Adopting CS towards International Hotels' B2B customers in international markets
A Qualitative study in B2B context
Acknowledgments

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Abstract

Background:

As mentioned by the hoteliers in our study, the Saudi Arabian markets are not in a full usage or application of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). There have been several reviews formed by the United Nation Development Program show the efforts done by the different sectors of the country to reach the 2030 Agenda which aim for a sustainable development. Sustainability became a requirement for any business to start in the region. CS has changed the way Saudi hotels market are conducting their business a few years ago. Besides that, doing business online has also been an important factor of this change. In many cases, being sustainable might be very costly to apply to many kinds of businesses, and for that reason companies must plan well. So, the companies should take into consideration several factors that might affect their relation with their B2B customers.

Problem Discussion:

There has been a huge pressure from customers and the public on companies to perform their business in an environmentally sustainable way. The increased number of hotels which led to higher competition in the region causing the companies in the hotels industry to carefully manage their B2B relationship. Second is the obligatory laws for companies to apply CS actions. Sustainable behaviors have today grown to become a compulsion to practice; however, these actions are not limited to the B2C sector of a business, CS has become a vital part of marketing strategies for business within B2B markets. In spite CS has proven to be advantageous to be practiced with B2B customers, the research on the subject has been very limited. The research and studies towards CS and CSR have been limited to B2C markets Due to the lack of enough research on the subject of being sustainability and its relationship to B2B customers, this paper will dig deep to fill this gap.

Purpose:

The aim of this research paper is to uncover the hotels CS and CSR strategies that hoteliers' practice with their B2B customers. While also considering the aspect of CS in markets where these hotels are gradually indulging into it, such as the Saudi Arabian Market. This research paper’s goal is to analyze and study different approaches for hoteliers that could be beneficial for them focused towards their business customer and guide them to gain competitive advantage and turn it into a profitable business decision through building and strengthening their relationships with their B2B customers.

Research Question:
1. What are the current CS strategies practiced by international five-star hotel chains situated in Saudi Arabia?

2. How can these hotel’s CS strategies be developed and adopted to positively influence and strengthen its relationship with their B2B customers internationally?

Methodology:
The authors of this study have been using qualitative method as their research approach which gave them the way in order to deeply understand the application of CS actions and its relation with the pricing strategies chosen by the companies in the hotel industry. The theory was collected from different database, and the empirical data was collected from 9 interviews within 3 hotels. The data collected was from high ranked journals. As for the type of interviews, it was semi-structured interviews. The authors used open questions to give a space to the interviewees to discuss in depth the topic of the question.

Conclusion:
This study shows that within the hotel industry social sustainability dimension of CS and instrumental theories of CSR, these hotels could develop and strengthen their relationships with their B2B customers as well as suppliers. Within the academic literature CS has been categorized into three sections; environment, that actions to sustain the planet, social, that is working for the welfare of the people and lastly economical that is the financial benefits gained from CS activities. In this study, the authors concluded that the international five-star hotel chains residing within Saudi Arabia have not been actively working toward their CS and CSR behaviors.

Keywords:
Corporate Sustainability, Corporate Social Responsibility, Business Customers, Hotel Industry, IMP Group
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List of Abbreviations
CSR    Corporate Social Responsibility
CSP    Corporate Social Performance
EM     Environmental Management
CS     Corporate Sustainability
1. Introduction

The introduction section will include a background of the topic with a discussion of the importance of the topic and the research gap. Furthermore, there will be presented the purpose if the paper with the research questions.

1.1. Background
According to Montiel (2008) within the subject of voluntary business behaviors there are many different sub-topics that have been categories and studied in business literature. Terms such as corporate social responsibility (CSR), corporate social performance (CSP), environmental management (EM) and corporate sustainability (CS). Lo (2010)’s study states that business terms such as corporate sustainability (CS) and corporate social responsibility (CSR) hold the same core idea of a business practicing voluntary actions. Acting socially responsible for a firm is going beyond what is required by law to do; “A firm is not being socially responsible if it merely complies with the minimum requirement of the law. . . It’s a firm’s acceptance of a social obligation beyond the requirement of the law” (Davies, 1973, p.313). Wempe and Kaptein (2002) states that CS is a ‘ultimate goal’ when a business aims to practice these voluntary actions. CSR is said to be a branch within the broad aspect of CS, CSR activities need to be adopted by a business to be able to successfully implement CS (Lo, 2010). Furthermore, the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which is also called the 17 Goals to Transform Our World (un.org, 2019). The UN is targeting to achieve the 17 goals by 2030, which are: "1: No Poverty, 2: Zero Hunger, 3: Good Health and Well-being, 4: Quality Education, 5: Gender Equality, 6: Clean Water and Sanitation, 7: Affordable and Clean Energy, 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth, 9: Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure, 10: Reduced Inequality, 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities, 12: Responsible Consumption and Production, 13: Climate Action, 14: Life Below Water, 15: Life on Land, 16: Peace and Justice Strong Institutions, 17: Partnerships to achieve the Goal" (un.org, 2019). The target of SDG 17 is to increase and support the implementation of all the goals (Ibid). It is used as a method to insure the achievement of the other 16 goals.

In order for these 17 goals to be achieved, each country should be responsible for developing its own economic and social sustainability (un.org, 2019). The process of
implementing the SDG in each country is called "Localizing the SDGs". “All over the planet, individual people, universities, governments and institutions and organizations of all kinds work on several goals at the same time” (Ibid). It mainly focuses on public and private sectors working together to achieve a smooth and mutual beneficial sustainable change. However, it also includes private organizations working together forming partnerships to achieve global sustainability standards.

According to hoteliers, business markets such as the Saudi Arabian hotel industry are yet to fully take on the practices of CS or even CSR (Interviewee 6, 2019, pers. comm., 21). Although, hotels have taken socially responsible actions, however, the practices have been limited and have taken a philanthropic approach to it. As of yet, the international hotel chains have not indulged in a different approach towards their CS actions that aims at their B2B customers (Ibid). The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia decided to volunteer by having a strong obligation to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The three goals of the Saudi Vision 2030 are: "[...]. a vibrant society, a thriving economy and an ambitious nation and shares the same timeframe and ultimate goals with the SDGs agenda" (Sustainabledevelopment.un.org, 2019). In order for these goals to be achieved, the government started taking action by making national entities including the government sector, the private sector, and non-government organizations to accomplish the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (Ibid). The figure below shows an example of one of the ministries targeting the implementation to all SDGs goals.

Dwyer and Tanner Jr. (2002) defines B2B customers as; “firms that consume a product or service, government agencies, institutions, and firms that purchase and resell the product.” There are three dimensions of business relationships that creates the network of the company: 1- links between activities. 2- ties of resources. 3- bonds between actors. The combination of the three dimensions affects the organization's B2B relationships of its direct partners and other relationships that surround the firm (Proença and Castro, 2007; Ford and Mouzas, 2013).

One of the four CSR theories that could be adopted by businesses and integrated within their marketing strategy to strengthen their B2B relationships is the...
instrumental theories. An effective use of Instrumental theories of CSR can lead to stronger relationships with a businesses’ customers along with positively influencing their industrial brand equity (Homburg et al., 2013; Lai et al., 2010; Luo and Zheng, 2012). Instrumental theories are when a business aims their sustainability strategies toward their financial goals (Friedman, 1970), however, that does not imply that these businesses completely disregard the social welfare of the society (Carrol, 1991; Mitchell et al., 1997; Odgen and Watson, 1999; Varadarajan and Menon, 1988). Social sustainability is considered as an essential element for sustainable development as it gained increased recognition. It also gained political and governmental approval to be included in sustainable development agenda (Colantonio and Dixon, 2011). It is argued that social sustainability can give firms the chance in having competitive advantage which will directly affect the firm's profit and relationships with their business customers (Longoni and Cagliano, 2015).

1.2. Problem Discussion
Since over 20 years, authors of academic literature as well as businesses are increasingly paying more attention to being socially responsible and indulging into CS actions (Dell'Atti et al., 2017; Freeman, et al., 2010; Hörisch, et al, 2015; Ortas, Gallego-Alvarez and Álvarez, 2015; Pollach, 2014). Within CS the subject of CSR has been analysed and reviewed by several academic authors from over five decades. CSR has now been developed into an international issue by practitioners and authors (Closs, et a, 2011; Crane et al., 2008; Rodriguez et al. 2006; Scherer and Palazzo, 2007; McWilliams and Siegel, 2001; Seuring and Mueller 2008; Van Marrewijk, 2003). This is due to the constantly increasing stakeholder's consciousness and demand about environmental issues today. It has also influenced and pressured companies to be more socially responsible (Čarnogurský et al., 2015; Driessen and Hillebrand, 2013; Pollach, 2014). According to Montiel (2008)’s research paper there have been several academic studies carried out on the subject of suitability, however, the main emphasis of these papers has only been towards CSR and not CS. According to Lourenço et al., companies are facing increasing pressure to start associating and applying sustainable developments in order to "balancing environmental, economic and social well-being" (Lourenço et al., 2016). The CSR activities can go in line with the 17 UNs 2030 SGDs goals as mentioned in the background section. Which will make organizations working together toward one common goal (un.org, 2019). Organization looking forward to apply some or all of the 17 SDGs goal will contribute to solve social, economic and environmental problems troubling the world. For the measurement of the implementation of the SDGs goals, there is an annual report provided: “It is abundantly clear that a much deeper, faster and more ambitious response is needed to unleash the social and economic transformation
needed to achieve our 2030 goals.” United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres (un.org, 2019). Therefore, companies will start applying the CSR that achieves the SDGs goals which can affect the quality of the relationship between B2B organizations (Blick and Axelsson, 2016). When implementing SDGs, the organizations will have to understand the opportunities it can create for a company. Survival of businesses in the long-term relies on their ability to fulfill their customers' demands, consumers today prefer opting for businesses that portray CS behaviors (Driessen and Hillebrand, 2013). Pai et al. (2013) stated within his study that the debate of sustainability has evolved from “weather a company should engage in CSR” to “how a company should engage in CSR to reap it benefits”. Sustainable actions are concluded to be an economic standard in today’s international business market and not just as an ethical responsibility of a business (Bhattacharya and Sen, 2003). Bhattacharya and Sen (2003)’s study states that over 80% of the top 500 largest businesses practice sustainability and communicate their socially responsible actions to its customers. It was an interesting discovery to find that the top 500 businesses in the world are mainly B2B companies and not B2C companies (Han and Childs, 2016). Industrial branding has been gradually gaining importance since the commoditization of industrial goods and the growth of B2B purchases online (van Riel et al. 2005).

