance has improved significantly since 1970 (Goveas and Aslam, 2011, Looney, 2009). In addition, Oman was considered by the World Bank as *"a regional economic model"* according to the Oman Daily Observer (2011). Looney (2009) noted that economic reforms have been implemented and free market policies were established to achieve an infrastructural capability, improve the well-being of its citizens and enhance economic growth. By the end of 2016, the real Gross Domestic Product (GDP) was USD 66.293. The country's main revenue comes from oil and natural gas (World Bank, 2016). The national currency of Oman is the Riyal (1 Omani Riyal (OMR) = USD 2.58: Ministry of Information, Oman, 2011c). However, due to recent instability of oil prices, Oman's government strategies have shifted to diversify its revenue sources to reduce its over-reliance on the oil sector (Khan, 2011; Ashrafi and Murtaza, 2008; Budhwar *et al.*, 2002).

4.2.2 Tourism Development

The Sultanate of Oman is committed to developing the tourism sector as an alternative revenue source for the economy due to the increase in the level of global interest in Arabian Gulf region. Although the weather during most of the year is hot, Oman still continues to attract seasoned travellers from all corners of the world. The government's support of the tourism sector has led to an increase in the growth of this sector as well as in the real estate sector.

Statistics show that from 2011 to 2015, there was an increase in the tourism rate, as shown in Figure 4.1.
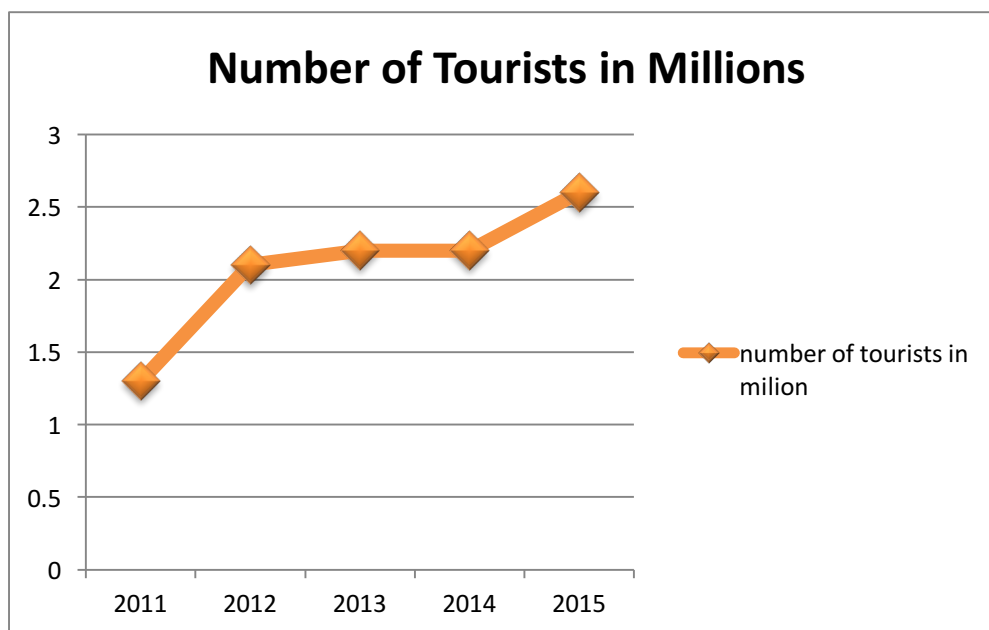
Figure 4. 1: Number of Tourists.

Source: National Centre of Statistics & Information

4.2.3 Tourism and Sustainable Development

Another developing source of revenue in Oman is tourism. Al-Masroori, (2006) noted that *"it is considered mostly capable of providing a suitable source of income and employment"*. Oman's extensive coastline, stretching over 17,000 km, gives it a competitive edge for water sports tourism. Likewise, its mountainous topography and deserts make it an ideal tourist attraction for nature lovers. In addition, Muscat, with its historical forts, ports and old marketplaces, is irresistible to visitors (BBC, 2011). The city of Salalah, in the southern part of the country, with its unique ecosystem and climate and green landscape during the summer, provides an opportunity to attract regional tourists (Ministry of Tourism, Oman, 2011).

Thus, Oman's tourism industry has experienced steady growth in recent times, and it is now one of the largest sources of national income (Carpentier, 2003). Therefore, sustainable tourism will help to create a balance between environmental, economic, and social-cultural aspects of the nation in order to

help in creating a positive contribution for all three levels of tourism: that is, local, national, and global.

In parallel, local and national sustainable tourism is a key source of income for the local communities, as it helps to provide strong incentives for their participation in protecting biodiversity. Indeed, globally, sustainable tourism has raised public awareness of biodiversity, and in 2010, Oman joined the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) (Tourism and Biodiversity, 2010).

4.2.4 Hotel Industry in Oman

In keeping with its support for the tourism sector, the government of Oman is committed to developing the hotel industry and has undertaken and completed a number of projects to build hotels. Thus, the hotel sector in Oman is experiencing rapid growth to cope with the increasing tourism and with local demands. In this respect, the total number of hotels registered in 2013 was 282 (Ministry of Tourism), compared to only 147 hotels in 2004 (Ministry of Tourism). Table 4.1 presents the latest statistical information about the numbers of hotels in each Governorate in 2009 and 2015.

Hotels classification by Governorate 2009-2015			
Governorate	2009	2015	Total
Muscat Governorate	90	123	213
North Al-Batina Governorate	14	22	36
South Al Batina Governorate	6	10	16
Musandam Governorate	6	7	13
Al-Dhahira Governorate	3	3	6
Dhakhilieya Governorate	17	30	47
North Sharqieya Governorate	16	20	36
South Sharqieya Governorate	19	32	51
Al-Wusta Governorate	7	11	18
Dhofar Governorate	29	33	62
Al-Buraimi Governorate	17	27	44
Total	224	318	542

Table 4.1: Hotels Classification, Source *National Centre of Statistics & Information*

Life in Oman has changed significantly since the discovery of oil in the 1960s, and although the changes in the hospitality industry have not occurred as quickly as in the neighbouring countries of UAE and other Gulf Cooperation Council countries, many hotel projects have arisen in the country. Most of them are in Muscat, which is the administrative and economic capital, hosting most of the nation's industries and business, or in Salalah, situated on the Arab Sea, with its unique topography and moderate climate.

This research focuses on a specific sector of the hotel industry: that is, in five-star hotels in the capital Muscat. There are not many five-star hotels in the Sultanate: Table 4.3, below, shows the distribution of five-star hotels around the country.

4.2.5 Justification for choosing Oman

The researcher believes that Oman is an appropriate context for studying the impact of CSR in the hotel industry, as the tourism industry is one of the major creators of waste, and consumes significant amounts of energy and water. Having depended on oil and gas for many years, since the 1960s, Oman is now trying to develop the tourism and hospitality sector as an alternative source of income. Thus, the demands placed on the hotel industry have heightened due to the increase in the number of tourists visiting Oman as well as local travel within this geographically vast country, and the numbers are growing annually. This section will provide both the theoretical and practical justification for choosing Oman as the context for this research.

As stated earlier, the tourism sector has started to grow recently, and it is expected to be one of the country's largest sources of income in the coming years (Carpentier, 2003). Moreover, Oman is considered as a favourable climate for tourism, as its wide range of natural environments is unmatched in the Middle East, making it one of the most important tourism destinations in GCC countries (Winckler, 2007). For example, the stunning valleys, mountains, caves, deserts, beaches, islands, lagoons, rock parks and nature reserves are considered crucial resources for Oman's tourism sector (Henderson, 2015).

Thus, the tourism sector in the Sultanate of Oman has been identified as one of the priority sectors for economic diversification and employment creation. Moreover, tourism has attracted growing interest from the government in the strategic plan 2016 – 2020 as well as in the national vision 2040 (Ministry of Tourism). The tourism records in 2014 showed that around 2 million tourists visited the country to take advantage of Oman's unique natural and cultural heritage, the pristine beaches, and the political safety and stability of the country, and the industry contributed 2% of the GDP (NCSI, 2015). However, the sustainable development of the tourism industry is considered crucial to ensure that this industry achieves its goals for the prosperity of both the Omani economy and society and for the protection of its unique environments. Indeed, Oman has a long-standing commitment to sustainable development, and the tourism sector is no exception to this.

In parallel to the above, the tourism sector's activities and operations take place in Oman's most fragile and unique environments; therefore, the success and sustainability of the sector depend on the sustainable management of those unique resources. Subramoniam *et al*. (2015) argued that the threats associated with the growing rate of the Omani tourism industry are not only to Oman's delicate environmental resources but should also include the cultural impacts, as the interaction between the local people and international tourists could lead to a dilution of the values and beliefs of the Sultanate. It is therefore timely to develop, manage, and assess the sustainable development of the tourism sector in the Sultanate of Oman using an integrated approach.

As stated earlier, tourism is known to be one of the sectors that generate significant amounts of waste and that consume significant amounts of water and energy (Duarte *et al*., 2002). If these impacts are not managed sustainably, the tourism development path will be one of self-destruction. While tourism has initially been adopted as a sector leading to the socio-economic development of local communities, unless it is carefully and sustainably managed, it could result in alienating the very communities it was supposed to serve and benefit.

Due to this, the government of Oman is committed to developing the hotel industry and has undertaken many projects to build hotels. In Oman, the hotel sector is experiencing rapid growth to cope with the increasing tourism and local demands. The total number of hotels registered in 2013 was 282 (Ministry of Tourism), as opposed to 147 hotels in 2004 (Ministry of Tourism).

Moreover, the government and global investors are spending billions of dollars in this industry, which justifies the importance of understanding the CSR in this industry and how it is implemented. Indeed, the government's decision to join UNWTO shows the importance of tourism sustainability.

Furthermore, the growth of this sector has led to increases in economic diversification as well as employment creation, thus showing the government's commitment towards sustainability, and to further emphasise the high importance of this issue, the government has highlighted the tourism industry in its strategic plan for 2016-2020 (Ministry of Tourism).

Success in implementing CSR mainly depends on those organisations which operate in the tourism sector; on how their initiatives can take place in helping to protect the Omani environment and on how they can support the local people. Table 4.2 below shows the number of five-star hotels in Oman by region.

No. of five stars Hotel in Oman by Region				
Muscat	Salalah	Sohar	Al-Jabal Alakdahr	Total
8	4	2	1	15

Table 4.2: Number of five-stars Hotel in Oman

Source National Centre of Statistics & Information

Although the growth of the hospitality and tourism sector in Oman still faces challenges – for example, most of its food resources are imported from abroad – the government is still trying to develop the tourism industry so as to reduce its dependence on oil resources. Another way in which the government is supporting the hotel industry is by inviting well-known hotel chains to invest and capitalise on opportunities, such as no tax and low administrative fees.

4.3 Background to Cases

As was mentioned in the chapter on context and background, the number of hotels in the Sultanate of Oman is increasing due to the high demand and increase in the number of tourists. Three major hotels in Oman located in the capital of the country, Muscat, were selected for this research. The total number of five-star hotels in Oman is fifteen, of which eight are located in the governorate of Muscat.

Hotels A, B and C are all international hotels operating in Oman and are rated as five-star hotels. They are located in Muscat, the capital of Oman, and come with direct access to the beach. The location of all three hotels is very inviting and welcoming, as they are in the centre of the capital where guests can experience high-quality facilities, a hospitable environmental, simplicity, and access to modern lifestyle privileges that the city provides.

Guests can immediately feel the warm welcome attached to the Omani touch from the moment that they enter the hotels, as the Omani tradition is to offer hot drinks and burn Frankincense (a local product). These hotels have also adopted such traditional ways of welcoming guests, such as offering Omani coffee. The method of blending the new with the old and the local with the worldly provides guests with an unforgettable experience.

As mentioned in the methodology chapter, 35 interviews in total were conducted for the purpose of data collection. The participants were from different managerial levels and different departments within the hotels. However, the majority were middle-level managers due to the short/simple organisational structure, as Table 4.3 shows.

Case (hotel) **Management level**	A	B	C	Total
Top management	2	0	1	3
Middle management	5	5	7	17
Lower-middle management	5	5	5	15
TOTAL	12	10	13	35

Table 4. 3*: Management level of participants

In the hospitality industry, the number of expatriate employees usually exceeds the number of local employees due to the local culture; however, this has recently started to change, as the industry is becoming more widely accepted by the local population. In addition, the government has established the Tourism and Hospitality College to train local high school graduates in order that they can work for this industry. A summary of participants in terms of local Omani employees, expatriate employees, and employees of different genders (see Table 4.4) shows that there were more Omanis in involved in this research.

	Expatriate	Omani	Total
Male	13	11	24
Female	3	8	11
Total	16	19	35

Table 4. 4: The number of Omanis and expatriates by gender

From this point, the research considered how organisations that provide high luxury and quality services should cope with the latest trends of CSR and participate in helping and protecting the local communities. The findings and analysis for each hotel will be presented separately, starting with Case A in the following section.

4.4 Case A

The case data was derived from mainly internal sources, and was acquired using semi-structured interviews. All data regarding the interviewees from Case A are presented in the table below (Table 4.5).

CASE A					
P/No	Management Level	Gender	Years of Experience	Interview Duration (min)	Nationality
1	Middle Management	M	**27**	**16:09**	Omani
2	Top Management	M	**30**	**50:38**	Omani
3	Top Management	M	**23**	**16:12**	Expatriate
4	Middle Management	M	**19**	**12:03**	Expatriate
5	Middle Management	M	**25**	**12:15**	Expatriate
6	Lower-Middle Management	M	**16**	**10:37**	Expatriate
7	Middle Management	M	**20**	**17:54**	Expatriate
8	Middle Management	F	**19**	**27:14**	Omani
9	Lower-Middle Management	F	**7**	**10:55**	Expatriate
10	Lower-Middle Management	M	**18**	**16:56**	Expatriate
11	Lower-Middle Management	M	**9**	**15:37**	Expatriate
12	Lower-Middle Management	M	**8**	**16:17**	Omani

Table 4.5 Summary of the semi-structured interviews of Case A

With regard to strategic character, different opinions about CSR exist within the business environment. However, this section will mainly present the findings derived from the analysis of the interviews. This section is divided into three main categories: CSR, Employer Branding and Value Co-Creation.

4.4.1 Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)

In Chapter Two, the literature demonstrates that organisations are facing challenges in positioning themselves as CSR organisations. This is because businesses and consumers are demanding greater social responsibility from companies and brands (Nielson, 2013). As a result, corporates have paid greater attention to CSR in order to influence the consumer response to the firms (Kang

and Atkinson, 2016). To understand CSR, it is necessary to understand what a corporate does; hence, the data collected was from the hotel industry, which has diverse dimensions due to different departments that provide services which can be poles apart. Therefore, linking the activities and the services provided by the hotel as core business practices contributing to CSR actions is considered to be of utmost importance. The following sections present the CSR actions by different departments along with the challenges and advantages of CSR.

4.4.1.1 Actions of CSR

The majority of the participants agreed that sustainability is everyone's responsibility, and everyone has a role, depending on which department they are working under. Also, the majority agreed that there are no risks, but rather challenges in implementing CSR, and the risk mainly lies in whether the hotel is not adopting CSR.

The engineering department was very concerned about saving energy, as stated by **P1,** who is at the middle management level**:** *"We've been asked to look at how we can save energy…So, for the last few years, we've been changing our light fittings, water consumption with the building water saving devices…we have a lot of air handling units which produced a lot of water, and we've been collecting that water and using it for agriculture".*

It was clear that participants in Case A were very concerned about how to save energy by using the latest technology trends, including replacing old machines with new ones that are more environmentally friendly in terms of saving energy, water [e.g. air conditioning] and electricity [e.g. LED lights]. As mentioned in the case background section, Oman is a very hot country where the temperature can reach up to 50 degrees centigrade, which in Case A plays a huge part in the need to save water, particularly for gardening use, as watering the hotel's gardens consumes a large quantity of water.

Another action was taken by the **restaurants** within the hotel. They changed their menu every season, as stated by **P11, who is at the lower-middle management level:** *"The menu changes every season; for example, when it is*

winter, people prefer to have heavy food, and the opposite in summer…also food testing is undertaken by the employees".

The reasons behind this food testing are that the employees are the ones who are responsible for answering questions from the guests (customers) and should thus be aware of the ingredients in the dishes. This is due to the common issue nowadays of food allergies.

In parallel to **P11**, participant **P5** stated: *"We try not to over-produce food because we cannot save the food for a long time due to hygienic and health reasons".* This is also very important, as it is clear that in Oman, most of the food is imported, and this circle may lead to very complex issues not only in terms of food, but also regarding the logistics that are involved in the process of importing goods.

Furthermore, the **activities and initiatives** to which the hotel is committed, and those involving the external community, are some of the actions of CSR; for example, the following quotes illustrate the idea further: As **P4** said*, "we support the local community first….a simple example is local fish".* In addition, **P5** stated that *"the organisation encourages us to clean beaches as one of the CSR initiatives".*

CSR actions are always recommended to start with local products and priorities for the local citizens (Harjoto and Jo, 2011). Although there are directives to use local products, there can be problems with this, due to shortages and high demand. On the other hand, Omanisation (employing locals) is another opportunity to which organisations must abide due to the government's policies.

Finally, the **room services** idea was very interesting, as stated by **P7,** who said: *"Adopting technology in room services, such as keys that help to save electricity, recycled toilet paper and bathroom amenities supplied from companies which are known for their reputation as environmentally-friendly.*

Other activities include minimising washing to increase the lifespan of the linen".

All of these ideas are simple enough in principle, but they really procure results and make a difference, especially in terms of saving not only cost and resources, but also saving time and energy, helping in a way to balance the four pillars of sustainability that were mentioned in the literature: community, organisation, the environment and future generations.

4.4.1.2 Benefits and Cost of CSR

The previous section demonstrated the importance of CSR and actions taken by the organisation to implement it. This section mainly illustrates the benefits and costs of CSR adoption within the organisation. **Sending simple messages to the guests is important, as P3 explains:** *"For example, in our rooms, we let the guest choose whether he would like linen and towels to be changed every day, as we are not forcing it on them, but we encourage them because when you are at home, you don't change bed-linen or towels every day".* This kind of message truly helps the hotel in many ways, according to the American Hotels and Lodging Association (2012). More than 75% of US hotels currently employ linen and towel reuse practices, 59% recycle, and 46% engage in water-saving actions. These actions also add to the lifespan of the resources, as was mentioned earlier.

With regard to organisational ethics, actions have to be aligned with CSR even when choosing suppliers (Powell, 2011). This affects the corporate identity, since the ethos and value also reflect the organisational foundation of the corporate brand (Balmer and Gray, 2003). In relation to Case A, one of the ethical considerations to be made by a hotel is their choice of food suppliers, as stated by **P4**:

"We should also work with suppliers who practice sustainability in terms of fishing, to provide certain quantities only and avoid over-fishing. Another example is that in Oman, we have beautiful lobster and prawn, but it is a very rare commodity that requires a long time to fish for in order to protect these

species. We are aware that if you take everything out of the sea, then one day there will be nothing left. For that reason, I think it is very important to work together with suppliers who believe in and embrace the same practice."

In the case of fish, it is important to ask if the fish are being procured during the fishing season as set by the government in order to avoid fish that are caught illegally, endangered species, baby fish, and fish caught in the breeding season, which might affect the lifecycle of those species. It is clear that Hotel A addresses many aspects of sustainability. For example, in relation to food suppliers, they make sure that their foods are ethically produced.

4.4.1.3 Challenges

Although CSR presents numerous advantages, there are also many challenges (Elving, 2015) that organisations face. Most of the participants agreed with this: for example, **P1,** who is the general manager of the hotel, stated that: *"The shareholders' decisions to approve our CSR activities take a long time, as we have to provide a lot of justifications for the implementation of CSR actions."* Also, a very negative opinion from **P3** presents another challenge, as he claims that**:** *"It's only for propaganda use. I don't believe in that, so I do have a problem with that sometimes with the hotel: we either do it properly or we don't do it".*

As far as external stakeholders are concerned, **P5, who is in charge of room services,** said**:** *"I think our customers demand that we need to adapt CSR strategies without compromising the level of luxury provided to them".* This can be due to the high expectations from customers, who book a five-star hotel because they want to enjoy a luxurious experience and hospitality. Here, the hotel tries to create awareness through messages on leaflets, etc., but they cannot force action unless the customers are convinced to choose to understand and adopt the same CSR strategies.

Another issue that is considered as a challenge to CSR is recycling. In Oman, the idea of recycling is not yet popular enough and is not well-implemented. The only action taken by the organisation in this respect is to export recyclable

products outside Oman for processing through external companies. This has led to explanations for more of the internal stakeholders, especially the locals, as the need to change their behaviour in terms of waste division is a new concept for them. **P7** stated: *"You have to explain why this is done and keep reminding your employees about the importance of such activities".* One of the internal challenges that the organisation faces is how to create awareness among their employees, and it ends up doing the work of CSR as an order or request.

Another challenge is the contradiction between the country's regulations and the internal regulations of the organisation**. P3** elaborated by saying *"Sometimes there are some government rules that override our internal rules, so in this case, we have to compromise and abide by the country's rules and regulations."* Although there are many regulations from the government regarding CSR and environmental affairs, the private sector is still more committed to such initiatives and activities. Sometimes the government hinders private sector initiatives. For instance, the complaint and penalty process for those who violate CSR actions is a lengthy one, with many phases.

4.4.2 Employer Branding

CSR is a strategy that enhances corporate branding in general and has an impact on the employer brand as well. The organisation helps to improve employees' knowledge by educating them about the latest CSR trends and encouraging them to work alongside the external community. This was clear through the activities that the hotel initiatives use to help society, such as sponsoring events to help people in need. **P7** stated that *"The hotel runs motivation programs to encourage the employees and to educate them about why it is important to implement CSR strategies. This is done through regular meetings with employees."*

Although this program benefits the organisation more in terms of saving resources, it also helps to shape the employees' attitudes and behaviour, which will later have an impact on the external stakeholders and subsequently reflect the image and culture of the employer. Another strategy that shows that the

brand is well-known as a sustainable brand can be seen through its activities as well as its websites and social media posts. **P10** noted that *"Simple steps taken by the organisation can reflect the adaptation of CSR strategies, such as a brand name or slogan that represents and summarise the mission of the organisation."*

It was noticed that Case A employees are aware of the issues of CSR; in fact, their employers claim that CSR activities are almost second nature to them. **P2** said: *"sustainability strategies to our employees are not merely practices or orders to be followed: it is more like brand DNA."* The brand is embedded with CSR throughout its activities and initiatives, which genuinely give back to the community. This is an organisational culture that the brand is working hard to build and create, first among its employees, before transferring it to external stakeholders. These activities are considered to be an important platform to encourage everyone to participate globally, in order to compete with other international organisations in the field of hospitality.

