Corporate social responsibility (CSR) and hospitality sector: Charting new frontiers for restaurant businesses

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ABSTRACT

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) has become a key theme of discussion and focus in all debates regarding the need for business enterprises to function in a manner that is responsive and sensitive to the needs of their communities and society. Academic research has also kept pace with the rising industry interest. The literature on CSR has grown appreciably, offering important insights that scholars must collectively evaluate if they are to inform theory and practice. Appreciating the value of such an endeavour, the present study utilised a critical systematic literature review (SLR) to analyse the literature published on the role of CSR in the restaurant sector from 2004 to 2021. The SLR was executed, first, by identifying relevant studies using a clearly defined search protocol. This process resulted in 67 studies. Subsequently, a content analysis we performed on these studies to delineate thematic areas of research. Based on the stakeholder perspective, two main themes and six sub-themes of research related to individual, organisational and societal levels were identified. In addition, the content analysis also identified crucial research gaps, providing the basis for a future research agenda and the development of a research framework for the reference of scholars and practitioners. The findings of the SLR provide valuable insights that can support efforts currently underway to strengthen CSR in the restaurant sector.

1. Introduction

Restaurants are becoming increasingly aware of their adverse environmental and societal impacts (Ferrell et al., 2019). For instance, approximately 40 billion pieces of plastic cutlery are thrown into landfills annually in the United States (Tenenbaum, 2019). Restaurants have also been known for their negative environmental impacts by wasting food during preparation and serving, and this waste likewise ends up in landfills (Brownell & Warner, 2009). Approximately 643 million meals were thrown away in the United States alone in 2018 (Cochran et al., 2018). In China, approximately 44.1 million tons of kitchen food waste is produced each year and ends up in landfills or incinerators (Liu et al., 2021). These numbers represent an immense resource wastage and an opportunity cost of feeding millions of disadvantaged people around the world. In contrast, saving this food, that

would otherwise go to waste, represents the tremendous positive social impact that restaurants can have. To offset their adverse outcomes and improve their self-image, hospitality firms, including restaurants, have begun investing heavily in both social and environmental initiatives, at times as a trade-off against economic profit (Kim & Zapata Ramos, 2018; Tong, Wong, & Cheng, 2019). These voluntary social and environmental initiatives are collectively termed corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives (Carroll, 1991; European Commission, 2001; Kotler & Lee, 2005). CSR initiatives are recognised as strong candidates for healthy practices and beneficial for both internal and external stakeholders (Kim & Zapata Ramos, 2018).

Because restaurant products and services are experience-based, customers are likely to view hospitality firms engaging in CSR initiatives as more trustworthy and dependable than those not engaging in CSR initiatives (Bridges et al., 2019). Thus, customers may decide to

patronise companies engaging in CSR because they perceive them to be more ethical (Bridges et al., 2019; Charlton & Cornwell, 2019). Customers' awareness of CSR programmes strengthens their identification with companies and builds long-lasting relationships (Glaveli, 2020). It is, then, hardly surprising that leading restaurants, including chains such as McDonald's, have pursued various CSR initiatives encompassing environmentally friendly and proactive activities as a part of strategic corporate response to the public's growing concern regarding the industry's adverse social and environmental impact (Park et al., 2017). Restaurants have also begun these CSR initiatives as a strategy to enhance their reputation in supporting social causes, maximising revenue and reducing costs (Park & Lee, 2009; Bouslah et al., 2013).

Scholars have suggested that engaging in CSR offers a way of addressing restaurant-level challenges, such as high costs, business environment uncertainty, low profits and significant environmental impact (Jogaratnam, 2017). CSR investment can play a crucial role in overcoming these challenges because of its significant impact on both internal (employees) and external stakeholders (customers; Park et al., 2017). According to scholars, restaurants can utilise CSR initiatives as a vital instrument for differentiating themselves from their competitors (McWilliams et al., 2014; Luo & Bhattacharya, 2006; Singal, 2014).

Consistent with CSR's importance, the literature examining the role of CSR in the restaurant sector is currently growing, with an increasing number of empirical studies being published each year. Despite this rising interest in the academic community, the literature includes few attempts to comprehensively review prior studies on CSR and restaurants. Although our review of prior literature suggests that some attempts have been made to synthesise the related literature, these reviews either take a broad focus or have investigated niche areas within CSR and the restaurant sector. For example, Serra-Cantallops et al. (2018) studied the progress in prior research published on CSR in the tourism and hospitality sector in general between 2006 and 2015. Rhou and Singal (2020) reviewed the prior literature published broadly on the hospitality sector (e.g. hotels, casinos, restaurants, cruise and airlines) between 1992 and 2017, but they did not explicitly focus on restaurants. Similarly, Guzzo et al. (2020) reviewed studies published between 2007 and 2018 that examined perspectives related to customer and employee behaviour concerning CSR and sustainability in general. The existing reviews thus leave academicians and practitioners perplexed regarding restaurants' motivations to engage in CSR activities. This is a particularly pressing gap because researchers require additional information to conceptualise and extend their work in reference to CSR in the context of restaurants. Thus, to address the gaps in knowledge presented above, our review attempts to consolidate the body of literature focusing on CSR initiatives in restaurants. We argue that consolidating the literature will provide a more nuanced understanding of the progress in CSR-related research in the context of restaurants; this understanding, which is currently lacking, will help to enhance practical decision-making by consolidating the major antecedents and consequences of the CSR process. Furthermore, a systematic review on the proposed topic can highlight the different thematic areas of prior research, delineate the research profile of the existing literature, identify the various research gaps, project possible avenues for future research and develop a guiding research framework on this timely topic. These valuable insights will thus help other scholars and practitioners who are interested in CSR in the restaurant sector.

Our study pursues three pertinent questions **(RQs): RQ1**. What is the current state of literature addressing CSR in restaurants? **RQ2.** What are the limitations of recent research and promising avenues for future investigation? **RQ3.** Can a comprehensive conceptual framework be synthesised from the extant literature to help academics, practitioners and other relevant stakeholders?

The present study utilises the systematic literature review (SLR) method advised by prior research (Dhir et al., 2020; Talwar, Talwar, Kaur & Dhir, 2020; Seth et al., 2020). We selected and critically analysed a total of 67 empirical studies to generate useful insights from our review. For instance, we undertook in-depth research profiling to reveal that a large part of the existing understanding of CSR in restaurants derives from research conducted in the USA. This indicates a bias in the extant findings. At the same time, it also uncovers interesting opportunities for researchers in emerging economies/developing countries. Similarly, our rigorous manual content analysis revealed various thematic areas of research. Considering the various types of stakeholders and their roles in restaurants' CSR initiatives, we divided the synthesised literature into two broad themes that cover factors internal and external to the restaurant and how they are related to CSR. These themes present an organised view of the existing research and serve as the basis for identifying visible gaps in prior research and suggesting various theme-based research questions and avenues of future research.

The findings of our SLR confirm that research on CSR in the restaurant sector has not adequately addressed the role of some important stakeholders, including the media, non-government organisations and trade unions. Despite this oversight, it might indeed be strategically important to consider the crucial roles of stakeholders in CSR initiatives and the impact of CSR on them. In addition to providing a pertinent review of the literature, which is currently lacking, our study also proves novel in proffering the CSR ecosystem framework, which summarises the complex multi-stakeholder structure of CSR in the restaurant sector. This framework bring together antecedents, processes and outcomes related to CSR in restaurants to create a holistic view of the research area and the relationships between factors that can be investigated. The framework will thus enable future researchers to have a bird's-eye view of the domain.

2. Scope of the review

Recent years have witnessed an increasing awareness among firms and business entities regarding the negative environmental and social impacts of various business operations. This awareness as well as firms' increasing willingness to undertake the actions necessary to undo the consequent damage has resulted in the widespread planning and implementation of CSR initiatives worldwide (Gürlek & Tuna, 2019; Singh et al., 2021). Both academics and practitioners have engaged in a decades-long debate regarding the appropriate definition of CSR; at present, this debate remains unresolved (Dahlsrud, 2008; McWilliams et al., 2006). Bowen (1953), who Carroll (1999) regarded as the *'father of CSR'*, considered CSR as an obligation of business leaders to align their decisions with societal values and objectives. Carroll (1979) conceptualised a CSR framework constituting businesses' social responsibility. CSR, in short, refers to the actions organisations take beyond their own economic interests to create a positive impact on all stakeholders. In a similar vein, Elkington (1997) discussed CSR as a triple bottom line, which emphasises the constant trade-off between economic, environmental and social performance dimensions of business operations.

