MODELLING EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT IN RELATION TO CSR PRACTICES AND EMPLOYEE SATISFACTION

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Abstract

Nowadays, companies are becoming more and more interested in internal marketing tactics in order to ensure a lower turnover rate, employee engagement and satisfaction. Also, giving the pressure global companies are experiencing from their stakeholders in getting involved in corporate social responsibility practices, they are considering sustainable initiatives to engage their employees and cater to their stakeholders' demands. Many international companies have an agenda of sustainability and corporate social responsibility, but have yet to overcome many challenges regarding the creation of staff engagement in the successful implementation of these techniques. Strategic internal marketing has the potential for to become a strategy of employee valorization, in the long-term profit maximization perspective, while the company's image can be enhanced and the sustainable practices can be the subject of viral marketing, with positive effect in the short term. This paper is based on the premise that internal marketing is an important tool in activities that have employee engagement as an important goal to achieve within any company, in general, and especially in a green company.

Keywords: internal marketing, employee engagement, employee satisfaction, corporate social responsibility, green marketing, structural equation model

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1. Introduction

Sustainability, green marketing, corporate citizenship, responsible business, corporate social responsibility - all of these concepts involve techniques, activities, programs, strategies and proactive solutions companies are trying to pursue in order to respond to social problems and environmental challenges.

Nowadays, for progress and industrial development to meet the requirement of sustainability, organizations need to address macro issues and challenges, such as economic efficiency (innovation, productivity, profitability), social fairness (poverty, community, health, human rights) and responsibility towards the environment (climate change, land use, biodiversity).

However, in terms of pursing a sustainable corporate behavior, and green practices in day-to-day business activities and operations, companies tend to relate sustainability in various ways adapted to their line of business. A sustainable corporate behavior has the potential to affect all aspects of a company's operations and all the value creation level in order to maximize the return on capital. In an effort to improve their corporate social responsibility practices, companies are also paying attention to cause-related marketing campaigns, which is a commercial agreement which is based on a win-win situation for both participants: the company and supported social causes (Anghel, Grigore and Rosca, 2011).

Companies are the subject of different sources of pressure to pursue sustainability from various stakeholders - employees, customers, consumers, value chain partners, competitors, investors, non-governmental agencies, the media, governments and society at large. But in order to be successful at changing certain business aspects and turning them green, companies need to have the support and positive feedback from employees.

The early conceptualization of internal marketing states that personnel represents the first market of any organization, and that employees should be treated as internal customers, whereas jobs as internal products (Berry, 1981; George and Gronroos 1989; George 1990). Moreover, internal marketing has been described as a philosophy for managing the organization's human resources based on a marketing perspective (George and Gronroos, 1989).

Recently, the implementation of internal marketing programs has gained momentum especially in the present context that puts so much emphasis on sustainability for different types of external customers. However, in order to meet the needs of external customers, companies need support from their internal customers, in order to achieve such green practices, while considering employee satisfaction and engagement.

2. Theoretical Development

2.1. Employee Perception of CSR Activities

From a business perspective, one can argue that corporate social responsibility and being a good corporate citizen can give companies a competitive edge. However, such green or social practices start from within a company and they need employee support of such ventures.

CSR has its roots in stakeholder theory (Carroll, 1991). According to the central proposition of stakeholder theory, the long term value of a company rests as much on the knowledge, abilities, and commitment of its employees as on its relationships with investors, customers, and other stakeholders (Wheeler & Sillanpää, 1997; Lee, et al., 2012).

Carroll (1991) proposed a four-part definition of CSR, stating that organizations have four major responsibilities – economic, legal, philanthropic, and ethical. Studies in this research area suggest that the successful application of corporate social responsibility practices starts with the employees' perception of such tactics. Employee perception of CSR activities can be viewed as the degree to which employees perceive a company supports the activities related to a social cause (Lee, et al., 2012).

