Corporate marketing and the role of internal CSR in employees' life satisfaction: Exploring the relationship between work and non-work domains

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ABSTRACT

In recent years, corporate social responsibility (CSR) has become an important aspect of corporate marketing that underpins an organisation's social connectedness and responsiveness. This study focused on how perceived internal CSR affects employees' life satisfaction and the role of mediating variables, such as job satisfaction and corporate identification. The results indicate that perceived internal CSR has an indirect effect on life satisfaction through its effects on job satisfaction. It also affects job satisfaction via organisational identification. Accordingly, CSR activities have a particularly important role in employees' lives at work and beyond, pointing to the potential of (ethical) corporate marketing to expand its influence beyond employees' work lives.

1. Introduction

Various factors, including globalisation and rapid development of new technologies, are changing the nature of work and life, making them more intertwined and interdependent (Land & Taylor, 2010). This interdependence allows work to become a salient domain that adds to one's life satisfaction (Loewe et al., 2014), defined as a cognitive assessment of satisfaction with life circumstances (Erdogan et al., 2012, p. 1039). Simultaneously, societies globally are interested in their citizens' life satisfaction and its impressive array of positive outcomes, several of which are also relevant to businesses (Erdogan et al., 2012). Thus, the question of how the work domain contributes to life satisfaction is becoming important for business organisations that pride themselves on being sensitive to the needs of their main stakeholders – employees.

Corporate marketing is a relationship-based viewpoint with a corporate social responsibility (CSR)/ethical orientation embedded in an organisation's culture that takes into account today's and tomorrow's needs and the concerns of stakeholders (Balmer, 2011, 2013, 2017a; Balmer & Greyser, 2006; Powell, 2011). The best means of showing care for stakeholders is to undertake CSR activities, as corporate marketing is a 'CSR/ethical focussed philosophy enacted via an organisational-wide orientation and culture' (Powell, 2011, p. 1367). By embodying the pursuit of a better quality of life for the workforce, their families, local

communities and societies at large (Baptiste, 2008), CSR is a concept guided by stakeholder expectations and reflected in a company's commitment to avoiding harm and improving stakeholders' and society's well-being (Mohr et al., 2001).

A key corporate marketing concern is a company's approach to internal management and how this affects employees' cognition and behaviour (Wilson, 2001). Accordingly, in the wider corporate marketing literature, employees have been one of the key concerns from the beginning, for example, in research on corporate image management (e. g. Kennedy, 1977; Shee & Abratt, 1989), services and internal marketing (e.g. Berry, 1981; Flipo, 1986; Gummesson, 1987), corporate identity management (e.g. Balmer & Wilkinson, 1991; Simões et al., 2005; Stuart, 1999), the organisational studies perspective (Hatch & Schultz, 1997), corporate branding (Balmer et al., 2001) and internal branding (e.g. Foster et al., 2010; Ind, 2017; Punjaisri & Wilson, 2007). The employee focus has been mirrored in *meta*-level corporate marketing literature. Corporate marketing in general and the use of corporate marketing mix as a tool in particular include several psychological foundations, especially in domains where the perceptions and reactions of employees or other individuals are important (Balmer, 2001). At this level, it has been established that employees and their support via positive identification with the organisation are important criteria for a successful corporate marketing orientation, which is critical for a firm to sustain long-term success (Balmer, 2013, 2017b). In light of this,

employee well-being, towards which CSR programmes are also oriented, is especially important and is enacted through the importance of relationships between the kinds of CSR-related choices and activities in which decision-makers are involved and the employees' interpretation of, and responses to, these activities.

The CSR literature also evinces that employees tend to be important stakeholders in CSR outcomes (e.g. De Roeck et al., 2014; Farooq et al., 2017; Hameed et al., 2016; Rupp, 2011; Valentine & Fleischman, 2008). Researchers are increasingly studying the psychological micro-foundations of CSR (micro-CSR) with a special focus on employees (e. g. De Roeck et al., 2014; Gond et al., 2017; Gond & Moser, 2021; Hameed et al., 2016; Rupp & Malloy, 2015; Shen & Benson, 2016; Tziner, 2013), their perceptions of CSR and the outcomes. Gond et al. (2017) conducted a thorough review of employees' (or any other stakeholders') evaluations of CSR. Examining the micro-CSR literature allowed the authors to predict several possible attitudinal reactions to, or outcomes of, CSR at the individual level, such as organisational and corporate identification, commitment, trust, engagement and job satisfaction (Gond et al., 2017). Thus, the research has shown that various positive outcomes at the employee level can result directly from CSR (Rupp & Malloy, 2015; Tziner, 2013).

