



Value creation in category management relationships in the UK grocery market

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Value Creation in Category Management Relationships in the UK Grocery Market

Michael Christopher Benson

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of Sheffield Hallam
University for the degree of Doctor in Business Administration

Sheffield Hallam University



March 2020

Candidate Declaration

I hereby declare that:

1. I have not been enrolled for another award of the University, or other academic or professional organisation, whilst undertaking my research degree.
2. None of the material contained in the thesis has been used in any other submission for an academic award.
3. I am aware of and understand the University's policy on plagiarism and certify that this thesis is my own work. The use of all published or other sources of material consulted have been properly and fully acknowledged.
4. The work undertaken towards the thesis has been conducted in accordance with the SHU Principles of Integrity in Research and the SHU Research Ethics Policy.
5. The word count of the thesis is 79,727 words (ex-tables, lists, references, appendix, reflections)

Name	Michael Christopher Benson
Award	Doctor in Business Administration
Date of Submission	05 March 2020
Faculty	College of Business Technology and Engineering - SBS
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Personal Reflection	2,155
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Abstract

This thesis explores the nature of value, and value co-creation within the context of collaborative category management relationships in the UK grocery sector. Category management is the process which involves a collaboration between food manufacturers (suppliers) and retailers to manage the needs of shoppers. Research into category management is very timely as the retailing industry is currently facing one of its greatest challenges. Shoppers are becoming more demanding and expect better value from their purchases.

The research reveals that shoppers are switching from branded to private label products following on from the recent success of Discounters. This has created opportunities for all category suppliers including private label and smaller niche suppliers, if they produce retailer specific innovative and creative ideas. It was also found that the role of the category captain was abandoned five years ago, despite being the focus of the category management literature even today. The role now known as ‘preferred supplier’ is available to any category supplier and is no longer the exclusive right of the largest branded supplier.

The current research study has involved UK based food industry supplier category managers and retail buyers, to understand if category management collaborations created value. Following a phenomenological approach using long qualitative interviews, the findings were controversial in that both the suppliers and retailers were not completely satisfied with the category management relationship, and that value was not always created. This finding contradicts existing research, and indeed the rhetoric that normally prevails in practice. The researcher anticipates that the thesis will alert practitioners to the underlying issues that exist and encourage them to find ways of working closer together, without fear of displeasing the other partner. It will no doubt spark reformist debates between suppliers and retailers, as well as update the category management literature.

The research findings move the category management conversation forward from an objective to a subjective explanation of value creation. Finally, it introduces the importance of Service-Dominant Logic S-DL in creating value through the lens of the five axioms of S-DL. It also adds further insight from a supplier’s perspective based on confidential testimonials of practitioners on the front-line.

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I express my deepest thanks to my Director of Studies Dr Craig Hirst and supervisor Professor Peter Schofield for their help and support throughout this research project. Most people see me as being calm and relaxed, but my team have experienced the high energy, never wrong, and emotional aspects of my personality. The supervisory team recognised this early on and quickly found the right way to handle the situation and keep me focused and equitable. I am also extremely grateful to the SBS for sponsoring me, and the teaching team for their expert help and advice. I would like to convey my sincerest thanks to all the participants of the study. They all lead incredibly busy lives and by taking time away from their work commitments to contribute to my thesis and moving category management research forward has been a real game changer.

I dedicate this thesis to the memory of my father, Mr Thomas Richard Benson. I was privileged to have had the opportunity to work alongside him within the family butcher's business and learned not only how to cut and present meat, but also the value of business relationships and the importance of hard work and a positive approach. He always believed in me, and he was not objective when I chose to leave the family business and pursue my career in a different direction. He would be proud to know that I have progressed from 'Butcher' to 'Doctor', and I am confident that his memory has helped me through this treacherous journey. I also dedicate this thesis to the memory of Mr Michael W. Taylor; a friend taken away at a young age who was also committed to self-development and learning. He too was always at my side, supporting me during difficult times.

I would also like to thank my mother, Mrs Barbara Benson, who is aware of my real personality and has always been there for me even during difficult times. Thanks to my brother, Mr Stephen Richard Benson, who has always been at my side as a brother and as a partner in the family business. Having different personalities has always worked in our favour in business and personal situations, and this support has continued throughout my DBA. Thank you to all the members of my family who have supported me in various ways both at home and with the business. Finally, thank you to my daughter, Miss Emily Elizabeth Benson, for her kind words of support throughout the DBA journey when I complained things were getting tough. I hope that my Doctorate will act as an inspiration to her in the future.

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List of Abbreviations

B2B	Business to Business
BAM	British Academy of Management
B/PL	Branded and Private Label
BSE	Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy
CIM	Chartered Institute of Marketing
CM	Category Management
CMA	Category Management Association
CPD	Continuous Professional Development
CPG	Consumer Packaged Goods
DBA	Doctor of Business Administration
EIRASS	European Institute of Retailing and Services Studies
EPOS	Electronic Point of Sale
G-DL	Goods-Dominant Logic
IGD	Institute of Grocery Distribution
IVF	Interactive Value Formation
JBP	Joint Business Plan
PL	Private Label or Own-Brand Products
Retailers	UK Food Retailers
RCM	Retailer Category Management
RIP	Retail in Practice
S2	Semester 2
SBS	Sheffield Business School

S-DL	Service Dominant Logic
SHU	Sheffield Hallam University
SME	Small and medium-sized Enterprises
Suppliers	UK Food Manufacturers
SKUs	Stock-keeping units

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Background

This thesis ‘Value Creation in Category Management Relationships in the UK Grocery Market’ was written by Michael Christopher Benson (the researcher). He has worked for over 25 years in the food retailing industry, for large and small and medium-sized enterprises (SME), in addition to being involved in a 100-year-old family butcher and bakery business since childhood. After starting the Doctor of Business Administration (DBA) in 2014, it has taken the researcher over five years to reach the thesis submission stage. He still has networks with senior category management (CM) practitioners and has used this to his advantage to attract senior CM decision makers to participate in the study.

The purpose of this chapter is to give an overview of the thesis; to explain the research aims, objectives and motivation for the research study. Chapter 2 (Importance of Practitioners) closely follows the introduction and explains how the experience of the researcher within CM practice has had a significant bearing on the quality of the study. The introduction chapter and Chapter 2 explains the choice of the topic and why this was important to the researcher, coupled with his passion, experience and commitment to improving the field of CM. The researcher has prepared the thesis as a submission in partial fulfilment of the requirements of Sheffield Hallam University (SHU), for the degree of Doctor in Business Administration (DBA). The University Research Degrees Sub-Committee approved Phase III of the research project, and progress to the thesis stage was approved in July 2016.

The participant interview process took over twelve months to complete, as both first and second interviews were carried out with senior retail practitioners from the UK grocery sector. The researcher transcribed the interviews verbatim, analysed the data and prepared the findings, contributions, and limitations of the study, through to recommendations for further research. The DBA was seen by SHU as a natural choice of Doctorate rather than a PhD. The DBA is better aligned to professionals who want to make a difference to the way both management and professional practices are developed in the future (SHU, 2020). The DBA research route is often defined as academic management research that contributes to both theory and business practice. Previous literature has discussed academic management research and its relevance to

practitioners (notably Darabi, 2012; Rousseau, 2006; Starkey and Madan, 2001). The benefits and drawbacks have also been highlighted in the literature (notably Bartunek, Rynes and Ireland, 2006; Pollit, 2006; Macbeth, 2002). The drawbacks and tensions of the connection between academia and management practice are significant, as the theoretical literature is not relevant to the needs of practitioners and practitioners do not take the academic literature seriously or use it in their day-to-day practice.

Management research extends the boundaries of knowledge, and this knowledge is used by practitioners to help resolve problems and challenges at a strategic level, rather than resolution through 'fire fighting', which is often what happens in practice (Learmonth, 2008; Macbeth, 2002; Buchanan, Boddy and McCalman, 1988). The development of this thesis has received praise and thanks from all the participants as they were grateful to be included in the research and were pleased that academia was taking an interest in their subject area (Appendix 6 - Key Stakeholder Testimonials). To date, there is limited literature on this topic except from a small number of academics from marketing and retailing disciplines, and thus this subject is widely misunderstood. Although the participants were all senior operational managers, they were happy to take time out of their busy schedules and participate in the research, and actively requested to be included in any further studies. The researcher is an ex-retail practitioner who is passionate about closing the gap between knowledge and practice to ensure both academia and industry understand each other better, and that the literature reflects what happens in practice. Throughout the thesis, the researcher has considered both academic and practice viewpoints to construct the conceptual framework shown in Chapter 3. Finally, this chapter will summarise the structure of the thesis and define the key stages in compilation of the research, analysis of the findings, contribution to the literature, management limitations and recommendations for potential future research.

1.2 Passion for the Thesis and Research Gap

The researcher has worked in the food-retailing sector for 25 years before entering into academia and often joked that 'he was involved in food retailing for 70 years before he was born'; being the fourth generation of a family retailer, which was started in Lancashire in 1904. The researcher believes that the current literature and therefore knowledge of the topic is limited, as it is a relatively new phenomenon not fully appreciated by academics. Likewise, what has been written in the literature is factually misleading or inaccurate due to a lack of

innovation from researchers to try and establish the truth about what happens in actual practice. The research findings support this observation. Indeed, the literature review chapter supports the claim that the existing literature is factually incorrect.

The researcher is therefore determined to help academia and category management to work more collaboratively together in the future to resolve the current problems faced by practitioners, as well as any emerging problems. The researcher was also encouraged by academics during the early stages of the DBA, as they quickly appreciated that the research would make a significant contribution. It was for these reasons that the Sheffield Business School (SBS) academics advised the researcher to pursue a DBA rather than a traditional PhD, to provide output for practice as well as update the literature. Practice combined with academic rigour at a doctoral level of study itself creates value for teaching and learning (Hodgkinson and Rousseau, 2009).

Figure 1.1, created by the researcher, shows how the research contribution was developed from the gaps identified in both the literature and in practice. The context of the research is the UK grocery sector, which is currently worth £220 billion per annum (IGD, 2020). It is, therefore, a significant part of the UK's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), accounting for over 17% of the UK's economy.

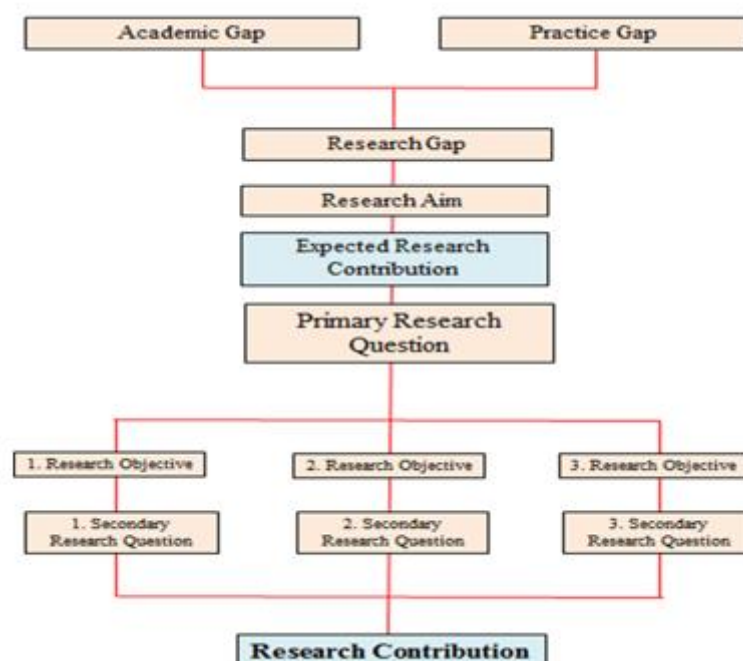


Figure 1.1. Research Contribution Model (Benson, 2020).

The following sections explain how the researcher created a focus for the study. The research questions were created from the gaps identified in both the literature and the UK grocery sector practice using data provided by the (IGD, 2020).

1.2.1 Academic Gap

The gap identified in the literature centred on both the limited quantity of the existing research on CM, and the limited discussions on the co-creation of value in collaborative CM relationships between a manufacturer (herewith defined as the supplier), and retailer within the extant literature. There is a requirement for more evidence-based research into S-DL considering the 5 axioms where service is the fundamental basis of exchange, that value is co-created by multiple actors within the relationship through resource integration. The literature was also mainly written from a retailer's perspective and the CM process was not collaborative, as it revolved around a retailer's strategy, rather than including any aspects of a supplier's strategy. Moreover, the previous research within CM was mainly from a positivist, quantitative perspective using large survey datasets. To gain a deeper understanding of how value can be co-created within the CM relationship, the literature review suggested that further research into the co-creation of value was required from both the supplier and retailer perspectives. This would ensure that the supplier's views were considered rather than just the retailers. Furthermore, the literature suggested that a qualitative approach would be more suited in order to acquire a deeper understanding (Kurtuluş, Nakkas and Ülkü, 2014).

1.2.2 Practice Gap

The practice gap i.e. the gap in knowledge relating to the existing UK grocery sector practice was as follows: while a collaborative relationship has existed between a supplier and a retailer, this has always been rhetorical and superficial. Suppliers would simply agree with the retailer to keep their business, rather than trying to represent the consumer or even the interests of their own business. This type of relationship is now regarded as unsustainable in the current climate where value needs to be created in the CM relationship. In 2020, the IGD (2020) stated that suppliers and retailers both needed to work closer together; their organisations needed to be transparent, and the consumer should be integrated into the relationship as the most important factor. A S-DL perspective was used to understand the service exchange within the relationship, and how resource integration is growing in strength within the collaborative

relationship. This view was supported by most of the participants interviewed during the primary research phase of this study. They all claimed that the collaboration needed to be more genuine with both parties having an equal voice. The collaboration also needed to consider not only category captain suppliers but all suppliers, such as: branded, private label, and both, regardless of their size. Furthermore, the relationship needed to be more transparent with open and honest discussions without any fear of recrimination between the supplier and retailer to meet the changing economic and consumer demands (IGD, 2020).

1.2.3 Research Gap

The research gap was derived from a combination of both the academic and practice gaps to ensure that the study's contribution was relevant to the current literature and practice. This research gap was therefore addressed by gaining a deeper understanding of how value could be co-created within CM relationships. The research is grounded in the five axioms of S-DL but considers the impact of the 11 foundational premises. Management thought and theory have largely ignored the service revolution and S-DL. S-DL represents a narrative of value co-creation through resource exchange and service exchange. Research into this field is requesting more empirical research is carried out, and so this has been done within the practice of category management. This helps to update the literature within S-DL, value creation and category management as the world is more knowledge intensive. The research helps to address the need for demonstrating service-for-service exchange rather than goods-for-money or goods-for-goods exchange, as seen in Goods-Dominant Logic (G-DL). Value co-creation is claimed by the literature to be created by resource integration; this research seeks to prove this theory. It captured the voice of all suppliers from branded, private label and both, regardless of their size and allowed them to be more genuine and transparent without fear of recrimination from either side. The gap in the literature enables this research to help join theory and practice within the context of category management.

1.3 Research Aim

The aim of the research was to explore and map the relationship between value co-creation, no-creation, and co-destruction in inter-organisational relationships. The study therefore sought to extend the current understanding of interfirm relationships through an empirical study of CM relationships in the UK grocery sector.

The research aim was addressed by initially asking the following primary question.

1.3.1 Primary Research Question

How do inter-organisational category management relationships realise value co-creation, value no-creation and value co-destruction outcomes within the UK grocery sector, and to what extent is the Category Captain role important? Addressing this question ensured that the literature was brought up-to-date and was in line with the activities and developments of CM in practice.

Three research objectives were devised to help achieve the aim of the research and to answer the primary research question. The next section discusses the research objectives further. Each objective had a secondary research question associated with it to achieve most of the objectives, and in turn, deliver on the aim of the research.

1.4 Research Objectives

1.4.1 Objective 1

To examine and critically assess the nature of value and its creation or otherwise, that exists between the grocery manufacturer (supplier), and the food retailer within CM relationships.

Research Question 1: *What is the nature of value, and is there value creation or otherwise between the grocery manufacturer (supplier), and the food retailer within category management relationships?*

The first research objective was the primary focus of the research, and it examined what was understood by the term ‘value’ in the context of CM relationships between a food manufacturer (supplier), and the retail buyer within the UK grocery sector. It investigated value creation through the lens of value co-creation, no-creation and value co-destruction within the CM relationship, in a changing environment. It was intended to explain if value was co-created, or if no-value was created at all, or if indeed, value co-destruction occurred because of the CM relationship. Understanding both the importance of value, and for whom value was being created in CM relationships, is at the heart of this thesis, and as such, is featured prominently in the conceptual framework presented in Chapter 3.

1.4.2 Objective 2

To investigate the changing role of the category captain in a changing retail marketplace (consumers are switching from branded products to private labels), and evaluate in the new reality if any category supplier could be allowed to demonstrate value creation and meet the selection criteria for category captain.

Research Question 2: *What is the role currently played by the category captain in category management relationships, and how will this role evolve as consumers switch from branded to private label products? Can other suppliers within the category in the new reality be allowed to demonstrate value creation and meet the selection criteria for category captain?*

The role of the category captain is a key focus within the literature and for practitioners. As the environment has changed significantly over recent years, the research seeks to understand this role and if it is still applicable within CM and CM relationships. Exclusion of the private label and smaller niche suppliers within a category have always fuelled emotive discussions, as suppliers want to be more involved in category development. This includes product selection, new product implementation and innovative category solutions. A category often has specialised sub-categories, which a traditional category captain has insufficient knowledge of to make the necessary decisions. The research questions need to include suppliers other than the category captains to work on category recommendations, as they were often experts in the sub-categories, and their expertise was needed for differentiation. As the business environment has become more competitive and is changing at an unprecedented rate, this research examined if changes to the role of the category captain were needed, and if the role should include solving problems through collaboration rather than previous financial contributions and brand presence.

1.4.3 Objective 3

To explore the main differences between the current CM literature and CM practice to facilitate a meaningful theoretical contribution.

Research Question 3: *What are the main differences between current category management literature and actual category management practice?*

The extant CM literature acknowledges the importance of CM as a discipline to improve collaborative business relationships between the supplier and the retailer for improved consumer value (Alan, Dotson and Kurtuluş 2017; Galbreth, Kurtuluş and Shor, 2015; Kurtuluş, Nakkas and Ülkü, 2014; Gupta, Choudhary and Alam, 2014; Han *et al.*, 2014; Huang and Wilkinson, 2013; Viitaharju and Lähdesmäki, 2012; Kurtuluş and Toktay, 2011; Gooner, Morgan and Perreault, 2011). The literature is, however, limited to the activities of the category captain and does not discuss opportunities for other suppliers within the category, and how they could aspire to the role of the category captain. The research also advises that the traditional category captain role was no longer used in practice but has evolved to become the preferred supplier. Written from the retailers' perspective, most of the existing literature ignores the suppliers' perspective. Objective 3 and Research Question 3, therefore, sought to summarise the current CM literature and compare this against the views of present CM practitioners, from both supplier and retailer perspectives. This comparison ensured a fair and balanced viewpoint from both sides and provided the potential for a literature update, which reflected the reality of CM. It also considered if the CM literature had mainly focused on the category captain in relation to the USA context, or if it was more generally applicable to the UK market.

1.5 Research Contribution

The findings from the research have enabled the researcher to develop a deeper understanding of the importance of value creation within CM relationships in the UK grocery sector, from both supplier and retailer perspectives. As such, this thesis is an effective theoretical lens through which to examine CM and provide an excellent practical example of value co-creation using an S-DL lens. The research contributes to academia and to CM practice. It updates the theoretical and contextual literature of the study and provides recommendations to CM practice that will be taken seriously, due to the experience and seniority of the research participants. The research updates the role of the category captain (now known as the preferred supplier), and the other suppliers within the category, and discusses how, through collaboration between the supplier and retailer, 'value' in the relationship is created. As the grocery industry is experiencing problems and has seen a dramatic shift from branded products to private label, the research has introduced a private label supply. It is the changing shopping trends forcing the industry to respond. The supplier and retailer perspectives are also scrutinised throughout the inquiry. The following section lists the academic and practitioner conferences where the

research has already been presented, and provides further evidence supporting the need for this research in both academia and practice.

1.5.1 List of Conference Presentations

The thesis has contributed to both academic and practitioner conferences; refer to Figure 1.2 for academic conferences and Figure 1.3 for practitioner conferences. The research has been presented at eleven academic conferences and two practitioner conferences. This has demonstrated the relevance and significance of the research for both academics and practitioners. The feedback from the conferences has been positive, and various requests have already been made by journal editors for the researcher to submit manuscripts. These include the British Journal of Management (BJM), and the International Journal of Management Reviews (IJMR).

As stated, the researcher is keen to close the gap between academia and practice, and exposure through academic journals and collaboration with industry practitioners will initiate this process. The context of CM is defined later in the thesis, and evidence is provided indicating that this is an under-researched area, which is forecast to grow. The researcher would like to invite practitioners to make time to read the journal articles and start using some of the findings to assist them with solving day-to-day problems. Historically, practitioners have not taken an interest in academic outputs, as often the material is not relevant to their needs. This results in practitioners reacting to problems rather than being more proactive. The researcher is confident that practitioners would trust research outputs more if academics took the time to really understand practice and saw first-hand what practitioners did in their everyday work. If practitioners were to spend more time reflecting on the problems and liaising with academics, reasoned solutions would emerge. Theory and practice would therefore both work together for mutual benefit.

1.5.1.1 Academic Conference Contributions

<i>Year</i>	<i>Organisation</i>	<i>Conference</i>	<i>Paper</i>	<i>Research Title</i>	<i>Outcome</i>
2015	Sheffield Hallam University	Sheffield Business School Doctoral Conference	Winner - Best Poster	‘Value for Whom? A Critical Analysis of CM Relationships in the UK Grocery Sector’	Received academic feedback to strengthen research topic and question
2016	Newcastle University	BAM Conference	Developmental Paper	‘Value for Whom? A Critical Analysis of CM Relationships in the UK Grocery Sector’	Received academic feedback to strengthen research argument for DB2 viva
2017	Warwick University	BAM Conference	Developmental Paper	‘Value Creation in CM Relationships: A Comparative Analysis’	Received academic feedback to develop research argument
2018	Eindhoven University	EIRASS Conference in Madeira	Developmental Paper	‘The Changing Role of the Category Captain in the UK Grocery Market’	Received academic feedback to develop research argument
2018	De Montfort University	Customer Value Foundation 1 st Global Value Creation Conference	Developmental Poster	‘What Constitutes an Effective Retailing Relationship’	Received academic feedback to develop research argument
2019	Fordham University New York City	Customer Value Foundation 2nd Global Value Creation Conference	Full Paper	‘Value Creation Capacity of CM Collaborations in the UK Private Label Chilled Food Sector’	Received academic feedback to develop for publication in <i>Journal of Creating Value</i>
2019	Fordham University New York City	Customer Value Foundation 2nd Global Value Creation Conference	Developmental Paper	‘The Undiscovered Truths of Value Creation in the UK Grocery Market’	Received academic feedback to develop for publication in <i>Journal of Creating Value</i>
2019	Aston University	BAM Conference	Full Paper	‘Value Creation or Destruction: The Role of Private label in the UK Grocery CM Decisions’	Submit to a 2* or 3* peer-reviewed journal in 2020
2019	Aston University	BAM Conference	Professional Development Workshop	‘Food Innovation Consultancy Challenge: ‘Live’ Learning and Professional Development with an Industry Client’	Run a series of workshops within the BAM Marketing & Retail SIG
2019	Aston University	BAM Conference	BAM Education Teaching Practitioners Award	‘Food Innovation Consultancy Challenge: ‘Live’ Learning and Professional Development with an Industry Client’	Received National Management Award
2019	Houses of Parliament	Public Health England Conference	Research Findings to Support Consumer Sugar Trends	‘Food Innovation Consultancy Challenge: ‘Live’ Learning and Professional Development with an Industry Client’	Present FICC findings to MPs, Lords and industry practitioners

Table 1.1. Academic Conference Contributions. Source: Benson (2020).

1.5.1.2 Practitioner Conference Contributions

<i>Year</i>	<i>Organisation</i>	<i>Conference</i>	<i>Paper</i>	<i>Research Title</i>	<i>Outcome</i>
2018	IGD Conference	CM & Shopper Marketing Summit	<i>Presentation</i>	'I Can't Get No Satisfaction: Value for Whom? A Critical Analysis of Category Management Relationships in the UK Grocery Sector'	First academic ever to present at this conference. Incredible support from over 300 practitioners with some wanting to collaborate with SHU
2019	Category Landscapers	Quarterly Meeting	<i>Presentation</i>	'Value for Whom? A Critical Analysis of Category Management Relationships in the UK Grocery Sector'	The group were senior category managers in practice, who invited me to join their committee

Table 1.2. Practitioner Conference Contributions. Source: Benson (2020).

The IGD conference attracted over 300 suppliers and all the retailers. This was the first time an academic could present at this forum, but it gave the researcher a unique opportunity to present the initial research findings to a wider audience than the invited study participants. The feedback from the presentation was used to support the research findings from the participants, and due to the uniqueness of the opportunity, this contributed to the success of the study.

The next section will introduce the need for value creation in CM relationships from both academic and practitioner perspectives, although this issue is discussed in more detail in later sections.

1.6 Value Creation and S-DL: Academic and Practitioner Perspectives

The Literature Review in Chapter 3 will discuss the need for value creation through S-DL in CM relationships as seen by academics. Category management is a relatively new phenomenon introduced in the 1990s and, despite an explosion of interest by academics in the early days, very little has been written recently. Practitioners often see value creation in CM as one of the only way retailers can differentiate themselves from competitors. Academics have not identified the practical requirement and, as such, have not completely identified this gap in the literature. Therefore, research into value creation is required to meet the demands of value creation practice from deeper collaborative CM relationships between the supplier and retailer.

Where academics spend time researching CM and making valid recommendations, practitioners need to understand and implement the findings where appropriate. Where there is a shortfall in the content, then both academics and practitioners need to work together to fill the gap. Practitioners, by nature spend most of their time 'firefighting' problems, but if they occasionally sat back and reflected, they would find longer-term solutions to the operational problems. Academics do not want to waste time researching and writing about CM if practitioners will not take any notice. Conversely, practitioners want accurate literature that reflects practice. The researcher has discovered from his literature review that much of the existing CM literature does not reflect actual practice. Thus, this thesis makes a major contribution to the CM literature. The next section will give a brief outline of CM, with further explanations in the literature review.

1.7 Introducing Category Management

Category management is a relatively new phenomenon developed in the late 1990s in America between the supplier Procter and Gamble and Walmart (2020) stores. Nielsen, Karolefski and Heller (2006) stated that during the 1990s, retailers were looking for ways to run their businesses better. Margins were low, often as low as one percent, which was unacceptable for business growth and sustainability. Consumers were becoming more demanding and due to more international travel; they were expecting wider varieties of products and tastes (Margolies, 1995). Consequently, retailers were looking for ways to improve their margins, and reconnect with consumers to satisfy their needs. The researcher is privileged to have worked with one of the pioneers of category management who originally worked for Walmart (2020). The pioneer currently works as a main board director for one of the UK's big four supermarkets and has been instrumental in advising and shaping the research directions. Having access to category pioneers emphasises the uniqueness of this DBA and its contribution.

Category management involves the allocation of resources within sets of complementary and/or competing brands to maximise planned outcomes (Gooner, Morgan and Perreault, 2011; Morgan, Kaleka and Gooner, 2007; Basuroy, Mantrala and Walters, 2001; Bush *et al.*, 2001). It involves the analysis of category-level data, setting goals for category performance, and the execution of plans to maximise category-level results (Gooner, Morgan and Perreault, 2011;

Dupre and Gruen, 2004; Desrochers, Gundlach and Foer, 2003; Dussart, 1998). Category management lends itself well to fast moving consumer packaged goods (CPGs) such as groceries and is an influencer for both the supplier and the retailer. While CM is common across CPG manufacturers, retailers in the UK sell thousands of products and do not always have the resources to manage all these products effectively. Gooner, Morgan and Perreault (2011) stated that retailers need to turn to their suppliers to provide resources, which will assist with the management of categories. The role of the category captain emerged in the late 1990s where one category supplier was asked to manage the entire category (including competitor's brands), for the retailer (Gooner, Morgan and Perreault, 2011; Aastrup, Grant and Bjerre, 2007; Gruen and Shah, 2000).

The category captain role in both the USA and UK has been responsible for much successes. However, the literature informs that the role has always been controversial and allows the lead supplier to be opportunistic. This will be discussed in greater detail within the literature review section, but it is worth noting at this stage that the category captain could manipulate data in their favour and increase the presence of their brands in the prime display location. Often rival brands would be discontinued, and this would not be in the interests of the consumer, retailer or the rival brand supplier. It inhibits competition and lowers consumer welfare (Gooner, Morgan and Perreault, 2011; Desrochers, Gundlach and Foer, 2003; Steiner, 2001). Arguably, if the role of category captain was executed fairly and correctly it would have a positive impact on the entire category and create the 'win, win, win' scenario for the consumer, retailer and all the category suppliers. This will be covered in greater detail later.

Category management involves the responsibility of both branded and private label (B/PL) products, and as consumers feel the financial pinch, they are switching in large numbers from branded to private label products. Private label products are cheaper than branded equivalents, and nowadays have quality that is the same, if not better than branded products. Retailers also carry three tiers of private label products, defined as basic, standard, and premium ranges. This ensures that private labels satisfy the needs of all consumer demographics and introduces a degree of retailer loyalty. Meiri and Bhatli (2014) stated that consumers were switching to private label products at an unprecedented rate to take advantage of the lower prices, and retailers were gaining value from the development of their own-brands, and so reducing reliance on leading brands. This will be explained in greater detail later in the thesis. The

following section will introduce the importance of collaboration and value co-creation within the CM relationship.

1.8 Collaboration and Value Co-Creation in Business Relationships

Wagner, Eggert and Lindemann (2010) argued that business relationships provided a means for creating and appropriating superior value in the marketplace, and it was the sharing between the exchange partners that created superior value. They also stated that more empirical research needed to be carried out in value creation within collaborative business relationships, as currently it was an under-researched area. Hirst and Tresidder (2016) agreed with Wagner, Eggert and Lindemann (2010) and stated, there was a significant departure from exchange perceptions in marketing, which included business relationships. The literature acknowledges the notion of value co-creation, where two organisations collectively share value co-creation and each one has its role to play in the value creation process (Hirst and Tresidder, 2016). Using a S-DL approach where collaboration exists within the relationship adds more value than traditional G-DL approaches (Vargo and Lusch, 2004). This research supports these claims of Vargo and Lusch. Co-creation is produced during the inter-play of the parties where the supplier, retailer and consumer want a 'triple win'. Value is created in use and can only be realised by the consumer as part of consumption (Hirst and Tressider, 2016; Warde, 2005). Vargo and Lush (2004a) have stated, for example, a supplier forms a value proposition or marketplace resource, but it is the activation of these that realises the value. This facilitates the value creation process through acts and processes of value co-creation (Vargo and Lusch, 2004a).

Category management is a prime example of a relationship to co-create value that seeks to create value for all stakeholders, but ultimately the consumer. A collaborative relationship within CM is defined by Nielsen, Karolefski and Heller (2006), as an integrative concept that connects the supplier and retailer touchpoints for the consumer. This includes factors, such as the deployment of new technologies, data sharing and online guerrilla marketing to reach the consumer through an integrative approach. Nielsen, Karolefski and Heller (2006) provided an example of this, where suppliers were gathering huge amounts of consumer data via the internet, and then sharing this with the retailers. The information within the collaboration was then used by both parties to learn more about the consumer, and so facilitated the category planning. The thesis reviews the collaborative position within the UK grocery sector, with a

focus on the co-creation of value with the category captain. The study by Alan, Dotson and Kurtuluş (2017) stated that the collaborative impact of the category captain was under-researched and further empirical studies were necessary. They also claimed that suppliers in direct competition to the category captain benefitted from the category captain recommendations, as the whole category grew. However, they did not state whether private label suppliers benefitted, and it is for this reason the thesis has reviewed the position of the private label supplier. The next section introduces the expected academic and practice contributions based on the experience of the researcher, and how these led to the generation of the research questions.

1.9 Structure of the Thesis

The thesis is structured to facilitate a logical flow of information. Thus, the thesis is structured as follows: Chapter 2 highlights the importance of practice. Chapter 3 is the Literature Review, which is divided into the theoretical literature and the contextual literature. Chapter 4 explains the research methodology, and Chapters 5 and 6 present the findings and discuss the results, respectively. Chapter 7 discusses the contribution of the research to theory and practice, and Chapter 8 concludes the study. The reference list and appendices supporting the thesis follow. Chapter 2 explains the importance of practice. The researcher is passionate about closing the gap between academia and practice and believes that practice should inform theory. In return, theory should reflect what is happening in practice, and the knowledge that is created should be in line with industry needs. Academics will be able to develop the activities already in practice and improve these to benefit the industry. As the thesis is a DBA rather than a traditional PhD, the importance of practice must be considered, together with the contribution of the study to both academia and practice. Chapter 2 also reviews the researcher's background in CM, and how this experience and flair motivated the study. The journey of the researcher is also featured in this chapter to emphasise the complexity in the process, and how it has challenged the researcher. It is hoped that the thesis will encourage more CM practitioners to embark on this level of study and further raise the awareness of CM in industry and academia. The literature review (Chapter 3) looks at the theoretical lenses of the research study, being value, value co-creation, value co-destruction and no value co-creation. It also assesses the importance of trust in business relationships and introduces the context of CM to the existing theoretical literature. Service Dominant-Logic (S-DL) is also reviewed within the literature chapter, as service provision within the business relationship is becoming increasingly more

important for differentiation and value creation. The contextual lens element focuses upon the role of the category captain within the UK grocery CM relationship. It reviews what the literature believes to be true regarding this pivotal role in CM relationships, to then evaluate the findings against what the practitioners believe to be correct, and project the future of the category captain. The literature review has attempted to understand CM from both supplier and retailer perspectives; however, it is mainly written from a retailer point of view. The context also investigates private label suppliers because it is important to try and understand how the role of private label is evolving considering consumer switching, and if the private label only supplier can become a category captain.

Chapter 4 of the thesis (methodology) is where a phenomenological approach was taken to try and understand the reality of the practitioners. Twenty-five qualitative interviews at the practitioners' workplaces were undertaken and transcribed by the researcher to ensure all responses were recorded accurately. The data was then analysed in NVivo version 11, and a thematic analysis was used to examine the research questions. The main theme that emerged from the analysis which helped to address the research aim, objectives and research questions was the theme of co-creation. The chapter then examined what co-creation is and how the supplier and retailer can effectively collaborate during CM to deliver value for the consumer. Secondly, the category captain and its role in the future, during times of difficult trading, and how other category suppliers can progress to be lead suppliers is discussed. A research thesis often has three discussion chapters, but due to the richness of the data from the interviews for themes one and two, the researcher decided to explore these in greater depth. The thesis research mapping, introduced in the next section of this chapter is used throughout the thesis to map the research objectives and questions to the findings and recommendations, and is designed to ensure the validity of the structure to keep the reader focused on the key elements.

Chapter 5 is titled 'I can't get no satisfaction' (Jagger and Richards, 1965), which is considered appropriate given its focus on how co-creation is or is not created in the CM relationship, and addresses the question: do either of the parties ever achieve satisfaction in the CM relationship? The chapter investigates what constitutes value co-creation or value co-destruction and asks category managers what their day-to-day reality represents, and whether this reflects the literature and the general perceptions in the industry. The findings from anonymised interviews revealed what practitioners really thought about this issue from both supplier and retailer viewpoints, but what was interesting to the researcher was the fact that the discussion topics

were almost the same between both parties. This facilitated the data analysis and the ability to make comparisons between the supplier and retailer in a consistent manner.

Chapter 6 is an investigation into the current role of the category captain and how according to IGD (2020) it is likely to evolve soon. This follows on naturally from Chapter 5. The chapter specifically analyses and discusses if a private label supplier can become a category captain and the role expected of all suppliers; both supplier and retailer perspectives are considered. In investigating collaboration within the CM relationship, it firstly explores getting internal alignment correct before collaborating and the importance of S-DL. As the research evidences, there is a move towards the provision of resources within the relationship rather than a traditional focus on the product itself. This is the forerunner of trust that should lead to loyalty and then an understanding of if satisfaction is ever achieved within the collaboration.

Chapter 7 reviews the contribution to theory and practice, as the thesis is a DBA as opposed to a theoretical PhD thesis. It also outlines recommendations for further research within CM and the limitations of the study. The thesis is then concluded and the researcher's personal reflections on the DBA journey are documented. The thesis has a sophisticated tracking method that ensures the research aims and objectives are monitored as the thesis develops, leading to final delivery. The research accumulated 130,000 words of transcripts from the participants, and the thesis document has around 333 pages. To ensure the key findings identified in each chapter are correctly carried forward to the contributions chapter the researcher has devised a structured process defined as the 'Thesis Research Mapping', and each stage of this process is presented in tabular format at the end of each chapter. Findings are therefore not lost within the scale of the thesis. Chapter 5 and Chapter 6 are the main discussion chapters. The key points from each of these which answered the specific question associated with that chapter are recorded on the mapping. The findings are then carried forward to Chapter 7 as summarised in Table 7.2, and then expanded within the discussion chapter for contribution to academia and practice. The next section introduces the thesis research mapping (Stage 1) – Research aims, objectives, primary and secondary research questions. Each stage of the thesis mapping is explained in more detail at the appropriate part of the thesis.

1.10 Summary of Chapter 1

The chapter has introduced the research and the researcher. It has defined the academic and contextual focus of the study; the main terms used and explained how the thesis is structured and what the reader can expect from each chapter. The thesis research mapping: stage 1 is shown below in Table 1.3. It summarises the key message from the research aim, objectives, and research questions. It tracks the progress of the research and ultimately measures the findings to ensure the thesis achieves its mission.