It is of great importance to make the strategy clear to all employees and ensure that they understand all the justifications for why the organisation has adopted CSR and how it will help to improve the brand image. **P3** said that *"as a brand, we want to be attractive: this can be achieved if employees understand what we stand for and why we do it"*. From this point, the researcher extracted that when an organisation chooses employees, it considers the candidates' knowledge of the latest CSR-related trends in the world and how they can help the organisation to improve and compete with others. The above is perfectly aligned with the statement from **P2, who** pointed out that *"When we interview candidates, we do consider their knowledge of CSR before employing them, as this is one of the cornerstones of the recruitment and selection process."*

From the above, Case A shows great interest in enhancing its employer branding image through the adoption of CSR activities. This is not enough on its own; the organisation also strives to achieve a healthy internal environment where employees' satisfaction, performance and loyalty play an important role.

4.4.2.1 Employee Satisfaction, Performance and Loyalty

There are many activities and actions that help to increase employee satisfaction, performance and loyalty. These include awareness, respecting the local culture of the country, considering its religious beliefs and welcoming ideas from employees. The next sub-sections will illustrate each behaviour separately.

4.4.2.1.1 Satisfaction

There are many indicators of an employee's satisfaction. First, in terms of years of employment, as **P10** states: *"A long-serving employee who spends more than five years in one organisation is most likely to be satisfied, especially if he is an expat. This is also true with local employees, who tend to keep their jobs regardless of other offers"*. Another reason is the working atmosphere that motivates employees to work. **P4** points out another reason for satisfaction: *"Healthy working environment and collaborative team work give the employee a sense of satisfaction"*.

Considering the opinions of employees and taking them into account is another way to ensure that they are satisfied. **P2** said *"Listening to employees and respecting their ideas, and involving employees before taking decisions, can show the organisation's ability to satisfy their employees"*. **P1** Added: *"Satisfaction here can be seen through the change in employees' behaviour as if they are ready to engage and stay connected with the external community"*. Employees stressed that a healthy work environment and appreciation are considered among the most important factors affecting employees' satisfaction.

In addition to the above-mentioned reasons that lead to employees' satisfaction, employers can contribute to satisfaction through educating and training strategies that increase employees' knowledge and awareness. **P3** said: *"Creating awareness among employees will be reflected in society about protecting the environment, which in turn grows the business by accepting the adoption of new and relevant CSR trends."* In addition, **P7** suggested that *"it's part of our responsibility to pass on this information and knowledge to others,*

especially the new generation, who are very eager to learn, so why doesn't the government add it to the school curriculum like other countries?"

Satisfaction is clearly shown through the participants' gratitude towards seeing results and being involved in work that gives back to the community. Understanding where the organisation stands boosts the participants' attitude and encourages employees to work as a team.

4.4.2.1.2 Loyalty

Employers provide some privileges to employees, such as free bookings for their families when travelling abroad, in order to increase their sense of loyalty. According to **P1**, *"The hotel provides employees with meals, accommodation and free bookings when they are traveling abroad and using the same chain".* This gives employees a sense of belonging and loyalty.

Other privileges that can enhance loyalty among employees are more monetary in nature, such as incentives and raises, but some employees consider the nonmonetary privileges to be equally important, such as adding to their knowledge and improving their skills. **P4** explained that *"Activities and training are not only for the hotels benefits, but also help the employees to improve their skills and knowledge, resulting in an increased sense of loyalty to the organisation".* Other activities that make employees more comfortable include free dress days: **P2** said, *"Employees sometimes can dress casually on certain days or occasions".* Moreover, health insurance provided for all employees, local and expatriate, increases loyalty in employees and makes them feel taken care of. Although local employees get their medical treatment for free from the government hospital, this organisation still gives them the privilege of using private hospitals like expats. Ultimately, they can enjoy using both public and private hospitals. **P7** stated: *"Well, as I said, housing, medical, insurance, etc.... and I add and share my knowledge with employees and it will add value for the organisation".*

All of these are activities and offers that increase loyalty among employees and help to change their lifestyle, making them feel like shareholders, which will

reflect on their behaviour with customers. In this way, customers' feedback will be more appreciated if the internal stakeholders have a sense of loyalty.

Furthermore, the organisational culture, especially in the hospitality sector, requires employees to smile and show that they enjoy their work, which reflects on customers' sense of hospitality. Thus, only loyal, satisfied employees can bring such feelings to customers. **P4** observed: *"Happy employees work differently: I mean, they work with a smile, they enjoy work and feel as if they are at home or running their own businesses"*.

Another action taken by employers to increase employees' satisfaction and loyalty is to treat customers as if employees are the shareholders when they say "The customer is always right". The majority of participants mentioned that they respect their employees and value them, but also deal with complaints in a professional way that will not affect their employees' rights, and that they will fight to protect them rightfully.

P4 said *"Our slogan states that "The customer is always right", but you know, there are certain ways of dealing with it….Like for example, we have special training courses as well that are called service recovery"*.

As mentioned earlier with regard to satisfaction, employees are now more aware of their duties, as their knowledge has been improved through experience. They have gained loyalty to the organisation from working with the hotel. This has resulted in lifestyle changes in terms of employees' sense of belonging to their society.

4.4.2.1.3 Performance and Motivation

Identifying employees' strengths and weaknesses can help to convert these weaknesses into strengths, especially via a proper consultation team with the HR department. In Case A, this was done through training courses designed to help employees achieve their tasks. **P11** said *"We make a training plan for employees as well and we need to keep asking them what they need to improve….We try to encourage people to do things from their heart"*.

Furthermore, a clear aim and strategy will ease the difficulties that come with achieving the organisational objectives and goals, and will result in motivating the employees. For example, the stronger the employer, the harder the employees will work. **P3** stated, *"We want to be an employer of choice, like Apple and Google",* so this is a reason to motivate employees to work with the hotel and be loyal. In parallel, the healthier and safer working environment will enhance and boost employee performance. As stated by **P2,** *"A healthy, safe working environment makes people more productive and passionate, which means that they do a better job",* whereas **P3** said, *"Well, I think it is a healthy working environment: we take care of them, we look after them, we support them as much as we can through good training, paying them on time, and we give them opportunities to work overtime to make additional money."*

In addition, diversification, even in tasks, helps to create better knowledge and allows employees to reach self-satisfaction. **P4** said, *"Working in different departments has helped me to gain different ideas and a wider spectrum, which means getting more opportunities later on".* Understanding the techniques of hospitality is another advantage. If the organisation cares about its employees and if the employees are satisfied, this will be reflected in their work. For example, employees will not offer fake smiles but will instead genuinely enjoy welcoming guests. As **P4** stated: *"Happy employees work very differently, as they work with a smile and they come to work happy, which reflects on their performance in hospitality."*

Finally, giving employees the opportunity to work with external stakeholders helps to motivate them to understand the reasons behind sustainability and also creates awareness among society about global warming. Such actions help to transfer knowledge as well as value not only internally but also by spreading it to the other stakeholders via activities and initiatives. **P7** said: *"Well, if you are ready to listen to your community, engage yourself, get connected with them. It's a human factor. They will be satisfied and be happy".*

Implementing CSR is not only about saving resources: it is about creating awareness about the harm posed to people and the environment. For example,

promoting health and fitness usually leads to better performance. **P10** stated, *"Awareness of health and fitness is very important, as it is all part of the work practices within the organisation that help to increase employees' performance, as they are a part of the bigger picture for the organisation. Being healthy and fit becomes a lifestyle that will also affect their family, friends and colleagues".*

So, caring about improving communication with employees is of great importance, as it will prevent poor service from affecting the organisation and subsequently the brand image. Using healthy communication to clarify problems for the employees in the organisation will increase their performance.

4.4.3 Value Co-Creation

Value can be created through the adoption of CSR for the employees, employer [organisation] and external stakeholders. CSR makes employees think and be more creative in bringing new ideas that help to enhance the use of environmentally friendly actions. The codes in this section were created by the researcher and were not generated from the literature review. The codes were divided into three categories under the concept of value co-creation, consisting of Dynamic, Dualistic and Dialogical. The following subsections illustrate in detail these ***three Ds*** of value co-creation and their impact on the organisation.

4.4.3.1 Dualistic

The value creation outcome may have a dualistic nature, as it may relate to value co-creation or value co-destruction. In other words, the result could be a positive or a negative outcome for the organisation. It is worth mentioning here the reasons that might lead to a positive outcome (value co-creation) or a negative outcome (value co-destruction).

4.4.3.1.1 Value Co-creation

First, value co-creation can be achieved only when employees are aware and adequately trained on CSR strategies and practice the three most important behaviours of performance, satisfaction and loyalty. Simple examples can be found, similar to what was stated by **P5,** the head of the hotel restaurant, who

mentioned the usages of organisation's resources: *"To make sure that what we spend is spent on the right products; we basically order what we need and ensure that products are used correctly and not wasted or misused"*.

Value co-creation is directly proportional to internal stakeholders' awareness and knowledge of CSR strategies. In other words, value co-creation increases in line with employees' awareness. This provides evidence of one feature of the nature of value co-creation.

In addition, value co-creation can be experienced through a healthy and safe working environment, as stated by **P3:** *"I think that productivity depends a lot on employees' feelings of loyalty and satisfaction. For example, I will do what I love regardless of how hard it is, but I will quit working if I am not enjoying the work I am doing. In addition, the feeling of being secure and safe in your job will increase productivity.* The above brings another dimension to value co-creation from an intangible aspect, namely job security and the safety of the work environment.

As an emphasis on the importance of employees' awareness in value co-creation, **P4** paid attention to the importance of creating awareness about the phenomena of environmentally friendly activities, as well as the organisation's justification for doing it: *"Environment-friendly activities help to protect our work, and save resources. For example, I prefer to have reports on my computer because I think it is tidier rather than keeping a lot of papers on my desk."* **P11** added to this from an intangible perspective when he said, *"We try to encourage employees to co-create value through their sense of commitment and loyalty to the organisation, which only comes if they are satisfied and performing well."*

Employees' Value co-creation depends mainly on three factors. The first is how aware and knowledgeable employees are, because the more educated and aware they are, the better they will be at value co-creation. The second reason is the availability of the three qualities in employees (satisfaction, performance and loyalty), which increases value co-creation. The final factor in value co-creation is job security and the safety of the work environment.

4.4.3.1.2 Value Co-destruction

In contrast to value co-creation, some factors lead to value co-destruction. In addition to the reverse actions of the value co-creation factors mentioned above, the researcher identified other factors that cause value co-destruction.

The absence of continuous monitoring of employees could result in value co-destruction. Leaving employees on their own to make mistakes without guidance is a negative attitude from employers. A good example to illustrate this point is clearly stated by **P3,** who explains*: "As a manager, I allow my employees to make mistakes so that they learn the hard way. I let them make mistakes once, twice or maybe three times, and then they will definitely learn from them".* From the researcher's point of view, this can be accepted in simple cases, but not in major ones, as mistakes may cause a lot of harm and result in huge damage. Therefore, thorough guidance and continuous monitoring are needed so that such mistakes could be avoided.

Another reason for value co-destruction is the lack of trust between employers and their employees. This was very clear from **P8**'s statement: *"Although I believe my employees, I tend to check their service trolleys to make sure that they are strictly following directions in regard to the consumption of resources like toilet materials and minibars."*

Another example that emphasises how the lack of continuous monitoring could lead to value co-destruction was mentioned by **P2,** a manager, when he stated that the outcome/output is more important than its means: *"I'm not very strict on knowing how employees do things because I look at life differently from other people. For me, as long as employees are doing their tasks, why worry about how they do it?"* In an industry where guidance and monitoring are important to value co-creation, it is more important to know how thing are done rather than whether they are done or not, as the hotel industry involves quality, luxury and prestige.

4.4.3.2 Dialogical

A dialogical approach is defined as the process of creating an output by

involving all parties within the process. The process of value co-creation needs to be clarified by all parties and any problems that arise should be resolved, as they may lead to a negative impact on the organisation. Therefore, involving employees is of great importance. As **P4** mentioned, *"We get recognition from the company, from the media, from customers etc. that also is good for us…it's respect for all humans from different cultures, etc."*

Trust between members of the organisation is also important, especially if there is no delay in the work and the internal stakeholders are happy about their working environment. The work is then done in a proper way by default. **P2,** who is a manager, mentioned that the outcome/output is more important, in that it ends in value co-creation directly for internal stakeholders, and indirectly for the organisation: *"In my department, I do trust my employees and give them freedom in how to do their tasks, as long as I know that they are well trained, qualified and aware of their job requirements."*

In addition to internal interaction with employees, it is important to understand the local culture and traditions of the country where the organisation operates. Respect for local culture and for the Islamic directives in hospitality is worth mentioning, as it creates value not only for employees, but also for local citizens. This includes, for example, the way locals have to dress, especially if they are females, as they have to wear long skirts and head scarves (Hijab). **P5**'s statement explains this understanding *"Oman is an Islamic country: we do respect the Omanis who work with us, especially if they are females, and we try to reflect the Islamic culture in their uniform, such as long-sleeved shirts, long skirts and head scarves as part of their religion and deep-rooted culture"*.

Furthermore, internal discussion with the employees also needs to be considered, as they are involved in the services provided to customers. Employers should make everything clear for their employees and give them the chance to participate in activities and provide opinions. It is the duty of managers to listen and involve their employees when it comes to ideas and suggestions, as they are closest to the customers. This can be extracted from **P10**'s statement: *"As managers, we do encourage our employees in all*

departments to bring us their ideas and suggestions that may enhance the brand image and add value to our products and services".

The dialogical aspect of value co-creation depends heavily on the interaction between internal stakeholders through sharing ideas and activities that will reflect directly on the brand image and indirectly in the community where the organisation operates.

4.4.3.3 Dynamic

Value co-creation is a dynamic process that stimulates change or progress within the organisation. As shown in this research, from the participants' point of view, the nature of value is dynamic. For example, when participants provide a service, they receive appreciation from the customers. In addition, customer feedback about the service also leads to rewards for the employees from their employer.

Another point to note is that the relationship between the organisation and its internal stakeholders (employees) is dynamic in nature from the beginning. In other words, while employers expect their employees to give their best, employees expect their employers to take care of them too. For instance, **P7** mentioned that: *"My knowledge and experience in the field adds value to the organisation; likewise, privileges awarded to me from the organisation are highly appreciated, such as event tickets, medical insurance and free stays abroad when using the same chain".*

The dynamic nature of value creation is not restricted to internal stakeholders. Below are examples of how the organisation interacts dynamically with the local community. **P2** noted that *"it is important to support local products and suppliers, as it enhances our brand image and reputation as well as benefiting local individuals and the community".* **P7** noted other activities that are dynamic in nature between the organisation and the external stakeholders: *"Planting trees in a number of villages and streets is an activity that benefits the environment and beautifies the surroundings as well as marketing our brand"*

One more dimension that illustrates the dynamic relationship between internal stakeholders and customers is clearly visible in services provided by the organisation. For example, **P5** mentioned, *"As an employee in one of the restaurants in this organisation, it is important to listen to customers when it comes to food quality and menu setting. Sometimes we have to remove some dishes and add new ones to satisfy our guests and show them that we do listen and care."*

The dynamic nature exceeds the local boundaries of the country. As the organisation receives guests from all over the world, the internal stakeholders interact dynamically with different cultures and traditions, and this adds to their knowledge and experience. This was clear from **P3**'s statement on this issue: *"Guests coming from Europe, America and Australia are more environmentally aware and they could add to our knowledge and experience in CSR-related activities. We are keen to listen and learn from their comments and feedback during their stay in our hotel"*.

4.4.4 Case Summary

As this was the first case study conducted, the researcher gained a lot of experience in how to deal with participants and how to run the interviews in order to extract the required information. I received great support from top management in this organisation, which made things very easy and accessible. On the other hand, some of the participants were worried and reluctant to reply to certain questions, thinking that it might affect their career.

This hotel was one of the most sophisticated and diversified, as its management and employees come from different backgrounds and nationalities. This enhanced their awareness about CSR and its effects on the brand. In addition, it gave the researcher new dimensions of understanding in regard to CSR strategies and behaviours within the hospitality industry.

4.5 Case B

4.5.1 Interviewee Information

The case data were derived mainly from internal sources, and again was acquired using semi-structured interviews. All data regarding the interview participants from Case B is presented in the table below (Table 4.6).

CASE B					
No.	Management Level	Gender	Years of Experience	Interview Duration (min)	Nationality
13	Middle Management	M	13	**10:53**	Expatriate
14	Lower-Middle Management	F	15	**11:33**	Omani
15	Lower-Middle Management	M	7	**13:06**	Omani
16	Lower-Middle Management	F	19	**18:52**	Omani
17	Lower-Middle Management	M	20	**14:41**	Omani
18	Middle Management	F	19	**13:25**	Omani
19	Middle Management	M	13	**24:16**	Omani
20	Lower-Middle Management	F	10	**25:10**	Omani
21	Middle Management	F	2	**23:32**	Omani
22	Middle Management	M	3	**17:03**	Expatriate

Table 4. 1: Summary of the semi-structured interviews of Case B

The implantation of CSR has multiple dimensions, and hence this research mainly focuses on the value co-created by the organisation via the adoption of CSR strategies. The findings presented here begin with CSR, followed by employer branding and ending with the value co-creation section.

4.5.2 CSR – Corporate Social Responsibility

This section consists of the codes that were generated from the literature and are presented here as subsections under the main heading of CSR.

4.5.2.1 Action of CSR

In this case, the organisation undertakes many activities concerned with CSR strategies in which employees are involved. This was stated by **P21**, who explained the importance of CSR and mentioned that *"Sustainability is everyone's responsibility, as giving back to the community in return, as an initiator, you will receive benefit yourself. Giving back to the community and being sustainable is not one person's job, it is everyone's!"*

It was clear that Case B has invested in sustainability and is trying to maximise the use of its CSR strategy internally, and this can be seen in particular throughout the activities and initiatives that the hotel is conducting. The organisation has involved its employees in these initiatives, as stated by **P17**, who spoke of welcoming new ideas from the employees: *"It is crucial to involve everyone in CSR to end with a mixture of ideas and tasks from the employees, as we have employees of different nationalities"*.

This helps the management of the hotel to explore more ideas from the employees regarding CSR and find those that are suitable for implementation, and the diversity of nationalities also enhances the opportunity for exposure to new ideas. One example is paper recycling: this began as an idea, which they then began to implement by selling the paper to a company that exports it to other countries such as China, the UAE and KSA.

In regard to the more sustainable resources used by the organisation, **P19** stated: *"We use two types of keys; the majority of hotels use the same keys. Hotels either use plastic keys or metal keys. We use plastic keys where it is valid as long as you do not misuse them. They are replaceable, and they are not expensive, and can last from one year to three or four years"*.

These types of keys have helped to provide more precise implementation of access and are programmed at locations where they can be used to increase the level of safety for both guests and employees. They have also helped to improve security, as **P19** continued: *"We have something called patrolling; previously we used to write down visits to this or that area. Now we have a machine in*

every location. When you visit the hotel you just plug in the machine, and it gives you the location of who passed by as well as the CCTV".

This system is all computer-assisted, which helps not only to minimise the usage of resources but also to increase the level of safety within the organisation for both internal stakeholders and guests. In addition, thanks to this computer system, the level of productivity is higher and work can be achieved in a shorter period of time.

Another idea for minimising the use of resources was expressed by **P14**: *"Maybe it's not a huge thing, but we also use water dispensers instead of using individual bottles, which helps to minimise resources. And if, let's say, communication-wise, instead of sending emails or picking up the phone, if it's internal, especially if it's the nearest department, we always prefer to meet the person instead of calling them or sending an email".*

This is an internal culture created by the organisation, which encourages its employees to think before using resources, which otherwise might end up creating more waste. Although it might look simple, as P14 said, it can in fact make a significant difference.

Meanwhile, **P15** described the actions that the organisation is taking into consideration as follows: *"...waste management is one of the environmental responsibilities. We have produced a lot of waste, and we have already divided it into dry and wet, and we send it to some outside companies".* This supports **P14**'s comment and indicates the action taken by the organisation as stated by **P15**.

Another action was explained by **P19**: *"All items which can be reused, we encourage staff to do so, and we collect, for example, paper, and we receive waste food."* This was achieved by establishing a community, as **P18** indicated: *"the hotel has established a community called Environment Action*. It is a useful program that is widely used by this hotel chain, which helps to educate the employees about CSR".*

The researcher believes that spreading knowledge and awareness is of primary importance. Most of the internal stakeholders come from different backgrounds due to the mixture of nationalities, and thus might require more explanation. This may not be a problem for those from developed countries, but those who are local and the other remaining groups may need more attention so that they can explore the concept of CSR.

4.5.2.2 Advantages of CSR

There is no doubt that the implementation and the actions of a CSR strategy have a positive impact on organisations. One of the advantages is the financial benefits associated with the reduction of resources used by the organisation.

P14: *"We now have a receiving area, for example, for recycling, like paper, plastic, wood, metal, etc... And they're tracking that monthly to see how much they're saving and what is the benefit of saving that amount and cutting costs".*

Selling the items collected generates income for the organisation, and tracking how much has been consumed helps to reduce the cost of new items. Therefore, the organisation benefits from this action in two ways and considers it an advantage.