However, studies on micro-CSR and corporate marketing have not addressed the concept of employees' subjective well-being, which is manifested through life satisfaction. Rather, quite similar to research in the general management field, the focus of micro-CSR and corporate marketing studies has been limited to, for example, 'a "happy worker" as someone committed to and satisfied with one's job' without embracing a more holistic perspective of life satisfaction (Erdogan et al., 2012, p. 1039). The psychology-of-working perspective, however, sees (meaningful) working and jobs as the 'foundation for a satisfying life that allows people to support themselves and their families, and to find an outlet for their values and interests in the world of work' (Blustein, 2013, p. 4). Thus, internal CSR – creating good 'social conditions' at work (e.g. Near et al., 1980) and satisfaction with work – seems essential for individuals' general well-being, and life satisfaction can be seen as a mechanism through which work experiences translate to individual behaviour (Erdogan et al., 2012). Moreover, studies on employee happiness tend to not only show the importance of meaningful work for organisational outcomes (Supanti & Butcher, 2019) but also hint at a reverse spillover effect of life satisfaction on organisational identification and commitment (Maharaj & Schlechter, 2007). On this account, Duffy et al. (2016) reported scholars' recent interest in the potential of work to foster happiness, health and well-being, indicating a turn towards researching positive organisational behaviour (POB). Furthermore, micro-CSR scholars have called upon other researchers to address the 'new frontier' of research and practice around the role of CSR actions that would make organisations more humanistic in nature (Jones et al., 2017). Similar perspectives can be linked to a strand of literature that explicitly emphasises the importance of ethical/CSR dimensions for corporate marketing (Balmer, 2011; Powell, 2011). In particular, life satisfaction is a concept that can be meaningfully integrated both in the micro-CSR and corporate marketing perspectives by understanding whether and how the impact of CSR practices can spill over to life satisfaction.

This is the gap that we intended to address with our research. Our focus, therefore, was on the overall impact of perceived CSR on employees. Specifically, we were interested in how perceived CSR oriented towards employees (i.e. internal CSR) affects corporate identification and job satisfaction and, in turn, stimulates life satisfaction. As such, our research focused on general perceptions of a supportive workplace induced by CSR practices, which play a particularly important role in forming employee attitudinal outcomes (Haar & Roche, 2010). Our results show that the route between perceived CSR and life satisfaction is established when CSR generates favourable work-related attitudes that emerge from a perceived positive employee–organisation relationship. This study, therefore, contributes to the literature by placing CSR and

corporate marketing in the POB domain to fully capitalise on developments that are important for understanding the significance of social concern at work and satisfaction with work for overall happiness.

2. Conceptual background and hypothesis development

The notions of positive psychology at work and POB, which investigate positive aspects of the organisational context for prospering employees (e.g. Bakker & Schaufeli, 2008; Roberts, 2006; Turner et al., 2002), constitute an appropriate theoretical avenue for exploring how perceived CSR impacts 'the experience of work and the lives of working people' (Rupp et al., 2013, p. 362). The POB perspective underlines the significance of understanding the interdependence of work and non-work domains in that work-related experiences can affect employees' life satisfaction (e.g. Heller et al., 2002; Unanue et al., 2017). This reasoning appeared in early works emphasising that work and social institutions are interconnected and that work tends to pervade other aspects of social life (Near et al., 1980). The reasoning re-emerged in recent literature on mindfulness at work arguing that mindfulness – present-centred attention and awareness directed at employees and also visible through CSR – can shape a broad understanding of human functioning (Good et al., 2016).

Job or work-domain satisfaction, conceptualised as an attitude, can be considered 'a positive (or negative) evaluative judgment one makes about one's job or job situation' (Weiss, 2002, p. 175) and is influenced by various employee experiences of the organisation. Life satisfaction, however, is defined as a cognitive aspect of subjective well-being and is often the pivotal construct in assessing subjective well-being (Unanue et al., 2017). While the interdependence of work and non-work domains appears to be important for CSR and corporate marketing, which both strongly emphasise their relevance for improving individuals' lives (Jones et al., 2017), life satisfaction has received limited research attention in these fields. This highlights a critical research gap (Erdogan et al., 2012).

Two theoretical approaches are normally used to study the connection between job and life satisfaction: top-down and bottom-up theoretical approaches (Bowling et al., 2010). Whereas the top-down explanation rests on the assumption that life satisfaction is best understood via a dispositional explanation (i.e. the predisposition of personality for satisfaction), the bottom-up model favours a situational explanation (i.e. situation at work and other life domains influences overall life satisfaction, indicating its relative stability), and this latter approach dominates the literature (Pavot & Diener, 2008). Following the logic of the situational explanation, a proper interpretation of the non-recursive relationship between work and life satisfaction demands the inclusion of relevant (exogenous) influences on satisfaction (Judge & Watanabe, 1993). These situation-produced variables affect job satisfaction, and situation-induced changes in job satisfaction can, in turn, cause variability in life satisfaction judgements (Pavot & Diener, 2008). In the present study, we focused on perceived CSR and identification with the organisation as important organisational variables that influence job satisfaction (Rupp & Malloy, 2015; Van Dick et al., 2008).

For the purposes of this study, we distinguished between external and internal aspects of CSR and focused on the latter. External CSR concerns stakeholders outside of the organisation and has been studied extensively in the CSR-related literature. The less investigated internal perspective relates to how employees as beneficiaries perceive and experience responsible practices with implications for their well-being (Rayton et al., 2015). Specifically, we adopted Hillenbrand et al.'s (2013) conceptualisation of internal CSR – that is, as perceptions and experiences of 'how the organisation relates to an individual stakeholder directly, often in routine interactions and regular processes' (p. 130). In this context, internal CSR initiatives are directed towards employees' career opportunities, training, health and safety, and work–life balance and include the organisation's respect for human rights and equal opportunities (e.g. De Roeck et al., 2014).

