



Examining mechanisms for creating shared value by Asian firms

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the home-based creating shared value (CSV) projects of two multinational corporations (MNCs), and three small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). One CSV project was examined in each firm. Based on qualitative case studies, we developed two bricolage-based models to represent different motives, different processes of resource acquisition, and different processes of resource utilization when implementing CSV. For the MNCs, both based in Hong Kong, institutional advocacy and recognition provided encouragement to engage in CSV. Internal resource slack underpinned their ability to implement their respective CSV projects by repurposing internal resources or infusing them with purpose. By contrast, the SMEs, two from Pakistan and one from Hong Kong, found it necessary to adopt collective bricolage for their respective CSV projects, involving repurposing external human resources while drawing on donations or grants and enlisting the collaboration of benevolent external experts or giants. Interviewees indicated that all the focal CSV projects were distinguishable from corporate social responsibility (CSR) projects, in that the former (but not the latter) were designed to create economic revenue for the respective focal firms, while concurrently generating social/environmental benefits. Most of the CSV projects were reported to have created significant economic value for external beneficiaries.

1. Introduction

There have been calls for businesses to add value to society rather than take value from it (Ahmed & Ahmad, 2011; Moon & Vogel, 2008). Business practitioners and academic scholars have responded in various ways to these calls. Associated theoretical developments have included corporate citizenship (Carroll, 1991), bottom of the pyramid (BOP) (Prahalad, 2004), strategic CSR (Porter & Kramer, 2006), social entrepreneurship (Yunus, 2008), and CSV (Porter & Kramer, 2011). We shall focus on CSV as a “hybrid” business model (Masanell & Ricart, 2011; Michelini & Fiorentino, 2012) that seeks to create economic value in tandem with social value creation such as contributing to environmental sustainability (Michelon et al., 2013; Boesso et al., 2015; Marti et al., 2015).

Since Porter and Kramer’s (2011) seminal work on CSV, many Western-headquartered MNCs have claimed to have adopted CSV (Masanell & Ricart, 2011; Michelini & Fiorentino, 2012; Maltz & Schein, 2012; Reyes et al., 2017). Prior literature has indicated that these avowedly CSV-adopting firms typically have a mixed portfolio of projects (Dyllick & Muff, 2016). These comprise: some business as usual oriented, profit-seeking projects (Dyllick & Muff, 2016; Friedman,

1970); some CSR projects that aim to contribute to social or environmental good (or reduce harm) without seeking direct economic gains or savings (MacGregor & Fontrodona, 2008); and one or more CSV projects that seek to contribute to social or environmental good while concurrently earning revenue or achieving savings stemming directly from the associated activities (Maltz et al., 2011; Porter & Kramer, 2011).

Firms’ claims about the adoption of CSV have appeared in annual reports, sustainability reports, and standalone CSR/CSV reports, and on company websites (Brown & Knudsen, 2012). Based on studies of such resource abundant MNCs that are operating in well-developed institutional contexts with strong legal, economic and political institutions, researchers (Maltz & Schein, 2012; Pfitzer et al., 2013; Invernizzi et al., 2016) have identified some key internal enabling factors for CSV implementation and practice, such as innovative and collaborative capabilities.

Notwithstanding such studies, plus public advocacy of CSV by governmental organizations (Høvring, 2017), and espousals of engagement in CSV by business practitioners (Kim, 2018), some scholars have expressed concerns about barriers to the practical applicability of CSV, and the associated lack of implementation guidelines (Aakhus & Bzdak, 2012; Corner & Pavlovich, 2016; Crane et al., 2014; Dembek et al.,

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2016; Pfitzer et al., 2013). Crane et al. (2014) argued, in particular, that the practical applicability of CSV may be limited to large, resource-abundant MNCs, and expressed skepticism about the possibility that smaller, resource-constrained firms could implement CSV. Furthermore, there is a gap in the literature about how firms headquartered in developing economies that are characterized by institutional voids would be able to adopt CSV.

This study tackles the above-mentioned critique of Crane et al. (2014) by analyzing how five Asia-based firms, including three resource constrained SMEs, have been able to draw on resources and capabilities to implement and practice CSV. Two of our focal firms are SMEs operating in Pakistan, where institutional voids include an absence of advocacy and support for CSV by national institutions (Webb et al., 2010; Parmigiani & Rivera-Santos, 2015). The inclusion of three Hong Kong based firms (one SME and two MNCs) in our sample enables us to compare how institutional factors can influence how CSV is adopted. All five focal firms have received awards or other public recognition for their engagement in CSV, which was the initial basis for approaching them for inclusion in our research.

This paper addresses two research questions. First, how do the focal firms marshal resources and capabilities for CSV implementation? Second, to what extent do representatives of the focal firms and their external stakeholders perceive that the focal CSV projects have created valuable social/environmental and economic outcomes for their respective benefit? We also examined the influence of firm size and home jurisdiction.

We make three contributions. First, we complement the extant CSV literature (Maltz & Schein, 2012; Pfitzer et al., 2013; Invernizzi et al., 2016), which features MNCs that are largely Western-based, by explaining and illustrating how CSV is being practiced by three resource-constrained SMEs in Asia, one of them housing a very small social enterprise as a vehicle for CSV. Second, we compare and contrast resource-constrained and resource-abundant models of CSV through bricolage. Resource-constrained bricolage is congruent with the concept of social bricolage in literature on social entrepreneurship (Janssen et al., 2018). It represents how the three SMEs sought to meet social and economic goals by drawing on external grants or donations and by attracting and harnessing benevolent cooperation by external stakeholders. By contrast, resource-abundant bricolage encapsulates how the two MNCs capitalized on internal resource slack, and repurposed internal physical resources at hand for engagement in CSV. Our third contribution is to have compared and contrasted institutional advocacy and recognition, i. e., forms of isomorphism (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983) as driving forces for CSV in a developed economy (Hong Kong) versus institutional voids as driving forces for CSV in a developing economy (Pakistan).

The rest of this paper comprises four parts. Next, we provide a brief theoretical background about CSV, and summarize prior research on key processes and underpinning resources and capabilities for CSV, along with a theoretical background about bricolage. Following this, we explain the research methodology adopted in this study and give a brief overview of the focal companies and their respective CSV activities. We then present the findings and explain the emergent CSV process models of focal companies. Finally, we identify theoretical and practical contributions and suggest directions for future research.

2. Literature review

2.1. Inception and theoretical background of CSV

Porter and Kramer (2011) built on their earlier ideas regarding “strategic CSR” (Porter & Kramer, 2006) to propose CSV as a “hybrid” business model (Masanell & Ricart, 2011; Michelini & Fiorentino, 2012), through which companies may gain competitive advantage by addressing unmet social needs and thus concurrently derive social and economic value. Under CSV, firms seek to offer pragmatic solutions to social problems and to generate profit by addressing social issues (Reyes

et al., 2017). Porter and Kramer (2011) identified three distinct pathways for CSV: (1) reconceiving products and markets, (2) redefining productivity in the value chain, and (3) developing local industry clusters. Porter and Kramer’s (2011) CSV formulation is given below:

$$\text{Creating Shared Value (CSV)} = \text{Economic Value Creation} + \text{Social Value Creation}$$

$$\text{Economic Value} = \text{Company's profit generated from CSV projects}$$

$$\text{Social Value} = \text{Meeting unmet social needs}$$

$$\text{Value} = \text{Benefits} - \text{Costs}$$

According to Porter and Kramer (2011), CSV entails the transformation of “business as usual” thinking because it does not construe social responsibility or sustainability as matters of “giving back” or “giving up” but instead constitutes a new model for achieving economic success by concurrently and conjointly addressing social/environmental needs. Like “bottom of the pyramid” approaches that have gained traction in the management literature (Banerjee & Jackson, 2017), it is a market-based strategy without an exclusive focus on economic returns.