To elaborate further, CSR has three dimensions. First, the integrated dimension of CSR aims to establish a proper synchronisation between organisations and society (Porter & Kramer, 2006). The second dimension focuses on establishing a positive relationship with various stakeholders and thereby creating a good reputation and enduring associations (Porter & Kramer, 2006). These stakeholders include employees, customers, suppliers, investors, society and the government. The third dimension concentrates on the ethical perspective, which suggests that the role of CSR is based on an organisation's ethics and value system and its obligation towards society (Carroll, 1979; Reidenbach & Robin, 1991). McWilliams et al. (2006) defined CSR as the collection of all those voluntary actions undertaken by a firm to advance positive social outcomes beyond the firm's interest. However, others have argued that this 'noble' and 'voluntary' CSR behaviour is often guided by policy- or industry-level competitive pressures to conform to evolving industry standards (Singh et al., 2021).

Irrespective of firms' motivations in pursuing it, however, CSR has

now emerged as a force for good and has produced several significant positive environmental and social changes. In fact, CSR is considered one of the most effective strategic tools that organisations use to positively impact their stakeholders in the long term (Lim & Greenwood, 2017; Rao & Tilt, 2016; Gangi et al., 2018; Hur et al., 2016). Interestingly, the extant literature has also observed that in addition to social and environmental outcomes, firms can also gain several positive firm-level benefits by engaging in CSR activities, including enhanced firm performance (Saeidi et al., 2015), enhanced employee outcomes (Mao et al., 2020) and brand image (Martínez & Rodríguez del Bosque, 2013; Ramesh et al., 2019) amongst others.

The preceding discussion highlights the value of CSR in a modern business environment. It also indicates that CSR activities are crucial and must be understood from an extremely micro-level perspective. Because each sector and sub-sector entails its own peculiarities, we posit that it is worth examining CSR activities from such a micro perspective. Thus, the present study reviews the prior relevant literature on CSR in the restaurant sector. The existing literature on CSR in restaurants has argued that hospitality products and services are experience-based and intangible. Thus, consumers and other stakeholders cannot verify them before consumption. By engaging in CSR activities, however, restaurants signal their virtue. Consequently, restaurants have benefitted extensively from implementing CSR (Y. Kim & Zapata Ramos, 2018; Schubert et al., 2010).

At this juncture, we also consider it prudent to conceptually define what constitutes restaurants in this study. In general terms, a restaurant is defined as any place where people can buy and eat a meal (Oxford Dictionary, 2020). One component of this definition is the presence of a location where such buying and eating take place. Thus, our study interprets restaurants as physical establishments such as cafés, fast food restaurants and luxury restaurants. However, it does not include catering companies that prepare food for events conducted on other premises. This distinction is essential because several of restaurants' CSR initiatives, such as energy-saving (Majumdar et al., 2013) or water conservation (Hatjiathanassiadou et al., 2019), happen *on* the premises of a particular restaurant. This dimension, however, is often not present in establishments such as catering services. Next, we also include those studies in this review that have examined restaurants' green or sustainability initiatives in the name of CSR. However, we do not include studies investigating green initiatives restaurants have introduced in general, i.e. those green initiatives restaurants pursue but do not frame as CSR activities. Such studies have already been recently reviewed by scholars (T. M., Kaur, Ferraris and Dhir, 2021).

3. Methodology

We employed the SLR approach in our study because it enabled us to develop a fine-grained and nuanced understanding of the prior literature, which is CSR-related research specific to the restaurant sector. Scholars have suggested that the SLR is a popular research method that aims to identify, critically review and analyse prior literature on a given topic or subject (Talwar et al., 2021; Kushwah et al., 2019). This method is now widely used in the social sciences and hospitality disciplines (Dhir et al., 2020; Kaur, Dhir, Talwar & Alrasheedy, 2021; Thirumalesh Madanaguli et al., 2021). The SLR method works through a well-defined protocol for assessing and identifying the relevant studies of the proposed review (Behra et al., 2019). In concordance, we used a robust and well-defined approach to execute this SLR, which began with articulating the research objectives and specifying the search protocol, as described below.

3.1. Specification of research objectives and search protocol

Before identifying the relevant literature, it is essential to explicate a review's objectives (Talwar et al., 2021). Accordingly, we specified five objectives of the current review: (a) analyse the profile of the research

studies undertaken in the area, (b) delineate the prominent research themes, (c) critically evaluate the literature to uncover research gaps in the area, (d) present future research directions based on visible gaps in the reviewed literature and (e) develop a conceptual framework providing a bird's-eye view of the accumulated literature in the area.

To achieve these objectives, we searched the relevant literature using well-defined methodological steps recommended and utilised by recent SLRs (e.g. Sahu et al., 2020; Seth et al., 2020). Fig. 1 summarises the steps taken in the review.

In the search protocol, we determined the relevant keywords for our search, the appropriate data sources and the inclusion and exclusion criteria to be used in the study. Based on the conceptual boundaries of the SLR, an initial set of keywords—in our case, 'CSR', 'corporate social responsibility' and 'restaurants'—were specified. We searched these keywords on *Google Scholar* and analysed the first 100 results (sorted by relevance) to examine if our keywords were sufficient (T. M., Kaur, Ferraris & Dhir, 2021). We also searched the same keywords in top journals, such as the *International Journal of Hospitality Management, International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management, Cornell Hospitality Quarterly, International Journal of Hospitality Marketing Management and International Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management.* Subsequently, we updated the list of keywords with keywords from the above sources. Then, we consulted an expert team comprised of three professors and two professionals from the hospitality sector to finalise the keywords. The final set of keywords were CSR, corporate social responsibility, social reponsibi*, green initiative* and restaurant*. We decided to use the *Web of Science* (*WoS*) and *Scopus* databases for our search because they are often used in hospitality- and tourism-related literature reviews due to their coverage of a large number of hospitality-related journals (T. M., Kaur, Bresciani & Dhir, 2021; T. M., Kaur, Ferraris & Dhir, 2021). As for the inclusion criteria, we wanted to include only peer-reviewed works to increase the validity of our findings (Madanaguli, Dhir, A., Talwar, Singh, & Escobar, 2021; Talwar et al., 2021; T. M., Arun & Joseph, 2020). Consequently, all non-reviewed forms of literature that may not have been subjected to a rigorous review process, such as conference proceedings, editorials, websites and magazine articles, were excluded. To avoid language bias, only works in the English language were considered (Khanra et al., 2020). Further, studies incongruent with the scope of the review were also excluded. Finally, all duplicate articles were removed. A complete list of the inclusion/exclusion criteria can be seen in Table 1.

3.2. Data collection and screening of literature

We converted the final set of keywords into strings using '*' and Boolean logic via the connectors 'OR' and 'AND'. A search of the following keyword syntax was executed in both databases: (('corporate social responsibi*' OR 'CSR' OR 'social responsibi*' OR 'green initiative*') AND ('restaurant*').