2.2. Employee Satisfaction

Companies are constantly looking for new possibilities to make their employees happy and engaged, while sustaining a low turnover rate. Employee satisfaction can be enhanced when the focus is on value co-creation of social and sustainable practices (Bhattacharya, Sen, Korschun, 2007). In terms of employee satisfaction, it is important for a company to create a work environment where staff has decision-making power and accountability in order for them to feel a sense satisfaction, in general, and for practicing sustainability internally, in particular.

The need for internal satisfaction of employees, as well as for the recruitment and retention of capable people, encourages organizations to treat

employees as customers (Berry, 1981) and therefore, to treat jobs as products in order to increase employee satisfaction. The latter aspect involves establishing and building jobs, with features that current or future employees would value and could relate to. In this context, sustainability and green practices can provide an extra level of motivation at work that would eventually lead to satisfaction and loyalty towards the organization.

Figure1. The vicious circle of internal marketing
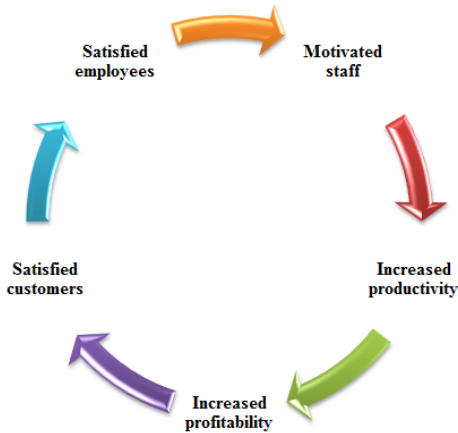
Source: Adapted from Ahmed and Rafiq, 2002, p. 110

2.3. Employee Engagement

Kahn (1990) was the first researcher to posit that engagement represents a employee's psychological presence when executing an organizational task. Employee engagement, as conceptualized by Kahn (1990), is the harnessing of organizational members' selves to their work roles; in engagement, people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively and emotionally during role performances. Therefore, he proposed that employee engagement is associated with three psychological conditions: meaningfulness, safety and availability.

People are more willing to expend additional effort if they feel they will be protected and rewarded in a way that matters to them. Employees are emotionally and cognitively engaged when they know what is expected of them, have what they need to do their work, have opportunities to feel an impact and fulfillment in their work, perceive that they are part of something

significant with coworkers whom they trust, and have chances to improve and develop Harter et al. (2002). Work engagement is an affective-motivational, work-related state of fulfillment in employees that is characterized by vigor, dedication and absorption (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004, Xanthopoulou et al. 2009). Engaged employees have high levels of energy, are enthusiastic about their work, and they are often fully immersed in their job so that time flies (Xanthopoulou et al. 2009).

Employee engagement is crucial for an organization's success because employees contribute to the bottom line, while performing work tasks and having an impact on customers (whether they are back-office or front-office).

Harter et al. (2002) concluded from their study that employee satisfaction and engagement are related to meaningful business outcomes at a magnitude that is important to many organizations and that these correlations generalize across companies.

Other studies suggest that employee engagement could be a strong factor of organizational performance and success, as it seems to have a significant potential to affect employee retention, their loyalty and productivity (Andre, Sofian, 2012). Ultimately, engaged employees are the most productive, the best team players, and the most committed to organizational goals (Lee, et al., 2012).

3. Research method
3.1. Research context

This paper is based on the premise that internal marketing is an important tool in activities that have employee engagement as an important goal to achieve within any company, in general, and especially in a green company. In consequence, we propose the following two major research hypotheses:

O1. Determining the impact of CSR practices on employee engagement.

H1. Employee perception of CSR activities affects employee engagement to their company positively.

O2. Determining the impact of employee satisfaction on employee engagement.

H2. Employee satisfaction has a positive effect on employee engagement.

3.2. Measurement and Research Instrument

A web-based consumer survey was used for the data collection. All measurement items were newly formed and were aimed at studying employee behavior and reactions towards green marketing practices. Also, all the measurements used 5-point Likert scales ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree).

The psychometric properties of the measures are provided in Table 1. Considering the fact that the scale items were newly compiled, we measured the reliability of the scales used to evaluate the internal consistency of the constructs. Reliability is identified by Cronbach's alpha with a minimum of 0.70 (Cronbach, 1970; Nunnally, 1978).