Thesis Research Mapping (Stage 1) Research Aims, Objectives and Questions (c/f to Chapter 7 – Research Contributions)	
Research Aim	Primary Research Question
The research aim of the thesis was to explore and map the relationships between value co-creation, no-creation and co-destruction in inter-organisational relationships. It, therefore, sought to extend an understanding of interfirm relationships and realise value outcomes through an empirical study of category management relationships in the UK grocery sector.	How do inter-organisational category management relationships realise value co-creation, value no-creation and value co-destruction outcomes within the UK grocery sector, and to what extent is the role of category captain important in the future?
Research Objectives	Research Question
Objective 1 To examine and critically assess the nature of value, and is value created or otherwise between the grocery manufacturer (supplier) and the food retailer within category management relationships.	Question 1 What is the nature of value, and is there value creation or otherwise between the grocery manufacturer (supplier), and the food retailer within category management relationships?
Objective 2 To investigate the changing role of the category captain in a changing retail marketplace (consumers are switching from branded to private label), and evaluate in the new reality, if any category supplier can be allowed to demonstrate value creation and meet the selection criteria for category captain.	Question 2 What is the role currently played by the category captain in category management relationships, and how will this role evolve as consumers switch from branded to private label products? Can other suppliers within the category, in the new reality, be allowed to demonstrate value creation and meet the selection criteria for category captain?
Objective 3	Research Question 3

To explore the main differences between the current category management literature and category management in practice for a deeper collaborative understanding, by comparing published academic category management literature against the views of present category management practitioners within the UK grocery sector.	What are the main differences between the current category management literature and category management in practice by comparing the published academic category management literature against the views of present category management practitioners within the UK grocery sector?
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Table 1.3. Thesis Research Mapping (Stage 1). Source: Benson (2020).

The next chapter discusses the importance of practice within this research and how it contributes to the research findings and discussion.

Chapter 2: Importance of Practice

2.1 Introduction

This relatively short chapter has been included in the thesis as the researcher believes his own background and experience have been the main driver for the research topic. The chapter, through post-thesis reflection provides a background to the thesis and explains the motivation for the study and why the researcher wants academia and practice to work more closely together. The defining moments of the DBA journey are also highlighted as these are fundamental to the development of the thesis and the evolution of the research aims, objectives and research questions. The next section will review the background to the thesis and the enthusiasm of the researcher for the topic.

2.2 Background to the Thesis

The thesis background originates from the researcher's interest in retailing from an early age. A DBA was chosen ahead of a traditional PhD, as it requires both an academic and practical contribution. The researcher is a practitioner of retailing and notably CM; it was, therefore, an obvious choice to base the DBA thesis within the retailing and CM arenas. Category management is a passion of the researcher and he often comments that 'he knows about nothing else' and so it was the obvious choice of topic for a doctoral study. Objective 3 of the thesis was to update the literature in line with reality, and to encourage practitioners to work alongside academics and implement the latter's recommendations into practice. It also requires the literature to reflect what is happening in practice so academia and practice work together in harmony. The thesis itself has strong practical and academic contributions; however, as only part of the data from the interviews was used, additional data is available for further manuscripts. Kelly (2017); Corley and Gioia (2011) stated that to be practically useful means that the research needs to be directly applicable to problems facing practising managers, from the position of a real-life phenomenon rather than from the position of a scholar. The next section will examine the researcher's motivation for the study.

2.3 Motivation for the Study

Without a high level of motivation, it would have been difficult for the researcher to embark on the DBA journey, which has taken six years. This has had a huge impact on the researcher's

personal life, and many of the usual pleasures and activities previously enjoyed such as golf have been foregone. It is a considerable proportion of one's life dedicated to studying and further research. The researcher's motivation came from within and was not for financial gain or career advancement. The researcher started his post at the SBS in July 2013, and at the time of his presentation to the interviewing panel requested that he be allowed to pursue a doctorate, if successful in securing the post of Senior Lecturer. The Head of Department granted this wish but suggested that the researcher pursue a DBA rather than a PhD due to his extensive practitioner experience within the retail sector. The researcher has always been keen to continuously learn throughout his life, including through Continuous Professional Development (CPD), and further academic studies. The researcher is also passionate about retailing and is highly motivated to improve the sector and contribute to this whenever possible. The following section presents the researcher's reflections after the research was completed, and this will explain in more detail how his experience and passion developed in retailing (more notably CM), and how this has motivated him to embark upon the current research topic and how he felt strongly that it would contribute to academia and practice.

2.4 Personal Reflection

This section is important for the DBA, as it reflects on some aspects of the best five years of the researcher's life. It has been hard, and at times impacted on the researcher's mental health due to the intensity of the work, while simultaneously trying to balance professional and personal commitments.

The researcher's working life story began in 1904, despite not being born until 1962. He was the fourth generation born into a large family butcher and bakery business founded by his great-grandfather over 100 years ago. The business operated in Lancashire, England and was a retail business comprising of ten retail outlets, an abattoir, bakery and meat processing unit; many of the food product recipes such as meat pies dated back to the 1920s, withstanding the test of time and two world wars. The business was fundamental in shaping the researcher's values and business perspectives, and building the foundations of his future philosophical stance, which is further highlighted in Chapter 4: Methodology. Additionally, how the researcher's philosophical position has helped to shape the research is outlined. The family business was challenging, both operationally and economically due to the highly competitive market; always experiencing constant change, innovation and changing consumer trends. The meat industry in

the 1990s experienced many setbacks, including bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE), commonly known as mad cow disease, which is a neurodegenerative disease affecting cattle. This issue, coupled with various food safety issues such as traceability sourcing, forced the industry to almost reinvent itself. Owning and managing a business through these difficult times exposed the researcher to a wide range of problems, which helped him develop life skills and responsibilities ahead of his young age. The researcher managed the business through these difficult times, often taking risks until 2001, when a successful sale of the business was secured.

The researcher worked for Asda for 12 years, starting as an in-store manager then progressing to a senior managerial position at the Head Office. The promotion was rapid due to the researcher having developed key skills from the family business, where business owners needed to be operational, marketers, accountants, and the best salespeople in the organisation by forming successful trading relationships with both customers and suppliers. It was this skill that the researcher 'mastered', learning much of this from his father who headed the family business. He realised the importance of building strong business relationships with customers and suppliers, which would eventually develop into trusting relationships, to deliver increased performance. The researcher was able to use this skill to attract high-level participants into the research study. This improved the quality of the data collected, reflecting how the decision makers within CM viewed their day-to-day work roles, and how each member of the relationship could add value for the customer (known as the consumer or shopper). The researcher developed a wider understanding of retailing whilst serving as a manager at the supermarket retailer Asda. The company recognised the importance of the consumer and the needs of the business to be flexible with the supplier, to achieve this goal. Of the UK retailers, Asda was the first to introduce CM into this market due to their ownership by the USA Company Walmart (Walmart, 2020). Walmart (2020) pioneered CM in America when the founder Sam Walton found that by working closely with suppliers, every business was able to improve efficiency and profits by exactly delivering what the consumer wanted. He saw the retailer as the shop front having the consumer 'footfall', and specific demographic customers only shopped in his store. He also became aware of the operational difficulties of manufacturers, and by working with one business plan, they could maximise production capabilities. The product could be produced during quieter manufacturing times and then even sold to consumers during special promotions, creating a 3-way 'win-win-win' scenario for the supplier, retailer and the consumer.

The researcher experienced first-hand the rapid growth of CM within the food sector. Asda is a multi-billion-pound company, and the researcher had responsibility for £20M per week (£1bn per annum). The CM concept exploded into the retail market, and other retailers soon began to recognise its benefits. Food manufacturers were becoming the experts in their product areas and the retailers were becoming increasingly more reliant on this service. Certain categories were better attuned to CM than others, and the researcher wanted to expand his knowledge of manufacturing and therefore joined a major beef and lamb supplier based in Northern Ireland, Dungannon Meats, later to become (Dunbia, 2020). This company operated CM services when dealing with the major retailers, including Sainsbury's (Sainsbury's 2020). The researcher has worked in a CM role with the Co-op, as the customer liaison and quickly progressed to overseeing the entire group of UK retailers by supporting the individual category managers working on each retail account. The Dunbia (2020) business was a family owned company that had a significant turnover of more than £800M per annum.

The researcher has therefore, worked in senior CM roles for both the retailer and supplier; always being responsible for high volumes of turnover and staffing. His passion for retailing and CM, grew exponentially, and as an experienced practitioner he saw the benefits and drawbacks of the process, from both retailer and supplier perspectives. The researcher started to teach marketing and retailing at the University of Central Lancashire UCLan (2020) and specialised in the topic of co-creation of value within CM relationships. This specialised area of retailing was recognised by the Chartered Institute of Marketing (CIM), (CIM, 2020), and it formed part of their professional diploma module portfolio. The IGD (2020), which recognised the importance of CM within the UK grocery sector, became involved in the research and were keen to see the findings of the thesis to allow future shaping of CM within the UK grocery industry. As explained in the introduction section, during June 2018 the researcher was invited to present his work to over 300 Suppliers and all the UK retailers at the IGD Category Management and Shopper Marketing Summit in London. This summit is an annual conference arranged by the IGD on behalf of the UK grocery sector, to share best practices between suppliers and retailers. The 300 delegates wanted to become more involved in future CM research and be invited to participate with the new CM centre of excellence at the SBS. The researcher was invited to sit on the committee of the Category Landscapers (2020) Group, a forum of practising category managers to collectively seek solutions to general category problems and support best practice.

The interest in the subject of CM has extended from practice to education; the researcher focuses upon practice-based teaching at undergraduate and postgraduate level courses. Category management is an integral part of this practice-based teaching, and feedback from students showed that they liked the applied approach as it helped them to learn. The researcher introduced the Retail in Practice (RIP) workshop is each year, where student's work on CM problems supported by invited senior category managers from the food industry. Many of the guests are from relationships developed by the researcher during the research process, as they wanted to continue to be involved with academia and student learning. The researcher has always been keen to learn and understand more about the world around him. It is for this reason he has continuously studied both formally and informally alongside his career. He has always delivered guest lectures and helped run workshops when invited by Lancaster University (2020) and the University of Central Lancashire UCLan (2020). He has graduated twice, and for over 20 years has been committed to CPD as a Chartered Marketer and Fellow of the CIM (2020).

The motivation for wanting to understand more about the co-creation of value in CM relationships resulted from working within the industry; this discipline is one of the most important factors in modern day retailing, ensuring consumer's expectations are met. The industry is suffering from the greatest change in its history, brought on by turbulent macro conditions, changing consumer needs, and an explosion in the use of technology in business and domestic environments. The exponential growth in academic interest in the development of S-DL, and the need for more practical examples to support the theory created a research window. Using S-DL logic presented an opportunity through the DBA to explore and unpack relevant issue. It also helped the researcher's teaching by giving students practice-based scenarios and better networks to help students find future employment within the sector. This innovative thinking by the researcher has now become a major strategy for his employer, SHU as part of the Transforming Lives strategy (SHU, 2020). Far too often, teaching is too theoretical and often out-dated, and this does not give students the University experience they require to prepare them for the workplace. Secondly, the motivation came from being an ex-practitioner and recognising that the literature was not reflective of practice, but it was vital for both academia and practice to work together. The subject of CM and the co-creation of value in the CM relationship are highly topical, as evidenced from the agendas of the IGD (2020), suppliers and retailers to provide differentiation. Additionally, it provides a mechanism to address consumer demands and the execution of sales through the ever-increasing types of

sales channels. These include the growth of online retailing, discounter stores, convenience as well as changes to the traditional large out-of-town store trading concepts.

The decision, therefore, to pursue a thesis focused on the co-creation of value through a collaborative relationship using an S-DL lens between a food manufacturer and retailer was timely. IGD (2020) states '*the development of collaborative relationships between the supplier and the retailer need to be a priority to maximise business efficiencies*'. They need to be more open and become two-way relationships, rather than being focused purely on the retailer's mission. Through a better understanding of each other's business, how they both work and what each can do to help the other deliver consumer expectations is how value can be created. In short, both academia and the UK grocery industry see this thesis as highly relevant, topical, and timely. The next section focuses on the defining moments of the researcher's DBA journey.

2.5 Defining Moments of the DBA Journey

The researcher has been committed to lifelong learning due to a desire to always better himself and contribute as much as possible back to society. This contribution has included friends, family and work colleagues. Once the researcher's proposal was accepted, the opportunity to develop a thesis within the area of his interest and specialism was a defining moment. The researcher felt privileged both to be sponsored for the research study by the SBS (2020), and to meet with senior managers as participants, within their organisations.

The second defining moment came during the DB2 presentation, after two years of study. The DBA programme consisted of four taught modules in the first two years, to provide grounding in doctoral level studies and learn about philosophy. The first two years were very confusing for the researcher as the modules were often too complex and were not relevant to the study. The assignments did however help when the research moved to the write-up stage. The DB2 feedback was, however, very practical and related to the nature of the study. This feedback was the point when the researcher started to appreciate how doctoral studies can contribute to theory and practice. Following the DB2 feedback, the researcher could approach the participants and start bringing the research to life. It took over twelve months to complete the research interviews, and the researcher enjoyed this stage very much and was able to leverage his strengths in relationship building and interviewing skills, developed over 25 years in industry. The researcher admits that the interview process was different from academic research;

however, the skills developed in previous interviews were transferable and contributed to the success of the primary research and the collection of valuable data. The meetings with participants were defining moments in the research.

The write-up during the sabbatical period was the next defining moment where the researcher was grateful for the support of the SBS and would not have been able to complete the write up without this break from working. It allowed the researcher to analyse the data without work distractions and commence writing-up the thesis. The researcher, however, worked many hours each day without breaks and after three months it impacted his health. The researcher returned to work and the health issues improved due to less time working alone and by focusing on different activities. The researcher believes this stage in the DBA reduced the completion date by six months. The participants have asked for a copy of the thesis and will use the findings to assist their CM activities. The next section explains the importance of the participants and how their roles provided the research with relevant, high quality data.

2.6 The Importance of the Practitioners

The networks developed over the years by the researcher, placed him in a unique position to carry out the research and write up this thesis. The contacts made over the years have helped the researcher gain access to key influencers in UK CM, at both the supplier and retailer levels. Many of the participants involved in the research held senior management positions within their companies and had responsibilities to make a direct impact on both CM and relationships with the other parties. This privileged position enabled the researcher to capture data directly from the front-end practitioners who experienced the issues on a day-to-day basis (see practitioner testimonials in Appendix 6). As an academic, the researcher is interested in writing academic papers that are factually correct; reflect the reality of practice and further our understanding of the subject. The primary research has produced over 130,000 words of verbatim data (see Appendix 7), of which a limited amount has been used in this thesis. There is, therefore, additional data available for further research, and there is further scope for publication(s) in high impact peer-reviewed journals. The industry participants were pleased with the professional manner by which the researcher conducted both interviews and follow-up sessions, when key themes appeared, which required further exploration. The work of Braun and Clarke (2006) was used predominantly within the methodology section in order to understand the psychology of emerging themes, and how this insight was used to support

decision-making. As they have a passion for CM, they are all available to participate in any further research so that they can work collaboratively with academia. The significance of these strong relationships and the use of senior CM practitioners is a major contribution to the research. Often researchers find it difficult to gain access to senior managers within organisations; this is often an issue for students who, working on research projects, have limited networks and collaborative skills.

The data collated from the participants has been used extensively in the thesis, but also as part of applied teaching in relevant modules, to keep students informed of up-to-date practices and activities. The researcher has worked with undergraduate students on their final year research project focusing on value creation in CM, following on from the researcher's lead. This has resulted in students presenting to the Category Landscapers (2020) and presenting their work together with the researcher at the 2nd Global Conference in New York City (June 2019). Student testimonials are also presented in Appendix 6, for further information. Students have embraced the idea of CM and when given topic choices, have based their assignments around CM, as it is one of the most important areas of retailing. From the student feedback they enjoy the passion of the researcher when presenting lectures and seminars on CM. It has also attracted students to careers with food companies working in CM. In 2015, the researcher presented this DBA research as a poster presentation at the SBS (2020) Doctoral Conference, where it won best poster prize due to the significance of the research question, the uniqueness of the participants and the potential of the results to make a contribution to both academia and practice (see Table 1.1). The research has also been presented in Malaysia at the Tunku Abdul Rahman University College (TAR UC) (2020), (Sheffield Hallam University's partner), to over 800 business and marketing students, including academics (see Table 1.1). The University has given an open invitation to the researcher to return after completion of the research. Throughout 2017 and 2018, various lectures were delivered internally at the SBS (2020) to doctoral students and groups of undergraduate and postgraduate students.

Finally, the interest received for this research from both academia and practice alike has ingrained the need for this research, and CM research projects in the future. The researcher has agreed that on successful completion of the thesis, he will continue his work within CM by working with the practitioners on future research projects and manuscripts, so that they in turn, will develop respect for academia and encourage practitioners to read and implement the recommendations in practice.

2.7 The Learning Process

The previous section has highlighted the interest shown by practitioners towards this DBA and the desire to support the research, as it will update the literature to be in line with the day-to-day CM reality. The researcher started the interviewing process with S2 (S, B/PL), in November 2016 and finished in March 2018, with R2 (L, M). Over this period, a total of 25 interviews of one-hour duration were conducted. These comprised of fifteen supplier and ten retailer interviews. During this period, the researcher's interview skills were developed, as prior to the doctorate he had little opportunity to conduct interviews. The researcher's master's degree was completed over seventeen years ago but had a research methods module that was more theoretical than applied. The interview process for the research was therefore new to the researcher, despite writing the methodology chapter and working with the researcher's supervisory team on interview techniques; the actual interviews were therefore a learning and improvement process. Before academia, the researcher worked in management positions and experienced interview situations for a variety of reasons such as recruitment, sales and marketing, and general management duties. The prospect of the interviews, therefore, did not cause any concern; although the reason for the interview was different, facing people and speaking with them was within the researcher's comfort zone. The researcher has always been objective and never tried to influence the participants either through his own experience, or the pre-research hunches or literature findings. As the study was phenomenological, the researcher had to ensure he freely allowed the participants to explain their reality, and as the research progressed so did the skills of the researcher. He learnt a significant amount from this process, which has now been introduced into his own teaching.

2.8 Summary

The introduction chapter and the importance of practice chapter have together created the backdrop to the thesis, explaining what the thesis is aiming to achieve and contribute to academia and practice. It also explains the difficulties experienced by the researcher and what actions were taken to overcome the issues by demonstrating the value that has been placed on the thesis by academic colleagues and industry practitioners from positive conference feedback. The next chapter is the literature review where the key terms defined in this chapter are explored in the extant literature and how these underpin the research and the conceptual framework of the study.

Chapter 3: Literature Review

3.1 Introduction

This chapter aims to review the pertinent literature and identify the theoretical gaps, to develop a conceptual model and the research questions. The theoretical concept examined in the research is value creation within collaborative relationships. This concept is further sub-divided into value co-creation, value no-creation and value co-destruction. The provision of service is critical within a business relationship and is no different in CM relationships. Service-Dominant Logic (S-DL), according to Vargo and Lusch (2006), represents a departure from the traditional exchange of goods to an exchange of service provision, which represents and creates value. An exploration of the work of how S-DL can create value in collaborative CM relationships will take place. This additional research will investigate the trust theory and how this can lead to loyalty and satisfaction, as it has been suggested by many scholars that trusting relationships are a fundamental requirement to CM (Galbreth, Kurtuluş and Shor, 2015; Barnes *et al.*, 2014; Kurtuluş, Nakkas and Ülkü, 2014; Gupta, Choudhary and Alam, 2014; Han *et al.*, 2014; Huang and Wilkinson, 2013; Viitaharju and Lähdesmäki, 2012; Kurtuluş and Toktay, 2011; Gooner, Morgan and Perreault, 2011; Chun and Cadeaux, 2010; Morgan, Kaleka and Gooner, 2007; Nielsen, Karolefski and Heller, 2006; Desrochers and Nelson, 2006; Leonidou, Paliawadana and Theodosiou, 2006; Humphreys, Li and Chan, 2004; Wang, Raju and Dhar, 2003; Steiner, 2001; Raimondo, 2000; Gruen and Shah, 2000; Zaheer, McEvily and Perrone, 1998; Hogarth-Scott and Dapiran, 1997; Moorman, Zaltman and Deshpandé, 1993). There is no literature to disagree that trust is fundamental to CM. Industry literature discusses the importance of trust in CM relationships. This view is supported by the industry literature, for example Joseph (1996) in *The Category Management Guidebook* states, CM is a method where the vendor and retailer team up and need to trust each other before an effective relationship can exist.

The contextualised lens of the research is restricted to retail CM and explores the CM literature in general, but also within the UK grocery sector. Category management is used in many industries across the world including, for example, the pharmaceutical sector, which is changing to a category captain management approach for its strategic benefits (Trombetta, 2010). This thesis has a focus on the evolution of category captain within CM, and reviews the role of the category captain, and how other suppliers within the category can make category recommendations. The category captain has historically been at the centre of CM decision

making, and according to many scholars, represents an advantaged position over the other non-captain suppliers within the category (Galbreth, Kurtuluş and Shor, 2015; Kurtuluş, Nakkas and Ülkü, 2014; Desrochers and Nelson, 2006; Zenor, 1994). Most CM literature features this position of exclusivity; however, this study shows that the position of authority is shifting in favour of all the suppliers in the category. As consumers have less and less disposable income, they are looking for savings in the cost of groceries (IGD, 2020). Private label products provide a cheaper alternative to traditional branded products. Kantar Worldpanel (2020) noted that the quality of private label products has improved considerably compared to five years ago. Booths (2020) stated that UK consumers are switching to private label products as, arguably, these are as good as, and in a few cases, superior to the branded products. Private labels give retailers a better margin and shopper loyalty through business efficiencies and retailer brand recognition (IGD, 2020).

The current research study is expected to contribute to academic research and be of use to grocery practitioners, including grocery manufacturing and retailing organisations. Currently, CM is still in its infancy in the food industry, and not widely understood by practitioners or academia. As the literature is not always clear, practitioners are implementing CM in different ways and are using outdated frameworks. Nielsen, Karolefski and Heller (2006) defined the eight-stage process of operation. Many organisations have adopted this model and reduced the number of steps to suit their business and often small organisations will only use two of the eight stages. This has brought inconsistency into practice, and this thesis will aim to help clarify some of the issues of category captain management, and the creation of value within the CM relationship.

The UK grocery retailing environment is currently experiencing unprecedented challenges resulting from growing complexities in the marketplace, and the need to satisfy increasing consumer expectations relating to better value (IGD, 2020). The IGD (2020) has stated that this has forced the grocery industry to change current practice and meet the needs of an increasingly demanding consumer. IGD Retail Analysis (2020) confirmed that three major influences are likely to impact the UK grocery sector within the next five years, and where the industry will need to focus their priorities. Following the UK's vote to leave the European Union, Brexit has changed the outlook for the UK grocery market. Retail growth of 15.4% rather than the pre-Brexit prediction of 18.2% over the next five years will take total sales (or size of the pie) to £212.9bn. This growth, will, however, not be driven by volume increase but

by the return of inflation and increased prices in the stores. As disposable incomes are squeezed, coupled with a slowing down of population growth, opportunities for volume growth will decrease. Secondly, retail sales channels within the UK grocery sector are changing, with online remaining the fastest growing channel; however, the forecast is that its expansion will slow down. Discounters will grow market share, faster than previously forecast and the outlook for sales from larger stores is more positive than originally forecast, but they will continue to lose market share. Thirdly, the UK grocery sector is better placed to overcome the challenges that lie ahead. Filimonau and Gherbi (2017) have stated that the UK grocery sector generates a significant amount of food waste, and this is mainly attributed to the food supply chain. Retail stores control waste and operate at a 2% waste level measured against sales. It is the inefficiencies and operating problems created by the supply chain that generate an unacceptable level of food waste. Public Health England (2020) has stated that globally over one-third of total food produced is wasted and is valued at \$1.2 trillion per year. They have also estimated that by 2050 the global population is likely to be 2.3 billion people, and this will require an increase in food production by 70%, or alternatively we should stop throwing food away, WRAP (2017). In the UK grocery market, there is a call from the industry to improve overall operational efficiencies by localising the supply chain. Filimonau and Gherbi (2017) have stated that collaboration within the supply chain stakeholders will improve efficiencies, by streamlining forecasting and demand planning. This will have financial savings through just-in-time deliveries but will also improve food waste. Public Health England (2020) have stated that collaboration within the food chain suppliers and retailers will prevent, globally, \$700 billion of food wastage annually. The researcher is passionate about food waste, and it is anticipated that the research will identify novel ways to improve collaboration through CM.

Over the last few years, retailers have managed to cut operating costs, reduced complexity and introduced strategies to reconnect with the shoppers. This research study is very timely while the UK grocery sector enters one of its most difficult phases for over 100 years. It was welcomed by the participants, who represented both the UK grocery manufacturers (now defined as the supplier), and retailers within the UK grocery sector. It is important to meet the needs of the modern discerning consumer or shopper and for the supplier and retailer to work collaboratively. The study distinguishes between both consumers and shoppers, where a shopper is a person who purchases the product, and the consumer is the person who physically consumes the product (Nielsen, Karolefski and Heller, 2006). The research explores how the supplier and the retailer, sometimes referred to collectively as the 'players' can collaboratively

create value or not for the shopper. The next sections focus on the theoretical and contextualised CM literature related to the retail sector.

3.2 Category Management

The thesis has already identified that the UK grocery sector is experiencing unprecedented changes resulting in new challenges for the incumbents. The diversity of competitors and different store formats has grown exponentially. Discounter stores such as Aldi (2020) and Lidl (2020), and convenience stores such as Tesco (2020) Express and Sainsbury's (2020) Local have changed the dynamics of the marketplace. Recent information technology, such as ordering online, and the use of hand-held devices are also contributing to the change. The food industry cannot hope to handle the complexity of change through traditional transactional exchanges, as these changes often affect all areas of the seller and buyer operations. The Category Management Association (CMA), CMA (2020), stated that the USA market is undergoing significant changes within the grocery sector, and is turning to CM to help the industry address the problems. Hutchins (1997) stated that CM was emerging as a sound philosophy and was a process to address these challenges; it exploded into the retail scene in the late 1990s because it dealt with many of the issues at that time, but now the grocery industry wants the process to develop even further through all partner's working closer together through collaborative relationships.

Defined as the strategic management of interrelated product groups within trade partnerships, CM is where the product categories are managed as separate business units (Nielsen, Karolefski and Heller, 2006). Traditionally, Retailer Category Management (RCM) was used to make CM decisions (Kurtuluş and Toktay, 2011). The retailer themselves managed the category and made decisions with limited support from the suppliers. It was simply a transactional relationship. However, since the early 1990s, grocery retailers and their suppliers have increasingly embraced collaborative CM as the number of categories has grown, and retail buyers are being asked to manage multi-categories often requiring different skills (Desrochers and Nelson, 2006; Kurtuluş, Nakkas and Ülkü, 2014; Morgan, Kaleka and Gooner, 2007). A single product category is now very diverse, and each will contain national brands and private labels (sometimes called own label) products. Within each grouping of products there are usually different quality tiers. Sainsbury (2020) defines these as basics, standard and premium where product quality and price differentiate them (Kurtuluş, Nakkas and Ülkü, 2014; O'Brien,

2014; Kurtuluş and Toktay, 2011; Hübner, 2011; O'Brian, 2009; Morgan, Kaleka and Gooner, 2007; Nielsen, Karolefski and Heller, 2006). With the correct implementation of CM, retailers can gain an advantage over their competitors. This advantage is through working collaboratively and obtaining the latest data and insights; what Kurtuluş, Nakkas and Ülkü (2014), have described as 'merchandising savvy' (effective product positioning on shelf) to exceed consumer expectations. These activities are underpinned by S-DL theory. It also gives faith to the supplier and the retailer that through such collaboration, sales and profits for the organisations will be maximised (Kurtuluş and Toktay, 2011). Alan, Dotson and Kurtuluş (2017); and Zenor (1994) stated that this will be for the entire category rather than a product-by-product basis. Traditional buyer-seller relationships were reliant upon negotiation, but with little collaboration, Kurtuluş and Toktay (2011) argued that when switching from transactional relationships to CM, the profitability of the category increases through the alliance, as there is an elimination of double marginalisation and increased price competition between all category suppliers. As the supplier and the retailer are working collaboratively, the margin achieved is shared rather than each one hoping to make a separate profit margin. Additional shelf-space increases the opportunity for additional products into the category, providing opportunities for suppliers to create value by introducing new and innovative products.

Prior research has shown that CM can be beneficial to retailers, as it simplifies and co-ordinates the process of making assortment, pricing and other merchandising decisions (Alan, Dotson and Kurtuluş 2017; Nielsen, 2006; Walter, Ritter and Gemunden, 2002; Basuroy, Mantrala and Walters, 2001; Dhar, Hoch and Kumar, 2001; Walter, 1999). Kurtuluş, Nakkas and Ülkü (2014) stated that CM has been expanding on a worldwide scale and has been a real breakthrough in trading practices, as the collaboration brings the supplier and the retailer closer together. Suppliers have the product expertise and manufacturing capacity, while the retailers have shopper footfall and offer a full range of products to entice shoppers. Effective category management requires a retailer to align its product offerings with evolving consumer needs, but as retailers manage many categories, it is not always cost effective for them to follow all the retailing and category trends. Manufacturers (suppliers) within a category are seen to be experts in their field and have a better understanding of consumer needs in a smaller focused set of products and categories (Blattberg and Fox, 1995). Alan, Dotson and Kurtuluş (2017) stated that the combination of retailer's lack of resources and the supplier's superior category knowledge created collaboration opportunities, and the best use of the retail shelf space would be determined.

A more detailed discussion of the collaborative relationship theory will appear in a later section. However, ahead of the theory, CM collaborative working maximises the skills within the CM relationship between the supplier and retailer. It brings together the organisations, which collectively determine the most appropriate products at the right prices to meet evolving consumer demands (Alan, Dotson and Kurtuluş 2017). Traditionally, the relationship has been a transactional trading relationship, where brands and suppliers compete for space without a more holistic view of the requirements of the full category. Suppliers would sell their products to the buyer offering the best price and product offers, without consideration of consumer needs from competitor products within the whole category. There are different collaboration levels practised within CM. Retailers will collaborate with all suppliers within a category, particularly where they have strong brands within the category, and with organisations that produce private label products to satisfy the growing consumer trend for retailer private label products. Many branded suppliers sit in both camps, producing their brands but also increasing supply chain efficiencies by manufacturing private label products for the retail customer. The thesis refers to these suppliers as 'non-captain' suppliers as they are suppliers but not the category captain supplier. Many retailers manage the categories in collaboration with one of their leading suppliers, often referred to as the category captain or the practice of category captaincy (Alan, Dotson and Kurtuluş, 2017; Desrochers, Gundlach and Foer, 2003).

The next section will define the role of the category captain and the evolution of the role and is now available to not only the most significant category supplier, but indeed to any supplier within the category. Morgan, Kaleka and Gooner (2007) discussed improving the performance of supermarket retailers using key suppliers as category captains. The use of the category captain reduces costs and provides a basis for differentiation. Levering resources and capabilities could achieve this differentiation and even managing other supplier brands (Morgan, Kaleka and Gooner, 2007; Gooner, Morgan and Perreault, 2011). Kurtuluş and Toktay (2011) have stated that retailers were beginning to outsource CM to leading manufacturers, which they described as category captainship. Once the retailer had assigned a category captain to manage the category on their behalf, they needed to feel that the category captain would provide the right insight and recommendations. According to Gruen and Shah (2000), category plans are implemented, based not just on their objectivity but also on the entire CM process. The literature still refers to the role of the category captain (for example, Alan, Dotson and Kurtuluş, 2017; Kurtuluş, Nakkas and Ülkü, 2014; Gooner, Morgan and Perreault, 2011), whereas this research has found that this role no longer exists in the UK grocery market.

The category captain in the UK is now known as the 'preferred supplier' or 'category adviser'. The research will, however, continue to refer to the role as category captain in line with the existing literature, but make recommendations that the CM literature appertaining to the UK grocery sector is updated. The researcher understands that the term category captain is still in use in the USA market, and so this literature will not need updating.

3.2.1 Who on Earth is the Category Captain?

One of the leading and often most influential collaborative relationships within CM is between the category captain (preferred supplier), and the retail buyer (Galbreth, Kurtuluş and Shor, 2015). Category captainship has, according to the Progressive Grocer (2011), become a preferred way of executing CM. According to Kurtuluş, Nakkas and Ülkü (2014), the category captain is appointed by the retailer to manage the entire category on behalf of the retailer and in effect the other category suppliers (known as non-captain suppliers). The category captain is deemed to be the 'expert in the category', and a key manufacturer within the category with a full understanding of the category and its market (Harris and McPartland, 1993; Progressive Grocer, 2007, 2008, 2009). For example, a large supplier who assisted a retailer in the dry packaged dinners category by replacing slow-moving stock-keeping units (SKUs) with faster-turning products, or a baby foods manufacturer who helped a retailer in the baby foods category by recommending a new planogram with some new products in the mix (known as assortment), (Alan, Dotson and Kurtuluş 2017). A captain's recommendations vary across retailers and often influence the main elements of the collaborative relationship highlighted earlier; the pricing assortment and merchandising decisions (Levy *et al.* 2004). This collaboration, of course, can impact on the non-captain suppliers within the category. Alan, Dotson and Kurtuluş (2017) claimed that, pricing and private label products can impact the category captain arrangements, and so this research investigates the nature of private labels to try and understand how private label suppliers can become the category captain. Chintagunta *et al.*, (2002) have argued that a private label programme is a key driver of retailer pricing decisions, and so should be given more priority to enable the collaboration between the supplier and the retailer, in an effort to generate a higher margin for each other and still sell to the consumer at a cheaper price. Kumar and Steenkamp (2007) have stated that private label products give higher percentage margins, and so private label suppliers should be awarded category captain status. Conversely, Pauwels and Srinivasan (2004); Ailawadi and Harlam (2004) have both stated that despite the use of private labels to increase the retailers' bargaining power, it may not increase store traffic due

to a lack of branded products. It may impact store loyalty and create an inverted relationship between a household's private label and share and store loyalty (Ailawadi, Pauwels and Steenkamp, 2008). Alan, Dotson and Kurtuluş (2017) have stated that further research needs to be carried out into private label suppliers from more than a pricing and percentage margin perspective, as they only reviewed organisations with poor financial returns. The research therefore looks at private label suppliers becoming the category captain, as the practitioners believed it was more about collaboration and the provision of additional support and resources than just price and margin.

Often tasked with purchasing for numerous different categories, retail buyers can no longer be experts in a particular category because there have been several new categories offered by retailers over the last 20 years, due to evolving trends in catering, changing tastes, and consumers demanding more (Harris and McPartland, 1993). Retail buyers do not have the resources to attach to each product category, whereas the suppliers are experts in their field, and they contribute resources to support their retail customers and ensure the category is correctly managed (IGD, 2020). Suppliers know their market and are constantly assessing the changes in consumer demand, new products and competitors. They employ managers to review the marketplace and provide an up-to-date insight, which they share with the retail customers (Asda Stores, 2020). The change in all market sectors has seen the need for the retailer to assign the task of managing the category to one of their trusted suppliers - category captain (Kurtuluş and Toktay, 2011). Morgan, Kaleka and Gooner (2007); Blattberg and Fox (1995) stated that retailers could significantly enhance category performance by granting the key supplier the role of category captain. Kurtuluş, Nakkas and Ülkü (2014) stated that retailers do not always understand their suppliers' production capabilities, and by allowing the category captain to advise on new products, production capabilities and changing consumer trends can significantly improve the overall consumer offer, price and promotional strategy. They also stated that at certain times of the year manufacturers have a 'quiet' time in their factories, but if a category captain creates a promotional offer due to improvements in production efficiencies, amazing deals can be offered to the consumers. Pricing is also an issue within captaincy, as Kurtuluş, Nakkas and Ülkü (2014) stated that pricing and product assortment decisions often extend from wholesale pricing. The category captain will ensure that the retailer achieves the right profit margin driven by product consumer attractiveness. This strategy clearly has issues for consumers as they may not receive the best possible offer in the store for the category, but are presented with a range, which keeps the retailer's margin safe. This strategy is likely to have

a long-term negative impact on the category sales or reduce the retailer's market share, as consumers shop at the competitors where they can find the products they want.

The category captain is usually responsible for developing and recommending the category strategy, which will then be adopted by the buyer based on supporting the retailers' strategy and goals. The captain advises operational actions to achieve the strategy, including brand listing from all category suppliers. This strategy includes the product range known as the 'assortment', and promotion planning activities to improve category performance (Kurtuluş, Nakkas and Ülkü, 2014; Dhar, Hoch and Kumar, 2001; Gruen and Shah, 2000). The retail buyer shares pertinent information such as sales data, pricing, turnover and shelf placement of brands with the category captain (Kurtuluş and Toktay, 2011). In return, the category captain will analyse the category and provide the buyer with a detailed plan for the category. The retail buyer is, in effect, handing over the management of a multi-million-pound category within their business to a third-party organisation, which requires a significant degree of monitoring. (Galbreth, Kurtuluş and Shor, 2015; Kurtuluş, Nakkas and Ülkü, 2014; Gooner, Morgan and Perreault, 2011; Kurtuluş and Toktay, 2011). The trade literature has suggested that both suppliers and retailers benefit from category captainship (for example, Alan, Dotson and Kurtuluş 2017; Progressive Grocer 2001, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2013).

However, as can be imagined, the literature declares that controversies surround the category captain, as they provide recommendations to the retailers, regarding not only their own products but also those of their competitors (Alan, Dotson and Kurtuluş 2017). Caramelli (2004) has argued that because of this, the captain may be biased towards their own products to the detriment of their competitors' products and ensure that they stock as many of their own products as possible. Alan, Dotson and Kurtuluş (2017); Gooner, Morgan and Perreault (2011) have advised that the term 'competitive exclusion' has often been used to reflect the position of the captain. Moreover, scholars researching CM have suggested that this has put non-captain suppliers in the category at a disadvantage. Hardin (1960) defined competitive exclusion as the principle that states two species are not able to coexist with a permanent population. Within the context of CM, the two species are the category captain and the non-captain suppliers. However, if there is limited differentiation between the suppliers and each one is treated fairly, then competitive exclusion should not exist. The retailer would ensure all category captains are scrutinised and monitored for potential competitive exclusion opportunities; for example, the retailer would ensure that the category captain provides enough shelf-space to carry all the

suppliers' brands. Kurtuluş and Toktay (2011) found that competitive exclusion was higher when there was limited shelf space, as the category captain would allocate only limited space and fewer competitor products. The retailer's challenge would be to identify whether a category captain has excluded certain category suppliers and brands, so that they could include their own products within a reduced shelf space. This exclusion may also be relevant to the use of promotional activities between themselves and other suppliers. Will the retailer be able to trust the recommendations of the category captain or would it be a chance for the category captain to exploit the situation and include too many of their own products? This has been defined by Kurtuluş, Nakkas and Ülkü (2014) as opportunism. Trust of the category captain and indeed the non-captain suppliers is paramount and is discussed later in the literature review.