We found a total of 240 studies in English in *Scopus* and 182 studies in *WoS*. We then applied the inclusion and exclusion criteria to ensure that the shortlisted studies were confined to the conceptual boundary of the study. Duplicate articles were screened using a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet; in this way, 202 articles were excluded, and a joint pool of 220 was taken forward. For the next level of screening, the authors reviewed the titles and abstracts of the retrieved studies based on the conceptual background, inclusion and exclusion criteria. The researchers performed this task individually before sharing their shortlisted articles. This process excluded 139 articles that were not congruent with the conceptual boundary. In the final stage of the screening process, three professors and two professionals from the hospitality sector examined 81 shortlisted studies and suggested eliminating 14 of them. Thus, a final pool of 67 empirical studies was included in our review. Thereafter, we performed a content analysis of the pool of relevant studies to extract various details, such as publication year, publication source, methodology employed, theoretical
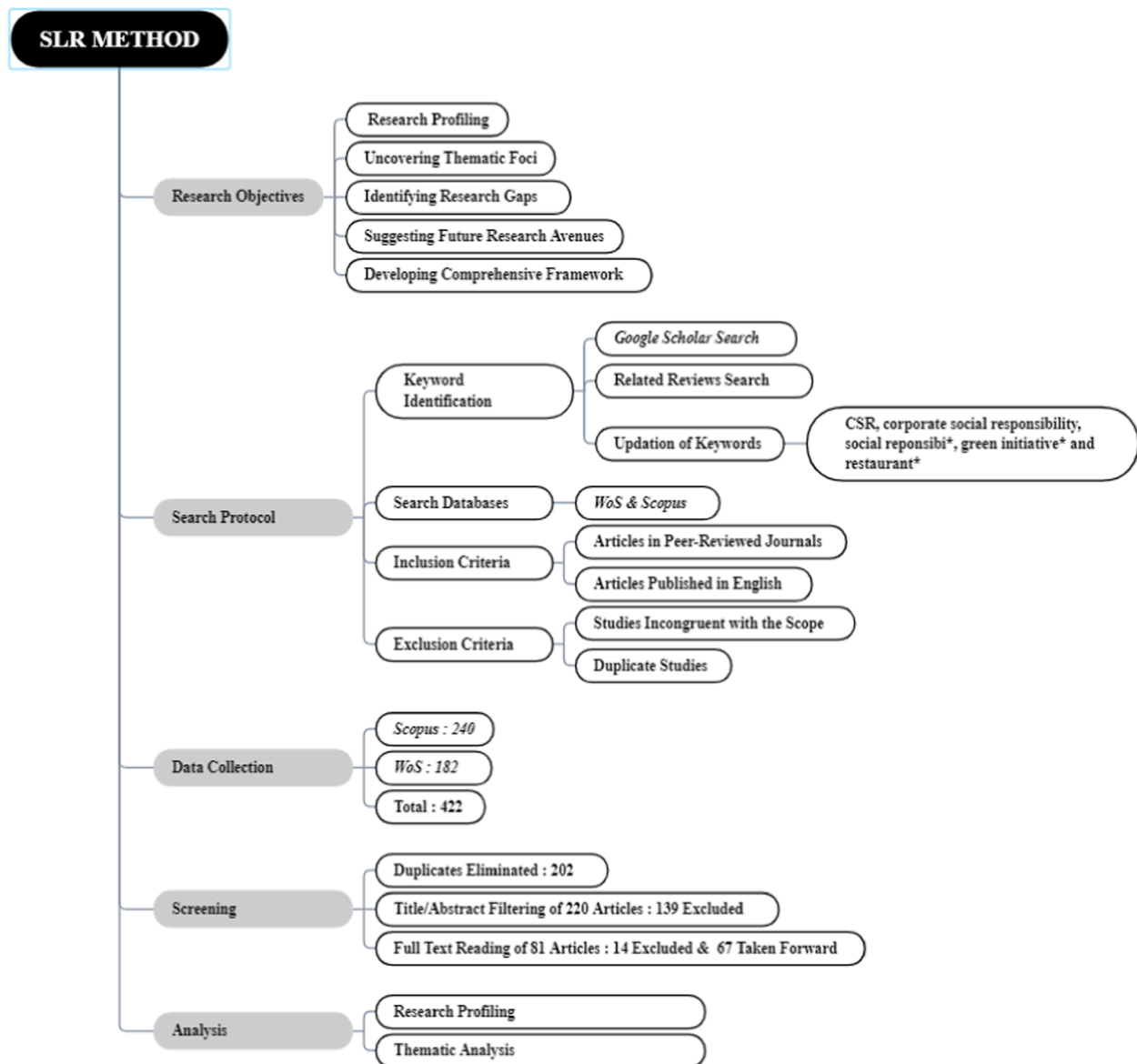
Fig. 1. Overview of SLR method.

Table 1
Inclusion/exclusion criteria.

Inclusion	Exclusion	Exemplary references from tourism hospitality literature
Works listed in *WOS* and *Scopus* Peer-reviewed works Only works in the English language were considered	All non-reviewed forms of literature including conference proceedings, editorials, websites, and magazine articles Studies not discussing CSR as primary study construct	T. M., Kaur, Bresciani & Dhir (2021), T. M., Kaur, Ferraris & Dhir (2021), Madanaguli, Dhir, A., Talwar, Singh, & Escobar (2021), Talwar, Kaur et al., 2021; T. M. & Joseph (2020), Pahlevan-Sharif et al. (2019)

framework used and so on. This analysis enabled us to present the research profile, identify the thematic areas of research, uncover existing research gaps, present potential avenues of future research and develop a framework for research that provides a useful point of reference for theory and practice.

4. Research profiling

In this section, we present the research profile of the selected 67 studies based on the information collected regarding the year of publication, publication source, geographical context, methodology used, theories used and types of CSR studied.

Regarding the time trend of publications, Fig. 2 clearly suggests a surge in the number of empirical studies published with each passing year, reflecting the growing popularity of this topic. In terms of publishing outlets, most of the selected studies were published in two leading hospitality management journals: the *International Journal of Hospitality Management* (n = 16) and the *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management* (n = 9) (Fig. 3). Most of the selected studies were conducted in developed countries, such as the USA (n = 45) and UK (n = 2), while very few studies focused on developing countries, such as China (n = 2), Taiwan (n = 2), Pakistan (n = 2) and India (n = 2; Fig. 4). This implies that the literature on CSR in restaurants may be biased towards the Western conceptualisation and contextual setting of CSR and requires additional studies adopting an Eastern view of the issue.

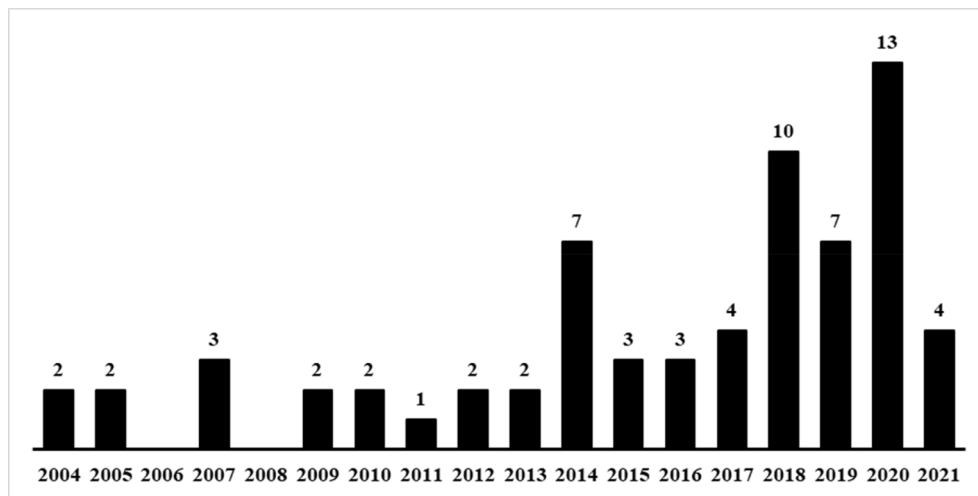We also reviewed the selected studies based on the research design
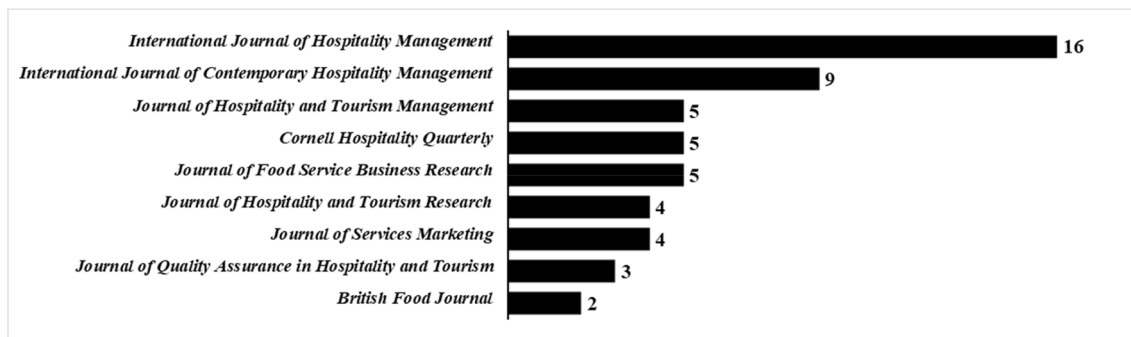
Fig. 2. Publication trends by year.

Fig. 3. Key publication sources.

Fig. 4. Geographical context studied. *Other countries include Slovenia, Malaysia, Spain, South Korea and Hongkong.

Fig. 5. Methodology utilised.

(Fig. 5). Quantitative research designs (n = 47) were the most popular, while a considerable number of studies also utilised qualitative research (n = 11) and mixed methods research (n = 3). Rather disappointingly, only six prior studies were based on experiments. Although the studies used four types of research designs, most employed quantitative design.

The studies utilised data analysis techniques such as factor analysis, correlation analysis, regression analysis, ANOVA, structural equation modelling, partial least squares and content analysis (Fig. 6).

The issue of CSR in restaurants is multi-theoretic in nature, allowing scholars to employ varied theoretical frameworks to investigate the related aspects, as presented in Fig. 7. Accordingly, past studies have

used theories such as attribution theory (Lee et al., 2021; Ahmed et al., 2020), attachment theory (Ahmed et al., 2020), the stakeholder approach (Severt et al., 2020; Park et al., 2017; Choi & Parsa, 2007), information processing theory, (Lee, 2020), cost signalling theory (Hanks et al., 2016), upper echelons theory (Lee et al., 2020), real options theory (Jung et al., 2018), organisational theory (Park et al., 2017), social identity theory (Severt et al., 2020), impression management theory (Chen et al., 2021), resource-based theory (Chen et al., 2021) and triple bottom line theory (Shim et al., 2021) to examine CSR and its behaviour-related outcomes. Here, it is pertinent to note that although theoretical perspectives are plenty, studies utilising multiple theoretical lenses in the same study are limited.
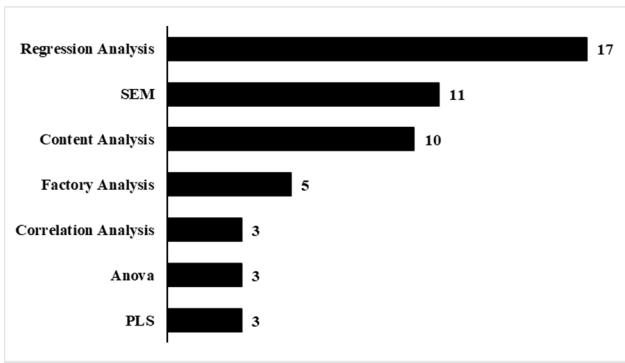
Fig. 6. Key quantitative data analysis methods used.