Research on the relationship that internal CSR has with both employees' experiences at work (Hameed et al., 2016) and life satisfaction in general (Newman et al., 2015) is still relatively sparse. However, researchers are increasingly emphasising the role that CSR plays in employees' quality of life at work and how their perceptions of internal CSR affect their responses to, and judgements about, work and the organisation itself (e.g. Bauman & Skitka, 2012; De Roeck & Maon, 2018; Singhapakdi et al., 2015). In particular, evidence suggests that CSR activities directed at employees serve 'to strengthen the informal contract between employees and the firm by satisfying a company's obligation to provide a desirable employment situation for its employees' (Valentine & Fleischman, 2008, p. 161). Although recent studies have overlooked the relationship between internal CSR and life satisfaction, some studies conducted long ago established a need for humanising the workplace for all workers and identified that this process essentially includes all the focal elements of internal CSR today (Wiggins & Steade, 1976).

2.1. Impact of internal CSR and job satisfaction on life satisfaction

As the central attitudinal concept in employee-focused research, job satisfaction is considered a very appropriate and useful variable for studying the impact of perceived CSR on employees' attitudes (De Roeck et al., 2014; Vlachos et al., 2013). Overall, the literature highlights the importance of a 'justice climate' at work and a feeling of fair treatment among employees for fostering positive work attitudes among employees (Rupp, 2011). On that note, Bauman and Skitka (2012) theorised about the role of CSR in understanding employee satisfaction in a holistic manner. They contemplated the ability of CSR to increase perceived corporate morality, which helps in satisfying various employees' needs and, thus, leads to greater employee satisfaction.

Valentine et al. (2011) further proposed that a positive work environment, which can be stimulated with ethical and CSR activities aimed at employees, benefits the employees and the company as a whole by instilling positive job attitudes. Studies mainly using variables that were conceptually close to the notion of internal CSR have supported this notion (e.g. Valentine & Fleischman, 2008; Valentine et al., 2011; Vlachos et al., 2013). Thus, some studies have hypothesised that a relationship exists between perceived organisational support and job satisfaction, whereby perceived organisational support was conceptualised as the extent to which an organisation values employees' contributions and cares for their well-being (e.g. Newman et al., 2015). Other studies have confirmed the link between an organisation's ethical values and initiatives and employees' job satisfaction. Here, the focus has been on ethical codes defining the employee–organisation relationship, which reflect social norms and expectations, and their influence on satisfaction with work. Studies have confirmed that a positive relationship exists between an ethical work context and job satisfaction (e.g. Valentine & Fleischman, 2008; Valentine et al., 2011) and between employees' perceptions of CSR and work engagement (Rupp et al., 2018). Meanwhile, to our knowledge, only one recent study attempted to predict job satisfaction with perceived internal CSR and yielded supportive results (De Roeck et al., 2014).

In the literature, three distinct hypotheses explain the relationship between work and non-work satisfaction (e.g. Unanue et al., 2017). First, the segmentation hypothesis suggests that no or a partial relationship exists between job and life satisfaction. However, this hypothesis has received no substantial empirical support (Unanue et al., 2017). Second, the compensation hypothesis states that the concepts are negatively correlated, indicating a compensation effect – that is, individuals who are dissatisfied with work pursue fulfilment in their non-work life (Heller et al., 2002). Third, the spillover hypothesis argues that experiences in the work domain can have corresponding influences in other spheres of life, thus confirming the existence of a positive relationship between job and life satisfaction (Heller et al., 2002). As *meta*-analyses exploring the relationship between these two domains of

satisfaction have shown, the spillover effect has the most support in the literature (e.g. Bowling et al., 2010; Erdogan et al., 2012). The spillover model is closely linked to the bottom-up approach to studying the connection between work and life satisfaction, which offers a situational explanation of work being an important part of life, thus greatly affecting one's overall satisfaction with life (Heller et al., 2002). Therefore, positive experiences of work may contribute to satisfaction in non-work domains and to overall life satisfaction (Bowling et al., 2010).

While the relationships between perceived internal CSR and job satisfaction as well as job satisfaction and life satisfaction seem relatively well-supported and straightforward, the link between perceived internal CSR and life satisfaction has received scant attention. There is some evidence in the organisational support theory literature (e.g. Dixon & Sagas, 2007) that perceived organisational support may be related to both job and life satisfaction, because such support is not only directed towards immediate work situations but also fulfils certain socioemotional needs. Moreover, some older studies suggested that the importance of work in an individual's life increases when working conditions are good, indicating that these conditions can contribute more to overall life satisfaction (Near et al., 1980). Therefore, perceived internal CSR might be important not only in terms of satisfaction with work but also in terms of overall life satisfaction, as certain internal CSR policies address issues beyond the work domain (e.g. work–life balance support, health and well-being issues).

To sum up, perceived internal CSR may spill over to employees' non-work lives, thereby influencing more than just job satisfaction. Therefore, we formulated the following hypotheses:

H1: Perceived internal CSR is positively related to both job and life satisfaction.