According to Alan, Dotson and Kurtuluş (2017), existing research on the category captain was based on legal theory (Wright, 2009); surveys (Gooner, Morgan and Perreault, 2011; Morgan, Kaleka and Gooner, 2007); game theoretic models of supplier-retailer interactions (Kurtuluş, Nakkas and Ülkü, 2014; Kurtuluş and Toktay, 2011; Subramanian *et al.*, 2010); and structural estimation, which enabled counter-factual analyses, depending on how hypothetical category captain implementation would affect category decisions (Nijs, Misra and Hansen, 2014). Legal theory is all well and good, but it does not address the reality of the CM and the practice adopted by both the suppliers and retailers. Alan, Dotson and Kurtuluş (2017) have stated that empirical evidence of the collaborative and competitive implications of category captaincy was scarce. They argued, this was because access to retailers was difficult and they were reluctant to share data because of anti-trust concerns. Alan, Dotson and Kurtuluş (2017) also stated that previous studies of CM and the category captain had majored on non-empirical studies. These studies have resulted in developing new knowledge without an understanding of the role of practitioners and what they did.

Consequently, as the literature is not always accurate, new academic papers are likely to contain incorrect information. The researcher was troubled during the interview process as the practitioners laughed at him when he asked them about the category captain. The literature review had identified the role, but the reality was that the role became extinct five years ago, and the role of preferred supplier emerged instead. The empirical data gained from the interviews in this research study, therefore, contributes to the literature. Alan, Dotson and Kurtuluş (2017: p.142) adopted an empirical study and claimed it '*constitutes an important contribution to the literature on category captaincy because of the uniqueness of the data set*'. It does, however, have limitations because it is limited to a single category. They suggested

that further research was required to test the generalizability of their findings, especially when the retailer was looking for increased profitability. This study builds upon the work of Alan, Dotson and Kurtuluş (2017), and through a phenomenological study has explored the reality of practitioners working within CM, from both supplier and retailer perspectives. The study contributes empirical evidence relating to the collaborative and competitive implications of the category captain, or preferred supplier as it is now known in the UK. It sought to answer many of the questions posited in the literature, for example, does the retailer benefit from the category captain? Additionally, what was the impact of the category captain on other suppliers within the category, including private label? It has also explored how non-captain suppliers, including private label suppliers create opportunities aspiring to the role of category captain (Nijs, Misra and Hansen, 2014; Kurtuluş, Nakkas and Ülkü, 2014; Kurtuluş and Toktay, 2011).

Kumar and Steenkamp (2007) stated that many retailers viewed private-label as a critical component of a successful category strategy, and they used private-label as a metric to evaluate category performance. Alan, Dotson and Kurtuluş (2017) argued that despite the practical relevance of private-label within CM, it has never been considered in the CM literature, and, therefore, their study included the importance of private-label in category decision-making. This study has also examined the significance of private label within the remit of not only the category captain, but also within the CM process for this very reason. The interviews included the practitioners explaining the reality of private label only, as well as brand and private label supply together. The literature has not hitherto examined the views of a range of suppliers and retailers in one study, and the researcher claims that this is a unique contribution which is explained in more detail later in the thesis.

3.3 Collaborative Relationships

Čater and Čater (2010); Ulaga (2003); and Panayides (2002) have stated that business-to-business relationships often create a competitive advantage for firms, which lead to superior results. Samiee and Walter (2003) argued that interest in the impact of buyer-seller relationships in business markets had increased significantly since 1993. CM started in the 1990s in response to this shifting demand (Walmart, 2020). The way in which two or more people interact or connect is considered a relationship. Samiee and Walter (2003) have stated that companies often do not have relationships with companies, but it is the individuals within those organisations that usually build relationships. Relationships between sellers and buyers

can range from collaborative to transactional relationship options (Kalwani and Narayandas, 1995; Ganesan, 1994; Heide and John, 1990). Sanders *et al.*, (2007) stated that transactional relationships are often adversarial and classified by tasks and functions not critical to the organisation and have low levels of interdependence related to the other parties. Buyers may have several transactional relationships with a supplier, which Rinehart *et al.*, (2004) defined as 'arm's length' transactions, and these were very impersonal, repeating over time without any structured agreements.

Collaborative relationships, on the other hand, according to Whipple and Russell (2007) were more likely to be co-operative and long-term and operate on a more interpersonal basis. Bunduchi (2008) has argued that they involve both economic and social elements. Several studies have confirmed the positive impact of collaboration on performance. Narayanan, Narasimhan and Schoenherr (2015) stated that other studies have concluded that collaboration often leads to beneficial effects, whereas others have questioned the positive effects of collaboration on the relationship performance. Narayanan, Narasimhan and Schoenherr (2015) concluded that trust mediates the impact of collaboration on performance, but this was non-linear, which meant that organisations needed to establish a certain level of collaboration to realise performance. Narayanan, Narasimhan and Schoenherr (2015) claimed that the seller-buyer relationship could be positive, neutral, or negative depending on the levels of trust in the relationship, which map to value creation and S-DL. The importance of trust within the CM relationship was therefore considered to be a significant aspect of the collaborative relationship, which is explored below. Equally, Rauyruen and Miller (2007) have stated that, the quality of a B-2-B relationship has a direct impact on loyalty where trust, satisfaction and service quality are important constructs of this. In response to this, the literature review includes a review of trust, loyalty, and service dominant logic (S-DL), all being pre-requisites to S-DL. Collectively these constructs have not been considered in the context of CM. The conceptual model involving these collective constructs developed in this thesis therefore contributes to theory. Rauyruen and Miller (2007) were concerned about whether it was the individual or the organisations they worked for that had the biggest influence on the relationship quality. Previous CM literature suggests that it was both, but for B-2-B relationships to continue, the organisation needed to establish trust at a senior level to ensure a sustainable relationship (Kurtuluş, Nakkas and Ülkü, 2014). Finally, Corsaro (2014) stated that value processes in a business relationship were becoming more important than the object itself, and this also led into the work of Vargo and Lusch (2014), within S-DL. Corsaro (2014) argued that it was the

role of the actors in the business relationship, which influenced the value, but more notably value creation. They believed it was the internal and external actors who had the most significant impact on the relationship rather than the organisation itself. Value creation is therefore the central construct of this research to understand better the views of the actors, as to whether value was created by them or their organisations.

While the literature has discussed economic impacts and performance in collaborative business relationships, this study has focused on the social aspects. Within a business relationship, there is always a degree of social interaction between individuals, and this interaction again defines the quality of the relationship. Social interaction and development of personal relationships increases competitive advantage, particularly for businesses operating within CM (Kurtuluş, Nakkas and Ülkü, 2014; Day, 2000; Dwyer, Schurr and Oh, 1987; Sheth and Parvatiyar, 1995a, 1995b; Webster, 1992). The importance of relationships at both individual and organisational levels have a direct impact on trust; the stronger the relationship, the quicker trust will develop. Establishing trust leads to loyalty in the relationship. Developments within relationships are likely to improve loyalty from the retailers' perspective and, in turn, improve the suppliers' opportunity to maximise profitability. Spekman and Stern (1979) described collaborative supplier-buyer relationships as evolving when the stakeholders thought in terms of 'we' instead of 'me'. When there was a collaboration between the parties and execution on a long-time basis, CM relationships were more effective, to enable both organisations to plan effectively and focus on the needs of the consumer. A detailed discussion on CM will follow in Chapter 6.

Whipple and Russell (2007) stated that collaborative relationships provided significantly more advantages than transactional relationships, and Ganesan (1994) argued that longer-term collaborative relationships often created many competitive advantages through reduced costs, decreased partner opportunism and a reliable customer base for the supplier. Within CM, it allows the organisations to work collaboratively, focusing on the needs of the consumer. Kalwani and Narayandas (1995) have argued that collaborative working in CM helps to grow sales and profitability for both organisations within the partnership, and at the same time satisfying the needs of the consumer. This strategy is the 'triple win' (satisfaction for the supplier, retailer and consumer); referred to in Chapter 5 by participant S8 (L, B/PL), who at the time was employed by a large food manufacturer producing both brands and private label products. According to Lindblom, Arto and Olkkonen (2008), CM brings many positive elements to the supplier-retailer interaction; for example, continuous collaboration instead of

repeated competitive bidding, and knowledge sharing instead of knowledge withholding. However, some academics, for example, Frankel, Goldsby and Whipple (2002) have claimed that collaborative working did not always live up to expectations, and often it slowed down progress with initiatives. Daugherty *et al.*, (2006) stated that collaboration created different messages depending on how it was interpreted, meaning there were benefits to the collaboration, but these were often shrouded, and confusion became evident between the parties. The researcher has interviewed practitioners from both supplier and retailer sides, through semi-structured questioning to gain a deeper understanding of how they perceived the day-to-day activities of CM. Collaborative working is fundamental to creating value within CM relationships. This research, however, has uncovered the reality of value creation within the CM relationship, and which aspects of the relationship gained the most benefits.

This thesis, therefore, reviews the theoretical literature of value creation with a specific focus on the co-creation, no-creation and co-destruction of value through an S-DL lens; the appropriation of this value for the supplier and the retailer are considered. As it is a collaborative relationship, the development of trust leads to loyalty and satisfaction within the relationship. The role of the category captain or the preferred supplier, and how as a non-captain supplier the organisation can aspire to the dizzy heights of the category captain are also considered. Trust has been mentioned earlier as one of the most important variables within collaborative relationships but is explained further in the next section.

3.3.1 Trust

Trust is a fundamental social phenomenon which is multi-faceted, complex, and culturally important. This section unpicks the elements of trust relevant to the research, particularly in relation to S-DL and value creation, and an important aspect of collaborative relationships. Trust for this research is framed in the work of academics, but the theoretical framework of Guido Mollering in his book *Trust: Reason, Routine, Reflexivity* (Mollering, 2008). Mollering (2008) is interested in researching interorganisational co-operation and how trust fits within this. Mollering (2008) states without trust society would disintegrate. 2,500 years ago Confucius said that trust is a precondition of social relations (Hann, 1968). Many other academics have pursued trust to understand more about its nature and its impact in society and the economy. Lyon, Mollering and Saunders (2012) state more empirical research into trust is required from different contexts to gain a deeper understanding of its multi-faceted dimensions.

They state the research can be qualitative or quantitative depending upon the needs of the study, and further research requires investigations into antecedents of trust, process of building trust, decision-making in trust, and distrust in institutions. This claim from Lyon, Mollering and Saunders (2012) is supported by Mathews and Stokes (2013: p.861) where they state there are few empirical studies within industrial 'districts'. The researcher claims that this research addresses these concerns within the context of CM.

With regards to CM and this thesis, the focus of attention is on a trusting relationship between the supplier and the retailer. Huang and Wilkinson (2013); Geyskens Steenkamp and Kumar (1998) stated that trust was a key dimension in business relationships, and this has been studied extensively in the management literature, although little attention has been paid to trust within the context of CM. Orth, Bouzdine-Chameeva and Brand (2013) stated that trust played a significant part in retail activities including where there was a collaboration between a supplier and retailer within CM relations. Nielsen and Evans (2004) supported the importance of trust and it was encouraging that the voice of practitioners in CM mirrored the literature. Free (2008) however, stated that the notion of trust was covered in the CM literature, where seller and buyer collaborations occurred. However, they examined the way in which calculative practices were implicated in the constitution of trust in UK retail, and they stated that trust does not exist, it is just said to happen. Suppliers often did not trust the retailer and *vice versa*. Free (2008) presented a longitudinal field study where management accounting practices pursued under the banner of CM, operated to dissemble a variety of self-interested actions. Here trust was deployed largely as a discursive resource which ultimately resulted in distrust and cynicism. The paper was particularly focused on accounting systems and joint performance rather than looking at the creation of value using operand resources. A limitation of the current research study was that it only considered the financial implications, and even though this was important there are social aspects that could have been considered. The researcher has taken a neutral view on the existence of trust in CM relationships and sought to solve the issue by selecting a qualitative methodology (see Chapter 4). Free (2008) stated that the calculative nature of the participants hid the truth and so masked trust; the 'talk' was different than the 'walk', as the actors were hiding issues by saying what they thought the partner wanted to hear. The participants were never given the chance to state the reality as there was so much at risk within the relationship. This study took an inductive qualitative approach, as Free (2008) stated, research was needed into collaborations where operators could be open and honest, without recourse to getting to the centre of problems. Organisations were searching for new ways to enhance cooperation through trusting relationships between people and groups, in order to

create value. Interest in how to promote and actualise trust has increased (Kramer and Tyler, 1996), and this has been an essential moderator in business relationships (Morgan and Hunt, 1994). According to scholars of CM, trust is an essential element of a successful collaborative relationship and is significant between a grocery supplier and retailer (for example, Viitaharju and Lähdesmäki, 2012; Dwyer, Schurr and Oh, 1987). Over the years, academics have widely acknowledged that trust could lead to cooperative behaviour amongst individuals, groups and organisations (Axelrod, 1984; Gambetta, 1988; Good, 1988, Mayer, Davis and Schoorman, 1995; McAllister, 1995). According to Currall and Inkpen (2002), and Hosmer (1995), there is no agreed definition of trust in the literature, as this is dependent upon the discipline. Trust has received a great deal of attention in social psychology (Deutsch 1960; Lewicki and Bunker, 1996; Lindsfold, 1978), sociology (Lewis and Weigert, 1985; Strub and Priest, 1976), and economics (Dasgupta, 1988; Williamson, 1993), as well as marketing and retailing (Anderson and Weitz, 1989; Dwyer, Schurr and Oh, 1987; Ganesan, 1994; Moorman, Zaltman and Deshpandé, 1993; Moorman, Deshpandé and Zaltman, 1992). Each discipline offers a unique insight into the nature of trust and the process through which it develops. According to Ganesan (1994); Kumar, Scheer and Steenkamp (1995), trust in business management relationships is the perceived credibility and benevolence of the relationship. Trust in interpersonal relationships was one of the earliest studies done by Mellinger (1956: p.1) where he stated that *‘trust is an individual’s confidence in another person’s intentions’*. Rousseau *et al.*, (1998: p.394) defined trust in collaborative relationships as *‘confident expectations and a willingness to be vulnerable’*, whilst the Oxford Dictionary (2020) defines trust as a commitment entrusted to one which will be used by another. The definition of trust for this research is that for a successful CM alliance to exist, there must be a joint readiness by the supplier and retailer to partner only with whom they have confidence in (Huang and Wilkinson, 2013; Nielsen and Evans, 2004; Moorman, Deshpandé and Zaltman, 1992). Without any confidence in the other party a sense of vulnerability is likely to exist and prevent open and honest relationships.

Many academics view trust in broad terms as one's belief and expectation about the likelihood of having a desirable action performed by a trustee (Nielsen and Evans, 2004; Sitkin and Roth, 1993). Others view trust as others' goodwill and reliability in a risky exchange situation (Ring and Van de Ven, 1994). Overall, Arnott (2007) stated that recent academic thinking views it as something that needs to exist when two or more people are working collaboratively, where they work for different organisations. According to Huang and Wilkinson (2013); and Moorman, Zaltman and Deshpandé (1993), trust is a willingness to deal with an exchange partner in whom

they have confidence. This trust hinges on a belief, sentiment or an expectation about an exchange partner that results from partners' expertise, reliability, and intentionality. According to Gupta, Choudhary and Alam (2014), trust is a component of the quality of a relationship, and it indicates a persons' credibility in a business situation as well as their reputation for trustworthiness. They stated that trust is a collaborative relationship that builds from the frequent sharing of information, face-to-face contact, and cooperative behaviour. This leads to joint responsibilities, sharing planning activities and together meeting the consumer expectations. Trust is now an essential aspect of CM relationships as it reduces uncertainty (Kollock, 1994). Crosby, Evans, and Cowles (1990) suggested that trust increased the opportunities for value creation and sales growth in supplier-buyer relationships. Ganesan (1994) confirmed that trust was fundamental to resolving conflict and creating sustainable relationships. Jarratt and Ceric (2015) recognised that trust between organisations on a collective and individual basis existed at different levels with different qualities, and this affected the behaviour of managers. Relationships within CM rely heavily on trust, where the supplier and retailer work together, operating as a single team, reducing management tiers and operational structures (Jones and George, 1998). The relationship often relies on goodwill and both partners must be genuinely interested in each other's welfare and be motivated for mutual gain. A retailer facing some degree of risk in the purchasing situation will need to be able to turn to a reliable supplier who has the retailer's best interests as a priority. This reliability helps to build trust and provides for a more successful relationship and enables both partners to create value through value co-creation. A lack of trust in the collaboration leads to no-creation of value or even value co-destruction. An example of where trust is vital in CM is through a joint 'open book policy' where both partners share confidential data about each other and use this information to create value. This open book policy will include confidential information relevant to the trading relationship such as historical sales, pricing, consumer insights and forecasting information. Chen (2003) argued that collaborative forecasting tended to be superior to the individual forecasting, as working together, both sets of skills and knowledge were more likely to produce an accurate estimation. Forecasting is often product volume, sales rates and consumer retention. For example, it provides an opportunity for suppliers to declare the actual cost of product manufacture, and so how could partners develop a strategy that still delivered joint margin and ultimately consumer satisfaction? Without trust in the relationship, both sides would be cautious which would prevent open and free conversation that was essential to achieving the desired outcomes. Suppliers guard cost prices if they do not trust the retailer, as they feel they will want to maximise the retailer profit further and expect heavily

discounted pricing. Trust facilitates more trust, and if the supplier declares the real cost strategically both parties may agree loss making in the short-term, if the future long-term would eventually benefit the supplier. Kumar (1996) reported that buyers should not take short-term advantage of suppliers, by exploiting them for 'quick wins' such as demanding lower prices, new products, etc. They should both work together and plan the category, including forecasting future prices and making the appropriate strategic decisions. Unreasonable short-term demands may come back to haunt them in the future, for example, reduced price leads to a devalued category and lower margins for both supplier and retailer. Category management does not support this type of behaviour due to its collaborative nature, and if the trust grows through openly sharing experiences, this will no doubt improve each side's ability to predict the other's behaviour (Doney and Cannon, 1997). Barnes *et al.*, (2014) have argued that in western cultures, empirical studies validate the positive effect of trust on the quality of the relationship, namely cooperation and collaboration (Anderson and Narus, 1990; Morgan and Hunt, 1994), commitment (Ganesan, 1994), and satisfaction (Geyskens, Steenkamp and Kumar, 1998; Ha, Karande and Singhapakdi, 2004; Karande and Kumar, 1995). Humphreys, Li and Chan (2004) have supported this view and stated that the buyer became dependant on the information, which encouraged joint activities. Trust is not merely an input of the relationship, but it is both a precondition and an outcome of relationship development. Rauyruen and Miller (2007) found that trust in the supplier gave the buyer commitment to the supplier and this led to loyalty, and often first choice for any new business or joint project work. Manufacturing suppliers were, therefore, encouraged to provide a long-term commitment to the retail buyers, which in turn would build a trusting relationship, develop loyalty and create value. Gupta, Choudhary and Alam (2014); and Hogarth-Scott and Dapiran (1997) argued that trust was considered as one of the components of the quality of a relationship, as it indicated a person's credibility in a business situation.

Trust is seen as an inherently individual-level phenomenon according to Zaheer, McEvily and Perrone (1998). They stated that there was individual and organisational trust where the latter referred to the collective orientation of the business, and individual trust referred to the specific behaviour of the individuals within organisations. Barnes *et al.*, (2014) confirmed that trust required personal relationships with face-to-face contact, which formed the cornerstone of intercompany relationships and contributed to business success (Ambler, Styles and Xiucun, 1999; Tsang, 1998; Yan and Sorenson, 2004). Organisational trust is the belief that a party's word or promise will be fulfilled in an exchange relationship (Ambler, Styles and Xiucun,

1999; Tsang 1998; Yan and Sorenson 2004). When trust between both parties in an inter-firm relationship is healthy, there is increased cooperation and mutual help and support (Morgan and Hunt, 1994). Barnes *et al.*, (2014); Leonidou, Palihawadana and Theodosiou (2006); and Anderson and Narus (1990) argued that once established, both parties have a strong desire to commit resources and energy to ensure the longevity of the relationship, which becomes the driving force for improving the quality of the relationship. Building long-term business relationships where trust already exists between individuals increases loyalty (Hutt and Sesh, 2004; Berry and Parasuraman, 1991). As discussed in the literature it is vital that the supplier category managers and the buyers form a healthy relationship at an individual level, rather than relying on a strong relationship at the organisational level. These individuals are the decision makers, ensuring decisions are made and action is taken. The research will explore if this is fundamental in CM or if the organisations need to be aligned and trusting. This is because often when individuals move on into a different role, the CM relationship has new practitioners, and a new trusting relationship needs to be developed from scratch. The departing manager will often facilitate an introduction, but it is critical that the personalities of both partners match for a new trusting relationship to develop. In practice, if a category manager does not work well with a retail buyer, the former will be taken off that account and moved to another account or even dismissed. Williamson (1993); and Williamson (1985), however, argued that while individuals developed trust in the relationship, they still needed to work within the boundaries and guidelines of their organisations, and therefore, create organisational trust. Interpersonal trust and inter-organisational trust are, therefore, connected but are empirically and theoretically distinct concepts (Nielsen and Evans, 2004). Both are important in the collaborative CM relationship, and where trust exceeds expectation at either the organisation or individual level it is often a determinant of the appointment of the category captain (Gooner, Morgan and Perreault, 2011; Morgan, Kaleka and Gooner, 2007; Desrochers and Nelson, 2006; Dhar, Hoch and Kumar, 2001; Walter, Ritter and Gemunden, 2002; Basuroy, Mantrala and Walters, 2001; Gruen and Shah, 2000; Walter, 1999).

Trust is particularly problematic in the context of the category captain, as the captain proposes the category strategy and makes informed recommendations to the buyer. This influence gives the category captain the potential to act in self-interest, rather than in the interests of the category. Kurtuluş, Nakkas and Ülkü (2014); and Gooner, Morgan and Perreault (2011); Morgan, Kaleka and Gooner (2007); Gruen and Shah (2000) have all argued that ‘opportunistic behaviour’ will be to the detriment of the retailer and the non-captain suppliers. Morgan,

Kaleka and Gooner (2007) argued that retailers often focused on using critical suppliers as category captains, to leverage their resources and capabilities and reduce overall costs, thus providing a point of differentiation. They also stated that the collaboration sales could be expected to increase by 11% with additional cost savings of 2% of the sales value, which would act as a significant influence on the retailer generating more profitability. Morgan, Kaleka and Gooner (2007) also argued that the role of category captain created the potential for supplier opportunism which decreased category performance and increased militancy with the category non-captain suppliers. Category management research is equivocal regarding whether the category captain acts in self-interest or not (for example, Gooner, Morgan and Perreault, 2011; Morgan, Kaleka and Gooner, 2007; Desrochers and Nelson, 2006; Dhar, Hoch and Kumar, 2001; Walter, Ritter and Gemunden, 2002; Basuroy, Mantrala and Walters, 2001; and Gruen and Shah, 2000; Walter, 1999). Some of these studies have found positive category results using category captains with favourable outcomes for the retailer, captain and the non-captain suppliers. This result was achieved because the captain was keen to support the retailer and the other suppliers, and to grow the category at the expense of the other categories.

To ensure that trust continues to develop between the captain and the buyer Gooner, Morgan and Perreault (2011) stated that retailers needed to monitor the activity of the category captain. This monitoring included the control systems, such as a balanced scorecard to monitor weekly key sales and profit margin information, as well as feedback from the non-captain suppliers. If the captain made errors and did not communicate them to the buyer, this was likely to damage the trust within the relationship. Where captains exceeded their authority, this could result in a suspension or dismissal. Gooner, Morgan and Perreault (2011) agreed that the role of category captain was controversial and disagreed with Morgan, Kaleka and Gooner (2007). Morgan, Kaleka and Gooner (2007) stated that the negative views of category captains operating in self-interest were only a perception and not reality. They further stated that there was no evidence to suggest that they only acted for themselves. As previously stated, the research reviews the role of the category captain and investigates if they did work with a self-interest element, and provides empirical evidence relating to this. Gooner, Morgan and Perreault's (2011) claim was made four years after Morgan, Kaleka and Gooner (2007), and this raised the question of whether the category captain had gained more self-focus in recent years. This does not sit well with the purpose of CM to act in the best interests of the whole category, rather than individual brands. Moreover, most authors agreed that by acting in the best interests of the whole category, everyone benefitted from the use of a category captain and this research has addressed this

issue. Morgan, Kaleka and Gooner (2007) have stated that the benefits of category captain outweighed the perceived concerns, and the role was important and pivotal for category growth, and furthermore, it was an effective value-creating and value-claiming mechanism. Gooner, Morgan and Perreault (2011) have argued that trusting CM relationships were more evident when there was a category captain compared to categories without one. The research has revealed, from the practitioner interviews there were compelling views that having more than one supplier within a category was more beneficial. Often smaller niche suppliers were experts in a sub-category they specialised in. For example, Tetley tea (2020) understand the black tea market, but specialist companies such as Twinning's (2020) concentrate on the fruit teas market and have a better understanding of this sub-category of tea.

The literature review on trust has shown that the development of trust between the supplier and the buyer is critical to the success of CM. The progression of trust over time leads to loyalty between the two parties, which, in turn, leads to value creation through a co-creation of joint activities, and ultimately to increased category sales and profitability, along with meeting consumer needs. The next section outlines how the development of trust within the CM relationship can lead to satisfaction and loyalty.

3.3.2 Loyalty and Satisfaction

Many CM and business relationship scholars agree that trust and loyalty are significant factors within CM relationships, as they contribute to a robust collaborative approach between the supplier and retailer (Gooner, Morgan and Perreault, 2011; Morgan, Kaleka and Gooner, 2007; Desrochers and Nelson, 2006; Dhar, Hoch and Kumar, 2001; Basuroy, Mantrala and Walters, 2001; Walter, Ritter and Gemunden, 2001; Gruen and Shah, 2000; Walter, 1999). A review of the effectiveness of relationships in the literature is in the context of relationship quality (Rauyruen and Miller, 2007). Rauyruen and Miller (2007) discuss relationship quality as a predictor of loyalty, and where a strong relationship exists, positive business activities will continue and develop. They further stated that individual business relationships offered suppliers a secure and loyal base for creating an increased opportunity to reach higher levels of collaboration. This view was also supported by Reichheld and Sasser (1990); and Jones and Sasser (1995) who argued that profitability follows loyalty and was a long-term investment. Category management collaborations often involve huge volumes of business. As previously acknowledged in the thesis, the UK grocery sector is valued at £220 billion per annum (IGD,

2019); trust and loyalty are therefore significant, and where there is a break down in a relationship this can result in companies losing business and even going bankrupt. CM is strategic, with decision-making at senior levels to maintain supply-chain and collaborative continuity. Organisations invest in their business and require security from partners for their commitment.

The review has already identified the need for business relationships to often extend to a personal level; the relational bond is necessary for many exchange transactions (Dwyer, Schurr and Oh, 1987). Samiee and Walter (2003) have also stated that relational exchanges between the seller and buyer were dependent upon the past, present and future predictable interactions between the parties, both at business and personal levels. See also Figure 3.1 (Makkonen and Olkkonen, 2017), which reviews IVF in inter-organisational relationships and is discussed further in section 3.4.1. Interaction between the parties is a way they got to understand each other fully and how they could both get the best from each other through starting the trust development process, to build and retain long-term relationships (Hogarth-Scott and Dapiran, 1997). Rauyruen and Miller (2007) have stated that retaining customers in the long-term often leads to a more consistent relationship, rather than continually looking for new customers. Nielsen, Karolefski and Heller (2006) stated that it takes five times more resources to attract a new customer than retain existing customers. Each party therefore understands the needs of the other better, resulting in a stronger and more supportive consumer-focused relationship and leading to loyalty. Loyalty can be measured through service quality, satisfaction, trust and commitment. The findings of Rauyruen and Miller (2007) have shown that the customers' perception of relationship quality and overall satisfaction with the supplier, influenced purchase decisions and focus on the consumer. Most of the literature has shown that trust, commitment and satisfaction are the main dimensions underpinning loyalty (Moorman, Deshpandé and Zaltman 1992; Crosby, Evans and Cowles, 1990). This thesis focuses on trust and loyalty, since these are the main variables within a relationship, as evidenced from the literature. It is essential in a CM relationship that trust exists in the relationship between the supplier and the retailer, to enable collaboration and focus the manufacturing and retailing efforts on the needs of the consumer. This collaboration almost ties the two companies' together, albeit not in a formal contractual agreement, but one based on two-way trust, and then loyalty from both parties becomes standard practice. Samiee and Walter (2003), however, found that trust, commitment, power, conflict, and communication were the variables which influenced loyalty in relationships and their management. They argued that trust, power,

commitment, conflict, and relationship quality were the fundamental constructs of a beneficial relationship. Trust is therefore, one of the variables explored during the interviews along with the recommendations of Samiee and Walter (2003). By comparison, Hallen, Johanson and Seyed-Mohamed (1991) stated that relationships developed from increased levels of trust and commitment. They argued that, as the relationship grew through greater trust and commitment, further adaptive behaviours could be expected, and they saw no connection between the age of the relationship and the levels of adaption. Smith and Barclay (1999), in another dyadic study, suggested that selling partners must invest time and effort in the relationship, and encourage reciprocal trusting behaviours to enhance performance. They believed the mutual perception of trustworthiness was critical to the satisfaction of partnerships. Trust is, therefore, recognised in the literature as a significant contributor to loyalty in relationships. Nyaga, Whipple and Lynch (2010) have argued that in collaborative relationships between the buyer and supplier, mutual relationship efforts play a decisive role, and the impact of the effort is likely to be directly related to trust and not the commitment, and this was the reason why the literature review focused on trust. This lack of detail was a weakness in the extant literature, and this research has challenged this and included commitment as one of the critical variables when establishing loyalty.

3.3.3 Power in Relationships

Power in business-to-business buyer and seller relationships is one which can influence decision making, and the significance of who has the power is a debate at the heart of power theory (Meehan and Wright, 2012). Who or what has the power in the relationship needs to be discussed in category management relationships? IGD (2020) state, in 2018 there was a strong disagreement between the makers of Marmite, Unilever (2020) and Tesco (2020). Marmite is a strong brand with a strapline ‘you love it or hate it’ as it is a yeast extract spread product that is not everybody’s preferred choice. Tesco (2020) are the largest food retailer in the UK, having the largest market share at 29.8% (IGD, 2020), and believed that as the largest retailer Unilever (2020) would always want to stock the product on their shelves. Unilever (2020) were forced to increase the cost price of the product which had an impact on the selling price but were adamant this needed to be done. Tesco (2020) refused to accept the price increase as they would have to take less margin or increase the price to the consumer. A ‘war’ developed between the two companies as Tesco (2020) sell many brands produced by Unilever (2020).

The disagreement was simply two companies wanting to hold the power over the other one. It was brand versus retailer dominance, and both wanted to have the power and be able to influence the other. In effect it was competing egos without compromise between two organisations without any concern for the consumer or the nature of category management. Meehan and Wright (2012) investigate how buyers and sellers investigate the origins of nature of self-perceived and countervailing power. The results of their research show that power in buyer-seller relationships is a pluralistic concept, and by focusing on individual, organisational and relational elements show that both sides are part of the same construct and should have equal influence.

Previously trust has been discussed. Trusting relationships will help to balance the supplier-retailer imbalances at either the organisational or individual levels. Hingley (2005) states, the business world utilises strategic relationships, value added relationships, channel/supplier partnerships such as category management and the supply chain. They also state that there are significant differences between the practitioners and academics. This research helps to close this gap and bring the parties closer together. It also focuses upon the views of suppliers and retailers to understand better the nature of power within the relationships and how trust influences this. Hingley (2005) state that retailers show fatigue towards relationship terminology, although suppliers are keen to maintain a collaborative relationship and not revert to transactional or one-sided behaviour by the retailer. Although Hingley and Lindgreen (2002) state that suppliers see relationships as 'gimmick' orchestrated by the buyers. This research, however, shows that both suppliers and retailers believe that trusting relationships can develop within category management, and that this is the only way the activity will survive and co-create value. Trust is paramount in the relationship, and this is demonstrated later in the thesis. Barnes (2005) say that emotional ties are important within the relationship and built on trust to balance out power. They state, for some the emotional dimension should incorporate the existence of trust and confirmed by a level of commitment from a dissolved power imbalance. Blois (1998) states, to fully explain power it will take time beyond that available to any of us. Hingley (2005), however, define power as dependence, punitive capability, non-coercive influence strategies and punitive actions. Therefore, power requires trusting relationships where both parties are dependent on each other equally, rather than one taking the lead. This leads to balanced strategies and better working together. Hingley (2005) states that trust does exist, but by degrees and this is dependent on the levels of power that exist. Category management is shown in the study to require more resource sharing and operant resources to deliver what is necessary for the final consumer rather than the retailer mission only.

Conversely, Narayandras and Rangan (2004) who studied pairs in relationships found that asymmetric exchange can thrive, but trust is important to ensure fair play within the collaboration. Therefore, both positive and negative outcomes are possible from a power imbalance. Cox (2004) states that an imbalance of power is regarded as normal, as most organisations are calculative in their dealings. Often companies accept the imbalance to achieve their business objectives and try to build stronger trusting relationships to ensure they achieve their desires (Newman, Lings and Lee, 2004; Greyskens et al., 1996). This research did not fully support this claim, although one large retailer did keep emphasising that the suppliers need to deliver their mission statement and build this into their business proposal. The buyer did however want to develop a trusting relationship by working with suppliers to prioritise his business over its competitors. This calls for tolerance from the supplier partners, and in category management applies to both branded and PL suppliers. Hingley (2005) believes that suppliers will offset retailer power-play and resultant outcome against the prospect of business continuity and increased market share. The opportunity to be selected as category captain will also be a reason to accept this situation. Hingley (2005) states, power and relationships have been 'kicked to death' in academic circles, but he states more empirical research is required to demonstrate the impact. This research contributes to this request, particularly vertical business-to-business relationships requested by (Harker, 2002).

Emerson (1962) claim power is the ability of an actor to influence another in a way they would not normally do. They state that the debate of who holds power remains unresolved. The literature review has already shown the Meehan and Wright (2012) that the power is dependent on a combination of factors at organisational and individual levels. Cheng et al. (2001); Ho (1991); Nielsen (1998) and Busch and Wilson (1976) state that two-way interaction that power is a property of a business relationship, and the dyadic interaction shapes the relational context, and so support the argument that power is a two-way play within the relationship. This research shows that this is the case within category management relationships if trust has developed and a collaborative approach is followed. Meehan and Wright (2012) conclude from their study that power stems from a combination of individual, organisational, and relational factors. To raise the power profile buyers and sellers need to address all three of these areas and how they conduct themselves during exchanges. The integration of these factors helps organisations to steer their strategies, knowledge sharing, negotiation and the recruitment and training of buyers and sellers. They state that the 'messy' power play can be addressed by researching the actors and understanding their experiences and expectations. For that reason, this research

interviewed both buyers and sellers. Difficulties arise if both parties do not have clear power demarcations and how they use power. Personal factors need to be considered when recruiting buyers and sellers, for example they need to be able to work together. The researcher has experienced this when working at Dunbia. He was an account manager attached to the Co-op account, but prior to being employed Dunbia introduced him to the buyer and would not employ him if there was not a connection between the two.

In summary, this section has provided a deeper understanding of power and how it influences value creation from trusting relationships, and if power is balanced between buyers and sellers in category management relationships. The next section reviews S-DL and how this creates value creation within the relationship.

3.4 Interactive Value Formation (IVF), Service-Dominant Logic and Value Creation

Value is amongst the ten most important research topics in marketing (Ostrom *et al.*, 2010). Business relationships provide meaning for creating superior value in the marketplace. Corsaro (2014) stated that scholars have, over time, moved interest from the value of objects exchanged, to value placed in business relationships. They argued that the value created through business relationships remains unclear. Historically, a different view of value was prevalent in business relationships that was strongly influenced by the commercial content of the transaction. This view was known as the 'transactional relationship', where the economic aspects of the relationship were superior to the social, psychological, and emotional dimensions of value (Corsaro, 2014). Schau, Muniz and Arnould (2009) claimed that brands were associated with value creation; the research has found however that it is no longer just about brands or the product itself, but now it is about the additional resources, collaboration and S-DL. In 1992, Shani and Chalasani (1992) discovered that it was important to explore niche activities within business relationships, which were never adopted in CM until recently. Value was limited or non-existent in the relationship and only added during the production process to attempt to reduce production costs and pass these savings onto the retailer and ultimately the consumer. This was measured by the price paid, but as it was not a collaborative agreement it was only seen as 'quick win' value creation with no longevity. Over time, scholars have progressed to assessing value by not only the transactional economic perspective but also by what Corsaro (2014) defined as a relational logic.

To explore the daily working lives of the supplier and retailer practitioners, and to gain an understanding of how they perceived value creation in the relationship, the researcher used a phenomenological methodology. Johnston (2014); and Helkkula and Kelleher (2010) have also supported this approach, as they suggested that involving actors in research often created a richness of interactive data, defining the processes and different phases of their daily activities. Further studies on business to business (B2B) value creation have followed Helkkula and Kelleher's (2010) findings. For example, Corsaro (2014) employed a similar methodology using actors to provide a better understanding of value creation appropriation. Johnston (2014) explored the act of proposing customer value during face-to-face business meetings, which supported the view of the researcher to interview the participants of this research face-to-face. Johnston (2014) focused upon how the supplier actors conveyed value to their customers. This research has shown how suppliers created value for the customer (retailer) but has gone one stage further to show value creation is a two-way process through a successful collaboration.