5. Thematic foci

Based on the stakeholder perspective, we segmented the reviewed literature into two major themes. These two themes were inspired by the observation that several stakeholders, internal and external to restaurants and their actions, impact the CSR process. The process of analysis began with the coding of articles, which involved creating open and axial codes. Proceeding with the analysis, we first examined a small number of articles to detect the underlying themes. Building upon these efforts, we created open codes by including more articles related to a specific theme, which led to the naming of the theme in the axial coding. Since we were examining an entire domain of CSR in restaurants, our efforts were focused on identifying the key components of different actors and their interactions as displayed by other reviews at the domain level in hospitality and tourism literature (Farmaki, 2019; A. Madana-guli et al., 2021; Thirumalesh Madanaguli et al., 2021). Particularly we focused on different antecedents that enable CSR, CSR processes, CSR outcomes and finally, how different internal and external stakeholders impacted or were impacted by these factors.

Having finalised the themes, we added more articles, adhering to the process suggested by prior literature (e.g. Guthrie & Murthy, 2009; Massaro et al., 2016). To ensure that the entire process was robust, we invited two researchers familiar with the SLR method to validate each

coding step. As a result of this analysis, we identified two main themes: CSR issues at the organisational level and CSR issues external to the restaurant. Next, to present the literature in a more relatable and clear manner, we sub-categorised each theme into three sub-themes. Thus, we identified CSR practices and communication, CSR and performance, and CSR and managers as three subthemes of CSR issues at the organisational level. We also identified CSR and customers, CSR and environmental issues and societal-level CSR issues in CSR issues external to the restaurant. Fig. 8 summarises the key thematic foci.

5.1. CSR issues at the organisational level

In the extant literature, CSR represents both a cost and an opportunity for companies (Franco et al., 2020). For instance, CSR can not only impact firm performance by enhancing the brand image, but also lead to more sustainable practices that translate into significant cost savings or new revenue sources (Saeidi et al., 2015). However, effective communication of CSR activities in proper channels is essential to realise these benefits (Ramesh et al., 2019). Finally, the extant literature has noted the crucial role of organisational leadership in enabling CSR (Madana-guli et al., 2021; Yasir et al., 2021). Succinctly, the most important questions to ask at the restaurant level are regarding (a) the best way to communicate CSR activities, (2) the impact of CSR activities on the performance of restaurants and (c) the role of the manager in CSR. Our thematic analysis revealed three subthemes that address these three questions. The first subtheme delves into details regarding effective ways to communicate CSR to stakeholders. The second subtheme considers the ways in which CSR can improve financial and non-financial performance. Finally, the third subtheme examines the impact of managers on restaurants' implementation of CSR.

5.1.1. CSR practices and communication

Given the various benefits associated with CSR, including customers' positive attitudes and behaviours towards corporate brand image, many companies have begun utilising CSR for corporate positioning and marketing (Schmeltz, 2012). To this end, restaurants give their CSR actions due visibility to showcase their socially responsible orientation either through online communication (websites, social networking sites) or in-menu information (Shafieizadeh & Tao, 2020).
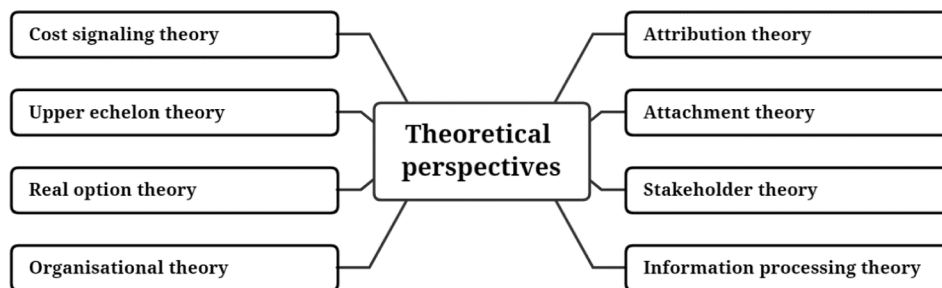

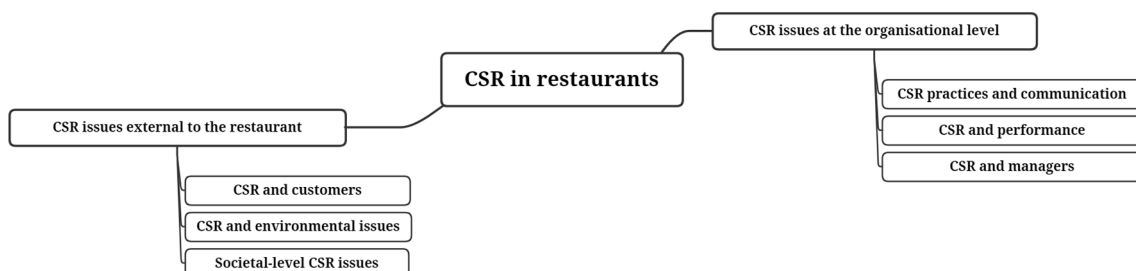**Fig. 7.** Theoretical perspectives used in the studies.

Fig. 8. Thematic foci.

Online communication in the form of reports, corporate websites and CSR advertising disseminated through varied channels, such as social media, has become one of the most important ways in which companies share information to enhance shareholders' awareness of their CSR efforts (Kansal et al., 2018; Wong et al., 2015; Jung et al., 2018). Kim and Stepchenkova (2020) specifically advocated for social media as an important tool for communicating CSR initiatives. Another channel of CSR and sustainable messaging that has received considerable attention in the past decade are the menus restaurants use (Lo et al., 2017). Menus are common in all restaurants but are often overlooked as a medium of CSR communication (Shafieizadeh & Tao, 2020). Indeed, only a few studies have investigated the role of menus in communicating CSR. For instance, Shafieizadeh and Tao (2020) suggested that menu information influences customers' perceptions of restaurants' transparency regarding their CSR actions. The prior literature has also shown that customers' awareness of CSR initiatives produces positive results for companies. For instance, Perez et al. (2018) revealed that customer perceptions related to CSR messages reinforce both the impact of CSR and customers' altruistic motives, leading to increased advocacy intentions among them. In a similar vein, Chen and Jai (2018) found that environmentally focused CSR initiatives exert a strong and positive effect on customers' perceptions of CSR in buffet restaurants. Furthermore, disclosing information such as nutrition and health benefits has also been found to favourably influence customers' perceptions of restaurants and their CSR activities, thereby increasing customers' revisit intentions (Ye et al., 2015; Lee et al., 2014; Martinez et al., 2021).

The importance of CSR-related communication notwithstanding, we observe a dearth of studies investigating this aspect in the context of CSR in the restaurant sector. At the same time, it is important to understand that greenwashing represents an increasing concern when businesses operate for profit. Greenwashing refers to an organisation's efforts to make misleading or empty environmental claims, which destroys the trust that is among the most valuable commodities a restaurant owner has from his or her customers. In the present context, if restaurants undertake only the initiatives visible to the customer and ignore initiatives that can actually do good (de Freitas Netto et al., 2020; T. M., Kaur, Ferraris & Dhir, 2021), their efforts may be perceived to be greenwashing. Despite the obvious criticality of understanding this issue, no studies have investigated this phenomenon in the case of restaurants with CSR as a backdrop.

5.1.2. CSR and performance

Engaging in CSR results in several direct as well as indirect performance-related benefits for restaurants, including enhanced reputation and revenue and reduced costs (Bouslah et al., 2013; Yoon & Chung, 2018; Kang et al., 2010; Lee and Kim, 2013; Youn et al., 2015). Implementing both revenue-enhancing and cost-reducing activities can significantly increase restaurants' profitability. In this regard, focusing on the economic dimension of the triple bottom line approach, studies have revealed that CSR has a positive effect on firm performance by fostering a positive reputation and enhancing the cost efficiency of business operations via reduced waste disposal costs (Kang et al., 2010; Tang et al., 2012). In addition, CSR involvement has been found to reduce idiosyncratic risk, with such reductions being greater for restaurants that operate a portfolio of brands (Ozdemir et al., 2021).

