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CSR's effect on brand image

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Abstract

CSR has for long time been defined and conceptualized in many ways by different writers, nevertheless, the concepts are constantly emerging. This era's growing environmental awareness has strengthened the competition between the businesses, and a certain need to develop marketable, innovative and legitimately sustainable brands. Therefore, it is essential to integrate CSR into businesses to be able to compete with other companies.

The purpose of this study is to investigate CSR's effect on brand image in order to increase the understanding of CSR as a marketing tool, within the service industry. The research questions of the study are "How does a service-based company's involvement in CSR as a marketing strategy affect the brand image? And how do the different CSR dimensions affect the brand image?"

This study has a positive and deductive approach with a cross sectional design. The quantitative method chosen was a questionnaire, more precisely. More specifically, a self-completion survey was conducted on a sample of 73 hotel guests living in a CSR friendly hotel in Malmo, Sweden.

The results showed that the causal effect of the ethical dimension on brand image was rather strong. The philanthropic and the sustainability variables, on the other hand, turned out to have a weak effect on the brand image.

The result showed that there is a strong positive relationship between all the CSR dimensions and brand image. However, the ethical dimension on brand image was rather strong. The philanthropic and the sustainability dimensions, on the other hand, turned out to have a weak effect on brand image.

As both CSR and brand image are quite complex concepts, a qualitative research approach could be conducted for further research.

Keywords: CSR, brand image, service industry, hospitality, hotel, Sweden

Paper type: Research paper

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1. Introduction

This chapter, will introduce the reader to the chosen topic. The chapter consists of a background, problematization, research question and a purpose for the upcoming study.

1.1 Background

More people than ever before are worried about sustainability-related issues and being green and aware have become mainstream (Ottman, 2011). Ottman (2011) claims that today's consumers fear that our planet is losing the ability to sustain human life and the health of humanity. Customers are more aware of sustainability today, due to the subject's accessibility. This era's growing environmental awareness replaces the old resource-intensive products with eco-innovative ones, consisting of new innovative designs and technologies (ibid). 90 % of the largest European companies today publish information about their activities within social and environmental areas. In addition, more than 50% of the largest global companies produce CSR reports to embrace the subject more specifically (The oxford handbook, 2009). This has strengthened the competition between businesses and a certain need to develop marketable, innovative and legitimately sustainable brands. Therefore, it is essential to integrate CSR into businesses to be able to compete with other companies (Crespo, Salmones & Bosque 2005; Cretu & Brodie, 2007). Although, there has been much research on CSR in recent decades, there is still a need for further investigation to understand its benefits as a marketing strategy (Martinez, Perez & Rodriguez, 2014).

An appropriate marketing strategy is crucial for the success of a business. The importance of brand building within the service sector has also gained considerable attention in the past 20 years. Hence, branding has become an essential part of service organizations in order to increase the competitiveness. However, to succeed with brand building it is important to consider the customer's way of identifying with the brand (Grönroos, 2007). The customer's associations linked to the brand is recognized as the brand image. Brand image is a key component and the most important actor in marketing strategy, since it affects both functional (objective) and affective (subjective) dimensions of customer perception (Vázquez, Belén & Iglesias, 2002; Martinez, Pérez & Rodríguez del Bosque, 2014). A former study by Werther and Chandler (2005) indicates that CSR has a positive effect on brand image. The study included 25 000 customers in Western Europe, Canada

and USA, where the result showed that two thirds of the customer's brand image were affected by CSR in a positive way (Werther and Chandler, 2005). Therefore, communicating the CSR policy can strengthen the brand image (Boonpattarakan, 2012). Sen and Bhattacharya (2001; 2004) show that the customer's perception of CSR and the applied CSR strategy have to be interrelated to deliver a positive outcome. Several studies show a positive effect on the attitude towards the company and the product purchase intentions when CSR is implemented in a company's strategy. However, customers are more sensitive to negative than positive CSR information (Sen & Bhattacharya, 2001; Sen & Bhattacharya, 2004).

Studies on CSR and brand image have mostly focused on the product-based industry and less on the service industry (Casado Diaz et. al., 2014; Grönroos, 2007). The service industry is growing and even product-based companies are to some extent developing into service businesses (Grönroos, 2007). Furthermore, studies have shown the important role of CSR in the service industry (Casado Diaz et. al., 2014). Travel and tourism is a fast growing sector within the service industry. According to the Swedish Agency for Economic and Regional Growth (2012), hotels are the most common type of accommodations for visitors in Sweden, also hotel and restaurant activities cover half of the tourism sector and is a growing industry.

The debate over CSR has been a very controversial topic the past decades and has become an essential strategy on the corporate agenda in Sweden (Idowu & Filho, 2009). Even though the studies of CSR's effect on brand image have shown an important role in the service industry the research is still limited in number and scope. Therefore, it is important to investigate this subject. This study will be applied within the service industry that is constantly growing, more precise the research will be conducted on the Swedish hotel industry.

1.2 Problematization

In today's competitive market, marketers grow their business by minimizing their environmental and health-related risks, due to the pressure and the specific environmental and social issues relevant to companies' stakeholders (Ottman, 2011). The CSR debate has been intensified since the twentieth century, not only on the international level but also in Sweden. An example of a debate that received a widespread attention is about one

of the biggest Swedish service companies Skandia, that was criticized for unethical and illegal behavior. Many protestors all over the world, including Sweden, began drawing attention to the role of the business in the society and raising the question about social responsibility. Ever since the debate about CSR has been on-going. The social awareness and CSR implementation do not only lead to positive or negative publicity, but also set pressure on firms to improve their performance of taking social responsibility (Idowu & Filho, 2009).

Swedish companies engage in CSR activities in order to create a positive brand image of the organization (Swedish trade federation, 2014). Furthermore, a report by the Swedish trade federation (2014) shows that the majority of Swedish customers think it is important that companies engage in CSR. Even so, this trend has been negative the last couple of years. The study also shows that companies that do not engage in CSR claim that the customer's demand for CSR-related issues is too low (Swedish trade federation, 2014). The arisen skepticism of CSR among customers has lately had a negative impact on customers' attitudes towards brands communicated through CSR. According to Bhattacharya and Sen (2004), CSR's effect on customer behavior is not as straightforward as it seems, and a positive customer response to CSR initiatives is not a fact. Therefore, when planning a CSR strategy, it is important to be cognizant about the hazards of the customers' perception of companies being irresponsible (Sen & Bhattacharya, 2001; Sen & Bhattacharya, 2004; Calabrese & Lancioni, 2008). This indicates that it is of importance to integrate an appropriate CSR strategy to optimize brand image.

Considering that, brand image is one of the most important aspect of a marketing strategy and CSR has become mainstream, it is relevant to investigate the subject for future marketing strategy planning. Casado, Nicolau-González, Ruiz-Moreno and Sellers-Rubio (2014) claim that CSR activities have a higher positive impact in service companies than in product-based companies. Studies have shown a large negative impact of hospitality industry on the economic, natural and social environments (Chan, 2011; Chung & Parker, 2010). When comparing the impact of the hospitality industry and other industries, such as e.g. the manufacturing industry, the hospitality sector has not been receiving as strong attention as other industries with strong negative impact. This situation is changing and customers are becoming more aware of the negative social and environmental impact that the hospitality industry contributes to (ibid). This strong reaction indicates the important role of CSR performance within the service industry as a tool for improving a service firm's reputation to enhance brand image.

Since studies on CSR's effect on brand image are limited within the growing sector of service industry, it is of importance to study this phenomenon. By increasing the understanding and knowledge of customers' reactions and attitudes to companies' involvement in CSR, firms will be able to develop more optimal CSR strategies. The results of this study can be applicable to all industries within the hospitality field, which includes accommodation, food service, tourism, leisure, travel, conventions and attractions. Likewise, the results are applicable to industries using similar CSR strategies as the hospitality sector.

1.3 Research question

How does a service-based company's involvement in CSR as a marketing strategy affect the brand image? And how do the different CSR dimensions affect the brand image?

1.4 Purpose

The purpose of this study is to investigate CSR's effect on brand image in order to increase the understanding of CSR as a marketing tool within the service industry.

2. Literature review

The following chapter presents the components and different definitions of the corporate social responsibility and the brand image concept. Further, the relationship and the gaps between these concepts will be identified and described. Finally, the theoretical framework that the research problem was derived from will be presented. The chapter will give an understanding of what is going to be investigated.

2.1 CSR

Social responsibility has for long time been defined and conceptualized in many ways by different writers, nevertheless, researchers do not share a common definition or core principles of what being socially responsible consists of. During the 50s Bowen was regarded as a pioneer of the CSR concept and explained it as “the obligations of businessmen to pursue those policies, to make those decisions, or to follow those lines of action which are desirable in terms of the objectives and values of our society” (Kashyap, Mir, & Mir, 2011, pp. 53). In the 60s the discussion about CSR started being beneficial and several researchers (such as Davis, Johnson & Manne) started to argue for CSR strategy being profit maximizing and requested by the society. In the early 80s the concept started to gain support as a possible business opportunity to create wealth by inter alia Drucker (Kashyap, Mir & Mir, 2011).