Another action relates to laundry, as participant **P16** indicated: *"Focusing on the environment, how to make the environment safe, for example, in the hotel, like not doing the laundry every day. On the other hand, the staff workload will be reduced".*

As we see, this strategy has helped to reduce the workload for the employees as well as the use of washing machines, which has many advantages. **P22** said: *"In addition to cutting costs, we are portrayed in the community as doing well even for outside stakeholders. I mean, the community itself benefits as well. How we clean our areas, how we recycle, so the community benefits as well".*

It was clear that not only does the organisation benefit from this action, but also outside stakeholders as well: hence some of the activities the organisation conducts, include cleaning areas, especially beaches close to the hotel. This has led the external community to enjoy the clean view as well.

4.5.2.3 Costs and Benefits of CSR

To understand the costs and benefits of being sustainable via the adoption of environmental friendly activities, participants responded according to their understanding of the concept that has been created internally within the working environment. From the interviews conducted, most of the participants agreed with the benefits of CSR, as explained below by participants 13, 15, 16 and 22:

P13: *"We have established a project based on the principles of 'reuse, recycle and reduce'. So whenever we print, we are very conscious of what we need to print. Moreover, if I print a one-sided document and I no longer need it, I recycle it".*

P15: *"We produce a large quantity of waste, so the action the organisation takes is to divide the waste into dry and wet and send it to external companies for recycling [...] Since the organisation produces a large quantity of waste, they are planning to get a compost machine internally to turn the waste into fertiliser that can be used for the hotel garden".*

P16: *"What I do is always give a briefing after we do our briefing or line-up. A meeting before we start our shift and after the end of the shift. So first, we talk about the expense: for example, not to use many calls, not to make calls to mobiles, because the last reports show that it's a bit higher, the telephone calls, which by default will increase the cost. Also, the paperwork, secretarial work, like printing, scanning and all this stuff, sending faxes, try their best to charge each guest, so as not to give anything for free. Besides, laundry sometimes, for example, if we wash the towels every day, it will be too much pressure for the employees. Reducing this work helps with the cost of gas, electricity and all this stuff".*

P22: *"We minimise the cost by recycling, reusing or reducing".*

Other ideas were presented by the following participants, who noted that the cost may be large at the beginning, especially when considering the external community:

P14 said, *"The amount that the organisation is spending for either helping the community or the environment is huge"*.

P19 stated: *"We always keep track of how much power we have consumed: electricity and water too. Besides, we very recently started a wastage system, and we also started to plant trees in a few places outside the organisation, like villages"*.

P21 agreed that the organisation spends a large amount, but expressed the expectation that they will receive the benefits later, as if in a cycle: *"You might spend more but I can say it's an investment, so the organisation will receive the return later"*.

This in itself helps to protect the environment where this hotel operates and improves the natural beauty of the area; although it takes time, they will experience the results in a few years.

4.5.2.4 Awareness of CSR

P14 mentioned employees' internal awareness of CSR activities and initiatives and how the organisation actually helps the community: *"Helping people and protecting the environment through the activities means educating them about the community footprint, which is done by this organisation"*. Likewise, **P22** stated: *"With different activities, we transfer what we do to into knowledge. We are very transparent in what we do. We are very open and communicative with the community"*.

In Oman, chains of international hotels have taken the initiative and started to take CSR action earlier than local authorities, simply because the level of awareness is not as it should be, which requires more work to be done in this area.

P15 added: *"We are living in a world which is too polluted, and people do not care, and they are not aware of what will happen tomorrow. If we do not take*

care of the environment, our next generation will suffer, and they will be affected very badly".

Another reason for creating awareness is that the latest trend in the hospitality sector is to be pro-environment, as this is considered to be one of the sectors affecting the environment. As **P21** indicated, *"Sustainable tourism is now the trend, being a role model in society and trying to create awareness through high schools by presenting certain things related to climate change; we invite them to witness our work in sustainability, as business does not stand alone".*

It is clear that the advantages of adopting CSR strategies are significant, but there are also disadvantages associated with this strategy. Let us now turn to an examination of the challenges faced by the organisation in adopting such methods.

4.5.2.5 Challenges

The benefits and advantages of adopting CSR are significant, as stated by **P14**: *"I do not see a risk, to be honest, because this is just helping either the community or the environment, so there is no risk in doing that".* Nevertheless, there are a few challenges associated with this strategy, some short-term and others long-term.

P15: *"It is easy indeed to reduce the use of resources, but the barriers are to change the mentality of the people who work, as it is quite difficult. […] The way we advise the employees, they take it sometimes as an order, for example, when we say please make sure that you consider the division of waste, etc..."*

Likewise with **P16**: *"Remind the team, because if you talk today and then again after two months, of course they will not take it as a seriously, but they will if you keep talking about it regularly, especially in the department meetings".*

Thus, pushing and reminding the employees of what they must do is considered a barrier, as the motivation has to come from within.

One of the impacts is the location of the hotel, as it is on the coast; as **P19** said, *"Many ships pass by, and if they are carrying oil or taking the waste out, it*

affects the beach. Too much pollution comes back to the hotel, and it brings a terrible smell too. That affects our guests because it is not something you can control: it is a natural thing, but it affects us because we get complaints that the beach is not clean and this can spread easily nowadays with social media".

This issue affects the guests' overall experience, and if the hotel takes no action, this could easily ruin its reputation, particularly given the advancement of technology and social media. Almost all guests use smartphones that support social media apps such as Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, etc. **P19** continued: *"Guests can take pictures and say 'I was in Case B hotel', and upload them to social media".*

Thus, the initiative that the hotel has taken is to start working on this by involving its employees in cleaning the beach. Although the government should do this, it seems that it is not feasible to just wait, as news spreads so quickly through social media and could affect the reputation of the hotel as well as the country.

P21: *"Since CSR activities are voluntary and you're not going to get paid for it, sometimes it is hard to convince others to do it. You feel responsible; you do it".*

In conclusion, the main challenge that the organisation faces in adopting CSR is to make its employees understand why they are doing so, as the level of education in this sector is not high and the field is dependent on experience, and organisations promote based on experience within the sector. Thus, it is of great importance to explain why employees should adopt CSR rather than only mentioning the financial benefits for the organisation. With the awareness of CSR in mind, the next section addresses the effects of the employer branding aspect on interviewees and its interaction with CSR.

4.5.3 Employer Branding

As mentioned before, a brand is a name, a term or anything else that identifies sellers of goods or services and differentiates them from one another (Wood,

2000). Branding is a marketing communication method that distinguishes a company or product from its competitors and aims to create a long-lasting impression in the customer's mind (Chiambaretto *et al.*, 2016). For this reason, participants were asked about the brand and how the hotel image is associated with CSR, and whether there is a clear message.

P13 said, *"It is a corporate voice. We are a company which supports a lot of things in terms of going green. We have a special pillar called Environment Action[1] in the organisation that talks about the conservation of energy and protecting the planet etc. […] we don't want to be just a money-making organisation. We want to be conscious and give back to our communities".*

P15 clarifies the organisation's three pillars in more detail: *"This hotel has programs that have three pillars. The first pillar is environmental responsibility, the second is poverty and the third is education for children. As a hotel and as a company, I am proud to say that I am a part of this company because of these activities".*

In parallel with the above, CSR also has a place in terms of the strength of the brand, as was made clear through the awards that the hotel has earned. **P17** noted: *"The brand is very strong indeed, as the hotel has been given awards for Environment Action and sustainability for the last three years".* All these activities have led to an improvement in the brand image, as stated by **P18**: *"Our Environment Action, it's in our philosophy, and it enhances the hotel's image".*

The importance of employer branding is to advocate for employees to ***"live the Brand"*** (Maxwell & Knox, 2010). This is in line with an observation by **P21**: *"The brand has created and sharpened my personal brand too… The brand is being empowered, there are a lot of things, ideas that I have, and these have been supported by the hotel and implemented".*

With regard to managing the brand, **P22** stated: *"This hotel brand has certain standards that make the brand strong in the marketplace. For example, when we choose suppliers or products, it is done by the purchasing department that*

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[1] The name has been changed in consideration of research ethics

follows CSR awareness standards set by headquarters […] even though sometimes the international standards are a bit challenging in the Middle East".

All these factors may be considered as criteria for the organisation to enhance their image not only with external customers, but also with internal customers (employees). Activities related to society and the environment do indeed work positively to create a good image. The next section focuses mainly on the effect of employer branding on the employees' behaviours. Some attention is also devoted to other stakeholders who directly and indirectly impact the organisation.

4.5.3.1 Employees: Satisfaction, Performance and Loyalty

From the literature, the above coding is deducted from previous research, but in addition, some new codes emerged during the analysis that are interrelated to employees' satisfaction, performance and loyalty.

4.5.3.1.1 Commitment: Employees and the Organisation

The self-discipline among employees can be seen in the use of organisational resources, representing the employees' commitment, as stated by **P16**: *"Resources should be used carefully, for example telephone calls. This is also because the hotel gives its employees some privileges, for example sending our team on holiday if they have vacation. This has a positive impact on their commitment, as they can benefit from employees' privileges even on holiday".*

Sometimes when this fails, another action is taken by managers, as **P22** described: *"It is my responsibility to remind my employees about going green, and that has helped me to achieve the task I have been given by using less even if I keep reminding my team about the task".*

With regard to the organisational commitment, the action was to support local products to minimise logistical costs and contribute to the local economy of Oman, as stated by **P16**: *"As a part of going green, the organisation is starting*

to always look for local products and materials to use as an alternative to those that it usually imports".

4.5.3.1.2 Ethics, Faith and Religion

Relating the reputation of the brand to ethics, religion and faith that comes from within has also contributed to enhancing the brand image within society and from the employees' point of view. **P18** gave an example: *"I participated physically at Royal Hospital; they have a wing with kids who are affected by cancer. I didn't think I would benefit, but when I spent time with those kids, I gained more than I gave. Personally, I appreciate what Allah has given me; it makes you reflect, and this is also mentioned in our religion, Islam: help people who need help and also protect the environment".*

According to **P22**: *"The implementation of CSR activities has changed the employee's ways of thinking, as they also implement this in their homes; especially here in Oman and the Middle East, the culture is different even in the amount of product they use".* Thus, the organisational culture has transferred knowledge and behaviour to external stakeholders as well.

Although international hotels operate worldwide, the government's policy may force these brands to change the way they operate. **P13** described: *"During the month of Ramadan, they have to close all the restaurants and only start to operate after sunset and close before sunrise".* However, this may not be an international policy of the brand, but rather a local policy set by the government which aligns with the religion of the country and the majority of the society.

4.5.3.1.3 Local Hospitality

One interesting aspect is that the local hospitality also has an impact on the brand. The brand may be international and well-known throughout the world, but attaching the local touch has a positive impact on it and allows the guests to experience local hospitality.

As **P16** mentioned: *"Some of our guests, they really like traditional things, especially in Oman, because they don't see these things elsewhere in the Gulf. I mean, if they're travelling to Bahrain, Kuwait or elsewhere, they don't see these*

traditional things, like Omanis' hospitality and Omani customs. Through observation, the researcher noted that most hotels try to colour their facilities with Omani traditions and their services and employees' uniform with traditional designs and customs.

4.5.3.2 Motivation and Performance

Most participants gave answers similar to that of **P13**: *"When you go out and participate in different CSR-related events, you get to see the difference. You get to see different people, you get to be exposed to a different environment, and when you come back to work, you feel good about contribution to the community".*

This has also helped to increase the employees' level of performance internally, and they explore other departments' work as well, and not only by participating in outside activities. In the words of **P15**: *"I realised that whatever we learn today, we will pass it to someone else tomorrow"*; and **P16**: *"The organisation is not only focusing on business, but also on improving the employees, and how to make environment safe for everyone".*

This is a long-term goal that motivates the employees and increases their level of awareness and performance. This happens only if the message from the organisation is clear as to why they are participating in CSR-related activities.

4.5.3.2.1 Effect of Organisational Culture, Indirect and Internal Marketing on the Brand

One of the organisational objectives is to motivate its employees, and not only through the concerned department. **P13** indicated: *"I am not a member of the Environment Action committee, but I work within their code of conduct".* The CSR activities in which the hotel is participating help to present the brand image to the society. **P18** gave examples: *"Like the Rice Challenge, the orphanage or cancer awareness".* **P22** mentioned *"the visual message that others in the community see what we do".* This certainly reflects on the brand and also helps to market it externally. It also has effects internally, as all employees are encouraged to participate, and this helps to increase the organisation's productivity, in addition to providing indirect and internal marketing for the

hotel. This can be achieved successfully by understanding that such efforts will help benefit employees, the organisation and guests, as explained by **P19**: *"We are here to make everyone's life easy: internal staff and guests. We have to accept feedback from guests to know where we stand and how can we improve in the future, and it is normal for guests or staff to complain. The good thing is that we are here as a team. When there is an emergency, you see everyone act as a team, whether it is an incident within staff or with a guest. So, management is always supporting us"*.

Another organisational action is in how employees are evaluated: trust is given by the organisation to ensure the highest level of accuracy and fairness. **P23** states that *"The self-review at the end of the year provides employees with the opportunity to evaluate themselves before being evaluated"*.

Another strategy was described by **P13**: *"The organisation itself encourages employees to work without monitoring, but we have to prove our capabilities."* This has also helped to increase the organisation's level of efficiency through opportunities for employees to prove their capabilities.

4.5.3.3 Satisfaction and Loyalty

Although the financial aspect is important to consider, it is equally important to understand what you are doing and to believe in the message. **P13** stated: *"I am not only working to make money with the company. I am contributing to society and the world, and it is not that I wanted to do it because my company supports it. Our company inspires us, educates us and tells us we need to be responsible for the world. This supports our career and the future of the company as well"*.

P15 expressed a similar thought: *"Nowadays, thinking about money is not everything because I need quality of life, and I need to develop myself. With money alone, I cannot do what I want. I need knowledge as well, and awareness of what is going on in the world"*. Therefore, knowledge is considered one of the benefits that the employer branding creates for employees.

Another reason was stated by **P14**: *"I have worked with several companies, and I can say that I really feel proud when we go outside and people recognise this*

[***Case B*** *Organisation*]*, as it is well known how it helps the community"*. This shows that when the organisation implements CSR, it will be considered as an organisation of choice. Furthermore, experiencing luxury service was another reason for being loyal, along with high income, as expressed by **P18**: *"I feel proud of working in an organisation known for its high payment and luxury services".*

After discussing the effect of CSR and employer branding on employees' behaviour, the next section will address the outcome of the above-mentioned aspect on value co-creation.

4.5.4 Value Co-Creation

The current literature indicates that value co-creation can contribute to more stable behaviour. However, the value co-creation concept can be generated via multiple processes and there is no single way to achieve the desired outcomes. This may be illustrated through three main dimensions, referred to as the **3 Ds**: Dualistic, Dialogical and Dynamic.

4.5.4.1 Dualistic

Here the research creates a new term in order to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the value co-creation process. Value may be co-created or co-destroyed depending on how the stakeholders feel or experience the product or services. In this section, the main concepts are value co-creation and value co-destruction.

4.5.4.1 .1 Value Co-Creation outcomes

Value co-creation occurs when the outcome is positive for the organisation and other stakeholders. Some examples of positive results internally include employee satisfaction, which leads not only to benefits for employees but also for the organisation in terms of value and financial benefits.

As mentioned earlier, employees genuinely appreciate and enjoy the initiatives that the hotel undertakes. This comes about when the activity's vision is clear to employees. **P13** talked about contribution to the team for CSR and

environmentally friendly initiatives: *"I am not responsible for the team, nor am I part of the team, but I contribute to them"*. He participated in the environmentally friendly and CSR activities even though he was not an official member of the CSR group.

In addition, as previously mentioned in the CSR section concerning the advantages and benefits of adopting CSR, the organisation gains and employees follow. There is no doubt that this provides added value for all stakeholders in general and for employees and the organisation in particular.

4.5.4.1.2 Value Co-destruction Outcomes

Value co-destruction occurs when the outcome is dissatisfactory, not necessarily for all, but even for one of the stakeholders. In this case, it was observed that all the participants were trying to give positive feedback about the hotel. Nevertheless, **P21** said: *"People don't want to do business with you if you don't give back to the community or preserve the environment"*.

4.5.4.2 Dialogical

Dialogical here refers to three parties: the organisation, employees and customer. Although the main focus of this research is the employees, the impacts of the other two must also be briefly explained.

4.5.4.2 .1Iinternal Stakeholders: Employees

Employees are part of the value co-creation process, as their experience and knowledge adds value for them as participants. **P15** described this as follows: *"Whatever I do is value adding for me, as I gain experience and knowledge"*.

In addition, gaining and diversifying types of experience is value-adding for employees, as they will gain more skills as well. **P19** stated: *"I was in customer service for 11 years, front line at reception. And there was a time I thought of moving to a different division to build up my skills"*.

4.5.4.2 .2 Organisation and Customers

When the management and managers think about choosing the right candidate to employ, this adds value not only for the person but also for the organisation.

This adds quality work and professional standards to the organisation, as the candidate will deal not only with the employees, but also with guests, so the organisation requires a person who is willing to hear complaints and work accordingly. **P13** said, *"My main responsibility in this hotel is to bring the best talent for our industry, for our hotel and also to create the experience for our ladies and gentlemen in the hotel"*.

4.5.4.3 Dynamic

As seen in the above analysis of dualistic and dialogical aspects, the dynamic nature of value co-creation also has the same tripartite nature, consisting of organisation, employees and customers. Through informal discussion with employees, the researcher came to know that local employees stay longer in the organisation because there is governmental support for localisation. When it comes to local people, Omanisation is a government policy that the organisation has to implement, with a minimum percentage of 35% of the total number of employees being Omani.

Although the researcher interviewed only two expatriate respondents from this organisation (P13 and P22), their feedback about working in Oman was very positive. This is due to many factors, such as it being a very safe place to live, the inviting package they were given and also the local culture and high level of respect from the local people. As **P22** explained, *"I've been based in the Middle East for about 9-10 years now. So, I've been to Kuwait, I've been to Bahrain, Egypt, so I've seen different places"*. He stated that the difference between these countries is not great. He continued by focusing on the *"green initiatives that the hotel is mainly conducting, but this is not among the people"*.

As we have seen, this research aims to assess the value created for the organisation via the adoption of CSR. The value is created for different stakeholders (employees, organisation and external stakeholders), although the data collected has proven that CSR adds financial value but also non-financial value. This section presents the participants' points of view on how value was added for them.

The value added for the employees was stated by **P13**: *"The awareness that the organisation creates is value-adding, as it helps employees to be more responsible not only in the working environment but also at the personal level"*.

When the management and the organisation understand the value of humans as capital, then this indirectly adds value for the organisation itself. This was clear in the statement of **P14**: *"The priority of this organisation is their employees, because they are the ones who deliver the services to the customers [...] the philosophy of the organisation has created value for employees by considering them during any action"*.

The philosophy that was clear from the vision of the hotel management was also clear in the response of participant **P15**: *"Welcoming the ideas that we present to the management adds value and creates more confidence [...] as an employee, the five qualities I get from this company are honesty, trust, respect, commitment and integrity. These are the five most important values which I am getting from this company"*.

These five qualities mentioned by **P15** allow us to understand how the employees deal with problems and solve them. In addition, **P16** notes that localisation and Omanisation add value: *"Improving employees' skills is value adding [...] also, as an Omani, the value added is employing local people"*.

Spreading value to the external community is one strategy that the hotel is taking. **P17** described *"The golden values of the company where we look basically to the environmental community [...] More connections and more public relations make you understand your role by sharing what you have and also receiving from others"*.

Not surprisingly, local hospitality also has a positive impact with regard to the welcoming way in which the hotel has embraced localisation or, put another way, added a flavour rather than considering localisation as a barrier. In the words of **P20**: *"The nature of Omanis is that they are more into hospitality and this adds value for the organisation"*.

Although the hotel is international and widely known, it respects the culture and

the religion of its employees, most of whom are Omanis, in the services it provides. **P18** stated that *"I am a person who believes in giving back to the community* […] *the organisation has respected the role of the religion of the country"*.

P19 spoke of how adopting technology has created value, justifying this by saying: *"technology has increased the level of safety: it is two-way value"*. Meanwhile, **P21** also explained the value from a personal perspective: *"Everyone is getting the benefits, which are genuine care and giving us the permission to innovate"*.

P22 stated that *"the achievement makes you feel proud, as you are a part of it, when the hotel helps others"*. Value is most enjoyed when the organisation achieves its targets, and in turn the employees feel satisfied with this achievement and proud to belong to that organisation.

4.5.5 Case Summary

Although there are similarities between this case and the previous case, the restriction in choosing participants has influenced the data gathered. The majority of participants were very positive, but there were several contradictions between their answers. Nevertheless, differences exist in terms of the knowledge of the employees and activities compared with Case A. Another reason was that this is a government-owned hotel, and thus we see that even when the participants were being interviewed, it was apparent that they were working for the government. In a certain way, this reflects the fact that there are many differences between locals and expatriates in terms of loyalty.

In addition, the researcher observed that the nature of the Omani personality had an impact on responses, as Omanis are known for their modesty and contentment. Overall, this organisation contributes to CSR in a number of ways, both globally and locally, which help to enhance the culture of CSR in Oman among internal and external stakeholders.

4.6 Case C

4.6.1 Interviewee Information

The case data was derived mainly from internal sources in the form of semi-structured interviews. All data regarding the interview pattern of Case C are presented in the table below (Table 4.7).

No.	Management Level	Gender	Years of Experience	Interview Duration (min)	Nationality
CASE C					
23	Middle Management	M	3	35:18	Omani
24	Middle Management	M	23	15:33	Expatriate
25	Middle Management	M	1	14:34	Expatriate
26	Middle Management	F	18	17:25	Omani
27	Top Management	M	7	26:13	Expatriate
28	Middle Management	F	16	23:41	Expatriate
29	Lower-Middle Management	M	27	14:51	Omani
30	Lower-Middle Management	F	22	13:04	Omani
31	Lower-Middle Management	M	31	20:24	Omani
32	Middle Management	M	12	13:23	Expatriate
33	Lower-Middle Management	M	21	16:11	Omani
34	Lower-Middle Management	M	8	29:53	Omani
35	Middle Management	F	26	18:13	Expatriate

Table 4. 2: Summary of the semi-structured interviews of Case C

The implementation of CSR in this organisation has been graded at the highest level globally. The findings are presented in three main categories, starting with CSR, moving on to employer branding and ending with value co-creation.