2.2. Key processes and underpinning resources and capabilities for CSV

Some leading MNCs claim to have integrated CSV within their business models (Wójcik, 2016), and some researchers (Bertini & Gourville, 2012; Invernizzi et al., 2016; Maltz & Schein, 2012; Michelini & Fiorentino, 2012; Pfitzer et al., 2013) have presented case studies of CSV adoption in Western-headquartered MNCs. Based on a study of thirty US firms, Pfitzer et al. (2013) identified five key processes in or underpinning resources or capabilities for successful CSV implementation, some of which appear similar to those identified by other scholars, as explained next. For brevity, we shall refer to these as “elements” in this section.

The first element (Pfitzer et al. 2013) involves embedding a social purpose in the corporate culture. Brown and Knudsen (2012) similarly argued that CSV requires a supportive and strong organizational culture along with a clear set of values. Since the current paper does not focus on internal moral norms, values and motivations, which may warrant a paper of its own, we shall not analyze phenomena corresponding to Pfitzer et al.’s (2013) first element.

Pfitzer et al.’s (2013) second and third elements comprise a deep understanding of the social needs that are being addressed, along with deep involvement by external stakeholders. Porter et al. (2012) likewise considered that strong partnerships with civil society organizations that have in-depth knowledge of local needs are essential for CSV, while Kuenkel (2015) recommends a “participatory” approach. Dentoni et al. (2016) studied the collaborations of four focal firms with community partners such as NGOs and found that effective collaborations entailed openly sharing information, knowledge, and skills, and could help unravel wicked problems such as poverty and food insecurity. Perrini et al. (2011) similarly identified a firm’s collaborative capabilities as a crucial factor for successful CSV. The current study similarly analyses focal firms’ collaborations with external stakeholders, such as civil society organizations and industry associations, and assesses whether the focal firms’ collaborative capability is an underpinning resource (with stakeholder collaboration constituting a key process) for successful CSV engagement by Asia-based firms.

Pfitzer et al.’s (2013) fourth element entails the creation of an optimal innovation structure. Kuenkel (2015) also emphasizes the importance of innovation in CSV, while Maltz and Schein (2012) similarly identify R&D expertise as essential for CSV. The current study analyzes whether innovative capabilities are indispensable for effective CSV by Asia-based firms. Pfitzer et al.’s (2013) fifth element involves the adoption of explicit measures for assessing the economic, social, and environmental impacts of CSV projects. While accounting systems are

outside the scope of the current study, we shall analyze qualitative explanations of the perceived economic, social, and environmental benefits of CSV projects for our focal firms and their stakeholders.

Further studies of shared value creation by Western-based MNCs have also identified a sixth element, to do with rethinking supply chains (Maltz & Schein, 2012) or value chains (Font et al., 2016; Kuenkel, 2015) and thereby redefining sources of productivity. Porter et al. (2012) and Bockstette and Stamp (2011) identify two additional elements. One of these concerns the availability of funds, either through internal flow of funds or through external investment or sponsorship. The other entails the openness of governments to private-sector participation in socio-economic development.

The current study examines the processes through which Asia-based firms recognize, repurpose and/or redefine and utilize their internal or external sources of productivity in order to implement and practice CSV. The focal firms that we shall examine in this paper are located in two contrasting institutional contexts (Pakistan and Hong Kong), and this sample provides the opportunity to examine how contextual factors may influence CSV mechanisms.

2.3. Resource repurposing through internal & collective bricolage

Developing an original concept from Lévi-Strauss (1966), Baker and Nelson (2005, p. 333) defined bricolage as ‘making do by applying combinations of the resources at hand to new problems and opportunities’. Bricolage has been contrasted with optimization (Garud & Karnøe, 2003; Oliver, 1997), the latter being defined as ‘acquiring standard resources that have proven capabilities for the specific application for which the resource is intended’ (Desa & Basu, 2013, p. 28). In the context of incremental innovation, bricolage entails piecing together a solution or grasped opportunity in the form of a ‘phenomenon in the making, which eventually makes sense in retrospect’ (Lanzara & Patriotta, 2001, p. 964).

Bricolage thus entails ‘moving ahead on the basis of inputs from actors who possess local knowledge, but through their interactions, are able to gradually transform emerging paths to higher degrees of functionality’ (Garud & Karnøe, 2003, p. 296). Previous literature has distinguished between internal and collective bricolage (Baker & Nelson, 2005; Duymedjian & Rüling, 2010; Garud & Karnøe, 2003). In internal bricolage, organizations reconfigure pre-existing internal resources and competencies, whereas collective bricolage entails a form of open innovation, through which a focal firm combines its existing resources with those of one or more external partners to create a unique and mutually beneficial solution (Duymedjian & Rüling, 2010; Garud & Karnøe, 2003).

It follows that resources ‘at hand’ are not confined to those that are internal to the organization but can also include external resources such as those made available through collective bricolage (Duymedjian & Rüling, 2010). Thus, a firm engaging in bricolage may draw on hitherto untapped resources that are readily utilizable once their potential value is recognized (Baker & Nelson, 2005; Di Domenico et al., 2010). Garud and Karnøe (2003) thus demonstrated that the wind turbine industry in Denmark was able to derive innovations through collective bricolage involving a community of engineers, manufacturers, customers and public administrators, working together to evolve incremental improvements through trial and error.

While no prior study has explicitly examined the role of bricolage in the process of CSV, the idea was ‘hidden in plain sight’ for several years. As envisaged by Baker and Nelson (2005, p. 349), well before the advent of the CSV literature:

‘By providing products or services that would otherwise be unavailable (housing, cars, billing system, etc.) to customers (because of poverty, thriftiness, or lack of availability), bricolage creates products and markets where none existed.’

Subsequently, a literature emerged on how social enterprises pursue social goals through social bricolage, while remaining economically

afloat in the face of resource-scarcity (Di Domenico et al., 2010; Janssen et al., 2018). Although literature on bricolage has tended to assume that bricolage, by definition, only takes place in resource-constrained situations where bricoleurs have no choice other than to use resources that are at hand (Witell et al., 2017), a recent study has shown that bricolage can also take place as a matter of choice where there are slack resources (Sun et al., 2020). The current research examines the potentially different processes through which how the five focal Asia-based firms have repurposed and re-utilized resources at hand through internal and/or collective bricolage in order to implement and practice CSV.