The CSR concept has encompassed a wide range of economic, legal, ethical and philanthropic (discretionary) activities of business performance at a given point in time, without any hierarchic order (Carroll, 1979; Carroll, 1991). Carroll (1979) was one of the first researchers who debated and had a big influence on the CSR concept. He claimed that the economic category was the most important within social responsibility, and the other three were ranked in the following decreasing order of importance: legal, ethical and philanthropic. Carroll (1991) developed the most known and a leading paradigm of CSR in the in the management field: The Pyramid of Corporate Social Responsibility (Carroll & Schwartz 2003). To this day, Carroll's paradigm remains the most known within business.

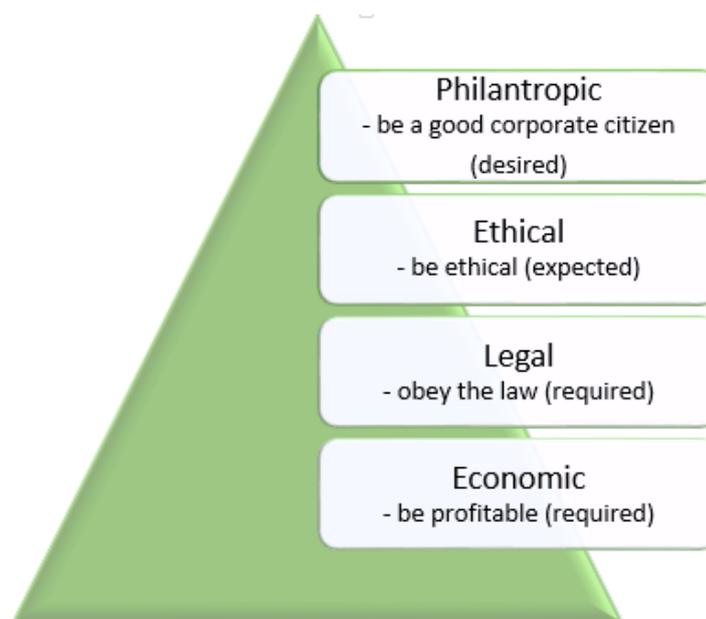


Figure 2.1 The Pyramid of Corporate Social Responsibility model by Carroll, 1991

The fundamental responsibility of all businesses is the economic responsibility where a business must produce and sell what the society requires to fulfil the economic mission. This economic issue must operate under a legal responsibility of laws and regulations. Both the economic and the legal responsibilities must embrace the ethical norms, but there are also other ethical activities that are not well defined and are above the legal requirements. However, the CSR activities requested by the society are expected to be

followed. The stakeholder's image of the company encourages ethical standards. The ethical responsibilities imply that organizations should produce goods and services that are demanded and desired by customers at, for example, a reasonable price and in an efficient way (Valentzas & Broni, 2010). The philanthropic responsibility consist of individual business discretion, where societal expectations must be taken into consideration. The implemented activities within this dimension are voluntary (Carroll, 1979), e.g. avoiding hazardous waste within the service industry or being involved in community issues. These four types of social responsibilities form what is called CSR (Iamandi, 2007). By designing a good CSR strategy companies create an exclusive and an explicit position in the market by establishing a definite company image that is recognizable by their customers (Valentzas & Broni, 2010).

Another famous model by Wartick and Cochran (1985) traced the evolution of the corporate social performance model by focusing on three challenges of the CSR concept, instead of four as in The Pyramid of Corporate Social Responsibility. These three are: economic responsibility, public responsibility, and social responsiveness (Wartick & Cochran, 1985).

During the early 90s, Elkington contributed to the research of CSR and developed and composed a new framework. This framework is called The Triple Bottom Line (TBL), also known as the 3P, and is more focused on sustainability issues. The framework includes not only profitability aspects but also helps to measure and identify the impact of the business on environmental and social dimensions. Elkington's model concentrates on performance along the interconnected dimensions of profit (financial), people (social) and the planet (environmental), which are the tools for achievement of sustainability. Making money is essential but it must also work harmoniously in the aspects of people and planet; it is important to take the employees and the community (people) into consideration and being cost effective (profit), but at the same time consider the cost of polluting (planet) when making decisions within the company. TBL measurements for sustainability are not standardized and can be accommodated depending on the project, industry sector, business goal, entity etc. (Slapper & Hall, 2011).

Friedman (1970) is known for claiming that social responsibility of a business is a strategy for increasing its profit, where someone have to pay for it (usually consumers or employees). Since the CSR concept intends to increase profits, the priority, according to Friedman, is to increase the shareholder value. Uddin, Hassan and Tarique (2008), on the

other hand, refer to Friedman's definition of CSR and mean that: as the strategy increases profit, CSR is not a threat to achievement of economic goals of a corporation, the CSR concept is rather an opportunity.

Nowadays, social responsibility is an important factor to customers and shareholders. Since businesses only make profit when products and services are being consumed by the society, a business must run its activities in a socially acceptable way to maintain a long-term relationship and long-run sustainability of the business (Uddin, Hassan & Tarique, 2008). Companies are learning that good governance and CSR is no longer a choice that can be made by companies, nor is it an added cost to the company (Jhunjhunwala, 2014). Similarly, Jhunjhunwala (2014) argues that firms need to develop and integrate CSR into their business strategy for a long-term success, due to the social request by customers and shareholders. A study by Mahonet and Thorne (2005) examined the link between CSR and long-term compensation for 90 publicly traded Canadian firms. The results showed that executives' long-term compensation (efforts done by executives on optimizing long term progress) was positively related to CSR and significantly associated with the firm's environmental action (Mahonet & Thorne, 2005).

Studies done through surveys and praxis by the European Union have showed that consumers of today not only want traditional, good and safe products, but also care that the production is practiced in a socially responsible way. Several different European instances and organizations support and help both large companies, but primary small and medium-sized enterprises (SME) to improve the ability for involvement in CSR and to improve businesses sustainability. SME are less driven in CSR and need more tools and guidance to perform CSR in an effective manner. This is done by, inter alia, adopting a mission statement, code of conduct, or credo where companies state their purpose, core values, and responsibilities towards their stakeholders; a process that must always be contemporized (Commission of the European Communities, 2001). Studies show that the customers reward companies, particularly service companies, for their support of social programs. Due to high degree similarity among service companies and theirs activities within social and environmental initiatives, a proactive CSR management in this sector is more valuable and preferable for customers (Calabrese & Lancioni, 2008).

The indirect effect of the growing attention of CSR by consumers and investors, increases opportunities on the market and can affect the intangible assets of a company, such as its brand and image. The direct effects of CSR are e.g. achieving awareness, social and

environmental improvement on a global level. This challenge is particularly relevant for global companies, since the pressure of being socially responsible is higher on the international market (Commission of the European Communities, 2001).

2.2 CSR in the service industry

As previously mentioned, there are several recognized definitions of CSR, and the three mentioned were defined by: Carroll's, Wartick and Cochran and Elkington. The Oxford handbook of CSR refers to De Bakker et al. (2005) and Lockett et al. (2006), who have been studying CSR for a long time, state that the field is well established and so are the concepts of CSR. What is of more interest is that the CSR is a very broad and an emerging concept - the definition of CSR has diverse perspectives and is not a complete concept (The Oxford handbook, 2009). The main reason of the diversity is that the meaning of CSR varies depending on the business sector where companies operate. This makes CSR a custom-made process where each company has to define their aim, intentions and alignment with the company's strategy (Martinez, Pérez & Rodriguez del Bosque, 2014).

Studies have shown the negative impact of the hospitality industry on the economic, natural and social environments, such as pollution or waste generation when consuming water, energy, food, linen, occupation of space and other resources (Chan, 2011; Chung & Parker, 2010). Different associations, such as Green Hotels, has developed guidelines that are designed to save energy and water and reduce solid waste (Commission of the European Communities, 2001). Casado et. al. (2014) mean that service firms gain from focusing on some CSR activities such as environment, responsible labor relationship or good corporate governance. Research show that CSR activities have a higher positive impact for service industries than product-based companies. This strong effect indicates an important role of CSR performance within the service industry to improve a service firm's reputation. Although most CSR activities are cost increasing in short-term, the strategy appear to deliver a long-term profitability. Implementation of CSR activities can be managed through trade-offs and proactive management of social responsibility in the company (Casado et al., 2014).

Research has shown that there is a risk that customers do not perceive CSR initiatives as sincere actions, hence, the actions could result either positive or negative effect. The effects are only effective and positive when the actions are as outright and honest as possible. As mentioned earlier, CSR strategy is a customized strategy where the

dimensions of CSR within the company must be well matched to receive a positive effect (Sen & Bhattacharya, 2001; Sen & Bhattacharya, 2004; Calabrese & Lancioni, 2008). This indicates that CSR is a dangerous tool which can contribute both positively and negatively on customers' choices, therefore, affect brand image in a crucial way.