H2: The positive relationship between internal CSR and life satisfaction is mediated by job satisfaction.

2.2. Corporate identification as a mediator in the internal CSR–job satisfaction relationship

As De Roeck et al. (2014) suggested, to fully understand and explain the effect of CSR on employees' formation of favourable work-related attitudes, we must tap into the psychological drivers of employees' responses to CSR. In this context, some scholars have highlighted identification with the organisation as an important concept that strengthens employees' self-identity and, consequently, helps them find meaning and satisfaction in their lives (e.g. De Roeck et al., 2014). Organisational identification or, more precisely in this case, corporate identification (as opposed to group identification, which is another facet of organisational identification; see e.g. Podnar et al., 2011) is frequently defined as 'a perceived oneness with an organization and the experience of the organization's successes and failures as one's own' (Mael & Ashforth, 1992, p. 103). Most previous studies that examined the relationship between CSR and identification with the organisation either focused on the effects of external CSR (i.e. how the organisation interacts with various stakeholders and its environment; Glavas & Godwin, 2013) or conceptualised internal CSR as employees' engagement in CSR-related practices (e.g. Rupp & Malloy, 2015). Consequently, there is a paucity of theoretical and empirical research on the relationship between internal CSR as care for employees and identification with the organisation (De Roeck et al., 2014). This link does not appear to be as straightforward as it is in the case of external CSR and identification, where the relationship between the two concepts has rather obvious roots in social identity theory (e.g. De Roeck & Maon, 2018; Glavas & Godwin, 2013; Hildebrand et al., 2011). The relationship between internal CSR and identification with the organisation, however, can be explained either via social identity or social exchange theory (Rupp & Malloy, 2015).

In the context of external CSR, employees who tend to align with the organisation's overall CSR vision, specific social cause or perceived virtues tend to develop a stronger feeling of oneness with the

organisation (Glavas & Godwin, 2013). In the context of internal CSR directed towards employees, however, scholars have recently emphasised the effects of employees' increased sense of obligation and positive reciprocity rooted in social exchange relationships (De Roeck & Maon, 2018). Nevertheless, apart from feelings of obligation, internal CSR and the introduction of programmes that directly benefit employees and contribute to the social exchange process may also trigger a stronger identification by enhancing employees' perceived status within the organisation (Farooq et al., 2014; Farooq, Rupp, & Farooq, 2017). Furthermore, internal CSR can stimulate greater self-worth and self-esteem by making employees feel that they are part of a caring organisation (Ashforth & Mael, 1989), as has become a social norm under societal expectations and pressures (Shen & Benson, 2016). Accordingly, such membership will likely induce identification with the caring organisation as a social entity (De Roeck et al., 2014; Shen & Benson, 2016; Sluss et al., 2008). In this process, employees may integrate 'common identity attributes to strengthen their self-concept and find more meaning in their lives' (De Roeck et al., 2014, p. 96).

Meanwhile, as noted in previous research, identification with the organisation and job satisfaction are positively related owing to the proposition that employees who strongly identify with their organisation tend to evaluate their situation at work more positively and, thus, exhibit high levels of job satisfaction (e.g. De Roeck et al., 2014; Loi et al., 2014; Van Dick, Christ, et al., 2004; Van Dick, Van Knippenberg, et al., 2008). This link is strengthened by the assumption that strongly identified individuals tend to evaluate the organisation and working conditions more positively in general (Van Dick et al., 2004). Moreover, congruency between the employee's self-concept and the organisation's identity attributes suggests that acting on behalf of the organisation should stimulate enjoyment of the job (Loi et al., 2014).

To sum up, higher perceived internal CSR enhances employees' identification with the organisation, which leads to greater job satisfaction. Accordingly, we constructed the following hypothesis:

H3: The positive relationship between perceived internal CSR and job satisfaction is mediated by employees' corporate identification.

The conceptual model is depicted in Fig. 1.

3. Methodology

3.1. Sample and data collection

Data were gathered from the Work–Family Survey conducted as part of the Slovenian Public Opinion Survey administered to a national representative sample (n = 1,082) of Slovenia's adult population. We used the subsample of employed respondents (n = 446) representing the theoretical population of employees across various organisations. Several studies of this nature have used convenience samples of specific organisations, which has been considered problematic, as an organisation's idiosyncratic characteristics may bias the results (Weisberg & Kirschenbaum, 1991). As such, using a national sample allowed us to avoid marginalising our results to a specific type of organisation and reach conclusions that can be applied broadly across different jobs, organisations and industries, thus maximising the value of our findings to corporate marketing and CSR practitioners (Landers & Behrend, 2015). The data were collected from computer-assisted face-to-face interviews in 2016.

The gender breakdown was 54% male and 46% female; 14.3% of respondents were below 30 years old, 41% were aged 31–45 years, 41.7% were aged 46–60 years and the rest (2.9%) were over 60 years old; 6.5% had completed primary school, 52.9% had completed secondary school and 40% had completed undergraduate or graduate studies. Furthermore, 85% had full-time permanent employment and the remaining 15% were contract employees; 32.4% were employed in small companies (up to 50 employees), 30% in medium-sized companies and 37.6% in large companies (more than 250 employees).