3. Research methodology

For the current research, we have adopted a qualitative approach (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008), that has been based mainly on semi-structured interviews. We sought to identify underpinning elements for and key processes in effective CSV, and to explain how the five Asia-based firms can implement CSV by drawing on the resources and capabilities possessed by them and/or made available to them. We also sought to identify perceptions of the social and economic value created by the CSV activities, and to thereby address the concerns expressed in prior literature about the conceptualization and applicability of CSV. Qualitative research has the potential to obtain rich accounts of participants’ experiences and knowledge (Bryman et al., 1988). Within this approach, we have adopted a multiple case study method (Thomas, 2011; Yin, 2001). This involved exploring, interpreting, and explaining the CSV phenomenon from the perspectives of our respondents, while increasing the generalizability of the findings arising from the replication of patterns across multiple data sources (Yin, 1994). Within each case, semi-structured interviews were conducted with managers of the focal firms, along with representatives of external stakeholder organizations. Individual beneficiaries were also interviewed for some cases.

3.1. The focal firms

In order to increase the transferability of the findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), we sought data about CSV practiced by organizations across diverse industries, and across two different institutional contexts. We approached and gained access to two MNCs (Towngas & Lawsgroup), and three SMEs (Mishal, Sehat Kahani, and Fimmick). Towngas, Fimmick and Lawsgroup are headquartered in Hong Kong, a well-established institutional context (Harper, 2003) while Mishal and Sehat Kahani are based in Pakistan, where local institutions are less developed and there are several institutional voids (Ahmad et al., 2018). We considered that differences between these institutional contexts could have an impact on how CSV is implemented. For example, in Hong Kong, agencies close to the government have been encouraging CSV (Our Hong Kong Foundation, 2019) as well as CSR (Hong Kong Council of Social Service, 2020), whereas no corresponding infrastructure exists in Pakistan.

All five firms claim to have undertaken CSV activities within their respective communities. We identified these companies through CSV resource collections, namely *Resources for Practice Change* under the Shared Value Initiative, and *Shared Value Resources* under the Foundation Strategy Group (FSG), and through sustainability award forums, namely *Business for Social Good Outstanding Awards*, and the *Rolex Awards for Enterprise*. Table 1 summarizes background information of the focal firms, which is elaborated below, along with some details of their respective CSV projects.

3.1.1. Towngas

This firm was founded in 1862 as Hong Kong’s first public utility and is the largest energy supplier there. It has over 3000 employees in Hong Kong, mainland China, and Thailand. Towngas’s first venture into CSV involved building an environmentally friendly combined heat and power (CHP) plant at Nethersole Hospital in Hong Kong, which began

Table 1
Background information of focal companies.

Company	Year of establishment	Business sector	Company Type	Number of employees	Geographical location	Ownership structure
<i>Towngas</i>	1862	Energy & telecommunication	Multinational corporation (MNC)	3000	Hong Kong, China, Thailand	Public
<i>Lawsgroup</i>	1975	Apparel manufacturing, Property & investment, Retail & branding	Multinational corporation (MNC)	22,000	Hong Kong, China, Myanmar, Bangladesh	Private
<i>Fimmick</i>	2009	Digital marketing	Medium-sized enterprise	100	Hong Kong, Taiwan	Private
<i>Mishal</i>	2003	Media and communication	Small-sized enterprise	40	Pakistan	Private
<i>Sehat Kahani (SK)</i>	2015	Healthcare	Medium-sized enterprise	20 (Full-time)1500 (Part-time)	Pakistan	Private

operations in 2017. Supplied by gas that is captured and piped in from a landfill site of Towngas, the CHP plant generates heat and electricity simultaneously and is the first of its kind in Hong Kong (BSG Awards, 2017). By substantially reducing the energy cost for Nethersole Hospital, which had not previously been a client of Towngas, while providing attractive income for the latter, this has been regarded as a win-win situation in economic terms. The CHP project also appears to have created environmental value. The landfill gas has a relatively low environmental footprint in that energy efficiency is high and emissions of CO₂ and other hazardous gases from the CHP plant are low. The CHP plant has attracted the attention of numerous educational and community organizations that promote sustainability awareness through site visits (BSG Awards, 2017).

3.1.2. Lawsgroup

Lawsgroup is a leading apparel manufacturer, headquartered in Hong Kong with production facilities in mainland China, Bangladesh, Myanmar, and Vietnam. Founded in 1975, Lawsgroup holds a diverse business portfolio, which also includes retail and branding, property development, and shopping malls. The firm currently has more than 22,000 employees worldwide. In 2017, Lawsgroup developed a plan with a 15-year time horizon for the comprehensive implementation of CSV across its whole value chain. Facilitated by a government policy initiative that involved the relaxation of building-use restrictions (LEGGCO, 2011), Lawsgroup's first CSV project involved converting two of its old industrial buildings, which were no longer in use, into shopping malls (D2 Place-1 and D2 Place-2). D2 Place provides space for retail shops at low rental prices, generating attractive revenue for Lawsgroup while providing a platform for young entrepreneurs to establish their own businesses (Lawsgroup Sustainability Report, p. 15, 2017).

3.1.3. Fimmick

This is a digital marketing agency with 100 employees, which promotes clients' services online through social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter. In 2016, Fimmick established a social enterprise named Eldage as an internal profit centre to undertake CSV, with the mission of preserving local culture and supporting local handicraftspeople in Hong Kong and their associated traditions, through inter-generational communication. Eldage is seeking to derive revenue through operating a digital platform and a retail space for local handicraftspeople to promote and sell the latter's products. Eldage has also organized workshops for the handicraftspeople to showcase their work to the public. In order to practice CSV, Eldage has utilized two pools of otherwise untapped external resources; local handicraftspeople, and students from local universities who work as interns. Eldage has gained recognition for helping to improve the profitability of some traditional Hong Kong businesses that might otherwise have ceased operations (BSG Awards, 2017).

3.1.4. Mishal

Mishal has 40 employees. It was founded in 2003 as a privately listed company, and is one of the leading locally headquartered strategic

communication solution service providers in Pakistan. Mishal's areas of expertise include media and public relations, behavior change communication, and scenario planning. As a key source of revenue for the firm, Mishal has sought and obtained commissions from outside bodies to undertake a CSV project named "Hidden Hunger" to publicize the issue of malnutrition. "Hidden Hunger" refers to cases where there is a deficiency of micronutrients that is unaccompanied by any physical symptoms, such that most affected people are not aware of their condition (WHO, 2018). In Pakistan, levels of awareness about this issue are correspondingly low, yet according to estimations, 39.5 million people in Pakistan (24% of the population) suffer from malnutrition (FAO, 2017). Under the "Hidden Hunger" initiative, Mishal has drawn on the services of expert journalists and academics to provide training for politicians and other journalists in order to raise awareness about malnutrition. This CSV project has gained recognition among the business community, and by the Pakistan government (The News, 2018). The project has contributed substantially to Mishal's profitability and has helped the firm to gain a unique position in the industry. In terms of social benefits, there is now greater awareness among the general public about malnutrition, and the number of undernourished people has decreased since the project began (GNP, 2018).

3.1.5. Sehat Kahani (SK)

SK is a private for-profit company with 3 investors, operating 25 medical clinics in rented properties across Pakistan, which provide healthcare services at nominal prices to remote, underprivileged communities by utilizing electronic communication technologies to connect the doctors with the patients and clinics. SK has 20 full-time employees, who manage a panel of 1500 home-based married female doctors, who are part-time employees. The medical clinics are operated by around 100 community healthcare workers, who are external partners.