2.3 Brand Image

According to Grönroos (2007) marketing has three objectives which consist of: getting customers, keeping customers and growing customers into a customer relationship. To reach these goals marketing needs to be viewed through a broad perspective since it exists on three levels: a way of thinking, a way of organizing and a set of tools and activities. The first level describes marketing as a way of thinking which means that a company's marketing concept needs to permeate the people, processes, functions and departments of an organization. The second level describes the company's way of organizing which refers to the extent the different departments communicate information to each other and how plans are coordinated. The final level comes down to the set of tools and activities which include the different marketing techniques of which the customer is exposed to, for example, promotion. There are numerous marketing tools and building a strong brand is one of these.

The first brands emerged in the beginning of the 20th century. However, the brand as a concept evolved first during the 50s and today, a strong brand is recognized as a vital part of a firm's competitiveness (Grönroos, 2007). A brand is defined by its name, term, sign, symbol or any other feature. However, within the service industry, the key characteristic of a brand is the service process. A strong brand has many advantages. For example, a company can charge higher prices for their service although it does not differ from other services in the same category (Apéria & Back, 2004). A strong brand also leads to greater customer loyalty, less vulnerability to competitive marketing actions and increased marketing communication effectiveness. When a firm succeed with its marketing strategy, the intangible assets increase. The intangible assets create value to the firm which has become known as brand equity, but since the term has developed through the years, there is no consensus in its definition (Kayaman & Arasli, 2007). Aaker (1996) defines brand equity as a set of assets linked to a brand's name and symbol that adds or subtracts value, provided by a product or service, to a firm and its' customers. Furthermore, he states that the components of brand equity consist of: brand loyalty,

brand awareness, perceived quality and brand associations (Aaker, 1996). From a marketing aspect brand equity builds and directs the brand assets by retaining and attracting customers and by avoiding the price competition, which in turn contributes to the profitability of a company (Apéria & Back, 2004). Keller (1993, p.45), on the other hand, approaches brand equity from a customer's perspective and defines it as:

The differential effect that brand knowledge has on the customer response to the marketing of that brand. Equity occurs when the customer is familiar with the brand and holds some favorable, strong and unique brand associations in memory.

In this definition Keller (1993) introduces brand knowledge which consists of brand awareness and brand image that contributes to customer based brand equity. Brand knowledge is essential since it enable the customer to link new, favorable and unique associations to the brand (Apéria & Back, 2004).

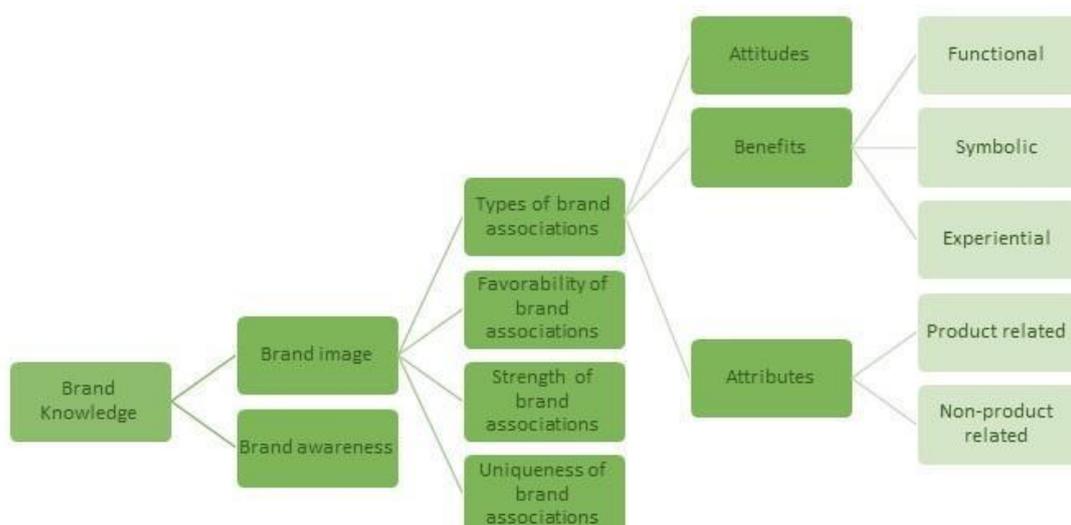


Figure 2.2 The brand knowledge model by Keller, 1993

Further, Keller (1993, p.3) defines brand image as “perceptions about a brand as reflected as brand associations held in consumer memory”. Similarly, Aaker (1996, p. 69) defines brand image as “how customers and others perceive the brand”. In figure 2.2 Keller's (1993) the complete model of brand knowledge is shown. In this study, however, the focus lies on brand image. Brand image is composed of associations that the customer links to the brand and these associations decide whether a brand is meaningful or not. Brand associations can be measured in strength, favorability and uniqueness. However, before those dimensions are considered, it is important to examine what different types of associations that are present in the mind of the customer.

The different types of associations regarding brand image are divided into three components: attributes, benefits and attitudes. Firstly, attributes are the descriptive characteristics of a service. Keller (1993) distinguish between product- and non-product related attributes. Product-related attributes are described as relevant function ingredients expected by a customer in a service. Non-product related attributes on the other hand are price information and the customer's impression of what type of person that uses the service and in what situation it is used. Secondly, benefits are the values that the customer links to the service attributes. These benefits can be categorized as functional, symbolic and experiential. The functional benefits correspond to the product-related attributes and meets the customer's basic need to solve a certain problem. Likewise, the experiential benefits correspond to product-related attributes but meet the customer's need for experience, pleasure, well-being, stimulation etc. These benefits represent the customer's feelings when consuming the service. The symbolic benefits on the other hand correspond to non-product related attributes and meet the customer's underlying need for social approval or personal expression. The symbolic benefits meet the need to be seen, to play a social role, to belong to a group and to demonstrate one's ego to others etc. Finally, attitude is defined as the customers overall valuation of the brand (Apéria & Back, 2004).

Brand awareness is described as the extent to which a brand is recognized by potential customers (Apéria & Back, 2004). It is important to create brand awareness in order for customers to be able to develop positive attitudes towards the brand (Apéria & Back, 2004). Brand awareness has a positive influence on customers' buying decision. If high brand awareness is achieved, the customers' uncertainty regarding the service decreases and the probability that the product will be chosen for purchase increases even though other brand associations are missing (Keller, 1993). Hence, the consumer behavior is affected in a positive way.

As mentioned earlier, a strong brand image contributes to the customer based brand equity in a positive way (Keller, 1993). Furthermore, a strong brand image contributes to a positive customer experience, and is therefore essential in service sectors, due to its intangible nature. A company should manage communication so that a favorable brand image develops in the mind of the customer. The image that a marketer wants to form is called brand identity. To succeed with branding the company's brand identity has to correlate with the customer's brand image. This means that the values of the company has to correspond with the values of the customer. Services does not only include logical and economical values but emotional connections as well. This means that a service brand needs to create feelings of trust, affection, closeness and reflection of the customer's core values (Grönroos, 2007). The challenge that marketers face is to form and link the customer's thoughts, feelings, images, beliefs, perceptions and opinions to the brand in a favorable way (Keller, 2007). The development of a positive brand image is complex and created through received inputs of specific brand messages. When a consumer relates to the flow of brand messages, a brand relationship will develop and give the service a meaning in the mind of the customer. However, whether a brand message adds positively to the brand image or not depends on if the customer finds the brand message favorable or not (Grönroos, 2007). Along with meeting expectations on intangible and visible components of a service, it is important to meet social values that the customer finds important (Popoli, 2011). These values are closely related to CSR, which have the potential to satisfy the customer's need which leads to a brand relationship and which in turn creates a positive brand image.

2.4 CSR and brand image

Nowadays, customers have influential CSR expectations on companies and this influence is growing stronger due to the increased importance of CSR. As mentioned earlier, customers have expectations on the value system (which includes both emotional and social values) (Popoli, 2011). Brands based on emotional values are more protected from competitive erosion (Martinez, Pérez & Rodríguez del Bosque, 2014). CSR can be seen as an emotional aspect of brand image which enhances a company's competitive advantage (Martinez, Pérez & Rodríguez del Bosque, 2014). If a company's positioning strategy is based on its' CSR activities, the core values are permeated by the core values of CSR (Du, Bhattacharya & Sen, 2010). One outcome of integrating CSR into the marketing strategy is to insure the brand from attacks (Werther & Chandler, 2005). This

means that CSR can work as a “damage insurance” to protect the brand. A company with a strong brand is less likely to have problems with e.g. reputation (Casado Diaz et. al., 2014). When CSR is communicated, it becomes a strategic branding tool to manage customer’s expectations (Werther & Chandler, 2005). Du, Bhattacharya & Sen (2007) state that CSR initiatives form a positive customer’s attitude and behavior. This in turn strengthens the company’s brand image, which is one of the main reasons for the company to engage in CSR activities (Du, Bhattacharya & Sen, 2007; Swedish trade federation, 2014). CSR and brand image are strongly linked to each other. CSR is becoming a core component that affects brand image in a positive way and is therefore considered to be a strategic necessity, rather than something that only contributes to the customer’s social value (Crespo, Salmones & Bosque 2005; Cretu & Brodie, 2007; Werther & Chandler, 2005; Idowu, 2009; Wu & Wang, 2014)

Casado Diaz et. al. (2014) state that customers favor companies that are involved in CSR. When customers perceive a company as socially responsible, they will be positively influenced when evaluating the service quality. Customers assume that social responsibility is linked to high service quality and may therefore use CSR information to decrease the uncertainty of a service (Casado Diaz et. al., 2014). Martínez, Perez and Rodríguez del Bosque (2014) state that CSR has a positive influence on brand image which in turn engages the customer in brand loyalty. Furthermore, the authors show that a strong brand image increases the word of mouth and the purchase intentions in a positive way (Martínez, Perez & Rodríguez del Bosque, 2014). However, it is important to effectively communicate the company’s CSR actions to increase the customers’ awareness and attitude, in order for them to develop a strong brand image (Martínez, Perez & Rodríguez del Bosque, 2014).