The hotel industry within Saudi Arabia is yet to practice CS behaviors towards their business customers and suppliers. Currently, the hotels are at the introductory stage of CSR practices and that are mainly focused toward the welfare of the society (Interviewee 6 2019, pers. comm., 21). According to Homburg et al., (2013) sustainable behaviors have today grown to become a compulsion to practice, however these actions are not limited to the B2C sector of a business, CS has become a vital part of marketing strategies for business within B2B markets. In spite CS has proven to be advantageous to be practiced with B2B customers, the research on the subject has been very limited. The research and studies towards CS and CSR have been limited to B2C markets (Ganesan et al., 2009; Sharma et al., 2010).

Authors such as Han and Childs (2016) have argued for the importance of conducting studies on the subject of sustainability and its relation to business customers. In addition, evidence concluded within academic journals have been found focused towards the airline industry, whereas, studies on the hotel industry have gotten little attention (Abrate et al., 2012; Chung, 2000; Hung et al, 2010; Wang et al., 2015). A major research gap has been discovered on sustainability and its relationship to B2B customers (Han and Childs, 2016). Due to the limited literature found on the subject of CS and CSR targeted towards B2B customer within the hotel industry and the noticeably growing interest and demands to comply by. This paper aims to make a
contribution towards filling the existing research gap for academic literature as well as practitioners to be able to make well informed business decisions.

1.3 Purpose
The aim of this research paper is to uncover the hotels CS and CSR strategies that hoteliers’ practice with their B2B customers. While also considering the aspect of CS in markets where these hotels are gradually indulging into it, such as the Saudi Arabian Market. This research paper’s goal is to analyze and study different approaches for hoteliers that could be beneficial for them focused towards their business customer and guide them to gain competitive advantage and turn it into a profitable business decision through building and strengthening their relationships with their B2B customers. While reading this paper, the reader will be informed about how international hotels chains could deal with CS and CSR when working with B2B customers. This research paper’s aim is to make a contribution towards the chosen topic with reliable facts, findings and a thorough analysis.

1.4. Research Question

1. What are the current CS strategies practiced by international five-star hotel chains situated in Saudi Arabia?

2. How can these hotel’s CS strategies be developed and adopted to positively influence and strengthen its relationship with their B2B customers internationally?

1.5. Delimitations
To be able to collect empirical data for this research paper, three different hotels all situated in Saudi Arabia were interviewed. From each hotel three employees were asked to join a face-to-face interview; all the chosen employees had a say in the decision-making process of their pricing strategies. However, since all the hotels that were interviewed were all situated within Saudi Arabia, it could be critiqued that the empirical findings collected to analyze this study’s results cannot be generalized as it is limited to a region. However, this study aims to uncover and understand the market situation of countries, such as Saudi Arabia, that are not as actively involved with CS. therefore, this study could be considered for countries with similar market situation as Saudi Arabia’s. On the other hand, all the hotels studied are internationally well renowned 5-star hotel chains. Hence, the empirical data may be not as limited as the
The reader might first assume it to be, since their work standards policies and strategies are internationally communicated.

1.6. Outline of the Thesis
This thesis starts with introducing the topic with a general explanation of the main concepts. In order to fulfill the stated aims of the paper, qualitative method has been chosen to assess business model literature. Further literature review will be written to explain in detail all the theoretical aspects. Later on, the empirical findings from interviews with three international Saudi Arabian hotels will be analyzed. Lastly, a conclusion will be presented to answer the thesis research question.
2. Literature Review

This section will include subchapters with detailed explanation of the main concepts from previous studies and literature. In order for the readers to have background of the concepts that will act as a guideline for the analysis.

2.1. Conceptualizing Corporate Sustainability (CS)

2.1.1. Corporate Sustainability and Triple bottom line approach

Acting socially responsible or being sustainable for companies means these companies work towards mutually beneficial goals for all their stakeholders such as their employees, community, environment, suppliers, as well as the government (Xu and Gursoy, 2015). As mentioned earlier in the study (see section 1.1), CS is said to be the 'ultimate goal' for a business aiming to be socially responsible. CSR falls under the umbrella of CS, however, it is a crucial aspect and needs to be practiced by business aiming to successfully implement CS (Lo, 2010). CSR will be further elaborated later on in the study (see section 2.2). According to several authors, corporate sustainability (CS) has been divided into three subcategories; (1) environmental sustainability, (2) social sustainability, and (3) economic sustainability dimensions (Xu and Gursoy, 2015). Amini and Bienstock (2014) describe the term corporate sustainability to be when a company aiming to become or remain sustainable for the long run should take into account of all of its dimensions that are as mentioned above environmental, social and economic. Furthermore, Elkington (2004) describes the same concept in his triple bottom line approach towards corporate sustainability. Wempe and Kaptein (2002) illustrates the triple bottom line approach to be centered between three P’s to a business that are its profit, the people (stakeholders), and planet that it operates within. The triple bottom line approach suggests that for an organization to be sustainability successful in long-term, would require them to work simultaneously with all the three sustainability dimensions and not just focus on one in the short run. Moreover, within the academic literature these dimensions are said to be correlated to one another and have a positive effect on each other. For this reason, an organization can not solely focus on its economic
sustainability and separating it from its environmental and social sustainability (Elkington, 2004).

2.1.2. Social Sustainability

The ‘Triple Bottom Line’ model has been developed to explain and justify development that raises economic growth while preserving social inclusion and reducing environmental effects (Colantonio and Dixon, 2011). Social sustainability is one of the three categories of the triple bottom line that deals with social implications (Wempe and Kaptein, 2002; Colantonio and Dixon, 2011).

According to Longoni and Cagliano, "Social sustainability refers to actively supporting the preservation and creation of skills as well as the capabilities of future generations, promoting health and supporting equal and democratic treatments that allow for good quality of life both inside and outside of the company context" (Longoni and Cagliano, 2015, p.218).

Social sustainability is considered as an essential element for sustainable development as it gained increased recognition. It also gained political and governmental approval to be included in sustainable development agenda (Colantonio and Dixon, 2011). There are elements that need to be considered for social sustainability to be accomplished which are the ability to regenerate, including more swathes of cities not
only employments problems (Ibid). Social sustainability actions could allow companies to gain competitive advantage against their competitors that will directly influence the firm's profits and the relationships with their business customers (Longoni and Cagliano, 2015). It is also a fundamental element for any business (Popovic et al., 2018).

2.1.3. Effects of Corporate Sustainability within the hospitality industry

Within the hospitality industry many companies are indulging into the sustainability aspect of the environment. Examples of acting socially responsible for a hotel include using greener products, administer environmentally friendly service processes, greener product usage, life extension of products, recycling, reducing pollution, usage of environment management systems (Xu and Gursoy, 2015). Within the hospitality industry, the three dimensions of corporate sustainability have been previously practiced. The environmental sustainability dimension has been implemented through being friendly to the environment and observing the company’s effects on the environment. For example, buying greener products, innovating green service processes, extension of their products life cycle, decreasing pollution and recycling (Xu and Gursoy, 2015). With the social sustainability dimension of CS hotels aim towards the welfare of the community and positively influence the internal and external stakeholders, that are company staff, business customers, retailer, suppliers, government and the community they operate in (Xu and Gursoy, 2015). Lastly, in the economic sustainability dimension, companies within the hospitality industry aim towards positively influencing their financial goals by controlling their costs and the growth of their revenue and increased market share (Ibid).

According to several authors, companies that act socially responsible results in them benefiting their companies overall performance, such as higher customer satisfaction (Gao and Mattila, 2014), increased business customers’ willingness to visit (Chen and Tung, 2014), customers’ readiness to accept higher price tags (Kang et al., 2012), along with better brand image (Jeong et al., 2014), customer loyalty (Martínez and Bosque, 2013), and job satisfaction (Lee et al., 2013). The above-mentioned benefits ultimately result in higher demand for the product or services in the market (Chen and Tung, 2014). Moreover, companies that produce higher financial performances are able to land investors relatively easier than compared to those that do not (Biddel et al., 2009). According to Chen and Tung (2014) and Berezan et al., (2013) companies that indulge into sustainability activities have the power of convincing their business customers to purchase and repurchase their products. Specific to companies within the hospitality industry, several authors have argued that consumers would be willing to pay higher prices because of their concerns about hurting the environment (Kang et
McWilliams and Siegel (2001) stated within their study that sustainability activities of a business ultimately lead to enhanced profits in the long-term.

2.2 Corporate Social Responsibility CSR

2.2.1 CSR definition and attributes
According to Blenkhorn and MacKenzie (2017) the concept of CSR has been evolved within the recent years, CSR begin with abiding the law, however, it goes a long stretch from there. CSR has been divided into three categories on the responsibility continuum, the lowest end, the center and the highest end of the continuum. Businesses that merely practice what is a compulsion enforced by the law and do-nothing further stand on the lowest end of the responsibility continuum. Such business entities practice necessary CSR actions enforced by the government in order to avoid fines and penalties of breaking the law. On the other extreme of the responsibility continuum, that is the highest end, are those businesses that practice CSR solely out of altruism. These are businesses that practice socially responsible activities more than what they are expected to by the law, without any expectations or financial goals associated with their social activities. They aim their socially responsible activities towards what is considered to be the best thing for everyone and not just their business. Lastly, business that stand of the center of the continuum are those businesses that practice their CSR with the aim of gaining profits (Blenkhorn and MacKenzie, 2017; Walton, 1967). This is due to the fact that a growing number of customers’ purchasing decisions are dependent on the brand association with their CSR (Brown and Dacin 1997; Klein and Dawar 2004; Sen and Bhattacharya 2003). These businesses practice more CSR actions than businesses on the lowest end on the continuum, however, their actions are driven by their financial goals and not what is best for the society (Walton, 1967).