Table1. Reliability statistics for construct measure

Scale item	Assigned dimension	Cronbach's alpha
My company's commitment to social responsibility (e.g. community support, protecting the environment, etc.) is genuine	Eng1	0.852
At work, I am encouraged to take green initiatives.	Eng2	
My company supports employee volunteering activities.	Eng3	
I am proud to work for my company.	Eng4	
My company does a good job of contributing to the communities in which we live and work.	CSR1	0.768
My company is reducing carbon emissions.	CSR2	
My company is trying to make our data centers more efficient.	CSR3	
Performance on green initiatives is an element of employee evaluation.	CSR4	
My company's corporate social responsibility efforts have increased my overall satisfaction with working here.	Satis1	0.864
I do feel my company speaks openly and honestly, in terms of internal communication even when the news is bad.	Satis2	
I feel I am treated with dignity and respect by my manager.	Satis3	
I have positive opinions about the degree of flexibility in doing my job.	Satis4	
I feel that my company attracts great talent, people with passion in order to drive success and growth.	Satis5	

My company tries to retain top talent by offering competitive compensation.	Satis6	
My company tries to retain top talent by providing ongoing development opportunities.	Satis7	

3.3 Data Collection

The data collection was achieved by using the professional social networking site LinkedIn. A brief description of the survey and a URL address was posted as messages for employees (and personal connections) of ten multinational companies, namely Facebook, Google, Procter & Gamble, Unilever, General Electric, Amazon.com, Best Buy, The Coca − Cola Corporation, Microsoft, and Starbucks.

The online survey provided 52 usable responses. Considering the fact that we approached 170 personal connections of our network of professionals, we achieved a valid response rate of 30.58%. Regarding the employees' profiles, most of the respondents were males (57.7%). Most of the employees who responded to this survey are currently working in United States of America (69.2%). Also, most of the responses came from Facebook (19.2) and Google (15.4%) employees. More information regarding the respondents' profiles can be observed in Table 2.

Table2. Respondents' profiles

Company	Sex	Country	Age	Percentage
Amazon.com	Male	USA	25 - 29 years old	5.8%
			20 - 24 years old	1.9%
			30 - 34 years old	1.9%
			35 - 39 years old	1.9%
Best Buy	Female	USA	35 - 39 years old	3.8%
The Coca − Cola Corporation	Female	United Kingdom	20 - 24 years old	1.9%
		Romania	20 - 24 years old	1.9%
Facebook	Male	Ireland	35 - 39 years old	3.8%
		United Kingdom	35 - 39 years old	3.8%
		USA	25 - 29 years old	5.8%
			30 - 34 years old	1.9%
	Female	USA	35 - 39 years old	3.8%
Google	Male	USA	25 - 29 years old	3.8%

			30 - 34 years old	3.8%
	Female	United Kingdom	25 - 29 years old	3.8%
		USA	30 - 34 years old	3.8%
General Electric	Male	USA	20 - 24 years old	3.8%
			35 - 39 years old	3.8%
Microsoft	Male	USA	25 - 29 years old	1.9%
		USA	25 - 29 years old	1.9%
			35 - 39 years old	3.8%
	Female	USA	30 - 34 years old	3.8%
Procter & Gamble	Male	China	25 - 29 years old	3.8%
	Female	Argentina	25 - 29 years old	1.9%
		Brazil	30 - 34 years old	1.9%
Starbucks	Male	SUA	40 - 44 years old	3.8%
	Female	SUA	30 - 34 years old	5.8%
		SUA	35 - 39 years old	1.9%
Unilever	Female	Brazil	25 - 29 years old	3.8%
			30 - 34 years old	1.9%
		France	30 - 34 years old	1.9%

3.4. Structural equation model

Structural equation modeling estimates the unknown coefficients in a set of linear structural equations, as is assumes there is causal structure among a set of latent variables, and that the observed variables are indicators of the latent variables. A structural equation model represents a series of hypotheses about how variables in the analysis are generated and related (Hu & Bentler, 1999).