The research from this study addresses the gaps in knowledge and explains how CM relationships in the UK grocery sector through resources, knowledge and skills of the practitioners can create value. According to Waseem, Biggemann and Garry (2018), business has long recognised the role of the individual 'actors' (practitioners in CM) in creating value within modern industrial marketing. Corsaro (2014) has stated that actors' perceptions of value and the interaction within the business context were the determinants of value creation.

S-DL is highlighted in the research study and discussed later in the chapter. According to Prior and Marcos-Cuevas (2016), S-DL focuses on the positive impacts of the supplier-retailer collaboration and emphasises value co-creation. The current research study includes this, but as the findings have revealed, some frustrations have existed within existing CM relationships, despite the rhetoric of satisfaction from both sides of the collaboration. This frustration has introduced the dimension of value co-destruction within the relationship. This study, therefore, draws on S-DL as it focuses on the actors' perceptions of how to create value within the CM relationship. It focuses on the positive outcomes identified by Plé and Cáceres (2010) but also the negative side of value co-destruction identified by Prior and Marcos-Cuevas (2016). Prior and Marco-Cuevas (2016) have stated that further research was necessary to establish if value co-destruction existed in sectors, other than their study of value co-destruction within the aerospace industry. The UK retail CM represents 17% of the UK's GDP (IGD, 2020). It is therefore a large proportion of the UK's economy and a large commercial player, which

warrants further investigation in addition to the aerospace industry. This thesis has focused on both the supplier and retailer in contrast to previous research, which has focused mainly on the retailer, thus giving a wider and fairer representation of the sector. Prior and Marco-Cuevas (2016) stated that CM research needs to include all stakeholders. The next section reviews the exchanges that often take place within collaborative relationships, defined in the literature as interactive value formation (IVF) (Payne, Storbacka and Frow, 2008). It is the dealings between the supplier and retailer that contribute to the success of CM and satisfying consumer needs.

3.4.1 IVF

Echeverri and Skålén (2011) stated that there are two types of value formation: interactive and non-interactive. Non-interactive value formation has dominated conceptualisations of value in marketing; here, the value is embedded in the production or service by the manufacturer, and often referred to as 'value added'. The value is the price paid and therefore measured in monetary terms, and it represents bottom line profit (Bagozzi, 1975; Hunt, 1976; Alderson, 1957), in line with the principles of Goods-Dominant Logic (G-DL) (Echeverri and Skålén (2011). However, a challenge to this view has recently occurred: the 'interaction view' or IVF, which stipulates that value is co-created when there is an interaction between the supplier and the retailer (Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004; Vargo and Lusch, 2004a; Ramirez, 1999). These authors have argued that the two types of value formation correspond with the two ways of conceptualising marketing theory and support the operand and operant value creation principles of Vargo and Lusch (2004a).

In contrast to conceptualising embedded value in the product, the providers co-create services and products collaboratively with the customer (Echeverri and Skålén, 2011). Value is, therefore, co-created or co-destroyed from social interaction rather than being added as part of the production process with non-interactive value creation. Holbrook's (2006: p.212) definition of value resonates with interactive value creation and refers to it as an '*interactive relativistic preference experience*'. He stated, it was a function of the interaction between subjects, attitudes, affections, satisfaction, behavioural-based judgements, and individual's preferences. Interactive value formation was articulated in S-DL, as it has a service-centred view (Vargo and Lusch, 2008; Etgar, 2008; Lusch, Vargo and O'Brien, 2007; Jaworski and Kohli, 2006; Kalaighnam and Varadarajan, 2006; Lusch and Vargo, 2006; Lusch and Vargo, 2006a; Lusch

and Vargo, 2006b; Vargo and Lusch, 2004a). The articulated view of service-centred, uses the distinction between ‘operand’ and ‘operant’ resources. Operand resources are those that are tangible such as land and buildings, and operant resources are the skills and knowledge used on the operand resources. The next section explains the resources used by organisations with IVF. Operand resources are more aligned to non-interactive value formation relationships, such as traditional buyer and seller relationships where there is less connection and exchange. Operant resources are more appropriate with IVF relationships, such as CM. The research has investigated interactive operant value but was not concerned with non-interactive resources, and for CM this includes the following:

- The collaborative provision of creative and innovative insight for improved category knowledge
- The provision of skilled people, resourced from the supplier to the retailer such as CM analysts known as implants; and
- Knowledge provision to ensure a profitable and sustainable collaboration.

Vargo and Lusch (2004a) have argued that operant resources are essential to value creation; either operant resources working on operand resources or operant resources working collaboratively between the supplier and the retailer. They argued that it was only when the operant resources were active that value-creation could take place. Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004) claimed that co-creation was where the firm and the customer were intimately involved in creating joint value that was unique to the customer. Within CM, a food manufacturer is likely to supply many retailers with different needs, and value creation takes place where collaboratively the supplier develops a category strategy in line with the strategy of the retailer. Echeverri and Skålén (2011: p.354) have stated that ‘*the interaction between customers and firms becomes the new focus of co-creation of value*’. If the CM actors applied the IVF principles and these worked against either party or both parties, then this was defined as value co-destruction. Conceptual approaches or anecdotal data limited early research into IVF (for example, Vargo and Lusch, 2004a; Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004, respectively). More recent studies such as Makkonen and Olkkonen (2017); and Echeverri and Skålén (2011), have used more empirical data, but even these studies were limited to industry sectors. Thus, further research, involving a broader range of industry sectors is required.

The UK grocery CM sector has addressed this gap. Makkonen and Olkkonen (2017) further developed the Interactive Value Formation (IVF) framework, first established by Echeverri and Skålén (2011), which refers to value creation between a provider and customer. IVF is a neutral and integrative term that looks at the positive side of value co-creation and the negative side of value co-destruction. Echeverri and Skålén (2011) developed the framework in a business-to-consumer setting, whereas Makkonen and Olkkonen (2017) extended this to a business-to-business scenario. The scholars have argued, however, that further research was required for both value co-creation, and more notably, value co-destruction in other business settings. The model has been adopted in the research as it describes the interplay between resource integration and a multi-level service system. Resource integration was described by both suppliers and retailers as one of the key contributors to an effective collaborative CM relationship. Figure 3.1 shows the IVF model which has been used to support the research.

Figure 3.1 illustrates Makkonen and Olkkonen's (2017) framework for an integrative approach to IVF in inter-organisational relationships. Makkonen and Olkkonen (2017) stated that the rectangle encapsulating all the elements in the framework describes the service system; considered an overarching context of various levels and presented in terms of the action and structural realms, and in time—past, present, and future (Vargo and Lusch, 2014, see also Bourdieu, 1990; Giddens, 1984; Pettigrew, 1997; Solomon *et al.*, 1985). The structural realm, located in the lower half of the figure refers to enduring structural elements, whereas the action realm in the upper half of the figure features short-lived actions and events. The circular form of the framework demonstrates the interconnectedness of the structural and action realms, and that between the past, present, and future. Chapter 6 discusses the role of the category captain historically, and present and tries to understand from the participants its role in the future. In other words, the past shapes the present, the present shapes the future, the future in terms of expectations shapes the present, and the present shapes how we perceive and interpret the past (cf. Giddens, 1984; for structuration theory-inspired studies on marketing and value, see e.g. (Edvardsson, Tronvoll and Gruber, 2011).

The framework describes service system as a multilevel entity comprising the levels of micro, meso, and macro (grey rotating arrows), and relationship (the inner, dark grey circle in the central panel of the figure), (see Frow *et al.*, 2014; Holmund, 2004; Leroy, Cova and Salle, 2013; Mattsson, 1997). Given the focus on inter-organisational IVF in the study of the category captain role, the relationship is defined as the primary level for resource integration (see

Chandler and Wieland, 2010; Gruen and Hofstetter, 2010). The focus on the interplay between service system and resource integration is directed especially at the relationship level, on the interplay between relationship infrastructure and resource integration. For analytical purposes, relationship infrastructure can be further divided into social setting comprising atmosphere, trust, and commitment (Dwyer, Schurr and Oh, 1987; Ha'kansson and Ford, 2002), and technical setting comprising activity links and resource ties (Ha'kansson and Snehota, 1990), which may be, for example, technological, procedural or legal in nature. Resource integration is enabled by interaction that features resource exchange and the actions of adaptation, coordination, and communication (Gummesson, 2011; Ha'kansson and Snehota, 1990). The structural elements and situational events at the micro-, meso- and macro-level impact the interplay between the resource integration and relationship infrastructure through the habitus of key individuals (the outer circle in the central panel of Figure 3.1). As an outcome of IVF, the centre of Figure 3.1 describes co-creation, no-creation, and co-destruction as alternative outcomes of interaction episodes and as a relationship. The macro-level structural elements (e.g. cultural norms, values, national/ international legislation, food industry legislation), and events (e.g. changes in food legislation, plastic reduction, sustainability) have the furthest reach to influence a society's organisations. The meso-level represents the structure of the supplier and retailer organisations and how these work in collaboration (see Bourdieu, 1990; Corvellec and Hultman, 2014; Scott, 1995), (e.g., competitive and technological norms and limitations, shared values/value regimes), and events (e.g., changes in network power positions, technological convergence). The micro-level structural elements operate at the organisational level, for example, a company's vision, strategy, and interpersonal relations. Micro-level events comprise, for example, changes to a company's personnel or business model. CM focuses on the retailer strategy and how the suppliers are required to build the business model around this.

The concept of habitus (Bourdieu, 1990) describes a mediating relationship between context and individual action and is the internal. Habitus refers to the internal conscious and unconscious views behind the actions of individuals and collective actors (see e.g. Danermark *et al.*, 2002). Thus, the habitus-based perspective in the framework are the shared rules and norms between suppliers and retailers to meet the needs of shoppers (see e.g. Edvardsson *et al.*, 2014; Vargo and Lusch, 2014). In line with the research this a more actor-centric than context-centric emphasis on actor-system interplay (Bourdieu, 1977, Bourdieu, 1990; see also Mills, 1959; North, 2005). The habitus determines how an individual actor perceives, interprets, and acts within the context (cf. Bourdieu, 1977; Bourdieu, 1990), as described by

the black arrows in the outer circle of the habitus in Figure 3.1. Within CM the participants (actors) perceptions of CM and their roles and activities are reviewed throughout the research, which support the use of a phenomenological study. However, an experienced and skilled actor has the capacity to improvise because of having acquired a 'feel for the game' or 'practical sense' (Bourdieu, 1990, p.54, p.57; cf. Giddens, 1984). Experience of working in CM was one of the requirements of the research and a mixture of long-standing practitioners and 'newbies' to the industry were interviewed to try and understand if service length impacted the perceptions. Bourdieu (1990) argued that actors within certain contexts have shared understandings and ways of acting that include attitudes, preferences, and habits of behaviour (Corvellec and Hultman, 2014). Thus, habitus is defined as 'schemes of perception, thought and action', which tend to guarantee the 'correctness' and 'acceptability' of practices and their constancy over time, rather than following formal rules and norms e.g., in contracts (see Bourdieu, 1990, p.54). Category management relationships are often initiated by a formal business contract between the supplier and the retailer that has key information included to protect both parties, for example, the duration of the business, expectations, pricing review criteria, etc. This is signed at a senior business level and used only as a base to the collaboration. Category managers and retail buyers then operate the collaboration based on their own relationship, trust, consumer needs and exceeding targets rather than following the guidance of the contract or Joint Business Plan (JBP), (IGD, 2020). The day-to-day challenges are not always covered in the contract and the experience and perceptions of the actors are called upon. Therefore, the more experienced the actor the greater the IVF and relationship development. There are usually individuals whose influence is significant, often the more experienced practitioners. Such influential individuals, who purposefully facilitate relationship development, are termed relationship promoters (see for example, Walter, *et al.*, 2002). Category management is supported by practitioners across all the departments within the supplier and retailer, for example, finance, marketing operations, etc. It is however the category manager and the buyer who maintain the greatest relationship and influence the overall collaboration. According to the extant literature the category captain and the buyer are often observed as the relationship promoters, although the thesis has found this role is being spread amongst suppliers who have something of value to offer the buyer.

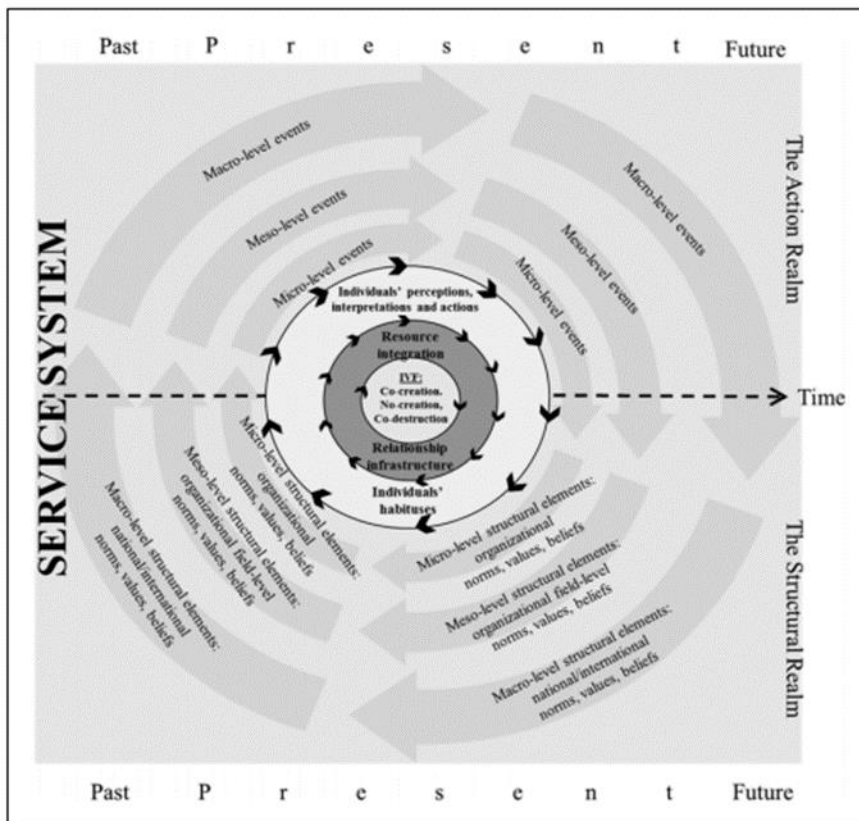


Figure 3.1. Research framework developed for the analysis of IVF in inter-organisational relationships by Makkonen and Olkkonen (2017).

The gap in knowledge has been addressed by this research as it looked at value co-creation, value no-creation and value co-destruction. The IVF framework was 'actor-centric', given its focus on the CM practitioners through the 25 interviews with suppliers and retailers. In summary, there are various perspectives on service, including S-DL (Vargo and Lusch, 2004a), service logic (Grönroos, 2011), and customer-dominant logic (Heinonen *et al.*, 2010). Customer-dominant logic adopts the notion of provider-customer interaction for value creation. These perspectives share the idea of the customer's role in value creation but differ on how the value and value co-creation relate to the service process and the interaction of the actors (Heinonen *et al.*, 2010). It was the interaction of the actors which led this research to a Service-dominant approach as opposed to a Customer-dominant approach (Kohli, 2011; Kowalkowski, 2010). Makkonen and Olkkonen (2017) have stated that service-logic occurs in direct provider-customer interactions only, whereas S-DL is related to both direct and indirect integration within the collaboration. Inherent within S-DL is the notion of operand and operand resources. Waseem, Biggemann and Garry (2018) stated that more phenomenological interpretations of actor's value creation needed to be carried out through lived work experiences, in their

competency as well as knowledge and skills. This research has looked at knowledge, skills and competency from an interpretative position and has included the emotional behaviour of the participants, as suggested by Waseem, Biggemann and Garry (2018).

3.4.2 Service-Dominant Logic

The researcher has discussed the ‘golden thread’ of the research is S-DL within the category management relationship. This section explains the importance of S-DL and how the UK retail sector is changing and starting to rely on the services provided within the relationship, rather than the product itself. Vargo and Lusch (2008) state S-DL has its core notions as (1) service is the fundamental basis of exchange, (2) service is exchanged for service, and (3) the customer is always the co-creator of value. They also state that S-DL is fundamental to human well-being by individuals being able to demonstrate knowledge and skills (operand resources) they specialise in, and exchange these for the same that they do not specialise in. So, the shift from operand resources to operant resources has implications for social interaction, rather than measurement from and ‘end-product’ only. Ultimately this has ramifications for understanding the exchange process/es, dynamics, structures, and institutions way beyond commerce. The researcher therefore sees that S-DL is foundational within the category management relationship where the food chain organisations work to satisfy the needs of the final consumer. Vargo and Lusch (2008: p6) state “service is the fundamental basis of exchange” through the provision of skills and services (operant resources). The following foundational premise’s from Vargo and Lusch (2008) ten FP’s are defined by them as the main ones fundamental to the S-DL core notions, highlighted earlier in this paragraph:

FPs	Foundational Premise	Explanation
FP1	Service is the fundamental basis of exchange	The application of operand resources (knowledge and skills) ‘service’ as defined in S-DL is the basis for all exchange. Service is exchanged for service
FP5	All economies are service economies	Service is becoming more apparent with increased specialisation and outsourcing
FP6	The customer is always a co-creator of value	Implies value creation is interactional

Figure 3.2 Service Dominant Logic Foundational Premise’s Supporting Service (Vargo and Lusch, 2008).

S-DL represents a departure from the traditional G-DL of exchange, where goods are the focus of exchange and services, which is a shift in emphasis from the exchange of operand resources to operant resources (Vargo and Lusch, 2006). Under the traditional goods exchanged or G-DL, operand resources such as products and goods exchanged were considered as providing a competitive advantage (Kowalkowski, 2010). Glanfield and Akfeldt (2018) stated that S-DL was the fundamental basis of exchange for all firms and value was co-created through actors where there was a beneficiary. They claimed that front-line employee's interacting with customers was a 'service encounter' and that customers consumed a service provided by the front-line employees. This idea was originally pitched by Solomon *et al.*, (1985), and developed further in Glanfield and Akfeldt (2018); Evanschitzky *et al.*, (2012); Homburg *et al.*, (2009). Evanschitzky *et al.*, (2012); and Homburg *et al.*, (2009) stated service encounters influenced customer satisfaction and loyalty and in turn contributed to profitability and growth. The thesis supports this view as loyalty and satisfaction are key variables within the research model, a contribution of the research (Homburg *et al.*, 2009).

Stephen Vargo and Robert Lusch have focused on S-DL since its introductory article the 'service-dominant (S-D) logic of marketing – Evolving to a New Dominant Logic for Marketing' (Vargo and Lusch, 2004a). There was a significant number of queries raised from the publication of the paper, and this section will explain how the foundational premises (FP's) of S-DL evolved into the five axioms a decade later. The foundational premises (FPs) of S-DL, or known as the founding principles of S-DL were complemented and queried by academics. The queries originated from the Otago Forum, New Zealand in 2005 and a special issue of Marketing Theory, resulting from the issues raised at the conference (Aitken *et al.*, 2006). A total of 70 submissions challenging S-DL emerged with academics proposing 'new logics' for marketing centred on S-DL in marketing (Vargo and Lusch, 2008). Vargo and Lusch state most of the comments were supportive and favourable, however some were very cautious, others critical as to the specific aspects of S-DL. Vargo and Lusch (2008) claim that they don't 'own' S-DL, they have simply tried to refine the original thesis of S-DL published in 2004. Vargo and Lusch (2008) stated that several of the general issues raised about the FP's is that they are still reliant on goods-dominant logic (G-DL) and that they were mainly managerial in their approach. The researcher, however, as an ex-practitioner supports the managerial approach but recognises that it did need to be improved with more academic wording and bias. The third issue raised was that S-DL is interactive and networked in nature, and the authors need to be more explicit in acknowledging that it is phenomenological and experiential. The recognition

of this fact by the researcher was one of the key reasons a phenomenological methodology was adapted. Vargo and Lush (2008) have always considered value to be phenomenologically determined, implied by the word 'service'. It is also reflected in key words such as co-creation, and even 'experience'. Vargo and Lusch (2008) continue to state that 'experience' is determined from a connection between a market provider and a beneficiary. Within category management this immediately alerts the researcher to the connection between the supplier and retailer companies, and so their joint 'experience' become the fundamental under-pinning to the research. Shembri (2006) and Arnould (2006) claimed that this was unclear in the original Vargo and Lusch (2004a) paper, however this was cleared up and re-iterated in Vargo and Lusch (2008). In this research the understanding of practitioners revealed that the service element within the relationship is more important than the end product itself. The experience of the practitioners was the only way to fully get to the bottom of the issue, and the importance of S-DL became apparent and will be explained in more detail in the findings chapter.

Category management actors will experience a service encounter where the category manager interfaces with the retail buyer. Outside of the scope of the thesis this would further extend to the relationship between the retailer check-out operator and the shopper or consumer. Glanfield and Adfeldt's (2018) study demonstrates the interaction between a firm supplying installations and servicing and domestic UK households. The research determines the importance of corporate branding and the co-creation of value to the customer. Food manufacturers often have large brand image and quality, and similarities between the Glanfield and Adfeldt (2018) study are apparent. The research shows that the contact between the service engineer and the consumer discussing the products installed, and the servicing options that are available is value co-creation. This is the same as a category manager discussing the benefits of a working collaboration with the retail buyer and the sharing of resources. The thesis has determined that brands and private label suppliers provide this.

However, several researchers now recognise operant resources as creating value and providing a competitive advantage (Gummesson, 2011; Ueda *et al.*, 2009). Operant resources are the competencies (mental and physical), of actors involved in the relationship and when used correctly create value. As these are both dynamic and challenging to transfer, they are often unique, and offer a source of sustained competitive advantage (Lush and Nambisan, 2015). Lush and Nambisan (2015) claimed the provision of operant resources was the specialised skills and knowledge services provided by one company to another. Within CM this is the

supplier providing operant resources, such as people, data, category insights, etc., to the retailer without charging directly for the service. The supplier covers the costs of the operant services by including these in the overall business proposal for the retailer. Where products are sold, often the costs of operant resources are built into the purchase price paid by the retailer. Constantin and Lusch (1994) have stated that operant resources produce an effect; it is not the resources themselves (for example, it is not the skilled employees themselves), but it is the services they produce which create value. Vargo and Lusch (2004a) stated that operant resources were often invisible and intangible. Within that research, the operant resource, which was the focus of the research, was the provision of innovative and creative insights by the supplier category managers. Operant resources are often seen as core competencies, because they produce an effect that enables humans to multiply the value of the resource itself, in order to create additional operant resources (Vargo and Lusch, 2004a). In CM the supplier category managers will use external operant resources, such as Kantar Worldpanel (2020); Shopper Intelligence (2020); and IGD (2020) data to create a new story of creative and innovative insight for the buyer. The buyer is then likely to take these recommendations and implement a new process in store operations, for example, the implementation of a new category range review. This shift in the primacy of resources has implications for how exchange processes, markets and customers are perceived and approached. Within CM, this presents new opportunities for the supplier to influence the product range on the shelf, the target consumer and appropriate pricing policies.

The use of knowledge as the basis of competitive advantage could extend to the whole 'supply chain' or service-provision chain. With G-DL the primary flow is the production and delivery of the product, whereas with S-DL it is the provision of information to the customer (Evans and Wurster, 1997). Supplier relationships such as CM, rely on information throughout the process, from the CM insight through to the monitoring and control documentation of the supply chain. Where suppliers generate insight, the more appropriate this is for the retailer's customer, the greater the levels of competitive advantage the larger is the opportunity for value creation (Normann and Ramirez, 1993). They went on to state that value creation was no longer the outdated notion of 'added-value' but was now the co-production or co-creation between suppliers and their customers to benefit the consumer (Vargo and Lusch, 2004a). The move from added value to value creation was grounded in an increased focus of operant resources and specifically on process management. The notion that the customer was the co-producer of value was essential in CM as the supplier-customer, retailer-customer and the consumer all

needed to collaborate for higher efficiencies. The consumer needs to be centric in all the decisions made further up the supply chain to ensure their needs are satisfied. Vargo and Lusch (2004a) stated that production and consumption should not be separated. Normann and Ramirez (1993) stated that the key to creating value was to co-produce offerings that mobilised customers. It was for these reasons of collaborative knowledge and co-production that these elements are profiled later in the study.

S-DL has however progressed and moved forward from the work of Vargo and Lusch (2008). In 2008 they recognised that the discipline itself will determine where it goes in the future. This is because there is a growing number of scholars and interest in the concept, and the need to apply this to empirical research and further study. Vargo and Lusch (2008) state that academics now recognise S-DL as a general theory of marketing, and as such it will continue to evolve (Lush and Vargo, 2006). They call it ‘S-DL logic is that of a mindset, a lens through which to look at social and economic exchange’ (Vargo and Lusch, 2008: p9). Vargo and Lush (2008) continue to state, there is a possibility S-DL will provide a philosophical and conceptual foundation for the development of service science, which will value-creation and exchange beyond the economic arena and contextualise it. They believe S-DL will become the new mode of business exchange in institutional, individual, and even nations. This takes exchange away from the traditional tighter economic constraints to enable wider thinking and planning.

The evolution of S-DL however, continued to flourish after Vargo and Lusch (2008), as the levels of interest from academics and practitioners alike continued to grow exponentially. The internet, or cloud-based processes have accelerated the exchange of information between individuals, organisations at all levels of business relationships. G-DL continues to disappear as organisations turn more to the benefits of S-DL. Greer, Lusch and Vargo (2016) state that organisations have institutionalised in the new paradigm of S-DL as opposed to historically using G-DL. They argue that the evolution continues where S-DL can be used more effectively in all industries including retailing, and indeed in category management. They say it is becoming essential for ‘mutual value creation’, rather than a nice to have, and decision makers need to be more than ever proactive in adopting service perspectives (Greer, Lusch and Vargo, 2016).

The literature review has shown that S-DL implies interactivity and togetherness between the service provider and beneficiary (in category management the supplier and the retail buyer beneficiary). Greer, Lusch and Vargo (2016) state it embraces working together (managers,

employees, suppliers, customers and other stakeholders) to integrate resources for mutual value creation (everyone to benefit). Greer, Lusch and Vargo (2016) formalised this thinking by reducing the original eleven S-DL FPs into five axioms of S-DL. This was necessary due to the growing importance of value co-creation within institutions and captured in just five axioms (Vargo and Lusch, 2017). Vargo and Lusch (2017) state, S-D logic represents a dynamic and continuing narrative of value co-creation through resource integration and service exchange. This has been constructed and advised by an increasing number of academics from various disciplines and sub-disciplines, predominantly from within the field of marketing. Like all narratives, it cannot predict the future, but the five axioms allow the story to develop over the coming decade and provide ongoing narrative within the S-DL discipline. Vargo and Lush state, more midrange theory development, as well as evidenced based research. This research is evidence-based research and provides first class findings that advance the S-DL debate. However, more studies of this nature are required in different disciplines to further support the theory. In brief, midrange theory development is the building of social theory through engagement and co-creation using empirical research. Management thought and theory have developed over the years, but this has not been undertaken within the S-DL discipline. Greer, Lusch and Vargo (2016) state that more knowledge is required in an intensive world to help solve the day to day issues. They support the work of scholars closing the gap between management and theory regarding S-DL. They therefore require more studies of this nature. The five axioms introduced earlier are summarised as:

3.4.2.1 S-D Logic Axiom 1

The first axiom of S-DL is that service is fundamental basis of exchange, service being the application of resources (knowledge and skills) for the benefit of a beneficiary. This implies that goods are appliance for service provision; all businesses are service businesses; and all economies are service economies. It suggests that society is service-for-service exchange, so service exchange and society are inseparable. In this research, it discovers that the exchange of operant resources is fundamental to success to the supply chain and ensure the end consumer is satisfied.

3.4.2.2 S-D Logic Axiom 2

The second axiom of S-DL is that the customer is always a co-creator. Within this research it is important the retail buyer gets involved in decision making to support the supplier

organisation. This axiom is in contradiction to G-DL as that insists the producer is the creator value and the consumer is the destroyer of value. It states that value is always co-created, and this takes time but unfolds over time.

3.4.2.3 S-D Logic Axiom 3

Greer, Lusch and Vargo (2016) state, all actors in organisations are resource integrators. They state the resources are anything an individual or organisation can draw upon for support. Within category management this includes data sharing, provision of implants, supply chain resource sharing, insight etc. These are discussed in more detail later in the thesis. In many of the situations these resource types are integrated, and value is then co-created in many different combinations. All individuals and firms are resource integrators and service exchangers.

3.4.2.4 S-D Logic Axiom 4

The fourth axiom is that value is always uniquely and phenomenologically determined by the beneficiary. As previously explained, the beneficiary assesses the benefit through a value proposition which explains how an organisations offering will benefit the other business, and how this can be achieved through S-DL (Greer, Lusch and Vargo (2016). The research has found that data and insight sharing are the drivers of axiom 4, and through wider collaboration extend this further.

3.4.2.5 S-D Logic Axiom 5

The fifth and final axiom of S-DL is that value co-creation is co-ordinated through actor generated institutions and institutional arrangements. For the research this supports the use of using the category management ‘actors’ (supplier managers and retail buyers) to participate and contribute their own views.

The next section introduces value creation and takes forward the theory of S-DL, specifically the S-DL axioms relating to value co-creation or co-destruction and how this has contributed to the success of this study.

3.4.3 Value Co-creation

Makkonen and Olkkonen (2017), stated that the literature on process dynamics and contextual properties of value co-creation was scant. Except for a few recent studies (for example,

Makkonen and Olkkonen, 2017; Laamanen and Skålén, 2015; Frow *et al.*, 2014; Edvardsson *et al.*, 2014), the context of the research shapes value creation through integration of the actors. Several researchers have identified the notion that the customer is an active rather than passive recipient of service (Baron and Harris, 2008; Payne, Storbacka and Frow, 2008; Toffler 1980; Xie, Bagozzi and Troye, 2008). In various degrees, customers play an active role in the provision of service and in the realisation of its benefit, known as the co-creation of value (Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2000; Tax, Colgate and Bowen, 2006; Vargo and Lusch, 2004a). The concept of customer participation is not particularly new, what is new is the recognition that service providers (suppliers in category management) are providing partial input into the customer's value creation process along with input from other sources (Ng, Maull and Smith 2010; Vargo and Lusch, 2004a) including the customer's own sources. McColl-Kennedy *et al.* (2012) state that customers co-create value in different ways, based upon their needs and resources. They also choose to integrate resources in different ways. Some customers engage in value co-creation in many activities while others do not. McColl-Kennedy *et al.* (2012) explored the health care sector using a phenomenological approach to understand the reality of doctors, nurses, dieticians, etc., along with support groups such as community groups to ensure a cross-section of the beneficiaries was obtained. This empirical study found two practice styles were beneficial to the customer and two were not, resulting in the findings challenging the way service providers do and should view their customers. They concluded that service providers will need to consider new business models. This research has followed this recommendation through using a similar research methodology but is flexed in line with the service provision within category management, and that the customer is not passive within the relationship. McColl-Kennedy *et al.* (2012) study was based upon the customer being passive, which is why they recommended further research of this nature but being tailored to the nature of the relationship and the customer.

Previous research has always focused on the positive aspects of value co-creation, with little research having been carried out on the negative aspects, known as value co-destruction. The value co-creation literature is minimal, but value co-destruction literature is almost non-existent (Makkonen and Olkkonen, 2017). Stokes *et al.*, (2018); and Cossio-Silva *et al.*, (2016) stated there was a growing interest in value co-creation; however, there is little knowledge on the topic, and further research is required. They found through extensive research on value co-creation that it had a direct impact on loyalty. Reichheld (2003) suggested that value co-creation was pivotal for the competitive advantage of firms, and the impact on loyalty for their survival. Loyalty from the retailer and the end consumer created a positive experience by

increasing sales and encouraging both groups to purchase more, often attracting more consumers into the retailer's store from competing retailers (Reichheld, 1996). The current research study has considered how value creation leads to satisfaction in CM relationships and consequently loyalty between the parties. The research, therefore, sought to address some of the issues raised by Cossio-Silva *et al.*, (2016); Lombardo and Cabiddu (2017); Laamanen and Skålen, 2015; and Grönroos and Voima (2013), who also stated that more research was needed to dissect, untangle and understand the practices through which service providers and customers interacted and influenced value co-creation. The current research study sought to address these issues through interviewing the actors from both suppliers and retailers.

The S-DL literature emphasises value co-creation in collaborative business relationships, including CM (Vargo and Lusch, 2015; Vargo and Lusch, 2013; Aarikka-Stenroos and Jaakkola, 2012; Haas *et al.*, 2012; O'Cass and Ngo, 2012; Vargo and Lusch, 2011). Value co-creation is created through the interaction between firms and customers at both organisational and personal levels, and the recognition and appreciation of each organisation's role within the collaboration (Chan, Yim and Lam, 2010; Ulaga, 2003). Lombardo and Cabiddu (2017); and Skålen *et al.*, (2015), both affirmed that through interaction with their customer's, service providers could influence the process of value creation opportunities to enhance the value proposition. Greer, Lusch & Vargo (2016) state, S-DL axiom 2 focuses on the customer always being the co-creator of value. They claim that two concepts of value are particularly helpful to managers, being value-in-exchange and value-in-use. Value-in-exchange is the money that changes hands for the value created which lends itself more to G-DL. This is too limiting so value-in-use which lends itself to S-DL. Greer, Lusch & Vargo (2016) affirm that value-in-use arises from individuals and firms experiencing value. For S-DL, a firm's output becomes the customer's input as value co-creation. This includes both tangible and intangible resources, and therefore value-in-use and value co-creation work hand in hand. Everyone within the relationship is a co-creator of value, customers can modify the value proposition of the supplier firm in category management, for example aspirin has many more uses than its primary function. Greer, Lusch & Vargo (2016: p33) state, *'if the supplier firm views its customer not as a customer per se, but as a resource integrating individual (or firm) that is co-creating value'*. It should also be recognised that the supplier firm is a customer of its own suppliers, hence they are also co-creators of value.

Coproduction between a supplier and customer is a subset of co-creation of value (Greer, Lusch & Vargo, 2016; McColl-Kennedy *et al.*, 2012). In category management this includes activities

such as joint NPD through identifying gaps in the relevant market and introducing new lines and taking out lines not selling. The thesis has already observed that the transmission of knowledge both ways in a category management relationship provide another perspective of value co-creation. This results in deep relationships where trust starts to evolve as it can often help to resolve difficult and complex problems. Firms develop their collaborative relationships. Greer, Lusch & Vargo (2016) believe ongoing collaborative and deep relationships should create strategic advantage as it cannot be transferred to other collaborative relationships. Within CM, suppliers can, therefore, influence the overall value proposition by interacting with their customer, the retailer. Collaboratively they can also interact with the final consumer. Direct interaction with the consumer has, however, not been considered in this thesis but was identified as one of the recommendations for future research. Chandler and Lusch (2015); and Ballantyne *et al.*, (2011) have defined value proposition as a tool through which service providers invited customers to assess what they could offer and together engage in value co-creation. Customers would review various providers' offerings and select the one most appropriate for them. This interaction formed the basis of the CM collaborative relationship. Different customers, who in this research were the retailers, could assess the supplier's proposition in different ways (Chandler and Vargo, 2011). Lombardo and Cabiddu (2017); and Lombardo and Kvålshaugen (2014) argued that the extent of the value provided by the supplier often depended upon the relationship the retailer had with that supplier, and within CM this could involve the profound relationship of the category captain or other preferred suppliers (Grönroos and Voima, 2013; Cabiddu, Lui and Piccolo, 2013; Aarikka-Stenroos and Jaakkola, 2012).

The previous section has explained that customers are not simply passive objects but are resources who participate in the value creation process or 'co-creation' (Vargo and Lusch, 2004a). Vargo and Lush (2004a) asserted that service was the fundamental unit of exchange in value co-creation. Customer's skills and knowledge, as well as the provider's operant skills and knowledge, both affected the creation of value. Thus, value was a joint function of the actions of the supplier and the customer, and always resulted from co-creation (Vargo and Lusch, 2008). They stated that the perspective on value creation was growing, as both firms and the consumers were creating new and innovative ways to support each other's value creation processes. This research, has however, focused directly on the supplier and the retailer as these two parties were assumed to carry out market research into consumer needs. Value co-creation, by bringing the supplier and the retailer closer together clarifies the blurred division between

the boundaries of the supplier and the retailer, as both businesses begin to learn and understand the issues and complexities of each other's organisation. Category management and value creation close the gap between the problems associated with 'cold' and unfriendly transactional relationships. Value co-creation would likely attract existing customers, but also attract new ones into the market. Therefore, within CM, value co-creation would assist the collaboration and give the retailer a competitive advantage to develop consumer loyalty. The next section reviews 'value co-destruction' where collaboration negates the creation of value. The position in the middle of value co-creation and value co-destruction is defined as value 'no-creation' which is where value remains the same and is neither created nor destroyed.

3.4.4 Value Co-destruction

Value co-destruction has been defined by Plé and Cáceres (2010) as an interactive process between service systems, which results in a reduction in the well-being of at least one individual or organisation. They stated that during this process, these service systems interacted either directly (person to person), or indirectly (via appliances such as goods) through the integration and application of resources (Plé and Cáceres, 2010). Value destruction and co-destruction were the negative sides of value creation and value co-creation. Operant and operand resources, if utilised positively within the relationship, would help to co-create value. However, if one or both of the parties did not positively utilise these, it could potentially lead to value co-destruction. S-DL is therefore important behind value co-destruction and can contribute to this in the same way as previously stated with value co-creation.