4.6.2 Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)

Case C is no exception to the adoption of CSR strategies, but there are differences in its implementation of CSR activities and initiatives compared to the other cases.

4.6.2.1 CSR Initiatives and activities

The organisation tends to conduct induction lectures about the importance of CSR for students at different levels of schools, both public and private, to help in shaping the CSR culture within the society. Furthermore, it publishes an electronic newsletter and organises competitions among employees as CSR actions. This was clear from the responses of **P23** and **P24:**

P23 *"We're providing facilities to schools, supporting them with our team. We have a CSR team that visits different schools to encourage students and provide support to other local social activities."*

P24 *"I used to bring children from Grade 10 and 11 who would like to know how water is produced. Also we have a quarterly E-newsletter which I send out for everyone to read, and then we have different posters in the back of the house: we have a commitment wall. **Sustainable Aware*** related tips are put up, especially in the bathrooms. In addition, we have a **Green Awareness Day**. We run a recycling competition and advise the staff to participate in it."*

Among the various activities conducted by this hotel is blood donation, which is a unique initiative, as it shows that the employees understand that CSR is not only about saving resources, but also saving human lives. In the words of **P26:** *"Five of us that run the department donate blood and do fundraising as forms of CSR activities. Our Chief Engineer handles the rest of initiatives such as, saving water, electricity and planting of trees. Besides that, we do a garage sale and encourage everyone to bring stuff from their homes, and we donate the profits to charity".*

Another action that results in saving resources for the hotel is energy saving. **P25** explains: *"Now more than ever, the most visible things we do in Case C hotel is energy saving. Water and electric consumption are considered to be a top priority for us in the organisation. We always ask ourselves, how can we save the planet? And how can we reduce pollution? Water is the primary concern for us, as Oman has a water shortage issue."*

Involving everyone is considered as an organisational culture that helps to create and spread awareness among the employees first, and this is achieved through involving them in the activities. **P33** said, *"For sure, I am involved in CSR activities, as it is a culture in our organisation. Making profit is not the first priority anymore: in parallel, the organisation respects the community in which it operates and looks forward to contribute and share responsibility for saving the environment. At the company level, we have some initiatives that target not only local communities, but also global outreach to help those in need, such as earthquake and flooding victims in countries such as the Philippines, Nepal and other countries affected by man-made disasters through donation and providing shelter."*

4.6.2.2 Advantages of CSR

The advantages of CSR can be seen through the changes in employees' attitudes towards life in terms of using resources not only at work but also outside the organisation. This was stated by many participants, such as **P23**, who noted: *"Though understanding the concept of CSR, a lot of changes in our personalities have occurred in the way we live and work."*

Going green is one of the booking criteria, as some customers make bookings based on green classifications, as stated by **P27:** *"Within our corporate world in general, you see, since about ten years ago, there has been a shift for a corporate company with global operators who place green credentials as a top priority when booking a hotel. So if you are sensitive to the environment, you are probably 50% more to stay in a hotel that facilitates that, rather than choose any other."*

It might sometimes seem too expensive to amend or change current polices in regard to CSR within the hotel, but in the long term, greater benefits will be gained through implementing CSR strategies. **P28** noted that *"The privilege of implementing CSR activities not only benefits the internal stakeholder (employees), but goes beyond to reach the owners of the organisation. It's affecting everyone, of course, because whenever you are doing it right, you*

might have to invest a little bit more money in the beginning, but the return on investment is almost immediate. I mean, we're seeing it as well, like for the electricity thing that we're trying to measure now, we see that actually, it's impacting a lot. We are paying less utility bills by going green. A clear example is that changing the light bulbs in the hotel to energy-saving bulbs cost the organisation a lot in the beginning because they are more expensive than conventional bulbs, But this action has proven to be cost effective in the long run".

Similarly, adopting technology has created positive impacts; the hotel has adopted technology and has replaced some old resources with new ones that are more advanced and more environmentally friendly. An example was given by **P28,** who pointed out that work is more secure and data is safer with the use of technology: *"Using technology, actually enhanced CSR. It's even better, because no one will tell you, 'I lost the paper.' It's on the shared drive, and anyone can access it at any time. So now, we're completely fine. We have started noticing this when we receive a call from a guest, instead of being in a panic about how to provide them with the information, simply because we don't know what the employees discussed with them."*

From the above, the researcher developed an understanding of how CSR strategies brought a lot of benefits to the organisation both on the individual level and at the collective level. The next section will focus on the impact of the implementation of CSR strategies on employer branding.

4.6.2.3 Cost of CSR

Although it may cost a lot at the beginning, adopting CSR strategies can become advantageous, depending on the geographical location and the climate in which the organisation operates, as stated by **P27**: *"Through daily monitoring, we receive data on the daily guest consumption and know how many people are in each room, as by common sense, two people in the room will use more water. In addition, the use of air conditioners will reduce significantly in during the months when the climate is relatively cold, thus reducing the electricity*

consumption. The change of consumption rate will give us an indication of what to expect in every season and consequently to understand customers' behaviour. Again, it depends on where you are. So, for example, the power price in Oman is in a different direction than it would be, for example, in Asia. So, therefore, I think the pricing is impacted by budget, so that we use energy consumption as a fixed cost as part of our budget."

Therefore, the nature of the country's climate sometimes requires more energy during summer and less during winter, as the majority of energy use is for cooling. A similar idea was mentioned by **P24**: *"The hotel consumes around 100 cubic meters of water per day. We don't use the potable water; we're using recycled water for irrigating gardens and the landscape. So this is another achievement. Then, of course, in the property itself, we are using low-pressure showerheads, water additives and waterless urinals. There are a lot of activities in this hotel: it has been awarded the highest certificate for green activities and all our utilities are controlled. If you ask me, here today, we have around 20%, 25% energy saving for our energy. So that is something related to Green Engagement.*

Then we talk about the carbon footprint, carbon footprint savings, so when you are saving energy automatically, we have a target for our carbon footprint also. So water, energy and the carbon footprint: these are the three areas related to the CSR from our organisation's point of view and the engineering point of view. In particular, water saving is benefitting the government stakeholders as well as us."

On the other hand, **P28** mentioned **"***Actually, I think CSR is a huge advantage because it pushes you to try to find other alternatives.***"** This comment indicates that employees are welcome to raise new ideas that help to reduce costs for the organisation as part of their target work.

4.6.2.4 CSR Challenges

Barriers to implementing CSR may come from external stakeholders: for example, the way they believe or think, or lack of familiarity with the concept

of CSR, is the main challenge that the organisations face. Three participants – **P34**, **P28** and **P23** – illustrated the challenges that come from the society or customers. For example, education is a challenge, and the external image of working in the hotel is also not very welcomed by the Omanis.

An idea was presented by **P23,** who clarified some barriers with the hospitality sector: *"The private sector related to hospitality is different, as the culture of the hotel is entirely different. You have to maintain a lot of procedures and policy as a standard, and you come to a grooming standard as well. The work shifts are based on the operations: this affects the weekends, holidays and working 24 hours, and the Omani culture needs to change in relation to working hours. Operations are affected a lot, as people would prefer to work in the public sector and not in the private sector, not in the hotel. In relation to that, religion is one issue, because there alcohol is not acceptable in our religion. So, that's another reason why Omanis don't want to work in hotels. And 70% of jobs in the hotel are shallow positions. We have people who have been working here for more than 25 years, but with the new generations, we have difficulty because they prefer not to, because they have higher education."*

In the words of **P28,** *"as much as I am positive towards CSR, the entire system is not used to going this way. But I think, when you have a reason to prove why you want this change and they start seeing the first small changes, you cannot make a big change and expect people to just cope with it and be productive."* Therefore, educating and convening society is a significant challenge to be faced by organisations in the hospitality sector in particular.

Another challenge is how to change or educate the communities within Oman. As explained by **P27,** similar to the above, *"The challenge we have at the moment is that we need to help to change the society. And how do you change the society? It's not going to be overnight, but we take our part with the people working for us to teach them, coach them, help them and make them sensitive to that matter. I think that's the most important thing, and here, in a country like Oman, AC is the number one killer. So I ask you now, if you go home, is your AC running?"*

Although the management and the hotel chain welcome the implementation of CSR strategies, there are sometimes delays in the process and procedures to fan approval for any activities take a long time. This is due to government rules and regulations, and sometimes also to hotel management itself. As explained by **P26,** *"The owner – I mean here the stakeholders – every month, we have to send a report to them. So they need to know what the activities are. However, usually [Case C] they are not the owners, so sometimes the delay is not from the brand management, but the local owners control us. The owners are very much involved because every month we have to report on everything."*

In parallel to the above, because these organisations are considered and rated as five-star hotels, their guests have certain expectations associated with the standards of services provided, which sometimes contradict the CSR strategies implemented. This puts the hotel in a dilemma between maintaining high standards and implementing CSR strategies. **P28** explained this issue in detail: *"Well, it's a little bit complicated, because we go a lot with the guests' requirements. It's not exactly our call here. What we can do from our side is just to make sure that we are maximising the opportunities to save the planet without compromising the standards of the hotel. After all, when guests come to a luxury hotel and pay a lot to stay here, they expect high quality services and facilities. For example, you cannot implement some activities that will show the guest that he is not getting the luxury he paid for… Another example; because we put those notepads in the room, in the meeting rooms, and every time, actually, we just find that they are putting like two words on each, like, nothing. They are just playing with it. It would be lovely if we could save on that, but that's entirely out of our hands."*

Finally, sometimes local regulation enforces the hotel to purchase and use local products that will not have the same level of quality as the imported products expected by guests. **P25** said*, "I mean, it is difficult to import certain products, due to the legislation of the country. You're not going to be able to do everything, because as I said, there are restrictions from the government, the law, and food safety as well. Food safety is the biggest part of it."*

P34 said, *"Well the challenges, I won't say it's a challenge, but it's more about educating. I think it's a slow process to educate the people. Like, until today, we still have people throwing away soaps, used soaps, soaps that are 50 grams."*

4.6.3 Employer Branding

In this case, it was clear that the importance of brand image was understood by the majority of the participants and that the implantation of CSR strategies is expected to second nature to employees. This was very clear through the response of **P27,** who said *"I can say that due to the training and the education by our employers and coaches, the level of awareness in the field of CSR has increased a lot and has become a way of life as well as a job practice. In addition, these behaviours and practices are transferred to our homes and families, leading to another CSR initiative that can be credited to the organisation."*

Furthermore, **P25**, **P27** and **P31** has paid attention the corporate brand, which is known globally as the first brand to establish online sustainability and use social media to communicate and spread news about its CSR activities. They also mentioned that when employees have the opportunity to work under this umbrella, although the financial benefits are important, the employees change their behaviour through the right awareness, gained from their employer, which leads them to consider the carbon footprint in their choices.

P25 *"We were the first brand to introduce an online sustainability system ten years ago; so all our hotels are connected to the online sustainability system. So the **Sustainable Aware**[2] is a registered trademark system where it is mandatory to update our data for each property every month on the issues of energy conservation and waste control, known as utility data."*

Case C organisation insists on being the employer of choice, which was apparent from **P27,** when he stated *"We have the Global Umbrella, which is corporate responsibility, and that highlights the entire carbon footprint, electric*

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[2] The name of the initiatives team has been changed for reasons of research ethics

use, water consumption. [Case C] is trying to do its best when it comes to CSR strategies. Although salary can make a big difference when deciding where to work, it is equally important to consider other things that relate to location and the feasibility of getting to work. In addition, I came to consider the role of the hotel in CSR. After becoming fully aware, I looked differently at the location and how I could get there: do you need a car or can you walk? So I have a lower carbon footprint on the consumption of fuel. All of the above reasons were taken into consideration when I selected the hotel to work for."

On using soft advertisement through online and social media, **P31** stressed that this is a more environmentally friendly approach: *"When doing CSR-related activities, the organisation benefits both directly and indirectly. For example, when we donate or provide assistance to someone, we publish this on our social media platform, and at the same time, the party receiving the support does the same on their social media platform."*

Furthermore, the level of implementation of CSR [Case C] are monitored by the headquarters, as stated by **P24**: *"So there are action plans. So each level there is an action plan that each hotel needs to complete and be audited by a third-party auditing body based in the U.S.: they are doing it online and they do not have to come physically. They will audit our action plan on what we have completed and then decide whether it is **Sustainable Aware** or not. The organisation has special criteria which evaluate energy, building envelope, operation process, recycling, and waste control, on which the build their decision.*

Another idea of the brand standard starts at the construction stage, as the building has to have different features that are distinct from the normal standard, including CSR features, as stated by **P27**: *"First, when constructing the building, the material should be local as much as possible and shouldn't come from China, for example, to have a lower carbon footprint. The material that is used should be sourced in this area to reduce global warming. So in [Case C] we put a lot of effort into the design of hotels, and we are actually supporting local construction owners in order to build an efficient hotel. In addition, the*

organisation took into consideration the culture and tradition of the country when choosing the materials for the hotel, along with consideration of things like air conditioning, paint, lighting and furniture. During the construction of the hotel plans, [Case C] would have a designer and the development team to guide the owner in how to construct an efficient hotel from a building point of view."

4.6.3.1 Employees' trust

Furthermore, employees gain trust through their involvement as part of the privilege given by their organisation/employer, which gives everyone within the organisation the opportunity to express their views**. P27** said, *"There is a corporate responsibility team on board, which is a mixture of many people from various departments. So it's not only the executive team that will take decisions, it's the waiter in the restaurant, the engineer in the backyard, the gardener, the housekeeper, who are all dealing on a daily basis with consumption of energy, water and other resources. This is done by meeting at least once a month to brainstorm new ideas. What has occurred? The schedule for what we're trying to do in a certain area hasn't been improved, hasn't been completed, and what is the result of it. It's not based on the director or manager only, but it is the duty of all of the staff to know what is happening in the hotel. In a hotel like this, with about 400 employees in total, the executive team and the directors, and the managers' level, are just a fraction of the mass of people".*

4.6.3.2 Training for the employees

The process of preparing employees to reach the organisational standard is achieved through providing a proper training program that the employees require to convert their weaknesses into strengths. Training is more likely to help local employees, as they have limited experience in the relatively new tourism and hospitality sector. **P23,** who is working as a Human Resource Manager, stated that *"We implement a grading system in this hotel chain, which would be a success in any country in the world. And we implemented it in 2014. When it was first launched we focused on local employees who have a diploma and who have been working with us for three years. Those employees were*

enrolled in a program coming from [Case C] Chain that helped them to work in the different departments in the hotel. They spent three to six months in each department. After two years, the candidate will have the choice themselves where they would prefer to work.”

4.6.3.3 Satisfaction

New approaches should be explored when working in the hospitality industry, as even if the geographical area is different, there are still a lot of similarities in terms of the organisational culture, which makes it very easy for any international employees to adopt. However, this can have a positive impact on employees' knowledge in terms of knowing other cultures, as there are different nationalities working under the same umbrella. In the words of **P29:** *"It is a little bit different, but the advantage of the hotels is actually that it works the same wherever you go. All that is needed to be done is to adapt to the culture of the people you are working with. Most of the time when you are working in hotels, even if...because I was working in Paris, my work was a lot ...not ex-pats, but you work with a lot of different nationalities, which makes you actually more knowledgeable about other cultures and traditions ...this is the richness of the industry as well. So that is applicable even in France.....But then the corporate office is somehow trying to push for those green actions to be taken with everyone, and those are part of our daily routine, so it's not something optional to do.”*

Although the bonus scheme improves employees' satisfaction, the Motivational programs also improve satisfaction and increase productivity. The handling of such programs is also assessed by the organisation to ensure the right results. **P23** explains: *"The HR department do a lot of activities to motivate people and support them in order to achieve their satisfaction. For example, one of the practices we do twice a year is a survey to assess how satisfied they are. Once the results of the survey are out, the hotel will evaluate the level of employees' satisfaction, upon which the HR department will design the most suitable program to increase employees' satisfaction.”*

Putting employees first create a lot of advantages, such as showing appreciation and caring for the employees, which will lead to employees' satisfaction. For example, **P26** noted that **"***We are an organisation that is very people-orientated and one of the things that they want to see before even looking at making revenue. We have something we call [our people]. We have to take care of our people in every way. Like now, we have just started ourselves an internal newsletter that includes social news and events like having a new child or getting married.***"**

4.6.3.4 Performance and Motivation

The friendly working environment within the organisation is one source of employees' motivation and leads to better performance and acceptance of the activities and initiatives. As explained by **P26,** *"some of the CSR activities are motivational in nature, such as a campaign to clean the beach where employees enjoy themselves as if they are going on a picnic or a social gathering, in addition to serving the communities and spreading the word through social media, which helps the image of the organisation."*

Another point was noted about the good leaders, who motivate their employees and help them to do their work without orders from managers, but through understanding the concept of CSR instead. According to **P27**, *"I can see the pride of the team when they can come to a department head and say, "Boss, I have noticed a defect in a certain area or a facility that needs to be addressed and provided a solution to the problem. Such things fill them with great pride, because at the end of the day we are all in one world. We are all responsible for the outcome, not necessarily for our generation, but for our children and grandchildren. So I think that for an employee who is very strong in this identity of saving the world, the environment and protecting what we have will take much more pride in the hotel and its operations on the daily basis. You can see that there are competitions between people or departments about what is the new idea of the month, where they can have an immediate impact which can be a contribution to the greater one."*

Changing attitudes or behaviour is challenging, but sometimes it is done through managers' actions to send a message indirectly to their employees. This was illustrated by **P28** when she stated: *"you can change others' behaviour by adopting the role model example, which means that you do it in order for others to do it."*

4.6.3.5 Loyalty

With regard to whether CSR enhances employees' loyalty to the organisation, the employees' answers were different and they saw the issue of loyalty from different perspectives. **P25** noted that the organisation's recognition enhances loyalty among employees who implemented CSR activities and initiatives. **P25** *"It's not all about the money. It's much more than this. It's like everything. When you believe in something, you do it because you believe it and you are passionate about it. Eventually, it's not about tomorrow you are going to get another job in a hotel, or you are going to get more money, but they don't care about the environment, sustainability. No. As a person, you don't feel any more comfortable. When you have a certificate of CSR implementation, it's something – it's an achievement. It's a way of saying that "Yes, we do care. We care about our client, our guest." So this is very important. We care about our planet, for our client as well. So it's all related."*

The experience and career growth make the employees more loyal towards their employer, as stated by **P32:** *"It's not only CSR, but I mean, if I look at my career, my growth, my development and whatever I did in these nine years, I'm so happy and satisfied. I've gained better experience; money is not everything at the end of the day, but from a personal side, I've improved more."*

On the other hand, **P33** expressed a different point of view regarding how to define loyalty or how to be loyal: *"I wouldn't say it will increase the loyalty to the hotel, but it will increase the loyalty to the knowledge that you may learn from a hotel."*

Fairness of performance evaluation is an indication of how the organisational culture is giving employees their rights and helps them in achieving their needs.

Also, trying to convert their weaknesses into strengths by giving the right training makes them loyal to the organisation. **P23** explains: *"In relating of how to develop the peoples' loyalty, it is important to start with a set of key objectives for them to achieve before being evaluated. The evaluation must be periodic. After evaluation, look at the areas of improvement and where they need further training to enable them to achieve the required set objectives. They have to tell you where they want to see themselves, what support they need from the organisation, and then do the suitable training that will help them grow."*

In parallel to the above**, P27** said, *"Think about it: if you work for a company that doesn't care about the environment, there is a great likelihood that it will not take care of its employees either, and it would be very hard for me to be loyal to such organisation."*

These excerpts illustrate that communication, personal development and employer brand standards help employees to define the loyalty concept and enable employers them to express their point of view very precisely. Continuous communication among the organisation's internal stakeholders is necessary to achieve employees' loyalty. As **P32** said, *"We communicate between ourselves on a daily basis to highlight the advantages and the benefits of CSR-related issues, as a part of our work...if we look at it from the human perspective and from the culture of the company, we realise that we are doing something good. At the end of the day, we feel proud that we are working in an organisation that considers our environment, which in turns increases our loyalty towards the organisation."*

Performance, satisfaction and loyalty are all catalysts to enhance the idea of co-creating value for multiple stakeholders, including employees, the organisation, customers, government, and the environment: therefore, the next section will illustrate the value co-creation aspect focusing mainly on internal stakeholders [employees], with a brief overview of value co-creation for other external stakeholders that occurs when the organisation adopt CSR.

4.6.4 3Ds of Value Co-creation

Following a similar format to the previous two cases presented earlier in this chapter, the division of value co-creation comes under three main categories, namely dualistic, dialogical and dynamic.

4.6.4.1 Dualistic

Understanding value may be complex, and may lead to an adverse outcome rather than favourable results. Assuming that the concept can be assessed by the stakeholders who experience the service or the products provided by the organisation, value co-creation reflects positive outcomes, whereas value co-destruction reflects adverse outcomes.

4.6.4.1.1 Value Co-creation Outcomes

Despite the financial benefits that the organisation gains through the implementation of CSR, the primary focus of these case findings is on the other benefits that help to spread the benefits among stakeholders.

Although the beginning of **P2**7's statement primarily reflects financial gains, understanding the value associated with the statement demonstrates the participants maturity concerning going green by understanding how and why to follow the CSR strategies. Therefore, going green creates value for the business, as customers sometimes consider such activities when making bookings and the data shows that around 60% of bookings are based on green activities.

P27 said, *"We believe in one thing: if we want to change our hospitality industry and maintain our position as one of the largest operators in the world, we have to measure the impact of the consumption of resources on the organisation's performance. I would say that probably 60% of our bookings are based on our green score.*

Some employees from the middle-management level are also spreading awareness among young people. **P24** explains: *"I even go to schools sometimes to give lectures to students on all environmental issues related to CSR, such as how water is important to life, how it is produced and how to protect such a*

vital resource. Also, we have a quarterly E-newsletter. Another thing is that when you go to our guest rooms, there is some information that enlightens the guest on the importance of CSR."