2.2.2 CSR theories
CSR theories have been categorized into four groups; (1) Political theories, these are a businesses’ political power that they hold within the community that they operate within. This theory implies that the businesses use of these powers appropriately for the 'better good', an example of such political power is lobbying (Menon and Menon,1997; Frynas, J. and Stephens, S., 2014); (2) Integrative theories imply that a business would have to integrate the society’s social demands with their own operations. This means that business would have to incorporate and consider the interests of all of their stakeholders into the decision-making process of their business (Jones, 1980; Wartick and Rude,
1986). This theory aims to satisfy the social norms of the society they operate in, in order to benefit from the support and loyalty they would gain of their stakeholders (Osterhus, 1997); (3) Ethical theories, are the ethical social responsibilities of a business that they have towards the society, for example, universal human rights and environmental issues; Lastly, (4) Instrumental theories, are when a business aims their CSR behaviours towards gaining competitive advantage through enhanced profits. The businesses’ social activities are used as a tool to achieve their financial goals, in doing so these businesses also contribute in the welfare of the society’s social issues (Varadarajan and Menon, 1988). According to Blenkhorn and MacKenzie (2017)’s study the four CSR theories are consistent with a business’ CSR involvement on the responsibility continuum. Businesses with the use these CSR theories position themselves on the responsibility continuum. These businesses do so through implementing one or a combination of the above-mentioned CSR theories (Blenkhorn and MacKenzie, 2017).

2.2.3 Instrumental Theories and Business Customers
It was concluded within his study that businesses are responsible for and aim at achieving their financial goals that eventually benefits their shareholders, while behaving socially and legally responsible (Windsor, 2001). Other authors such as Drucker (1984) emphasized on businesses converting their CSR into financial opportunities. He described it as: "But the proper ‘social responsibility’ of business is to tame the dragon, that is to turn a social problem into economic opportunity and economic benefit, into productive capacity, into human competence, into well-paid jobs, and into wealth." (Drucker, 1984, p. 62). This, however, does not necessarily imply that businesses that operate with goals of increased profits do not consider the interests of their other stakeholders. On the contrary, taking into account the interests of a businesses’ stakeholders can in the long-term lead to increased shareholder value (Mitchell et al., 1997). Several studies have argued for the relationship between CSR and financial performance to be positively influencing one (Frooman, 1997; Griffin and Mahon, 1997). McWilliams and Siegel (2001)’s study also argues the same, their study concludes that allocating a budget towards CSR activities of a business is a productive business decision that could lead to greater competitive advantage and ultimately increased profits. CSR activities have been argued to be most financial beneficial when a business collaborates their mission with their CSR behavior, as compared to other sorts of donations (Burke and Lodgson, 1996).
According to Carter and Jennings (2002) and Homburg et al. (2013) a businesses’ CSR activities have been concluded to have positive influences on their business partners, given that they are themselves actively involved in their CSR behaviors. These positive effects include development of trust as well as commitment between B2B customers (Carter and Jennings, 2002; Lai et al., 2010). CSR behaviors of a business has a significant impact on their industrial brand equity (Lai et al., 2010). Studies have also concluded that business customers that actively practice CSR behaviors have experienced increased improvement within their channel performance (Luo and Zheng, 2012). According to Homburg et al. (2013) practicing instrumental theory of CSR has a direct impact on trust between business customers. While a business taking a philanthropic approach towards its CSR has been argued to result in “company identification” by its customers (Ibid).

Several studies have concluded that the end consumers today prefer purchasing products or services of a brand that practices CSR (Blenkhorn and MacKenzie 2017; Brown and Dacin 1997; Klein and Dawar 2004; Sen and Bhattacharya 2003; Walton,1967). This has encouraged B2B businesses or businesses that deal with B2B markets to start practicing CSR within their brand management strategy (Blenkhorn and MacKenzie, 2017). A brand’s value is within the competitive advantage it offers through differentiation (Beverland et al. 2007; Webster and Keller 2004). This type of differentiation built through B2B branding is of key importance since it is usually difficult for the competitors to imitate it (Beverland 2005; Davis and Devinney 1997; Mudambi 2002). B2B companies’ brands hold more value when their stakeholder’s needs are satisfied, which today are through their CSR involvement (Jones, 2005). A brand association with CSR positively influences emotional perceptions of B2B customers about brands that they are considering to buy from. This results in buyers preferring products and services from these brands (Pai et al., 2013).

2.3 CSR and importance of B2B relationship building in IMP Group Theory

Business relationships are defined by the IMP Group as a complicated mixture of exchange processes and acclimation attitude of firms, which take place through business interactions between companies (Proença and Castro, 2007). "Business networking” is the term used by the IMP group to indicate to the effort to create awareness to change and improve the structure used through the interaction of relationships. these interactions are considered as the core of managing the businesses
(Ford and Mouzas, 2013). According to Ford and Håkansson “IMP research has also been concerned with the process through which this structure of relatedness evolves as the activities, resources and actors associated with different companies are constantly adapted in relation to each other.” (Ford and Håkansson, 2013, p.1019).

As shown in figure 2 below, it was indicated by the IMP group members that building relationships relies on creating network through transactions of resources and activities (ARA) model between buyer–seller (Baxter, 2012). Both sides, buyer and seller, have resources that helps in building the relationship, which can be information or tangible resources (Ibid). The ARA model consists of three main factors which are activities, resources and actors. This process is used as a key aspect of B2B relationships (Lenney and Easton, 2009; Ford and Håkansson, 2013). Business interaction is not only about the process of communication between the firms but also about conducting commitments that leads to a long-term relationship (Lenney and Easton, 2009; Ford and Håkansson, 2013).

IMP researchers concentrate on business relationships that plays an important role to the participants within it. Usually the interaction within these relationships is intensive and has a long-term approach between a large combination of participants activities and resources which lead to a strong bond and harmonization between them (Ford and Håkansson, 2013). The participants within these interactions forms a kind of conference where important cases and matters are discussed. These interactions can form economic benefits to these participants that wasn't applicable when a single participant act alone with its resources and activities (Ford and Håkansson, 2013). Most managers of a large number of companies have a strong concern in forming theses interaction and economic interdependencies. On the other hand, it should be understandable that these long-term investments on these relationships doesn't prevent issues and competition between them. But the main concerns and goals of those relationships between the companies and collaborations, agreements and reciprocity, so that the business environment can be described as being stable interdependent and adaptable (Ford and Håkansson, 2013).

IMP Group contributions confirmed the importance of having continuous evolution of knowledge about the business customers as the “[...] process involving interactions among people and organisations with different backgrounds, resources, predispositions and insights.” (Morlacchi et al., 2005, p.6); those differences can affect the B2B relation which will indeed affect the whole process of sales (Morlacchi et al., 2005).

According to Proença and Castro, "Buyers and sellers in business markets often have mutual convergence of interests and long-lasting business relationships tend to
develop as risk reduction strategies, and as a recognition of mutual dependence."
(Proença and Castro, 2007; P.64).

According to Hakansson and Snehota (1995), business relationships is divided into
three dimensions: "1- links between activities. 2- ties of resources. 3- bonds between
actors (Hakansson and Snehota, 1995 cited in Proença and Castro, 2007:64). All the
three dimensions are established as a combined structure called “the network” which
include all actions done toward the interaction of a company that affects its
relationships of its direct partners and other relationships that surround the firm
(Proença and Castro, 2007). The bond between the actors will require all the parties
involved not to change or develop any strategy independently (Ford and Mouzas,
2013).

Furthermore, there are some factors that help the firms in structuring and managing
different types of interrelationship: technology, knowledge, managerial systems,
social relations and legal bonds (Ibid).
The importance of industrial relations is also supported by Proença and Castro, as organizations have to use transaction-oriented method that focuses on increasing sales by approaching marketing methods instead of just showing the products’ or services’ advantages and by developing involvements of both suppliers and buyers, which is a precondition for better relationship (Proença and Castro, 2007). The act of the IMP group toward the business relationships is a useful theoretical structure to have efficient knowledge and understanding of the dynamic changes like growth, development, and change within an organization of business-to-business marketing (Proença and Castro, 2007).

Moreover, according to Naudé et al., "business-to-business marketing is not about something that a company does to attract more anonymous customers ‘out there’." (Naudé et al., 2009, p.493). In other words, organizations when dealing with B2B marketing should be aware of complicated relationships and interactions, in which they have to follow the actors and actions that will help them in creating suitable value (Naudé et al., 2009). Therefore, the IMP group consider those actions to be an obligatory step in managing B2B relations (Ibid).

According to many studies, CSR has a great effect of the relationships. It is also confirmed that the relationship quality can be higher by the advantages of the CSR activities the stakeholders can get (Blick and Axelsson, 2016).

It can be indicated that the implementation of CSR actions can attract specific stakeholders that are favorable to the company. Those CSR activities in combination...
with the positive stakeholders will result to a more positive behavior towards the whole company itself (Blick and Axelsson, 2016). For the company to be able to get the positive response from the CSR activities applied toward a specific customer, they should be able to show their stakeholders the advantages they will get in return first. therefore "This will in turn influence the quality of the relationship between the two parties, a claim that has solid roots within both stakeholder- and relationship marketing theory" (Blick and Axelsson, 2016, p.15).

2.4 Theoretical synthesis

The theoretical synthesis has been developed based on two major topics of the thesis within industrial marketing, that are; CS and importance and understanding of B2B relationships through the use of IMP Group Theory. The IMP theory suggests that the B2B relationships are complex and longer termed as compared to B2C. B2B relationships require a network through transactions of resources and activities. Both the parties involved in a B2B relationship have resources that they could use to develop their relationship. Companies practicing CS and CSR actions could lead to stronger B2B relationships with their Business customers and suppliers. Within CS the Social sustainability dimension and the instrumental theory of CSR could both strategically implement their resources toward the B2B customers of the company.

Instrumental theory and Social sustainability actions of a company could lead in them gaining competitive advantage amongst many others that have been proven to have a positive impact on their profits and business relationships. Hence, Social sustainability and the instrumental theory could both be practiced and strategize with their focus on positively influencing their business customers and suppliers. That are proven within the IMP group theory to be beneficial and profitable for companies in the long run. The diagram below illustrates our theoretical synthesis.
Figure 5: Theoretical Synthesis Model (Own Illustration)
3. Methodology

This section will present the methodology used that was selected in order to conduct this thesis. Also, explanation about different choices of methods will be presented in detail throughout the subchapter, followed by an explanation of why a certain method or approach was chosen by the authors.