The importance of co-destruction is growing in business contexts and further research is necessary (Stokes *et al.*, 2018). The marketing literature has mainly studied value creation and co-creation as having a positive slant where possible. According to Plé and Cáceres (2010), this was because Vargo and Lusch (2008: p26) referred to '*the benefit of another entity or the entity itself*', and where S-DL worked in a 'beneficial way'. They also claimed that there was no reference to negative outcomes in the early literature after publication of the S-DL of marketing in 2006. Plé and Cáceres (2010) also stated that the word 'creation' had a positive connotation and should not be used where there was a negative situation. However, recent papers have addressed both value co-destruction and value co-creation, investigating positive and negative outcomes. This research sought to explore both positive and negative views of suppliers and retailers, rather than the previous research and practitioner belief that CM was

always positive. The study has found this was not always the case. Realistically, research needs to consider both the positive and negative aspects of value creation and value destruction, respectively (Dong, Evans, and Zou, 2008). Plé and Cáceres (2010) defined value co-destruction as an interactional service that resulted in a decline in the service or one aspect of the service, which could either be related to the organisation/s or individual/s. Co-destruction could arise either directly or indirectly from the application of resources from either party within the relationship (Plé and Cáceres (2010), and was always harmful to the business relationship or collaboration. Prior and Marcos-Cuevas (2016) identified value co-destruction as an essential way to conceptualise non-positive outcomes from actor-to-actor interactions. They stated that using the notion of perceived value it was likely that value co-destruction occurred when the result of actor interactions was negative or when they settled on incomplete or misinterpreted information. Echeverri and Skålén (2011) stated that value destruction studies have indicated a decline in wellbeing as the primary result. However, Prior and Marcos-Cuevas (2016) affirmed that this was not a clear way of expressing the value co-destruction outcomes. Smith (2013) has suggested that resource loss was a significant indicator of value co-destruction and this contributed to negative emotional states. The researcher found in the study that the provision of resources particularly from the supplier to the retailer has become almost expected. Where there is a breakdown in the provision of data, information or event, human resource co-destruction will occur. The buyer will feel that the supplier is not delivering on their promises. This is particularly relevant to the category captain role as often resource is a pre-requisite to the relationship. Prior and Marcos-Cuevas (2016) confirm that value co-destruction can result from the role of the actors within a relationship. They stated actors in the relationship were the recipients of value. Lusch and Vargo (2014); Vargo and Lusch (2015) claimed that the role of actor's perceptions can determine value co-destruction. This suggests that the perceptions of value depend upon the information available to the actor, and their appraisal of that information. Prior and Marcos-Cuevas (2016) also stated, actors were the co-creators or destructors of value, and that they should decide what resources are normal within the relationship before the exchange of product takes place. The provision of resources within S-DL should be agreed prior to trading. Studying resourcing issues, Prior and Marco-Cuevas (2016) claimed that often the engagement of a relationship starts out with positive intentions but leads to negative outcomes. The development of trust and collaboration in the CM relationship have been shown in this research to start off in a positive way and where this break down leads to value co-destruction.

Existing studies suggest that the actors in the collaboration receive information about the purchase or trading detail. Woodruff (1997) stated, this includes pricing and product related information and in CM this is provided to the retail buyer by the supplier. The information is processed by the retailer which influences their perception of the relationship. The buyer then assesses if the information is valuable and may base this on previous similar experiences (Brakus, Schmitt and Zarantonello, 2009). Finally, the buyer assesses the information received from previous set criteria to see if their expectations have been met (Prior and Marcos-Cuevas, 2016). Given the notion of ‘perceived value’ it is likely that value co-destruction occurs when the expectations have not been met. The research shows that buyers feel that suppliers do not create new and innovative ideas that are aligned to their consumer profiles. Likewise, the suppliers said that the retailers want new and innovative ideas based on market and consumer data, but when these are presented, they are only interested in the pricing. This stagnates any creative thinking by the supplier if cost is the over-arching concern. These are discussed later in the thesis. Echeverri and Skålén (2011) stated, value destruction occurs where there is a decline in the customers well-being. This study shows that this is true, but equally this is appropriate to the supplier as well. Smith (2013) suggested that resource loss was a key indicator of value co-destruction and this contributed to negative emotional states.

The literature review has already emphasised that S-DL collaboration between actors co-creates value. However, Payne, Storbacka and Frow, (2008) stated that refinements to this notion were required. Collaboration, they stated depended upon the contextual factors as value co-creation occurred during specific outcomes. Chief amongst the outcomes was timing, location, alignment, and content (DiMascio, 2010). Echeverri and Skålén (2011) stated that in collaboration, co-destruction of value occurred where the parties did not align. This research has highlighted this position within CM and found that both internal alignment and external alignment with the business partner needs to take place before trading commences, or value co-destruction can occur.

The constraints faced by actors can influence the behaviours of the actors. Retail buyers, for example within CM can only access certain amounts of information at one time and only dedicate a certain amount of time at any one time to analyse the data. For that reason, the suppliers stated that the retailers often expected resource or ‘implants’ to be placed inside the retailer organisation to analyse the information on behalf of the buyer. The implant is employed by the supplier, but in effect works as a buyer’s assistant. Zablah *et al.*, (2012) stated, buyers

need to balance working priorities and often relied upon supplier resources to maintain balanced behaviours. The resource reduces the stress placed on the buyer and so facilitates consistent behaviour from the buyer. If this resource was not available, the buyer is likely to have increased stress levels and behave in what the suppliers claimed was inconsistent behaviour. Value co-destruction therefore occurs with both partners. Gary and Wood (2011) stated where there is a balanced behaviour within the relationship, predictability occurs and helps to maintain a more positive relationship. DiMascio (2010) suggested, adopting a service style or S-DL reflects a desire for a 'win-win' situation within the relationship, rather than the perceptions of a 'win-lose' approach coming from a non-service-based business relationship. Prior and Marcus-Cuevas (2016) defined this as stylistic behaviours, defined in several previous studies as actor engagement styles. These are typical behaviours that actors adopt to shape their experience and determine when they should engage in interactions with the other party. Therefore, they are likely to contribute to value co-destruction opportunities by creating situations of misalignment or misuse of resources and practices. Prior and Marcos- Cuevas (2016) claimed that their research addressed the issue of identifying actor engagement styles and how these related to value co-destruction. Stylistic behaviours, therefore, influenced perceptions of the actors and how they understand the world, and the researcher claims this has also been explored in the thesis through its phenomenological methodology. Therefore, Laamanen and Skålen (2015) claimed that they found that value co-destruction was more apparent in business relationships than previously thought. They stated previous studies were largely preoccupied with harmonious discourses, leading to skewed assumptions that neglected discordant social reality. They stated their research revealed that value co-destruction was rife within value co-creation by empirically analysing the phenomena. Laamanen and Skalen (2015) stated that innovation comes from conflict, and that transformation re-positioning are outcomes of value co-destruction. The negative activity enables the actors to be open and honest. This research has followed the work of Laamanen and Skålen (2015) as they suggested more research into value co-destruction be carried out and support their claims. It is clear this research has exposed value co-destruction within CM relationships. It is hoped by the researcher that this discovery will update the literature and encourage suppliers and retailers to work closer together by respecting each other more. It will lead to a better offer for the shopper. In the UK grocery CM, the research shows both partners were unhappy with the actions of the other. Generally, the retailer partner would express their concerns to the supplier partner without fear of damaging the relationship. The study by Prior and Marcos-Cuevas (2016) has further shown that value co-destruction has a practical relevance, and other research has shown

that the method of engagement between the actors, influences the perceptions of value co-destruction. The level of collaboration or the strength of the relationship was found to be important in co-creating value, but also where it was weak it would lead to value co-destruction. The strength of the relationship, whether it was organisational or personal, often assisted communication and allowed the actors to freely express their opinions if it was a reliable and trusted relationship. Where there was a notion of satisfaction that was discussed by suppliers and retailers, this was just to satisfy the other party that everything was fine. The reality uncovered by the current research study is that both parties within the relationship have issues with the other party, and the research therefore questions whether, either side achieved satisfaction. Value no-creation is defined as the efforts of value creation, which are indifferent. Value no-creation sits in the middle of the extreme notions of value co-creation and value co-destruction. Makkonen and Olkkonen (2017) launched the concept of value no-creation and have applied it to the framework of inter-organisational IVF (Figure 3.1).

Value no-creation was established by Makkonen and Olkkonen (2017), to strike a balance between extreme notions of value co-creation and value co-destruction. It is in the middle of a dichotomy and is neither positive nor negative, and often defined as the position of indifference.

The following section summaries the literature review bringing together the link between the theoretical and contextual lenses.

3.5 Summary

In summary, CM is an area of interest to both academia and industry. The research contributes to knowledge through the theoretical and contextual lenses, as detailed in Figure 2.1. The theoretical lenses reviewed are value creation (co-creation, co-destruction and no-value creation, S-DL, trust and loyalty (which can lead to satisfaction)). The contextual lenses of CM, category captain, non-captain suppliers and private label have not previously been reviewed using these theoretical lenses. Therefore, this is a significant contribution of the thesis to the literature. It details the effects of collaborative and trusting relationships over time, between food manufacturers (suppliers) and retailers. The knowledge contributes to the changing needs of the retail landscape and the impact of CM on retailing, including new multi-channel trading formats and private label products.

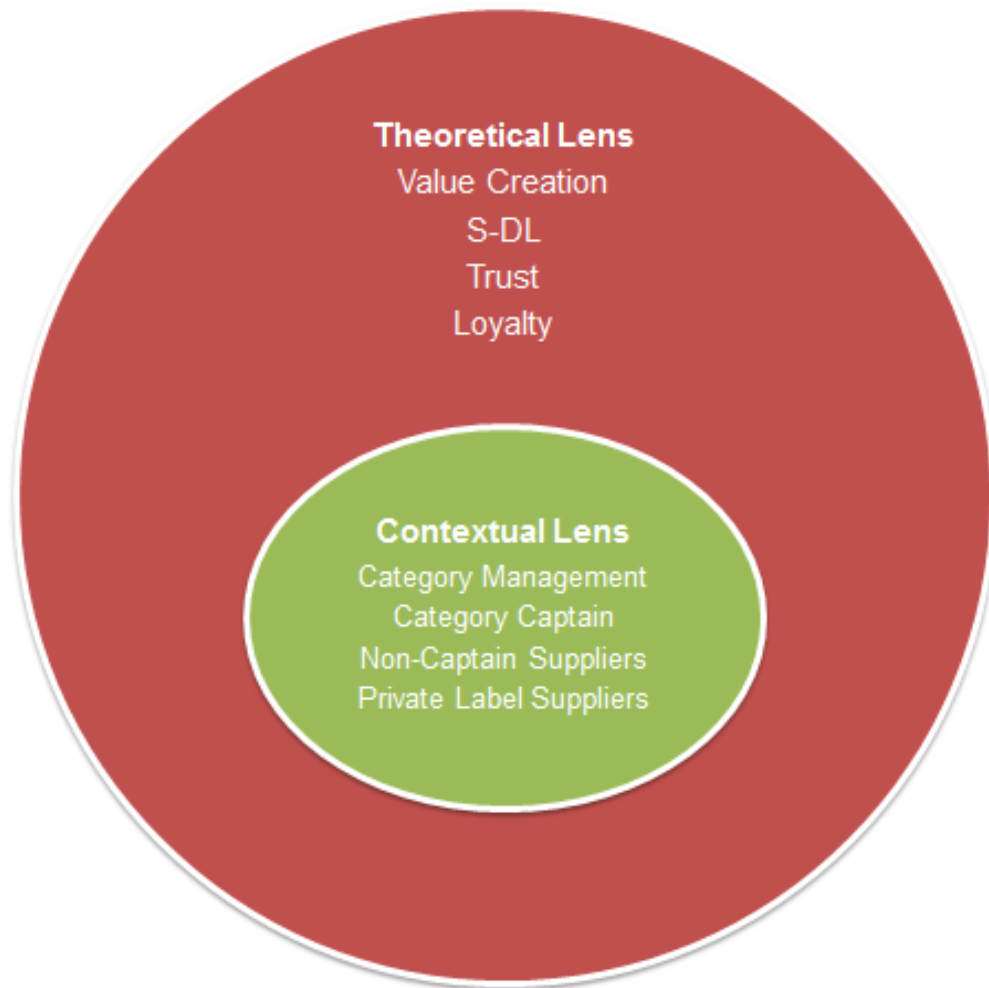


Figure 3.3. Theoretical and Contextual Research Lenses adopted in the study . Source: Benson (2020).

The review has identified the areas of weakness in the existing CM literature and the extant gaps in research to date (Galbreth, Kurtuluş and Shor, 2015; Kurtuluş, Nakkas and Ülkü, 2014; Gooner, Morgan and Perreault, 2011; Kurtuluş and Toktay, 2011). Table 2.1 maps the research objectives against the key findings from the literature review that were taken forward to the discussion chapters, to compare the extant literature with the key findings of the study. The next chapter is the methodology employed by the researcher and the reasons for its choice, and why alternative methods were not adopted.

Thesis Research Mapping (Stage 2) Key findings from Chapter 3 – Literature Review c/f to Chapter 7 – Contribution	
Research Question	Three Key Findings Contribution (Chapter 6)
Question 1 What is the nature of value, and is there value creation or otherwise between the grocery manufacturer (supplier) and the food retailer within category management relationships?	See Chapter 5
Question 2 What is the role currently played by the category captain in category management relationships, and how will this role evolve as consumers switch from branded to private label products? Can other suppliers within the category in the new reality be allowed to demonstrate value creation and meet the selection criteria for category captain?	See Chapter 6
Research Question 3 What are the main differences between current category management literature and category management in practice by comparing published academic category management literature against the views of present category management practitioners within the UK grocery sector?	1. The category captain is discussed in detail in the category management literature. The findings are discussed later which allude to this literature being incorrect.

Table 3.1 Thesis Mapping (Stage 2) Key findings from the literature review. Source: Benson (2020).

Chapter 4: Methodology

4.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to describe and explain the assumptions, decisions and approaches that were taken regarding the research methodology and methods, to address the research questions. It also outlines the aims and objectives of the research; the epistemological, ontological, and axiological assumptions; the influence of appropriate theory; the research techniques, data collection and analysis. The author's approach to thematic analysis will be considered throughout the chapter and integrated into each step of the process.

The literature review (Chapter 3) has explored the importance of value creation within inter-organisational relationships, particularly focusing on CM. It specifically looked at value co-creation, value no-creation and the destruction of value within collaborative relationships between UK grocery food manufacturers (suppliers), and retail buyers (retailers). It also explored the significance of trust and S-DL, and how this can influence the co-creation, no-creation or destruction of value within CM relationships. The literature review also considered the role of the category captain, which is described by practitioners as the preferred supplier within CM relationships. It mainly raised the issue of exclusion from the CM relationship by non-captain suppliers, which prompted the research study to further understand if they could ever aspire to this privileged position.

The research, therefore, extends our understanding of interfirm relationships and helps to realise value outcomes, through an empirical study of CM relationships in the UK grocery sector. It investigated practitioners' day-to-day reality within the CM relationship, seeking answers to questions concerning both the supplier and the retailer, to ensure an equitable and balanced view from both sides of the relationship. Practitioners were recruited from the ranks of company senior managers and directors, as the author felt these represented the key decision makers within the organisations and were best qualified and positioned to answer the research questions.

4.2 Research Questions

The following primary and secondary questions were asked to address the research's aims and objectives:

Primary Research Question:

- How do inter-organisational CM relationships realise value co-creation, value no creation and value co-destruction outcomes within the UK grocery sector?

Secondary Research Questions:

- What is the nature of value, and how does this influence the supplier and retailer in CM relationships?
- How is value co-created or otherwise, between the supplier and retailer who typically enter a CM relationship for mutual benefit?
- What is the nature of trust, and how does this influence value co-creation or otherwise, in CM relationships?
- What is the current role of the category captain in CM relationships, and how is this role likely to evolve as consumers switch from branded to private label products?

4.3 Conceptual Framework

Figure 4.1 shows the conceptual framework developed during the early stages of the research from exploring the literature in business relationships, and specifically CM relationships. This conceptual framework was a result of desk research and shows the critical variables identified from the literature in business relationships (Kurtuluş, Nakkas and Ülkü, 2014). Value is the central construct and, as such, lies in the centre of the conceptual model with all the other variables feeding into it, either directly or indirectly via other variables. As value was the key component of the research, it was appropriate to commence the literature review in this area. However, it soon became apparent that co-creation in relationships was significant to adding value in CM relationships (Kurtuluş, Nakkas and Ülkü, 2014). Additionally, at an early stage, it became apparent that in CM relationships, there was not only co-creation of value, or value destruction, but also a state of no-value which neither added nor destroyed value (Makkonen and Olkkonen, 2017; Laamanen and Skålen, 2015; Gummerus, 2013; Plé and Cáceres, 2010). Figure 4.1 also shows the importance of trust and how this links into the concept of value. Trust is shown in the research findings as being the underlying driver of the CM relationship, and it is from the thesis that trust in the relationship will lead to more deep and cohesive collaboration between the supplier and the retailer. Figure 4.2 is the revised conceptual framework, and includes co-creation, no-value, and co-destruction in response to the early research findings

which highlighted all three variables are at play in CM relationships. The issues surrounding value co-destruction became more and more evident during the twelve-months of primary research. The researcher transcribed each interview in the primary stages and was surprised by the remarks made by the suppliers and retailers, where they felt value was not co-created in the CM relationship. This is discussed at length throughout the thesis and alights to be a significant research contribution. The model is therefore shown again in the contribution chapter as the model will be used by researchers working on business relationship research. Loyalty is an extension of trust, where trust needs to be developed before any form of loyalty enters the relationship. In Figure 4.2 trust is shown as an extension of loyalty, satisfaction, and S-DL rather than being shown as a standalone variable in Figure 4.1. S-DL can be seen to link into loyalty in Figure 4.1 and Figure 4.2, since following the dialogues from the participants it was found that they agreed with the conceptual findings from the literature review. The research also found that the supplier and retailer organisations were separate businesses, and although they had a shared view within CM, they often had conflicting business aims and objectives. These differences often led to frustration and tensions within the relationship. The research has focused on the supplier and retailer relationships only, without a direct consideration for the consumer. The needs of the consumer are, however, foremost in the minds of suppliers and retailers throughout the whole process. Direct consumer involvement within CM relationships was therefore not part of this research, but is an important area for future research, as discussed in the contribution chapter. Finally, the conceptual model considered the differences between branded products and private label products, as the industry is experiencing consumers switching from branded products to private label products due to changing consumer patterns (IGD, 2020). This switch is changing the dynamics of CM. The impact of switching from branded to private labels is reflected in both Figure 4.1 and Figure 4.2. The market changes were identified early in the desk-based research and as discussed in the later chapters, were endorsed by both the supplier and retailer participants. Although the conceptual models are investigated further in the discussion chapter, it is important to highlight these at this point in the thesis as the cornerstone of the theoretical perspectives of the research.

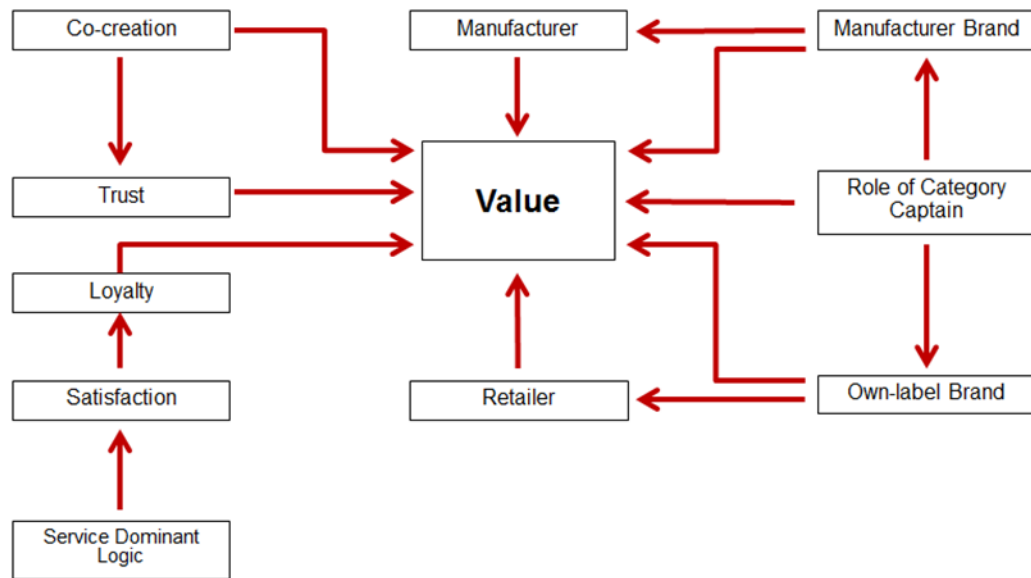


Figure 4.1: Original conceptual framework - Value creation in category management relationships. Source: Benson (2020).

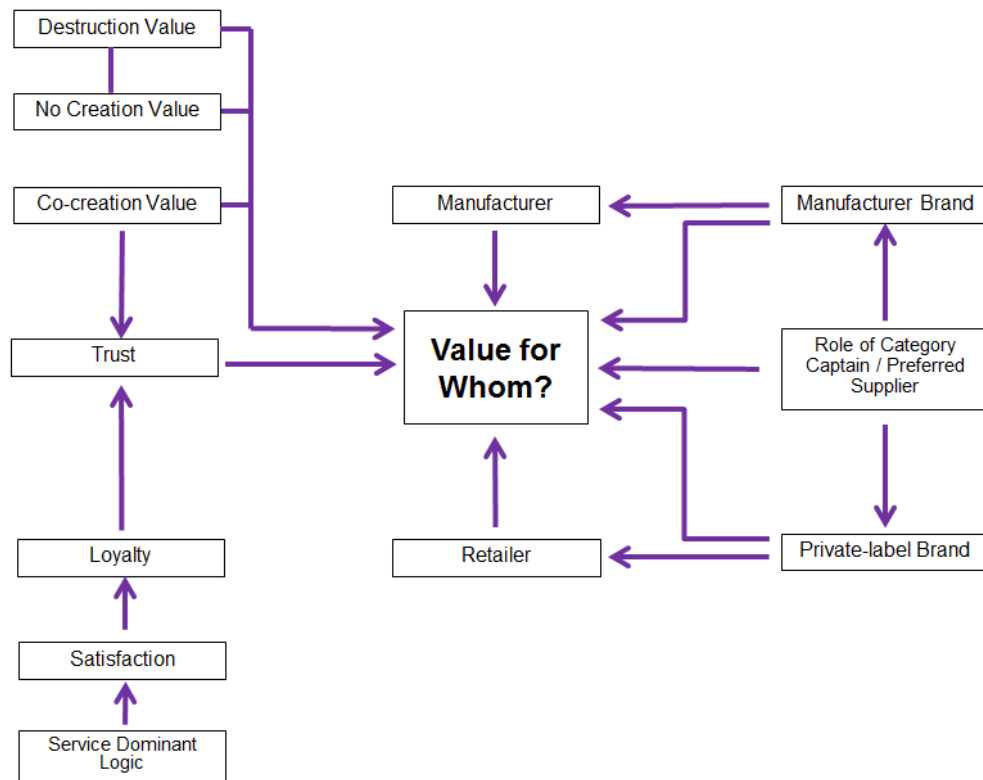


Figure 4.2. Revised conceptual framework – Value Creation in Category Management Relationships in the UK Grocery Market. Source: Benson (2020).

4.4 Epistemological, Ontological and Axiological assumptions

This section discusses the epistemological, ontological, and axiological assumptions used in the research, and the assumptions which helped the researcher to select the most appropriate research methodology and methods. McAuley, Duberley and Johnson (2014) stated that epistemology is the study of the theory of knowledge, and by evaluating specific criteria it can help decide if any claims made in the evaluation can become new knowledge. Epistemology questions what knowledge is and how it can be acquired. McAuley, Duberley and Johnson (2014) stated that the classical definition of epistemology is where there is true belief that is justified, and this falls into one of two very different epistemological positions: objectivists and subjectivists. Epistemological objectivists believe that it is possible to neutrally observe the social world and its behaviour by using the senses to test and determine the truth. Alternatively, epistemological subjectivists believe that perceptions give an understanding without any testing and that truth is determined through experience (Charmaz, 1995). However, ontology looks at the nature of reality or merely a description of what is in existence and what people believe to be the reality. Reality is a structure that has many parts, which can be measured precisely through observations of the world (Reckwitz, 2002; Burrell and Morgan (2000); Bagozzi, 1980; Hudson and Ozanne, 1988; Morgan and Smircich, 1980). Johnson and Duberley (2012) stated that it questions what entities exist, and groups these together according to their similarities or differences. Finally, axiology is the study of value and worth, and it investigates the concepts of what is right and good for humans and society (Biedenbach and Jacobsson, 2016). As the concept of axiology has evolved, it has led researchers to distinguish between judgements based on fact, and judgements based on values, creating a division between positivist and interpretivist approaches. Therefore, it is crucial that epistemological, ontological and axiological paradigms are considered independently and collectively to help determine the theoretical research paradigm.

Ontology is the study of what is believed to be real including what people themselves believe to be their reality. This can cause differences even with likeminded people as their beliefs may be different (Johnson and Duberley, 2012). This research, therefore, considered ontology with the view to understanding what grocery industry practitioners believed was reality throughout their daily CM duties. It wanted to understand if there were differences between suppliers and retailers, and even differences between the different types of suppliers and different product 'tiers' (defined as basic, standard and premium product ranges) of retailers. Like epistemology,

there are two very different ontological positions, namely ontological objectivists, and ontological subjectivists. Positivist approaches are ontologically objectivist, while interpretivist approaches are ontologically subjectivist. Hudson and Ozanne (1988); and Hirschman (1986), contended that human beings construct multiple realities, and the realist view of positivists using a measured approach with scientific methods would add little value. Hudson and Ozanne (1988) stated that, the most significant understanding of positivist reality came from a controlled setting such as in a laboratory. Calder, Phillips and Tybout (1981) claimed that measurements in controlled settings would not allow the researcher to unravel complex relationships and visualise what emerged from the practitioners. By comparison, interpretivists deny that only one real world exists, and that social reality is a projection of our minds (Berger and Luckman, 1967). The current research explored participants' views, to understand their reality and establish shared meaning, and shared realities, or even differences in the views of supplier and retailer participants. The research study reviewed all types of organisations; standard and premium retailers, as well as different sized B/PL suppliers to ensure that the full spectrum of the sector was represented. From an ontological perspective, the research sat within the paradigm of ontological subjectivism, and therefore adopted an interpretative research methodology. The next section reviews the research from an axiological perspective.

Previously the thesis identified that axiology is the study of value and worth and investigated what was right and good for humans and society (Biedenbach and Jacobsson, 2016). Axiology has led researchers to distinguish between judgement based on fact and judgement based on values. This has created a division between positivism and interpretivism. Axiological issues are significant for the evolution of theory, which help to explore whether research can be truly free of value. Rescher (1969) classified value into seven basic types; economic; moral; social; political; aesthetic; religious; and intellectual value. The conventional scientific approach of positivism has shown that research is free of value to be valid, and so positivist researchers must approach research neutrally and objectively. By contrast, interpretivists have argued that it is impossible for research to be completely free of personal values; notably research can be biased towards the values of the researcher (Denzin, 1984). Hudson and Ozanne (1988) have stated that axiology 'sits' beneath the different views of reality in positivism and interpretivism. Positivists explain reality through symbolism and prediction from the association of variables with phenomena (Anderson, and Weitz 1989; Bredo and Feinberg, 1982; Hunt, 1983; Kerlinger, 1973), whereas the primary goal of interpretivists' is to 'understand' behaviour

rather than predict it (Rubinstein, 1981). Therefore, from an axiological perspective, the research study also took an interpretivist perspective, as it requires the values of the practitioners. Category management is not a scientific discipline but one that responds to the changing circumstances.

The next section explains how the epistemological, ontological, and axiological assumptions shaped the research approach. Maclean and McIntosh (2002) stated that there is one process to management research, but there are two research approaches, qualitative and quantitative explained later in Sections 4.6 and 4.7. Interpretivism uses a qualitative research approach, which has been used in this research (Orlikowski, 2007). The researcher wanted to follow the suggestions of Wax (1967), where research showed misunderstandings in research which can be corrected using *verteshen* understandings. Wax (1967) advised *verteshen* was research using participatory examination of social phenomena in an emphatic manner. Figure 4.3 shows the philosophical mapping that was developed by the researcher to support the research aims and objectives, as well as the needs of the research to follow an inductive approach, and those suggested by the literature. This helped to gain a better understanding of value creation in CM relationships from industry participants as they saw it. The researcher has followed the route highlighted in beige. The epistemological, ontological, and axiological philosophies of the research were considered which led to a mainly subjectivist paradigm.

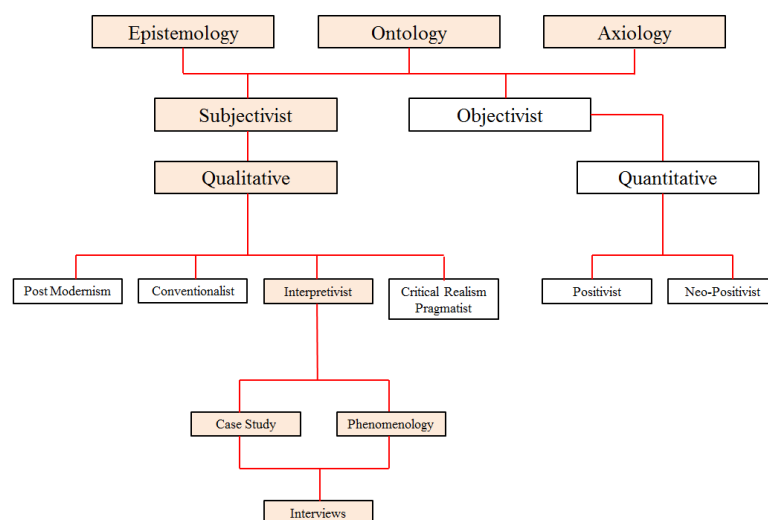


Figure 4.3. Philosophical Approach Mapping. Source: Benson (2020).

Figure 4.4 shows that the epistemological and ontological positions of the main research paradigms. The selected research paradigm of interpretivism is positioned as both a subjectivist epistemology and a subjectivist ontology, where Johnson and Duberley (2012) therefore state

that interviewism has a strong subjectivist approach (Johnson and Duberley, 2012: p.180). The ontological approach (on the X-axis) ranges from objectivist in the top left corner, and the subjectivist approach in the top right-hand corner. The epistemological approach (on the Y-axis) ranges from objectivist in the top left corner through to subjectivist in the bottom right-hand corner. The different paradigms highlighted in the research justification sit within these parameters. The research has therefore chosen an interpretivist approach which sits with a strong subjectivist epistemology and ontology. The interpretivist approach was directly compared in the methodology to the opposing positivist approach which sits with an objectivist epistemology and ontology. Cause and effect, a fundamental discipline of positivism was considered not to be appropriate to this study. It needed to be left partly open using semi-structured questions in an interview to enable the participants to freely express their reality of CM. The top right quadrant is defined as 'incoherent' as no research approaches sit within an objectivist epistemology and subjectivist ontology.

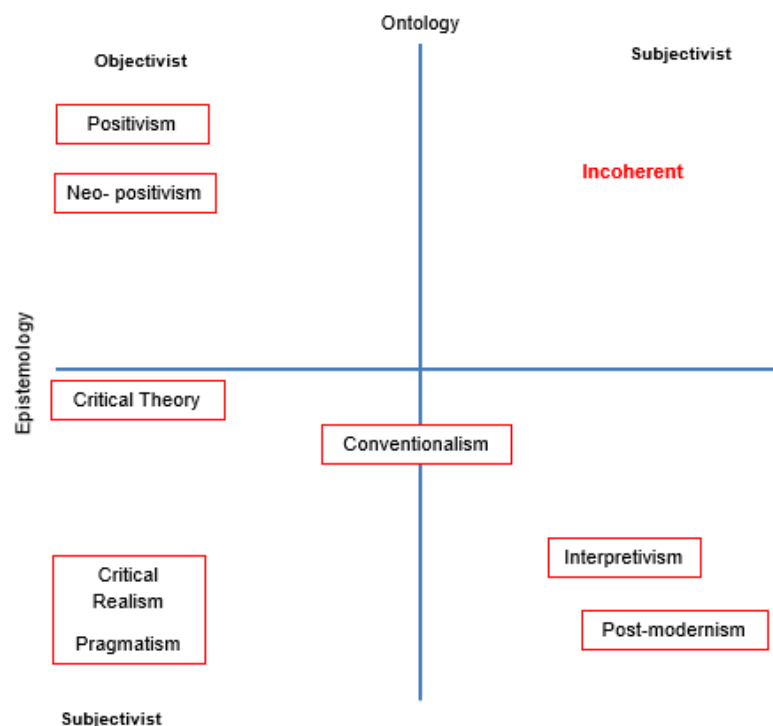


Figure 4.4. Reflexivity and Management Research Tool (adopted from Johnson and Duberley, 2012, p.180).

Johnson and Duberley (2012) stated that research paradigms 'sit' within objectivist and subjectivist perspectives with extremes of each. However, most are positioned in the middle with bias one way or the other. Extreme objectivist paradigms include positivism and neo-

positivism, and alternatively, extreme subjectivist paradigms include interpretivism and post-modernism. Positioned in the middle of the extremities are critical theory, critical realism, pragmatism and conventionalism, and their traditions slightly favour one approach over the other. The researcher used a subjectivist epistemological stance, as he wanted to understand the participant's beliefs about their reality with respect to CM. Adopting an objectivist approach would have resulted in formal and structured interviews, which would have gone against the spirit of the research aims and objectives, and were therefore considered not to be the most appropriate choice of method. Although each paradigm is not discussed in detail (this was deemed not necessary for the study), the next section however summarises why the other approaches were not suitable for the research. The choice of interpretivism over positivism is explained in detail as the CM literature mainly focuses on positivist research but refers to a need for future studies using an interpretive approach (Kurtuluş, Nakkas and Ülkü, 2014). According to Kurtuluş, Nakkas and Ülkü (2014) previous CM research has mainly adopted an objectivist approach. This was highlighted earlier and in the literature review. Researchers previously favoured quantitative data collection, rather than trying to gain a specific understanding of what the industry practitioners believed was their reality. However, many authors have suggested that future studies would benefit from taking a more subjectivist approach in order to gain a better understanding of practice. The extant CM literature recommended an interpretive approach (Galbreth, Kurtuluş and Shor, 2015; Kurtuluş, Nakkas and Ülkü, 2014; Hübner and Kuhn, 2012; Kurtuluş and Toktay, 2011; Hübner, 2011; Gooner, Morgan and Perreault, 2011; Chun and Cadeaux, 2010; Aastrup, Grant and Bjerre, 2007; Desrochers and Nelson, 2006; Gruen and Shah, 2000).

The objectivist paradigm of positivism will, therefore, be compared to the subjectivist paradigm of interpretivism and why it was preferred for the research objectives. Hudson and Ozanne (1988) stated that, the difference in what constitutes knowledge from a positivist approach compared to an interpretivist approach is striking. Positivists adopt a more general approach to research and look for over-arching laws not necessarily relevant to the study. This was too general for this study as it was necessary to be specific, to update and correct the literature in CM. McAuley, Duberley and Johnson (2014); Johnson and Duberley (2012); Hudson and Ozanne (1988) supported these comments and stated that positivists tended to use general context within their research, whilst interpretivists took a more particularistic approach and studied specific phenomena appropriate to their study. Hudson and Ozanne (1988) also stated that interpretivists sought to determine meaning and other experiences within a

conceptual framework as opposed to positivist general findings. As the research questions were specific to CM rather than general management questions further evidences that the study was more suited to be interpretivist rather than a positivist approach. Hudson and Ozanne (1988); and Berger *et al.*, (1982) argued that there would be minimal investigation into the specific requirements of the research to meet the research objectives using a positivist approach, rather than a consideration of the objectives through interpretivism. Hudson and Ozanne (1988) further stated that positivism considers the bigger picture and generalises causality, for example the 'cause and effect' theory introduced earlier, where one action is likely to have a direct consequence on another action. A good example to illustrate this point is, if one holds an object high off the ground and let's go of it, it will fall to the ground due to the force of gravity acting on the object and giving it weight. The nature of this research is exploratory and therefore generalisations or cause and effect do not address the core questions. Positivists place a high degree of importance on cause and effect, which produce findings that are too general. They consider the world to be rather simplistic, and avoid the complexities facing many organisations, individuals, and other stakeholders. Once the realities are established, future generalist positivist research can then be undertaken. Category management and retailing have become a very complicated business in recent times due to the uncertainties and changes affecting them (IGD, 2020). As previously stated, the current research study has found the extant literature to be inaccurate, for example, the category captain role is currently being discussed as though it still exists in practice. However, the subsequent chapters will show this is not the case. By generalising the category captain role and asking for information via a large survey would not provide accurate answers. It is likely to confuse participants and generate mixed responses. Interpretivists use techniques such as descriptive analysis of participant observations, historical documents, and interviews, as used in this research study, for a more holistic approach, supported by interpretivism (Johnson and Duberley, 2012; Rist, 1977).

The next section will review why research paradigms were rejected for this study.

4.5 Paradigms Not Appropriate for The Study

The previous section has explained the reason the researcher chose an interpretivist phenomenological study, and the reason a positivist study was not chosen. McAuley, Duberley and Johnson (2014) stated that these two are almost direct opposites as shown in Figure 4.4. The researcher explains why social constructionism, conventionalism, critical realism, critical

theory, pragmatism, and post-modernism were not chosen to clarify that the reader considered the different paradigms before selecting interpretivism.

Social constructionism and social constructivism are not the same thing. Constructivism emphasises that knowledge emerges through the individuals' interaction with the environment. Social constructionism has its roots in the work of Alfred Schultz, and the popularised in 1966 by Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann in their book 'The Social Construction of Reality'. Social Constructionism sits within the views of interpretivism (and indeed phenomenology) that meaning is created and negotiated by human actors. Social constructionism takes the epistemological position that knowledge and therefore meaning are contingent upon human practice which is constructed in and out of interaction between human beings and their world and transmitted essentially in a social context (Crotty, 1998). This research method is not self-reflexive (a requirement of this study) and seeks to know about the objects under study. As the UK grocery sector is vast the selection criteria of the participants were simply a supplier or retailer in a decision-making position or senior within their organisation. No more detail was required. Social constructionism emphasises the cultural and institutional origins of meaning, again not seen as relevant for this study. Culture brings certain things into view and can restrict certain vision and ignore some things that may be said by the participants. Culture provides a specific lens through which we view phenomena. The research was 'open' to a reflective and reflexive account of the participants reality, hence further reasons why social constructionism was not chosen over phenomenology. The research rejects social constructionism for phenomenology as it required to understand the phenomena without a cultural bias. Gray (2014) states social constructionism only requires knowledge that should fit into the set structures of cultures within the research. Although culture is important within the research it is not the only factor being considered. Therefore, phenomenology is different from social constructionism as it arrives at meaning about phenomena quickly and directly without cultural bias. Both do however share an active interest in the role of human experience and an awareness of the lived world. The researcher found the choice of phenomenology over social constructionism tricky, but it was the freedom away from culture that caused social constructionism to be rejected in this study.