3.2. Measures

To measure corporate identification, a three-item version of the one-dimensional scale tested by Podnar et al. (2011) was used. Respondents rated each item on a 5-point scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree). The three items were 'I feel that the company I work for is a part of me', 'I can easily identify with the company for which I work' and 'I can say that the company's problems are also my own problems'. Measures of perceived internal CSR among employees are scarce in the literature. Thus, we reduced and slightly adapted Turker's (2009) scale including measures of employees' perceptions of CSR directed at them. The items in our study were 'Our organisation encourages employees to undergo education and training', 'The organisation takes into account the needs of employees', 'Our organisation has a policy to support work and family balance' and 'Our organisation strictly complies with labour regulations', all measured on a 5-point scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree).

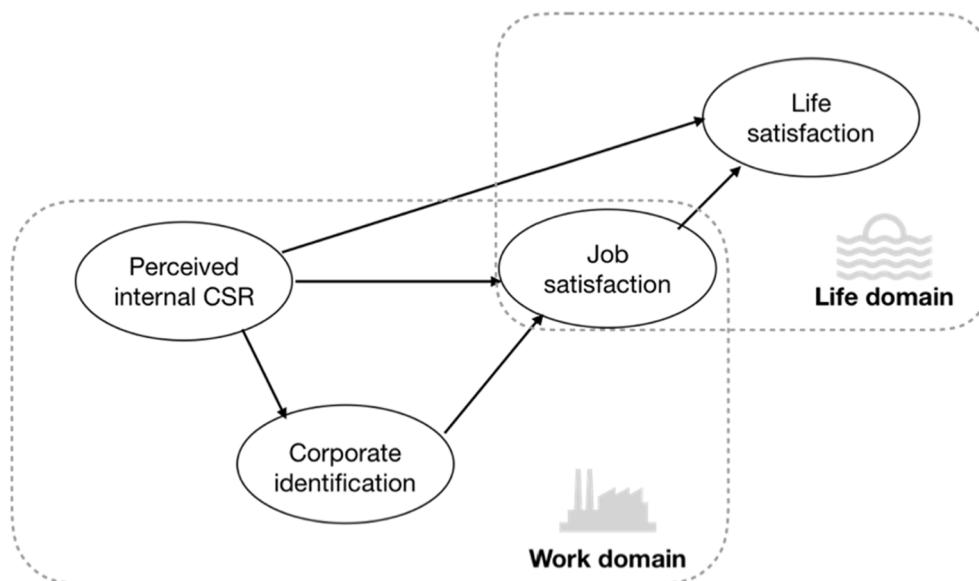To measure overall life satisfaction and general job satisfaction, a

Fig. 1. Conceptual model addressing the connection between work and life domains through internal CSR/ethical corporate marketing focus.

single-item question from the European Social Survey (ESS; based on the single global rating method) was used, as the Slovenian Public Opinion Survey is part of the ESS. The questions were 'All things considered, how satisfied are you with (a) your life as a whole and (b) your current job? Please answer using this card, where 1 means extremely dissatisfied and 5 means extremely satisfied'.

The data were then checked for missing data, outliers, assessment of normality and multicollinearity. All variables had an approximately normal distribution (skewness and kurtosis coefficients between − 1 and + 1). The calculation of the variance inflation factor (VIF) indicated that there was no multicollinearity among the constructs.

4. Results

The data analysis was performed in two phases using Amos 21.0. First, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted to examine the dimensionality, reliability and validity of the constructs. Then structural equation modelling was employed to test the hypotheses simultaneously.

4.1. Measurement model

The measurement model included two single-item constructs (overall life and job satisfaction) and two multi-item constructs: three for corporate identification and three for internal CSR. Following the approach suggested by Laverie et al. (2002) for models with single items, the variance of each single-item variable was fixed to 1.0. Factor loadings and residuals for multiple-item constructs were freely estimated. However, in the case of single-item constructs, it is recommended to partially control for random error by fixing the measurement error term at a conservative value (Petrescu, 2013). This was done by specifying the measure of reliability as 0.90 by assigning the fixed value (1 – reliability) × variance to the error term. All latent factors were allowed to covary. The covariances between all residuals were fixed to zero.

The CFA results revealed a relatively good model fit ($\chi^2 = 30.979$, df = 23, CFI = 0.99, IFI = 0.99, RMSEA = 0.03) within the recommended ranges (Byrne, 2010; Hu & Bentler, 1999). The CFA results also indicated acceptable ranges of construct loadings, good composite reliability and high average variance extracted (AVE) for latent constructs. All constructs exhibited good internal reliability, with composite reliabilities above the threshold value of 0.60 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). The model's convergent validity was supported with all *t*-test values of the indicator loadings in the measurement model being statistically significant. AVE across constructs was around the 0.5 benchmark (Fornell & Larcker, 1981), ranging from 0.45 to 0.59 (Table 1). Discriminant validity was assessed by comparing the correlations between constructs and their AVE. The AVE of each construct was higher than the squared correlations among constructs (see Table 1), suggesting that all constructs exhibited adequate discriminant validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Hu & Bentler, 1999). Together with the acceptable composite reliabilities, the results suggested satisfactory reliability and validity of the constructs and their underlying indicators.