The management of SK set up the business for the dual purposes of providing affordable healthcare to the community and offering employment for members of a large pool of otherwise unemployed female doctors. These qualified professionals had left the workforce after marriage, owing to traditional social constraints and childcare obligations. In addition to its CSV operations through the clinics, SK has organized CSR based health education campaigns, targeting underprivileged communities. The SK management believes that they have empowered the doctors and nurses by providing a platform for them to serve the community, while providing access to quality healthcare services for underprivileged people. SK has received many national and international awards associated with these contributions (SK Annual Report, p. 9, 2019).

3.2. Data collection

Besides receiving ethics approval from the authors' institution, official approval for the study was obtained from all five focal companies. For Towngas, the second author obtained this from the top management through his personal contacts. For Mishal, Lawsgroup, SK, and Fimmick, the first author obtained consent from the respective

corporate affairs departments.

An interview guide was prepared, comprising three parts. The first part sought demographic information about the interviewees and asked about their general understanding of CSV, and about the main duties associated with their involvement in CSV. The second part asked for interviewees' perceptions about how the respective focal firm had gone about undertaking CSV projects, and about how the CSV activities of focal firms have been creating social/environmental and economic benefits for the firm and its stakeholders. The third part investigated how the focal firm had deployed, utilized, and possibly repurposed internal or external resources in order to implement CSV. Interview questions included: (1) How has (the focal firm) gone about undertaking CSV activities? (2) Can you please explain how (if at all) the CSV activities of focal firms have created social/environmental or economic benefits for the firm and its stakeholders? (3) Can you please identify some resources and capabilities that have enabled (the focal firm) to implement and practice CSV? (4) Can you please explain how (the focal firm) has deployed and utilized its internal resources and capabilities in order to practice CSV? (5) Can you please explain how (the focal firm) has utilized some essential resources and capabilities, which were not available in-house to implement CSV? (6) How has (the focal firm) ensured that there have been enough resources to implement and practice CSV?

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, conducted by the first author. Each interview lasted at least 40 min, with some exceeding 60 min. Altogether, interviews were undertaken with 28 informants. In terms of language medium, ten interviews (all for the Mishal and SK cases) were conducted in a mixture of Urdu (the official language of Pakistan) and English, while the remaining interviews were conducted entirely in English. The first author is fluent in Urdu.

While according to Bertaux (1981), an acceptable sample size for interviewees in qualitative research is fifteen, we sought to engage more

interviewees because of the multiple case study research design. For each case, interviews were conducted with senior and middle-ranking managers of the respective focal firm, along with representatives of at least one stakeholder organization, and mostly also with individual beneficiaries of CSV projects. We adopted a purposive sampling technique and selected for interview only those individuals, who had some involvement in the CSV activities of the respective focal firms. Interviewing managers from different functions and at different levels was an attempt to increase variation among respondents within the focal firm (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Interviewing external stakeholders constituted triangulation of data sources (Denzin, 1978) and enabled us to examine in greater detail the role of partner organizations in CSV projects and to identify associated beneficial outcomes for them and for individual beneficiaries, while checking for consistency with the accounts of the managers from the focal companies. Table 2 lists the profiles of the interviewees.

For further data source triangulation, in addition to inspecting relevant material in the CSV databases and sustainability award forums, mentioned above, we also analyzed the homepages of the focal companies and, where available, standalone sustainability reports, annual reports, and salient newspaper articles.

3.3. Data analysis

We adopted an interpretative approach to qualitative data analysis, which aims to examine meaningful and symbolic content (Dey, 1993). Thematic analysis (Aronson, 1995) was carried out to identify patterns of meaning and to provide answers to the research questions. These patterns were identified by following a systematic process of data transcribing, data coding, and thematic development.

Within-case analysis began after the first author had checked the English transcriptions to ensure that they were consistent with the

Table 2
Profile of interviewees.

Focal Case or (Stakeholder)	Serial No.	Department	Designation	Length of interview (in minutes)	Number of transcribed pages	Years of service	Gender
Towngas	1	Strategic Management	Managing Director	106	16	26	M
	2	Marketing & Sales	General Manager	63	13	37	M
	3	Corporate Affairs	Head	40	8	22	M
	4	Corporate Communication	Senior Manager	45	9	12	F
(Nethersole Hospital)	5	Hospital Authority	Senior Manager	52	10	25	M
Fimmick	6	Strategic Management	Chairman	48	9.5	10	M
	7	Strategic Management	CEO	44	8.5	10	M
	8	Marketing	Manager	62	13	6.5	F
	9	Marketing	Assistant Manager	42	8	3.5	F
	10	Operations	Assistant Manager	47	9	1	F
	11	Marketing & Retailing	Director	40	8	5	M
(Lawsgroup)	12	–	–	43	8.5	38	M
(Local craftsman)	13	Strategic Management	CEO	46	12	15	M
Mishal	14	Operations	Project Manager	41	8	1.5	F
	15	Research & development	Consultant	51	10	7	M
(Academic Institute)	16	Business Incubation Center	Director	55	11	5	M
(NGO)	17	Strategic Management	CEO	49	9.5	3	F
(Journalist)	18	Media & Communication	Journalist	41	8	17	M
Lawsgroup	19	Marketing & Retailing	Director	55	11	5	M
	20	Marketing	Manager	51	10	4	F
(Local Entrepreneur)	21	Traditional handicraft	–	43	8.5	3	F
Sehat Kahani (SK)	22	Operations & Strategy	CEO	50	9	4	F
	23	Operations & Strategy	Chief Operating Officer	47	8	4	F
	24	Information Technology	Manager	44	7.5	3	F
	25	Marketing	Manager	42	7	1	M
	26	General Medicine	Physician	41	6.5	2.5	F
(Healthcare professionals)	27	General Medicine	Physician	43	7	1	F
(Community worker)	28	Medical Units	Healthcare worker	40	6	20	F

original tape-recordings. The transcripts for the Towngas case interviews were analyzed first. This initial analysis was undertaken primarily by the first author, who sought to identify the various aspects or building blocks of their CSV implementation and value creation processes, using a constant comparison method (Charmaz, 2014) to identify commonalities and differences within the same interview and across different interviews. At the first step of thematic analysis, initial codes were assigned systematically to salient passages of each interview. During the second step, provisional categories were generated from codes, and the relevant data was marshaled under each of these. In the third step, overall themes were generated from the clusters of codes and categories. During the fourth step, these themes underwent detailed refinement and clarification. The data and research objectives together guided the coding and thematic analysis process (Dey, 1993).

For the Towngas case, of 32 initial codes that were created from interview 1, 13 codes were relevant to our research objectives, and these were grouped on the basis of their similarities, forming seven categories. Analysis of the transcript of interview 2 produced three additional codes. Analysis of interview 3 yielded one more code, but after this, no additional codes or categories were obtained from interviews 4 and 5 for the Towngas case, i.e., we had achieved data saturation (Fusch & Ness, 2015). By this point, 17 codes had been established, which applied across the data set for the entire case, and after some recategorization, these were grouped into 11 categories under three main themes.

A similar approach was adopted for the analysis of the interviews for the other four cases. For Fimmick, Mishal and SK, data saturation was achieved on completing the analysis of the third interview within each set, while in the case of Lawsgroup, this was achieved after analysis of the second interview. Within each case, the accounts provided by representatives of stakeholder firms and (where obtained) individual beneficiaries were found to be consistent with those provided by the managers of the respective focal firms.