3.1 Research purpose
According to Corbin and Strauss (2008), exploratory approach is when the researchers are looking for perceived understanding of how a specific problem was demonstrated and to develop ideas related to the specified problem (Corbin and Strauss, 2008). Exploratory research approach was chosen for this study by the authors, as the research paper aims to explore the practices of CS and CSR strategies that hoteliers’ practice with their B2B customers. In this bachelor's thesis, the authors are aiming to discover aspect of CS in markets where hotels are gradually indulging into it. The authors will analyze and study different approaches for hoteliers that could be beneficial for them focused towards their business customer and guide them to gain competitive advantage and turn it into a profitable business decision through building and strengthening their relationships with their B2B customers.

3.2 Research Approaches

3.2.1 Inductive, Deductive, or Abductive
According to Krippendorff, there are three research approaches which are inductive, deductive, and abductive (Krippendorff, 2013). In inductive approach, researchers begin their study through an analysis of the different empirical findings they have collected by searching for the similarities and variations within the findings, then the collected findings are analyzed with academic literature found on the subject and moved to modes of theoretical concepts (Schreier, 2012). This approach is also called data-driven or text-driven research (Schreier, 2012; Krippendorff, 2013). On the other hand, deductive approach is moving from theory found on the topic to empirical findings by testing or analyzing the existing theories with real situations (Schreier, 2012). An abductive approach is a combination of both inductive and deductive
approach (Schreier, 2012; Krippendorff, 2013). This approach is also called complementary and it is mostly used in qualitative analysis (Schreier, 2012; Krippendorff, 2013).

First the authors have conducted a literature review about corporate sustainability and Corporate Social Responsibility in B2B context, it was clear to the authors that there is a need for more empirical data to create more theories about how effective is corporate sustainability activities are on hotel industry toward their B2B customers. It was unclear for the authors why all the interviewed hotels were not successful in their experience of applying sustainable activities while theories support applying CS. Therefore, the authors decided to focus on how international hotels chains could deal with CS and CSR when working with B2B customers. Within this research paper, the authors applied the inductive approach that has allowed them to use theories as an inspiration to find patterns within the academic literature to develop an understanding about the subject for them to be able to collect in depth and a wider scope into their empirical finding for them to be able to answer the thesis research questions.

3.2.2 Quantitative vs. Qualitative Research Approach
Before collecting data, a researcher should decide which research approach they will follow, either quantitative methods or qualitative method (Bryman and Bell, 2015).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Qualitative</th>
<th>Quantitative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conceptual</td>
<td>Concerned with discovering facts about social phenomena</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assumes a dynamic and negotiated reality</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodological</td>
<td>Data are collected through measuring things</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data are collected through participant observation and interviews</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data are analysed by themes from descriptions by informants</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data are reported in the language of the informant</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source: Adapted from Minichiello et al. (1990, p. 5)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 6: Quantitative vs. Qualitative (Minichiello, 1990)

Quantitative method, as shown above in figure 6, is all about comparing numerical data (Bryman and Bell, 2015). A qualitative literature review is a collection of facts
and data, that is then analyzed in order to grab the reader's attention onto the existing theories and research gaps. On the other hand, qualitative research is a market research method that focuses on collecting data through open-ended and conversational means of communication. First, the researcher should have a clear ‘‘What”, ‘‘How” or ‘‘Why” questions that seek to answers (Yin, 2014). Then the researcher begins to collect evidence from theory and real-life cases. The qualitative method shows the relationship between theory and research through interactions between individuals (Bryman and Bell, 2015).

A research approach of a qualitative method has been chosen by the authors of this thesis in order to reach an understanding and in-depth knowledge on how CS and CSR strategies that hoteliers’ practice with their B2B customers. The database the authors used to access relevant articles was through Google Scholar, EBSCO and OneSearch, Linnaeus University (LNU) online database. While for the empirical findings were collected through 9 interviews with three hotels, for more information see section 3.3.3.

3.3. Data collection

3.3.1. Data source
Two sources can be chosen from in academic research, which are primary data and secondary data (Bell et al., 2019). The primary data is the new data collected for the purpose of this study which can be done by interviews, questionnaires, or observations (Ibid). The authors have decided on collecting data by using primary data methods specifically for the aim of this thesis. To be able to get an in depth understanding of how CS influence pricing in variable situations, our primary data will be based on 12 face-to-face interviews that are with three employees from each hotel, within four international hotels chains based within Saudi Arabia. The secondary data is information that is collected for other research purposes (Bell et al., 2019).

We decided to focus mostly on the top-ranking journals to analyze how the implementation of CS influence pricing decisions in today's business to business relations in hotels industry. According to Scientific Journal Rankings, “The set of journals have been ranked according to their SJR and divided into four equal groups, four quartiles. Q1 comprises a quarter of the journals with the highest values, Q2 the second highest values, Q3 the third highest values and Q4 the lowest values” (Scimagojr.com., 2018). The academic literature used to support this study were drawn from scientific journals. The authors concentrated on choosing mostly the
journals that ranked Q1 and Q2. A table of the journals used throughout the thesis can be found in the appendix.

### 3.3.2. Interviews

There are different types of interviews such as structures interview or standardized, semi-structured interview and unstructured interview (Bell et al., 2019). The authors used the semi-structured interviews, in which the authors have a list of questions but a follow-up question can be added to the interview (Bell et al., 2019) to have a full in depth understanding. The questions of the interview were open-ended questions to give the chance to the interviewee to give us more accurate and detailed answers. Initially, one corporate salesman was approached and interviewed from each hotel, which later turned into the method of snowball sampling and staff members from different authoritative levels were interviewed (See Table below). The snowball sampling method aided in selecting staff members that are closely working and held good knowledge of pricing strategies for their corporate customers of the hotel from different hierarchical levels. Furthermore, it was ensured that all of the interviewees had been working at their respectable hotels from at least three years to ensure they had good knowledge and experience within their fields to be able to provide valid and reliable information. The interviews lasted for an approximate of 30 mins each, and it was conducted in English language. The interviewees requested from us to stay anonymous that is why we did not add the names of the interviewee and the hotels. Transparency is a measure of the quality of qualitative research (Bell et al., 2019). Even though the anonymous interviewee could affect the transparency of the study, the authors decided to follow the ethical principles of harm to participants by following the interviewees request to stay anonymous. According to Bryman and Bell, it is the researcher's responsibility to prevent any physical or emotional harm that the participants could exposed throughout the research process (Bell et al., 2019). The interview questions can be found in the appendix.

Later On, more information was needed from the interviewees of hotel A, B, and C about the UN 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) implementation of each hotel. Therefore, an email was sent to each hotel on the 25th of September 2019, and the authors got a fast reply with the needed information from hotel A on 25th of September 2019 and from hotel B and C on the 27th of September 2019. The questions sent to the interviewees are:

1. When was your hotel brand established? And where?
2. What is your hotel’s international CSR strategy? Are they aligned with the UN’s 2030 SDGs?
3. Has your hotel focused any of their CS resources towards their B2B customers international and locally at your property?

By sending those questions the authors were able to know how many and what are the SDGs that they have adopted and what are the effects of these activities.

Table 1: Interviews

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hotels</th>
<th>No. of corporate customers</th>
<th>No. of rooms</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Type of interview and Language</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>300+</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>Interviewee 1</td>
<td>17 April 2019</td>
<td>Corporate salesmen</td>
<td>Face-to-Face In English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Interviewee 2</td>
<td>17 April 2019</td>
<td>B2B Sales Manager</td>
<td>Face-to-Face In English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Interviewee 3</td>
<td>18 April 2019</td>
<td>Director of Sales and Marketing</td>
<td>Face-to-Face In English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>280</td>
<td>374</td>
<td>Interviewee 4</td>
<td>21 April 2019</td>
<td>Sales Manager</td>
<td>Face-to-Face In English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Interviewee 5</td>
<td>21 April 2019</td>
<td>B2B Sales Manager</td>
<td>Face-to-Face In English</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### 3.4 Operationalization

As this study was conducted by inductive approach, the authors first had an overview of the available literature by reading several articles about the topic in order to find a research gap and form a research questions. Second, the authors collected the needed empirical data by conducting interviews in order to answer the thesis research questions by having a relevant interview questions that enabled the authors to receive the needed data. In the table below are the main concepts used in this research paper with the definition and the related questions in the interviews.
## Table 2: Operationalization

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concept</th>
<th>Authors &amp; Year</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Number of Questions From the Interview</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Corporate Sustainability</td>
<td>Xu and Gursoy, 2015; Perez and Bosque, 2014; Amini and Bienstock, 2014;</td>
<td>Corporate Sustainability is when organizations decide to work in a way that is beneficial for both stakeholders and the environment. Corporate Sustainability consists of three categories as mentioned in 2.1.1., environmental sustainability, social sustainability, and economic sustainability dimensions. Each of those three dimensions have an effect on company’s profit, the people (stakeholders), and the planet.</td>
<td>Question No. 6 and 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Elkington 1998, 2004; Wempe and Kaptein, 2002</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corporate Social Responsibility</td>
<td>Blenkhorn and MacKenzie, 2017; Walton, 1967;</td>
<td>CSR has been divided into three categories on the responsibility continuum, the lowest end, the center and the highest end of the continuum. Businesses that merely practice what is a compulsion enforced by the law and do-nothing further stand on the lowest end of the responsibility continuum. Such business entities practice necessary CSR actions enforced by the government in order to avoid fines and penalties of breaking the law.</td>
<td>Question No. 7 and 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corporate Sustainability within the hospitality industry</td>
<td>Xu and Gursoy, 2015; Gao and Mattila, 2014; Chen and Tung, 2014; Kang et al., 2012; Jeong et al., 2014; Martínez</td>
<td>According to several authors, companies that act socially responsible results in them benefiting their company's overall performance, such as higher</td>
<td>Question No. 1-5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
and Bosque, 2013; Biddel, Hilary, and Verdi, 2009

Business relationships are complicated mixture of exchange processes and acclimation attitude of firms, which take place through business interactions between companies.

Question No. 1-5

3.5. Data analysis
According to Saunders et al, data analysis takes place while collecting the data and after.

After collecting the needed empirical findings, the next step will be data analysis. The first step was gathering the information from the interviews by transcribing them. This step will help in having a complete overview of the gathered data (Saunders et al, 2009). Then, the data was structured into relevant information that would help in answering the aim of this study.