Scholars have also noted that in addition to several direct financial benefits, CSR activities impart many non-financial benefits to restaurants (Cai et al., 2012; Chen et al., 2018; Youn et al., 2015). A diverse body of literature has established that restaurants can enhance their brand image and reputation through CSR activities (Kim & Kim, 2016; Tong et al., 2019). However, the outcomes of CSR for restaurants include multiple nuances that must be appreciated. It is interesting to note that the type of CSR can influence the benefits a firm derives. For instance, using the triple bottom line theory, Shim et al. (2021) investigated the association between CSR and the value of restaurants in the USA to show that economic CSR enhanced restaurant value, while environmental CSR diminished restaurant value.

Other aspects to be uncovered at this point include the effect of no CSR activities and a potential adverse effect of the CSR activities undertaken. In this context, past literature has found that an increase in negative CSR activities, such as a violation of desirable practices related to environmental issues and health concerns, can lead to a decrease in the size of the internalisation effect on risk reduction and vice versa (Jung et al., 2018; Schubert et al., 2010; Szuchnicki, 2009). At the same time, the absence of CSR or ineffective CSR activities can also pose a risk that restaurants must guard against. For instance, Maloni and Brown (2006) found that customers' perceptions of CSR deficiencies is detrimental to a firm's profitability and market share. However, this dark side of not engaging in CSR has received limited attention. We argue that further examining the detriments of not engaging in CSR may be essential in convincing restaurants to engage in CSR.

5.1.3. CSR and managers

The past literature has established rather indisputably that restaurants can enhance their brand image and reputation through their CSR activities; however, few studies examine the effects of corporate governance on CSR (Chin et al., 2013). Undoubtedly, a firm's CSR initiatives depend upon managers' discretion (Chin et al., 2013). For example, CEOs play a crucial role in formulating and implementing corporate strategies and investing in CSR activities (Yasir et al., 2021). Similarly, based on their study of restaurant managers in the UK, Tomasella and Ali (2018) concluded that hospitableness is expressed via restaurants' engagement in CSR activities. This attitude of hospitableness depends upon managers' own personal values. Focusing on the role of managers, Choi and Parsa (2006) also found that managers' preferences and attitudes towards CSR practices regarding health concerns, environmental responsibility, charity and customer communication determine their willingness to invest in these practices.

We also observe that the literature on this theme is mainly consistent with the upper echelons theory (Hambrick & Mason, 1984), which proposes that a firm can be considered a reflection of its top management. These studies offer interesting insights. For instance, in their study of restaurant CEOs, Park et al. (2019) found a significant negative effect of CEOs equity-based compensation (EBC) on CSR. It is pertinent to note here that an individual does not represent top management; rather, the top management team (TMT) and team characteristics, such as gender, tenure, age, functional background and gender diversity, have been known to impact corporate actions in the strategic management literature (Cannella, Park, & Lee, 2008; Dwyer, Richard, & Chadwick, 2003; Perryman, Fernando, & Tripathy, 2016). However, none of the reviewed studies focused on this aspect, presenting a visible research gap and thus opportunities for future research.

5.2. CSR issues external to the restaurant

This theme encompasses the findings of the reviewed literature regarding external factors, which include the role of customers and other external stakeholders. The discussion also delves into the response of individual customers to a restaurant's various CSR initiatives. As discussed above, individual customers' perceptions of CSR can pay rich dividends to firms in terms of loyalty (Swimberghe & Wooldridge, 2014). In addition, we also cover the environmental and societal aspects of CSR. Accordingly, the reviewed literature related to this theme can be best presented through three distinct sub-themes discussed below.

5.2.1. CSR and customers

The various CSR activities of restaurants affect customers, as discussed above. Some studies have investigated the effect of restaurants' CSR initiatives on customers' responses in terms of satisfaction (Swimberghe & Wooldridge, 2014) and loyalty (Lee et al., 2020). In addition, scholars have held that CSR activities are directly associated with customers' attitudes, perceived reputation (He & Lai, 2014; Bolton &

Mattila, 2015) and revisit intentions. Quite interestingly, scholars have also suggested that the properties/characteristics of the food served can play a role in customer satisfaction from CSR activities. For example, Severt et al. (2020) found that satisfaction and restaurant's CSR strategy of making use of local food had strong influence on customers' conative loyalty. Illuminating the point further, past studies have argued that CSR investments produce positive outcomes in customer citizenship behaviour, which is defined as customers' voluntary decisions to provide suggestions to improve products and services (Ahmed et al., 2020). To elaborate, customer citizenship behaviour is influenced by their positive emotion towards a brand, which, in turn, is determined by CSR activities (van Tonder et al., 2018; Lee & Yoon, 2018; Kim, 2018). At the same time, the sole aim of CSR activities should not be to enhance customer satisfaction; rather, firms should, through their CSR activities, work to strengthen customer trust and establish long-term relationships with them (Swimberghe & Wooldridge, 2014).

Another issue of interest considers the ways in which customers participate in the CSR process through donation and patronage. The extant literature contends that customers' donation intentions vary across public versus private collectors of donation (Hanks et al., 2016; Wu et al., 2016; Mattila et al., 2016). For instance, Hanks et al. (2016) revealed that customers were more likely to donate in the presence of others than via self-service technology (SST). In their study, Mattila et al. (2016) observed that consumers' sense of power, moderates the effect of gratitude expression on consumers' attitudes and behavioural intentions to engage in matching donations. This observation presents interesting opportunities to investigate the potential for restaurants to use intelligent crowdfunding and sourcing mechanisms to propose and implement CSR. However, studies in this direction are missing in the extant literature.

5.2.2. CSR and environmental issues

Prior research has indicated that customers are aware that restaurants can be incredibly wasteful and cause serious environmental harm (T. M., Kaur, Ferraris & Dhir, 2021). Therefore, they are careful about their patronage, and a restaurant's projection of environmental responsibility is paramount in attracting customer attention (Joo et al., 2017; Lo et al., 2017). For example, a study by Joo et al. (2019) found that the efficacy of CSR authenticity for environmental concerns helps to predict positive consumer attitudes and intentions towards a firm. Social responsibility and concern have also been shown to impact customer trust (Hanks & Mattila, 2016).

This indicates that customer-level outcomes of environmental CSR activities are only as good as customers' perceptions of them. Previous studies on fast food restaurants have found that customers show stronger support for fast food companies committed to improving society through their CSR activities (Harun et al., 2018; Kim & Ramos, 2018). For example, a study by Harun et al. (2018) reported that CSR activities by fast food business strategists can strengthen effective customer identification and satisfaction. Considering that the context was only fast food restaurants, however, it is unclear whether such an environmental focus in other types of restaurants produces a similar impact.

5.2.3. Societal-level CSR issues

Societal benefits, such as advocacy for the environmental protection of their communities, are among the important parameters on which restaurant CSR activities are evaluated. Studies at the societal level aim to identify the factors that help the restaurant sector implement CSR practices for societal benefits. This is perhaps best exemplified by the impact of restaurant CSR activities on the social and environmental outcomes of the triple bottom line (Kim & Zapata Ramos, 2018). Though this topic is potentially fruitful, the number of studies currently addressing it is limited. For instance, one way restaurants can make a real difference is by donating excess food to the needy (Filimonau et al., 2019). However, Sakaguchi et al. (2018) observed that chain restaurants were particularly hesitant to donate food because they fear that doing so

may impact their brand value. This sheds light on an interesting finding—that considering the type of restaurant is essential when studying CSR issues in restaurants. Chain and luxury restaurants, in particular, are less likely to engage in responsible activities that would make them appear 'cheap' to their customers (Peng, 2020).

6. Research gaps and avenues of future research

Our review finds that the issues related to CSR in the restaurant sector encompass a growing area of research that has attracted increasing scholarly attention in recent years. However, the existing body of literature suffers from certain limitations that present opportunities for future research. Therefore, summarising the research gaps and possible research questions for future work are vital for the advancement of academic literature in the area. The gaps in the literature broadly cover two aspects, one related to content and the other to methodology. Accordingly, we identify research gaps in each thematic area and in the methodological approaches used by the reviewed studies. At the same time, we use these gaps as the basis for suggesting research questions that future scholars can address. The gaps as well as suggested research questions are presented in Table 2.

7. Research framework

Based on the insights gained from our extensive review of relevant literature in the area, we propose a conceptual framework that brings together multiple dimensions of CSR initiatives/activities in the restaurant sector. Our review highlights the multi-theoretic nature of the area as well as the ways in which CSR can be impacted by and can impact several individual-level (micro), firm-level (meso) and macro-level factors. Although the captured themes represent several parts of the system scholars have already investigated, our deeper analysis reveals the existence of several gaps that must be addressed to gain a more holistic understanding of CSR in the restaurant industry. We believe that capturing this big picture is essential to represent the field more effectively and advance the research area. Therefore, we draw upon the systems approach that is quite popular in systematic reviews (e.g. Kaur, Dhir, Talwar, & Alrasheedy, 2021; Madanaguli et al., 2021) to bring together various parts and processes of CSR in restaurants (see Table 2).