The service industry is the fastest growing sector and, as mentioned previously, even product-based companies are to some extent developing their businesses into service businesses. Consumers today have more knowledge of sustainability and an increased awareness of companies’ actions which means that CSR has gained influence. Meanwhile, brand image is becoming known as one of the most important marketing components. Still, the number and the scope of the research on how the different CSR dimensions influence brand image is limited and needs further investigation.

2.5 Theoretical model

The theoretical framework includes two main concepts: CSR and brand image. The following model has been developed and based on established theories from previous research. In this thesis CSR has been defined by two different concepts (see literature review). This theoretical model consist of components which has been selected from Carroll's pyramid (ethical and philanthropic) and the TBL model (sustainable).

Relevant components from the established models have been selected to fit the research question in this thesis. The economic and legal dimension have been excluded from this model due to the low relevance of the research question. Since these factors are considered to be required by the society and by the legal framework within businesses, organizations have to follow the framework of these responsibilities. Likewise, Perez and Rodriguez del Bosque (2013) imply that customer CSR perception can be measured through ethical and philanthropic responsibilities, as economic and legal responsibilities are considered to be necessarily performed by corporations. Ethical and philanthropic dimensions are also expected by the society, but are considered to be voluntary activities; the actions vary depending on the industry sector and are selectable, since they are not directly requested. In this study, the ethical dimension includes issues related to the ethical actions that the customer expects from a service (Carroll, 1979; Carroll, 1991). The activities within the philanthropic dimension are voluntary (Carroll, 1979), for example, avoiding hazardous waste within the service industry or being involved in community issues.

Sustainability-related issues are controversial and consumers fear for the planet's future ability to sustain life (Ottman, 2011), therefore, the sustainability dimension from the TBL model was of importance to include in this theoretical model. Also, TBL measurements for sustainability are not standardized and can be accommodated depending on the project, industry sector, business goal or entity and so on (Slapper & Hall, 2011). The sustainability perspective is considered to be a part of the ethical dimension (Carroll, 1991; Perez & Rodriguez del Bosque, 2013), but due to its importance this study will consider sustainability as one unique dimension. Today, environmental and social activities are considered as proactive actions of CSR and less as defensive or compulsory to respect laws and regulations (Popoli, 2011). Based on the literature review, it is of interest to examine which of these three dimensions affect the brand image within the service sector.



Figure 2.4 Chosen CSR components

As mentioned earlier, brand image is a widely used marketing tool across different industries. Nevertheless, there is no consensus in the literature regarding the measurement of brand image since the concept is multidimensional (Malik, Naeem & Nasir, 2011).

Wu and Wang (2014) examined CSR's effect on brand image and concluded that CSR and brand image are strongly linked to each other. The researchers measured brand image through functional, symbolic and experiential image and attitude which are closely related to two of Keller's (1993) dimensions of brand image, namely benefits and attitude. Since this study is conducted on a service industry context, the brand image in this theoretical model is operationalized through one more dimensions, namely attribute. The justification for this additional dimensions is that a service consists of both product-related and non-product related attributes to some extent (Grönroos, 2007) and, therefore, Keller's definition of brand image is more suitable. This allows brand image to be measured in a more holistic way since it does not only include benefits and attitude but attribute as well.

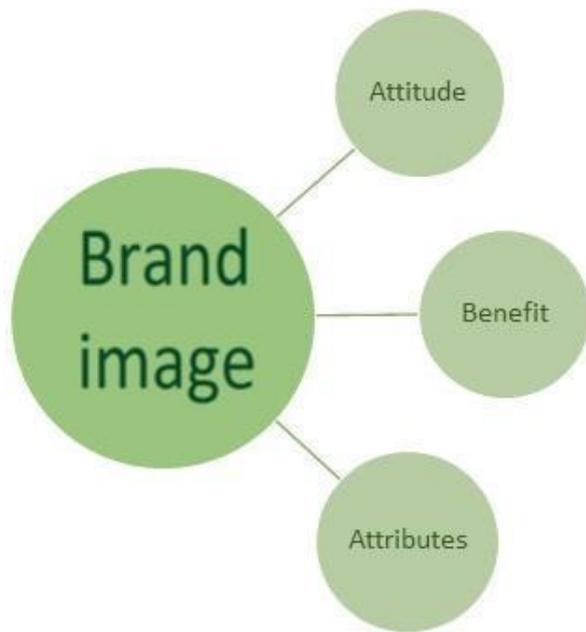


Figure 2.5 Chosen Brand image components

There are several studies that show the positive effect of CSR on brand image, but few studies that are conducted within the service industry. It is therefore relevant to examine how the different dimensions of CSR affect brand image in order to optimize the CSR strategy as a marketing strategy. In conclusion, there are two main concepts that form the basis of this study: CSR and brand image. By operationalizing these concepts they have become empirically testable. Consequently, this model will be used as a framework when exploring what effect the CSR's dimensions has on brand image.

3. Methodology

The following chapter presents the methodology of this thesis. Firstly the research philosophy will be discussed. Secondly, the research strategy will be presented, which explains the research approach and the theory choice.

3.1. Research philosophy

All researchers have assumptions about the grounds of knowledge. The assumptions are known as epistemological considerations and concern whether knowledge is considered as acceptable or not within a specific discipline. There are three main epistemological positions which consist of positivism, realism and interpretivism. The researcher's values, assumptions and view on the world affect which research philosophy will be chosen. This in turn will have an impact on what strategic approach and what direction the research will have.

A positivistic approach has permeated the research process in this study. This philosophy highlights the researchers' opportunity to observe the social reality by applying methods of natural sciences. By developing hypotheses based on existing theories an explanation of a phenomenon can be made. Furthermore, the hypothesis can either be confirmed or rejected and in turn generalized on a population. Hence, positivism is concerned with facts rather than impressions. Another characteristic of this philosophy is that the research is done objectively. The researcher's own values are eliminated to some extent as the empirical material is usually quantitative and based on numbers (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009). This research philosophy is suitable for this study since the purpose is to explore CSR's effect on brand image through analysis of collected data. The CSR dimensions will thereby be translated into independent variables while brand image will be translated into a dependent variable. The derived results are then generalized on the population.

Ontological considerations refer to the nature of social entities. Social entities can be considered as either objective entities that have an existence independent of social actors or as social constructions that have an existence dependent on social actors (Bryman & Bell, 2011). In this study social entities are classified as objective as it is believed that the social reality is of an external and objective reality.

3.2 Research approach

The research approach can be either deductive, inductive or abductive. The main difference between the deductive and inductive approach is that the inductive processes begin with collection of data from which a theory is created based on the result. The deductive research, on the other hand, is dependent on former research and theories. From this knowledge the researcher develop hypotheses which will be analyzed and either confirmed or rejected (Saunders et al., 2009).

In this study, a deductive approach has been applied which is closely related to the positivistic and quantitative research approaches. Since this study has a deductive approach, a research question was developed to explore the effect of CSR's different dimensions on brand image. Furthermore, a theoretical model, based on former theories and concepts was developed, which is typical for a deductive approach. The different components of the theoretical model was operationalized to make collection of data possible. Regarding CSR and brand image, which are the two main concepts in this study, there is a large number of studies made. However, there is limited knowledge of how the different CSR dimensions affect brand image.

3.3 Choice of empirical methodology

Within business and management research it is common to distinguish between quantitative and qualitative research methods. A qualitative method is applied when one wants to measure the complexity of a phenomenon. Interviews, observations and experiments are typical practices to answer the question "why?". The quantitative method, on the other hand answers the question "how?" by quantifying observations to find a relationship between factors. To find these relationships, a statistical analysis is conducted on the collected data.

In this study, a quantitative method has been applied to answer the research question. The justification of the chosen method are several. Firstly, a quantitative method enables a broad and comprehensive coverage. Secondly, the data collected is objective and measurable. Thirdly, previous researchers have conducted this method to explore CSR and brand image, which show that this method is appropriate (Martinez, Pérez & Rodríguez del Bosque, 2014). Finally, this method is suitable since this research has to be completed within a short time frame and by using a quantitative method the researcher

can make a relatively fast analyses in statistical programs (Denscombe, 2013). Furthermore the choice of this method reflects the positivistic philosophy on which this study is based on.