There different qualitative data analysis processes based on the different dimensions as shown in figure 7 (Saunders et al, 2009). The process that will be used in this research paper is called grounded theory. "Within this strategy specific analysis procedures are used to build an explanation or to generate a theory around the core or central theme that emerges from your data." (Saunders et al, 2009, p.509). In this analysis method, it is required to compare the collected data and put it in relation with theoretical basis (Ibid).
3.6. Quality criteria
Writing any academic research should take into consideration its validity and quality. It has been proven that the quality of quantitative research can be measured using the two-concept validity and reliability (Yin, 2014). Other researchers assert that other terms should be used when evaluating the quality of qualitative research (Bryman and Bell, 2019). Quality Criteria is defined as trustworthiness, and this term includes measuring the credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability. Credibility is defined as the internal validity of the research, and it concentrates on measuring to what extent the findings are trustworthy. Dependability is also known as reliability, and it refers to the ability to get the same results using similar findings. Conformability examines the level of objectivity of the researchers, and whether they are using the actual data collected or they added things that might change the results (Yin, 2014). So, the authors have chosen these three concepts (Credibility, Dependability, and Conformability) to measure and evaluate the quality of this research.

3.6.1. Credibility
Credibility is used by the researcher to measure their understanding of the social world, in which they try to evaluate to what extent this social world understands and believe on the findings (Bryman and Bell, 2019). To take credibility into consideration on this study, the authors decided to give back the interviewees the collected data so that we can take the confirmation from them that it’s their point of view, not ours. In addition, all our interviews were conducted with the same sample of people in all the different sights to make sure that all of them have the same knowledge of the topic, and can respond to the questions correctly.
3.6.2. Dependability
To take dependability into consideration for this study, the authors were keen on writing everything during the interview, to make sure not to miss any data that might have an impact on the reliability of the study. In addition, the authors got an acceptance from the interviewees to record the interview, so that also the authors keep the reliability of the data as high as possible. The authors used semi-structured interviews in this study, and according to Saunder et al. (2009), semi-structured interview is less reliable, since it only reflects the social world interviewed, and may not have the same results throughout the time, and this is a weakness the authors believe it should be mentioned.

3.6.3. Conformability
While writing a research paper, the author should always make sure that they are objective as much as they can (Bryman and Bell, 2019). For us to ensure that the data we collected is clear from any personal opinion, after transcription of the interviews from the records, it was sent back to the interviewees so that they confirm that this what they said during the interview.

3.7 Ethical Consideration
An important part of any research is to take into account the ethics that should be considered when collecting data (Bryman and Bell, 2019). These ethical considerations are mainly used to protect the rights of the interviewees in a way that prevents any harm to them or to the company’s business (Bryman and Bell, 2091; Saunders et al., 2009). These considerations also give the interviewees to remove any data from the research at any time if needed. It also gives them the right of privacy in a way that they can be anonymous (Ibid).
When taking ethical considerations in our research, the companies requested from us to be anonymous and the authors applied that as shown in the interview's sections, so the authors replaced their names with numbers instead. The authors also informed them about their rights to cancel any data written in the research if it will cause any harm to a person or the company’s business.

3.8 Description of the group’s work process
Both the group members of this thesis Abeer Alzahar and Sarah Tariq through mutual efforts came to the conclusion of the chosen subject of this study. The introduction and problem discussion were written together by the both of them, grammatical and reorganization of the final draft was then done by Sarah. Within the literature review,
Abeer Alzahar focused more toward the CS and business relationships in hotel industry and the IMP group while Sarah worked with the Conceptualization of CS. Within the Empirical findings all the face-to-face interviews were carried out by Sarah due to her residing in Saudi Arabia at the time while Abeer was in Sweden. Meanwhile Abeer focused her time towards finding literature for the methodology part. After the interviews were completed, Abeer and Sarah wrote the empirical findings and the methodology together. The analysis of the paper was written together as well, with constantly exchanging thoughts and ideas throughout the writing and analyzing process. The conclusion has been discussed together and will be written within the coming days.
4. Empirical Findings

In this section of the report, findings from all the interviews will be presented separately with different sub headings. All the interviewed hotels are international five-star hotel chain that are well established and have properties around the globe. This section is divided into four main parts: the first part is about the business customer and their relation with the three hotels. Then each of the other parts consist of the information collected from three interviewees.

Hotel A: Interviewee 1, Interviewee 2, and Interviewee 3
Hotel B: Interviewee 4, Interviewee 5, and Interviewee 6
Hotel C: Interviewee 7, Interviewee 8, and Interviewee 9

4.1. Business customers

As mentioned earlier (see section 3.3.2) a total of three hotels were interviewed, to be able to collect the empirical findings needed for this research paper. To be able to understand the empirical findings collected during the interviews, a basic understanding of the hotel's customer structure needs to be established. It was discovered during the interviews with the hotels that, they divide and categories their customers in different way than how most industries do (Interviewee 3, 18 April). Like any other industry within the hotel industry, hoteliers also deal with B2B customers as well as B2C consumers (Interviewee 2, 17 April). The end users of the hotel services are considered to fall under their B2C segment, which includes their corporate clients as well as the public (Interviewee 6, 21 April).

“The reason as to why we hoteliers' categories our corporate clients to be B2C is because they themselves consume our services and not resell it to another party. Therefore, we consider our corporate clients such as, Amadeus and Ernst & Young to be B2C and not B2B.” (Interviewee 9, 25 April).

B2B customers are basically their wholesalers such as booking.com, destinations of the world (DOTW), hotel beds and Expedia. Who actually resell their services on their platform to the end consumers (Interviewee 4, 21 Apr). The relationship between the hotel and their wholesalers is mainly based on how much do the end consumer
demands and purchases the hotels services. All the competitors deal with the same wholesalers within Saudi Arabia; therefore, it is a task for them to maintain their sales figures to be higher in order to keep our wholesalers involved and in good terms (Interviewee 6, 21 April). Furthermore, since they are a five-star hotel and a brand internationally are known for its luxurious services, for this reason they are not able to reduce their prices below a certain extent, as cheaper services are associated with low or poor quality. This is where their B2B wholesalers help them in implementing lower pricing during the off season, they believe when the wholesalers sell our services on a lower rate it does not negatively affect our brand image with the end consumers, they do not directly associate those prices with the brand instead they associate with the wholesalers company. Furthermore, their B2B wholesaler also allow them to reach different consumer segment and bigger consumer base through their online sales websites. These are some of the major reasons why their B2B wholesalers are of crucial importance to them, for them to be able to adapt and adjust their marketing mix with the current market demands and trends. (Interviewee 6, 21 April; Interviewee 8, 25 April). As stated earlier, being part of an international luxury brand, these hotels have certain standards to maintain. For that to be possible, they have adopted an agile and lean supply chain approach. Due to this the hotels need to maintain a healthy and strong relationship with their suppliers, to be able to provide their customers with premium quality products and services (Interviewee 8, 25 April).
4.2 Hotel A

Hotel A was established in the year 1988, it is a multinational British hospitality management company. The company has their headquarters situated in Denham, Buckinghamshire, England. The company owns and franchises guestrooms and hotels, they currently have hotel properties in almost 100 countries. The hotel’s CSR has been closely aligned with the UNs 2030 SGDs, from a total of 17 SDGs they have incorporate seven SDGs into their marketing that they believe they best associate with and would be able to make a difference within their communities and globally. The seven SDGs that Hotel A has aligned their marketing with are number 6. Clean water and sanitation, 8. Decent work and economic growth, 10. Reduced inequalities, 11. Sustainable cities and communities, 12. Responsible consumption and production, 13. Climate action and 17. Partnerships for the goals.

The hotel aims incorporate their CS goals within their corporate culture globally across all their hotel properties. They are largely invested in their employees and their educational advancement. With the help of their IHG Academy their employees and people from the community come together to gain education and knowledge of working in a hotel. These programmes also help them secure jobs at their hotel once they are done studying. The academy has reached a 100% of employment rate after graduation and an increasing number of participants every year. The hotel has worked towards several sustainable programs such as; they scored 100% on the Corporate Equality index in 2017, scored a B on their water retention program and have implemented over 15,000 Green solutions globally. They have developed partnerships several different NGOs such as JA Worldwide (Junior Achievement). They do jointly work towards a sustainable future with their B2B customers such as their suppliers. The hotel has a selection process when selecting their suppliers and business partners. They expect all suppliers to abide by their “IHG Vendor Code of Conduct Policy”, whereby their suppliers are expected to act sustainably towards the community, environment and human rights required by the local law. This is to ensure that the hotel does not associate themselves with customers that don’t have similar work and environmental ethics. They have developed joint sustainability projects with their business partners mainly NGOs.

Furthermore, all of their hotel properties around the globe use IHG Green Engage system, which is an environmental sustainability online system. This system allows the hotel to be able to measure the impact that they have on the environment as well as allows them to manage and sustain their negative impacts on the environment (Interviewee 3, 18 Apr). They then continued with how their brand has given them more than 200 ‘Green Solutions’ that are created by their headquarters to aid them in
reducing their consumption of water, energy and waste. However, they are not obliged to follow through with any of the solutions offered, it really depends on each hotel property what they want to opt for and implement according to what suits best to their business environment (Interviewee 3, 18 Apr).

The IHG Green Engage system includes four different levels that each hotel property can reach depending upon their involvement with sustainability. Their hotel property in Saudi Arabia has currently been certified with Level 1 on the brands sustainability scale. That is once the hotel complies to at least ten green solutions which successfully helps the hotel achieve reduction in energy and/or water consumption along with reduced costs (Interviewee 1, 17 Apr). Being associated with an internationally famous brand comes with certain responsibilities to be able to maintain the brand’s public image, due to this reason they do practice a few CS activities. It was then stated that their hotel property currently practices sustainability actions such as installing energy saving lightings and ‘grey water treatment plant’, which basically recycles the used water by the hotel guests, and use it to water the gardens and plants on the hotel property (Interviewee 1, 17 Apr). However, they are yet to use their CSR strategies with their B2B customers and suppliers towards mutually beneficial goals.