Our framework, entitled the antecedent-process-outcome (APO) model and presented in Fig. 9, comprehensively summarises our results and findings. Our choice of the model is grounded in two primary reasons. First, as discussed in the preceding parts, the issue of CSR in restaurants is inherently complex, requiring multi-theoretic insights to appreciate it fully. Utilising only one or two theories to summarise the findings would preclude future researchers from adopting a more realistic and broader theoretical perspective to understand the proposed associations. Second, the theory-agnostic position also allows for an intuitive summarisation of the factors influencing and influenced by restaurants' CSR activities.

The conceptual framework, thus formulated, comprises five components: (a) the antecedents of CSR, (b) CSR processes, (c) the mediators and moderators of the CSR process, (d) the outcomes of CSR implementation and (e) contextual factors.

7.1. Antecedents of CSR

The restaurant sector's efforts to formulate and implement CSR initiatives are driven by varied internal and external stakeholders, such as the TMT, employees, customers, investors, governments and the community. Our framework proposes these stakeholders' roles and perceptions as antecedents driving restaurants' CSR initiatives through their actions and expectations. According to the stakeholder perspective (Freeman, 1984), the expectations of various stakeholders and shareholders (who are also stakeholders) determine a firm's actions, and initiatives taken by these groups help in achieving the firm's business

Table 2
Research gaps and suggested research questions.

Theme	Sub-theme	Gaps	Suggested research questions
CSR issues at the organisational level	CSR practices and communication	1. Differences in the effectiveness of different channels' impacts on perceptions of restaurants' CSR activities are currently not well understood. 2. Different restaurant types can have different impacts on society. The literature has yet to—but must evaluate—differences in these types of restaurants' CSR initiatives.	**SQR1**. How do the communication channels restaurants use to inform various stakeholders about CSR initiatives differ? **SQR2**. What impact do the different communication channels used to inform varied stakeholders about CSR activities have on economic and social goals?**SRQ3**.What role does restaurant type play in the formulation, execution and impact of CSR activities on societies?
	CSR and performance	1. As in the case of other sectors, greenwashing is increasing in the restaurant sector. However, the present literature does not offer much insight into this controversial yet common practice. 2. The dark side of not engaging in CSR activities has not received much attention from academic research in the area thus far.	**SRQ4**. What are the various financial and non-financial consequences of a firm's failure to engage in CSR?**SRQ5**. What causes restaurants to engage in greenwashing, and what are the common 'greenwashing methods' they use? **SRQ6**. What is the impact of greenwashing on CSR outcomes?
	CSR and managers	1. Although scholars have investigated the impact of TMT, more granular investigation of the diversity of TMTs is required.	**SRQ7**. What is the role of board diversity characteristics, such as gender, tenure and age, on CSR activities in restaurants?
CSR issues external to the restaurant	CSR and customers	1. Although studies have found low 2. awareness of restaurants' CSR initiatives 3. among customers and other stakeholders, the impact of varying levels of awareness on firms' outcomes has remained underexplored. 4. Research related to the rigorous communication systems through which CSR information can be made accessible is currently quite deficient. 5. Existing scholarship in the area has quite visibly neglected the potential observations and expectations of varied stakeholders. 6. Recommendations for developing mechanisms that can strengthen CSR awareness among various stakeholders remain somewhat under presented in the literature.	**SRQ8**. Does the level of awareness about restaurants' CSR initiatives impact the various financial and non-financial outcomes of those initiatives?**SRQ9**. How do varying awareness levels about restaurants' CSR initiatives influence both the theoretical understanding of CSR and the numerous practical implications for the industry?**SRQ10**. How can an effective communication strategy for disseminating information about CSR initiatives boost the visibility of the concerned restaurant?**SRQ11**. How do the observations and expectations of varied stakeholders strengthen restaurants' CSR initiatives?
	CSR and environmental issues	1. The question of how addressing environmental issues creates tangible benefits for societies requires closer inspection.	**SRQ12**. How can the benefits societies derive from restaurants' environmental CSR activities be quantified?
	Societal-level CSR issues	1. Encouraging customers to participate in CSR through mechanisms such as a donation is gaining popularity, requiring deeper analysis than the current literature offers. 2. The usefulness of crowdsourcing as a way of mobilising funds for CSR activities is another area that has remained underexplored from the perspective of societal involvement in restaurants' CSR activities.	**SRQ13**. How can restaurants craft crowdsourcing and funding mechanisms to encourage customer/societal participation in CSR initiatives?**SRQ14**. How do various CSR initiatives of restaurants align with and impact social goals?
Methodological gaps		1. A cross-sectional design may limit the generalisability and robustness of research findings, as underscored by recent studies (Talwar, Dhir et al., 2020). Mixed methods and qualitative methods can provide deeper insights into stakeholders' perceptions of restaurants' CSR activities. Currently, however, the literature is skewed towards quantitative data collection methods. 2. In addition, the qualitative data necessary to uncover the finer nuances of CSR issues are lacking. This is essential because to bring more robustness to the literature, it is imperative to include narratives among the powerful techniques of qualitative analysis (Aguinin & Glavas, 2017) 3. Studies regarding the impact of demographic variables, such as age, income, gender, culture and behavioural characteristics, on CSR-related issues in the sector are lacking. 4. Despite being skewed towards quantitative data analysis, most studies have failed to examine the role of relevant mediating and moderating variables. This means that intervening mechanisms and individual differences that may affect the associations between variables of interest in the area have not received much attention.	**SRQ15**. Would the current results hold if investigated through a different research design?**SRQ16**. How can examining causal relationships using experimental data rather than associative relationships using cross-sectional design provide more granular insights about various aspects of restaurants' CSR activities?**SRQ17.** How do personal demographic, geographic and behavioural characteristics moderate the associations tested to understand varied aspects and consequences of CSR activities in the restaurant sector?**SRQ18.** What potential variables act as intervening mechanisms in the associations of the various antecedents and consequents of CSR initiatives in the restaurant sector?

objectives.

CEOs or top management help to formulate CSR strategies with the support of other employees, and the implementation of these initiatives positively impacts external stakeholders (Yasir et al., 2021). Moreover, as proposed by the upper echelons theory (Hambrick & Mason, 1984), top management acts as a driver in strengthening a firm's values and formulating CSR into action. Hence, further research in this direction can be of great use and immense benefit to the restaurant sector. At the same time, analysing the demographic profile of concerned stakeholders can help to better understand their role in strengthening restaurants' CSR initiatives. Furthermore, research linking the role of top

management teams with diversity can be quite useful. In this regard, research grounded in theories such as cognitive diversity (Miller et al., 1998), resource dependence (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978) and social identity (Tajfel & Turner, 2004) can offer interesting insights. We believe such studies can help us understand if there is value in the diversity of top management teams. We suggest that such investigation should also be extended to examine the impact of employee diversity in terms of age, gender, experience, education and other aspects on initiating and implementing restaurants' CSR activities.

It is also important for researchers to examine how employees' expectations are and should be taken care of in this context. Despite
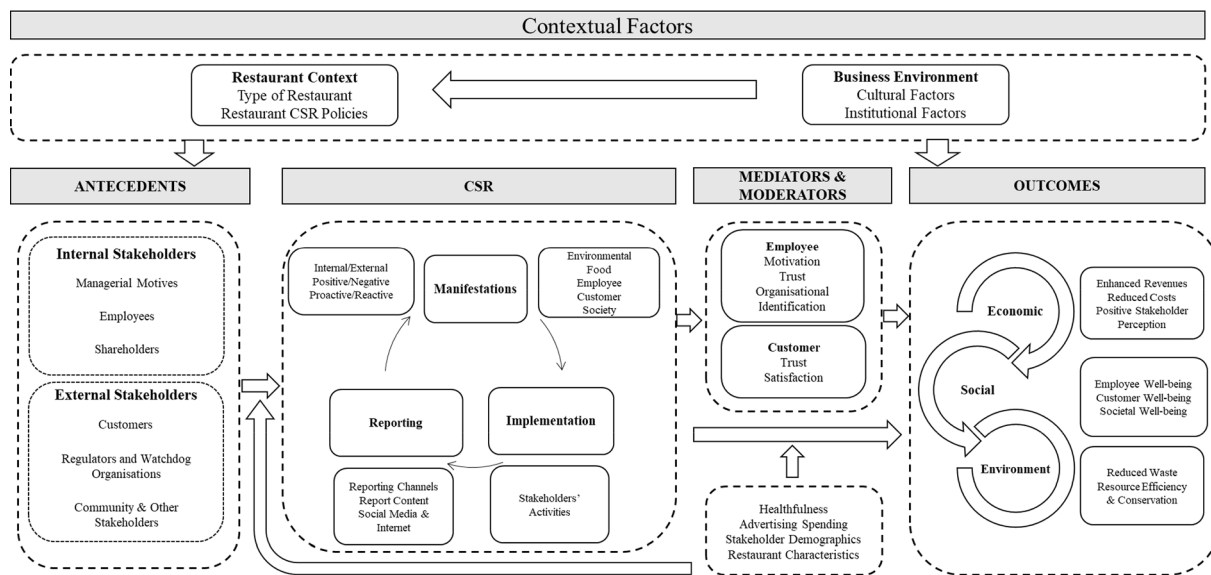
Fig. 9. Research framework.

acknowledging that employees are crucial drivers of CSR initiatives in restaurants, very few studies reviewed in our SLR have focused on employees' expectations and roles in CSR implementation. This gap indicates that examining the role of employees in CSR formulation, implementation and communication presents a fertile area for future research. Future research can deliberate upon the role of employees, their demographics and personality traits as significant employee-related antecedents.