3.4 Choice of theory

Three main theories has been integrated in this study to define and operationalize the concepts. Carroll's (1979) CSR pyramid and Elkington's Triple Bottom Line (Slapper & Hall, 2011) are the two main concepts used to define CSR. The most suitable dimensions within these definitions were chosen to form an optimal model for this research (see the literature review). Brand image, which is the third main concept in this study, is defined by Keller (1993). He describes at the customer's associations to the brand reflected in the mind. This definition is well established and widely practiced within marketing research.

4. Empirical method

The following chapter presents the empirical method of this thesis. Firstly, the research design and strategy will be discussed, followed by study design, data collection and sample selection of the study. The chapter continues with a reflection of reliability and validity. Further, a questionnaire design and chosen analytical data will be presented. The ethical considerations of the study will sum up the chapter.

4.1 Research design and strategy

Saunders et al. (2009) state that there are three different research designs, namely exploratory, descriptive and explanatory designs. Explanatory studies are used when exploring relationships between different factors and variables and how they affect each other (Saunders et al., 2009). Since the aim of this study is to explore how the CSR's dimensions affect the brand image, this research design is appropriate. The uncovered relationships between these variables will be analyzed to find out how the independent variables affect the independent variable.

Moreover, there are seven types of research strategies that enable a collection of data, namely, experiment, survey, case study, action research, grounded theory, ethnography and archival research. In this study, a questionnaire approach was practiced to gather precise information that answers the research questions. More specifically a survey was conducted on a sample of 73 hotel guests living in a CSR friendly hotel.

4.2 Study design

The case studies are divided into the longitudinal design and the cross sectional design. Longitudinal study is a form usually used to map a change in business and management research which is usually qualitative type of study, also time and cost consuming. The cross sectional design is traditionally used in the context of quantitative research, which can be followed up by interview if necessary. This type of research design show how the reality looks like at the present time of the investigation (Bryman & Bell, 2011). This type is common when conducting surveys when the research time is limited to a short time-period (Saunders et al, 2009). Since this study is made during a time frame of 15 weeks and does not investigate a development, a cross sectional time horizon is suitable.

4.3 Data collection

To answer the research question it is important to choose an accurate collection method. This study will collect primary data to answer the research question. Primary data can be gathered through observations, questionnaires and focus interviews. Since the aim of this study is to measure and analyze different elements of customer's experience of CSR and its effect on brand image, a questionnaire is the most suitable method. The questionnaire will include the chosen dimensions of CSR and brand image which will be broken down into relevant questions/statements to measure these components. The most common type of questionnaires is surveys, which will be used in this study. More specifically the type of questionnaire conducted was a self-administrated delivery and collection questionnaire; surveys were handed out among the guests staying at the hotel and later on collected (Saunders et al., 2009).

4.4 Sample selection

Firstly, to answer the research question of this study, an appropriate sample and research field was chosen. The hotel where the questionnaires were handed out to the guests, was located in Malmö, Sweden. The second key step in the research process is sampling. There are two different types of sampling techniques which consist of probability sampling and non-probability sampling. A probability sample means that the respondents are randomly selected. In comparison with the probability sample, the respondents in a non-probability sample are consciously selected by the researcher. As the probability sampling is more representative and the most useful sample method, this specific sample was chosen for this study. A simple random sample was conducted in this research, which is the most basic form of probability sample. With random sampling every participant has an equal probability of being chosen in the sample (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

The randomized respondents chosen for this study consisted of Swedish adult hotel guests (+18 years). The anonymity of the respondents increases the veracity of the answers. There will however be questions about the age and the gender to ensure the relevance and the validity of the answers. The number of the respondents of our study is a total of 73 respondents.

4.5 Reliability and validity

The quality and credibility of a research is measured by its reliability and validity. It is important to take the issues of research quality seriously to consider it credible and to be able to maintain consistency (Saunders et al., 2009). (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Validity is concerned with the accuracy and truthfulness of the findings, while reliability measures how consistent the findings would be if they were to be repeated on another occasion or replicated by a different researcher. The research must also be fully transparent and objective so that the readers can interpret the text (Bryman and Bell, 2011; Saunders et al., 2009). Saunders et al. (2009) names three threats to reliability: participant error, participant bias and researcher error. Participant error considers the effect of the timing of the questionnaire, for example, a respondent might be less receptive to participate in a survey questionnaire after a long day at work. The second threat is called participant bias, where the respondents tend to answer in a way that is biased by someone else, for example, by the interviewer in a qualitative research. The third threat is the researcher error, where factors such as mood can affect the researcher's interpretation. The final error is called researcher bias, which is errors caused by the researcher's own values and beliefs (Saunders et al., 2009).

A strong validity increases the generalizability of the study (Descombe, 2011). As mentioned earlier, a quantitative study is objective, measurable and enables a broad and comprehensive coverage. To measure what is supposed to be measured a theoretical model was developed (see literature review). The dimensions were operationalized to help find specific survey questions relevant to the dimensions of CSR which increase the internal validity: questionnaires represent the reality of what is measured (Saunders et al., 2009). The theoretical model was developed from established frameworks, therefore, the industries using similar CSR strategies as hotel industry can apply the findings of this study to their business. Use and operationalization of established models also increases the measurement validity (Bryman & Bell, 2011). This means an extended external validity; this study can be generalized to other relevant businesses (Bryman & Bell, 2011; Descombe, 2011; Saunders et al., 2009). Furthermore, by using Cronbach's alpha test, this study will increase the internal validity of this research. The test indicates how related the different components are. The internal validity refers to how well the conclusions

drawn from the relationship between two or more variables hold (Bryman & Bell, 2011). These factors increase the validity of the research and its objectivity, hence, a stronger credibility.

4.6 Questionnaire design

In this study a self-completion questionnaire was applied. This type of questionnaire can come in several forms: mail-, post and text form but also a form of administration where questionnaires are handed out personally. This type of questionnaire is very common due to the easy distribution, cost effectiveness, simplicity and due to the fact that it allows respondents to choose to what extent they want to answer. The used survey consists of closed questions which are short, easy to process, easy to answer and to follow up compared to open questions. Using closed questions enable an exploration of the relationship between different variables and to make an observation of answers by different types of respondents (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Questions asked in this survey dealt with the respondents attitudes, beliefs, normative standards and values of components related to CSR and brand image.

The questionnaire consisted of 15 statements which were divided into two parts: one part related to CSR's three dimensions and the other related to the components of brand image. Statement two and three measured the ethical dimension of CSR, followed by the philanthropic dimension which was measured by statement four and five. Finally, the sustainability dimension was measured by statement six and seven. Brand image consisted of benefits, brand attitude and attributes which were measured by eight statements. Statement eight, nine and ten measured the benefits of the service, followed by statements 11 and 12 that measured the brand attitude. The last three statements measured the attributes of the service. The questionnaire was handed out after the guest's hotel visit, in other words, the customers first experienced the service and then participated in the survey questionnaire. Almost all of the statements were followed by examples. In statement number three, for example, the respondent was asked if she/he experienced that the hotel considered the ethical issues. The statement followed by an example "the hotel is adjusted for functionally limited people". This increases the comprehension of the questionnaire and in turn increases the validity of this study.

The statements were measured on a seven level Likert scale with a horizontal format, where the respondents could choose from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The Likert

scale is a well-established measurement scale used by many researchers, especially when using closed answers (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

To conclude, the data collected through the self-completion survey makes it possible to see the differences between respondents and what dimension of CSR affects more and less on brand image.

4.7 Data analysis and analytical tools

The analytical tool used to analyze the collected empirical data was the software program IBM SPSS Statistics 22. This tool helps to translate and analyze data into to relevant information for studies. Furthermore, this analytical tool is recognized within the fields of statistics and science, which increases the validity of the research. The specific tools used in this study are:

- Cronbach's alpha is used to evaluate the reliability and significance of the components used in this study.
- Descriptive statistic and cross tabulation is used to understand the interrelation between two variables and to find interactions between them.
- Spearman's correlation is used to measure the relationship between variables.
- A regression analysis is conducted to see how different CSR dimensions affect brand image. More specifically, a multivariate regression will be applied to learn more about the relationship between CSR dimensions, which are independent variables, and brand image, which is a dependent variable.

4.8 Ethical considerations

It is important to consider ethical principles when conducting a business research. Ethical issues are categorized into four different types: harm to participants, lack of informed consent, invasion of privacy and deception. (Bryman & Bell, 2011)

The risk of harming a participant refers to both respondents and the company that the questionnaire is conducted on (Bryman & Bell, 2011). The risk of harming the respondents in this study has been minimized by making the survey questionnaire anonymous and by maintaining the surveys confidentially. In this study, there are descriptive questions about the respondent's' age and gender but this information is not enough to identify the person. Furthermore, to protect the hotel's involvement in this

study the name is kept anonymous. The second ethical principle to consider is the lack of informed consent. The potential participant should receive as much information needed to make a decision whether to participate or not (ibid.). In this study the survey contained information about the research and contact details for further questions. The third ethical principle concerns the invasion of privacy. The respondent might find some questions too private and do not wish to make the answer public (ibid.). In this study the respondent has the opportunity to skip a question if it is judged sensitive. Furthermore this study is not of a sensitive nature which enhances the respondents' willingness to answer. The fourth ethical principle refer to deception which occurs if respondents are led to believe that a research is about something else that what is (ibid.). In this research the survey contained a clear description of the purpose and both researchers of this study were situated on the hotel to answer the respondents' questions if needed. Recording or observation techniques were not used in this study.