It was mentioned that they are aware of their B2B customers being socially responsible in Saudi Arabia as well as internationally, as most of their business customers are international brands as well. Therefore, it could be interesting to see how they would perceive CS activities targeted towards them (Interviewee 2, 17 Apr).

“Sustainability activities in Saudi Arabian market are relatively less popular than compared to other parts of the world. That’s because the end consumers there are aware of sustainability issues and demand sustainable actions from business. The Saudi market is yet to motivate us to practice sustainability actions vigorously.”

(Interviewee 3, 18 Apr).
4.3 Hotel B

During the interview, it was stated that their brand is well-known internationally and is aware of its responsibilities towards the environment they operate in and that they consider it to be a part of our community. When asked about their brands international CSR in-line with the UN 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It was stated that, the hospitality brand has internationally endorsed four out of the total 17 SDGs that the UN has targeted to achieve by the year 2030. Four of the UN’s 2030 SDGs that the hotel is currently aligning their CS policies are number “8. Decent work and economic growth”, “12. Responsible consumption and production”, “14. Live below water” and “15. Life on land”. The last 2030 SDGs of the UN that is “17. Partnerships for the goals”, has not been considered by the hotel brand to align with their CS goals. (Interviewee 6, 25 September).

“The main head office in the USA has decided on focusing on just the four SDGs of the UN for the time being, and it has been communicated to all the properties around the world, just like ours. Although, they have partnerships with Non-Profit Organizations (NGOs), such as the World Wildlife Fund (WWF), their main goals seem to be focusing towards the other four SDGs at the moment and not “17. Partnerships for the goals.” (Interviewee 6, 25 September).

The hotel has partnered up with WWF since 2012 and are now actively working towards using only 100% cage-free eggs and they aim to achieve this within Europe, Canada and the US by the year 2022. However, locally for the hotel property in Saudi Arabia, CS activities are an issue that all the hotels within the market argued with, that the market does not demand being socially responsible and that it is an expensive operation to initiate for any business, hence the level of risk involved with such decisions runs high (Interviewee 6, 25 September). It was then mentioned that if there is no need for them to change their work processes, why would they implement such costly plans. (Interviewee 6, 21 April).

“Especially when the market is as uncertain as the Saudi Arabian market, it becomes extremely difficult for companies to forecast an expected ROI.” (Interviewee 6, 21 April).

The hotel property in Saudi Arabia’s practice their sustainable activities through their promising international CSR program. This is due to their brand’s international CS standards, as stated earlier, that they have certain obligations to fulfil. Their brand internationally is also working towards improving the community’s healthcare,
education and welfare of the society, especially children, as they believe children are their future. The B2B manager of the property then said:

“The help of our CSR programme, we aspire to leave behind a positive global footprint.” (Interviewee 5, 21 April).

Currently, the hotel property in Saudi Arabia does indulge into sustainable actions through their CSR goals. They do donate a certain amount of their profits towards the welfare of the community they operate in, especially for the children as stated in their international CSR program, however, it is a minor amount (Interviewee 4, 21 April). In addition to that, they also have implemented the ’grey water treatment plant’ and a few other minor recycling projects, but nothing major that would require large amounts of investments, instead these projects save us by reduced water and electricity consumption costs. (Interviewee 6, 21 April). Furthermore, the new Saudi government has already launched their 2030 sustainability vision, that will be gradually implemented, and may mean for businesses to adopt CS activities by law (Interviewee 4, 21 April). He continued by stating that due to this reason he is very keen to learn more about how to deal with sustainability issues and CSR of a business.

The hotel brand internationally has recently collaborated with one of their main suppliers Avendra, who are the largest hospitality goods supplier in the US. In doing so their aim is to achieve a sustainability supply chain management, this collaboration would aid them in gaining a smoother transition into sustainable purchasing process. Before signing contracts with a supplier, they ensure that they abide by the brand’s “suppliers code of conduct”. This code of conduct requires them to fulfill at least the minimum health and safety rights by law toward their employees as well as practice environmentally friendly actions to an extent. This collaboration with Avendra LLC would help them in implementing and practicing sustainable choices with their procurement operations in the coming years that they aim to achieve. Moreover, it would make the process of transitioning into sustainable operation run smoothly and time efficiently. The hotel has not yet considered taking this collaboration to the next step and developing a marketing plan that would be mutually beneficial for both their business customers as well as themselves. The hotel collaborated with Avendra LLC to aid in achieving their sustainable actions of purchasing making it easier for them to follow their own sustainability goals (Interviewee 6, 25 September).

For the hotel property in Saudi Arabia, they believe they need to ensure that their B2B customers have a good understanding of their CSR program and the advantages that comes with them (Interviewee 5, 21 April). They need to communicate these concepts to their business customers, but also, they seem to believe that there are a few issues
when implementing sustainable activities. The diagram below portrays their concerns with CS actions (Interviewee 4, 21 April).

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This diagram consists of the main issues that should be considered when applying CS activities (Interviewee 4, 21 April).

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There are specific points that we should study before applying CS. We should ensure that the cost will be paid for CS activities will not affect the costs for delivering the luxuries quality of service. Which will also affect our financial performance. The customer relationships in the diagram consists of all kinds of our customer, B2B wholesalers and B2C.```

(Interviewee 4, 21 April).
4.4 Hotel C

The hotel brand internationally acknowledges that their community and the world has been brought to a stage where mother nature has given us serious warnings. Their brand internationally has developed CS goals and most of the properties around the world do practice CS behaviors. They believe it has long been time to change habits and process as individual as well as a business (Interviewee 9, 25 April). The hotel brand is now listed amongst top 100 Qualmark Green Tourism businesses and been awarded with Enviro-Gold Award. Through CS actions the hotel aims to achieve better living standards globally in the communities that they operate within. The hotel brand has been a signatory of the UN’s 17 SDGs, with the goal of developing and implementing a positive change which is aligned with UN’s SDGs. They have adopted majority of the SDGs that are; 1. No Poverty, 2. Zero hunger, 3. Good health and well-being, 4. Quality education, 6. Clean water and sanitation, 7. Affordable and clean energy, 8. Decent work and economic growth, 9. Industry, innovation and infrastructure, 10. Reduce inequalities, 11. Sustainable cities and communities, 13. Climate action, 15. Life on land, and 16. Peace, Justice and strong institution. The main focus of the hotel is to support sustainable activities that work towards education and healthcare of children with the aim to achieve a better quality of life for the future generation of the community. (Interviewee 9, 25 September).

Furthermore, since 2018 the hotel has been involved with making a conscious effort towards choosing their business customers, all of their major suppliers and customers are ISO 14001 certified, to ensure that they abide by their local laws for environment friendly behaviors. They aim to have all of their suppliers and business partners ISO 14001 certified by 2030. They have also developed international partnerships with several different Volunteer Welfare Organizations (VWOs), Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs) as well as the government, to be able to achieve their CS goals. However, none of these collaborations or partnerships have been formed with their business customers and suppliers, despite all their major suppliers also being socially responsible. The aim of their collaborations with NGOs and VWOs are to make it easier for the hotel to work with locals and have a broad impact on the communities that they are aiming to improve. They ensure to incorporate their business partners, employees as well as their consumers in their CS activities, by communicating their goals and aims to them, so that they can promote their “Green Vision”.

One of their global initiatives were to implement “Wear Less Day” to their employees, that allows them to reduce electricity consumption for their air-conditioner and reduces water consumption in laundry as the employees would be wearing less clothing. This has also created more awareness and brought attention to the issue with their guests.
The brand has been actively working towards CS and has conquered several milestones, and they have a lot more achieve. By 2020 all of their hotel buildings are aimed at achieving a minimum green rating, through the Green Mark GoldPLUS award. All of their other properties around the globe are targeted to meet their local certification or the World Green Building Council (WGBC) by 2030 (Interviewee 9, 25 September). However, Sustainability seems to be a rather niche program within the Saudi Arabian market not a lot of business have indulged into its thorough practices. In addition to that, not a lot of the public and business customers are aware or care for paying more for sustainability issues. Therefore, they have not really implemented CS activities within our hotel or business customers. However, the current market situation can be seen shifting trends and they believe that their business customers would be interested in practicing sustainable action with the hotel (Interviewee 9, 25 April).

Recently, the hotel has been committed and is working towards the environment and are practicing sustainable behaviors (Interviewee 9, 25 April). The hotel has indulged into smaller initiatives such as water-saving toilets, showers and taps along with suggesting guests to reuse their own towels and sheets during longer stays at the hotels (Interviewee 7, 23 April). Furthermore, they are currently working toward installing a recycling water plant to be able to reuse and lower their water consumption. However, none of it is targeted towards their business customers (Interviewee 8, 25 April). Customer lifetime value is a concept used by hotelier to indict and measure the hotels B2B customer relationship value. By measuring financially how much the hotel gets from a specific B2B wholesaler. One of the main objectives for the hotel to apply CS activities was to increase competitive advantage which will lead to have better business relationships (Interviewee 7, 23 April).

"Our hotel always aims in having long-term relationships, especially with the well-known B2B wholesalers which we consider as profitable customers" (Interviewee 7, 23 April).
5. Analysis

In analysis chapter, the authors will find the similarities and differences between the data and theories to be able to answer the research questions.

The hotel industry internationally works and deals with business partners who constantly require an adaptive and agile attitude from hotels, that takes place through business interactions between the hotel and their B2B wholesalers and suppliers, to insure a healthy long-term relationship (Interviewee 8, 25 April). As supported by Proença and Castro (2007), IMP group classified business relationships as the attempt done by organization to create awareness to change and improve the structure developed within the interaction process of B2B relationships (Proença and Castro, 2007). Within this thesis, the authors aim to implement and direct the international 5-star hotel’s CS efforts and resources by strategizing them toward the business partners of the hotels i.e. business customers and suppliers. Furthermore, interviewee 4 and interviewee 7 also believed that CSR could be one of the strategies that they could consider using towards their B2B customers to positively influence with their long-term relationship with B2B wholesalers and suppliers that would in the long run ultimately lead to enhanced financial performance.