The researcher rejected a conventionalist approach because conventionalism does not assess absolute reality. It captures subjectivist data from participants and so opposes positivism, and rejects theory-neutral language, but according to Johnson and Duberly (2012) the result is a

relativistic stance which is riddled with fundamental epistemological contradictions. The headline in Johnson and Duberly (2012: p91) is '*Postmodernist Epistemology - Relativism Unleashed*'. The thesis required data that was absolute and reflected the reality of UK CM and so conventionalism was not seen as appropriate for the study. Post-modernism was rejected for the same reason of having a strong belief in relativism. It has the extreme of subjectivist ontology and epistemology, and as this position does not have any formal structure it adopts a highly relative position and therefore research cannot be seen to be absolute (DeCock, 1998). Johnson and Duberly (2012) stated post-modernism have complex language due to post-modernists rejecting a single perspective but having multiple perspectives. The post-modernists inherent relativism negates the researcher's confidence in the data that would have been captured as the approach does not lend itself to empirical research required by the study. Post-modernism does not allow organisational intervention, again this is another key objective of the research to provide the food industry with suggestions for practice. This would have been too complicated for this research as it would have been good to have multiple viewpoints, but the researcher was seeking responses to provide answers to the issues raised by the research and therefore needed a basic structure behind the research.

Critical theory was rejected by the researcher because he was concerned that the findings would upset the industry organisations and the practitioners. Kincherloe and McLaren (1998, p.260) stated that critical theory '*produces, in our view, undeniably dangerous knowledge*'. Critical theory focuses too much on political values, and so relies on this knowledge to support its beliefs. It is therefore too reliant on difficult situations and one the researcher was not prepared to get involved in with this study. The industry is going through change and further political complications would not have been helpful. The relationship between a supplier and retailer are often viewed as asymmetrical, with the power lying with the retailer. However, the researcher wishes to explore both parties in an equal manner as the secret to a successful collaboration is symmetry for both organisations. Therefore, critical theory provides an opposition to positivism and some neo-positivist approaches, it rejects theory-neutral language but unfortunately relies heavily on political values and interest, and for the participants to be reflexive on their values. Johnson and Duberly (2012) have stated reflexive data capture require undistorted communication. Social theory explored by Keat and Urry (1975) was used. The researcher wanted the participants to reveal their reality and often it was difficult for them to guard against the political nature of their organisations and what they thought the research required. As the participants were senior managers, they were highly paid and relied heavily

on their positions, and with the best will in the world could often lead to distorted views to get the points across. Critical theory was therefore rejected by the researcher.

Pragmatism and critical realism were rejected by the researcher. Critical realism came a close second to interpretivism during the early stages of the methodology development as it recognises reality. It looks at socially constructed knowledge and so this would have been useful with having the participants' viewpoints. Both critical realism and pragmatism have ontological and epistemological positions that encourage practical action; again, these were helpful for this study. However, they were both rejected because they both questioned who the correct people were to communicate the reality. The researcher had made connections with senior managers whom the researcher thought was the most appropriate to make the call. They were all decision makers at operational levels and were viewed to be the most appropriate. Critical realism and pragmatism asked questions of whether the decision makers were the correct people to make the call on this research. Using these two approaches a wider range of participants would be required from different levels within the organisations. The research would have become too large, and perhaps this is something for future research. The next section will explain and compare the differences between qualitative and quantitative research and the justification for the research.

4.6 The Qualitative Approach

Having explained the epistemological, ontological, and axiological perspectives of the research it naturally follows to explain the two main research approaches used in management research. These are known as quantitative and qualitative research. Both approaches use data collection and analysis in construction of the findings, but in different ways. Flick (2009) stated that researchers selected the most appropriate research approach depending upon various influences including the epistemological, ontological, and axiological assumptions. Researchers also examine the extant theoretical and contextual literature to gain an understanding of the previously used approaches; how successful they were and if they addressed the needs of the study. This decision also depended upon other factors such as the sample size required, and the availability of participants to take part in the research to ultimately deliver the expected outcome of the research (Flick, 2009).

The quantitative approach usually has its basis in positivism with an objectivist conception of reality that has a distinctive epistemological position which focuses on the importance of numbers and measurement variables (Cassell and Symon 2011). Positivist thinking supports the principles of cause and effect, and so quantitative research in positivism is often used where large numbers of participants are involved (Bryman, 2004). Flick (2009) stated that cause and effect are used in quantitative studies to measure phenomena, and as this is for generalisation, the research cannot be specific. Often, this includes random samples of populations that are not precisely targeted, producing only general results and not truly representative of the needs of the study. Bonb and Hartmann (1985, p.21) were disappointed with positive objective approaches and stated:

'On the condition of the disenchantment of ideas of objectivism, we can no longer unreflectively start from the notion of objectively true sentences. What remains is the possibility of statements which are related to subjects and situations, and which a sociologically articulated concept of knowledge would have to establish. '

(Bonb and Hartmann, 1985, p.21).

Furthermore, Oevermann *et al.*, (1979) stated that quantitative methods were only economic research shortcuts to generate data, whereas qualitative methods could produce an actual scientific explanation of the facts. Kleinig (1982) held the view that qualitative methods could stand alone without the subsequent use of quantitative methods, whereas quantitative methods needed qualitative methods for explaining the relations they found. Cicourel (1981) saw qualitative methods as being appropriate for answering specific questions. This view was supported by Alvesson and Skoldberg (2000). McKinlay (1995) stated that the choice of method must be appropriate to the issue under study, and in the case of this research, where the aim was to achieve an understanding; the researcher chose a qualitative method. This research was not aimed at seeking to identify causal effects or any generalisations but was to bring CM theory in line with current day practice and understand what the participants believed was the truth. The research did not focus on many participants, again supporting the qualitative research choice. The research has however, shown that further research using larger quantitative studies should be undertaken, building on the findings of this study. A quantitative approach was not relevant for this study as qualitative discoveries were deemed to be more appropriate to achieve the research objectives. Interpretivism uses a qualitative research approach, which has been used in this research (Orlikowski, 2007). It was argued a qualitative approach to the research

was required to understand the realities of the CM within the grocery food sector. The research led to an interpretivist approach to satisfy the research aims and objectives, and this was carried out by using a phenomenological and case study approach. Interviews were chosen above focus groups; these were semi-structured questions interviewing senior CM practitioners. A total of 25 practitioners were invited and interviewed from supplier category managers and retailer buyers, and this number was capped at 25 as the researcher found that with more participants no new information was emerging out of the interviews. Gray (2014) stated that qualitative research can be more compelling than quantitative research. It is highly contextual and more fitting to real life situations such as this one. It goes beyond providing a mere snapshot of the situation and shows why things happened. It allows the participants to express their feelings and drivers, such as motivation, emotion, prejudices and incidents of interpersonal cooperation and conflict, which are suitable for understanding the issues of collaborative CM relationships (Charmaz, 1995). It is also a good research tool to use where there is a lack of understanding about the phenomenon, or to gain new perspectives (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). It follows that, as CM is a relatively new discipline currently going through change, this reinforces the methodological choice.

The literature on CM is scant; the literature that exists does not reflect the reality of the sector and the published papers are often based on incorrect information obtained from previous incorrect literature. An example of this is a continuous discussion about the category captain; in reality, this role or function no longer exists. The qualitative data collection enabled the practitioners to speak out anonymously and 'tell it as it is'. The category captain role ceased to exist around five years ago according to participant R4.1 (L, M):

'The reality is the category captain position disappeared about five years ago. I have consulted with my team, and that is what they advise. The role is now filled by a position known as the preferred suppliers.' R4.1 (L, M).

A fundamental reason the researcher selected qualitative analysis over quantitative analysis was to update the literature regarding CM and the role of the category captain. It allowed an opportunity to explore this in more detail and accurately from the participant's point of view. Gray (2014) stated that qualitative research could create a strong base for any future wider and larger quantitative studies. As this study has now been completed, the researcher will build on the qualitative data collected with a more comprehensive quantitative study; this will be further

discussed in the future research section. Miles, Huberman and Saldaña (2013a) showed that qualitative research involves the following characteristics, which are also pivotal to this study:

- Conducted in a real-life setting with grocery industry practitioners.
- Researcher's role is to gain a 'holistic' and integrated view of the study including the participants' perceptions.
- Themes that emerge from the data can be verification with follow-up interviews.
- The predominant focus of the research should be to understand the way the participants act and account for their actions in their day-to-day lives.

To summarise, a qualitative approach was therefore selected over a quantitative approach as the research aims and the epistemological, ontological, and axiological assumptions better fitted within interpretivism. Qualitative research sits within interpretivism, which is not concerned with numbers or cause and effect scenarios, but focuses on the specifics including the thoughts of the participants, and how they constructed meaning and made sense of it within their reality (Gray, 2014; Miles, Huberman and Saldaña, 2013b; Bryman and Bell, 2011; Flick, 2009). The next section explores the research methodology choices used in the study, the reasons for these and how they fit with interpretivist tradition.

4.7 Research Methodology

The research aims and objectives were to gain an understanding of the reality within UK grocery CM relationships, using an interpretivist research approach. Qualitative research has many different methods, which can be used within the tradition and used either in isolation or inter-changeably by the researcher. This section explores the different categories of the research which Gray (2014) defined as 'selecting the strategy' for qualitative research. It is not a case of adopting one strategy over another, but rather combining several strategies within the research design (Flick, 2009). Gray (2014) stated that it is both feasible and legitimate to select combinations of strategies, depending upon the research questions asked. The research took a phenomenological approach and integrated a case study approach with this. As Gray (2014) stated, this was perfectly acceptable and legitimate within the tradition of interpretive and qualitative research.

The main interpretive strategy used during the research was the phenomenological approach, in combination with the case study approach. Gray (2014) stated that phenomenology attempts to understand social reality and needs to be grounded in people's experiences of that social reality. The data was obtained for this research study by interviewing participants who worked within the industry or social reality under investigation and had the relevant experiences. It is essential to note that, although the findings were founded in people's experiences, the research did not take a grounded theory approach of inductively using these findings to create hypotheses. Instead, it used the findings to help understand and answer the research questions. The research used a thematic analysis, where the findings were built into the data but not in any formal systematic manner. The researcher was aware that phenomenology requires all previous knowledge and understanding to be temporarily disregarded when carrying out the interviews and allow the conversations to proceed without any bias. This tradition was maintained throughout the interviews, although the researcher accepts that at times this was difficult. Fortunately, CM knowledge has moved forward significantly from that stated in the literature and is also different to what it was during the researcher's CM career. This knowledge allows the data to 'speak for itself', unadulterated by any preconceptions which the researcher held (Gray (2014). Many aspects of the researcher's previous knowledge were no longer relevant to current knowledge, or even practice.

4.7.1 The Philosophy of Phenomenology

The researcher selected a phenomenological approach for the research. First, however it is important to understand the philosophy of phenomenology and why this method was chosen. Phenomenology was the result of Edmund Husserl, a distinguished mathematician who turned from working with science and logic to understanding the human elements behind knowledge. In his book, Mohanty (2011) traced the development of Husserl's thoughts from the 1920's to Husserl's death in 1938. An incredible story of a trained mathematician turning to become a most sophisticated philosopher whose problems arose from those of mathematical experience.

Husserl developed his thinking, and at his inaugural lecture as professor delivered his current mode of thinking – transcendental phenomenology in Freiburg, Germany. The background to the new way of thinking was the revolutionary changes to mankind during this period. Husserl felt mankind was 'dis-satisfied'; things were changing, and Husserl noted even philosophy

changes and 'moves on'. Mohanty (2011) state, there was a need for change in line with the spiritual age. Phenomenology is therefore a science of 'pure phenomena'. Husserl found a correlation between 'object', 'truth' and experience. To each object there is a closed system of truths, where the truths are made up of experiences. The objects must be perceived by those involved with the object before reasoning can begin. In other words, Mohanty (2011) states, they must appear in our consciousness first before they become 'actual' and real. Where many perceive things to be the same, this 'phenomena' has the same clarity, insightfulness or not for the same object. Husserl therefore defined phenomenology as "a science of every kind of objective phenomena, as they present themselves in the consciousness" (Mohanty, 2011: p10). The science of consciousness. Transcendental phenomenology, Husserl claims is 'outer experience' which means something we can perceive through appearance as opposed to immanent experience which is an experience created by intuitive reflection. This research has followed the immanent phenomenological experience as the participants were asked to comment on their awareness from reflection rather than an outward experience. Category management is a management function as opposed to a physical activity, and so reflective actions are the most effective to establish reality.

To ensure inward reflection is not just the psyche, Husserl says psychology studies the mental life of something that belongs to 'nature' (Mohanty, 2011). The immanent reflection, however, is inter-woven with perceptual data that ensures the data captured is from empirical beliefs with natural conjecture. Even objective beliefs remain as beliefs and may not materialise as objective realities. They remain the belief of the individual, and as Husserl said how can we have a science of such experiences. They will be not like the pure sciences of mathematics and geometry, but it will lay down their own laws and principles that evolve. Mohanty (2011) states, even pure sciences have only been 'grounded' over time, it was the Galilean physics that defined these sciences. The answer to this therefore lies not in a team of scientists but in a philosophy known as phenomenology. The research therefore sought to understand the belief of supplier and retailer managers through the reflections of their own working experiences in category roles.

4.7.2 Phenomenology

The phenomenological approach resulted in contributing new meaning within CM and renewed meaning of the role of the category captain. Gray (2014) stated that the key was to gain the subject's experience and argued 'trying to put oneself in the place of the subject' (Gray, 2014: p24). Bradbury-Jones, Sambrook and Irvive (2009) stated that in phenomenology the researcher does not arrive at an objective description of the phenomenon, but instead shapes the interview throughout, using guiding questions and direction. The responses obtained from the participants also helped to give further direction for the interview questions; often sending the interviewer off in different directions. It was for this reason the interviews included semi-structured questioning only, as it was anticipated the participants would raise issues not considered in the conceptual mode. This tangent was typical of the interviews, as frequently the researcher would run out of time to ask all the semi-structured questions. Interestingly, on most occasions, the participants covered the main topics of the conceptual model, but not necessarily in the same order the questions were laid out. Gray (2014) stated that far from using a theoretical model, which imposes an external logic on a phenomenon, this inductive approach sought to find the internal logic of the subject. Studying the participants over a period, an ethnographic study was thought not to be relevant to achieve the objectives, as spending additional time with the participants was unlikely to add any further value. Gray (2014) stated that ethnography needed to be studied over a long period of time, and often in the participant's workplace. The researcher considered taking this approach, but on reflection thought that shadowing the participant would waste time and not gain any deeper findings. The participants were busy people and were unlikely to commit any further time once they started working in their day-to-day roles, and therefore would not be able to support or add much more than the qualitative interviews.

The research followed a phenomenological approach and Table 4.1 below details the comparisons between positivism and the interpretivist paradigm of phenomenology. Phenomenology is socially constructed and subjective, with the research requiring a social understanding of the operators, and as it focuses on meaning it allows the participants to freely share their understanding. The researcher gathered the data, which facilitated his understanding and enabled him to construct the social reality employed currently in CM. Phenomenology requires the research study to involve small numbers of different participants, and for this reason a small number of both supplier and retailer views were considered in the qualitative

study. Conversely positivism is shown in Table 4.1, but as previously stated was considered not to be appropriate for the study.

	<i>Positivist Paradigm</i>	<i>Phenomenological Paradigm</i>
<i>Basic beliefs</i>	<p>The world is external and objective.</p> <p>The observer is independent.</p> <p>Science is value-free.</p>	<p>The world is socially constructed and subjective.</p> <p>The observer is a party to what is being observed.</p> <p>Science is driven by human interest.</p>
<i>The researcher should:</i>	<p>Focus on the facts.</p> <p>Locate causality between variables.</p> <p>Formulate and test hypotheses (deductive approach).</p>	<p>Focus on meanings.</p> <p>Try to understand what is happening.</p> <p>Construct theories and models from the data (inductive).</p>
<i>Methods include:</i>	<p>Operational concepts so they can be measured.</p> <p>Using large samples from which to generalise the population.</p> <p>Quantitative methods.</p>	<p>Using multiple methods or different groups of participants to establish different views of a phenomenon.</p> <p>Using small samples in-depth over time.</p> <p>Qualitative methods.</p>

Table 4.1. Summary of positivist and phenomenological paradigms. Source: Benson (2020).

It would have taken an objective view of the study, and the researcher felt that this approach would not have yielded the required data. Previous studies have largely followed this methodology, but as stated these were inaccurate with regards to the day-to-day practices. Previous positivist research has assumed what will happen from causality theory and does not reflect what the practitioners do daily. Positivists use quantitative research, and this has been suggested as an area for further research, although this study has corrected some of the literature on CM. A further quantitative study will target a wider audience based on the key findings of this thesis. Table 4.1 below summarises the significant distinctions between positivism and phenomenology.

A second strategy widely used with phenomenology is a case study approach. Lewis (2003) stated that case studies are strongly associated with qualitative research and link well with phenomenology; in fact, Gray (2014) went on to state that the two are sometimes synonymously used. This is because case studies allow for the generation of multiple perspectives from multiple accounts. The current research study has gathered multiple accounts

of CM using a single collection method of interviewing both suppliers and retailers from a collaborative context. The case study context of collaboration within the supplier retailer relationship has been identified by the IGD (2020), as the single biggest contributor to the creation of value within the relationship. Punch (2005) stated that almost anything serves as a case study and cannot easily be defined. Individuals or organisations are typical examples; however, as this research focused on the view of individuals, it was their accounts of collaboration for value creation, rather than the organisations they worked for, which was the focus of the research. Case study designs are generally flexible to react to different situations and issues, which are raised (Gray, 2014, p.163; Frank, 2012; Goodall, 2000), stated that to qualify as a case study it must show:

- *The 'unit of analysis' for the case, e.g. individuals or organisations*
- *The criteria that were used when selecting cases for the study*
- *Who the key participants are?*
- *How many cases there are and the number of participants within each case.*

(Gray, 2014, p.163; Frank, 2012).

The research has analysed individual participants from both the supplier and retailer perspectives within the UK grocery sector. A primary requirement of the participants was that they were senior managers with decision-making responsibilities and were key influencers within their respective organisations. The supplier category manager and the retail buyer both collaborate and usually have the strongest relationship within CM. It was therefore appropriate to include these two stakeholders in the research, as they had the biggest impact. There were 25 participants. Initially, the researcher had planned for a 50/50 split between suppliers and retailers, but the difficulty of recruiting key retail buyers due to their work pressures, a 60/40 split in favour of suppliers was achieved. Unbeknown to the researcher during the planning, this had a positive effect because the published literature has identified that more studies from a supplier perspective were required. However, the research did need to maintain a balance through retailer contribution, as their understanding is equally as important as that of the supplier.

The next section discusses the data collection methods and procedures used to achieve the aims and objectives of the research and comply with the methodology appropriate for the research.

4.8 Data Collection Method and Procedure

4.8.1 Research Sample

As stated previously, the primary aim of qualitative research is to produce deep levels of meaningful data that shows participant understanding, rather than the generalisations of positivist approaches (Blaikie, 1993). Thompson (1999) defined this as 'rich data'. Mays and Pope (2000) stated that people who live and work in the area of the research study usually provide the best findings. This was confirmed by Black (1999), who stated that the best research sample comes from a population that has shared traits and similarities. The careful sampling of participants and data sources is a crucial component of any research study (Gray, 2014), which impacts the destiny of the research (Kemper, Stringfield and Teddlie, 2003). Creswell (2009) continued to argue that in qualitative research, sample selection has a profound impact on the ultimate quality of the research. Phenomenological research tends to involve purposively selected individuals who share similar experiences to ensure appropriate experiences emerge (Learmonth, 2008; Moustakas, 1994). The research adopted an interpretive phenomenological theoretical perspective and a phenomenological methodology. The respondents were selected because they worked in CM within the UK grocery sector. Gray (2014), stated that qualitative sampling should be:

- *Naturalistic - takes place in ordinary settings where people live or work.*
- *Unified – has common threads within the research such as questions and aims.*
- *Emergent - sampling strategies are based on reflections, data analysis, provisional hypothesis, and possible further sampling.*
- *Serial - choices about sampling are based on previous samples.*

The sampling strategy of the research included recommendations from the literature to interview participants to understand their reality but was also based upon current literature needs and was updated from the views of practitioners within the field. Each participant worked in a senior position within their organisation and could make CM decisions and influence the CM process. The researcher wanted to include senior practitioners, as these were the people who experienced the practice or reality daily. They had a holistic view of the entire CM process and had worked in collaborative relationships with a business partner. The researcher selected a range of senior managers and board directors from branded suppliers, private label suppliers

and suppliers who manufacturer both brand and private labels. Retailers were selected from UK mainstream, premium and discounter supermarkets to ensure the entire grocery sector was represented. The research therefore differed from previous quantitative surveys, and so the serial choice of participants differed in this study.

The research followed the recommendations from Gray (2014), thus, the participants were interviewed in their workplace. The researcher arranged meetings at the offices of the supplier and retailer interviewees. The room was away from the workplace, which enabled the participants to feel comfortable. The researcher was able to get a sense of the nature of the company and how it operated within the grocery sector. The interviews were unified as semi-structured questions were used as a basis for each interview, and this ensured the answers generated were in common with the research objectives. The company names and participant names were anonymised to protect identities and conform to the requirements of the ethics approval granted by (SHU, 2020). After the DB2 approval stage, a list of potential participants was compiled, including industry senior managers and previous work colleagues. The research design included an equal number of suppliers and retailers to ensure a full cross-section of the UK grocery sector. The total number of participants required was 21, with 12 participants planned from suppliers, and 7 participants from retailers. However, due to the type of research and time constraints, not all the planned participants were able to participate; this resulted in a total of 20 participants, with 13 participants from the suppliers and 7 participants from the retailers as shown in Table 4.2 and Appendix 7. Given that ‘phenomenological research requires between five and fifteen participants’ Gray (2014, p.25), the number of participants in each sub-category, albeit unbalanced was enough.

THESIS CODE	SUPPLIER OR RETAILER	TYPE	CATEGORY	ROLE	1 ST INTERVIEW	2 ND	WORD COUNT
S1 (M, B/PL)	Supplier	Brand & Private Label	Hot Beverages	Category Manager	1 st 2 nd		9,589
S2 (S, B/PL)	Supplier	Brand & Private Label	Hot Beverages	Category Manager	1 st Only		6,129
S2.1 (S, B/PL)	Supplier	Brand & Private Label	Hot Beverages	Commercial Manager	1 st Only		5,588
S3 (S, PL)	Supplier	Private Label Only	Hot Beverages	Commercial Manager	1 st Only		7,742
S4 (L, B)	Supplier	Brand Only	Hot Beverages	Category Manager	1 st Only		8,640
S5 (S, B)	Supplier	Brand Only	Hot Beverages	Category Manager	1 st Only		7,129
S6 (L, B)	Supplier	Brand Only	Hot Beverages	Category Manager	1 st Only		5,616
S7 (L, B)	Supplier	Brand Only	Hot Beverages	Category Manager	1 st Only		5,977
S8 (L, B/PL)	Supplier	Brand & Private Label	Dairy	Category Manager	1 st 2 nd		7,956
S9 (S, B/PL)	Supplier	Brand Only	Dairy	Category Manager	1 st Only		7,821
S10 (L, B)	Supplier	Brand Only	Bread	Category Manager	1 st Only		6,845
S11 (L, PL)	Supplier	Private Label Only	Cooked Meats	Category Manager	1 st Only		4,524
R1 (M, P)	Retailer	Medium Premium	Grocery	Buyer	1 st Only		6,018
R2 (L, M)	Retailer	Large Mainstream	Grocery	Buyer	1 st 2 nd		7,468
R3 (L, P)	Retailer	Large Premium	Grocery	Buyer	1 st Only		4,846
R4 (L, M)	Retailer	Large Mainstream	Grocery	Category Director	1 st 2 nd		10,122

R4.1 (L, M)	Retailer	Large Mainstream	Grocery	Main Board Director	1 st Only	6,182
R5 (L, M)	Retailer	Large Mainstream	Grocery	Category Manager	1 st 2 nd	7,927
R6 (S, M)	Retailer	Small Mainstream	Grocery	Category Manager	1 st Only	5,565
TOTAL						131,684

Note: Retailer Company Size (Measured in Sales): Large > £100m pa; Medium £50m to £100m; Small <£50m

Table 4.2. Research participants, showing supplier & retailer information. Source: Benson (2020).

The participants were all senior managers within their organisations with many years of experience in CM. They were employees of food manufacturing organisations (suppliers), and retailers from within the UK grocery sector. They all had significant sales and buying responsibilities and were the key decision-makers within their respective categories. Some of the participants were already known to the researcher, but most were because of introductions from other practitioners known to the researcher. The inclusion of senior practitioners with decision-making responsibilities was a major contribution to the research due to the privileged access the researcher had. In the first phase of interviews, all the participants were interviewed, and all were willing to partake in second interviews if necessary; this is discussed in more detail later in the chapter. The participants were anonymised to protect their identities; the same applies to the business organisations. As previously mentioned, the organisations that the participants worked for, could be categorised into food manufacturer (supplier) or retailer organisations, where both operated within the food supply chain. The supplier manufactured or produced the grocery product and supplied this to the UK retailers. Suppliers within the research consisted of branded suppliers, private label suppliers and companies who manufactured both brands and private labels. Branded label companies were mainly large Fast-Moving Consumer Goods Companies (FMCG), often listed on the stock market with a sales turnover of more than £100m per annum. The same applied to the B/PL manufacturing companies, whereas often the private label companies were smaller and operated within a smaller niche within the UK grocery sector. Table 4.2 also shows an anonymised break down of the companies who had representations from senior managers and directors. The role of the category captain is not shown, as the company representatives denied that the role currently

existed, rather it had evolved to become a preferred supplier, but this can be several suppliers within the category (see Chapter 6).

It was only because of the researchers' previous experience of working in CM and having existing relationships with senior practitioners in the sector that such a privileged access was possible. This unique access was a major contribution to this research in academia and practice; an explanation of this follows in the contributions chapter. The research focused on the tea and coffee category in the UK grocery sector, which is why most of the participants were from this category. As the interviews progressed, it became apparent that the focus of the research was too narrow and it should focus on a broader range of categories, such as chilled dairy, bread, cooked meats and general grocery, as category differences became evident early on during the interviews. Nielsen, Karolefski and Heller (2006) stated that there was an eight-stage CM process that was introduced during the 1990s, when CM principles began to develop. Companies no longer followed these principles verbatim but had tailored them according to business needs and collaborative working; this is often a four or five stage process, where steps are merged to simplify the process, as explained in more detail in the finding's chapters.

Gray (2014) stated that, in case study research the researcher makes the vital decisions on which cases to select and may use any number of probability and non-probability sampling approaches. According to Gray (2014), probability approaches fit in the quantitative tradition, for example systematic sampling and stratified random sampling. Non-probability sampling approaches are more appropriate to the qualitative tradition, as it is not systematic. Patton (1990) stated that a purposive strategy should be used to achieve the objective of the research, by using the most appropriate sample of people. In this type of approach, the researcher exercised personal judgement over who was most apt for the study and followed this up with both telephone and email invitations to participate (Maxwell, 2012; Maxwell, 1998). Bias within the criteria of the sample, as well as who to invite, was one of the disadvantages of this approach from the researchers' point of view. The researcher, however, adopted the innocent researcher position and was careful to select a cross-section of people that were most appropriate to the research, based on their current roles, experience and willingness to participate in the study. The researcher chose a 'typical case sampling' within a purposive sampling approach, as the cases were simple and typical of the phenomena within the study. The researcher sought clarification that the participants held appropriate positions within their

organisation before setting an interview date and time. For example, the following question was put to participant S7 (L, B) before arranging an interview date, to which he replied 'yes':

'Are you the most appropriate person within your organisation to discuss how value is co-created in the category management relationship with your retail buyer?'

(The Researcher).

The researcher initially contacted each participant by telephone to introduce himself; he explained the purpose of the research and asked, as a senior practitioner within the sector, if they would like to take part in the research study including the interviews. The researcher went on to explain that these interviews would be strictly confidential, anonymised and a copy of the thesis would be provided to them following the successful completion of the doctoral degree. Most of the participants immediately agreed to being involved, whereas some had to seek approval from their organisation. The telephone call was followed up with a confirmatory email with details of the interview date, time, place and a document outlining the scope of the research was attached together with a participant information sheet and consent form (Appendix 3.10). The participants were encouraged to read all the information and sign the consent form prior to attending the interview. Most of the participants did read the scoping document and participant notes before the session. It appeared that they did not rehearse any of the answers although there is no certainty. The researcher believed that the participant responses were genuine as there were consistencies in the responses from both the supplier and retailer sides. The interviews were scheduled to last for one hour, with a provision and agreement for subsequent sessions if the researcher wanted to explore any of the points or answers in more depth. All participants had agreed to this in advance, as it was a requirement of their involvement, and as the participants are very busy people, the researcher agreed interview dates months in advance. Table 4.2 summarises the interview dates which were spread over twelve months, starting in November 2016, with completion of most of the interviews by November 2017. The researcher was still completing interviews in February 2018, but these were follow-up (second interviews), rather than first interviews. Second interviews were used to 'deep dive' into emerging issues from the first interview, and an opportunity to ask the participants for 'real-life' examples to help contextualise the findings and make these more meaningful. It was initially difficult for the researcher to identify emerging themes during the interview, but he did identify these through the transcribing and analysis

stages. An explanation of how the interviews were prepared and carried out by the researcher will follow in the next section.

4.8.2 The Interview

The most common method of gathering data in qualitative research remains the interview, as it can allow for almost any theoretical and methodological approaches within the tradition (Cassell and Symon, 2011). As previously discussed, the interviews were semi-structured to keep the participants 'on-track'. This semi-structured format was to address the main issues of the research question while at the same time, giving the participants the freedom to 'open up' and describe their understanding of CM relationships, particularly the reality of value creation within the collaboration. Kvale (1996; p.174) defined the qualitative interview as follows: *'An interview, whose purpose is to gather descriptions of the life-world of the interviewee concerning the interpretation of the meaning of the prescribed phenomena.'*

The interview's goal was to observe the research topic from the viewpoint of the participant and try to understand how and why they held this perspective. The researcher designed the interviews with a low degree of structure to allow the discussion to flow and focus on specific situations, and to see what the actions of each participant would be. This fluid structure prevented the interview from being abstract, as was the case in the current literature. It also encouraged the participant's opinions to emerge, but at the same time, steering the discussions to be in line with the research aims and objectives (Kvale, 1996). Gray (2014) stated that semi-structured interviews were essential in phenomenological interviewing, as they allowed the researcher to 'probe' the participant and, where necessary, clarify the meanings and expand on their answers. With unstructured interviewing, Gray (2014) added that the interviewer could never seek clarification and so could not achieve any depth in the meanings, nor could validate what was said. The primary objective of a phenomenological approach is to explore subjective meanings, and semi-structured questions, which act as a validation of the research objectives (Gray, 2014).

It was pivotal that the researcher asked the questions consistently while using the same tone of voice with all the participants (Gray, 2014). The researcher attempted this and felt through the interview reflections that he had been successful, with consistency having been achieved. The researcher is regarded as having a calm and welcoming manner by others, and it was this

strength coupled with his credibility within the industry that helped recruit the high-profile participants and allowed the research to take place. According to Cassell and Symon (2011), the relationship between the interviewer (researcher) and the interviewee (participant) is part of the process and should not be a distraction to it. The researcher and the participants had agreed before the interview that the researcher would play the 'innocent researcher' who had no previous experience or understanding of the practical elements of CM. Only the issues raised in the literature were assumed to be of knowledge to the researcher. The participant becomes part of the research where their comments shape the course of the interview. Passive remarks without any interest in being involved properly in the research were of no value to the researcher, so a passionate and positive approach by the participant was expected (Cassell and Symon, 2011). The proposed time-frame for the interviews was one hour, although the majority exceed the hour, and it became clear to the researcher that the participants were enjoying themselves, while feeling privileged that someone was genuinely interested in CM and their contribution to the sector. The researcher set aside his personal beliefs of CM, which Cassell and Symon (2011) have described as 'bracketing'. Phenomenological interviews are often quite lengthy, and the researcher felt that a one-hour interview was of enough length and in line with phenomenological traditions to allow the realities to emerge. By allowing the participants to freely discuss their reality this reduced any influence from the researcher. However, Thomas (2006) stated that any findings are shaped by the assumptions and experiences of the researcher conducting the study and carrying out the data analysis. A neutral influence was particularly difficult for the researcher to adopt due to his previous experience of working within the CM sector. The researcher, however, made every effort to play the role of the naïve interviewer through open-ended questioning, and not formally following the pre-set questions. The researcher also tried to be innocent by questioning all the discussions about CM assumptions and jargon. For example, participant S10 (L, B) said in his interview: *'we often work with retailers in a formal manner and collaborate using a very detailed JBP'*. S10 (L, B) assumed that the researcher knew what was meant by a JBP, because of his ex-practitioner status. The truth was, the researcher actually understood what it meant, but wanted to come across as the innocent researcher and followed up by asking: *'for clarification purposes within the research, can you please explain what you mean by a JBP?'*. Requests for clarification of terms and jargon helped to clarify the participant's understanding, rather than relying on potentially dated knowledge of the terms from previous CM experience. The innocence and probing of terminology did, however, cause some frustration with some of the participants as they became

concerned that the researcher did not understand the jargon, but felt he should have had a better understanding.

The researcher behaved in this manner so as not to influence or bias the interview in any way, ensuring a consistent approach for everyone. Hudson and Ozanne (1988) stated that to prevent including the researcher's personal beliefs and views in the study, they should study the people from their perspective rather than from their own viewpoint. McAuley, Duberley and Johnson (2014), further stated that where there is a belief in something, individuals see this as the truth. This was the fundamental principle that underpinned this research, where practitioners were asked to explain their CM beliefs and therefore validate what they considered to be the truth.

The first interview was planned to minimise disruption to the participants work and to ensure that they felt comfortable during the interview. This was conducted at the participant's place of work. The researcher travelled to the participant's workplace, which also allowed an opportunity to gain an understanding of the organisation, and how it contributed to CM, for example, if it was a branded or private label supplier, or which tier of retailer they were. The participant had arranged a private room for the interview, away from any noise or disruption, which allowed the interview to be voice recorded without any distractions. The researcher briefed the participant at the beginning of the session on any information necessary for the interview, including a recap of the scoping document, ethics process and expectations of the participant. The researcher advised the participants that they were free to withdraw from the interview at any point, without offering any explanation. Throughout the interview it was stressed that confidentiality would be preserved, and that the participant's involvement would be anonymous, which helped appease the interviewees. Before the end of the interview, both the participant and researcher signed the consent form in Appendix 3.10.8. Also, any follow-up interviews were agreed with the participants after the interview transcription.

Following the interview, the voice recordings were downloaded and stored confidentially on the SHU (2020) research drive and were stored ready for transcribing into a Word file. All interviews were transcribed verbatim by the researcher to ensure nothing was missed and the transcripts were stored on the University's research drive. The full transcripts were uploaded to NVivo to enable the first phase of coding to be applied. Patton (2002) suggested that the objective of interviewing was to ensure that a full transcription of the event could be taken, albeit expensive and time-consuming. The transcription was time-consuming, and it took the researcher six hours to type up each hour of an oral interview, however, the benefits outweighed

the costs. A total of 110,000 words were transcribed during the first interviews and filed in the thesis supporting document named 'the interview transcripts document'. An example of an interview transcript R4.1(L, M) is shown in Appendix 1.2. The full transcripts will be available for the examining team to see at the viva. The researcher also saved the interview reflections, and an example from S1 (M, B/PL) is shown in Appendix 1.3. Each reflection was analysed, and any additional literature requirements highlighted by the participant were recorded. The researcher then returned to the literature to include appropriate findings that had not been previously considered. This ensured the research was continuously improving following each interview, and the wider views of the participants were included to support the original literature review. The researcher stored the transcription of the oral interviews in password protected files on confidential hard drives, to ensure the data was securely backed up. The next section explains how the data was analysed using the NVivo software (version 11). The researcher attended a SHU (2020) training course on NVivo in summer 2017, and from this point onwards started the data analysis.

4.8.3 First Phase of Data Collection

This section explains the coding of the data during the first phase of the analysis, and how this helped to inform the researcher of the subsequent steps to take in the second phase. The researcher used a thematic approach for data collection and analysis as shown in Figure 4.5. Figure 4.5 is a diagrammatic representation of how the transcribed data from the participants was processed in NVivo. Data was received from 25 interviews. These were mainly first interviews only, with several participants interviewed twice. The diagram shows the data had a first cut, coded and saved in folders named nodes by NVivo. The methodology section explains the nodes for suppliers and retailers were very similar which demonstrated consistent interviews and similar shared beliefs by both parties. Once the supplier and retailer data were 'noded' the researcher carried out a 2nd code and condensed the number of nodes to help analyse the data. Finally, the data was pulled together into categories, the first being nodes appropriate for value creation and the other regarding CM and the category captain. In turn this generated the two main discussion chapters to expose the themes of the research.