After taking these ethical principles into considerations and fully living up to the requirements this study can be classified as ethical.

5. Results

This chapter presents the results from the collected data that has been analyzed. Firstly, the chapter will present the demographics of the research followed by the results needed to respond our research question. Further, an analysis of each result will be presented.

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the collected data will be presented. This chapter starts with descriptive statistics regarding the demographics, hotel visits and the importance of CSR to the customers. Thereafter, a Mann-Whitney test was done to determine if there is a significant difference between men and women regarding the importance of CSR. Finally, to explore the relationship between the different dimensions of CSR and brand image, a Spearman's rho correlation test and a multiple regression analysis were conducted on the data. The following data was analyzed with the software program IBM SPSS Statistics 22.

5.1.1 Demographics

The descriptive statistics will be presented in this subchapter and will provide information about the sample being studied. A total of 73 respondents participated in this study: 35 men and 38 women. In table 5.1, the share of percentage that represent men respective women are shown. The age was divided into four groups. Group number one represents the age range of 18-33, number two the age range of 34-49, group number three the age range of 50-65 and the last group represents the age of 65 or older. The frequencies within these age groups are shown in table 5.2.

Table 5.1 Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Man		47.9	47.9	47.9
Woman		52.1	52.1	100.0
Total		100.0	100.0	

Table 5.2 Age

Age	Freq	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
1 (18-33)		38.4	38.4	38.4
2 (34-49)		23.3	23.3	61.6
3 (50-65)		21.9	21.9	83.6
4 (66>)		16.4	16.4	100.0
Total		100.0	100.0	

Furthermore, table 5.2 shows that the majority of the visitors were between 18-49 years old (group 1 and 2). The minority was the group number four, the age of 66>.

5.1.2 Hotel visit

The questions about demographic characteristics were followed by questions about the guest's hotel habits. The first question was "how often do you stay in a hotel" where the respondents could choose between "several times a week", "several times a month" and "several times a year". The second question was "when you are in Malmo do you stay in this hotel" where the respondent could answer between "usually" or "usually not". As shown in table 5.3 the majority of the respondents (44) stay at a hotel several times a year. Only five of the respondents stayed at a hotel several times a week. 20 of the respondents preferred to stay in this specific hotel, while the majority preferred another hotel.

Table 5.3 Hotel stay

		Do you stay in this hotel when you are in Malmo		Total
		Usual	Usually not	
How often do you stay in a hotel	Several times a week	2	3	5
	Several times a month	8	16	24
	Several times a year	10	34	44
Total		20	53	73

Table 5.4 tells us that the majority of the visitors (57/73) were there for leisure or other reasons where most of the visitors were there for leisure. Those who stay at a hotel several times a week are business related visitors.

Table 5.4 Reason of stay

		Reason of stay			Total
		business	Leisure	Other	
How often do you stay in a hotel	Several times a week	5	0	0	5
	Several times a month	9	9	6	24
	Several times a year	2	28	14	44
Total		16	37	20	73

5.1.3 CSR importance

Statement number one measured how important it is for the guests that the hotel they are staying at takes social responsibility. Table 5.5 shows that the involvement in CSR is important for mostly everyone, most important for group number four (age 65>), and least important for group number three (age 50-65).

On statement number one 37/72 of the respondents answered “agree” or “strongly agree”. 11/72 of the respondents answered “partly agree”, 11/72 were neutral and 24/72 answered either “partly disagree” or “disagree”. None of the respondents answered “strongly disagree” on this statement. To conclude, the majority of the respondents in this study (48/72) of the respondents think it is important that the hotel they are staying at takes social responsibility, 11/72 are indifferent and 13/72 do not think that it is important.

Table 5.5 Statement 1 - age

		Age				
		1 (18-33)	2 (34-49)	3 (50-65)	4 (66>)	Total
It is important that the hotel I am staying in is taking social responsibility	Disagree	0	1	3	0	4
	Partly disagree	5	1	3	0	9
	neutral	2	5	3	1	11
	Partly agree	9	1	0	1	11
	Agree	8	7	3	4	22
	Strongly agree	3	2	4	6	15
Total		27	17	16	12	72

There was a difference between men's and women's general attitude towards social responsibility, which can be seen in table 5.6. Generally, the female respondents of this study find taking social responsibility more important than the male respondents, however, the percentage of men finding social responsibility of big importance is higher than the women's. Although there is a difference between genders in descriptive statistics we can not consider the difference as statistically significant, which will be explained in the next subchapter.

Table 5.6 Statement 1 - gender

			Gender		Total
			Man	Woman	
It is important that the hotel I am staying in is taking social responsibility	Disagree	Count	2	2	4
		% within Gender	5.9%	5.3%	5.6%
	Partly disagree	Count	7	2	9
		% within Gender	20.6%	5.3%	12.5%
	neutral	Count	6	5	11
		% within Gender	17.6%	13.2%	15.3%
	Partly agree	Count	6	5	11
		% within Gender	17.6%	13.2%	15.3%
	Agree	Count	5	17	22
		% within Gender	14.7%	44.7%	30.6%
	Strongly agree	Count	8	7	15
		% within Gender	23.5%	18.4%	20.8%
Total		Count	34	38	72
		% within Gender	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

5.2 The Importance of CSR to men and women

The Mann-whitney U test is used to test whether two independent samples are significantly different. In this case, the difference between men and women regarding the importance of CSR when choosing a hotel, will be tested. The difference of CSR importance between men and women, that was discovered in the previous subchapter, will be tested to see if it is statistically significant.

Table 5.7 show that the Z value is -1.392 with a probability value of 0,164. Since the probability level is lower than 0,5 the difference is not significant. This means that there is no significant difference between men and women regarding the importance of CSR when choosing a hotel.

Table 5.7

Significance: gender	
	Statement 1
Mann-Whitney U	542,000
Z	-1,392
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	,164
a. Grouping Variable: Gender	

5.3 Internal reliability through Cronbach's Alpha test

In this subchapter, Cronbach's Alpha measures the relationship and the reliability of the statements in the questionnaire survey. When using multiple indicator measurements, such as Likert scales, it is important to measure the internal reliability. A multiple item measure consists of several statements that form an overall score to capture a specific element of a concept. The internal reliability refers to the coherence between the statements in the various elements and can be tested by using Cronbach's alpha (Bryman & Bell, 2011). When doing a Cronbach's alpha test, the minimum acceptable level is 0,5 (Pérez & Rodríguez del Bosque, 2013).

The results of the Cronbach's Alpha test are presented in table 5.8. In this study, brand image and the ethical-, philanthropic- and sustainability dimension were tested separately to find out if the statements are coherent. The three dimensions that were measured in this subchapter were received from the theoretical model (figure 2.4) in chapter 2. Each dimension consisted of two statements that formed an overall score to capture the unique elements of the dimensions. The results show that the ethical and sustainability dimensions have a value above the recommended level of 0.5. The philanthropic level, however, have a value below 0.5, which means that coherence between the statements within the philanthropic level is weak.

Further, the coherence between the statements of brand image was measured. Brand image consisted of eight statements that captured the specific components (attitude, belief and attribute) of brand image in the theoretical model in chapter two, figure 2.5. The results of the brand image statements had a value of 0.703 which show a consistency of the questions as a measurement instrument. The Cronbach's alpha test showed an internal reliability in the questions with the exception of the philanthropic dimension which had a value of 0.448.

To conclude, brand image and the CSR's dimensions, except the philanthropic dimension, are coherent which means that the statements measures the same thing. The low Cronbach's alpha value of the philanthropic dimension can be a result of the low number of questions and their lack of accuracy. Another possible explanation is that the philanthropic dimension is a very broad area which cover several CSR activities. Hence, the questions were designed to cover these different aspects and a consistency in the answers was therefore not achieved. To improve the Cronbach's alpha value within the philanthropic dimension one of the questions could be deleted, but since there are only two questions this is not a possibility (Pallant, 2005).

Table 5.8 Cronbach's Alpha

	Cronbach's Alpha	Number of questions
Ethical dimension	0,557	2
Philanthropic dimension	0,448	2
Sustainability dimension	0,648	2
CSR	0,666	6
Brand Image	0,703	8

5.4 Spearman's rho correlation test

The Spearman's rho correlation test shows the strength of the relationship between different variables that represent the different concepts of the theoretical model. The Spearman's rho correlation test is commonly used to disclose relationships between different variables. Since all the statement variables in this study are ordinal, this type of correlation test is suitable (Pallant, 2005; Bryman & Bell, 2011).

A relationship between the variables occur when the value is close to 1 or -1, indicating the strength and the direction of a relationship. There is no relationship if the value is 0. However, this test does not uncover the causal effect of the related variables (Bryman & Bell, 2011). A relationship is considered to be weak when the correlation value is below 0.2. To determine a strong relationship the value has to lie between 0.2 and 0.8 (Wahlgren, 2008; Pallant, 2005).