The second author conducted a peer examination (see Merriam & Tisdell, 2015) of the analysis of each case, helping to refine the emergent themes and categorization system developed by the first author. This involved close inspection of each interview transcript in order to ensure that the findings were plausible and based on the data.

Cross-comparisons of the five case studies were then undertaken in order to identify similarities and differences among the firms' CSV implementation and value creation processes. We found that some key phenomena corresponded to concepts in the organizational literature, such as internal and collective bricolage (Baker & Nelson, 2005; Duy-medjian & Rüling, 2010; Garud & Karnøe, 2003), resource slack (Cyert & March 1963), and filling institutional voids (Mair et al., 2007). We incorporated these concepts into our emergent CSV process model.

We have divided our research findings into three sections. In the first section, we analyze the CSV mechanisms of the two MNCs and identify some common features among them and inductively develop a resource slack bricolage-based model of CSV implementation. In the second section, we perform a similar analysis of the CSV mechanisms of the three SMEs and develop a resource-constrained bricolage-based model of CSV implementation. In the third section, we present qualitative accounts of value outcomes. These indicate that the CSV projects of the focal firms have largely generated social/environmental and economic value both for the focal firms themselves, and for their intended beneficiaries.

4. Findings

4.1. Findings I: CSV implementation by the two MNCs

Common features in the cases of Towngas and Lawsgroup were institutional advocacy and recognition for CSV, resource slack, and making do through internal bricolage. We explain and illustrate these features below.

4.1.1. Institutional advocacy and recognition for CSV

Interviewees from both firms indicated that there had been governmental advocacy for CSV in Hong Kong. Since the Hong Kong government has the power to enact regulatory changes, such advocacy may be regarded as a channel of subtly coercive isomorphism (Kim & Kim, 2018). Both MNCs had also been encouraged by and had received recognition from Our Hong Kong Foundation and the Hong Kong Council of Social Service, two NGOs with strong governmental ties, constituting channels of normative isomorphism (see Kim & Kim, 2018). *"The Hong Kong government had been encouraging us to do CSV. They have also been promoting green capitalism...The former chief secretary of the Hong Kong Government arranged a meeting of the top managers of big companies and encouraged us all to reduce the emissions of CO₂ and other gases."* (Managing Director, Towngas). *"The government is promoting CSV and is encouraging local businesses to engage in CSV activities. Many government officials have visited us, and they have encouraged us to create shared value for society."* (Marketing Director, Lawsgroup). *"Towngas was one of the winners of Business for Social Good Awards, Hong Kong, and the CHP project was appreciated at public and government levels."* (Senior Manager, Corporate Communications, Towngas). *"Our CSV initiative has been widely recognized in the society, and we have won the Business for Social Good Awards, Hong Kong."* (Marketing Director, Lawsgroup).

4.1.2. Resource slack

George (2005) defined slack resources as those utilizable resources that can be redeployed or repurposed in order to achieve organizational goals. Resource slack serves as a buffer to support and enable firms to adjust their strategies according to changing needs and opportunities (Bourgeois, 1981). Both MNCs had capitalized on internal resource slack for CSV implementation. Towngas had long possessed a sound capital structure and strong innovation capabilities. Based on sound finances, the firm had been able to raise capital specifically for the CHP project through the issuance of green bonds: *"Towngas has adequate cash deposits and stable sources of funds and unutilized banking facilities. Moreover, financial investments of HK\$752 million have also been made in equity and debt securities."* (Towngas Annual Report, p.41, 2017). *"We issued the first green bonds in the energy sector of Hong Kong and collected 7 Million HKD, and we used these funds for our CHP project."* (Managing Director, Towngas).

Regarding innovation capabilities, Towngas had harnessed in-house expertise for the design of the CHP installation: *"The CHP project was the first of its kind in terms of technology in Hong Kong. We did not have any prior experience, so we studied many journal articles...Moreover, we have long had a capable research & development team and a pool of qualified engineers."* (General Manager, Marketing & Sales, Towngas). *"We realized that we have a team of qualified engineers, who are very knowledgeable and capable; therefore, when initiating our CHP project, we utilized the skills and knowledge of our existing engineers."* (Head, Corporate Affairs, Towngas).

For Lawsgroup, one source of resource slack was the firm's strong basis of global investments, from which capital was made available to finance the setting up of its CSV project: *"Lawsgroup holds a diverse portfolio of businesses, which include retail & branding, property development, investments in shopping malls, office buildings, parking lots, and other global investments."* (Lawsgroup Sustainability Report, p. 6, 2017). Another source of resource slack for Lawsgroup was its expertise in apparel design and retailing: *"Bosco [Deputy CEO] and his team made use of the company's core competence in apparel design and retail operation to experiment and evolve a new business model that connects commercial success with its mission to support the development of creative industry in Hong Kong."* (Chan, 2018).

4.1.3. Making do (internal bricolage)

According to Baker and Nelson (2005), for entrepreneurial bricoleurs, "making do" is the process of applying and repurposing combinations of internal resources at hand, such as a physical resource trove.

Both MNCs had been making do in a manner consistent with the concept of internal bricolage. Towngas, in addition to repurposing its innovation capabilities as described above, had converted a previously non-utilized trove of landfill gas to supply the CHP powerplant: “We have three strategic landfill sites, which are rich sources of landfill gas, and we have constructed a treatment plant to convert this into natural gas.” (Towngas Sustainability Report, p.13, 2018). “We had landfill gas, but we were wasting it. Now we are utilizing our landfill gas through CHP and selling it to Nethersole Hospital.” (General Manager, Marketing & Sales, Towngas). Towngas’s client, Nethersole Hospital, was also deeply involved in the bricolage: “It was not easy for a hospital to spare a building for the system, but they found an old building for this system and we have installed the system in that building.” (Managing Director, Towngas).

Lawsgroup had repurposed slack physical resources in the form of two old industrial buildings, which had been lying idle for several years: “We converted two of our industrial buildings, which are now D2 Place-1 and D2 Place-2. We changed the structures by investing our money and converted them into commercial malls, which are serving the needs of local (entrepreneurs).” (Marketing Director, Lawsgroup).

Fig. 1 depicts how institutional encouragement and resource slack supported and enabled Towngas and Lawsgroup to repurpose their resources and capabilities to create shared value.

4.2. Findings II: CSV implementation by the three SMEs

In this sub-section, we shall analyze common features in the cases of Fimmick (via Eldage), Mishal, and SK. These firms were utilizing hitherto untapped external human resources for collective bricolage (henceforth we shall shorten this term to collective bricolage) and were also drawing on donations or grants. In addition, they were also drawing on collaborations with benevolent external experts or giants; and (for Mishal and SK only) were thereby filling institutional voids, while Fimmick/Eldage was seeking to preserve overlooked cultural treasures. We explain and illustrate these features below.

4.2.1. Collective bricolage

Collective bricolage enables the creation of novel solutions through the repurposing of external resources (Duyumedjian & Rüling, 2010; Garud & Karnøe, 2003), and can be especially helpful for resource-constrained firms, such as many SMEs (Kwong et al., 2017). Recent studies have found that managers in SMEs can learn to recognize the potential value of previously untapped external resources and utilize them effectively (Bradley et al., 2011; Patzelt et al., 2008). The three focal SMEs were facing internal resource constraints in terms of limited capital and limited innovation structure but were able to recognize and

repurpose otherwise untapped external resources for their respective CSV projects.