As supported by several authors, ensuring business interactions can not only rely only on a specified and fixed process of communication for the purpose of delivering a service or a product, but it can rely on having on-going transactions of resources and activities between the buyer and the seller (Baxter, 2012; Lenney and Easton, 2009; Ford and Håkansson, 2013). Another important element that hoteliers should put inconsideration when managing business relationships are the components of the IMP's Interaction Model (impgroup.org). This model consists of short-term elements such as a product or service provided by organization, and financial information while long term elements are the institutional situation that leads to a relationship (Ibid). One of those components is the Environment which is divided into the market structure, dynamism and social system. The social system in this case can be the CS activities practiced by the hotels. Therefore, it could be argued that hoteliers could use their current resources to influence their business interactions positively with their business customers and suppliers.

Since the processes of interaction between organization includes people with various and different backgrounds and insights (Morlacchi et al., 2005), the hotels would have to be cautious of such differences, and may face the need to analyze their business customer and suppliers through multiple interactions including business negotiations.
to be able to fully understand their B2B customers' needs, beliefs, and corporate culture. However, that was not done by Hotel A since Sustainable activities in Saudi Arabian market are relatively less popular, as interviewee 3 stated which made them less motivated to start analyzing their B2B customer behavior toward CSR actions. On the other hand, Hotel B and Hotel C believe that the CSR is a method they use to increase competitive advantage which will result in long-term relationships, this can be done by ensuring that their B2B customers are aware and have a full understanding of the benefits of the CSR practiced by the hotel (Interviewee 4, 21 April; Interviewee 5, 21 April; Interviewee 7, 23 April). Moreover, according to theory, CS is one of the factors that can make a change in the quality of the relationship between organizations when it comes to B2B interaction (Blick and Axelsson, 2016), while according to empirical findings, hotels are not as certain about the effect of CS on the business relation, even that the B2B customers of the three hotels are being socially responsible in Saudi Arabia as well as internationally (Interviewee 2, 17 April; Interviewee 6, 27 September; Interviewee 9, 27 September). When using the ARA model of business relationship, hotelier would have to work on exchange of the activities, resources as well as actors (Lenney and Easton, 2009; Ford and Håkansson, 2013). In other words, both Buyer and seller would require to communicate sufficient information and act in line with each other's needs for the relationship to be successful. The ARA model consists of three layers activities-resources-actors that depends on each other (Håkansson and Snehota, 1995; Baxter, 2012). When it comes to hoteliers, activities in this case are considered as the services they offer to their customers. Therefore, in order for the services to be fully offer in the right way, hoteliers will need to have a complete resource to act in the right direction. Furthermore, for an organization to have a successful business relationship, the three dimensions needs to be approached. First links between activities (Proença and Castro, 2007); when applying to hotels case, hoteliers should communicate the advantages of implementing their CSR activities and also the advantages of implementing them towards the B2B customers as stated by interviewee 4. The second dimension is ties of resources (Proença and Castro, 2007). Third is the bonds between the actors (Ibid) which requires all the business partners involved within the B2B relationship to be a part of any exchanges. While hotels C is expecting to increase competitiveness from CS activities which will lead to better business relationships but there is no action taken by the hotel in order to reach long term business relationships (Interviewee 7, 23 April). On the other hand, studies show the importance of applying social sustainability which can give firms the chance in having competitive advantage that can directly affect the firm's profit and the relationships (Longoni and Cagliano, 2015; Popovic et al., 2018).

As stated above, business customers and suppliers are an integral part of the value and supply chain of a company. In addition to that, B2B customers also require an ongoing relationship maintenance which is not solely based on exchange of goods or
services, instead requires constant resources and actors to maintain a healthy long-term relationship (Naudé et al., 2009; Morlacchi et al., 2005). Therefore, it could be argued that long term and constant CS and CSR activities with B2B customers of the hotels could evoke stronger and healthier relationships with their B2B customers. In recent years the hospitality industry internationally has been indulging into more and more sustainable behaviors (Xu and Gursoy, 2015). All the three interviewed hotels are internationally invested into their CS and CSR programs that are well aligned with certain UN’s 17 SDGs of their choosing. Hotel B with the lowest count of practicing SDG is currently working with a total of 4 SDGs, Hotel C with the highest count of practicing 12 SDGs lastly hotel A with 7 SDGs (Interviewee 3, 25 September; Interviewee 6, 27 September; Interviewee 9, 27 September). The three CS dimensions are environmental sustainability, social sustainability and economic sustainability dimension (Xu and Gursoy, 2015). Regardless of the number of SDGs practiced by each hotel, all the hotels seem to have touched all the dimensions of CS with SDGs that work towards sustainability such as; “Clean water and sanitation” which is an environmental sustainability dimension and “Decent work and economic growth” that includes both economic and social sustainability dimension (Interviewee 3, 25 September; Interviewee 6, 27 September; Interviewee 9, 27 September). This would suggest that these hotels are aiming at successfully maintaining their CS behaviors in the long run (Amini and Bienstock, 2014; Elkington, 2004).

The number 17th UN’s SDG called “Partnerships for the goals”, as stated earlier on within the thesis, it promotes business partnerships that could bring along a smoother and bigger impact towards a sustainable future. One out of the three hotels, that is hotel A, has endorsed the 17th SGD (Interviewee 3, 25 September), however, since the 17th SDG involves many other aspects of partnerships, hotel A seems have only participated in developing partnerships with different NGOs to create and work on sustainable projects (Interviewee 3, 25 September). Drucker (1984)’s study emphasised on companies turning their social responsibilities into financial opportunities. Social sustainability dimension of CS focuses towards positively influencing its stakeholders, including business customers and suppliers (Longoni and Cagliano, 2015; Xu and Gursoy, 2015). Furthermore, instrumental theories of CSR aim towards achieving competitive advantage and financial goals (Varadarajan and Menon, 1988).

Instrumental theories of CSR aim towards achieving competitive advantage and financial goals (Varadarajan and Menon, 1988; Carrol, 1991). The hotels CSR activities could be used as a tool to strategize them into positively influencing their business partners (This is will later be further discussed in the Analysis). That would be possible only if these business customers are also involved in acting socially responsible (Carter and Jennings, 2002; Homburg et al., 2013). All three hotels have adopted a screening process for selecting their suppliers, to ensure that their suppliers
also act sustainable towards their community, environmental friendly behavior and human rights by their local laws. Which is carried out through their supplier policies such as Hotel A’s “IHG Vendor Code of Conduct Policy”, Hotel B’s “Suppliers Code of Conduct” and hotel C ensure this by having all of their suppliers and customers ISO 14001 certified (Interviewee 3, 25 September; Interviewee 6, 27 September; Interviewee 9, 27 September). Therefore, it could be argued that Drucker (1984)’s theory of converting CSR into financial opportunity through positively influencing business customers could be achieved since all of the hotels suppliers are socially responsible as well. Furthermore, Hotel B has already formed a collaboration with one of their major suppliers called Avendra LLC, to achieve a smoother and sustainable supply chain helping them transition into sustainable purchasing process (Interviewee 6, 27 September).

This collaboration could be taken to the next level by jointly working towards CS projects and programmes to be able fully reap the benefits of B2B collaboration (Blenkhorn and MacKenzie, 2017; Carter and Jennings, 2002; Homburg et al., 2013). For these hotels to be working closely with their business customers and suppliers would allow them to, as argued by many authors, improve the hotels overall performance, for example higher business customers satisfaction as they will working along-side towards mutual benefits (Gao and Mattila, 2014), which could lead to increased business customers’ willingness to work together and customer loyalty, which usually comes with satisfied customers (Chen and Tung, 2014; Martínez and Bosque, 2013). Furthermore, B2B customers are of crucial importance to within the hotel industry, as they help them deal and cope up through different pricing strategies during different market trends and changes in demand. Without their B2B wholesalers they wouldn’t be able to make these frequent pricing changing without damaging their brand image in the long run (Interviewee 6, 21 April; Interviewee 8, 25 April). Hotels that practice socially responsible behaviors have been proven to gain convincing power towards their business customers to repurchase their products and services (Chen and Tung, 2014; Berezan et al., 2013) making CSR activities for the hotel industry to be beneficial through its impact on their purchasing decisions. Hotels were also discovered to base their relationship with their wholesalers on how much the end consumer demands their services and the number of sales they make (Interviewee 6, 21 April) and Chen and Tung (2014) suggest within their study that sustainable activities lead to higher demand for the product or services in the market. In addition to that, studies within the hospitality industry suggest that the end consumers would be willing to pay more due to their concerns about harming the environment (Kang et al., 2012). These results have also encouraged B2B companies to incorporate their CS behaviors with their brand management strategy (Blenkhorn and MacKenzie, 2017). Which is something these international hotel chains have already implemented and have been working towards (Interviewee 3, 25 September; Interviewee 6, 27
September; Interviewee 9, 27 September). The value of a brand comes from the competitive advantage that it provides through differentiation (Beverland et al. 2007; Webster and Keller 2004), which is built through B2B branding and hold significant value as it difficult for competitors to copy (Beverland 2005; Davis and Devinney 1997; Mudambi 2002). The hotel chains are popular and well-known international brand; however, they haven’t consciously worked with the industrial branding of their hotels (Interviewee 3, 25 September; Interviewee 6, 27 September; Interviewee 9, 27 September). This could be done through them aiming to satisfy their stakeholders such as business customers’ needs through its CSR activities, as satisfied stakeholders hold more value within industrial branding as compared to B2C branding (Jones, 2005).

Long term CS behaviors of a hotel eventually leads to building trust and commitment with their business customers (Carter and Jennings, 2002; Lai et al., 2010) and has shown to have a significantly positive impact on the industrial brand equity (Lai et al., 2010). It also holds a positively emotional perceptions on their B2B customers about the brands that they consider purchasing from (Pai et al., 2013). Which has been found to be of great importance to the five-star international hotel chains (Interviewee 6, 21 April; Interviewee 8, 25 April) making CS activities focused towards B2B customer valuable for hotels. This ultimately also leads to business customers leaning more towards products and services of these brands (Pai et al., 2013). Furthermore, business customers practicing CSR activities have proven to see significant improvement in their supply chain performance (Luo and Zheng, 2012). This supports Hotel B’s statement about collaborating with their main suppliers Avendra LLC to help them in smoother and efficient transitioning of sustainable activities which would also help them in achieving their own CS goals (Interviewee 6, 25 September).

