

Exploring the effects of Internal Corporate Social Responsibility on the Employee-Employer Relationship in Luxury Hotels: An Employee's Perspective

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Abstract

Since the early 1990s Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has been widely researched by scholars from varying academic disciplines and cultural backgrounds (Aguinis & Glavas, 2012; Gürlek & Tuna, 2019; Lee, 2020; Liu et al., 2020). However, due to an increasing awareness within modern society about the devastating impact of human behaviour on the planet, there is a continuously growing demand for people to create a more sustainable society and for businesses to act in a more sustainable and socially responsible manner (Carroll, 2016; Lee et al., 2013; Rodriguez et al., 2021). Consequently, CSR and Sustainability are now considered by many to be key contemporary issues and have grown in importance and significance among stakeholders (Kim & Kim, 2016; Rodriguez et al., 2021). Nonetheless, thus far the majority of CSR literature tends to direct its focus towards the External element of CSR rather than the Internal (Rhou & Singha, 2020). Consequently, the general construct of Internal CSR (ICSR) lacks definition and theoretical conceptualisation (Low, 2016; Mory et al., 2016; Sanchez-Hernandez et al., 2021; Sanusi & Johl, 2020). Therefore, in an effort to overcome this gap, contribute to existing literature and expand on current understanding, this study explores how ICSR influences the Employee Employer Relationship (EER) within Luxury 4/5* hotels in the United Kingdom and Ireland (UK&I).

To better understand how ICSR influences Luxury Hotel Employees (LHE), including insight into how the EER is established and maintained, a qualitative methodological approach was selected. In accordance with this approach, individual semi-structured interviews (over Zoom) were undertaken with eight LHE and one Luxury Hotel Manager (LHM) during the month of November 2021. All participants were over 18 years old and provided individual written consent. During the interviews participants were asked a range of open questions to develop a better understanding of ICSR expectations and how these influence Employee Trust, Loyalty and the Employee Employer Relationship. Once collated, the data was analysed using thematic analysis which was chosen over other methods because it is designed to analyse respondents' experiences, perspectives, attitudes and expectations, individually and then collectively to identify commonalities and create themes (Grbich, 2012; Guest et al., 2012; King et al., 2019).

Although there were clear variations in the luxury hotel employees' perceptions and expectations of ICSR, the findings are in keeping with current mainstream literature surrounding the positive influence of CSR on business performance. However, they also suggest that Trust, Loyalty and therefore the Employee Employer Relationship are primarily

formed and influenced by four main socially responsible attitudes and behaviours. These are: feeling valued and acknowledged; receiving regular open communication and contact; being treated with equality, honesty, transparency and respect and that employers demonstrate consistency and integrity by honouring verbal and written promises and agreements. Additionally, the findings also provided insights into the basic and desired ICSR activities/incentives LHE want from an employer helping to develop a better understanding of ICSR's influence on the Employee Employer Relationship. In the process, potential variables were highlighted and the influence of ICSR on Employee Trust, Loyalty and the Employee Employer Relationship was suggested from the luxury hotel employee's perspective. From a theoretical perspective, the findings emphasise employees expect something in exchange for their contribution to and investment in the business however, these expectations clearly vary, supporting a wide range of previous studies (Gill, 2008; Lee, 2020; Stojanovic et al., 2020; Rodriguez et al., 2021 & Yu et al., 2018). Nonetheless, despite this support, this study's findings also suggest it is the employers' response, including actions, attitudes and behaviours, which truly determines the level and quality of Employee Trust, Loyalty and therefore Employee Employer Relationship. From a practical perspective, based on the findings, management are encouraged to invest in ICSR practices and to develop an organisational culture built upon the four main socially responsible attitudes and behaviours and which fosters a mindset of mutual trade.

It is acknowledged however, to prove any of the findings or theories emerging from this study, further research with a mixed methods approach and greater sample is required. Nonetheless, it is the position of this paper that, in the coming years, as society's expectations continue to change and adapt, the concept of ICSR is going to become more important and influential.

Key words: HRM; Internal CSR; Luxury Hotels; Employee-Employer Relationship; UK

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