As the discussion proceeds, it is equally important for managers to understand the impact of CSR initiatives on shareholders because they play a pivotal role in providing the capital necessary for CSR initiatives (King & Lenox, 2001; Park & Lee, 2009; Lee & Park, 2010; Kim; 2013). Because balancing shareholder value with stakeholder value is the key to successful CSR implementation, we suggest that to advance research in this area, scholars should draw upon the concept of 'shared value' (Porter & Kramer, 2011), which emphasises the idea of creating both shareholder and stakeholder value simultaneously through the intelligent design of business processes. Related insights can enable restaurants to move beyond the trade-off between value created for shareholders and value created for other stakeholders.

In addition to employees and shareholders, customers represent another important part of the CSR structure. Customers can actively promote and support restaurants' CSR initiatives by showcasing their loyalty and revisit intentions based on their positive feedback about CSR activities. Thus, deeper research into the drivers of customers' perceptions of CSR and ways of increasing their awareness about various restaurant CSR initiatives may prove quite useful for practice. In this regard, we suggest that theories such as social identity (Tafjel et al., 1979) and social exchange theory, which entail a collection of many conceptual underpinnings (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005), may be used to develop frameworks and test hypotheses to better explicate customers' motives and behaviours related to CSR activities. Other important stakeholder groups about which restaurants must be vigilant and with which they must engage are the media and consumer 'watchdog' groups because these stakeholders can quickly spread evidence of observed socially irresponsible behaviours or initiate punitive actions, as necessary, resulting in serious repercussions for restaurants. More studies delving into the ways in which restaurants can minimise irresponsible behaviours at the employee level and engage in damage control when victimised may prove to be quite valuable. Moreover, research investigating various policy and regulatory aspects of CSR initiatives as well as the ways in which policy can impinge on

restaurants' CSR-related decisions are necessary to make the knowledge base in the area more sound and practically responsive.

Finally, about the community as a stakeholder, it is well-documented that CSR initiatives create a positive impression in stakeholders' minds if these stakeholders perceive that an organisation's CSR actions are beneficial to the community at large. Prior studies have noted the impact of CSR on the community but failed to examine how community-focused CSR activities in the restaurant sector create a positive impact on stakeholders' minds. Hence, our framework posits that scholars must examine the community as an antecedent in this regard. Further, it is also interesting to note that despite the growing interest in the role of various stakeholders in impacting restaurants' CSR initiatives, research attention has remained limited to the stakeholders' mentioned above. This presents an interesting opportunity to expand the scope of research by identifying and examining the role of various other stakeholders, such as trade unions, employee unions, non-governmental organisations, associations and academic institutions, among others, in impacting restaurants' CSR activities.

7.2. CSR processes

Our review highlights the complex nature of the process by which firms plan, implement, communicate and draw value from CSR initiatives. This component of our conceptual framework addresses the various processes restaurants must carry out related to CSR. These include (a) communicating CSR, (b) investing in CSR implementation and (c) manifesting CSR initiatives, which are discussed below.

Our review confirms that communicating CSR-related information is as important as the activities themselves. Among the ways that information regarding CSR initiatives can be disseminated are online communication channels, such as websites and social networking sites. Research has shown that information provided via CSR messages on social networking sites positively impacts restaurants' credibility (Tong et al., 2019). In addition, in-situ modes of communication, such as a restaurant's menu, can be used to convey CSR-related messages to various stakeholders. However, the ways in which these modes interact with various stakeholders to produce positive results for restaurants are less understood. Understanding such dynamics may enable restaurants to disseminate information related to CSR initiatives in a much more professional, transparent and effective manner.

Stakeholders can influence investment in the implementation of various CSR-driven activities in both a positive and a negative manner.

Prior studies have sought to associate CSR expenditures with enhanced performance via a restaurant's reputation and its relationship with external stakeholders (Orlitzky et al., 2003; Gatti et al., 2012). However, CSR expenditures also entail costs and thus impose a burden on the sector, thereby hindering the maximisation of shareholder wealth (e.g. Park & Lee, 2009; Makni et al., 2009). Through our framework, we underscore the need to investigate the positive and negative effects of CSR implementation, which can help top management make strategically effective decisions.

Finally, we also underscore the importance of the process displaying CSR initiatives to produce anticipated outcomes for the concerned restaurant. Our review reveals several such displays, which can be broadly seen as issues related to the environment or society, either internal to firms (e.g. employee wellness) or external to them. Further, though several studies have discussed positive aspects, we call for an examination of negative manifestations, such as greenwashing and the extreme path of avoiding CSR-related activities altogether.

Further, restaurants can choose to take a proactive or a reactive approach. In this regard, scholars have noted that the proactive approach of engaging in CSR activities can help restaurants avoid customer and activist boycotts (Luo & Bhattacharya, 2009; Vogel, 2005). Interestingly, customers tend to perceive a proactive approach to CSR as an expression of a restaurant's altruistic nature; meanwhile, they assess a reactive approach as a reaction to a restaurant's previously irresponsible behaviour (Becker-Olsen et al., 2006; Ricks, 2005). The related literature offers narrow insights about the proactive and reactive approaches restaurants have taken via CSR initiatives, indicating a need for additional research in this direction. We argue that the consideration of varied manifestations of CSR and their purpose is an interesting variable of investigation.

7.3. Mediators and moderators

Although some studies have examined CSR as a mediating variable (Chen & Jai, 2018; Koo, 2018) or moderating variable (Assaf et al., 2019), few related studies have considered personal characteristics (e.g. healthfulness), social settings and situational factors (e.g. advertising spending, restaurant characteristics) as mediating and moderating variables. Because intervening mechanisms and moderation effects can provide a more realistic understanding of any phenomenon, we suggest examining the moderating effects of demographic variables, such as age, gender and country, and of behavioural characteristics to understand better the complexities of CSR processes, the interactions of varied stakeholders and the outcomes thereof. In addition, personality factors, both of customers and employees, and aspects such as organisational identification, motivation, satisfaction and trust may be quite interesting mediating or moderating variables.

7.4. Outcomes of CSR

As highlighted in the preceding discussion, restaurants' CSR initiatives can prove beneficial for varied stakeholders. However, these initiatives must be effectively disseminated to increase their impact. To better communicate anticipated and actual positive outcomes, we suggest that firms apply the triple bottom line approach (Elkington, 2004). The application to triple bottom approach can help the restaurants working towards economic, social and environmental aspects. CSR initiatives that enhance social and environmental outcomes can help firms create positivity among various stakeholders, who are known to carry a positive attitude towards firms that work towards the well-being of employees, customers and society at large.

In contrast to the clear positive consequences of CSR initiatives focused on social and environmental aspects, the quest for economic outcomes through CSR is a double-edged sword. Only the positive dimension has received scholarly attention thus far. Strategic CSR implementation by restaurants is expected to reduce costs and increase revenue. At the same time, restaurants' proactive approach towards CSR may enhance the reputation and performance of the sector. However, pursuing these outcomes can come at the cost of pretending or over-communicating CSR activities merely to gain the related benefits. Although such pretentious manifestations are known to exist, particularly by the term greenwashing in the sustainable hospitality literature (Chen et al., 2019; Gupta et al., 2019), such manifestations have remained underexplored in the context of lip-service done by restaurants in the name of CSR.

Our framework addresses this lacuna in the literature, presenting it as a potential dimension deserving scholarly attention. Of course, our proposal to focus on the negative aspects is in no way intended to preclude the importance of investigating the positive aspects of CSR. There is no disputing that awareness of CSR and societal benefits may make restaurants mindful of their approach towards energy conservation and the reduction of waste. Our framework also clearly highlights such linkages, indicating that research related to CSR's impact on these aspects needs to be strengthened.