Diversification in knowledge and experience among employees is considered as an outcome and opportunity for employees when they seek to leave Oman to work in another country, so that they gain experience from a global perspective. **P23** asserted: *"We're giving experience opportunities through job and position rotation. Through rotation, employees gain diversified experience to help them to grow and improve."*

In parallel to the above participant, **P27** mentioned that *"being in a CSR-aware environment has reflected on my personal behaviour and made me more sensitive to activities that could harm or lead to misuse of resources."*

From the above, value co-creation can be seen through changes in behaviour, attitudes, discipline and creating awareness that works not only within the organisation, but also outside it to benefit other stakeholders.

4.6.4.1.2 Value Co-destruction Outcomes

The negative impact happens when there is a misunderstanding about the CSR concept and why the organisation is following it. Unfortunately, it may be true in some organisations that CSR is only a marketing tool for a brand. However, this may not reflect Case C, as the researcher has observed and compared the implementations of CSR activities and initiatives. Genuine CSR was clear through the hospitality experiences during a one-week stay of one week at the Case C hotel.

Although the image of working in the hotel industry is still not very welcomed by Omanis due to certain religious and cultural reservations, this does not affect the hotels' contribution to society. **P23** said, *"Working in a hotel is not acceptable in our religion because of some hotels' activities, resulting in an outside misunderstanding of the good we do for society. For that reason, Omanis tend to detest working in hotels, especially given that 70% of jobs in*

hotels are considered to be low-level positions."

P30 had a different viewpoint regarding CSR that might affect the organisation's CSR vision: *"Well, first of all, I think everyone believes that all this corporate responsibility is nothing more than a big marketing effort."*

In parallel to the above, the implementation of going green is a challenge, as it requires a lot of energy to create awareness as well as education for both internal and external stakeholders. In addition, marketing research requires a lot of investigation on the culture of the country in which the organisation wants to operate. **P23** explained through an example: *"Using a greeting phrase like 'Marhaba" instead of saying 'Salaam Alaikum' is likely to be perceived as an insult to Omanis, as it is a casual phrase, only used between friends. This might be acceptable in Dubai, but not in Oman."* This clearly shows that proper communication with the society needs local experience so that the value of the brand will not be destroyed.

In order to overcome such challenges in understanding the vision of the organisation, the hotel needs to clarify its purpose more thoroughly, as the message may not be delivered appropriately due to the limited knowledge of the external stakeholders.

4.6.4.2 Dialogical

Value co-creation can be described as an outcome for all stakeholders: employees, the organisation and customers. The next sub-section illustrates value co-creation for employees separately, followed by the organisation and external stakeholders.

4.6.4.2.1 Employees

Demonstrations of managers' appreciation to the employees may take many types and forms that lead to value co-creation. For example, **P23** mentioned some direct and indirect dialogical activities that show gratitude to employees**.** *"Yearly, at the end of May, we give employees a thank-you card for their effort*

and present them with gifts. In addition, I as a manager cook and serve them. Another gesture is that we allocate transport to and from work to motivate them. There are requirements and standards that need to be implemented to make sure human rights are respected. When employees have the right to complain about anything, it shows that we care about protecting them. There is a standard, and the auditor evaluates that standard".

Communication skills will improve through the work as the employees deal with the customers, as this helps them to improve and convince others about the importance of the use of resources. **P23** said, *"First of all, you gain a lot of life skills when you know how to deal with the customer and how to be diplomatic. That definitely transfers to your normal life with your friends and family and your domestic workers."*

Furthermore, understanding the employees' needs and requirements will enhance their performance. **P23** presented an example: *"As some employees have duties at the weekend, we will allow them to bring their family and enjoy the hotel's facilities."* Health is another concern about which the organisation educates its employees. **P23** continued: *"Annually, we do a sports activity that lasts for one week, during which we provide a lot of sport activities, such as walking, football and exercises."*

When employees feel safe and trust their employer, this definitely co-creates value for the employees first and for the employer too. This also occurs when employers care about their employees and consider and support their needs: **P32** stated *"I know and I trust that if anything happens, God forbid, in my area or to me, my employer will look after me as if I was family. If you have this culture, you will be confident. If you have such mentality and approach, employees will do whatever it takes to support the organisation."*

4.6.4.2.2 Organisation and Customers

Value can be either tangible or intangible**;** it is tangible when the organisation gets something back, like financial benefits. **P24** argued that *"Financial value is there, definitely, and the bottom line, everyone will look at the financial value,*

but I can say that the awareness we are creating in this property with around 400 staff is massive. The great thing about this is that you know that you are not only spreading knowledge to your employees, but also to external customers like their families and friends."

Supporting local products adds value for external stakeholders and also brings great savings for the organisation in terms of logistics. In addition, as stated by P28, local products are more environmentally friendly, such as incense and sweets. **P28** said, *"Honestly, I think local products are more natural than imported products. For example, incense, dates and local sweets are natural health items. In addition, whenever we use them, we are in fact enhancing the local cultural experience along with luxury."*

The tangible benefits of the initiatives are more likely to be for external stakeholders. **P25** presented an example: *"Collecting 10,000 bottle caps will help in providing a wheelchair."*

Considering the local law of any country is another CSR implementation, even if the organisation is an international one with more than 50 branches worldwide. This was stated by **P26,** who works as an HR manager: *"We work with two types of laws – one is the Oman Labour Law and the second is the brand's standard, which we implement in our day-to-day activity in many areas. For example, we can focus on the terms of recruitment: we have such procedures and policies in terms of how to select the right candidate. So we implement this in terms of performance management, in terms of calibration. Thus, we provide a lot of tools related to the brand standard. Well, as Case C globally, they quite understand, and it is entirely different from the local law when we have to reach a target of Omanisation which may not match the brand standard. As a principle, in order to meet the local standards and requirements, we train them after employment."*

Although the Omani government does not yet have strict rules and regulations regarding the usage of water within hotels, the organisation has taken action in recycling water. This benefits not only the organisation itself, but also other

external stakeholders. **P24** explains: *"We have a 40-acre garden here, so it's around 120 cubic metres of water. There are no regulations from the government yet in this part of the world to strictly say you have to use the recycled water. This is based on our own decision. Yeah. I could use drinking water, or I could use re-issued water."*

4.6.4.3 Dynamic

In this case, participants' answers indicated the dynamic nature of value. For example, **P25** said, *"You have to be part of what you achieve."* This indicates that employees feel they are part of the organisation's achievements, as they are there in the process of reaching its goals and objectives. Another aspect of CSR arises when choosing suppliers to provide raw materials, as some regulations within Omani law may not allow certain types of food. For example, **P25** said, *"Actually, it's a long process because you have to know the supplier as well as the chain to be able to receive the product and how to use it. When it comes to food and beverage laws and regulations, for example, there are some flowers that you can bring into Oman, but not Kuwait, for example."* Therefore, respecting and considering the law benefits the organisation in terms of long-lasting presence within the marketplace.

Moreover, **P25,** who is a restaurant manager, went on to illustrate that food ingredients may be affected when the organisation follows the CSR strategy: *"For example, due to local regulations, some cooking ingredients may not be used for safety or religious reasons"*. Nowadays, many people suffer from food allergies, and some kinds of food cannot be used for everyone for religious and cultural reasons.

Taking care of the natural beauty of the area is not one person's responsibility, and with regard to the cultural transfer gained from implementing CSR activities, and initiatives **P26** said, *"What drove me to start the CSR activities is that when I go camping, and I see…I sit there, and I watch people having a barbecue, and then they leave the place in a mess. I take pictures; I send it to the newspaper. And then I say to my group, my friends, 'Let's go and clean up'."*

Helping and contributing to society by creating awareness is one of the actions that hotels undertake with their guests, as explained by **P34:** *"Of course when it comes to using chemicals, that's the most critical part of our job. We use a lot of chemicals, washing detergents and water. So we can help when it comes to CSR initiatives through educating our guests. For example, instead of washing the linen every day, we can tell the guest that they can reuse them. It's not that we want to save water, but to save water as valuable resource."*

Another point was that employees welcome the idea of CSR, as it reflects their religion. **P32 stated** *"I mean, helping others is fantastic, as this is something in my religion and I am used to it. I like to help and support because we are doing it for a good cause. "*

Another aspect of the dynamic nature of value co-creation is that when employees gain support from their employer, the results benefit all concerned stakeholders (employees, the employer and the society). **P32** explained: *"The real reason would be how we care about our employees; how we develop them and what value we can give them. For example, I'm doing an online course through Cornell University for which my company is helping me with 50% of the cost."* Sometimes value co-creation can be explored by noting the changing behaviour of internal stakeholders as formed by the organisation, as emphasised by **P32:** *"It's becoming a habit. So, indirectly, without noticing or thinking about it, you are somehow applying it because it is a regular exercise."*

The experience that the employees gain from their previous organisations also co-creates value for the organisation. For example, **P35** said*, "I was studying in Switzerland during the early 1980s, where CSR was adopted much earlier than in our country."* Knowing the outcomes from such CSR adoption is priceless, proving the dynamic nature of value co-creation. **P35** added*, "The value gained is priceless. It becomes priceless if you know these things can help. Last year, we had a lot of blankets in the hotel that we didn't want to use anymore for hygiene reasons, so we sold them to our staff at the lowest price."*

Coping with the latest knowledge leads to value creation for employees and

greater appreciation of the workplace. **P28's** opinion on value was co-created within this organisation was as follows: *"First, I would say that actually my work environment is giving me this safety and at least when you know that they are trying to keep up with the latest trends in terms of green technologies, for me, it's essential, because it tells me that actually, they are up to date and they are trying to enhance the service, not only for the guests but also for us as employees."*

4.6.5 Case Summary

Organisation C has the clearest picture of all cases on the impact of CSR strategies and the corporate branding relationship with internal stakeholders (employees), which in turn affects value co-creation. Organisation C has a holistic vision toward implementing CSR both locally and globally, as well as tangibly and intangibly. It has focused on spreading awareness and knowledge through training and educating employees to achieve the three most important behaviours: performance, loyalty, and satisfaction.

The cycle of value co-creation was very clear and present through the 3Ds concept, which integrate CSR, employer branding, internal stakeholder interaction and value creation. The dynamic nature was visible through the precise implementation of CSR strategies and organisation C achieved admirable corporate branding, resulting in the abovementioned employee behaviours, which in turn co-created value. The dialogical aspect was also clear through the interaction between employers and their employees. Finally, with such a successful relationship, value co-creation will be a default product.

4.7 Case Comparison: Summary

From the three above cases, the researcher concluded that there are similarities and differences between hotels' approach in relation to CSR activities, resources management, and the value co-creation process (Table 4.8). In the input phase, certain similarities can be summarised with regard to how hotels deal with the importance of CSR activities and their impact on corporate branding. Although all hotels agree that CSR activities are important, each hotel views the nature

and scope of CSR activities differently: some focus on the internal environment and the local community, whereas others are more globally oriented. Similarly, there are differences in terms of managing resources, as some hotels tends to focus on saving tangible resources, whereas others tend to be concerned with intangible resources.

Table 4. 3: Case Summary and Comparison

	Category / Case study		Case 'A'	Case 'B'	Case 'C'
Input	CSR Activities	Nature	Adopting latest technology to save energy and resources.	Mix of adoption of latest technologies and increased knowledge and awareness.	The organisation's view of CSR activities is more focused on the ethical and humanitarian aspects of CSR
		Scope	Within the organisation and the local community.	Internally and locally oriented.	Engaged internally, locally and globally
	Resources Management	Tangible	More oriented towards saving tangible resources.	Affords equal importance and awareness towards tangible and intangible resources management.	Less concerned with managing tangible resources.
		Intangible	Less concerned with managing intangible resources.		More oriented towards saving intangible resources.
Process	Employees' Behaviours	Performance	Awareness & training/ motivational programs	Motivational programs and increased awareness increases performance.	Focuses more on motivational programs to employees' performance.
		Loyalty	Provide privileges as well as a sense of responsibility	Sense of pride and belonging is the main reason for loyalty.	Fairness of evaluation and effective communication.
		Satisfaction	Through educating and training the employees/ involvement in activities.	The financial benefits are an important way to achieve employees' satisfaction.	Showing appreciation to employees and knowledge development.
Output	Value Co-creation	Dynamic	Interaction between employees and employers as well as customers.	Organisation's CSR activities reflected positively on employees' role in VCC.	Focus more on the relationship between the organisation as a whole and the community.
		Dialogical	Interaction between employees and employers.	Tripartite interaction between employees, employers and customers.	Emphasis on the relationship between employer and employees.
		Dualistic	Value co-creation is directly related to increased knowledge and awareness among employees as well as safety within the work environment.	The dualistic nature depends on the dynamic and dialogical nature of the process.	The dualistic nature is a direct result of employees' performance, loyalty and satisfaction.

In the process phase, all hotels focus on training and development programs for their employees in parallel with motivational programs to improve employees' behaviours. Employees' performance, satisfaction, and loyalty were dealt with through various actions like financial incentives, appreciation, involvement, and evaluation fairness. Although the degree and nature to which the above employees' behaviours were achieved differed from one case to another, all cases sought to enhance employees' performance, loyalty, and satisfaction in order to achieve value co-creation.

Finally, the output phase revealed some differences in how these hotels viewed the value co-creation process. Some focused more on the relationship between the organisation and the local community, whereas others emphasised the relationship between employer and employees. All hotels agreed that value co-creation is directly related to employees' increased knowledge and awareness as well as the safety of the work environment.

4.8 Chapter Summary

In this chapter, the findings of the three cases were discussed based on the main topics of the research. Findings from each case were divided into sub-sections by topic. The first topic was how each case views and deals with CSR activities and how resources are managed. Then the researcher focused on how each case tries to improve its employees' behaviours (performance, loyalty, and satisfaction) in order to enhance employer branding.

The last section of this chapter focused on the value co-creation process and discussed the 3D elements of this process (Dynamic, Dialogical, and Dualistic) and how each case views the nature of the value co-creation process in order to achieve corporate branding. Finally, a summary and comparison table of all cases was developed to show similarities and differences between cases. The next chapter will discuss the findings in order to develop the final and revised framework of this thesis.

CHAPTER FIVE-DISCUSSION

5.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, the findings and differences between the three cases were highlighted. This chapter presents a thorough discussion of the findings and concludes by developing a solid understanding of the impact of CSR on employer branding and on the value co-creation process. The cross-case analysis helps to provide a thorough understanding and explanations, derived by comparing the findings from the three cases, leading to a sophisticated description (Miles and Huberman, 1994). This chapter reveals both theoretical and practical contributions of this thesis, generated through rigorous and robust methods, as described in Chapters Two and Three.

The discussion chapter is divided into four major sections, starting with the CSR strategies and their impact on internal stakeholders. The second section discusses how the interaction between internal stakeholders is represented by employees' behaviours (performance, satisfaction and loyalty), which reflect on employer branding. The third section addresses the effects of the 3D's (Dualistic, Dialogue and Dynamic) of the value co-creation process, which makes a significant contribution to the relevant scholarship. The fourth section of this chapter presents the revised framework and theoretical contribution of this research, followed by a chapter summary.

5.2 Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)

Lim and Greenwood (2017) conducted a quantitative empirical study to compare two CSR communication strategies (engagement vs. responsiveness) by utilising communication channels to achieve CSR goals. The responsiveness strategy (Carroll, 1999; Wood, 1991) is where organisations regard the communications of CSR activities as either proactive or reactive responses to current pressure and potential threats. On the other hand, another group of scholars (Devin & Lane, 2014; Girard & Sobczak, 2012; O'Riordan & Fairbrass, 2014) have developed a new CSR communication strategy known as engagement strategy. This strategy is based on the organisation, the

stakeholders' relationships (Meintjes & Grobler, 2014), two-way symmetrical communication (Grunig *et al*., 2002), and the dialogue theory of public relations (Taylor & Kent, 2014). This strategy has integrated three stakeholders: the community, business and employees. The significant difference between the two strategies is that the engagement strategy adds a new factor, namely the employees, making it more holistic and comprehensive.

A recent study by Lim and Greenwood (2017) concluded that the stakeholder engagement strategy carries some implications and accountability for the relationships between the three parties. In their study, the focus of CSR communication was shifted from business-community to business-community-employees, which reflected on the planning and implementation of CSR initiatives.

Furthermore, the engagement strategy leads organisations in a more interactive, transparent and collaborative direction (Wen & Song, 2017). Implementing the engagement communication strategy has been found to increase employees' productivity. In parallel, the literature agrees with the abovementioned study in considering employees and the community as the primary and most valuable stakeholders of CSR communications (de Bussy & Suprawan, 2012; Dhanesh, 2015; Pastrana & Sriramesh, 2014).

Based on the above studies, the researcher selected internal stakeholders (employees) as the key protagonists in defining the relationship between the employer and value co-creation. In addition, the researcher tried to understand the impact of the CSR engagement communication strategy on employees' behaviour towards achieving employer branding.

5.2.1 Actions of CSR strategies

Through the findings, the researcher came to the understanding that CSR is naturally embedded in the vision and mission of the three hotels. On the other hand, it is the CSR communication strategy adopted by the organisation that makes the difference. For example, Case A and B Hotels tend to follow the responsiveness strategy, whereas Case C has adopted the engagement strategy.

The majority of participants in the first two cases agreed that sustainability is everyone's responsibility and everyone has a role depending on his/her field. In addition, they saw no risk associated with CSR implementation. Instead, there are challenges when trying to implement CSR activities.

In contrast, Case C has a different approach, implementing CSR activities based on the engagement strategy, which depends on the interaction between the employer and employees. For example, Case C conducts induction courses about the importance of CSR and utilises technology to spread the culture on CSR actions among its employees.

Although all hotels implement different CSR strategies, the researcher believes that the engagement strategy is the most effective, as it increases understanding and awareness among employees, which in turn positively changes their behaviour. This comes as an enhancement to Wen and Song's (2017) study of CSR engagement strategy.

5.2.2 Impact of CSR strategies on internal stakeholders

CSR strategies and actions have a significant impact on stakeholders in general, but internal stakeholders are the ones who benefit most. From the interviews conducted, it was found that the organisations encourage their employees to be involved in CSR activities on a voluntary basis and as part of their work duties. Norton's (2015) conceptual paper suggests that it is essential to examine the factors that help to enhance employees' green behaviour, which is defined as *"scalable actions and behaviours that employees engage in that are linked with and contribute to or detract from environmental sustainability"* (Ones & Dilchert, 2012a, p. 87). Sadovnikova and Pujari (2017) discuss the impact of the green action of the organisation and Line and Hanks (2016) have assessed this in the hospitality sector. In parallel, Luu (2017) found that the effect of CSR on employees' behaviour has a positive impact. This was also clear from the data collected and discussed in the previous chapter, as a large number of the participants mentioned that their behaviour has changed even outside the organisation, such as at home and while shopping, which all comes under the

concept of reducing one's personal impact on the environment (Panjaitan and Sutapa, 2010).

From the empirical findings, the researcher concluded that Case A and B hotels' understanding of the benefits of CSR is limited to conserving resources, which in turns helps the organisations financially. For example, they see that the implementation of CSR activities has a positive financial effect on the organisation through the reduction of resources used within the hotel. In addition, they consider CSR activities as a factor to reduce their employees' workload.

In contrast, Case C considers the impact of CSR more in terms of the change of employees' attitude towards using resources, not only at work but also in their daily lives. In addition, employees see that the impact of implementing CSR strategies will reflect positively on employer branding in the long run. Through empirical findings, the researcher came to the conclusion that the implementation of CSR strategies has positive effects on the internal stakeholders' behaviour as well as the benefits achieved by the organisation.

From the results of this research the advantages presented in the findings chapter in CSR sections for the three cases can be divided into two major categories. The first category is more to do with saving tangible organisational resources. The second is intangible in nature, through educating the internal stakeholders about the importance of CSR and its impact on the environment, society and businesses. The importance of the CSR implementation for all kinds of organisations has been widely discussed by previous studies (Popa and Salanta, 2015)

From the findings, the researcher identified that the impact of CSR strategies and activities could be positive in some countries and negative in others. For example, through analysis, the researcher's view contrasted with other studies highlighting job localisation as a negative impact on local workers. Roberts and Tribe (2008) considered that low payment to locals in the hotel industry has negative impacts on local society. However, the researcher concluded that Omanisation has a positive impact on society because it creates numerous job

opportunities and balances the pillars of CSR strategy. Furthermore, the government controls and assigns a minimum wage for workers in the private sector.

Although CSR strategies present numerous advantages, the empirical findings reflected the findings of Elving (2015), who highlighted some challenges associated with the implementation of CSR strategies for both employers and employees. This also was clear in Case A, in which it was claimed that the hotel tries to create awareness through messages to customers; however, it cannot enforce any action unless customers embrace this green awareness.

Another challenge is present when there is a contradiction between the organisation internal regulation and the regulations of the country in which it operates. In addition, challenges could be due to the high cost of choosing to adopt CSR strategies that might not be accepted by shareholders. Case C presented another dimension of challenges that come from limitations in the external stakeholders' understanding of the importance of the hotel industry to the country's economic growth. For example, the local community does not consider working in a hotel as a respectable job due to Oman's religious and traditional conventions.

Finally, the researcher concluded that in order to implement and achieve CSR-related goals, it is imperative to consider three main factors. The first factor is the diversified experiences of employers in CSR; this leads to the second factor, which involves making them capable of creating awareness among their employees. The third factor is external stakeholders' acceptance of the concept of CSR culture. All of the above form a foundation on which the employer can achieve employer branding. This will be addressed in detail in the following section.

5.3 Employer Branding

Nowadays, businesses and consumers both demand greater social responsibility from companies and brands (Nielson, 2013), as this reflects the value and ethics of the companies (Pomering and Dolnicar, 2009). As a result, corporates have paid greater attention to CSR to influence consumers' response to the firms (Kang and Atkinson, 2016).

The above was clear through the empirical findings in all three cases. For instance, the Case A organisation believes that the implementation of CSR enhances corporate branding through improving their employees' knowledge and education, and encouraging them to engage in CSR activities with their local community, whereas Case B stresses that their brand image and standards oblige them to implement and engage in CSR activities. Case C has expanded their implementation to CSR activities globally, as their brand is well known all over the world. This makes it important to engage not only with the local community but also worldwide in order to achieve and maintain their brand image.