Fimmick had drawn upon external pools of human capital to support the activities of its CSV vehicle and internal social enterprise, Eldage, whose mission has been to preserve and promote local craftwork heritage. These external resources have comprised some local handicrafts-people, who had not previously been actively promoting their own businesses, but who became partners in such promotional activities, and were thus to some extent repurposed, supported by students from local universities, who constituted free or inexpensive human resources. Managers explained: “We found that the local handicraft industry is at a high risk of extinction; therefore, we decided to empower local handicrafts-people by providing them a platform where they could showcase their skills and promote local culture... We approached some local handicraftspeople and connected them with the public by organizing workshops in order to promote local traditional handicrafts... We have worked with academic departments from two local universities and have engaged their students to work with us as interns in order to promote the local tradition and culture of Hong Kong.” (CEO, Eldage & Marketing Manager, Fimmick). “A large pool of local university students have been trained by our staff. After the training, they have conducted interviews with the local craftspeople and have made videos, which have helped to develop public consciousness about their local traditional handicrafts.” (Assistant Manager Marketing, Fimmick).

Although Mishal possesses limited internal resources in terms of capital and workforce, the firm has managed to attract and utilize nationally based freelance journalists who had not previously investigated public health issues such as malnutrition, as external resources for its commissioned Hidden Hunger project: “We approached a large pool of freelance journalists, who subsequently played a central role in our Hidden Hunger CSV project.” (Consultant, Mishal). “We built the capacity of almost 700 journalists through training and these journalists then started reporting on the malnutrition issue.” (CEO, Mishal).

With only 20 full-time employees, SK faced similar internal resource constraints. SK has nonetheless achieved success in its healthcare and employment creation-based CSV initiative. The firm has utilized the expertise of an external and otherwise unemployed pool of 1500 qualified, married female medical doctors, working from home on a part time basis. “In Pakistan, a large number of female doctors do not pursue their career after graduation and marriage, owing to traditional social and cultural norms. Therefore, we thought we could utilize the knowledge and expertise of these home-based qualified female doctors in order to provide quality health care services.” (Chief Operating Officer, SK). “We have utilized a big pool of doctors to deliver our services, who were out of the workforce, but now they are working with us and providing healthcare facilities through our platform to the people who live in underprivileged remote

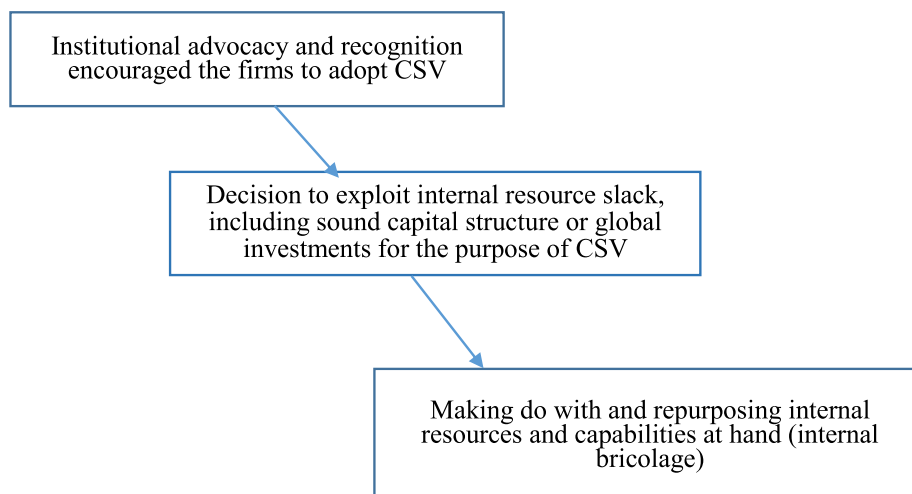


Fig. 1. CSV adoption and implementation by the two MNCs.

communities.” (Manager, Information Technology, SK).

4.2.2. Utilizing donations or grants

At the time of the research, Eldage was not fully covering expenditures with revenue arising from commissions on sales, but still remained financially viable, sustained by dividend income from shares in Fimmick, the parent company, which had been donated by Fimmick’s chairman as an act of personal philanthropy. Mishal had successfully solicited a donation for its Hidden Hunger project: “We initiated this project, but later on, Australian Aid approached us and provided further financial support.” (Program Manager, Mishal). “The Australian Government, through Australian Aid, is supporting Mishal Pakistan to deliver a series of workshops across Pakistan to build the capacity of local journalists to report on Pakistan’s nutrition crisis. Australia is a leading donor in improving nutrition outcomes in Pakistan and has invested AUD 39 million in the World Bank’s Multi-Donor Trust Fund and Australian Aid for Nutrition.” (Mishal, Hidden Hunger Press Release, 2017).

SK had received financial grants from two international development agencies to help expand its healthcare network: “We have received \$500,000 collectively in terms of grants from two development agencies, Australian Aid and IDEO.” (SK Annual Report, p. 11, 2019). “We received a grant of USD 500,000 from two international development agencies.” (Chief Operating Officer, SK).

4.2.3. Benevolent stakeholder collaboration

Benevolent collaboration (Bridoux et al., 2011) refers in our paper to partnerships with outside experts or with friendly large organizations, who are motivated to be helpful in working toward mutually valued goals. Besides benefitting from benevolent, *pro bono* contributions of academics, who have been providing co-supervision of the work of the student interns, Eldage has also been using space in D2 place, provided free of charge by Lawsgroup (one of the focal MNCs in this research), as an outlet for retailing products of the partnering handicraftspeople. Another large local organization, Ocean Park, has, through Eldage, and on favorable terms to the latter, commissioned a series of works by local handicraftspeople for retailing to visitors of Ocean Park.

Mishal has enlisted the help of external public health experts, who have either been providing *pro bono* services or have been funded by the grants received by Mishal, in order that the freelance journalists can receive training in how to raise public awareness about malnutrition. “We have various knowledge partners, such as academics from various educational institutions. Some of them are part-time employees of Mishal and provide their support throughout our CSV process.” (Program Manager, Mishal). “Mishal has collaborated with international development agencies, industry organizations, and academic institutions, who have provided their knowledge and expertise for the Hidden Hunger project.” (Consultant, Mishal). “We collaborated with Mishal three years ago to provide them knowledge support for the Hidden Hunger CSV project, and this collaboration is very broad, and as established partners, we always invite each other for collaboration on social initiatives.” (Director, Academic institute).

SK has enlisted contributions from various external partners to ensure that sufficient technological resources and specialist expertise have been available to support and augment the work of the doctors. Some of these contributions have been provided free of charge, either by MNC partners under the CSR programmes of the latter or by international development agencies: “We purchased the software for our clinics from a leading international company named Medical City Online. We worked with GlaxoSmithKline (MNC) and Unilever (MNC) for health education. Currently, we are working with British Asian Trust on mental health.” (Chief Operating Officer, SK).

4.2.4. Filling institutional voids

Institutional voids arise from the absence of adequate intermediary services that would otherwise facilitate rational business transactions (Khanna et al., 2010; Mair et al., 2007). It appears that, as compared with Hong Kong and Western economies, such institutions are far less

developed in Pakistan: “The government is absent on CSV, and there is no understanding of or advocacy for CSV at the government level.” (CEO, Mishal). “The government does not provide us any direct support or encouragement for our CSV activities.” (Manager, Information Technology, SK).