Figure 2 presents the testing model with all the indicators of the hypothesized relationship between two latent variables, namely CSR and employee satisfaction, and a dependent variable, namely employee engagement, while all three of these variables are in connection to several directly observed variables.

Figure 2. The conceptual model
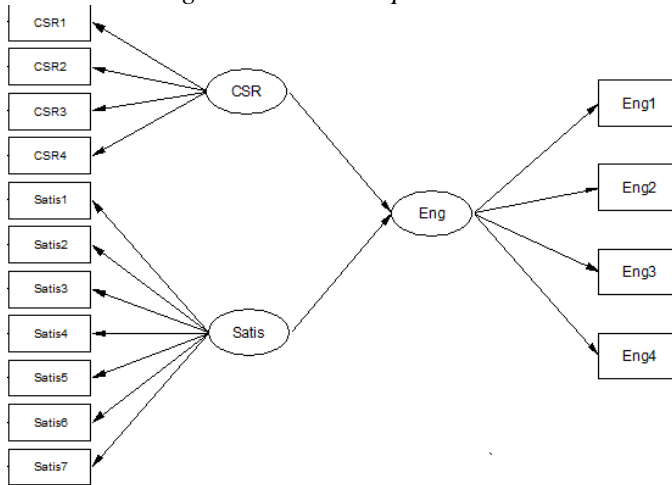
Notation: *Eng= Employee engagement, CSR = Corporate social responsibility, Satis= Employee Satisfaction, CSR1-4, Satis1-7, Eng1-4 are available in Table 1*

4. Results

The hypotheses were tested using the LISREL structural model. Following Hu & Bentler (1999), we tested the full structural model. Overall, the findings of the research show support for model fit and can be judged acceptable, with the following indicators Comparative Fit Index (CFI)=0.98, Relative Fit Index (RFI)=0.96, Goodness of Fit Index (GFI)=0.95, Root Mean Squared Error of Approximation (RMSEA) = 0.058, and Standardized Root Mean Square (SRMR)=0.08.

With good fit indices, we moved on to study the correlation and covariance values of the directly observed values in the research instrument, namely the 5-point Likert scales. All the latent-trait correlations between constructs were found to be significantly different from each other, establishing discriminant validity of the research variables that we will be using in the structural equation model.

Correlations help to determine the strength of the association between the directly observed variables of the current study, whereas covariance represents a systematic relationship between two variables in which a change in one

implies a corresponding change in the other. Table 3 includes this information about the observed variables.