As presented in table 5.9, the result of the correlation test show that there is a relationship between the variables. The ethical dimension and brand image have a correlation value of 0.489, while the philanthropic dimension and brand image have a correlation value of 0.407. These relationships have a positive direction and are considered to be strong. Sustainability and brand image, on the other hand, have a correlation value of 0.299, which is a rather a weak relationship.

The correlations between all the CSR dimensions and brand image are significant on a significance level of $p < 0.05$. This means that there are only 5 in 100 chances that one of these correlations appear by coincidence (Pallant, 2005).

Table 5.9 Relationship

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Spearman's rho		
			Ethical	Philanthropic	Sustainability
Ethical dimension	5.417	0.986			
Philanthropic dimension	4.77	1.024	0.509		
Sustainability dimension	5.111	1.011	0.148	0.303	
Brand image	5.376	0.69	0.489	0.407	0.2990
CSR	5.11	0.741			

The standard deviation provides an indication of how the responses deviate from the mean; that is the concentration of the response around the mean. Higher spread indicates a higher deviation from the mean, which means that the responses have a high variation. As we can see in table 5.9, the standard deviation is higher for the philanthropic and sustainability dimensions, but lower for the ethical dimension and brand image. To conclude, the results show that there is a large amount of variation of the responses of the philanthropic dimension and the brand image items. However, the responses of variation of the ethical and the sustainability items are smaller.

5.5 Multiple regression analysis

Finally, a multiple regression analysis is presented in this subchapter. The regression analysis is the final step to disclose the information about the unique contribution of each CSR dimensions and its' effects on brand image. The regression includes one dependent variable (brand image) and three independent variables (ethical-, philanthropic- and sustainability dimension). The dependent variable is a variable which is dependent on independent variables (Pallant, 2005).

A multiple regression analysis explores the interrelationship between several variables and provides information about what variable that best predict a specific outcome. For example, the test uncovers information about the unique contribution of each variable that the theoretical CSR model consist of. In this study a standard multiple regression analysis will be conducted. This means that one dependent variable (brand image) and all the independent variables (the CSR dimensions) will be entered in to the regression equation at once instead of entering them step by step. The result of this regression is also generalizable (repeatable), due to the sample size of 73 respondents, which increases the reliability of the study (Pallant, 2005).

5.5.1 Pre-testing

Before entering the variables in the regression model, tests were made to assure that statistical assumptions were not violated. For the independent variables to be accepted, the correlation between the variables must not exceed a value of 0.7. One of the methods to inspect if the independent variables are relevant to include in the regression model is to look at the correlation values. If the correlation is too high, the independent variables

must be modified (Pallant, 2005). Table 5.9 shows that none of the independent variables exceed the recommended value of 0.7. Furthermore, for the dependent variable to be accepted in the regression model, it has to be normally distributed.

A Shapiro-Wilk test was made to identify the distribution of the dependent variable. As shown in table 5.10, the p-value is 0.193 which means that the distribution of the dependent variable is normal. This means that the requirement to enter the brand image variable in the regression model is met. To conclude, the independent variables and the dependent variable meet the assumptions and will thus be entered in the regression model.

Table 5.10 Normality test

	Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.
Brand_image	,976	69	,193

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

5.5.2 Interpreting the R square

Table 5.11 presents the regression model in which the R square is found. The result shows a value of 0.323, which explains how much the independent variables affect the dependent variable. This means that the regression explains 32.3 % of the variance in the data, in other words, 32.3 % of brand image variation depends on the three independent variables (the three CSR dimensions). The ANOVA table shows if the regression model is significant. The significance value of this regression model is 0.000, which equals $p < 0.0005$, and F equals 10.193, which means that the model reaches statistical significance (Pallant, 2005).

Table 5.11 Regression model

<u>Model Summary</u>							
<u>Model</u>	<u>R</u>	<u>R Square</u>	<u>Adjusted R Square</u>	<u>Std. Error of the Estimate</u>			
1	,569 ^a	,323	,292	,58443			

a. Predictors: (Constant), Sustainability dimension, Ethical dimension, Philanthropic dimension

<u>ANOVA^a</u>						
<u>Model</u>		<u>Sum of Squares</u>	<u>df</u>	<u>Mean Square</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>Sig.</u>
1	Regression	10,444	3	3,481	10,193	,000 ^b
	Residual	21,859	64	,342		
	Total	32,304	67			

a. Dependent Variable: Brand image
b. Predictors: (Constant), Sustainability dimension, Ethical dimension, Philanthropic dimension

<u>Coefficients^a</u>								
<u>Model</u>		<u>Unstandardized Coefficients</u>		<u>Standardized Coefficients</u>	<u>t</u>	<u>Sig.</u>	<u>95.0% Confidence Interval for B</u>	
		<u>B</u>	<u>Std. Error</u>	<u>Beta</u>			<u>Lower Bound</u>	<u>Upper Bound</u>
1	(Constant)	2,631	,515		5,110	,000	1,602	3,660
	Ethical dimension	,305	,091	,409	3,340	,001	,123	,488
	Philanthropic dimension	,090	,086	,135	1,052	,297	-,081	,262
	Sustainability dimension	,125	,074	,186	1,701	,094	-,022	,272

a. Dependent Variable: Brand image

5.5.3 Coefficients

The unstandardized coefficient refers to the direction of the relationship and the amount of change that the different independent variables contribute to brand image given that one unit change in the value of the independent variable. Table 5.11 shows that the effect of the ethical dimension would increase the brand image value with 0.305 units, given that all other variables in the model are constant. The philanthropic and the sustainability dimensions are less related to the brand image than the ethical dimension. This means that the philanthropic and the sustainability dimensions are less important factors to enhance the brand image.

The standardized coefficient, in contrast to the unstandardized, explains how much each independent variable uniquely contributes to the regression model. In this case the ethical dimension has the largest beta coefficient of 0.409, which means that this variable contributes the most to the model compared to the other independent variables. The philanthropic and sustainability dimensions have lower standardized coefficients of 0.135 and 0.185, which means that their unique contribution is less than the ethical dimensions (Pallant, 2005).

5.5.4 Statistical significance

Furthermore, table 5.11 presents the unique contribution of the ethical dimension with a probability value is 0.001, which means that the variable is statistically significant. The philanthropic and the sustainability dimensions on the other hand have high probability values of 0.297 and 0.094, which means that neither of them are statistically significant. This can also be interpreted by looking at the 95 % confidence intervals that are related to the probability value. Table 5.11 shows that the confidence interval for the philanthropic and the sustainability dimensions includes zero, which means that the coefficient is not statistically significant. An explanation for the non-significance might be that the independent variables overlap each other (Pallant, 2005).

6. Discussion

In this section the empirical findings are discussed and analyzed from the received results from the previous chapter. The empirical findings are linked to the literature review and conclusions are drawn.

6.1 introduction

The intention of this study was to explore how the different dimensions of CSR's effect on brand image within the service industry. Since most research regarding CSR's effect on brand image has been made within the product-based industry, a theoretical model adjusted to the service industry was developed. The theoretical model was based on three concepts: Keller's (1993) definition of brand image, Carroll's (1991) CSR pyramid and Elkington's TBL concept (Slapper & Hall, 2011). In this study CSR is composed of the ethical dimension, the philanthropic dimension and the sustainability dimension. These dimensions were analyzed separately to see what effect they had on brand image.

6.2 CSR's effect on brand image

Apart from a substantial amount of literature on CSR's effect on brand image within the service industry, there is a lack of empirical research testing and measuring the CSR activities within the service industry. As previously mentioned in the literature review, today's consumers are more aware of companies activities, and businesses have become more transparent (Ottman, 2011). Previous studies in the literature review have shown that CSR is a strong marketing tool that affects the customer's choice of brand.

The results of this study showed that the majority of the respondents find it important that the hotels they are staying in takes social responsibility, without any significant distinction of attitudes towards the importance of the CSR between age or gender (table 5.5 and 5.6). This is aligned with Casado Diaz et al. (2014) statement that customers favor companies that are involved in CSR (Casado Diaz et al., 2014). An explanation of this could be that customers think that companies involved in CSR are linked to high service quality and may thus use CSR information to decrease the uncertainty of a service (Casado Diaz et. al., 2014).

Previous studies have shown the importance of an outright CSR communication, to acquire a positive effect on the brand image (Sen & Bhattacharya, 2011). The hotel, where the questionnaires were handed out, is one of the largest hotel chains in Scandinavia. The hotel has a substantial CSR involvement and has received several sustainability awards. The customer perception of the experienced CSR activities in this hotel showed a mean value of 5.11 on the seven level likert scale, with a standard deviation of 0.741, which is shown in table 5.9. This shows that the respondents in this study have similar experiences of the hotels involvement in CSR activities, as well as an indication of high response on CSR perception. A high value of the CSR perception defines an association to the brand held in the consumer memory (Keller, 1993). The positive perceived experience, for a customer who does care about service companies taking social responsibility, will create feelings of trust, affection, and closeness to this specific brand that reflects the customer's core emotional and social values (Grönroos, 2007; Popoli, 2011). To conclude, this association links to whether the customer decides that the brand is meaningful or not, which in turn, can be a decision making factor when choosing a hotel to stay at.