Interviewees also referred to other institutional voids in Pakistan, where malnutrition and the need to ensure universal provision of basic healthcare have historically been neglected. Baker and Nelson (2005) proposed that “refusal to enact limitations” is a driving factor for entrepreneurial bricoleurs operating in resource constrained environments. This appears to apply in the cases of SK and Mishal, where the respective managements have refused to accept that resource constraints would prevent them from filling institutional voids in Pakistan: “In Pakistan, malnutrition had not been considered a serious issue by the government and the public; therefore, we stepped in and started our Hidden Hunger CSV project, and later on, two provincial governments initiated their own projects to deal with malnutrition, in collaboration with international agencies. We have inculcated a sense of responsibility at the government level. Moreover, The Hidden Hunger project was the first of its kind in Pakistan, and no other organization has done a similar project.” (Consultant, Mishal). “The total population of Pakistan is approximately 220 million, and out of this, around 40% of the population does not have access to basic quality healthcare. We are not even sure that the 60% of the population that has access to healthcare is actually getting good healthcare. Therefore, we are addressing the issue of quality healthcare through undertaking various healthcare initiatives.” (Chief Operating Officer, SK).

Fig. 2 depicts how commitment to filling institutional voids (for Mishal and SK) or to preserving cultural heritage (for Fimmick/Eldage); donations or grants; collective bricolage involving hitherto untapped external human resources; and collaborations with benevolent external experts and/or large organizations have featured in the adoption and implementation of CSV by the three SMEs.

4.3. Findings III: Perceived outcomes of the CSV projects

Interviewees indicated that the CSV projects of the focal firms have for the most part been generating both economic value (Brown & Knudsen, 2012) and environmental/social value (Pirson, 2012; Shrivastava & Kennelly, 2013) as explained next, case by case.

4.3.1. Towngas

4.3.1.1. *Mutual economic value creation.* Interviewees indicated that the CHP project has given rise to economic benefits for both Towngas and Nethersole Hospital: “We are getting profit by selling landfill gas. Now that Nethersole Hospital is using our gas to generate electricity through CHP; we are selling more gas to them...The hospital is also getting an economic benefit because before this project they were paying a huge amount for their electricity bills and after this project their energy cost has been reduced and they have saved 2.5 to 2.7 Million HKD in one year.” (General Manager, Marketing & Sales, Towngas). “The CHP project has achieved its intended results. Before the installation, the combined annual total of our bills to the electricity utility company plus to Towngas was around 5–6 Million HKD. After the installation of CHP, we do not need to pay anything for electricity and just need to pay for the landfill gas. We have saved 2–3 Million HKD per year.” (Senior Manager, Hospital Authority).

4.3.1.2. *Environmental value creation.* The latter interviewee indicated that the CHP project has also created significant environmental value: “There is a substantial reduction in emissions of CO₂. It is not just about money; we are doing something good for society. Now everyone is focusing on the reduction of emission of hazardous gases and efficient energy use, and we are supporting Hong Kong as a place that contributes to the world through reducing emissions of hazardous gases.” (Senior Manager, Hospital Authority).

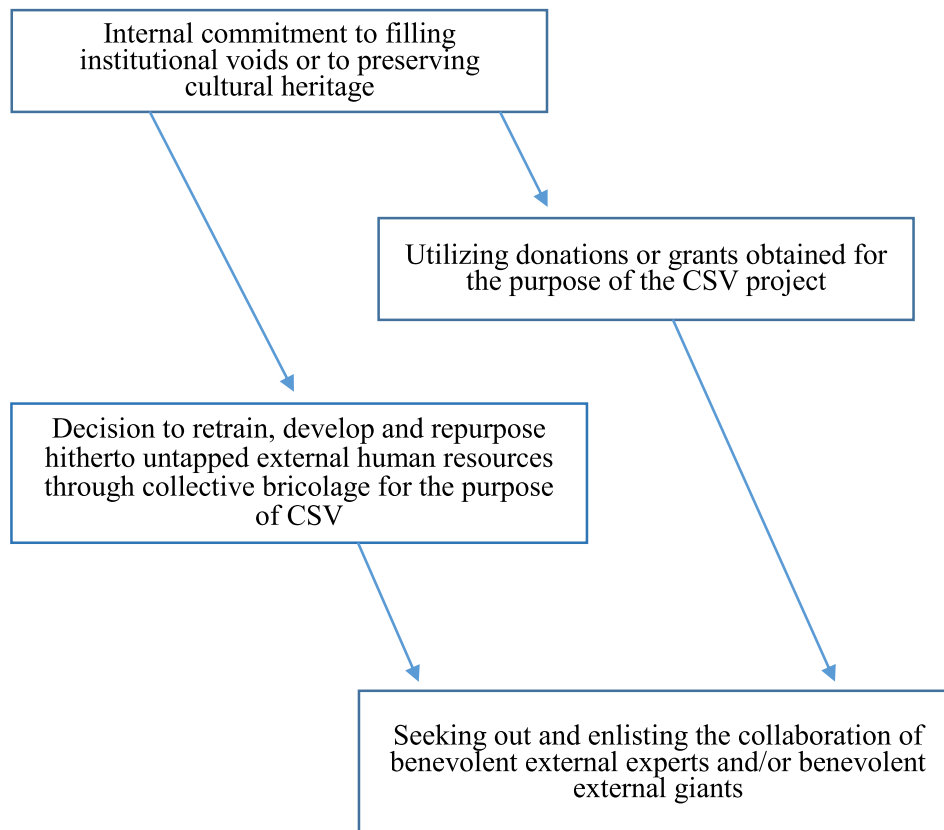


Fig. 2. CSV adoption and implementation by the three SMEs.

4.3.2. Lawsgroup

4.3.2.1. Mutual economic value creation. An interviewee stated that the D2 Place project has generated economic value both for Lawsgroup and the entrepreneurial firms using the premises: “Our rental revenue is increasing every year. We encourage entrepreneurs to increase their sales, and if they have more sales, we will have more revenue. It is a win–win situation.” (Marketing Director, Lawsgroup). An individual entrepreneur explained how her firm has been benefitting from the facilities and services of Lawsgroup: “D2 Place brings new customers to me because Lawsgroup promotes us on Instagram and on their website, and so they provide me access to those people, who otherwise are inaccessible for me.” (Local Entrepreneur).

4.3.2.2. Social value creation. By “revitalizing two industrial buildings into a design and cultural icon of the city”, D2 Place can also be regarded as a contribution to the development of Hong Kong’s creative industry (Chan, 2018).

4.3.3. Fimmick (via Eldage)

4.3.3.1. Attempted economic value creation for the firm. Although the parent company, Fimmick, has been achieving strong financial results, the CEO of Eldage, their subsidiary social enterprise and vehicle for CSV, admitted that Eldage’s financial performance has not reached break-even point: “Currently the profit margin is really low...At this moment Eldage is not generating as much revenue as we had anticipated...In recent months we have started to actively look to increase the profit, so that I can be a more responsible employer.” (CEO, Eldage and marketing manager, Fimmick).