As mentioned earlier, instrumental theories of CSR are used by companies as a tool to enhance their financial performance and have proven to have a direct impact on building trust between B2B customer (Homburg et al., 2013), which is of crucial importance to businesses like hotels that largely dependent on their wholesalers during lower demand seasons (Interviewee 6, 21 April; Interviewee 8, 25 April). This however, most certainly would not mean that the hotels would have to disregard their other stakeholders’ interests. In facts studies have concluded that considering business’ stakeholders interests leads to higher shareholder value (Mitchell et al., 1997). Therefore, it could be argued, that the hotels could allocate resources towards both their instrumental theories approach as well as a philanthropic approach aiming to achieve as many stakeholder's satisfaction as possible.
6. Conclusion

_In this final chapter, the authors will present the answers to the research questions in order to fulfill the purpose of this study: to uncover the current pricing strategies that hoteliers’ practice with their B2B customers. While also considering the aspect of Corporate Sustainability in markets where these hotels are gradually indulging into it._

6.1. Answer to research question 1 & 2

*RQ1:* What are the current CS strategies practiced by international five-star hotel chains situated in Saudi Arabia?

*RQ2:* How can these hotel’s CS strategies be developed and adopted to positively influence and strengthen its relationship with their B2B customers?

This study has been mainly focusing towards suggesting five-star international hotel chains on how to develop a mutually beneficial sustainability strategy targeted towards their business customers. With the help of business literature found on the subject of B2B relationships, CS and CSR, mainly focusing towards the social sustainability aspect of CS and the instrumental theories of CSR. This paper aims to suggest how these theories could be implemented within the marketing strategies of these hotels towards their business customers.

After thoroughly analyzing the empirical findings of this study with the business literature on industrial marketing, it can be concluded that the hospitality industry internationally has been seen to be actively involved with their CS behaviors. Currently all the three interviewed hotel chains are well invested into their CS and CSR actions. They have a well-developed CSR program which is aligned with certain UN’s 17 SDGs of their choosing. The hotels have also developed partnerships with different NGOs to work on different CSR projects and to help them achieve their own sustainability goals. Furthermore, all their
suppliers and business customers are ensured to be socially responsible, each by their own local laws.

It can be concluded that for the hotel industry internationally, their business customers are of key importance for them to be able to cope up with different market situations. Therefore, hotels should analyze their B2B customers to achieve a better relationship. In addition to that, hotel's B2B customers also require an ongoing relationship maintenance which is not solely based on exchange of goods or services, instead requires constant resources and actors to maintain a healthy long-term relationship. In order to achieve the constant maintenance of resource and actors, hoteliers can apply CSR actions that could be one of the strategies that used towards their B2B customers to positively influence with their long-term relationship with B2B wholesalers and suppliers. Therefore, it could lead to improvement in the financial performance of the hotel.

Since the B2B relationships are rather complex process than just exchange of goods and services, hoteliers could study the elements of IMP model interactions which require considering elements are the institutional situation that leads to a relationship such as Market structure, dynamism, internationalization, Position in the manufacturing channel, social system, expectations, closeness, and co-operation.

It can be concluded that if the hotels managed their relationship with their B2B customers by applying the three dimensions: 1- links between activities. 2- ties of resources. 3- bonds between actors, hoteliers will be able to apply CS as well as CSR behaviors successfully. It is also concluded that ARA model is used by organizations to manage their business relationships. Which support the three dimensions suggested by Proença and Castro (2007). Therefore, to ensure that the three layers are implemented between buyer and seller, hotelier could create awareness of their CS and CSR activities and its benefits.

Their current sustainability strategy has been aimed towards the welfare of the society, environment and human rights through different UN’s SDGs. It was discovered that the hotels sustainability strategies have not yet been targeted towards their business customers and suppliers. It can be suggested through the analysis section of this study that it is of crucial importance for these international hotel chains to build and maintain strong and mutually beneficial relationships with their business customers and suppliers. This could be possible through adequately using the hotels CS and CSR strategies to their own benefit. It could be concluded that with the help of the social sustainability dimension of CS and instrumental theories of CSR, these hotels could develop and strengthen their relationships with their B2B customers as well as suppliers. This could be only possible if these strategies are actively directed
towards the hotels B2B customers and supplies, for example through jointly
developing and working with a CSR project. This sustainability marketing strategies
could result in positively influenced industrial brand image of the hotels and creation
of this type of differentiation is unique to each brand as it may not be easily copied
hence holds a great deal of importance to these hotels. Ultimately, leading to stronger
industrial relationships in the long-term. Forming partnerships and collaborating with
business customers and supplier could lead to a better business channel performance
ensuring premium quality of products and services.

Hotels practicing Social Sustainability and instrumental theories of CSR towards their
B2B customers evokes a stronger and healthier relationships. The number 17th UN’s
SDG “Partnerships for the goals”, also promotes business partnerships, the hotels
would be able to align their CSR with the number 17th SDG of the UN. Such
practices within the hotel industry would help them gain competitive advantage,
stronger bonds with their business customers, customer loyalty and increase
willingness to repurchase and work with them, enhanced financial performance,
positive industrial brand image. It could also help in smoothing transition and
continuously work toward their own sustainability goals. CSR practices could also
lead to satisfied customer with the ongoing communication and work with them.
Social behaviors of the hotel have also been concluded to have to have a positive
emotional impact of their B2B customers’ perception resulting in a valuable asset of
the hotels.

6.2. Theoretical and managerial implications
The majority of the existing literature on industrial marketing focuses far too little on
the problems many hotels faced when applying CS activities and the importance of
sustainability and its relation to business customers (Abrate et al., 2012; Chung, 2000;
Hung et al, 2010; Wang et al., 2015). However, the research we found and presented
in the theory chapter reveals that hotels operators sooner or later face a need to make
decisions for applying the CS activities. We found that hotelier could benefit from
their CS actions if they are able to create awareness among the customers about the
importance of CS. However, there are also social policy factors the forces
organizations to follow specific standards like the UN’s 17 SDGs for example the
three goals of the Saudi Vision 2030 which impose the governmental and
nongovernmental to work toward one goal which is the achievement of goals with the
SDGs agenda (Sustainabledevelopment.un.org, 2019).
The implication CSR has a great effect on business relationships (Blick and Axelsson,
2016; Naudé et al., 2009). Therefore, as supported by the IMP groups, CSR is one of
the strategies that can be used toward the B2B customers to ensure long-term
relationship with valuable customers that positively affect their financial performance (Proença and Castro, 2007).

Furthermore, our studies revealed that hotels can benefit from correctly managing their business customer relationships when deciding to indulging CS actions, especially in Saudi Arabia's market since it is facing an increasing number of hotels that increased the competition between the hotels (Proença and Castro, 2007; Ford and Mouzas, 2013).

When it comes to managerial implications, the results from our studies suggests that it is critical for the success of international hotel to structure and preserve the strong relationships with their business customers and suppliers. This study also can raise awareness of the importance of practicing CS activities toward the business-to-business customers. Our studies revealed that companies can benefit from developing a comprehensive and consistent strategy in applying CS activities to strengthen the relationships.

6.3. Limitation
The limitations of this thesis were the time and resource limitation. Due to the short time framework of this research, the authors were not able to conduct more interviews other than the three hotels to have good scope and in-depth knowledge on different markets.

One limitation of this paper was the existence of only one of the authors in the interviews for the empirical findings due to her residing in Saudi Arabia. While the other author wasn't able to be available on the face-to-face interviews which could gave the authors the chance to ask more questions. However, both authors prepared well before the interviews to have relevant questions to get the needed information. Also, the interviewee did not mind to send follow up questions.

Another limitation is that this study does not include other types of hotels other than five-star hotels which limits the results of the study to only one perspective.

6.4. Suggestions for future research
As for future research, it would be interesting to compare more empirical data from more hotels to study the process of choosing a pricing strategy when applying sustainable activities, which would give the research topic more in depth knowledge as well as more information to back it up. In order for hotels to implement CS and CSR activities, hoteliers will need full information about the expenses they will pay. Therefore, it would also be interesting to find more theoretical information on how sustainability influences the overall costs to set the right price for B2B customers.
This study focused only on one market; thus, future research can be conducted on
other different markets as well to test the results. A further study could be made with hotels that are already implementing the CS activities toward their B2B customers in order to insure the effect of it on B2B relationships. More studies could be about the methods needed to measure the benefits of CS actions toward the B2B customers.

Examples of further research questions:

- How to measure the successes and failure of the implantation of CS activities toward B2B customers?
- How much it would cost hotels to start implementing CS actions, towards the B2B customer. To be able to be aware of the costs and risk it way involved.
- What are the standards needed to create a CSR team to ensure a right pass of the process?

By answering those questions, hoteliers can have full information needed to take the step toward applying CSR actions toward B2B customers.
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Appendices

Interview Guide

All the 12 interviews were divided into three parts. First, introducing the author’s project with a brief explanation of the author’s aim. Second, the authors asked general questions about the hotel and their B2B customer. Third, the authors asked the questions that are needed to answer the research question of the thesis.

Question of the Second Part

1. How many rooms does your property hold?
2. What does the organizational structure look like for the Business-to-business (B2B) sales management?
3. How many Corporate salesmen are currently employed at your hotel?
4. How many B2B clients is your property currently dealing with? Could you name a few?

Questions of the Third Part

1. How many rooms does your property hold?
2. How many Corporate salesmen are currently employed at your hotel?
3. How many Business-to business (B2B) clients is your property currently dealing with? Could you name a few?
4. What are the different pricing strategies that are currently being practiced by your hotel towards your B2B customers? And Why?
5. What are the situations that led to the use of specific strategy?
6. What are the main factors that are considered in pricing decisions?
7. Does the hotel currently practice any corporate sustainability (CS) activities? If yes, what are those activities?
8. What challenges you face when applying sustainability?
9. Are any of the hotels CS efforts and resources focused towards their B2B customers? If yes, can you specify what these CS actions involve?
10. Are there any cost implications involved with practicing CS activities?
11. Do the CS activities of the hotel have an impact on its pricing? If yes, do these affects influence the pricing in a positive or a negative way?

Email Interview

1. When was your hotel brand established? And where?
2. What is your hotel’s international CSR strategy? Are they aligned with the UN’s 2030 SDGs?

3. Has your hotel focused any of their CS resources towards their B2B customers international and locally at your property?