Table3. Correlation and covariance values for the observed values of the model

|		CSR 1	CSR 2	CSR 3	CSR 4	Satis 1	Satis 2	Satis 3	Satis 4	Satis 5	Satis 6	Satis 7	Eng 1	Eng 2	Eng 3	Eng 4
CSR 1	Cor	1														
	Cov	0.974														
CSR 2	Cor	0.370**	1													
	Cov	0.459	10.57													
CSR 3	Cor	0.435**	0.719**	1												
	Cov	0.558	10.17	10.69												
CSR 4	Cor	0.323*	0.484**	0.365**	1											
	Cov	0.262	0.500	0.391	0.677											
Satis 1	Cor	0.367**	0.318*	0.381**	0.162	1										
	Cov	0.373	0.412	0.510	0.137	10.05										
Satis 2	Cor	0.252*	0.256*	0.391**	0.138*	0.467**	1									
	Cov	0.305	0.394	0.621	0.139	0.588	10.49									
Satis 3	Cor	0.205*	0.317*	0.418**	0.231*	0.380**	0.323*	1								
	Cov	0.152	0.300	0.409	0.143	0.294	0.297	0.565								
Satis 4	Cor	0.299*	0.683**	0.775**	0.430**	0.478**	0.394**	0.497**	1							
	Cov	0.446	10.30	10.52	0.535	0.745	0.729	0.565	20.29							
Satis 5	Cor	0.448**	0.468**	0.662**	0.382**	0.319*	0.341*	0.648**	0.647**	1						
	Cov	0.475	0.632	0.925	0.337	0.448	0.523	10.052	10.153							
Satis 6	Cor	0.358**	0.385**	0.661**	0.322*	0.334*	0.305*	0.606**	0.734**	0.803**	1					
	Cov	0.443	0.607	10.08	0.333	0.431	0.469	0.573	10.39	10.08	10.57					
Satis 7	Cor	0.488**	0.651**	0.687**	0.439**	0.302*	0.240	0.475**	0.670**	0.671**	0.614**	1				
	Cov	0.517	0.878	0.959	0.388	0.333	0.315	0.383	10.08	0.774	0.828	10.15				
Eng 1	Cor	0.295*	0.260*	0.266*	0.119*	0.547**	0.335*	0.366**	0.484**	0.284*	0.384**	0.378**	1			
	Cov	0.324	0.364	0.386	0.109	0.627	0.457	0.307	0.817	0.340	0.538	0.452	10.24			
Eng 2	Cor	0.399**	0.662**	0.653**	0.233*	0.560**	0.405**	0.430**	0.795**	0.556**	0.644**	0.674**	0.538**	1		
	Cov	0.483	0.990	0.994	0.235	0.706	0.606	0.396	10.47	0.731	0.991	0.887	0.734	10.50		
Eng 3	Cor	0.263*	0.146*	0.175*	0.289*	0.453**	0.576**	0.295*	0.310*	0.251*	0.305*	0.254*	0.423**	0.444**	1	
	Cov	0.186	0.131	0.163	0.052	0.333	0.504	0.051	0.227	0.116	0.095	0.195	0.337	0.389	0.511	
Eng 4	Cor	0.452**	0.455**	0.571**	0.364*	0.499**	0.505**	0.377**	0.492**	0.525**	0.485**	0.473**	0.462**	0.518**	0.267*	1
	Cov	0.341	0.437	0.567	0.103	0.392	0.472	0.216	0.569	0.431	0.465	0.388	0.394	0.485	0.146	0.584

** *Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). *Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).*

Notation: Eng= Employee engagement, CSR = Corporate social responsibility, Satis= Employee Satisfaction, CSR1-4, Satis1-7, Eng1-4 are available in Table 1

Although all the correlations were deemed significant whether at a 0.01 or a 0.05 level, a high level of correlation and covariance was displayed for the companies' CSR activities of reducing carbon emissions and making data centers more efficient (CSR2 and CSR3). Regarding employee satisfaction, it can be observed that retaining top talent through competitive compensation (Satis6) has increased correlation and covariance values in relation to job flexibility (Satis4) and attraction of great talent (Satis5). Moreover, for employee engagement, a notable relationship exists between the genuine commitment to social responsibility (Eng1) and the encouragement of pursuing green initiatives at the workplace.

Furthermore, we advanced our analysis towards the structural equation model proposed. The path diagram displays the estimates of the latent variables and each of their indicators, as well as the relationship between the latent independent variables (corporate social responsibility and employee satisfaction) and the dependent variable (employee engagement) assigned in this research.

Figure 3. Estimates of the structural equation model proposed for this research
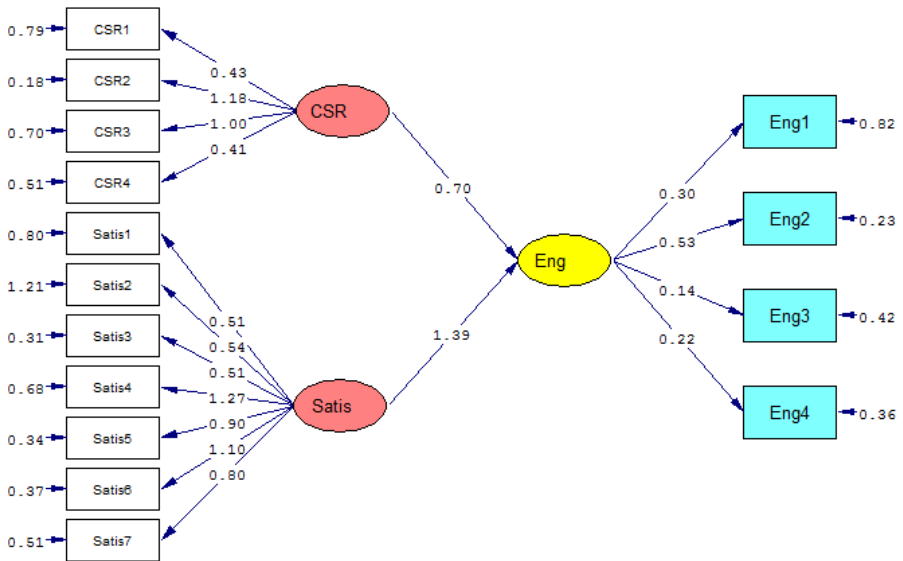
Notation: Eng= Employee engagement, CSR = Corporate social responsibility, Satis= Employee Satisfaction, CSR1-4, Satis1-7, Eng1-4 are available in Table 1