Odriozola and Baraibar-Diez (2017) conducted empirical research in companies based in Spain over a period of five years to test the effect of the CSR strategy of disclosure of information on the organisation's reputation. For this purpose, the authors selected two variables: First, the corporate reputation based on the MERCO hotel ranking, and second, the quality of information, which was also based on the following five indicators: environmental policy and disclosure, description of environmental initiatives, presentation of environmental improvement, setting environmental objectives, and inclusion of environmental assessment. The authors claimed that the corporate reputation is directly proportional to the quality of information disclosed. However, both variables used in their research are relative to ranking and can be easily manipulated by changing the assessment and quality criteria.

In addition to the above, the current study found that although the three organisations are striving to achieve awards that relate to CSR, they are embracing these activities for two main reasons: to achieve financial benefits

and to maintain their brand image. Unlike other nations, where markets are open and competition is furious, the limited competition in Oman does not put a lot of pressure on organisations to excel in order to survive. A clear example was Case C, in which the global popularity of the brand helped it to enter the market with ease and it did not need to excessively invest in image branding.

This research is more focused on the internal organisational activities that help in creating awareness to achieve CSR strategy and enhance the primary role of employees' behaviour towards their employer's branding. The main argument of this thesis is that when organisations behave in a CSR manner towards the external community, they partially enhance the internal CSR behaviours of their employees (such as increase satisfaction, performance and loyalty). This results in the co-creation of value for internal employees, which subsequently enhances the employer branding of that organisation.

Pervious empirical studies addressed the influence of the employer brand on employees' attitude related to service branding. Schlager *et al*. (2011) argued that a service brand is created through a triangular relationship between organisation, employee and customer. The authors noted that employer branding is important to create the brand image. In addition, employer branding changes employees' attitudes and behaviour, which reflect positively on external stakeholders. This change could come in the form of employees' satisfaction.

In their empirical study, Westerman and Yamamura (2007) claimed that there is a clear relationship between employees' awareness of the organisation's goals and the outcome (performance) of employees. In addition, Sokro (2012) emphasised the impact of employer branding on employees' loyalty. The following section will address the main factor influencing employees' behaviours (performance, satisfaction and loyalty).

5.3.1 Employees' Performance

A large number of academic studies have focused on the relationships between CSR strategies and organisational performance (see, for example, Orlitzky *et al*., 2003; Campbell, 2007; Mackey *et al*., 2007). However, this research focuses

on the internal stakeholders (employees) and the impact of CSR on their performance. Although studies have been conducted in this field from the perspectives of organisational behaviour and human resources, the marketing literature has focused more on the brand image. The novelty of this research comes from the fact that it addresses the subject from a marketing perspective that involves the impact of CSR on the performance of internal stakeholders.

Employees' performance was noted by many scholars to be directly related to employer branding and in turn to overall corporate branding (Drumwright, 1994; Brown and Dacin, 1997; Menon and Menon, 1997; Epstein and Roy, 2001; Foster, Punjaisri and Cheng, 2010). The empirical findings of this research support the above-mentioned theoretical literature: Case A participants emphasised the importance of knowledge generation and increased awareness, which positively affects employees' performance. This is done through evaluation of employees' knowledge to determine their strengths and weaknesses before designing the required training programs.

Another approach that Case B follows to improve employees' performance is increasing knowledge and spreading awareness through making their employees work in different departments in order to understand each other's work and responsibilities. In addition, Case B participants believe that employees' performance increases as motivation increases, which again can be related to the above-noted literature. Case C participants stressed the influence of motivation on performance and added two valuable factors that increase employees' performance. The first factor is the healthy work environment, which leads to better employees' performance. The second factor is the influence of good leadership style and its effect on better performance through education, raising awareness and accepting ideas to improve the work environment.

Other scholars highlighted more points that affect employees' performance and its impact on corporate branding. Manhas and Tukamushaba (2015) noted that brand image is associated with employees' performance, whereas Zhu *et al*. (2013) argued that it is important for the corporate recruitment policy to

consider employees who are willing to work with a positive attitude. Case A is a clear example of this, as the researcher noticed that managers were well rounded and had international experience in CSR strategies and their implementation; this was also reflected in their employees.

5.3.2 Employee Satisfaction

In the field of marketing, and according to Bowers *et al*. (1990), internal stakeholders (employees) are considered as customers. Therefore, based on a study conducted by Xu and Gursoy (2015), CSR activities in the hotel industry include all activities which lead to customer satisfaction and loyalty. Empirically, the researcher found that participants in the Case A hotel believe that the work environment has a great influence on their satisfaction. Another factor that increases employee satisfaction is the employer's appreciation of their opinions and ideas to develop the organisation.

A theoretical study by So *et al*. (2013) suggested that an organisation's implementation of CSR strategies can lead to internal stakeholders' trust, which will reflect on their satisfaction level. Case B participants gave a solid example of how their satisfaction was formed by activities carried out by their organisation toward society. In addition to financial benefits, Case C participants believed that their feeling of satisfaction came from motivation programs and activities organised by their employers and from the feeling of being cared for through different privileges and incentives.

The relationship between satisfaction and performance has been confirmed by Han *et al*. (2011), who argued that customer satisfaction and trust significantly affect customer loyalty. The findings of this research demonstrate that the opposite is true as well. Employees' performance and satisfaction go hand in hand. An efficient employee is most likely to be satisfied. Case A findings presented some indicators and reasons for employee satisfaction, such as employee retention for long periods of time, a healthy and cooperative working environment, employers' appreciation for their employees, and open opportunities provided by the organisation for employees to learn and develop.

Case B highlighted other factors that lead to employees' satisfaction, including the financial benefits achieved by employees, the importance of understanding the causes and benefits of the implementation of CSR strategies, generation of awareness and knowledge, and feeling a sense of pride in working for a CSR-aware organisation. Employees' satisfaction was expressed by participants of the Case C hotel from a different perspective. Participants emphasised the importance of knowledge and field experience as factors that contribute to satisfaction. Another important factor that leads to employee satisfaction is the motivational program conducted by the organisation to motivate its employees, which in turn affects their satisfaction. In addition, organisation 'C' is keen to make employees feel that their rights come before their duties, which really boosts their satisfaction. As stated by Edinger-Schons *et al.* (2018), employees are the brand ambassadors and organisations consider them as critical messengers for what they stand for. As a result, adopting and ensuring the implementation of CSR is a method for ensuring success.

5.3.3 Employee Loyalty

Society, culture and loyalty have been mentioned in a number of extant studies (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). According to Chauvin and Guthrie (1994), low employee turnover and high rate of retention are solid indicators of employees' loyalty to the organisation. Consequently, loyal employees often influence customers and improve corporate branding (Levering *et al*., 1984; Sullivan *et al*., 2002). Case A presented a model that promotes and motivates loyalty among employees through employer behaviour; this makes employees satisfied and loyal by treating them as shareholders, such that their suggestions are heard and they have more freedom of action. In addition, Case A management provides some privileges to employees, such as free bookings for their families when traveling abroad, in order to increase their sense of loyalty.

Just like employee performance and satisfaction, loyalty is established through awareness and education, as these characteristics go together and complement one another. Case C participants stated that the organisation's reputation increased the sense of loyalty among its employees. They also noted that length

of employment solidifies loyalty to an organisation. Therefore, in order to stay employed for a long time, it is important to be satisfied and perform efficiently.

However, Khalique *et al*. (2015) noted that loyalty also depends on leadership style. They stressed that understanding the internal influence of leaders on their employees will definitely affect employee loyalty towards the organisation. In this regard, managers in Case C noted that evaluation of employee performance fairly and rightfully will increase employees' trust and loyalty to the organisation. Another employer behaviour that will create loyalty among employees is to understand their strengths and weaknesses and try to deal with them accordingly. A further leadership quality that increases employee loyalty is the ability to communicate and motivate employees as well as to continue monitoring and guiding them.

In sum, it is important to point out that three above-mentioned behaviours are concurrent and important to each other. A loyal, satisfied employee will perform efficiently, and conversely, an efficient employee is probably a satisfied and loyal employee. Performance, satisfaction and loyalty are the secret ingredients of the value co-creation process. Next, the researcher will present some other considerations that influence employer branding.

5.3.4 Other factors affecting employer branding

The three above-mentioned behaviours (performance, satisfaction, and loyalty) might be the main aspects affecting employer branding in addition to other considerations found throughout the empirical studies. Among these considerations are government rules and regulations, motivated employers, and local culture.

5.3.4.1 Government rules and regulations

Although the private sector in Oman has freedom of action, the government still imposes some rules and regulations that protect its citizens' rights and opportunities to secure jobs while presenting organisations with committed employees. As far as this research is concerned, the government rules and regulations were initially classified as barriers, but it later emerged that they are

also a way of implementing CSR (e.g. Omanisation, banning fishing in some seasons).

Omanisation law was issued in 1988, stating that a minimum of 30% of hotel and restaurant employees must be Omanis by law. Due to the fact that the hospitality market was small and not accepted socially, the government was not strict on implementing this law at the beginning. With the increase in the population and growth of the market, the rates of Omanis in the hospitality sector increased significantly. One Case C participant noted that the organisation is obliged to follow both internal and local laws. For example, employment of Omanis is mandatory by law, although the organisation tries to employ the most qualified in the field. This was seen as a challenge at first, but the organisation then realised that it is actually an opportunity to contribute to local society.

Another example of how rules and regulations affect the general strategy of the organisation is present in the local law that bans fishing in certain seasons. Oman law *"RD 53-81 issuing the Law on Sea Fishing and Protection of the Marine Biological Wealth"* regulates fishing and protection of marine life, and controls fishing of certain species at certain times of the year, which affects the operation of hotels' restaurants. This, again, might be considered as a challenge. However, looking at that law from an environmental perspective, it is considered an opportunity to contribute to the local environment (Sustainable Oman, 2018).

5.3.4.2 Employers and CSR implementation

There are two main reasons why employers implement CSR strategies. The first is that it will achieve financial benefits for the long run through minimising usage of resources and cutting the costs of utilities. The second reason is the growing effect of such strategies on employer branding, which enhances the brand image (Glavas, 2016).

Research conducted by the American Hotels and Lodging Association (2012) confirmed that *"More than 75% of U.S. hotels currently employ linen and towel*

reuse practices, 59% recycle, and 46% engage in water-saving actions". Empirical findings of this research confirmed the abovementioned claims. In all cases, organisations were keen to implement CSR strategies in order to limit the use of resources such as linen, washing detergent, towels, and water used for gardening. On the other hand, the use of technology, especially in electric and plumbing equipment, increased the lifespan of the resources as well as cutting the costs of utility bills.

In addition, adopting CSR strategies helps to enhance the employer and brand image within society and helps to achieve competitive advantages. Scholars such as Foreman and Argenti (2005), Hirsch and Shaukat (2008) and Khojastehpour and Johns (2014) suggested that the use of CSR positively increases a brand's reputation both locally and globally. Empirical data from the current research confirmed the above statement. For example, a participant from Case B noted that responsible involvement in CSR activities such as charity work, awareness programs and cleaning campaigns with local society helped to increase the organisation's reputation among the local community as well as the government's reputation for operating well within Oman.

5.3.4.2 Local culture

Due to the fact that each society has different and unique features, the researcher's findings revealed certain effects of local culture on employer branding. For example, faith and religion in Oman has a significant impact on organisations' operations. Participants from all cases agreed that the month of Ramadan is a special month for organisations, employees, and customers. Organisations change the working hours of their Muslim employees during Ramadan in adherence to government rules and regulation. In addition, hotels' restaurants close down during the daytime out of respect for the fasting majority.

Another effect of culture on organisations, which is considered negative in a way, is how society views Omanis working in the hospitality sector, as people are still reluctant to understand the importance of this sector to the country's economy and development. Therefore, it is the organisation's role to change this stereotyped image through awareness programs, jobs with attractive income and

visible CSR activities that go beyond saving resources to reach the community's activities of daily life. For example, all hotels participating in this research are involved in charitable activities to enhance their reputation and brand image.

Although the three main factors of employee behaviour are important for employer branding, the influence of local culture seems to be equally important, especially in growing markets such as Oman, where culture and traditions have a great influence on customer behaviour. For this, the effect of culture and tradition can be further investigated theoretically and empirically in the Omani context.

5.4 Nature and outcome of value co-creation process (3D's)

Based on the literature review and the empirical findings, the researcher believes that the relationship between CSR strategies and employer branding results in value co-creation. The nature of this outcome will be discussed comprehensively in the following sections.

The research abstract model in Figure 5.1 presents a dynamic and dialogic process of value co-creation resulting in a dualistic output of value co-creation or value co-destruction that influence employer branding. All phases of the process have two important traits. First, it is dynamic, which means that it is a continuous and iterative process that moves in a spiralling manner from one stage to the next. Second, it is dialogical, which allows all components of the process to communicate and interact to achieve the goal of the process. The third trait of the process is solely related to the output phase, which is dualistic, as it could have a positive (value co-creation) or a negative (value co-destruction) output. Depending on the type of output, the employer branding decision makers will either continue to implement successful CSR strategies if the output is value co-creation or refine the input or the process if the output is value co-destruction. Figure 5.1 illustrate the nature of the 3Ds of the value co-creation process in this research.
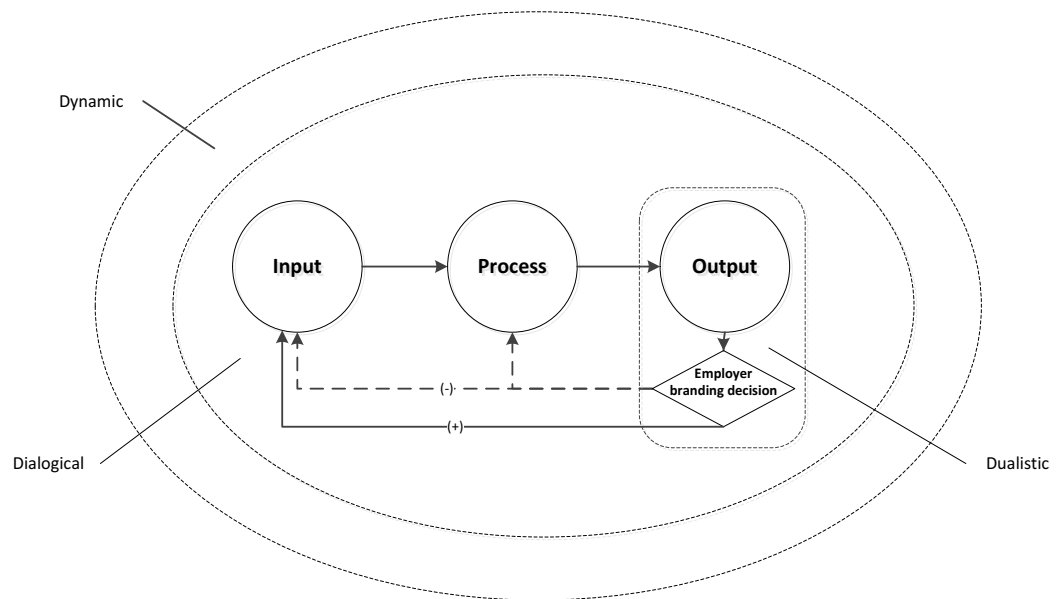
Figure 5. 1: Abstract 3D's model of value co-creation process

5.4.1 Dualistic

The Merriam Webster dictionary defines the term dualism as *"a doctrine that the universe is under the dominion of two opposing principles, one of which is good and the other evil."*[3] In the Oxford dictionary, dualism is defined as *"The division of something conceptually into two opposed or contrasted aspects, or the state of being so divided."*[4] Both definitions serve the purpose of this research, as both illustrate the outcome of the result. Dualism manifests best during the output phase, when the creation of value could be either positive, known as value co-creation, or negative, known as value co-destruction.

The relationships between employer branding and CSR implementation form a process that results in an elusive outcome (Woodall, 2003). Hence, value creation in the hospitality sector is a combination of product and services, and the outcome of this process could be either value co-creation or value co-destruction. Figure 5.2 illustrates this idea.

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[3] https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/dualism
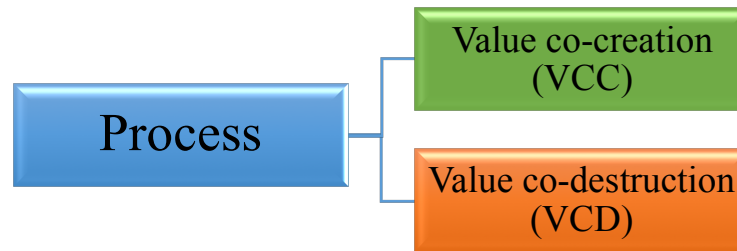[4] https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/dualism

Figure 5. 2: Dualistic nature of the process

Value co-creation is a complex, multifaceted process that has a strong relationship with CSR and employer branding, and hence the value within the organisation is for employees and the employers who ultimately sustain and strengthen their interrelationships.

Although there is a wide range of literature that illustrates value and value co-creation, this topic has not yet received equal empirical attention (Grönroos & Voima, 2013). It has been agreed that there are different types of value co-creation but also that the value co-creation in service provider organisations is different than the value co-created by organisations that provide goods (Gronroos, 2011). The main focus of this research, based on the data collected, is service provider organisations. This research is based on the hotel industry provides services as well as presenting goods.

Based on the findings from Case A, participants noted that value co-creation is the cumulative result of positive employee performance, satisfaction and loyalty. In other words, an efficient employee who is satisfied and loyal is most likely to co-create value for the organisation. Another example of value co-creation is the safe and secure work environment provided by employers, which reflects positively on employees' behaviours.

Grace and Lo Iacono (2015) conceptualised the internal customer perceived value based on the PERVAL model and proposed three dimensions of value co-creation from internal customers' perspectives. The first dimension was

monetary value, followed by emotional value and then social value. The discussion of value co-creation stems from the PERVAL model for the internal customers.

A Case B participant said that value co-creation can be a result of feeling proud about their organisation's CSR activities and positive behaviour to external stakeholders. Case C participants added that value co-creation is a result of financially satisfied employees with a sense of pride in their organisation's policies of going green.

5.4.1.1 Value Co-destruction

In order to define value co-destruction, the author referred to the definition of value creation. Vargo *et al*. (2008) defined value creation as an integration of resources in a dynamic process where service is traded for service. In parallel, value co-destruction could be generated via the same process but negatively. As a result, and according to Vargo *et al*. (2008), value co-destruction could be defined as a consequence of providers and customers drawing on unequal elements of practice with respect to employee behaviours such as informing and helping.

Vargo *et al*.'s (2008) study correlated the S-D logic and COR theory to illustrate the concept of value co-destruction taken from the customers' perspective. In contrast, the current research focuses on the role of the inter-organisation interaction between employers and employees in areas such as satisfaction, loyalty and performance, which leads to value co-creation if the interaction is positive and to value co-destruction if the interaction is negative.

Empirical findings of this research revealed that the reverse effect on employees' behaviour mentioned in value co-creation is most likely to generate value co-destruction. For example, Case A participants noted that unsatisfied, disloyal and inefficient employees are most likely to generate value co-destruction. In addition, uneducated and unaware employees will affect the organisation's image in the eyes of its external customers, resulting in value co-destruction.

Case B participants highlighted that the deficiency of implementing CSR strategies by the organisation will lead to external stakeholder dissatisfaction and in turn to value co-destruction, whereas Case C participants pointed out that the leadership style has a significant impact on value generation. For example, when employers do not respect, appreciate or communicate effectively with their internal stakeholders, this will definitely lead to value co-destruction. Another example is the cultural issue, as working in a hotel is considered an indecent job.

5.4.2 Dialogical

Dialogical is derived from the word 'dialogue', which, according to the Merriam Webster dictionary, means *"a conversation between two or more persons; also: a similar exchange between a person and something else (such as a computer)"*. According to the Oxford Dictionary, the term 'dialogical' originates from *"Late Latin from Greek dialogikos, from dialogos"* Referring us to the noun *'dialogue', meaning a conversation between two or more people as a feature of a book, play, or film."* The Merriam Webster definition is more suited to the present context. In this research, the dialogical aspect exists in all phases (input phase, process phase and output phase).

Payne *et al*. (2008) argued that there is an interaction between the organisation and the external customers but neglected the internal interaction with the internal customers. This research focuses on the interaction between the employer and the employees as an internal customer environment. The dialogical nature of the relationship between employers and employees depends mainly on communication.

In parallel to the above, the DART model mainly involves the consumer as a part of value co-creation (Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004). However, the four blocks of the DART model (Dialogue, Access, Risk assessment and Transparency) were discussed within the value co-creation concept by employees and organisation as one entity, whereas this thesis separates employees from the organisation to help clarify the value co-creation process.

During the input phase, the term 'dialogical' refers to the interaction between all organisational tangible and intangible resources and the employees, resulting in satisfaction, which leads to better employees' performance. In parallel, during the process phase, another type of dialogue exists during the interface between service, production and consumption.

According to Brammer *et al*. (2015), CSR good communication within the organisation helps to co-create value, and this reflects on the employees' identity (Luu, 2017). Based on the findings of this research, Case A employees pointed out that two-way communication with employers and customers helped in creating a link between the organisation and the customers. For instance, receiving first-hand feedback from customers and transferring it to the organisation helped the employer to refine or changed some rules and regulations.

Another example of the importance of communication is the cross-communication between different departments within the same organisation that assisted in understanding each other's work and finding new solutions using an outside view. Furthermore, the organisation's communication reached out to the local community through understanding their religion, culture and tradition.

Case B employees were given the opportunity to expand and diversify their work experience through allowing them to work in different departments within the organisation. In addition, employees were given the chance to interact with the local community in CSR activities such as cleaning campaigns and charity work.

Case C emphasised two axes of communication: internal communication (employees and organisation) and external communication (organisation and external stakeholders). On the first axis, employers adopted a communication strategy with their employees based on appreciation through listening and implementing their ideas and suggestions. The other aspect of internal communication is shown through employers' understanding of employees' needs and requirements and working towards achieving them.