4.2. Hypothesis tests

Table 2 shows the means, standard deviations, reliability estimates and inter-correlations among the variables used to test the hypotheses. All reliability estimates were acceptable; they exceeded the minimum recommended value of 0.70.

Subsequently, structural equation models and paths for the hypothesised relationships were assessed. Initially, we tested the full mediation model (Model 1) in which the paths were drawn from internal CSR to corporate identification, from identification to job satisfaction and from job to life satisfaction. The model fitted the data well ($\chi^2 = 70.019$, df = 26, CFI = 0.96, IFI = 0.96, RMSEA = 0.06) with significant paths for hypothesised relationships from internal CSR to corporate identification ($\gamma = 0.65$, p < .001), from corporate identification to job satisfaction ($\gamma = 0.59$, p < .001) and from job satisfaction to life satisfaction ($\gamma = 0.37$, p < .001).

Next, we tested a partial mediation model (Model 2, Fig. 2) to address H1. In addition to the paths in the previous model, direct paths from internal CSR to job satisfaction and life satisfaction were added. The results indicated a very good data fit for Model 2 ($\chi^2 = 20.733$, df = 17, CFI = 1.00, IFI = 1.00, RMSEA = 0.02, $\Delta\chi^2$ [Δdf = 9] = 49.286, p < .001). A significant relationship was found between perceived internal CSR and job satisfaction; however, the path between perceived internal CSR and life satisfaction ($\gamma = 0.10$, p < .167) was not significant. Both the comparison of overall fit indices and the chi-square difference test suggested Model 2 as the better variant.

The path results of Model 2 showed that perceived internal CSR positively influenced corporate identification ($\gamma = 0.57$, p < .001) and job satisfaction ($\gamma = 0.42$, p < .001). The effect of corporate identification on job satisfaction was moderate ($\gamma = 0.28$, p < .001) and job satisfaction positively influenced life satisfaction ($\gamma = 0.32$, p < .001). In interpreting the significant paths, the results indicated the presence of mediation (indirect effect was $\gamma = 0.19$, which accounted for 65% of the total effect, suggesting nearly full mediation) of the direct influence from perceived internal CSR to life satisfaction. In addition, corporate identification partly mediated the effect of perceived internal CSR on job satisfaction (with the indirect effect $\gamma = 0.16$ accounting for 27% of the total effect). These findings, therefore, provide support for all three hypotheses.

5. Discussion, limitations and conclusions

The results of this study allow for bridging the gap between CSR (i.e. perceived internal CSR) and beneficial employee outcomes at multiple levels (identification and satisfaction with work as well as life satisfaction), thus confirming the significance of CSR – a prominent feature of corporate marketing (Balmer et al., 2011; Hildebrand et al., 2011) – for global life satisfaction. On that note, the findings enable us to unpack the underlying micro-level processes responsible for the relationship between CSR and life satisfaction outside of work (Bauman & Skitka, 2012).

While no previous study empirically investigated the relationship between CSR and life satisfaction, some studies identified a positive link between constructs similar to CSR and life satisfaction. For instance, Newman et al. (2015) confirmed that perceived organisational support indirectly relates to life satisfaction via job satisfaction. Similarly, our

Table 1
Assessment of reliability and validity of the measures.

	CR	AVE	MSV	MaxR(H)	1	2	3	4
1. Internal CSR	0.76	0.45	0.38	0.77	**0.67**			
2. Job satisfaction	0.84	0.84	0.38	0.84	0.62	**0.92**		
3. Identification	0.81	0.59	0.35	0.85	0.59	0.56	**0.77**	
4. Life satisfaction	0.70	0.70	0.25	0.70	0.29	0.50	0.20	**0.84**

*Square root of AVE on diagonal.

Table 2
Means, standard deviations, correlations and alpha reliabilities of study variables.

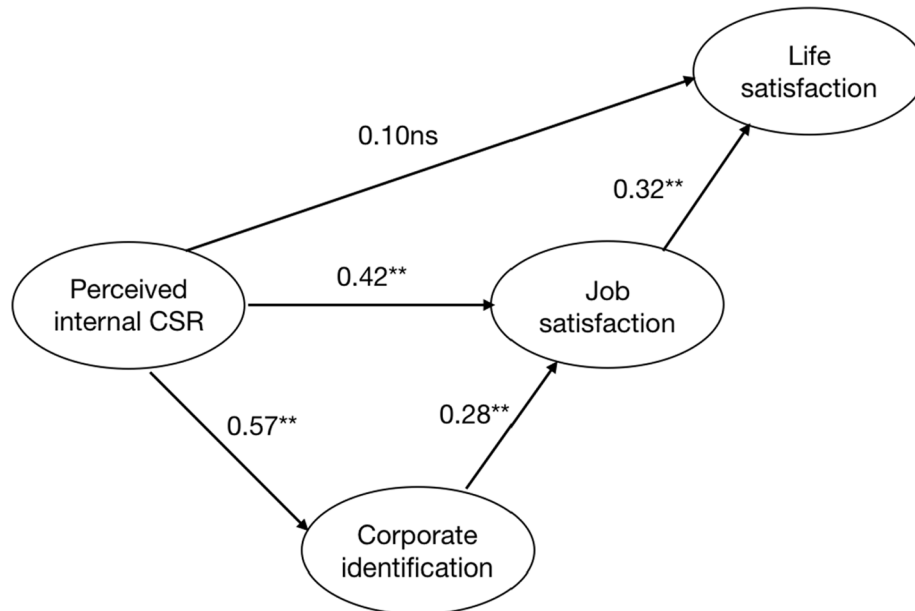|	Mean	SD	Alpha	1	2	3
1 Internal CSR	3.47	0.79	0.771			
2 Identification	3.35	0.92	0.794	0.495***		
3 Life satisfaction	4.00	0.57	single item	246***	0.126**	
4 Job satisfaction	3.74	0.78	single item	0.511***	0.438***	0.386***