7.5. Contextual factors

Contextual factors constitute the business environment (cultural and institutional factors) and restaurant context (type of restaurants and their CSR policies). The business environment factors consist of cultural factors, government policies and regulators. To elaborate, it includes the sector in which the firm operates, the embedded culture of the restaurants, the legal framework, the role of regulators and technological aspects, which help to shape organisational goals. In addition, geographical location is also an essential contextual factor because it impacts strategising and implementing CSR initiatives. In this regard, our analysis reveals that developed nations have more vibrant CSR practices and their implementation is more effective compared to developing nations. Thus, our framework highlights the need for researchers to focus on restaurants in developing nations to deeply investigate the extent to which geographical location contributes to laxity in CSR practices, if any. In addition, we suggest examining the role of cultural differences in affecting CSR dynamics and pursuing wider geographical coverage as an agenda for future research in the area. Furthermore, mandatory CSR-related laws, such as those in India, can significantly influence how and why restaurants implement CSR. At present, the literature offers little understanding of the ways in which these laws affect CSR outcomes. Similarly, comparative studies on CSR differences between cultures and institutional environments are also currently limited. Therefore, our framework proposes these areas as potential research concerns that must be addressed.

Restaurant-level contextual factors comprise the type of restaurants and their CSR policies, which play a crucial role in formulating and implementing CSR initiatives. In this regard, we recommend that researchers in the area focus more closely on differences in CSR initiatives across different types of restaurants, such as fine dining, casual dining, fast food dining and so on.

8. Study implications

Reviewing the literature related to CSR in restaurants helped us to identify the key research themes and visible gaps in the amassed knowledge on CSR and thereby provided us with a basis to suggest research questions and formulate a comprehensive conceptual framework. Our study also presents several interesting theoretical and managerial implications, as discussed below.

8.1. Theoretical implications

By reviewing studies related to CSR in the restaurant sector, published between 2004 and 2021, we make three key theoretical contributions. First, our study contributes by organising the existing research

on CSR into distinct themes, which make it easier to understand the literature and draw inferences from it. The three themes we delineated are societal-level CSR issues, organisational-level CSR issues, and individual stakeholders and CSR. To make the narrative more structured, we further classified each of these themes into two subthemes. For example, societal-level CSR issues include two sub-themes: CSR and environmental issues and CSR and donations. Similarly, the organisational-level CSR theme includes two sub-themes: CSR practices and communication and CSR and performance. Finally, the theme individual stakeholders and CSR theme has CSR and managers and CSR and customers as its two subthemes. Based on our classification, we contend that the theoretical advancement of this research area requires defining and interpreting CSR in the restaurant sector by explicitly relating business necessities to social and environmental goals while taking all stakeholders' perspectives into account. In this direction, we define CSR as *a sincere and committed investment by restaurants to work towards sustainability and well-being for all stakeholders through continued and transparent efforts to promote societal and environmental agendas*.

Second, we contribute by systematically uncovering crucial research gaps in the reviewed literature related to CSR in the restaurant sector. Our analysis revealed that CSR is an important tool for the restaurant sector because it can play a significant role in the sector's success and growth when formulated and implemented correctly by duly engaging multiple stakeholders. The findings of our SLR confirmed that research on CSR in the restaurant sector has not adequately addressed the role of some important stakeholders, particularly stakeholders such as media, non-government organisations and unions. Considering the crucial role of these stakeholders and the impact of CSR on them might be strategically important for the restaurant sector.

Finally, we contribute to the advancement of research in the area by contemplating potential research questions and formulating a comprehensive conceptual framework comprising interesting variables and relationships for further examination to better understand diverse aspects of CSR in the restaurant sector. The framework provides future researchers a bird's-eye view of the existing knowledge base in the area, indicating, at the same time, what remains underexplored or ignored. In addition, we also offer the research profile of the reviewed studies for the ready reference of future researchers to identify appropriate outlets for their studies. Further, the profile also summarises the most widely used methods and theories to help scholars conceptualise their research and determine their research designs.

8.2. Managerial implications

Our review emphasises the significance of CSR practices for restaurants' financial and non-financial outcomes, offering four key implications for practice. First, the results confirm the role of CSR in impacting varied stakeholders and enhancing organisational performance. At the same time, our analysis reveals the role of multiple stakeholders in strengthening the credibility of CSR practices in restaurants. Thus, we suggest that top management sincerely acknowledges the role that internal and external stakeholders play in making their restaurants' CSR initiatives more effective and visible. As one of the essential building blocks of any organisation, employees, in particular, should receive credit for their efforts. At the same time, their concerns should be seriously considered and addressed.

Second, our review of relevant literature reveals a deficiency in CSR awareness among various stakeholders. Hence, we suggest that restaurants make their communications regarding their CSR activities more visible to all stakeholders. To provide a comprehensive view and enhance transparency and awareness, it is pertinent for the industry to embed CSR in employee training programmes and on restaurants' websites and other social media platforms. Further, based on the pro-environmental literature, which indicates a need to market environmentally friendly practices to environmentally conscious customers (Hanas, 2007), we suggest that restaurants advertise their CSR practices

through consumers' preferred advertisement channels, such as websites and menus. For instance, showcasing their responsibility and concern for the well-being of their customers, restaurants can highlight words such as '*fresh ingredients*' and '*health benefits*' in their communications. We also suggest that restaurants develop a dedicated plan for communicating their CSR practices across various social media platforms. In particular, restaurants must effectively communicate the positive outcomes of their CSR activities to achieve greater returns on their CSR investments. For instance, they can share data related to savings that have emerged from implementing water efficiency practices, waste reduction initiatives and recycling projects on their websites and social media accounts.

Third, restaurants' CSR activities should be oriented towards making a long-term social impact rather than adopting a short-term reactive stance. Such efforts to make a long-term social impact would benefit the community and stabilise the often-vulnerable socio-economic environment in which many restaurants operate. Achieving such a long-term impact requires the involvement and contribution of all internal and external stakeholders in these activities. In particular, because customers are considered one of the most valuable assets for the industry, their feedback and suggestions should be prioritised during CSR implementation. Restaurants can also demonstrate their commitment to CSR initiatives via reward mechanics, such as vouchers, for customers who actively support their CSR activities.

Finally, to secure a competitive advantage, restaurants should minimise greenwashing and scepticism because these practices have the potential to cause severe reputational damage. Moreover, top management should remain vigilant while working on CSR policies to ensure synergy—and thus effectiveness, resource use efficiency and credibility—in the efforts of various departments working for CSR implementation. Finally, to outpace competitors on the CSR front, we suggest that restaurants keep track of all financial and competitive impacts of their charitable activities. These activities are also required to provide evidence for social return on investment (SROI) reports.

9. Conclusion

The purpose of this SLR was to critically analyse the literature related to CSR in the restaurant sector and set the future research agenda for the area. To the best of our knowledge, ours is the first SLR to review research focused on CSR in the restaurant sector specifically. In achieving this objective, we were guided by three research questions.

RQ1 sought to uncover the current state of the literature investigating CSR in the restaurant sector. After reviewing the literature, the study identified two themes with three sub-themes in each pertinent to the CSR perceptions and initiatives of various stakeholders, including top management, employees and customers, for societal benefits. RQ2 was formulated to identify gaps in the area's current knowledge and to suggest research questions. Towards this end, we explored limitations in the literature under each theme and presented several theme-related and methodology-related gaps and potential research questions for future researchers. RQ3 aimed to formulate a comprehensive framework summarising various dimensions and nuances of CSR research in the restaurant sector. As a result, we proposed a conceptual framework with multiple dimensions: business environment, type of restaurant, stakeholders, processes, investment, manifestations, mediators, moderators and outcomes.

Although we followed the necessary steps while conducting the SLR, certain limitations need to be acknowledged. First, to keep the scope of our review manageable, we reviewed articles published in peer-reviewed journals only. Therefore, we may have failed to review some relevant studies published in conference proceedings or as book chapters. We suggest that future researchers who undertake a review in this area address this limitation by expanding the search scope. Second, we confined our search to *Scopus* and *WoS* only. We thus suggest that scholars endeavouring to review the literature in this area consider

including other databases, which may yield additional results. Finally, although we took all precautions while coding the literature to ensure that the process was stringent, there remains a possibility that we missed certain aspects. Because this is the first SLR in the area, we suggest another review be conducted soon to validate and verify our interpretation of the literature. In sum, our review contributes to motivating research in the area and indicates the need for further reviews.

CRediT authorship contribution statement

Puneet Kaur: Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Validation, Project administration, Methodology, Formal analysis, Data curation, Conceptualization. **Shalini Talwar:** Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Methodology, Investigation, Data curation, Conceptualization. **Arun Madanaguli:** Conceptualization, Writing – review & editing, Visualization, Methodology. **Shalini Srivastava:** Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Methodology, Investigation, Data curation, Conceptualization. **Amandeep Dhir:** Conceptualization, Writing – review & editing, Supervision, Resources, Project administration.

Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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