The second axis is the external communication, where the organisation has reached out to external stakeholders in the local community, such as suppliers, through a full understanding of the benefits of local products and services provided to the organisation. For example, managers in Case C highlighted the benefits of using local products, which are preferable because they are fresh and organic.

5.4.3 Dynamic

According to the Merriam Webster dictionary, 'Dynamic' is defined as *"marked by usually continuous and productive activity or change."* The Oxford dictionary defines it as *"a process or system characterised by constant change, activity, or progress."* For this research, the researcher has elected to use the Oxford definition due to its compatibility with the nature of the research topic. The importance of the dynamic trait comes from its ability to continuously change according to changes in the input, process and output, allowing the organisation to adapt, improve and develop areas of weakness.

Recently, the dynamic trait has gained considerable attention from scholars and practitioners in the context of the dynamic knowledge-based workplace: something which has not yet been sufficiently addressed in the micro-CSR literature (Hur *et al*., 2016). Moreover, Lenka, Parida and Wincent (2017) adopted Grönroos and Voima's (2013) framework and highlighted the significance of the interface between service providers and customers to enhance the value co-creation process. The framework for the above-mentioned research shows value creation as a one-way process, whereas this research argues that it is a continuous, renewable process.

The empirical data for this research revealed that participants view the value co-creation process as dynamic. An example of this dynamic process is shown in the response of Case A participants, who collectively agreed that the more you give to the organisation and the community, the higher the appreciation you receive back. One more perspective that shows the dynamic relationship between internal stakeholders (employees) and customers is visible in the

services and products provided, as employees listen to customers and convey their suggestions to the organisation to change or refine its services and products.

The nature of value co-creation is seen by many scholars as an interaction between employees and customers (Lusch & Vargo, 2006a; Lusch *et al*., 2007; Vargo & Lusch, 2004, 2008b, c). However, through its findings, this research indicates that an organisation's achievements make employees feel part of the goals achieved. Participants from Case C noted that value is generated through employers' support for their employees who perform well, which means that the relationship between internal stakeholders is dynamic and goes both ways.

From the above discussion, the researcher concluded that the proposed framework of this research needs to be revisited and refined to in light of this study's findings. The main structure of the framework is significantly changed due to the qualitative method adopted, as it allows the researcher to elaborate and explore in depth the relationship between internal stakeholders and its effect on value generation within the context of CSR. The following section illustrates the final framework of this research.

5.5 Revised Framework

Through a review of the literature and comparing it with the research findings, the researcher has refined the proposed framework based on the 3D's concept (dualistic, dialogical, and dynamic) and on the phases of the value co-creation process. Below is a discussion of how the final framework of this research evolved and developed. The researcher analysed and explained the 3D's of value co-creation and examined their interrelationship with CSR and employer branding. In so doing, this research elaborates on the factors that constitute value creation, and how and to what extent the co-creation of value influences employer branding.

Stakeholder theory was adopted as a foundation and has given the researcher the ability to understand the interaction between various stakeholders (Internal and External). The findings of this research suggest that employees are

concerned about the usage of organisations' resources and are trying as much as possible to minimise the misuse of resources. Their concern and understanding of organisational resource saving strategies indicates that an organisation's engagement with its employees is central to its ultimate success in persuading and motivating staff, which, in turn, influences value co-creation. It is important to point out that this research stands out in considering the internal stakeholders (employees) as an independent and integrated part of the value co-creation process.

Some authors have suggested that customers are the main co-creators of value for organisations (Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2002, 2004), whereas others have stated that value is an exchange process between internal and external customers (Lusch and Vargo, 2006; Lusch, Vargo & O'Brien, 2007). However, this research expands the body of knowledge by offering a more holistic model of value creation, by delineating it into three major components: inputs, processes and outcomes. It further links with CSR to explain how organisational endeavours, if interpreted properly to employees, can influence its delivery of value and subsequent enrichment of its employer branding. It is a continuous and iterative process that has dualistic outcomes in terms of value co-creation and value co-distraction, as shown in Figure 5.3.

5.5.1 Value Creation Input Phase

The first phase of this process is the input. It consists of two main components. The first component is organisational resources (both tangible and intangible). The second is employee behaviours (performance, satisfaction, and loyalty). Both components are from CSR perspectives that have two important traits. Two points were assessed from the collected data: first, whether employees will gain any financial benefits from the organisations' implementation of CSR strategies; and second, how value is created and enjoyed by the parties involved. In this study, information provided by participants indicated that the adoption of CSR has resulted in a monetary benefit for the organisation and has consequently enhanced the employer branding.

The two components of the input phase interact and combine in this phase. For example, reducing the use of tangible resources can financially benefit the organisation through cutting costs. On the other hand, other intangible policies that aim to create awareness about the importance of CSR and its advantages can affect employee behaviours such as performance, loyalty, and satisfaction.

Ranjan and Read (2016) have identified satisfaction as a key factor in value co-creation. However, their conceptual framework places greater emphasis on the customer-organisation dyadic relationship and does not explicate the roles and nature of various other parties in a holistic manner. Meynhardt *et al*. (2016) focused on ecosystem perspectives and introduced nine systemic principles of value co-creation to clarify the complexity of value co-creation in service ecosystem perspectives. However, dynamic mechanisms of the ecosystem do not fully capture the iterative and dualistic nature of value co-creation.

5.5.1.1 Dialogical Nature of the Input

Through the empirical findings, it was found that the two main components of the input phase depend on their interaction, even though they are different in nature. Organisations' resources (both tangible and intangible) need to be administrated sensibly by employers to convey awareness to their employees in order to affect their behaviours in a way that will lead to better understanding of the organisations' CSR strategies.

On the organisational side, there is another type of dialogical relationship between internal stakeholders and the community, which operates through CSR activities carried out by the organisation, such as charity donations and CSR campaigns, which lead to better employer branding.

5.5.1.2 Dynamic Nature of the Input

The other trait of the input phase is that it is dynamic, which means that it is continuous. The interrelation between organisational resources and employee behaviours is continual because of the continuous advancement of training programs and CSR activities implemented in the organisation. Thus, in order for

it to continually compete successfully, the organisation needs to cope with new advancements in the field.

Likewise, the organisation has to follow the latest technological trends in the field of resources, such as electricity-saving equipment and other environmentally friendly gadgets to further cut the cost and eventually increase financial revenues. Finally, value creation is dynamic and iterative by nature. This is where our epistemological stance contributes to the conceptualisation of value creation. All parties involved herein have iterative inter-relationships. Value creation is a process of input and outcome. It is a process to support and implement an organisation's CSR strategies and is an outcome of organisation's effective stakeholder strategies. Our findings suggest that stronger employer branding can only be achieved through value co-creation.

5.5.2 The Process Phase

The second phase of value creation utilises the input components (organisation resources and employee behaviours) within the context of CSR and employer branding. It is the process during which the services interface, the production interface, and the consumer interface combine and interact to co-create value. Grönroos and Vioma (2013) noted that both the service provider and the customer play roles in value generation and value co-creation. They suggested a more analytical definition of the customer's and the provider's value creation spheres, as well as how they intersect to achieve value co-creation. Besides, they explained how value is created in each sphere and by whom. Their theoretical work is based on the fact that value has always been ill-defined, according to Garu and Cova (2003) and others like Woodall (2003) and Iniesta-Bonilla (2007). They stated that there have been more attempts to look at value from a holistic perspective (Khalifa, 2004). Consequently, Grönroos and Vioma emphasise that value creation entails a process in which customers are completely engaged with the service providers.

Grönroos and Vioma (2013) concluded that the customer sphere of a role as a value creator must be within the service provider's sphere or role and that the

provider has to find a way to interact with the customer in order to make him part of the process.

However, the research model of the current study has proven that there is a need for another sphere or role, which is played by employees within the organisation and which leads to their satisfaction and loyalty; this, in turn, enhances value co-creation both internally (employer-employee) and externally (organisation-customer). The researcher's contribution, therefore, is to add another layer for internal interaction to connect employers, employees and customers to generate value.

5.5.2.1 Dialogical Nature of Process

During the service, production, and consumer interface, it is important to communicate and interact in order to fuse the input components to create the desired value. Hence it has been agreed by different scholars that value creation is a process rather than an outcome (Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004; Payne et al., 2008). The dialogical nature of the process phase mainly depends on how the organisation's CSR vision is conveyed to employees and consumers alike to achieve the desired objectives.

The organisation needs continuous work to improve its employees' awareness of CSR strategies and at the same time present its environmental image to consumers to maintain the corporate image. The dialogical nature in the process phase has the same characteristics as in the input phase. Moreover, this dialogical trait is concurrent in both phases.

5.5.2.2 Dynamic Nature of the Process

Likewise, the second phase of the model is the process, which involves three main interfaces, where services, products and consumption interact and are combined. In this process, tangible and intangible aspects cannot be separated, as services, products and consumption are all happening at the same time. The dynamic nature here is not an exception to the previous phase. In addition, the ever-changing nature of the hospitality industry and the furious competition dictate continuous dynamic change.

5.5.3 The Outcome Phase

The third phase of the model is the outcome, which in this case is the result of the two previous phases. Based on the dualist nature of the outcome – i.e. constructive (value co-creation) or destructive (value co-destruction) – either of the outcomes mentioned above will lead to employer branding in the organisation where the feedback could serve to correct either the input phase or the process phase. The nature of the employer branding correction is used to enhance and improve the input or the process of value creation through an iterative process, which includes either maintaining the benefits or redesigning the policies and activities to overcome defects in the input factors.

The present study's findings also help to synthesise the current literature to develop a more holistic understanding of value co-creation. The researcher identifies three major components by corroborating the findings with the existing literature:

1) Value co-creation is dynamic and iterative,

2) Value co-creation depends on dialogical interrelationships, and

3) Value creation has a dualistic outcome: value co-creation and value co-destruction.

In contrast to earlier studies, the current research focuses on the role of the inter-organisation interaction between employers and employees in areas such as satisfaction, loyalty and performance, which leads to value co-creation or value co-destruction. For this reason, the current research adds to extant knowledge a new dimension where value co-destruction can be generated as much from the inside as from the outside.

5.5.3.1 The Dialogical and Dynamic Nature of Outcome

The dialogical and dynamic nature of this phase is a replica of the input and process phases. Both phases are identical and concurrent, utilising the same concepts, mechanisms and tools. The only difference here is that it is inclusive

of phases and more holistic, as the three phases interact and combine to result in value generation, whether value co-creation or value co-destruction.

Based on the final model proposed in this study, value co-creation is the result of a holistic process that involves input, process and outcome with three major traits: Dynamic, Dialogic and Dualistic. The three traits form three overlapping and intersecting circles in which the process take place.

5.5.3.2 The Dualistic Nature of Outcome

Reflecting on the work by Plé and Chumpitaz Cáceres (2010), the research has also found evidence of value co-destruction. Therefore, the researcher argues that value creation is dualistic in nature. Figure 5.3 below presents the revised framework of the research. The outcomes may not always generate a win-win situation for all stakeholders, although such results should be welcomed. The involvement of value co-destruction nevertheless highlights
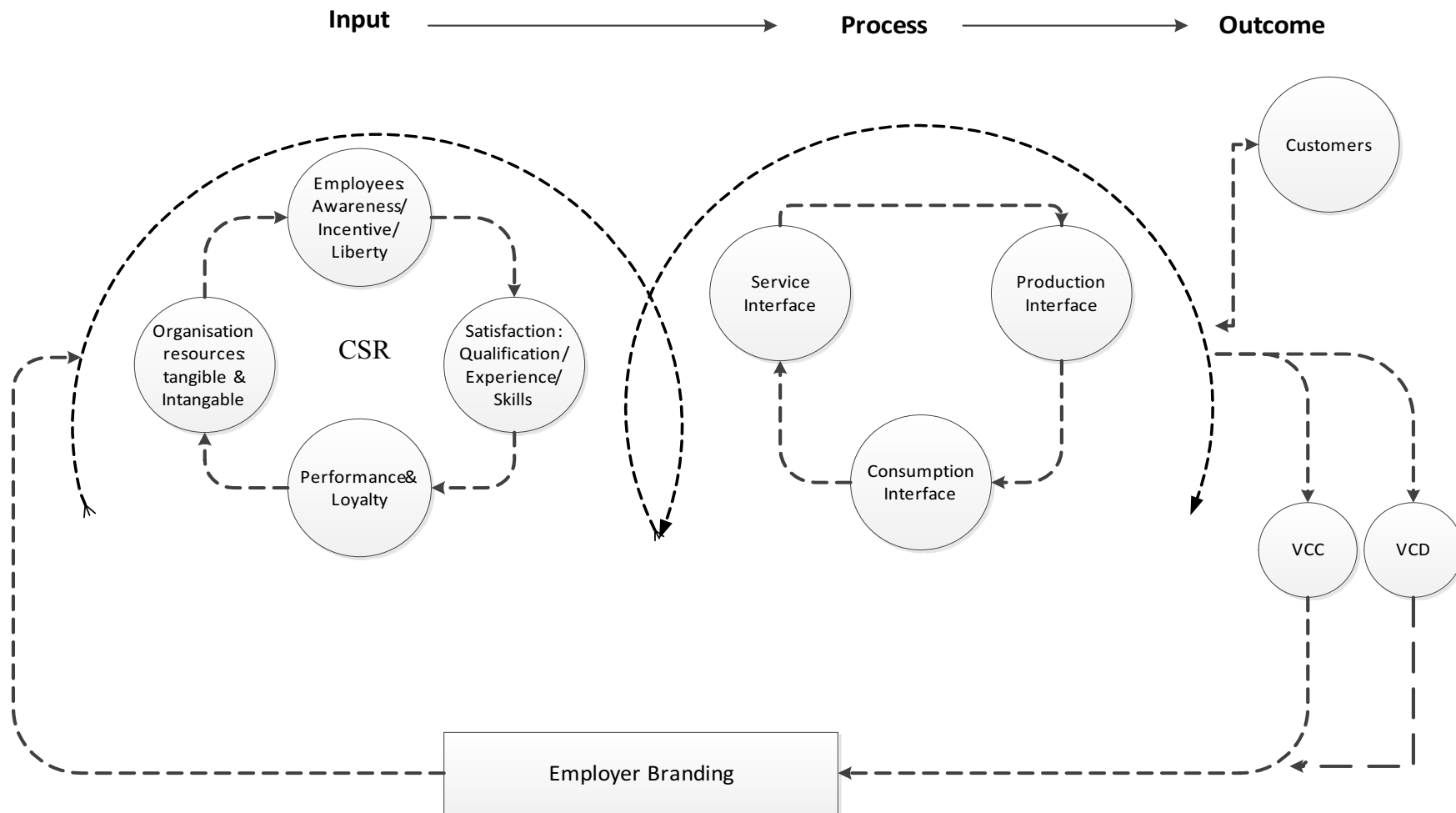
Figure 5. 3: Revised Framework

The fact that due to a lack of procedural efficacy, the presence of contradictory and conflicting interests of various parties' value can be co-destructed.

Makkonen and Olkkonen (2017) focused on the outcome of the interaction between resources and services and adopted the term IVF (interactive value formation), as mentioned by Echeverri and Sakalen (2011). They suggested a possibility of the triple result of value co-creation, value co-destruction and VNC. Based on the research model, the researcher argues that in business, VNC or break-even is not considered a profit. Therefore, the researcher believes that VNC is deemed to be value co-destruction in the long run, especially with the mounting competition in mixed product and service organisation.

The researcher argues that the dualistic nature of the process needs to be considered. Furthermore, the parties involved in the value creation should be dialogically interconnected. The rationality of the process and inter-relationships between the actors can be smoothed and facilitated through dialogue. Hence, organisations need to communicate well with employees, customers and other stakeholders. Likewise, reciprocally transparent communication amongst other parties is key to a successful value generation process.

Thus, ambiguity remains, as value might be added or destroyed. As a result, corporates sometimes assume that they are creating value for the stakeholders, but realise that the strategy of value generation has failed or, in another word, destroyed value. This is due to misunderstanding of the process, as there might be miscommunication between internal and external stakeholders.

5.6 Chapter Summary

This chapter has presented a discussion of the findings from the last chapter. The researcher followed a systematic approach in which the main findings were divided into the main empirical categories of CSR, employer branding, and value generation. In addition, the researcher evaluated the proposed framework

presented earlier and made necessary changes in accordance with the empirical results.

With regard to CSR, the researcher examined the extant literature and compared it with related findings in the areas of CSR and its activities. This was followed by a comparison between the theoretical findings and the empirical results on the impact of CSR strategies on organisations' tangible and intangible resources and employee behaviours.

Then, the researcher discussed employer branding, engaging in extensive analysis of employee behaviours in order to understand their impact on employer branding and to relate them to the existing literature. Other considerations were discovered during the empirical studies that had an effect on employer branding within the context of CSR strategies.

Finally, the researcher illustrated the nature of value generation as an outcome of the value generation process. The researcher concluded that there are three main traits to the value generation process: it is dualistic, dialogical, and dynamic. Concluding this chapter, the researcher revised the proposed framework based on the empirical results.

CHAPTER SIX-CONCLUSION AND CONTRIBUTION

6.1 Introduction

Chapters Four and Five dealt with the presentation of the cross-case study interpretation analysis table and a discussion of the findings respectively. This chapter will conclude the research by first presenting the theoretical contribution to the body of knowledge from the researcher's perspective. It will then highlight the potential managerial contribution, not only in the field of study but also in other fields.

This chapter also revisits the limitations faced while conducting the research, which opens the door to suggested future research in the field, before concluding the entire work with the researcher's personal reflection.

6.2 Theoretical Contributions

This research contributes theoretically to knowledge by introducing three integral components (the three D's) of the nature of value co-creation in a CSR environment through addressing the intra-relationships between internal stakeholders. This sets it apart from most prior studies in the literature, which mainly focus on the interrelationships between external stakeholders. To do so, the researcher started with a well-established theory (Stakeholders' Theory) that was adopted as a focal theory in this research and a foundation to understand different stakeholders' interactions.

In Chapter Five, the discussion chapter, it was argued that the theoretical contribution of this research lays in the introduction of the 3D traits – Dualistic, Dialogical and Dynamic – corresponding to the value co-creation process presented in Figure 5.1. It should be recalled that Figure 5.3 corresponds to an abstract model of value co-creation that was first generated in Chapter Three as the main construct of the proposed conceptual framework. After thorough

analysis and examination, the research shed light on new findings and aspects, detailed in Table 6.1 below. The table presents a summary of the literature perspectives with regard to value co-creation. These were compared to the research findings in order to highlight the novelty brought by the qualitative approach adopted by this research.

Thesis Contribution		
Suggested Literature	Empirical Findings	Comments
Dey *et al*. (2016) argue that value co-creation and co-destruction are a dialectic phenomenon.	Cases showed that VCC is directly related to internal stakeholders' awareness and knowledge, which emphasise the nature of the VCC process as dualistic in nature (6.3.3.1). On the other hand, the interaction between employers and their employees and customers revealed the dialogical nature of the VCC process (6.4.4.2.2). Finally, findings showed that adopting and embracing the latest knowledge is a never-ending process that helps in the VCC process (6.5.4.3).	Empirical findings confirmed and added that value co-creation has a dynamic, dialogical, and dualistic nature.
Ranjan and Read (2016), through a quantitative approach, claimed that value co-creation is aligned and assessed with co-production, and defined co-creation as a function of co-production.	The researcher carried out a multiple case study on three leading five-star hotels in Oman to demonstrate that the VCC process can be achieved in a sector where products and services can go hand in hand (Chapter 6)	This research addresses the issue from a qualitative approach, since the hotel industry provides a combination of services and products. Furthermore, findings asserted that VCC is a function of both services and products.
Mostafa (2015) noted that value co-creation is a factor contributing to the competitive advantage and added that VCC is defined to involve partner engagement, co-reflection and co-design	Participants suggested that branding in general and employer branding in particular starts by separating the organisation from other competitors, even in the shape of the building, to give a unique and prominent image (6.5.3).	Findings cemented the fact that VCC plays an important role in enhancing employer brandings when CSR activities are embraced. This research added that employees' interaction with their employers improved VCC and employer branding.
Payne *et al.* (2008) and Frow et al. (2014) widened the concept of value co-creation and highlighted the roles of stakeholders other than customers	Most cases focused on spreading knowledge through training and education of their employees to achieve employees' performance, loyalty, and satisfaction (6.5.5).	Findings revealed that internal stakeholders play an equally important role to that of customers in value co-creation.
Plé & Chumpitaz Cáceres (2010) The interaction between service systems may result in value co-creation or lead to value co-destruction	Finding showed that going-green activities, for example, create value for the business as customers consider such activities in their booking, and according to Case C, participants data showed that around 60% of bookings were based on the green activities. On the other hand, customers tend to stay away from hotels that do not implement such activities (6.5.4.1.1).	The findings confirmed the fact that value creation is a two-headed spear named as dualistic outcome which means value co-creation or value co-destruction.
Grönroos (2011) offers a critical perspective to analysing service domain logic and suggests that customers are not always co-creators of value, indicating the roles of situational and contextual variables and factors that may	Empirical findings showed that employees' performance, loyalty, and satisfaction are directly related to raised awareness and high levels of training and education (6.3.2.1).	Empirical findings showed that in addition to customers, internal stakeholders' performance, satisfaction, and loyalty have an integral role in value co-creation that reflects on employer branding where CSR activities are implemented.

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determine the locus and nature of value co-creation.		
Roberts and Tribe (2008) believe that socio-cultural sustainability should focus on developing relationships between guests and local communities to build a bridge between hotels and the local communities.	Integrating locals as employees in the organisation enhances its imaged and helps in spreading awareness of CSR activities among the community through its employees (6.3.1.2).	Findings added that enhancing the relationship between internal stakeholders and the local community improves the chance of value co-creation when CSR activities are implemented.

Table 6. 1: Table of Contributions

The core of the research corresponds to a multiple case study on three of Oman's leading hotels that combine product and service provision. The empirical findings presented in the above table set out some facts elaborated in the literature and introduce others.