***p < .001.

Fig. 2. Structural model with standardised path coefficients.

findings support the link between perceived internal CSR and life satisfaction, where job satisfaction acts as a mediator – a missing link (e.g. Drobnič et al., 2010) – thus pointing to the spillover effect that job satisfaction has outside of work. Furthermore, our results show that besides the direct contribution of perceived CSR to employees' job satisfaction, an indirect effect exists via employees' identification with the organisation, thus confirming the findings of some previous studies (e.g. De Roeck et al., 2014; El Akremi et al., 2018).

The theoretical contributions of this study are twofold. First, the study involved expanding the previously known nexus of variables associated with employees' perceptions of CSR on the previously not well-examined, but nevertheless important, outcome (Jones et al., 2019). By employing a micro-level analysis in the intra-individual psychological domain, this study contributes to the micro-CSR literature (Gond & Moser, 2021) by suggesting that organisations' CSR practices relating to employees can not only generate positive effects on employees' identification with the organisation and their job satisfaction (Gond et al., 2017; Wilson, 2001) but can reach beyond the work domain and influence their life satisfaction. Moreover, by indicating that organisations' internal CSR initiatives may have far-reaching benefits for employees' life satisfaction, their families and the broader communities affected by the organisations practising CSR, the study shapes an understanding of how (internal) CSR can also operate across organisational boundaries (Gond & Moser, 2021). This corroborates what Jones et al. (2019) referred to as the 'inherently multilevel nature of employee-focused CSR' (p. 300). Following this logic, the micro-level foundations of CSR dictate the central role that organisations should have in addressing issues of social responsibility related to the situations, interests and needs of employees (De Geer et al., 2009). In other words, CSR at the micro level can ensure 'the presence of positive conditions as well as the absence of negatives' (Erdogan et al., 2012, p. 20) on which

life satisfaction depends. The study findings, thus, open up new avenues for theorising on and researching the effects of internal CSR beyond the organisational settings in which they have been studied so far.

Second, this study specifically contributes to the corporate marketing literature by empirically placing internal CSR at the centre of corporate marketing efforts (Hildebrand et al., 2011; Powell, 2011). Since work has become an increasingly important part of everyday life, and work–life boundaries are more permeable than ever, social ties, commitment and satisfaction – all important outcomes of CSR – often extend into individuals' non-work hours (Lent & Brown, 2008). Properly executed CSR can create a strong internal image of the organisation and its CSR activities (Glavas & Godwin, 2013). It can also encourage a strong employee–company relationship (Balmer, 2017b) and satisfy employees' self-enhancement needs (i.e. feeling good about oneself; Hildebrand et al., 2011), which can be seen as a prerequisite for life satisfaction (Erdogan et al., 2012). More generally, internal CSR tends to enhance an important endeavour of corporate marketing – its societal application, referring to balancing and meeting employees' needs (Balmer, 2001, 2013; Wilson, 2001). By embracing CSR, organisations can build an ethical identity that has the potential to enhance social connectedness and extend their responsiveness to the life domains of their employees (Balmer et al., 2011) to further foster better outcomes for the organisation itself (Maharaj & Schlechter, 2007).

As noted above, our results most directly theoretically inform the *meta*-level corporate marketing literature (Balmer, 2011). However, the insights of our study could potentially stir up further theoretical debates tackling various areas under the corporate marketing umbrella. One such potential contribution could be related to internal and corporate branding (Ind, 2017). From this perspective, internal CSR is in the realm of organisational governance of brand identity and employees (through their identifications) function as conveyors of the brand. The spillover to

life satisfaction denotes that the 'internal' branding might not stop at the work/life boundary but transcend beyond the workplace, indicating that employees and their lives are central to the integrity of the corporate brand (Land & Taylor, 2010).