Table 4 and Figure 3 provide the coefficient estimates of the model, their significance, and standardized values of the coefficients. The squared multiple correlation coefficients (R^2), describe the amount of variance the common factor accounts for in the observed variables, are also displayed in Table 4.

Table4. Model test results

Relationship tested	Parameter estimates	Errorvar.	T-value[a]	Standardized estimates	R^2
Eng1→ Eng	0.30	0.82	3.20	0.53	0.28
Eng2→Eng	0.53	0.23	3.93	0.90	0.80
Eng3→Eng	0.14	0.42	2.40	0.38	0.24
Eng4→Eng	0.22	0.36	3.39	0.57	0.32
CSR1→CSR	0.43	0.79	3.08	0.43	0.19
CSR2→CSR	1.18	0.18	7.63	0.94	0.89
CSR3→CSR	1.00	0.70	5.91	0.77	0.59
CSR4→CSR	0.41	0.51	3.60	0.50	0.25
Satis1→Satis	0.51	0.80	3.65	0.50	0.25
Satis2→Satis	0.54	1.21	3.16	0.44	0.20
Satis3→Satis	0.51	0.31	5.29	0.67	0.45
Satis4→Satis	1.27	0.68	7.25	0.84	0.70
Satis5→Satis	0.90	0.34	7.26	0.84	0.71
Satis6→Satis	1.10	0.37	7.74	0.87	0.76
Satis7→Satis	0.80	0.51	6.11	0.75	0.56
CSR → Eng	0.70	1.00	2.50	0.38	0.71
Satis → Eng	1.39		3.26	0.75	

[a]*Based on one-tailed tests, t-values greater than 1.65 are significant at p < .05; t-values greater than 2.33 are significant at p < .01.*

The path coefficients developed for this model can be used to test the hypotheses. As it can be observed from the results presented, overall, for the respondents of the research, corporate social responsibility practices and employee satisfaction had a significant effect on employee engagement in day-to-day work activities and green marketing practices.

However, the final structural equation is:

$$Eng = 0.70*CSR + 1.39*Satis, \text{Errorvar.}= 1.00, R^2 = 0.71$$
$$2.50 \qquad 3.26$$

implying that employee satisfaction at work has a stronger impact on employee engagement in green marketing practices, than perception of corporate social responsibility activities supported by the companies in this study.

Considering the observable variables, encouragement and proactivity in green initiatives (Eng2) has the most prominent effect on the latent variable, employee engagement. A positive and strong perception of corporate social responsibility activities is determined by the companies' practices of protecting the environment, as a result of their operational activities, by reducing carbon emissions (CSR2) and energy consumption through data centers (CSR3). Regarding the employee satisfaction, this latent variable is highly influenced by degree of flexibility at their workplace (Satis4) and the companies' efforts of retaining top talent by offering competitive compensation (Satis6).

5. Discussion and Conclusion

5.1. Theoretical Contribution

The primary objective of this study was to examine the relative impact of corporate social responsibility and employee satisfaction on employee engagement. The results of this study revealed a stronger connection between employee satisfaction and employee engagement than between corporate social responsibility tactics pursued by different companies and employee engagement. Through this research we provided valuable insights from employees of ten of the biggest companies in the world, ranging from online companies to beauty products companies.