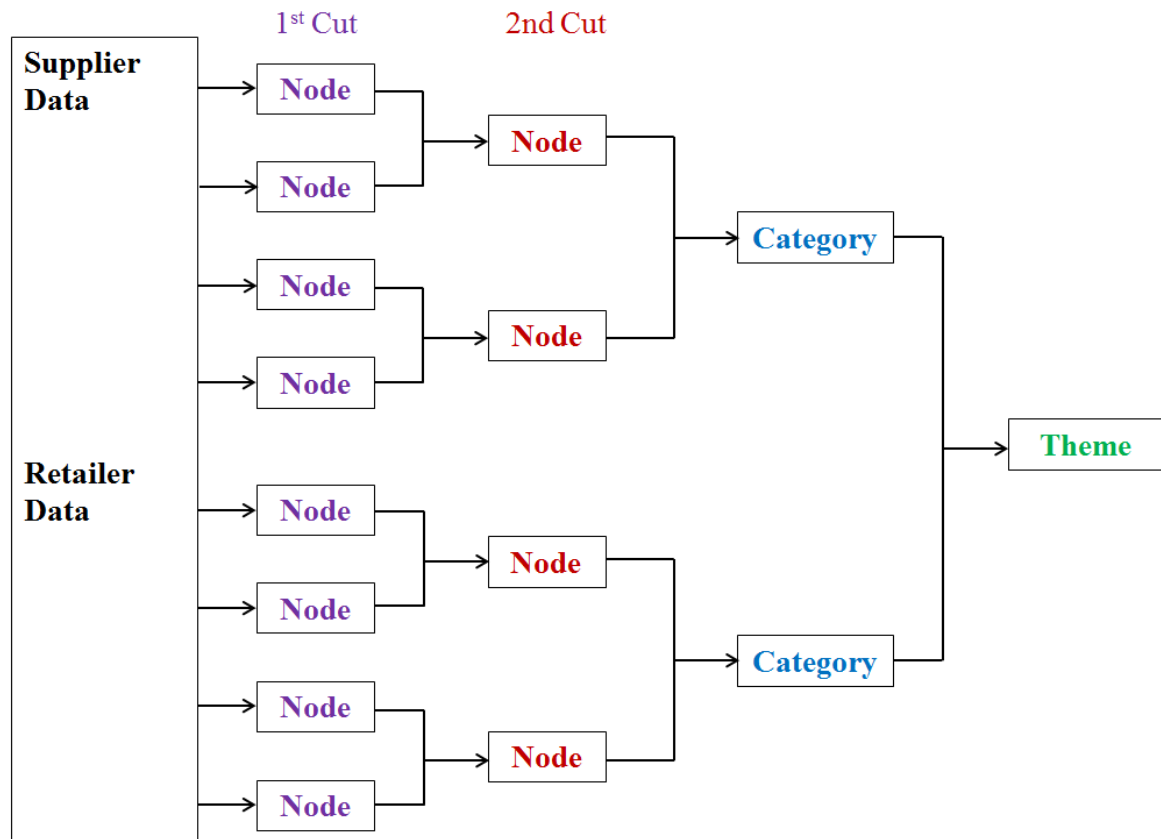


Figure 4.5. Streamlining nodes to themes in qualitative inquiry. Source: Benson (2020).

The first interviews generated approximately 9,000 words of verbatim data, where more than 95% of the contribution was from the participant. The researcher transcribed all the voice recordings personally to build up a deeper understanding of what was said, and to make further notes of the questions and issues to be aware of during any subsequent interviews. The follow-up interviews were voice recorded from a telephone conversation with the participant and planned for between 15-20 minutes. Cassell and Symon (2011) argued that this helps the researcher to deepen his/ her understanding of the research phenomenon and adjust for subsequent interviews. Madill, Jordan, and Shirley (2000), also recognised that text written during the interview, helped shape any future interviews.

For coding, Saldaña (2016) recommended that the researcher needed to have the following personal attributes for coding; they should be perseverant, flexible, creative, and rigorously ethical. The researcher followed these recommendations by being perseverant with the research as the first stage of coding the data took nearly two weeks to complete. He was also flexible and ensured that the whole process was carried out ethically. Gray (2014) stated, that coding

in a qualitative inquiry is often a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns data to capture the language of the study. The researcher mainly used single words in the first phase, which symbolised the essence of the points raised by the participants. Vogt *et al.*, (2014, p.13) stated: 'in qualitative data analysis, a code is a researcher-generated construct that symbolises or translates data'. Saldaña (2016) believed that a theme is an outcome of coding derived from the analysis of data using codes and categories. A category is a word or phrase that is explicit and describes a segment of the data, whereas a theme is a more subtle phrase or sentence describing the whole event. Lofland *et al.*, (2006); Strauss (1987); and Wolcott (1999) felt that all data should be coded, as everything is worth consideration, whereas others including Seidman (2013); Guest, MacQueen and Namey (2012); and Morse (2007) felt that only salient points relating to the research questions should be considered. The researcher coded all the data from the transcriptions, as he felt that during the transcribing process everything said by the participants was relevant to the research question and so warranted inclusion. The researcher was concerned that by not including all the data, some salient points could be missed, and felt everything was important. The researcher looked for patterns within the data, which according to Hatch (2002), should have the characteristics of similarity, difference, frequency and sequence. These characteristics were at the forefront of the researchers' mind during the first cut of data. It was pointed out earlier that most of the coding names for both suppliers and retailers were very similar, and so the researcher believed that this validated the choice of using semi-structured questions within the interviews for consistency, whilst satisfying the phenomenological traditions.

The first coding of the data was a mixture of 'lumping' and 'splitting' the data. Bernard (2011) defined lumping as grouping full segments of data, whereas splitting is where the researcher splits longer data descriptions into smaller ones. The reason the data was a mixture of lumping and splitting was because it was the first cut of data and the researcher did not want to lose any vital information. Often individual responses were concerned with one topic, for example, when the participant was discussing trust it was important to capture every comment made. Splitting generated a more nuanced analysis from the start, however, there was potential for missing data. Lumping captured the essence of categorising a phenomenon and considered all the data by using conceptual words. Stern (2007) stated, that he never carried out a line-by-line analysis, as he was concerned that he may miss the cream at the top, so he looked at all the data. The second cycle of coding reduced the original number of codes by 50%. This reduction enabled a re-analysis from a smaller number of codes (nodes), which enabled the researcher to

find stronger connections and derive more coherent meanings. Friese (2012) stated that research should not venture into thousands of codes and recommended between 50-300 different codes. The first coding had 299 codes between supplier and retailer, and the reduction of codes was due to many of the codes becoming sub-codes of the parent code, because they were related topics. Figure 4.6 shows an example of the code's structure in the first phase of the coding, along with the full list of codes shown in Appendix 5.

Node Structure
Value for Whom
02/02/2018 08:20

Hierarchical Name	Nickname	Aggregate	User Assigned Color
Node			
Nodes\\Retailer			
Nodes\\Retailer\\Account Manager		No	None
Nodes\\Retailer\\Add Value		No	None
Nodes\\Retailer\\Aggressive Retailers		No	None
Nodes\\Retailer\\Air Time		No	None
Nodes\\Retailer\\Appraisal		No	None
Nodes\\Retailer\\Aspiration		No	None
Nodes\\Retailer\\Behaviour		No	None
Nodes\\Retailer\\Belief		No	None
Nodes\\Retailer\\Branded		No	None
Nodes\\Retailer\\Business Relationships		No	None

Figure: 4.6 Extract of the coding structure from the first phase coding (Nodes). Source: NVivo (2019).

Divided into the two main sections of supplier and retailer, Figure 4.6 is an extract of the node structure report. It shows the first codes (known as first 'cut' codes) from the data. The report showed this for the full 299 codes of the first cut, which was used to assist the researcher with the second cut in addition to the 50% reduction in codes, to give more meaning and assist with categorising the data.

The researcher decided to use electronic coding over manual coding due to the substantial amount of data collected. Although the researcher often favours manual methods over electronic methods for analysing data, in this case, as there was a large amount of data to be

analysed with a limited timescale, an electronic method using the NVivo software was selected. The researcher, being an academic attended an internal NVivo training course, but also has many years of experience of coding through teaching and mentoring research students. Basit (2003; p.143) argued that *'the choice will be dependent on the size of the project, the funds and the time available, and the inclination of the researcher.'* NVivo does not code the data, and therefore the responsibility lies with the researcher (Saldaña, 2016). It was crucial that the researcher chose the most appropriate method to code the data. This method must be in harmony with the research aims. As this research sought ontologically to understand the nature of people's realities, and epistemologically to understand the phenomenon, the researcher selected an initial holistic coding, followed by In Vivo and emotion coding for the more detailed coding that was required in the second phase. In Vivo and emotion coding will be defined and explained in the next section.

Holistic coding is described by Saldaña (2016) as 'macro-coding' and is an attempt to grasp the basic themes or issues through the research aims and objectives, and from the findings of the literature review. This method adopts the 'lumper' method described earlier, rather than splitting the text into smaller paragraphs and sentences. This was the first stage of analysing the data and coding it. A more detailed split of the data in phase 2 followed, using a mixture of NVivo and emotion methods. These methods work together, as Saldaña (2016) stated that it is perfectly acceptable to use two or more methods together. The choices of the study were suggested alternatives for qualitative research according to Dey (1993). An example of a holistic coding response from participant S9 (S, B/PL), when asked about giving an example of a trusting relationship that builds over time, is given below. The code was named 'Trusting Relationships':

'Yes, and as we have multiple brands, you can see these as competing, for example sauces, but I do not see them as competing but as a means of opening doors for future product development. Through us, we get economies of scale with products, and you build up your relationship by being important to a buyer because you bring a portfolio of products to the table as opposed to one or two products offered by most suppliers.'

The response allocated to the trusting relationships code was lumped together for a more detailed analysis in the second phase. Dey (1993) stated that all the data can be brought together and examined before refinement, but this time, early on it will save considerable time refining

the data in the future. The second stage of the first phase of coding was to holistically analyse each of the participant's transcripts in order to identify some of the central responses and record these on an analytic memo on NVivo. Figure 4.7 shows the following questions that were asked of each participant from the transcript. These reflections were then used as part of the process to assist the researcher prepare for the second phase of the analysis. The interview and transcript reflections of the researcher were generated from the following questions to help code the data:

Reflections from Interviews:

1. What are they doing?
2. How do they do this - what does it mean to the strategy?
3. How do they understand/talk about what they are doing?
4. What assumptions do they make?
5. What do I observe going on here?
6. What did I learn from the notes?
7. What surprised me?
8. What intrigued me?
9. What disturbed me?
10. Are they Co-creation / No creation / Co-destruction?

Figure 4.7. Interview reflection template used in first phase coding (noding).

Figure 4.8 below is an extension and drill-down of Figure 4.3 and shows the methodological process after the interviews. After the first stage of coding the second phase of coding was coded at a lower level (more specific), for example CM would split into category captain, non-captain suppliers, etc. This enabled the same amount of data be coded more accurately to help the data analysis. Emotion coding was also used to help put the data into the nodes, where the output was defined by Saldaña (2016) as pattern coding.

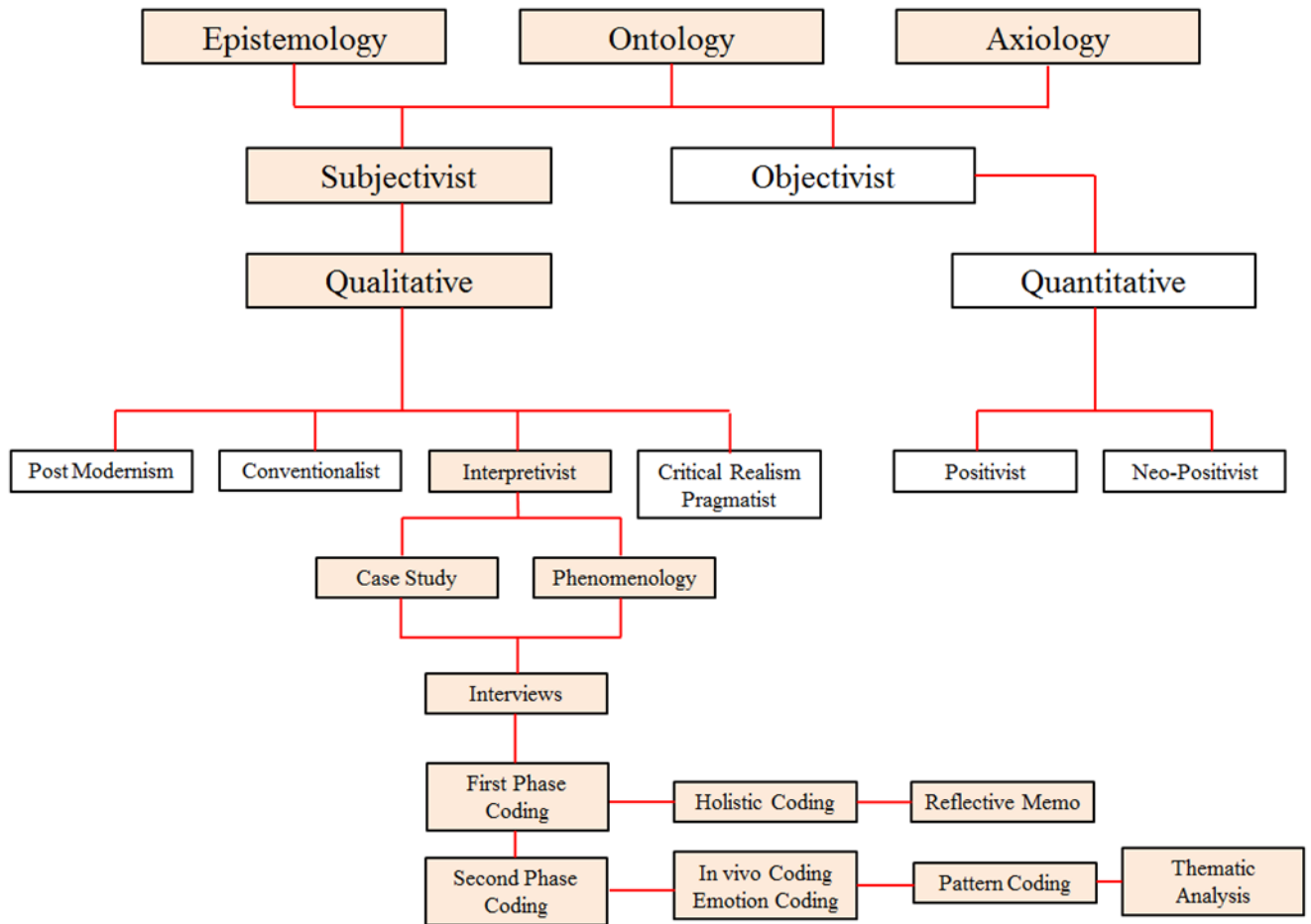


Figure 4.7. Methodological research approach. Source: Benson (2020).

The next section will explain how the researcher approached the second phase of the coding i.e. refining of the coding using In Vivo and Emotion coding methods, followed by how this refinement progressed to the thematic discoveries of the research.

4.8.4 Second Phase of Data Collection

The first phase of data collection enabled the researcher to 'lump' the data into a single word or short statements as codes. The researcher divided them into two main headings and folders entitled suppliers and retailers. There were 299 codes created between the two sectors, with most of the coding headings being the same across both. This re-assured the researcher that at an early stage of the analysis, the questions asked of the participants and their ability to freely describe their reality were consistent. Reflective memos were produced for each of the

participants to gain a deeper understanding of the main holistic emerging topics. The results of this were compared with the research questions and found to be harmonious.

The objective of the second phase of the coding was to reduce the number of codes created and divide the data to construct categories and establish themes. The researcher began this process by dividing the data using In Vivo and emotion coding methods. In Vivo coding known as 'verbatim coding' or 'inductive coding' is widely used in qualitative research and is widely understood (Saldaña, 2016). The meaning of 'In Vivo' according to Strauss (1987; p.33) is *'in that which is alive'*. In this process, data is coded into a word or short phrase, which represents the 'actual language' of the data. This allows the researcher to fully understand what the participants believe, thus, *'In Vivo uses the terms actually used by the participants themselves'* (Strauss, 1987; p33). Saldaña (2016) stated that In Vivo coding was appropriate for almost all qualitative research and can be used alongside other coding methods. It is particularly useful for early researchers who are learning to code data, and as the researcher was new to doctoral level research, it proved to be invaluable. It was the first project of this magnitude that was undertaken by the researcher. As the researcher interviewed practitioners from the UK grocery sector, the terminology, culture, ways of working and networks were uniform across suppliers and retailers. Although they were separate organisations within CM, they operated collaboratively. McCurdy, Spradley and Shandy (2005) stated that folk or indigenous terms were usually participant-generated words, used by members of the same or similar groups, and often it was difficult for 'outsiders' to understand their meaning. The researcher ensured that during the interviews the participants defined all appropriate terms. It was for this reason that Coghlan and Brannick (2014); Fox, Martin and Green (2007); and Stringer (2014) argued that In Vivo coding was particularly useful for practitioner based research using the 'verbatim principle', as it drew terms and concepts from the words of the participants. Stringer (2014; p140) further argued that: *'by doing so, researchers were more likely to capture the meanings inherent in people's experiences'*. An example of In Vivo coding was where the retailer R4 (L, M) used the word 'shrinkflation' and assumed that the researcher understood its meaning. However, it is used widely within CM relationships by both suppliers and retailers according to participant R4 (L, M):

'R4 (L, M): So, we are not seeing prices rising within the stores, but shrinkflation seems to be the way we absorb the material cost increase.'

Researcher: What do you mean by shrinkflation?

R4 (L, M): I thought you would understand what this means. It is where they reduce the product; so, remember the chocolate bar shrink where they removed two spikes out of the bar, and the price remained the same to the consumer? Also, if you look at laundry gels, five years ago there were 28 gels in a tub now there are only 24 and the price is the same! So, it is where customers pay the same for a reduced size product and which a cost price increase is in effect. '

To ensure the research was not limited to In Vivo coding exclusively, emotional coding was also used to give more conceptual and theoretical views of the relationships within CM. Emotional coding labels were the emotions recalled and experienced by the participant's in their roles. The researcher reflected on the feelings and emotions of the participants throughout the interviews and during the later transcription. As risk was high in CM relationships, the research found that stakeholder emotion was crucial. The researcher sensed some friction during some of the discussions and played out the role of the innocent researcher. At times the participants challenged his naivety and expected a deeper understanding because of his previous career in CM. Goleman (1995) defined emotion as a distinctive feeling with tendencies to react. Where jargon or discussions were centred on category captaincy, the researcher noted the often-negative emotions of some of the participants.

Saldaña (2016) stated that since emotions were a universal human experience, virtually everything we did had an accompanying feeling. Emotion and action often went together, and according to Corbin and Strauss (2014, p23): *'One cannot separate emotion from action; they flow together with often one leading the other'*. The literature has highlighted the emotions of non-captains in that they were often disgruntled with the actions of the category captain. Kozinets (2010) stated that, it is important for researchers to have the ability to read non-verbal cues, to infer underlying effects, and to sympathise and empathise with participants, as they are critical to emotion coding. As the researcher had experience in CM, the issues that arose around the category captain resonated and it was, therefore, a major aspect of the research to understand how the role was changing and opening up opportunities for all suppliers to rise to become category captains. Kozinets (2010) reinforced this idea by stating that research should attend to the 'non-rational' and emotional lives of the participants and the researcher, where emotions reveal not just the inner workings of the individual but also possibly the underlying tone of society. Category management participants were unhappy with the collaboration at supplier and retailer levels as will be explored later in the thesis.

Emotion coding looked at the emotions generated during the interview, but it also helped the researcher understand how the participant was feeling at that point. The next section reviews how the codes were summarised into categories, and then how the main themes emerged which were in line with the research questions. This stage of the data analysis procedure was ‘theming’ the data.

Earlier in the chapter, theming the data was described as an outcome of the coding, a categorisation and analytic reflection resulting in a coding. In this research study, the various themes have been weaved together to create the main theme narratives for discussion and further analysis in Chapters 5 and 6. Desantis and Ugarriza (2000; p.358) stated that theming ‘brings meaning and identity to a recurrent (patterned) experience and its variant manifestations’. As such, a theme captures and unifies the data and generates a meaningful cluster of data. Additionally, Rubin and Rubin (2012) stated that themes were statements that summarised the ideas from participants during the interview. Themes serve phenomenology well; as previously discussed; they are the study of the lifeworld before reflection. Phenomenology gives the researcher a deeper understanding of the everyday experiences of the practitioners. The research questions sought answers to what it was like to be, to have or to live and phenomenological approaches addressed this (Sandelowski, 2008). Saldaña (2016); Giorgi and Giorgi (2003); Smith and Osborn (2008); Smith, Flower and Larkin (2009); and Wertz *et al.*, (2011) confirmed that theming was usually more applicable to interviewing and it was particularly appropriate for phenomenological studies on beliefs, constructs, identity development and emotions.

Interestingly, Rubin and Rubin (2012); and Van Manen (1990) attested that through carefully planned questions, the participants could construct meanings of what the researcher was trying to explore. The researcher did achieve this in the current study, as the themes that emerged answered the original research questions established from the literature. An example of theming the data in relation to value is shown below using three extracts from the data:

S4 (L, B) stated: *‘Value is just so subjective, and that is the problematic thing about category management and retail marketing. Because value means different things to many people; to some people, it might mean providing a meal for the kids, and it might be they have the same food every night, but it is giving value because it was cheap, the children have eaten and enjoyed it. It may have also been quick to cook. So, it has given*

peer acceptability, something to entertain with; so many things that are so subjective.'

S8 (L, B/PL) stated: *'Whereas, if you think about something like a beautifully prepared dessert that you can show off to people, perhaps even say you have made yourself, that has a completely different value to it when you have friends' around on a Saturday night for a drink.'*

S2 (S, B/PL) stated: *'So, for me, when you start to talk about category management, I do not think we understand the consumer's interaction with the supermarket, with the food, the meal occasion that you get from that individual product. Whether, in fact, they associate any value to individual products, or the value associated with a meal occasion, I am not sure consumers give it as much thought as you would think.'*

Participant S2 (S, B/PL) stated that the understanding of value and what this meant was a 'subjective phenomenon'. They said it meant different things to different people, and that understanding was important to the research. The idea that value can have different meanings, is also described in the second quote, therefore this would immediately signal to the researcher that this is a potential node or even a theme. This thought process was adopted in the coding and theming stages throughout the research analysis. The following section reviews the reflections of the interviews, and how after each interview, it helped to shape subsequent meetings.

4.9 Interview Reflections

Each interview was a maximum of one-hour duration; this time was enough to ensure that the discussions captured the necessary data. Subsequent interviews, held over the telephone, were recorded to enable an accurate transcription by the researcher. These interviews were 10- 15 minutes long, where the researcher picked up on issues raised during the first interview. The relationship between the researcher and the participants had developed where they were keen to further support the research. Once a connection had been made it was much easier to access the participants, as they had provided direct contact numbers and email addresses. The results and consequent recommendations of the research showed that the inclusion of senior managers was appropriate. Interviewing junior managers would not have provided the same quality of data to address the aims and objectives of the research. The use of key decision makers

improved the research quality and produced appropriate findings. The first interviews were very open with limited input from the researcher; this allowed the participants to feel comfortable and relaxed with the situation.

The initial reflection was that the results were appropriate for the research questions posited, and the participants' real-world perspectives shone through naturally, rather than waiting to be asked. The researcher, however, ensured that the interview was kept on track by asking semi-structured questions, in line with the research's scoping document. The researcher was new to academic research and academic interviewing and has learnt considerably from this experience. However, as each interview was approximately four weeks apart, the researcher reflected on the outcomes of each conversation, and where necessary made changes to improve the effectiveness of subsequent interviews. Any proposed changes to the interview technique were discussed with the supervisory team at the monthly supervision meetings. The supervisors, highly experienced in research, provided the researcher with suggestions for further improvements. This included asking the participants to define and explain any terms and company jargon, to ensure that the researcher understood the true meaning. The researcher acted as an innocent researcher in the development and conduction of the research, to stay in line with the traditions of interpretivist qualitative research. As the interviews progressed, the researcher became more proficient in asking for further explanations of the terms and jargon used in CM; this included the researcher asking participants to be very clear with their answers and not to take any comments at face value. Overall, the quality of the data collected improved as the interviews progressed. By the end of the twelve-month interview schedule, the researcher felt that he was more proficient and relaxed with the participants. Geertz (1973) stated that interpretive interviews should be in line with the organisational culture. The researcher felt confident this had been achieved by visiting the participants in the workplace, and this was therefore observable.

4.10 Problems Encountered

The research had progressed smoothly since the DB2 presentation and ethics approval in 2016. One of the significant challenges encountered by the researcher was securing time with the participants, because of their senior positions. Even with this privileged access to category managers and buyers, the researcher still struggled to 'lock' them down and agree to give up their valuable time. Unfortunately, the researcher was unable to contact retail buyers from any

of the discounter supermarkets. However, the researcher was able to secure mainstream and premium retailers, along with food suppliers manufacturing combinations of B/PL products.

The first interviews commenced in November 2016 and were completed by November 2017, when data saturation was reached. Fortunately, there were no problems regarding the audio-visual equipment as the researcher took two recorders to each session.

Overall, the researcher encountered very few s with the research. The researcher continues to maintain excellent relationships with UK grocery sector practitioners who are keen to help. They also visualised the benefit of this long-awaited research to help them in their daily activities and assist them with problem solving. The next section explains the second stage of the analysis where the pattern coding was reduced by 50%.

4.11 Second Stage Coding

The second stage of the pattern coding process was to reduce the number of nodes by 50%. This enabled the analysis to be manageable for the researcher. Morse (1994) stated that this is a step to link logical data and put a wider range of data together. The researcher merged folders in NVivo where there were similar findings, and more accurate folder titles were determined. Often conceptually similar codes were merged as the researcher did not want to lose the meaning found in the first coding. Saldaña (2016) stated that the primary goal of the second coding is to organise the first coding into thematic strands. This was however carried out in a basic form during the first coding, but the researcher found that by condensing the number of folders and joining codes together, built stronger thematic links. Pattern coding was used in the same way as in the first coding process. The number of nodes was reduced from 299 in the first coding to 130 in the second coding. A third coding process was deemed not be appropriate as after the second coding, the researcher had identified emerging themes that would address the research objectives.

Thematic analysis was used to address the research and answer the research questions and objectives. Roulston (2001); and Boyatis (1998) stated that thematic analysis was poorly discussed in the literature; it was rarely acknowledged but widely used in qualitative studies. It offers an accessible and theoretically flexible approach to analysing qualitative data. Braun and Clarke (2006) stated that using thematic analysis is good for new researchers with limited experience in data analysis as it is easy to use and uses a logical approach by finding themes

within the data. As qualitative approaches are often complex and difficult, thematic analyses are foundational methods to address the issues. Holloway and Todres (2003) stated, thematic analysis were one of the few generic skills that could create meaning from a wide range of data, and was flexible to meet the needs of the research. Boyatis (1998) characterised it as flexible and effective across a range of qualitative studies. As this research used both phenomenological and case study qualitative approaches, the use of thematic analysis was again reviewed by the researcher and was found to be the most relevant. Smith and Osborn (2008) stated, thematic analysis is a research method and should be used where the epistemological position of the research is based upon phenomenological analysis. Braun and Clarke (2006) confirmed this and stated that thematic analysis guides the direction of the analysis. Thematic analysis is used widely in psychology qualitative research as the researcher needs to be clear about what they are doing and why, but also how they carried out the analysis (Attride-Stirling, 2001). Braun and Clarke (2006) claimed that thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analysing and reporting on patterns. Pattern data coding as used in the current research therefore lent itself to thematic analysis, which organises and describes the data, defined a 'rich data' (Boyatis, 1998). Braun and Clarke (2006) claimed that a theme captures something important in the data in relation to the research question and represents a response within the data set. Often the researcher looked for similar words in the data set to determine the theme, but as this was qualitative research there were no hard and fast rules governing which words formed a theme. Braun and Clarke (2006) stated, researcher judgement was important to determine a theme. The researcher was in a strong position at this stage of the research as an ex-category manager. However, as previously noted the researcher sought to be the innocent researcher, and as the importance of theming was not necessarily dependent upon quantifiable measurements, this position was maintained (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

Themes or patterns within a dataset could be identified by one of two primary ways in thematic analysis. Frith and Gleeson (2004) stated that there is an inductive, 'bottom up' approach or deductive, 'top down' approach. An inductive approach means that the themes are strongly linked to the data, and bears some connection with grounded theory (Patton, 1990). The current research study has adopted this approach, as the data was collected specifically for the research by interviewing, and the themes did not represent the questions asked, since the participants often deviated from what was asked. It was therefore data driven, rather than the views of the researcher being an influencing factor (Braun and Clarke, 2006). In contrast, a theoretically thematic analysis could have been used. This, however, would have provided a 'less rich' data

set, that could be mapped against a specific element of the research. The research study was designed to allow the participants to openly explain their reality. The only area of focus was the category captain role as it was a fundamental aspect of CM. Inductive thematic analysis did not go beyond what was said by the participants. There were no assumptions; the findings were simply derived from analysing what was said in the interviews. This reduced the risk of incorrect interpretations by the researcher. The research needed to reflect what the practitioners believed was correct, to update the literature effectively. In contrast, if the thematic analysis had gone to what Braun and Clarke (2006) described as the 'latent level', the research would have examined underlying ideas and assumptions. The research simply identified facts from the participant's beliefs rather than delving into assumptions or further ideas. These would have shaped or informed the semantic content of the data but would not have been representative of the research objectives. Thus, latent thematic analysis involves interpretive work and to be 'jiggly-jiggly' with the data to almost make it fit with what the researcher wanted or expected. The researcher looked for themes during the data collection but almost exclusively during the NVivo analysis. The analysis stage constantly involved moving 'to-and-fro' between the entire data set of both the suppliers and retailers. Data was coded and put into the node folders, and then compared to the literature findings. Tuckett (2005) stated that engagement with the literature enhances the analysis by informing the researcher of the more subtle features of the data. It therefore guides the researcher without an obvious bias.

To summarise, thematic analysis involves searching across a dataset to find repeated patterns of meaning (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis is therefore widely used in management research, and according to Tuckett (2005); Boyatis (1998); and Attride-Stirling (2001) there is no clear agreement as to what thematic analysis is and how to go about it but as an adaptable method, should be used. It does not appear in the literature as a 'branded' method or 'named' analysis, for example, such as narrative analysis or grounded theory. Often it is used in research but not explicatively. Meehan, Vermeer, and Windsor (2000) stated that, often thematic analysis was claimed as something else. An example of this is that the data 'was subjected to qualitative analysis for commonly recurring themes' (Braun and Wilkinson, 2003; p.30). In line with the objectives of the research, Braun, and Clarke (2006; p.81) stated that thematic analysis ensures that the research makes issues of 'the world' and 'reality' more transparent. The two themes identified formed the basis of Chapter 5 and Chapter 6:

Chapter 5 - I Can't Get No Satisfaction: Value Co-Creation.

Chapter 6 - Category Management Relationships and the Evolution of the Category Captain.

The next section reviews the ethical considerations of the research. The research was identified as being 'low risk' as it did not involve working with vulnerable people, such as the elderly or children.

4.12 Ethical Issues

SHU (2020) operates an ethical code of practice for all doctoral students, and this research conformed to the requirements of the University. SHU (2020) states that research should be risk assessed so as not to cause physical, emotional, or mental distress to the participants, or damage their financial or social standing. Appendix 3.10.3 details the predicted risks of the research as stated in the risk assessment document. There were no significant risks identified, and the researcher always ensured that the interests of the participants prevailed over that of the research. The committee approved the study as being able to contribute new knowledge and, as such, agreed the primary research to go ahead. The committee was very supportive of involving participants at a managerial level and considered the study to be capable of making a significant contribution. The committee was also satisfied that the researcher was competent due to his previous experience in practice as well as his academic experience and were satisfied with the supervisory team.

Practitioners were not approached until after obtaining the ethics committee approval for the research. Research ethics refers to the moral principles guiding research Economic and Social Research Council (2020) [ESRC], or as Homan (1991; p.1) described it: 'the science of morality.' SHU (2020) states that staff and students must conform to all legal requirements including relevant data protection and be under the ESRC (2020) Research Ethics Framework. Gray (2014) stated that it was a means of conducting research that went beyond just selecting the most appropriate research methodology but conducting research in a morally and defensible way. Ethics are a set of norms or principles used to guide choices of moral behaviour and relationships (Blumberg, Cooper, and Schindler, 2005). Codes of practice have grown since the Nuremberg Code of 1947, where war crime tribunals set out standards when conducting human experiments and the Declaration of Helsinki supported the alignment of appropriate subjects with the needs of the research (Gray, 2014). Codes of practice continue to increase prominence in business and other professions as problems become more complex and contain several ethical dimensions (Nicholson, 1994). Awarding bodies such as Universities, have

become increasingly concerned at the risks of litigation from research participants involved in student research. Consequently, SHU (2020) has established ethics to provide the University and research students with guidelines to protect themselves and the participants. The procedure states that if one supervises students or a student carries out research that involves participation from humans, then University approval is required (SHU, 2020). Gray (2014, p.73) stated that ethical principles fall into four main areas:

- *Avoid harm to participants.*
- *Ensure consent of the participants.*
- *Respect the privacy of the participants.*
- *Avoid the use of deception.*

As stated, ethical approval was obtained from the SHU (2020) ethics committee in November 2016, and the ethical approval confirmation is detailed in Appendix 3.9. The approval included use of the documents listed in Table 4.3, which can be found in the Appendix.

<i>Appendix Number</i>	<i>Document Type</i>
3.1	ShuRec 2a - Request Form
3.2	Data Management Plan
3.3	Risk Assessment Plan
3.4	Organisation Letter
3.5	Participant Letter
3.6	Participant Briefing
3.7	Scoping Document
3.8	Participant Consent Form
3.9	Ethics Approval Letter

Table 4.3. Ethics Approval Documentation. Source: Benson (2020).

The documentation ensured that the participants gave informed consent as they were made aware of the aims, objectives, methods, benefits and contribution to the literature and practice. Copies of the briefing documents and consent forms were sent electronically, and a hard copy was made available on the day of the interview to be completed and agreed. Participants were

volunteers and had the right to withdraw from the interview and study at any time, and their contribution was solely for the thesis. All participants offered their consent and were happy with the protection they had from the research ethics. The participants commented that this allowed them to be more open and honest without the fear of repercussion from their organisations. The researcher stressed to the participants that all contributions were confidential; individual names and company names would be anonymised. All transcripts and documents were stored confidentially on SHU (2020) drives and were not available to any third parties.

Finally, after conducting over 25 interviews with the participants, there were no complaints or concerns raised, so, it was safe to conclude that the participants were happy with the research process and what was expected of them.

4.13 Summary

This chapter has discussed the researcher's philosophical stance which guided the research design, research methodology and method. The research questions shaped the philosophical position of the researcher, i.e. an interpretive approach to understanding the perceived reality of CM relationships between suppliers and retailers within the UK grocery sector. This approach had an impact on the research method. There was a strong connection between the research question, the literature, and the participants' responses during the interviews. The findings discovered contradictory points of view, consistent points of view and new insights, where the most exciting and innovative arguments were selected to form the basis of the findings and discussion chapters. A discussion of the central themes that emerged from the analyses will take place in the next two chapters, which together demonstrate the critical findings of the research.

Chapter 5: I Can't Get No Satisfaction: Value Co-creation

5.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses whether value is created in a CM relationship and if any of the parties can reach satisfaction. It examines how the findings from the interviews were used as the basis of the discussion and to address the primary research question. An analysis of value through a theoretical lens of the 5 axioms of S-DL identified in the literature review using; specifically value co-creation, value no-creation and value co-destruction is presented in this chapter. Category management was the conceptual lens of the research alongside the theoretical lenses of value creation, trust, loyalty, and S-DL. The conceptual and theoretical findings were derived from interviewing both suppliers and retailers operating within the UK grocery sector. The explanations of their day-to-day CM activities enabled the research study to establish how the participants perceived value, and to compare the claims of the practitioners with those within the published literature. It explains how each organisation type felt about value creation in the relationship, and if this was the belief of both supplier and retailer in CM relationships, or if it was merely rhetoric to satisfy a business relationship. Based on the discussion, recommendations are made to improve value creation within the CM relationship. This chapter focuses on how the actors represent value creation in a business relationship. The following sections discuss value co-creation, no-creation and co-destruction and extend the discussion in Chapter 3 (Literature Review). The nature of value creation as understood by the practitioners is then reviewed and compared with the theoretical perspective.

The chapter will conclude with the contribution of the findings, and future research opportunities for academia and CM practitioners. The findings will also be used to answer the research questions and will be linked to the findings in Chapter 6, where there is overlap between the two major discussion areas.

5.2 Analysis, Findings and Research Questions

The current research study has used a phenomenological approach. Through qualitative research, it has been able to resolve how food industry category managers and buyers perceive their roles and business activities, in addition to the roles and business activities of their category partners and associated organisations, and these are compared to the theoretical

contributions of the 5 S-DL axioms. The literature review explained how the 5 axioms have replaced Vargo and Lusch's (2004a) 11 foundational premises (FP's). Axiom 1 (FP1) states that service is the fundamental basis of exchange; Axiom 2 (FP6) states value is co-created by multiple actors, always including the beneficiary; Axiom 3 (FP9) states all social and economic actors are resource integrators; Axiom 4 (FP10) states that value is always uniquely and phenomenologically determined by the beneficiary; and finally, Axiom 5 (FP11) states value co-creation is co-ordinated through actor generated institutions and institutional arrangements. Each of the following sections will relate the research data and findings to the appropriate axiom. This demonstrates the application of the S-DL theory to the research findings. The relations between the axioms and research findings are then summarised in Table 5.1 and Table 5.2.

The analysis used the NVivo (version 11) software, which generated emergent themes, including the significance of value creation in CM relationships as discussed in this chapter. The findings and discussion of this chapter focus on answering the primary research question:

How do inter-organisational category management relationships realise value co-creation, value no creation and value co-destruction outcomes within the UK grocery sector, and to what extent is trust important?