In addition, with its implications for companies' CSR and corporate marketing strategies, this study provides some guidance for practice. The global increase in knowledge-intensive workplaces is raising employees' expectations of what is best for their well-being (Baptiste, 2008). Thus, managers have a moral responsibility to be sensitive to the issues and forces at work that shape such internal CSR policies that will both increase job satisfaction and help employees balance and optimise their non-work lives. This includes meeting employees' functional and psychological needs, such as work–life balance, training and development, and non-discrimination (De Roeck et al., 2014). In shaping their CSR policies, managers must be aware that objective CSR indicators might not be sufficient to ensure workers' identification and job and life satisfaction. Our micro-based study confirms the importance of a 'subjective' approach to shaping CSR policies, where the employees themselves evaluate and judge different aspects of their situation at work and how these aspects affect their non-work lives (Drobnič et al., 2010). From the 'subjectivity' point of view, it is also important for managers to consider the ways in which employees can be invited to shape and engage in CSR policies inside the organisation.

In terms of corporate marketing, implementing CSR aimed at employees reflects the corporate identity and values in day-to-day management and interpersonal relationships. Thus, CSR-oriented corporate values must be embraced as a way of changing internal behaviour (Baptiste, 2008). In practical terms, internal CSR must be seen as a value exchanged between the organisation and the employees, which is managed not only as a win–win strategy for enhancing the organisation's identity and performance but as a win–win approach in terms of added overall employee well-being. Internal CSR must be approached with the knowledge that all CSR practices have the potential to indirectly influence life satisfaction and, thus, also potentially affect the employees' families and communities. This resonates with the end-focus of corporate marketing linked with social value creation and satisfaction of societal needs (Hildebrand et al., 2011). In terms of further value for the organisation/brand, the spillover to life satisfaction implies that employees are potentially producing value for the brand outside of the realm of work (Land & Taylor, 2010) while happily living the brand (Ind, 2017) in other spheres of activity interpreted as 'life'.

Besides its contributions, this study had limitations regarding both the methodology and theory. In terms of methodological limitations, as the study was based on self-reported responses, there was potential for common method variance. We avoided this issue as much as possible by inserting questions into a well-established and continuous survey which has been conducted by well-trained interviewers as a face-to-face survey nationally for several decades. The executors of the survey also ensured strict enforcement of confidentiality and separation of items in the questionnaire measuring predictors from those measuring dependent variables (De Roeck et al., 2014). Despite this limitation, self-reported responses were appropriate because subjective perceptions, rather than objective indicators, matter when evaluating concepts such as identification and satisfaction. A similar argument can be made about perceptions of CSR; following the reasoning of Glavas and Godwin (2013), employees' perceptions of their organisation's CSR practices are as important as the reality.

In addition, like most other studies on CSR, the present study was cross-sectional. Thus, we could not predict for certain the causal connections between variables in the model. Attempts were made in previous studies in the job–life satisfaction domain to account for causality by employing a longitudinal approach. The results vary, although studies have established a weak causal link between job satisfaction and life satisfaction over a five-year period (Judge &Watanabe, 1993). More longitudinal research in this domain, which would also include CSR aspects, is called for.

A final major methodological issue concerns the measurement of perceived internal CSR. As in other studies (e.g. De Roeck et al., 2014; Farooq et al., 2014), we reduced and slightly adapted Turker's (2009) scale for measuring CSR towards employees, which is one of the rare scales developed for this setting. As De Roeck et al. (2014) observed, the scale was developed and tested in a particular setting among young, educated white-collar workers in a particular cultural environment and, therefore, might have certain limitations. This is reflected to an extent in our results, as the items did not perform outstandingly in terms of reliability measures. Future research should entail testing El Akremi et al.'s (2018) newly developed instrument.

The theoretical limitations also suggest future research avenues. Our study was limited to exploring employees' perceptions of internal CSR. Further research could test the effect of perceived external CSR on employees' non-work satisfaction, as some external CSR practices might be directed at the local communities and immediate environments where employees reside. Moreover, internal CSR can be regarded from a broader perspective that includes not only organisational practices directed at employees but also CSR practices in which employees are directly engaged (Gond et al., 2017). Such a perspective might add further insights into the importance of CSR for employees' overall well-being and life satisfaction. From the corporate marketing perspective, this means also examining how different aspects of an ethical climate and ethical corporate identity affect employee engagement in CSR (Powell, 2011). Engagement has the potential to increase the meaningfulness of work through the fulfilment of employees' personal growth needs. As Erdogan et al. (2012) noted, finding meaning in one's work might be important for life satisfaction. Although our study is positioned in the domain of POB, negative CSR-related aspects, such as negative CSR perceptions, lack of CSR practices or even irresponsible practices, could also be considered for further research into the relationship between CSR/ethical corporate marketing and life satisfaction. Drobnič et al. (2010), for instance, uncovered that perceived bad conditions at work (i.e. non-CSR) are more effective in worsening perceptions of life satisfaction than good conditions are in improving it.

Finally, researchers should take into account that cross-national comparisons generally show large differences in life satisfaction (Drobnič et al., 2010) and, thus, the impact of perceived CSR and job satisfaction might also vary depending on the national context.

To conclude, the literature suggests that life satisfaction is an important variable to consider in organisational settings (Erdogan et al., 2012) and should become an important focus of (ethical) corporate marketing as an organisation-wide philosophy (Balmer et al., 2011). Our study constitutes the first step towards including life satisfaction in the micro-CSR and corporate marketing research. We hope our findings will stimulate further CSR and life satisfaction research.

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