The examination of this study shows that the employees who work for ten of the biggest multinational corporations, tend to exhibit higher levels of engagement at work when their satisfaction is more prominent, over CSR practices probably as they feel these initiatives are dictated by their companies. Therefore, our study shows that employee satisfaction is a more important factor in driving employee engagement, than corporate social responsibility activities.

Moreover, the current research suggest that employee perception of CSR practices has to be improved in order to appeal to staff and trigger engagement in green initiatives, and further increase their satisfaction and decrease their turnover. Studies (Bhattacharya et al., 2008) show that employees prefer the idea of working for socially responsible companies, believing that such firms give them more opportunities for personal growth. However, only sustainable programs that are appealing to employees should be considered.

Also, this study contributes to the theory in this area of expertise by presenting new reliable scale measurement that can be used to examine employee engagement, employee satisfaction and employees' perception of CSR activities.

5.2. *Managerial implications*

The findings of this research are of great importance to companies, as they affirm that satisfaction at the workplace can lead to higher levels of involvement of their employees in different activities, in general, and in pursuing green marketing techniques, in particular. This aspect is especially true in the sense that employees have to feel a connection to the practices that can have a positive output on the environment, their community or other social activities that require levels of engagement that go beyond their daily work tasks and of what is expected of them. In order to achieve a better targeting of practices that engage a company's employees, a marketing information system (Orzan, Cetină and Mihail, 2008) should be developed at an internal marketing level, also.

Companies can nurture employee engagement through various green marketing programs. Managers must create internal products that engage staff in social responsibility and sustainability activities. An important element in forming the new domestic product for engaging employees in the sustainability philosophy should be to change the traditional rewarding systems (mainly the financial ones that are easily copied by competitors) to a total reward system that should cover all the values employees are experiencing in their working environment (Grayson, Sanchez-Hernandez, 2010). Thus, the compensation system should not only involve money, and other techniques can be implemented to increase employee satisfaction and engagement in green and social activities, such as:

- *Corporate responsibility champions or sustainability champion*: This can be a staff member who is interested in actively helping improve the social responsibility and sustainability programs of the company. The sustainability champion is a volunteer who is encouraged to supply and support the development of the sustainable strategy with any ideas, suggestions and even complaints about the sustainable performance of the organization (Exter, 2009);
- *Green Teams*: These were defined as participatory and interdepartmental groups, with the ability to unlock new ideas,

innovation and creativity, in order to "sell" the idea of sustainable benefits to all the departments of a company that seeks to develop sustainable programs (Beard, Rees, 2000);

- *Social Intrapreneurs*: While social entrepreneurship occurs in start-ups, social intrapreneurship occurs in already existing companies. The social intrapreneurs are defined as people in a multinational corporation who take direct initiatives for innovations that address social and environmental challenges, in a profitable way for the company (Grayson et al., 2011).

5.3. *Limitations of the research*

This research must also be interpreted in the context of its limitations. Firstly, the data for this study was collected from a limited number of employees from ten widely recognized companies (Amazon.com, Best Buy, The Coca – Cola Corporation, Facebook, Google, General Electric, Microsoft, Procter & Gamble, Starbucks, Unilever), and while the respondents chose to be a part of this research, it does give the research a restrictive generalizability.

Secondly, we did not include in our online survey any of the scales previously used in other studies to comply a unified vision of the three dimensions explored in this research, namely corporate social responsibility, employee satisfaction, and employee engagement. Even though, the scales were deemed reliable, they could have included a broader range of Likert statements.

Thirdly, this study did not include several control variables or mediator variables such as work experience, work environment conditions to observe other dimensions that could lead to a better understanding of the relationships proposed in this paper.

In conclusion, this study provides various new ways to improve the assessment and to add the other important variables, and thus expand the future research in this direction of observing the drivers of employee engagement in a company pursuing green marketing tactics.

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