The results of this study, once again, confirms that there is a positive CSR effect on the brand image, which is aligned with the previous studies. Further, in the next subchapter, a discussion and an analysis of the results will be presented regarding what dimensions of CSR affect brand image the most, within the hospitality industry.

6.3 The ethical dimension's effect on brand image

The correlation test in table 5.9, show the strength of the relationship between the ethical dimension and the brand image equal to a value of 0.489, which indicates a positive and a rather strong relationship between the two variables. To uncover the causal relationship a regression analysis was conducted on the collected data. As seen in table 5.11, the result showed that the ethical dimension has a causal effect of a value of 0.305 on brand image. This shows the value that the brand image increases or decreases with, if the ethical dimension changes with one unit, given that other variables are constant. Furthermore, this causal relationship was proven to be statistically significant, which shows that the relationship is not caused by a coincidence.

An explanation of the ethical dimension's strong effect on brand image can be that the ethical CSR activities have a direct effect on the customer's everyday life. The direct effect of the ethical activities are the desired actions requested by the consumers. These actions include, for example, product price or how the customers are treated (Valentzas & Broni, 2010). Friedman (1970) claimed that the main concept of business is to increase its profit. This is only possible when the produced products are consumed by the society. The findings show that the ethical dimension has a big effect on product consuming. To maintain a long-term relationship and long-run sustainability of the business, the ethical dimension must be considered when implementing a marketing strategy.

Furthermore, Grönroos (2007) state that the brand image within the service industry is affected in a positive way when the customer finds a brand message favorable. This would mean that ethical considerations are perceived as favorable and associated with a good brand image that correspond to the customer's own values.

6.4 The philanthropic dimension's effect on brand image

The correlation test in table 5.9, shows that there is a relationship between the philanthropic dimension and the brand image. The correlation value is 0.407, which indicates a quite strong relationship. The results of the causal relationship in table 5.11 shows that the philanthropic dimension has a causal effect on the brand image. Once more, this shows the value that the brand image increases or decreases with (0.09 in this case) if the philanthropic dimension increases with one unit, given other variables constant. In comparison to the ethical dimension, the causal relationship between the brand image and the philanthropic dimensions was not proven to be statistically significant.

As the unstandardized coefficient in the regression model shows, the philanthropic dimension has the least effect on brand image. This result is consistent with Carroll's (1991) CSR pyramid, where he states that the philanthropic dimension is of least importance. A reason for the weak effect can be that the consumer's do not expect companies to engage in philanthropic activities since it is considered to be a voluntary activity (Carroll, 1979; Carroll, 1991). Another explanation might be that the survey included questions that did not measure the philanthropic dimension in an accurate way. A Cronbach's alpha test was conducted to see if there was a coherence between the

statements that aimed to measure the philanthropic dimension. The test showed that there were no coherence between the statements.

6.5 The sustainability dimension

The correlation test in table 5.9, show that the strength of the relationship between the sustainability dimension and the brand image equal to a value of 0.299, which indicates a rather strong relationship between the two variables. The regression model analysis, in table 5.11, showed that the sustainability dimension have a causal effect on brand image. This shows the value that the brand image increases or decreases with the (0.125 in this case) if the sustainability dimension increases with one unit, given that other dimensions are constant. Similarly to the philanthropic dimension, the causal relationship between the brand image and the sustainability dimensions was not proven to be statistically significant. Consequently, this causal relationship was not statistically significant which means that there is a risk that the relationship is caused by coincidence.

The causal effect of the sustainability dimension on brand image was proven to be very weak, which is somewhat unexpected. This dimension was expected to have a larger impact on brand image, since Ottoman (2011) state that consumers are concerned with the planet's ability to sustain life. Furthermore, customers are becoming more aware of the harmful effects that the hospitality industry has on the environment (Chan, 2011; Chung & Parker, 2010). This knowledge among customers might be an explanation to the low causal effect of the sustainability dimension since CSR initiatives form the customer's attitude (Du, Bhattacharya & Sen (2007). The belief that a service company will cause harm to the environment might decrease the effect of the sustainability dimension on the brand image.

The low causal effect can also depend on the fact that sustainability related measurements are not standardized and can be accommodated, depending on for example, the business sector (Slapper & Hall, 2011). The customers still have influential CSR expectations on companies and CSR is a growing emotion related concept. Due to this, companies have a responsibility to form a sustainability dimension where the issue enclose the customers' emotional values. However, this is not easy due to the unstandardized sustainability measurements.

To conclude this chapter, CSR has a positive effect on brand image. However, the contributions of the different dimensions are somewhat different. The ethical dimension have the strongest effect on brand image, whereas the philanthropic dimension have the least effect on brand image. The sustainability dimension had a rather weak effect on brand image.

7. Conclusion

This final section presents a summary of the thesis and its findings. Further, the empirical contribution, limitations of the research and suggestions for further research will be presented.

7.1 Conclusions of the research

Today, as customers are becoming more concerned with sustainability related issues, the importance of CSR is increasing as well. More companies than ever are engaged in different CSR activities to meet the demand of their customers. By communicating this engagement to customers, CSR has become a strategic marketing tool to enhance the brand image. Naturally, the CSR competition between companies has become stronger and it is therefore important to form an effective CSR strategy in order to outlive other companies (Uddin, Hassan & Tarique, 2008). This is usually done by making sure that the customer has a positive brand image of the company. To enhance the brand image, it is important to consider the customer's way of identifying with the brand. Since the studies within this area are limited in number and scope, this specific research area was chosen.

The purpose of this study was to explore CSR and its different dimension's effect on brand image within the service industry in order to increase the understanding of CSR as a marketing tool. Research questions were formed to reach the purpose of this study: "How does a service industry company's involvement in CSR as a marketing strategy affect the brand image? And how do the different CSR dimensions affect the brand image?".

To reach appropriate conclusions, a Spearman's rho correlation test and a regression analysis were conducted to see if there were any significant relationships between the CSR and the brand image. The Spearman's rho correlation test showed that there were strong positive relationships between all the CSR dimensions and brand image. The test indicated that the relationships between philanthropic dimension and the brand image and the ethical dimension and the brand image were strong. The relationship between sustainability and the brand image, however, were rather weak. The regression model showed that the causal effect of the ethical dimension on brand image was rather strong. The philanthropic and the sustainability variables, on the other hand, turned out to have a

weak effect on the brand image. The weak effect of these two variables were not proven to be statistically significant.

7.2 Empirical contribution

This study contributes to the research of CSR and brand image within the service industry, which have been less investigated than the other sectors. Several studies have also shown the strong relationship between strong CSR and strong brand image (Du, Bhattacharya & Sen, 2007; Swedish trade federation, 2014; Crespo, Salmones & Bosque 2005; Cretu & Brodie, 2007; Werther & Chandler, 2005; Idowu, 2009; Wu & Wang, 2014). Brand image is a vital part of a firm's competitiveness (Gröönros, 2007). Few studies have been made on the CSR's dimensions effect on brand image within the Swedish industry, which makes our study of importance. This study contributes to an increased understanding and knowledge of the customers' reactions and attitudes towards companies' involvement in CSR. The results of this study will help firms be able to develop a more optimal CSR strategy.

The commission of the European communities (2001) have shown that SME are less driven in CSR and need more tools and guidance to perform CSR in an effective manner. The results of this study can be to an advantage for SME within the service industry, particularly hospitality industry. CSR is no longer a choice that can be made by companies, nor is it an added cost to the company (Jhunhunwala, 2014). However, the cost of implementing CSR can be significant to the SME. The SMEs may find it more risky to adopt CSR in their business because of the costs. The results of this study can help the SME to modify their business and the brand image by adjusting only the most efficient CSR dimension, to make it cost effective. Due to the results of this study, the ethical dimension might be the most appropriate dimension to choose, when the spendings are restricted.

7.3 Limitations and Further research

This study is not without limitations. Specifically, the survey data suffers and this fact might have influenced the findings of the paper. The questionnaire survey could have been designed in a different way. Each CSR dimension used in the model, was measured by two statements in the questionnaire. More statements within each dimension would increase the accuracy of the dimensions as some statements might have been more

weighted than others. This could, however, decrease the participant's willingness to participate as the survey would become complicated and time-consuming. Furthermore, since this study was a cross sectional study, an expanded time horizon would have enabled a greater collection of data which would have increased the reliability of this study. Finally, this study could have included more hotels and other types of service companies to enhance the generalizability of the derived results.

Further research on this topic is needed. More research on this subject will increase the understanding of CSR as a marketing tool. This study examined CSR and its different dimensions' effect on brand image. Since CSR is constantly emerging and there is still no common definition or core principles of what CSR means, it is of importance to maintain further research of CSR as a marketing tool. As both CSR and brand image are quite complex concepts a qualitative research approach could be conducted for further understanding. Interviews would enable more flexible questions to get better answers.

To conclude, the authors consider that, the findings still serve the goal of answering the initial research question "How does a service-based company's involvement in CSR as a marketing strategy affect the brand image? And how do the different CSR dimensions affect the brand image?"

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