The research critically analysed the existing literature on value co-creation, with a particular focus on the two most cited models, namely the DART model and Payne *et al.*'s (2008) model. In fact, the DART model, developed by Parahlad and Ramaswamy (2004), argues that there is a static relationship between suppliers and organisations, wherein employees are considered part of the organisation. Following the same logic, Payne *et al.* (2008), while considering VCC as the result of successful communication between suppliers and customers, included employees in the customers' sphere rather than considering them as a separate entity.

The present research adds to the existing models by arguing that employees cannot be included or excluded from the organisation. However, exclusion of the employees from the organisation and considering them as a separate entity would help to examine employees' understanding of CSR implementation and employer branding enhancement. This results in the points detailed below.

First, the researcher concludes that the value co-creation process has three fascinating traits, being dynamic, dialogical, and dualistic. Second, the findings proclaim that value co-creation has no clear-cut definition, as it is an outcome of CSR activities implemented within an organisation that considers its employee performance, loyalty, and satisfaction.

In addition, it is also found that value co-creation has an important role in enhancing employer brandings and the organisation's image when CSR activities are adopted. The researcher also adds that employees' integration with their employers enhances the VCC process and in turn employer branding. Of no less importance, the research also concludes that internal stakeholders play an independent, but integral role in the value co-creation process. Furthermore, the findings confirm that value creation could be either value co-creation or value co-destruction, depending on how the input and process are dealt with.

The empirical findings again show that customers' as well as internal stakeholders' performance, satisfaction, and loyalty have an integral role in value co-creation that echoes employer branding where CSR activities are implemented. Finally, the findings confirm that enhancing the relationship between internal stakeholders and the local community improves the chance of value co-creation when CSR activities are implemented.

The arguments in the literature on value showed different definitions of the term and concept. For example, in business, value commonly depends on consumers' perception of the services and products more than their real value (Butz & Goodstein, 1996; Christopher, 1996; Woodruff, 1997; Petrick, 2002; Gallarza *et al.*, 2011). Emphasising the same idea, Zeithmal (1988) defined value as the consumer's overall assessment of the products they have consumed based on their perceptions of what is given and what is received. In contrast, Day (1990) defined value as the difference between the customer's perceived benefits and their perceived costs. Moreover, Chiu *et al.* (2005) argued that the definition of value may vary, as it is based on the context. In summary, value is an outcome of a consumption experience which varies from one context to another.

In light of the above definitions of value, researchers focused on value from customers' perceptions. However, this research also emphasised the internal stakeholders, who are of vital importance (Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004). Employees, considered here to be the internal stakeholders, are the largest non-shareholding group of stakeholders within the organisation that can act on or react to organisational decisions, processes, or products.

Since value is a complex and multifaceted concept (Dey *et al*., 2016), and it has a well-established relationship with CSR and employer branding (Balmer, 2001, Petkovic, 2008), the value within the organisation involves both the employees and the employers who eventually sustain and strengthen their interrelationships. Therefore, this research concluded that value is created by the organisation when it adopts CSR strategies to enhance the brand image. Internal stakeholders are internal customers who understand how to create value for the organisation. This has been widely identified in the literature (e.g. Ravald and Grönroos, 1996; Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004; Ramaswamy, 2008; Dey *et al*., 2011, 2013) and it is called value co-creation.

Moreover, Sanchez-Fernandez and Iniesta-Bonillo (2007) argue that value is should be considered as belonging to behavioural psychology, concurring that the value concept is rich and complex to assess. For that reason, this research stems from the idea that value creation needs to be validated and understood. It is also important to decide how it can be assessed with the organisation, as sometimes, the value might be co-destroyed (Plé & Chumpitaz Cáceres, 2010) given that it is not always co-created (Makkonen & Olkkonen, 2017). This research assessed the non-financial value created within organisations via the adoption of CSR for the internal stakeholders and investigated how it affects employer branding.

In addition, the assessment is based on the level of satisfaction, performance, and loyalty of the internal stakeholders as well as how these constructs benefit the organisation, and on what kind of value is co-created for the organisation itself by its employees. The research concluded that value co-creation is a process with three major traits. First, it is dynamic, in the sense that it is continuously going through input, process and outcome. Second, it is dialogical, which means that there is always interaction between all concerned stakeholders. The third and final trait is that the process is dualistic in nature and could either result in a positive outcome, known as value co-creation, or a negative one, referred to as value co-destruction.

6.3 Managerial contributions

In this section, the researcher reflects on the theoretical contributions on the practitioners' side. This reflection is based on the academic model developed by Van de Ven (2007), which transfers research into real-life practice. The model includes four phases: problem formulation, research design, theory building and problem solving. During the four phases, the researcher strove to reflect the research in practical life in the field of the hotel industry. Below is a brief description of each phase of the model that helps in transferring research to practice.

According to Van de Ven (2007), in order to transfer research into practice, the researcher has to observe practical gaps from different perspectives. This research considered both the theoretical and the practical perspective in regard to the adoption of CSR strategies and its role in positive value generation, or what is known as value co-creation, to enhance employer branding and in turn the brand image.

The researcher reviewed the existing literature in the area of research and decided to consider the hotel industry as a practical reflection for the research. This is an expanding industry and has a great impact on economic growth and on the environment. In general, most hotels' employers view CSR as an initiative to save resources and gain financial benefits, but no more. The researcher believes that the hotel industry has a unique characteristic; that is the interface of products, services and consumption, which in turn makes it difficult for the organisation to understand the effect of each aspect on the CSR strategies to be followed.

Furthermore, there was void between the shareholders and the consumer in hotel branding due to the detachment between the two parties, resulting in shareholders' lack of awareness about what is required to improve their hotel branding. In addition, hotels view CSR as an external relationship between them and the outside community, but with minimal attention to internal CSR activities where employees are considered.

This research allows organisations in the tourism industry to identify the gap between their strategies and policies and their implementation by their employees. Assessing the hotel industry environment provides employers with a clear picture of how their employees think and behave, so that they are not solely dependent on feedback from external stakeholders to design the most appropriate strategies and policies to be adopted in the context of CSR.

The next phase of Van de Ven's (2007) model talks about research design. The present research is exploratory in nature and followed a qualitative approach that aimed to assess the effect of employees' impact on adopting CSR strategies. The researcher decided to carry multiple case studies on selected hotels in Oman where employees at different levels were interviewed to explore their understanding of CSR in their field of business and how they would try to improve and develop their impact on hotel CSR strategies and their implementation in order to enhance employer branding. In this phase and through the multiple case studies, concerned stakeholders are presented with a holistic view of the hotel industry in Oman and other stakeholders are able to benefit from each other's policies in order to refine and develop the design of their strategies.

After formulating the problem and designing the research, Van de Ven (2007) advises that it is a normal practice to build a theory that reflects on the practical aspect of research, which in this case is the hotel industry. For this research, a theory was not built, but instead a model was developed to help understand the dynamic relationship between employers and employees and the unique interface of products, services and consumption resulting in a dualistic output of value generation: value co-creation or value co-destruction.

For that reason, the researcher developed a model for the organisation to follow in order to enhance the employer branding of hotel industry and continue to generate positive value or value co-creation. The model incorporates three traits (dynamic in nature, dialogical in behaviour and dualistic in result) in order to bridge the gap between the employer and their employees.

In this thesis, the researcher had to satisfy both the theoretical and the practical field. For the hotel industry, the model developed by the researcher presents a frame of reference to improve the generation of value co-creation. In addition, it serves as a generic frame of reference for any organisation that wishes to improve its employer branding through the enhancement of value co-creation in the context of CSR.

The research's final framework identified three major phases that affect the hotel industry's value generation. The first phase is the input phase, which presents a dynamic and a dialogical relationship between the hotel's resources (tangible and intangible) and employees' behaviours (satisfaction, performance, and loyalty). The second phase is the process, in which the hotel industry is unique in combining an interface between products, services, and consumption: again, the process is very dynamic and dialogical in nature.

The final phase is the outcome phase where the outcome is value generation, which has a dualistic nature, resulting in two contradicting outcomes of value co-creation or value co-destruction, affecting employer branding. This simple dynamic model can be adopted in any field looking to achieve a positive result when considering the inter-relations between internal stakeholders. In addition, the research also advances scholarship by critically assessing the role of employees as an independent, but an integral entity in the value co-creation process, establishing clear and robust links between CSR, value co-creation, and employer branding.

6.4 Research Limitations

All research is subject to some limitations and this study is no different. Although this thesis has presented theoretical and practical contributions, there were some limitations associated with this research. One of the main limitations is the need for a larger sample; however, the size of the hospitality industry in Oman means that samples for such studies cannot be larger. Using a wider pool of respondents might have helped to confirm some findings when the data gathered did not particularly lean towards a specific view. Regional biases and

cultural differences may have also acted as a limitation. In any human-related study, cultural aspects may produce answers that would be different from views in other countries. However, this also means that the research gathered is highly orientated towards the hospitality industry in Oman. Since the research is based on subjective outcomes, the views of respondents may also reflect personal biases.

In addition, another limitation was related to the exclusiveness of interviewees in this empirical study. The research focused only on the internal stakeholders of the organisation in the hotel industry in Oman. External stakeholders were excluded due to the nature of the study. Taking into consideration locality and cultural differences, the results in this regard can only be generalised to similar cultural contexts.

Due to the fact that the rationale for undertaking this study was to assess the important role of internal stakeholders (employees) within an organisation, which was defined as a gap in extant literature by the researcher, no conclusions can be drawn with regard to external stakeholders. Although participants in the three cases came from different levels of management with diversified experience, they are all considered as internal stakeholders in the organisation. Another limitation is that the research context focused on five-star hotels, which means that the result cannot be generalised to other hotels with significantly different rankings (for example, three stars or less, or even unranked hotels).

6.5 Future Research

Further studies must involve changing the context of the current study – both in terms of the country where this research is carried out and different industries besides the hotel industry, such as hospitality and restaurants. Most of the staff interviewed in this study were at management level; further studies should consider a wider range of staff from all hierarchies. Further studies must also look at other methodological approaches and consider quantitative as well as qualitative approaches. External stakeholders need to be considered in future

studies: they could be interviewed to ascertain their experience with the hotel, their perceptions of CSR and the quality of the value they receive.

Motivation for the employer is no exception to this topic. This is due not only to the rise of financial benefits through minimising the use of resources but also due to its impact on improving the reputation of the brand image. However, as well as the availability of awareness and personal development, the employer has set up strict processes in certain areas that need to be followed internally (e.g. the use of energy, water, food etc.). On the other hand, flexibility remains when initiatives arise to create awareness among external stakeholders via internal stakeholders (e.g. employees are given the option as to whether or not to participate in these activities). Therefore, strict implementation of systems and mechanisms has to be backed up by the implementation of processes and systems to increase awareness. This also requires further investigations.

In conclusion, this study has expanded the scholarship on VCC and its strong association with CSR and employer branding. This study has demonstrated that value within an organisation relies upon employees as well as employers, and failure of the brand to consider and involve internal stakeholders (employees) is unfavourable both for finances and for the reputation of the company. The marketing literature must consider internal stakeholders when seeking to optimise marketing potentials in any industry. Investing in employees will lead to the creation of value, sustainability and growth of companies.

In Oman, where this study was undertaken, there is a need for further CSR measures. For instance, Oman is still at the developing stage and requires more focus in terms of tourism and sustainability. There is considerable scope for improvements in sustainability, and a need to catch up with the CSR and sustainability practices that are implemented in other parts of the world. Therefore, it is critical to educate societies not only in Oman but also in the whole Arabian Gulf about the need for such measures to protect the environment and the importance of their application as a natural holistic approach to their everyday living.

6.6 Personal Reflection

The idea for this research started when I was doing my master's degree at the University of Bradford in 2007. It was new to me to see how society in general, and individuals in particular, are aware of sustaining the environment through personal activities like recycling. This simple yet important behaviour has a great impact on the environment. I liked the idea of recycling and embraced it in my daily activities within and out of school.

After finishing my studies, I went back to Oman to find the exact opposite behaviour towards recycling and environment sustainability. People and society were unaware of the environment. I thought to myself about how a country like mine, with a harsh environment and scarce resources, has less motivation than countries with more plantations and better resources.

In 2009, I started chasing a dream of introducing the idea of environmental sustainability in my country, and I submitted a proposal to establish a recycling facility in Oman. To achieve this, I visited China to see how such a facility could be opened and such behaviour could be implemented. My message is very clear: our country deserves better awareness from individuals in the field of environmental sustainability. For this reason, I started to be academically and practically involved and decided to do my PhD in this field.

When I started my PhD journey, my idea of sustainability was limited to personal activities, but with time and a lot of reading, I realized that sustainability is a way of life and a concept embraced by big corporations in order to achieve the idea of CSR. With time, I started to see CSR as a major strategy that can benefit corporates in planning, production, and profitability, which in turn develops the national economy of Oman.

My idea of CSR doesn't stop at recycling, but involves the three pillars of any successful corporate: the environment, society, and business. This holistic view of CSR will not only bring profit to the corporate, but also will create value for the organisation. This value creation will include both an external interaction between the corporate and the consumer, leading to consumer trust and loyalty,

and an internal interaction between employers and their employees, which will achieve satisfaction, improved performance and loyalty to the latter, which in turn will foster the concept of value co-creation.

7.0 References

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8.0 Appendices

Brunel Headed Letter Appendix (1)

Brunel University London

College of Business,
Arts and Social Sciences
Brunel Business School

Brunel University London
Kingston Lane
Uxbridge
UB8 3PH
United Kingdom
www.brunel.ac.uk

Hotel Sustainable Branding Research

I am a researcher at Brunel University London and I am writing to ask if you could spare me 30 to 40 mins to discuss my outline research.

My study is intended to focus on examining different successful factors that you have developed and implemented with the aim of enabling a sustainable branding for your organisation.

I look forward to your response and please do not hesitate to contact me regarding my research.

Yours,

Al Habsi Zahra

Researcher

Brunel University London, UK

bupgzsa@brunel.ac.uk

List of Codes –Appendix (2)

Nviov -Codes Generation	Nviov -Codes Generation
Code	**Code**
Actions to Sustainability	Initiatives and Activities
Advantages of CSR	Internal Marketing
awareness	Kids
Barriers	local Hospitality
believe on what you do	loyalty
benefits	Misunderstanding
Branding	motivation and performance
commitment	New Ideas
Cost of Adopting CSR	Omani Government
Creating Awareness	organisational culture
Creativity	privilege
Culture Transfer to external stakeholders	Result of CSR
cultures	reuse - recycle - reduce
Customers are always right	Satisfaction
diversification	strategy
employees Choice to participate	suggestions
Employees' commitment	Sustainability
Engineering Dep	Technology
ethics	training for employees
External stakeholders	transfer value to external stakeholders
Faith Religion	Trust employees
food and Menu	Unexpected definitions
health and hygiene	Value
Indirect marketing	Value for Corporate

Letter of Approval - Appendix (3)

College of Business, Arts and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee
Brunel University London
Kingston Lane
Uxbridge
UB8 3PH
United Kingdom

www.brunel.ac.uk

21 January 2016

LETTER OF APPROVAL

Applicant: Ms Zahra Sultan Mohammed Al Habsi

Project Title: Hotel Sustainable Branding Research

Reference: 1689-LR-Jan/2016-1398

Dear Ms Zahra Sultan Mohammed Al Habsi

The Research Ethics Committee has considered the above application recently submitted by you.

The Chair, acting under delegated authority has agreed that there is no objection on ethical grounds to the proposed study. Approval is given on the understanding that the conditions of approval set out below are followed:

- The agreed protocol must be followed. Any changes to the protocol will require prior approval from the Committee by way of an application for an amendment.

Please note that:

- Research Participant Information Sheets and (where relevant) flyers, posters, and consent forms should include a clear statement that research ethics approval has been obtained from the relevant Research Ethics Committee.
- The Research Participant Information Sheets should include a clear statement that queries should be directed, in the first instance, to the Supervisor (where relevant), or the researcher. Complaints, on the other hand, should be directed, in the first instance, to the Chair of the relevant Research Ethics Committee
- Approval to proceed with the study is granted subject to receipt by the Committee of satisfactory responses to any conditions that may appear above, in addition to any subsequent changes to the protocol.
- The Research Ethics Committee reserves the right to sample and review documentation, including raw data, relevant to the study.
- You may not undertake any research activity if you are not a registered student of Brunel University or if you cease to become registered, including abeyance or temporary withdrawal. As a deregistered student you would not be insured to undertake research activity. Research activity includes the recruitment of participants, undertaking consent procedures and collection of data. Breach of this requirement constitutes research misconduct and is a disciplinary offence.

Professor James Knowles

Chair

College of Business, Arts and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee
Brunel University London

Zahra Al Habsi

Participant information sheet Appendix (4)

College of Business, Art and Social Sciences

Business School

Participant Information Sheet

Study title
The Role of Sustainable Branding Strategies in creating value for internal stakeholders in the Field of Hospitality industry

Invitation Paragraph
You are being invited to take a part in a research study. Before you decide, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask me if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take a part.

What is the purpose of the study?
The research aim is to establish links between corporate branding strategies and corporate social responsibility in the context of the hospitality industry. This will be achieved through assessing the successful factors within sustainable branding mechanisms that contribute towards value creation for stakeholder [Internal stakeholders] within the hotel industry. To do so, the data will be collected via semi-structured interview. In order to achieve this I will need to interview the senior managers as well as front line managers of hotels' employees. In this respect, the purpose of conducting interviews is to collect their views on this phenomenon. All the data collected through the interviews will be strictly confidential. Only the researcher will have access to the material. The data will be anonymised on request and then securely stored; it will be destroyed when no longer required.

Why have been invited to participate?
You have been invited because as the study requires information from a person who works as hotel manager, frontline hotel employee, or in a similar role. To do so, the researcher needs to interview you in order to discuss the role of branding in creating value for the internal stakeholders.

Do I have to take part?
As participation is entirely voluntary, it is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form. If you decide to take part, you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason

What will happen to me if I take part?

If you agree to do the interview then you will be requested to sign a consent form. Then you will be asked questions about your experience in your job. The interview will be recorded using a voice recorder. The main purpose of recording the interview is to allow the researcher to capture all the points that you will mention during the interview so she will be able to analyse the conversation later. The interview will take a maximum of 60 minutes.

What do I have to do?

Zahra Al Habsi

You are kindly requested to answer the questions during the interview according to your personal experience.

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?
To the researcher's knowledge, there are no risks expected by conducting this research. However, some sensitive questions might be asked during the interview about certain topics, but you have the right not to answer.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?
Nothing tangible, but you will be helping to improve the research in the field of the hotel industry and its implementation of sustainable strategy.

What if something goes wrong?
If you as a participant have any complaints in regard to your participation, please do not hesitate to inform the Chair of the College of Business School, Art and Social science Research Ethics Committee .

Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential?
Yes indeed. The researcher will record the interview and it will be coded and anonymised. In addition, once the transcript is completed and checked by the interviewee, then all the recorded conversations will be deleted.

What will happen to the results of the research study?
The result will be summarised and may be used for academic purposes: for example publishing articles in journals. They will be included in the researcher's PhD thesis.

Who is organising and funding the research?
Brunel Business School/ Brunel University is organising this research and the researcher is the sponsor of this research.

What are the indemnity arrangements?
Brunel University, College of Business School, Art and Social science Research Ethics Committee.

Who has reviewed the study?
This study has been reviewed by the College of Business, Art and Social Science Research Ethics Committee.

Include a passage on the University's commitment to the UK Concordat on Research Integrity
Brunel University is committed to compliance with the Universities UK Research Integrity Concordat. You are entitled to expect the highest level of integrity from our researchers during the course of their research.

Contact for further information and complaints

Zahra Al Habsi

Appendices

Researcher

Zahra Sultan Al Habsi

PhD Candidate

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College Business, Arts & Social Sciences Department of Arts and Humanities

Vice-Dean Research and Professor of Renaissance Literature and Culture

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Consent Form Appendix (5)

College of Business, Arts and Social Sciences

CONSENT FORM

The participant should complete the whole of this sheet

Please tick the appropriate box

YES   NO

Have you read the Research Participant Information Sheet?

Have you had an opportunity to ask questions and discuss this study?

Have you received satisfactory answers to all your questions?

Who have you spoken to?

Do you understand that you will not be referred to by name in any report concerning the study?

Do you understand that you are free to withdraw from the study:
- At any time?
- Without having to give a reason for withdrawing?
- (where relevant, adapt if necessary) without affecting your future care?

(Where relevant) I agree to my interview being recorded.

(Where relevant) I agree to the use of non-attributable direct quotes when the study is written up or published.

Do you agree to take part in this study?

Signature of Research Participant:

Date:

Name in capitals:

Witness statement(if required – adapt where necessary):

I am satisfied that the above-named has given informed consent.

Witnessed by:

Date:

Name in capitals:

Researcher name:	Signature:
Supervisor name:	Signature:

Zahra Al Habsi

Interview Guide Appendix (6)

Section A: Background of the Participant

1. How long you have been working for this Hotel?
2. What are your main responsibilities?

Section B: CSR in Hospitality Industry

3. Why do you think that CSR is important for the Hotel industry?
4. In your opinion, what are the elements of good CSR in the hospitality industry?
5. What are the benefits and challenges in implementing CSR in the hotel industry?
6. How do you practice CSR in your organisation?
7. How does implementing CSR help you to meet your organisational goals?
8. What are the key factors that help in enhancing employee motivation for implementing CSR?

Section C: Employer Branding

9. To what extent do you believe that employer branding is important for the hotel industry?
10. How does your organisation build employer branding?
11. To what extent do you believe CSR helps in developing employer branding?
12. Does employer branding help in implementing the CSR?
13. To what extent do you believe that businesses in the hospitality industry need to modify their current practices in order to implement CSR and enhance their employer branding?
14. How does employer branding impact employees?

Section D: Value Creation

15. How do you create value for your employees?
16. How does CSR help in creating value for employees?
17. How does employer branding create value for employees?
18. How does value creation impact employees' satisfaction, performance and loyalty?
19. Who do you think gains more from value creation? Is it the organisation or employees?
20. How does value creation for employees support sustainable CSR and employer branding?

Section F: Others

21. Do you have anything else to say?

> **Closing the Interview:**
>
> - Thanking the interviewee for their participation in this research work
> - Asking the interviewee if he/she has any documents related to what has been discussed during the interview