4.3.3.2. Economic and social value creation for beneficiaries. An individual beneficiary of Eldage’s CSV activities explained how the platform had increased his income: “Eldage has a big network, through which they have promoted my products, and my income has increased. The firm is an advertising company with new and innovative ideas, and I have learned a lot from them.” (Local handicrafts person). Eldage’s CEO commented positively about social value creation: “The (handicrafts) masters are now much happier than before because of the money they get and the opportunity to get to know members of the younger generation and to set up business collaborations.” (CEO, Eldage and marketing manager, Fimmick).

4.3.4. Mishal

4.3.4.1. Economic value creation for the firm. The CEO of Mishal indicated that the Hidden Hunger project was generating significant economic value for the firm: “Our profit has significantly increased. Moreover, Mishal is now positioned as a unique organization in the media industry.” (CEO, Mishal).

4.3.4.2. Social value creation. A publication (GNP, 2018) indicated that the Hidden Hunger project has given rise to greater awareness among the general public about malnutrition and that the number of undernourished people in Pakistan has decreased since the project began. According to a recent survey conducted by UNICEF (2018), the total number of undernourished people in Pakistan decreased from 23% (in 2016) to 20.5% (in 2018) of total population, which may be attributed, at least in part, to the efforts made by Mishal and its collaborators. Some partners in the Hidden Hunger project indicated that their professional knowledge has been significantly enhanced through the project: “I learned something very new in my professional career, so it was an interesting project, through which I learned a lot.” (Freelance journalist). “I gained

more exposure, not in technical terms but in terms of research. This is in so far as I learned a lot from monitoring the research projects on nutrition, especially from the platform of the journalists.” (CEO of a collaborating NGO).

4.3.5. SK

4.3.5.1. Mutual economic value creation. Telehealth is the main business of SK, and the economic performance of the firm appears to be strong: “We have generated a substantial amount of revenue from our healthcare activities.” (SK Annual Report, p.5, 2019). One of the physicians employed part time by SK mentioned that working with the firm has given her financial and social empowerment: “SK has made me independent and given me financial empowerment. My income has significantly increased after working with SK.” (Physician, SK case).

4.3.5.2. Social value creation. SK appears to have made a significant social impact through its CSV activities, for example: “We have provided employment to a pool of 1500 qualified female doctors who otherwise were unemployed, and these doctors, in turn, provided 90,000 online consultations to underprivileged people in remote communities.” (SK Annual Report, p.5, 2019). An interviewee, who was staffing one of the clinics expressed satisfaction that her skills and knowledge had been enhanced through the project: “Working with SK has given me confidence, and I learned significantly through collaborating with them. They have built my capacity through training, and now I can better understand the medical issues.” (Community Health Care Worker).

5. Discussion and conclusions

We had two research questions (RQs). Our first RQ was about how the focal firms have marshalled resources and capabilities for CSV implementation. Among the elements for successful CSV mentioned in our literature review, our paper confirms the importance of innovation in all cases. Our SME cases highlight the important role of external stakeholders in contributing expert knowledge. In addition, in order to get the CSV projects off the ground, internal transfer of financial assets has been necessary for the two MNCs and for the Hong Kong based SME, while external funding has been necessary for the two Pakistan based SMEs. From the data, we have built on the existing literature by developing two alternative models of shared value creation, summarized below. Both models are based on bricolage, i.e., engaging in CSV through processes of arriving at workable solutions by repurposing available resources and capabilities.

Our second RQ was about the extent to which managers and external stakeholders of the firms perceived that the focal CSV projects had successfully created valuable outcomes. Our findings are largely in the affirmative. As presented above, interviewees’ qualitative accounts indicated that the CSV projects of Towngas, Lawsgroup, Mishal and SK were perceived to have generated both economic value (Brown & Knudsen, 2012), and social (Pirson, 2012) or environmental value (Shrivastava & Kennelly, 2013). Fimmick’s project via Eldage was perceived to have created social value for the community and economic value for the handicraftspeople, and although the focal firm was still struggling to make a profit from the project, this had nonetheless generated a revenue stream. The creation of economic value for the focal firms themselves, in addition to the creation of social/environmental value, distinguishes these CSV projects from CSR projects.

Our paper therefore shows how a sample of for-profit organizations, comprising both MNCs and SMEs are deriving economic and social value through bricolage in both resource-abundant and resource constrained situations. Our first model of shared value creation represents that both MNCs have been responsive to strong encouragement from the home government and related NGOs to engage in CSV. They have embraced a resource-abundant model of internal bricolage (Baker & Nelson, 2005; Duymedjian & Rüling, 2010) by harnessing resource slack (Cyert &

March, 1963) and making do with repurposed internal resources and capabilities, in anticipation that this would not detract from the effectiveness of their solutions.

Our second model of shared value represents that all three SMEs have embraced a resource-constrained model of bricolage. Under this model, they have relied upon collective bricolage, i.e., recognizing, harnessing and repurposing external resources that were hitherto untapped (Duymedjian & Rüling, 2010; Garud & Karnøe, 2003), while also drawing on grants or donations, and attracting benevolent cooperation (Dentoni et al., 2016; Maltz & Schein, 2012; Pfitzer et al., 2013) by large and/or expert external stakeholders. Furthermore, the two Pakistan based SMEs have sought to fill institutional voids (Khanna et al., 2010; Mair et al., 2007), while Eldage, the Hong Kong-based social enterprise arm of Fimmick, has sought to preserve cultural heritage that had hitherto been neglected. Our second model indicates how CSV can be practiced by resource constrained SMEs in Asia, thereby challenging Crane et al. (2014) regarding the feasibility of CSV in SMEs, while also building on literature on the adoption of CSV by social enterprises (Desa & Basu, 2013; Di Domenico et al., 2010).

There are two main differences between the two models. First, institutional encouragement appears to have been necessary to ‘nudge’ the MNCs to depart from their business-as-usual large firm inertia into embracing CSV, suggesting that coercive and normative isomorphism (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983) have been driving forces. By contrast, among the SMEs the impetus for engaging in CSV appeared to have come from within. Second, the MNCs have relied almost entirely on internal resources, whereas the SMEs have been heavily reliant on external resources.

5.1. Limitations and future research

Future research could, for comparison and generalization purposes, investigate the CSV practices of SMEs in developed economies as well as in a larger set of other less-developed economies and across a wider spread of industries. Furthermore, the feasibility of adopting CSV in some sensitive industries, e.g., arms manufacturing, petroleum, tobacco, and gambling, could be studied in future research, perhaps involving reconfiguration of the value chain and repurposing of resources and capabilities to construct alternatives to toxic business models (e.g., “swords into ploughshares”). Such research would address one of the critiques of Crane et al. (2014), who contended that CSV embraces an over-optimistic view of new products and services because in some industries these are inherently of questionable social value.

Some commentators have criticized the sustainability discourses of corporations and consider that these may be based on spurious claims and vague promises, manifesting organizational hypocrisy and façades, while seeking to maintain legitimacy (Adams, 2004; Patten, 2012). From the accounts of managers, collaborators, and community beneficiaries involved in the five CSV projects, we detected no sign of organizational hypocrisy or façades. Perhaps more extensive interviewing with a wider sample of stakeholders might have revealed some down-sides. Future research can seek out dissenting voices and remain alert to the possibility that less attractive corporate faces might hide under a CSV veil.

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