The chapter will also focus on answering two of the four secondary research questions:

- (i) *What is the nature of value, and how does this influence the grocery manufacturer (supplier) and retailer in category management relationships?*
- (ii) *How is value co-created or otherwise between the grocery manufacturer (supplier) and retailer who typically enter a category management relationship for mutual benefit?*

5.3 Importance of Value

The literature review has shown that the nature of value and its creation is increasingly being debated amongst scholars, as well as the roles of internal actors (Grönroos and Voima, 2013; Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2000, 2004; Vargo and Lusch, 2004a). According to Ostrom *et al.*, (2010) value was amongst the most important research topics in marketing. Furthermore, Corsaro (2014); and ISBM (2011) stated that managers in industrial companies rated value as

a top priority for business management. Value has been regarded by the retail CM literature as the collaborative ideal that emphasises a 'triple win' for the suppliers, retailers, and consumers (Aastrup, Grant and Bjerre, 2007). S-DL derives from service marketing developed in the 1980's, and has now become significant to marketing scholars, indeed a transcending perspective for all of marketing and marketing science (Vargo and Lusch, 2017). The reviews have shown it is fundamental in value creation, and this research demonstrates this claim through category management.

The next section focuses on value co-creation or not, from a practitioner perspective.

5.6 Supplier Business Entity

This section will explain how the UK grocery supplier businesses involved in the research study understood the nature of value co-creation, no-value and value destruction. The views of the practitioners working within the sector have aided the researcher to understand the nature of value in the context of CM. This section will also include an analysis of the comments made and will conclude with an understanding of whether the retailers felt that they were getting value from the CM relationship.

Categorised into branded (B), branded and private label (BPL), and private label (PL) within the UK grocery food manufacturer's sector. This categorisation ensured a clear division between those suppliers who manufactured branded only, private labels only or both branded and private labels. Fifteen supplier interviews were conducted: 12 first interviews and three follow-up interviews. The follow-up interviews were to 'deep dive' into the key findings from the first interviews, which lasted 15 minutes instead of 1 hour for the initial interviews. These will be discussed collectively as 15 interviews rather than sub-dividing them into first and second interviews unless there was a specific reason in the argument to differentiate between them. Six of the 15 supplier interviews were labelled B, seven were labelled BPL and two were labelled PL. These comprised of small, medium, and large companies as defined in Chapter 3. Small companies had a sales value of less than £100m; for medium companies, this figure was between £100m to £249m, and for large companies was more than £500m. These will be defined collectively within the discussion as 'supplier companies' unless there was a specific reason in the argument to differentiate between them. In Chapter 3, Table 3.2 shows the specific defining characteristics of the companies. Finally, the individual participant's commentary will

only refer to their position within the company if it was appropriate for the argument; this is because all of the participants selected for the research study were senior managers with decision making responsibilities and did not require differentiation as they carried out the same CM roles. The supplier participants perceived the nature of value and the best way of creating value as follows:

- Sales growth, profitability, and sustainability
- Product range/assortment
- The consumer and consumer behaviour
- The provision of creative and innovative insight
- Collaborative relationships

Discussion point 4.9.5 (collaborative relationships) will conclude by directing the reader to Chapters 5 and 6, which discuss the role of trust and the evolution of category captain responsibilities in the future.

5.6.1 Sales Growth, Profitability and Sustainability

The supplier business entity participants raised several positive and negative issues regarding what they perceived the nature of value to be, and how these perceptions created value in collaborative CM relationships. The suppliers believed that value was not just about the quickest or cheapest job; it was also about quality. Ebrahim-Khanjari, Iravani and Shin (2011) supported the view of the suppliers. Value is achieved through the delivery of quality outcomes. S1 (M, B/PL) from a B/PL supplier stated, *'Value and co-creation in this sense would be about growing the size of the category, so growing monetary value within the category'*. Breidbach and Maglio (2016) stated that value co-creation has been around for ten years and more contextual examples of what different sectors regard as drivers are required. They would recognise that within the context of CM sales growth is seen by the practitioners as one of the main contributors to successful value co-creation. This view is also shared by the retailer participants and shown later in the chapter. Nyaga, Whipple and Lynch (2010) stated that firms in all industry sectors are building collaborative relationships, and that for this to be successful both parties needed to share the vision of co-creation and not rely on just one side of the relationship. Axioms 2 and 4 of S-DL particularly apply to sales growth, profitability and

sustainability, as both actors within the collaboration (both the supplier partner and the beneficiary partner, the retailer) co-create value. Axiom 4 also states that the beneficiary needs to be involved in the value creation process using phenomenological determination. This research follows this requirement, but it goes one stage further and includes the phenomenological perspectives of the retailers and the suppliers. Ganesan (1994) re-enforces this claim and suggested that firms working together in long-term relationships maximised profit. This supports value co-creation although in 1994 it was undiscovered.

The literature review has discussed value creation, and how this leads to trust and loyalty. Value is a subjective phenomenon and often depended on how people viewed it, and what organisations and individuals' thought was important. It is concerned with the accumulation of monetary value into the category by increased sales from more consumers spending. S1's (M, B/PL) view resonated with most of the supplier participants in the study; S9 (S, B/PL) stated *'Value is about monetary value to the category and taking things out that do not add value.'*

In addition to the need to drive commercial sales, the suppliers argued that the retailers were always striving for profitability. There was a relationship between sales and profit. Suppliers recognised that profit was not just for the retailers but was also for themselves, so they remained competitive and were able to invest in their business to develop a long-term sustainable business. S9 (S, B/PL) commented that: *'Everyone, suppliers and retailers have to make a profit!'* Also, S10 (L, B) added that: *'Value is category growth in pounds which is sustainable.'* S1 (M, B/PL) supported this by stating: *'It is about long-term sustainable value which can only be maintained by continuous growing of the category'*. The degree of profit depended on the retailer. However, all retailers expected the suppliers to provide the highest levels of category expertise and 'deliver' the performance targets. S1 (M, B/PL) suggested: *'We just need to 'deliver' and show the retailer some category expertise.'* The notion of 'deliver' that S1 (M, B/PL) was referring to meant that they needed to produce a CM result which could mean several things: a range review, the introduction of new lines, product deletions and so on. However, above all, they must recommend an innovative category that was differentiated to entice existing customers and introduce new ones to grow sales value and generate more 'bottom line' profit for the retailer. S6 (L, B) and S2 (S, B/PL) supported the views raised earlier and stated: *'Category management will not work if we do not look at profit for both...'* and *'If as a supplier you don't get it right, the retailer will fire you'*. Furthermore, the private label suppliers' felt continually assessed on their pricing and performance, and the threat of

moving the supply of private label products was always evident. S2.1 (S, B/PL), from a private label company, reported:

'In private label, the retailer will always check your price and capability with other suppliers to ensure they are getting the best deal.'

'They do not need you, as they have several other suppliers banging on the door.'

S2.1 (S, B/PL) and other suppliers believed that the retailers were not overly concerned if their businesses were profitable or not, although they felt the retailers were keen for them to be sustainable. This belief was raising frustration with the suppliers, and although they felt that sales value growth was essential for value co-creation, they also felt that the retailers relied too heavily on generating profits for themselves at the expense of the suppliers. They were concerned with the suppliers returning a profit to ensure business sustainability. Doyle and Roth (1992) raised this concern in the early days of CM, and this finding shows it is still a concern. Private label suppliers also felt frustrated at having to continuously have their prices checked against their competitors who were striving for the best deal. The suppliers believed in creating value through a sustainable relationship but felt that a greater consideration towards their profitability would help them improve the longevity of the collaboration.

5.6.2 Product Range/Assortment

The suppliers also believed that the correct product range or 'assortment' in the category was pivotal to creating value; this included the merchandising of products on the shelf and ensuring they were in the best and optimum positions to entice consumers. Hall, Kopalle and Aradhna (2010) stated this placement helps to maximise sales and contribute to the previously discussed point of increasing the collaborative commercial sales value for sustainability. Correct product ranges, combined with a balance of promotional activity alongside standard sales, maintained a respectable all-year around consumer offer. Hart and Davis (1996) claimed non-food assortments must have a balanced range of products and promotional activity is required at key seasonal times of the year, for example Christmas and Halloween, and this leads to value creation. The participants felt this was also applicable within food assortments to create value co-creation. For value co-creation, suppliers were seeking a 'triple win' for everyone i.e. themselves, the retailer, and the consumer. S1 (M, B/PL) defined this as *'Value is ease of shopping, having the right products at the right price and in the right place for the consumer*

at all trading times'. So, to co-create value, the value of correct product ranging needed to be maintained throughout the trading day and not just during the peak trading times. Modern retail stores are open seven days a week, and many being open 24 hours a day, where shoppers can visit at any time during this period and expect product availability. The stores need to be relatively easy to shop at, with the aisles de-cluttered of side stacks and additional promotional offers. Consumers are often 'time-poor' and have a limited time allocated to complete their shopping. Shugan and Desiraju (2001) stated that pricing is important within the offer, promotions were effective ways to drive volume sales. This is still true today, however the research shows it is no longer just about price. Axiom 1 of S-DL is particularly relevant to this aspect of value creation, as the use of effective promotions and product ranges is providing a service to the end-consumer, and by the supplier and retailer exchanging collaboratively through the process improves the final consumer offer.

5.6.3 The Consumer and Consumer Behaviour

The third issue raised by the suppliers regarding what they perceived to be the nature of value was the importance of the consumer. S7 (L, B) stated that: *'If I have the buyer, the sales team, and brand team and we are looking through a category lens, we will start with the shopper (consumer)'*. S-DL axiom 4 is applied to this area of value creation as it considers the perspective of the beneficiary. The end-beneficiary within category management is the consumer, however all levels within the supply chain are beneficiaries. The research proposes later that further research will include a phenomenological study including retail shoppers. However, ahead of further research with shoppers the importance of the customer resonated with all the supplier companies interviewed in the research, and S11 (L, PL) raised the point: *'If we are not giving the consumer what they want, then it is value destruction'*. A tenet of successful CM is providing the consumer with what they wanted as opposed to providing products that benefit manufacturing capability and retailer range reduction (Nielsen, Karolefski and Heller, 2006). Manufacturers are continuously looking at ways in which to drive efficiency into production to reduce costs and achieve the 'triple win'. Where manufacturers identified efficiency savings in production, those savings may be passed down the line to the shopper and provide better value. Retailers reducing product ranges in stores to maximise operational efficiencies will need to ensure that shoppers no longer demand those products which are being discontinued. If shoppers cannot find the products in a retailer, then they will shop at a competitors' store or online where they can find the products. Shoppers are now also making

more frequent trips to supermarkets and responding to the growth in sales channels, resulting in diminishing loyalty. Liu, Kiang and Brusco (2012) stated that the market is changing, product ranges are reducing in line with the desire of the retailers to reduce stock levels and improve cash flow. S11 (L, PL) felt that range reduction was hurting value for shoppers and asked: *'Is range reduction to give more space to fast selling lines really adding value?'*. S11 (L, PL) confirmed the view of Nielsen, Karolefski and Heller (2006), which was, in order to add value in CM the consumers needed to be at the forefront of the decision-making process. S11 (L, PL) also stated: *'For value, we need to understand the consumer's point of view.'* Furthermore, S7 (L, B) stated: *'People have different 'need states' where they are trying to be satisfied at different times, and you really need to understand that in order to drive value'*. Speaking directly to shoppers will give both the supplier and the retailer better insights into future trends. Historical data such as Kantar Worldpanel (2020); Shopper Intelligence (2020); Mintel Academic (2020); IGD (2020); and Euromonitor (2020) is important and is discussed later, but this is often considered to be historical data, which does not always allow for future trending. Suppliers and retailers need to spend more time in the retail stores speaking to shoppers to gain a better understanding of their 'needs' and how they are likely to shop in the future. Product development is often a 12-month process, and early recognition of trends would allow an earlier collaboration to start planning. S1 (M, B/PL) claimed *'Data is often historical, albeit a trend, but the trend is projecting from the here and now. Whereas speaking to shoppers gives a feel for what is next'*. The supplier participants reported that CM would need to evolve further by gaining an even deeper understanding of the needs of the consumer. S11 (L, PL) said:

'But I think what is required is change around the understanding of value for the consumer point of view. It is to find out how they get that value; there is only a couple of ways I can see how you get that, and it would need to be an extensive piece of research around behaviour, interaction with products and psychological measures.'

There is an increasing desire from the suppliers to gain a better insight into consumer behaviour as an indicator of value. There is a need for more research into consumer behaviours to better understand consumer needs as discussed later in the thesis. S8 (L, B/PL) reported that:

‘Consumer behaviour is the driver of category management, and it needs to be a recommendation that further research into this important area and how it adds value within the category management relationship.’

5.6.4 The Provision of Creative and Innovative Insight

The provision of beneficial, innovative, and creative research insight is the fourth key in helping to understand the nature of value according to the suppliers. The provision of data has been available to suppliers and retailers from a variety of sources, including internally from the retailer or externally from data collection organisations such as the IGD (2020); Mintel Academic (2020); Kantar Worldpanel (2020). Data has historically satisfied the retail buyer and created value within the relationship. Often the buyer would present their data to the supplier and the category captain and this would be used in conjunction with external data. Category management is now facing new challenges (Kurtuluş, Nakkas and Ülkü, 2014). In the future, ‘value’ according to the suppliers would be provided by using all the available data and converting this into meaningful insights. Suppliers are expected to get closer to individual retail customers and through CM, create insight that is creative, innovative, and differentiated. This would give the retailer a chance to try and establish a point of contrast in the marketplace for that category. The literature does not currently support this viewpoint as these are new findings of the thesis. However, S-DL axiom 1 and axiom 5 apply to this level of value creation. The sharing of data between the category management supplier and the retail buyer is the fundamental service provision of axiom 1. The co-creating of value between the two parties applies axiom 5 where the value co-creation is generated by the stakeholders and the joint agreements between their organisations.

S1 (M, B/PL) reported that category had a vital role to play within the CM relationship: *‘Category cannot give them more margins, but we can give them a valid opinion through the use of effective data, and creative insight’*. S1 (M, B/PL) raised the point that the insight needed to have future value, and this could be assured to the retail buyer, thus, *‘Insight has to be truthful, innovative and accurate.’*

The insight should be truthful and be supported by the data, or if it is a future prediction, the justification and the reason should be clearly explained to the buyer. Good category insight helps to make the buyer’s job easier, as buyers are often ‘time poor’, having to manage the day-

to-day issues such as supply chain issues, rather than taking time out to focus on the future. It is vital that suppliers present the data and insight to the buyer in a succinct way; S1 (M, B/PL) stated that *'At meetings only present the key slides, do not present the back-up data unless this is asked for by the buyer to support the recommendations.'* Buyers only have a limited amount of time during meetings and therefore require only the succinct points to support the decision. Buyers were keen to understand what the actions of the supplier were and what the expectation was from the retailer and the other suppliers working within the category. S2 (S, B/PL) commented:

'If you take it to its ultimate limit, how does a supplier add value to a retailer? Essentially a retailer has got lots of data, the buyers have all the information at their fingertips, but they do not have the time or resource to use it.'

Value to suppliers was about being an expert in a sector; this was particularly prevalent in smaller suppliers where the findings showed they often operated in a niche situation and could become experts. For example, within the tea category, a smaller niche supplier would only manufacture within a small sub-sector such as herbal or fruit teas. Often such companies were new to the market and were keen to develop and grow their business, and so tended to respond to the needs of the buyer quicker. The findings show that these companies were also more creative and innovative; they used the data but also provided a more detailed justification for the recommendations. The retail marketplace is rapidly changing, and CM needs to evolve to keep pace with the changes and move alongside it. Passionate suppliers who continuously questioned their market and capability learnt to understand the sub-sector markets better than their competitors and could react to the changes, and the emerging and differing sales channels. S2.1 (S, B/PL) and S9 (S, B/PL) stated, respectively:

'Spend more time in your sector and become the industry expert in your field, and 'Yes, category for us, I think, is our retailers asking us to look beyond the sub-categories that we work within and ask us to open our eyes and look wider and wider, rather than have tunnel vision.'

Suppliers, who sold products into different markets, could generate improved value for the collaborative relationship with the retailer by including trends in other sectors. For example, one supplier who also operated in food service had insights from the hospitality sector and used this restaurant data to assist with the recommendations. Often new product development and

ideas followed this sector, as consumers dined out more and travelled abroad. S9 (S, B/PL) highlighted the advantage of this:

‘For our business of a small size we buy data, and then have insight input, but as we also cover the restaurant world as well, this gives us an added dimension when making recommendations, particularly around trending. We are very much close to the consumer and the shopper.’

Suppliers also welcomed relationships with academia and felt that there should be a closer working link between practice and the literature. One of the participants felt that the research topic added value, as it demonstrated that academia was interested in CM.

‘Having this interview today is pleasing for me, as it shows academia is still interested in category management and that it has a guaranteed future for it within the grocery sector. I am passionate about category management.’ S9 (S, B/PL).

5.6.5 Collaborative Relationships

The final aspect of value for the suppliers was the importance of the relationship with the retailer. Traditionally, this has been a direct relationship between the supplier category manager and the retail buyer, but through CM, has extended to multi-functions within both organisations. The literature review has discussed collaboration and the growing importance in business relationships. For example, the marketing function of the supplier formed a separate relationship with the marketing function of the retailer, and worked collaboratively together (IGD, 2020). Hass, Snehota and Corsaro (2012) claimed that effective collaboration between the supplier sales and category teams created value in the relationship. They suggested that without a close collaboration both organisations would continue to operate in silo's and value co-creation will not occur. Axiom 2 of S-DL focuses upon the customer being the co-creator of value. The retailer is the customer of the supplier, and the consumer the customer of the retailer or the collaboration. Each one therefore co-creates value within the respective relationships. We have seen in the literature review Vargo and Lusch (2017) describe this as value-in-use where one firm's output becomes the input in a customer's own value creation process. This has we have seen is both tangible and intangible resources provided within the collaboration. The beneficiary in the collaboration by using the resources provided by the partner is co-creating value and integrating with the other organisation. Therefore, if a firm

view their customer not as a customer but as a co-creator, they are generating value together. The transmission of knowledge provides another perspective on value co-creation as well as inter-dependency, and so the deeper the collaboration the more value is co-created to solve problems and create opportunities. Niraj and Narasimhan (2003) supported this claim that vertical exchange of information was necessary. A category approach requires the suppliers and the retailers in the vertical relationship be constantly updating each other with the latest knowledge and insights. S1 (M, B/PL) felt that a category approach was essential, rather than an ideological approach:

‘The buyer’s role with the account manager will become more category partner focused; in that sense, we will be coerced to take a more holistic category view to add category value back in. These things are cyclical; we bring in category partnership then we move away from it. Yes, the buzzword now is ‘category partnership’, and that could change as it is already moving away from it. To have a strong category management function is not a point of difference; it is essential.’

Most suppliers felt that value was created by building a 'great' relationship with the buyer, and this belief was extending to the broader collaborations within the CM relationship. Category management has often been associated with the commercial function. Nyaga, Whipple and Lynch (2010) challenged whether the cost of collaborative relationships was worth it and requested more contextual research to be done to find out. This research shows that the suppliers felt it was worth the extra expense. The retailers re-iterated this point later in the chapter. Nielsen, Karolefski and Heller (2006) stated that CM was a separate function to commercial; it should not be mixed up with marketing and delivers on its own merits. This separation involves the category team meeting separately with the buyer, then the commercial team. Suppliers have acknowledged that long-term plans create value agreed with the retailer, and the category function should operate independently of other business functions. This is new knowledge as it is not reported in the extant literature. S1 (M, B/PL) stated:

‘We are going to our first commercial meeting, and we will make it clear that as a category, we work separately to commercial. Category is therefore different within that meeting. Then hopefully build a relationship on the back of the separate meetings, but we have a long way to go’

Moreover, S10 (L, B) felt that value was also co-created by long-term planning, and his company ensured that a formal joint plan was introduced to define the responsibilities of each party within the collaboration:

‘Building joint category plans is something we all strive towards with the retailer, and gets you into that position where we go in as category advisers where we have a good relationship with the buyers; we actually discuss with them the long term plans, the things they need to do, and we agree to build a joint category plan.’

It was important, however, that the supplier organisation presented a cohesive corporate approach to the retailer. Category managers confessed that they wanted to build relationships internally with commercial, administrative, and manufacturing teams. They tried to get national account managers to 'champion' them with the buyer, which demonstrated a joined-up approach that helped to make the category manager's role easier as there was more all-round credibility in the relationship. Category management is concerned with a more holistic view of the category and as defined in the literature review, includes products from other suppliers, brands and private labels. Exceeding a company's expertise within a category was also seen by the participants as a way of adding value. This finding is not reported in the current extant CM literature. Buyers were always 'time poor' and selective as to which suppliers they chose to meet with. When a trusted supplier could demonstrate a more extensive understanding beyond their sector this would most likely gain the attention and interest of the buyer. As S8 (L, B/PL) advised:

‘Yes, it is detached, but as a category management role with a retailer, one tends to get a more trusted relationship with the retailer rather than the commercial representative of the company; this is because one does not fall out over trading terms, so there are no arguments over the negotiation table. One is there to help them grow their business; this means one tends to get a lot closer to the buyer, expand the business much further, and allows one to get to know what is needed to help them with their business.’

Suppliers felt that trust is built over time and S9 (S, B/PL)'s company ensured they engaged with the buyers early on in a relationship; this could include starting to work with a new retailer or where the buyer changed and a new one was employed:

‘Co-creation from a retailer's perspective – the business will partner with a retailer early on and, as mentioned earlier, ask questions of them: of what does this look like, what do you want to do?’

Good collaboration in the relationship would ensure that the retailer was successful and this, in turn, would deliver the needs of the shopper. If the supplier genuinely wanted the retailer to succeed, this would most likely result in success for them as well. Retail customers were vital for most supplier organisations as they were often a major part of the supplier's business. The loss of one retailer could have a detrimental effect that could potentially put the business at risk of failure. The researcher has previously worked for a company where this situation presented itself. It supplied fresh beef and lamb to retailers with one of the retailers accounting for over half of the company's sales. The retailer had a change in trading policy and had been receiving a product for many years from two suppliers and decided to focus their attention on one supplier to increase efficiency and improve costs. This change negatively impacted the researcher's company, who had to venture out into the market and search for new a business(es) to replace the lost business. S9 (S, B/PL) resonated with the researcher's view and stated:

‘Businesses have to have a relationship with the buyer across the table that is hopefully on the same side of the table to say they are in this together. We, as a business, want them to succeed because that is the only way we will succeed.’

In summary, the suppliers had identified five key areas, which they understood to be the nature of value and how value was co-created within the CM relationship. Value added through relationships and collaborative working was the dominant factor from the suppliers' perspective framed by key S-DL axioms. The next section will review how retailers perceived the nature of value and how value was co-created in the CM relationship. A review of the comparison of both stakeholders' views and the positive and negative aspects of each were identified and discussed later.

5.7 Retailer Business Entity

This section explains how the UK retailer businesses involved in the research study understood the nature of value co-creation, no-value, and value destruction. It outlines the views of the practitioners working within the sector, defines and explains their understanding of the nature

of value in the context of CM, and whether they felt they got value from the CM relationship. As with the supplier findings in the previous section the findings are applied to the 5 axioms of S-DL. The suppliers have already reported that they have, and the collaboration was worth the extra cost.

Categorised into mainstream (M) and premium (P) retailers, these were the retailer business entities within the UK grocery retailer's sector. The researcher approached the discounter retailers, who were unavailable to participate in the research, as the researcher felt that by including these and online retailers in the research would help with future development of the research study. Retailers accepted that consumers with different profiles shopped at different stores. However, in mainstream retailing, each business now attracts different types of UK socio-economic groups rather than the traditional clients associated with each one. This was because shoppers now had less loyalty and shopped for the right deals. There were ten retailer interviews carried out: seven first interviews and 3 follow-up interviews. As with the supplier interviews, the follow-up interviews were to 'deep dive' into the key findings from the first interviews and lasted a maximum of 15 minutes instead of 1 hour for the first interviews. These will be discussed as 10 interviews rather than sub-dividing them into first and second interviews unless there was a specific reason in the argument to distinguish between them. Of the 10 retailer interviews conducted, eight were M and two were P retailers. As these were UK retailers and all the companies were relatively large with a sales value turnover more than £250m per annum. These will be defined collectively within the discussion as the 'retailer companies' unless there was a specific reason in the argument to differentiate them. Chapter 3, Table 3.2 shows the specific differentiating characteristics of the companies. Finally, the individual participant's commentary will refer to their position in the company only if it is appropriate. The reason is that all participants were senior buyers and chosen for the research as they were all key decision makers who did not require differentiation, as they carried out the same CM functions. The retailer participants believed that the nature of value and the best way of creating value was as follows:

- Sales growth, profitability, and sustainability
- Expectation of suppliers
- The consumer and consumer behaviour
- The provision of creative and innovative insight
- Collaborative relationships

The following sections discuss the above five ways of creating value.

5.7.1 Sales Growth, Profitability and Sustainability

The retailer business entity participants raised both positive and negative issues regarding what they perceived was the nature of value and how these perceptions created value concerning sales growth, profitability, and sustainability. The issues raised in this section were limited. However, the retailers felt that branded suppliers needed to provide more volume growth rather than value growth by putting up prices; this would include encouraging shoppers to make more frequent shopping trips. Alan, Kurtuluş and Wang (2019) studied the retailer's CM strategy and interaction with the suppliers and found that increasing private label products increased profitability through 'spillover' into other categories. 'Spillover' is where suppliers can mix different categories on one delivery vehicle. They will be distributed at the same temperature, which will improve distribution efficiencies. This research therefore has raised awareness to practice of the impact of 'spillover' on product assortment and pricing. The research has already reported that private label sales are growing ahead of the overall grocery market. This observation supports the extant literature which highlights the importance of pricing and that growth should not come from inflation. It needs to be expressed with the volume sold. R4.1 (L, M) stated:

'Their shopping insight goes beyond what we would expect as we are looking at transactional data rather than behavioural data. So, to co-create value, any supplier could come in here and say, 'I can improve the speed of shopping.'

The retailers believed that suppliers were stuck in the availability trap and focused most of their attention in the supply chain, ensuring stores received deliveries on time, and where this did not happen, they spent time chasing the deliveries. R6 (S, M) supported this view by stating:

'So, from a value creation perspective, its best from how one can align the manufacturer who wants to sell more of their products, with the overall category aims of the retailer. Where the touch points and objectives overlap, and where mutually it works better for both of us to create value for both parties, also creates value for the consumer.'

S-DL axiom 2 and axiom 4 are applied in this section as the retailers believe that service is important in the exchange, and that value is determined by the understanding of the retailers. The next section will focus on the retail buyers' expectations regarding the suppliers.

5.7.2 Expectation of Supplier's

The second major issue raised by the retailers regarding what they perceived to be the nature of value and how these perceptions created value, was in relation to their expectations of the suppliers. The retailers felt that co-creation of value was making sure that the suppliers sent their best people to work on the specific retailer account. S-DL axiom 3 is applied to these findings as it states that all actors need to be integrated and work together. Where a retail buyer does not work well with a supplier category manager the relationship between the partners breaks down and axiom 3 cannot be applied. Unfortunately, the best category manager in a manufacturer could not work on every retail account, since often each one was attached to one retailer, if only to protect confidentiality. R2 (L, M) stated: *'So, we have spoken about the right people in front of the buyer'*. Furthermore, R3 (L, P) and R (L, M) expected category managers to be flexible and respond to the buyer's needs. Buyers liked their suppliers to always be available to answer availability queries, supply chain issues and category problems, rather than allowing the team to focus on looking ahead and anticipating trends. R4 (L, M) stated: *'Suppliers are expected to be flexible and come into the journey at different stages and respond to our needs.'*

5.7.3 The Consumer and Consumer Behaviour

The third major issue raised by the retailers regarding what they perceived to be the nature of value, and how these perceptions created value was in connection with the consumer and consumer behaviour. S-DL axiom 4 is applied to these findings in the same way as reported previously regarding the supplier consumer behaviour findings in the previous section. This was one of the three main areas reported by the participants for value creation in CM relationships. Value is concerned with CM delivering more for the shopper. Holt (1995) stated there is limited loyalty to specific retailers, and that consumers consume mainly on price and promotional activity. This view has changed in 2020 as shoppers are now looking for more value and quality rather than simply the lowest price (IGD, 2020). Category management is contributing to facilitating suppliers and retailer collaborations to deliver this. R5 (L, M) stated:

'Yes, the way we think of value in category management is about delivering more for the shopper'. A mission of the retailers was to save consumers money, and often at the heart of the retailer mission statement was a claim of intention to do this through improvements in product range, pricing, availability and products that satisfied the emergence of 'shopping missions', such as purchasing for lunch boxes, picnics, seasonal and meal occasions. Nielsen, Karolefski and Heller (2006) argued the consumer needs to be at the forefront of the relationship for value to be created. R4.1 (L, M) stated that multiple buyers needed to get together and work cross-category:

'Well, that is the challenge as some of those events are cross-category; it really does challenge the way we think about grocery retailing, a category model and so we stood up last year with a multi-category execution team to help because otherwise its marketing and trying to talk about an idea like that to multiple buyers to get them on-board.'

The value for the retailer was from getting the most spend from the shopper; this was in the number of visits to the store, loyalty, and increased purchases whilst in the store. Category recommendations needed to be innovative, with R4.1 (L, M) arguing during his interview that shoppers were 'time poor', and by improving product positioning this would enable them to buy the products they wanted quickly, and this would leave some time for browsing and potentially increase the number of purchases. Innovative recommendations were also identified by the suppliers in the previous section. It is satisfying that both sides agreed, which is a new finding, as it is not previously discussed in the extant literature. Where shoppers could not find the products they required, they wasted time looking for them and then left the shop quickly. We need to increase the speed of shopping as consumers only had a limited amount of time to spend in store, and once it had gone, they would usually leave. Buyers needed to get closer to their shoppers, the competitors' shoppers, and really understand shopper needs and how by working with their suppliers collaboratively could deliver this. R4 (L, M) supported this by saying:

'If a manufacturer's customer is over here, and my customer is over there, then we will never work together. Moreover, this will mean we will never be able to gain alignment and, therefore, be a very transactional relationship. However, if we were with a supplier who was the other way around and close to us with a similar customer aspiration, then we could become very aligned in what they want to deliver.'

In summary, the retailers believed that the consumer was at the forefront of the CM relationship and all the decisions made, which added value to the relationship, and were in consideration of the needs of the shopper. R6 (S, M) stated:

‘So, it is really about being able to put decision making in the hands of the retailer by providing a wider depth of category insight and how this affects the consumer; puts the buyer’s eyes through the same eyes as the consumer as how they see it.’

5.7.4 The Provision of Creative and Innovative Insight

The fourth major issue raised by the retailers regarding what they perceived to be the nature of value, and how these perceptions created value was the provision of reasoned creative and innovative insights. Insight is a fundamental aspect of CM, and this needs to be different for each retailer, based on their company and consumer profiles, and the suppliers need to recognise this with personalised and innovative insights for retailer differentiation. As reported previously within the supplier’s findings, S-DL axioms 1 and 5 apply and frame these. The provision of a strong service provision through better insight forms the basis of the collaboration. This spans from aligning all the departments from each organisation, for example marketing from the supplier directly with marketing from the retailer to ensure there is mutual interest from managers across both sides of the collaboration. Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2000, 2004), stated that to overcome the competition from other suppliers within a category, suppliers needed to go the ‘extra mile’ with the provision of additional resources to help the retailer contribute to value co-creation. Vargo and Lusch (2014) stated, operant resources such as insight were becoming more important in business relationships than even the product itself. Suppliers were expected to be experts in their field, and often they were expected to have knowledge of the wider category and understand the implications of actions within the category itself. R1 (M, P) stated:

‘Yes, customer insight stuff, for example, about how they are shopping, how the displays need to look, ease of shop and so on. Things like that play a big role in creating value in the relationship. Supplier organisations, I feel, have got a better understanding of this and are able to work with us, on things like shopping habits as things are changing.’

Suppliers were expected to understand how to make sense of the data available in the market and purchase the data. The larger suppliers were expected to invest heavily in the data, whereas smaller and more niche suppliers were expected to purchase less data but provide more creative and innovative insights. Suppliers created value by being 'experts' in their field, as often, retail buyers managed multiple categories and only stayed in that post for two years and did not have enough time to become experts. They then tended to move to a different category and needed to learn a new range of products and consumer expectations. They relied on the suppliers to provide the recommendations for the category, but also other associated categories. Suppliers were, therefore, expected to understand their markets and this could include other sectors such as international cuisine to create a point of difference. R3 (L, P) advised:

'We want to see what those trends are; we have many of the developers travelling with suppliers around the world in different countries looking at emerging cuisine. That adds value.'

When suppliers made category recommendations, they were adding value by providing insight to enable shoppers to 'trade up', which equated to spending more money within the category. That could be asking a shopper to purchase for example, a better-quality cooked ham because it has higher meat content, fewer additives and provides a healthier product. The cost is relatively higher, but the benefits outweigh this, which encourages the shopper to pay a premium price for it. Suppliers are often asked to provide a sustainable category model, which includes a promotional plan and collectively protects the retailer's margin. Tellis and Zufryden (1995) identified in the 1990s the importance of product discounting, and they suggested it was the major brands that benefitted from promotions. The recent shopper changes have negated this activity and Kantar Worldpanel (2020) stated, shoppers in the UK grocery sector are switching away from cyclical promotions to demanding better value all year round. This change is supported by the data and insight available across the sector. Retailers expected all supplier data and insights to be shared to ensure they could monitor and justify the supplier decisions. R4 (L, M) confirmed that the recommendations need to be justified and should include the best possible product assortment within the category. This needs to include the supplier's brands, as well as all other brands and private labels within the category:

'In my view, because of that, you either need a strong trading team and a strong internal team to cut through that bias, or you get multiple perspectives that give you the detail to formulate a decision.'

Despite the perception within the sector, the retailers wanted suppliers to add value by being honest and truthful about the category recommendations, and this would include not being a 'yes man', and to challenge the retailer. This has not previously been covered in the extant literature. Provided the suppliers had the evidence to make a strong claim which differed to that of the buyer then they should be able to make it without being concerned about the loss of favour or business. R4 (L, M) stated:

'Having a strong piece of work is where they demonstrate the good behaviours of being a category captain, and they are not 'yes men' in this exercise. They were actually challenged, and when they went into stores, they acted as the voice of the category, the voice of the customer and they were able to challenge our thinking as we went through this.'

The previous section has discussed the importance of the consumer. The retailers, as reported in this section have suggested that insight needs to be customer focused. The research has found that both suppliers and retailers should visit stores collectively and hold focus groups with shoppers and speak with them directly about their shopping needs. This helped to facilitate a joint value creation process whereby the supplier and retailer formulated long-term plans. R4.1 (L, M) supported this finding and suggested reviewing consumer behaviours:

'Joint value creation to me has a couple of different places to it; one is the way we talk to the consumer; there is plenty of value to be created there. Money does not need to change hands; we accept we are both going to be spending on advertising and other things, so let us do these together. That includes sharing data and insight.'

Conversely, some retailers have argued that data was no longer important. They claimed that going forward, suppliers needed to analyse the data more and use creative insights to make bespoke decisions, which were appropriate for that retailer's shopper requirements. They claimed that they also received data and could interpret it themselves. It was the application of the data and knowledge of the category to create innovative bespoke recommendations that

were important to them. They did, however, still need the suppliers to provide the expert insight, as each category was different, and a general internal team would only be able to pull together generic category recommendations. Each category was different and had its specific recommendations to achieve the overall retailer mission. R5 (L, M) argued:

‘The suppliers need to give reasons for the decisions, and not just give back the data. As a buyer, I will choose the best ideas with justifications and take this forward with the business. All recommendations need supporting with evidence, facts or trending’

Suppliers need to be educated in their category and be forward thinking, and not wait to be asked by the buyer. The sector is going through challenging times, and suppliers needed to be almost aggressive with new ideas and have a convincing argument to drive these quickly to be implemented in the stores. Radical ideas and value created by, the supplier approaching the buyer and delivering a steady two- or three-year recommendation were needed.

5.7.5 Collaborative Relationships

The final issue raised by the retailers regarding what they perceived to be the nature of value, related to working in collaborative relationships. This was the main issue for the retailers, which was also the same issue for the suppliers, as reported in the previous section. S-DL axiom 2 is applied to these findings, again the same as reported in collaborative relationships of the suppliers in section 5.6.5. This states value is created by multiple actors including the beneficiary. The managers throughout the supply chain at every level are included to deliver benefit for each down the chain to the ultimate benefit of the consumer and providing value for them through the best possible offer. Collaborative relationships form a significant part of the next section in which suppliers' and retailers' perceptions of value co-creation are compared. Retailers believed that value was co-created when the suppliers worked collaboratively with them, and the businesses became strongly aligned with each other. The retailers had strong opinions regarding improving collaborative working with all suppliers. R4 (L, M) stated:

‘Yes, exactly, it is like pull-push. If they are trying to go one way and we are trying to go another way, we must move them onto our agenda. That is always very difficult, whereas if they are already on the same path, it is then a hell of a lot simpler to work with them, and we spend a lot less time just trying to nudge them forward, and spend more time working together and adding value.’

Retailers were continuously seeking long-term collaborations with suppliers, as long-term collaborations meant more stability in the relationship for both parties and ensured appropriate investments could be made to secure future consumer needs. The literature supports the need for longer trusting relationships, and to meet the industry challenges these need to be deeper and collaborative. The participants reported that longer-term relationships inspired innovation and creativity when reviewing categories. R4.1 (L, M) stated:

'Definitely, a long-term relationship is better than a short-term relationship. We just said at our supplier conference at the IGD, so we talked about category management and, well, we had a couple of thousand suppliers there. Twice a year we have a supplier conference, and we try to level the playing field.'

Retailers were looking to suppliers to provide a more holistic view of the category, rather than focusing on their own products. Category management is about managing all the products categorised within a similar grouping and it was pivotal that every company considered supplying products within the category. This was one of the retailers' main concern and was identified following the data analysis and will be discussed further in the next section. R6 (S, M) stated:

'Collaboration between the manufacturer and the retailer, then that is only really going to work when manufacturers think more about the retailer. By that, I mean more about thinking about the category holistically where it is not just about that category but also where that category relates to other categories.'

Conversely, R6 (S, M) also believed that from a retailer's perspective, suppliers were still unsure as to the requirements expected from them. Suppliers were not 'open' to ask direct questions of the buyers, as they still feared the buyer, and this, the retailers felt stemmed back from the old days of transactional relationships. These fears were still present amongst the suppliers, and the retailers would like to see suppliers becoming more direct in their approach and their recommendations. R6 (S, M) stated: *'Suppliers would like a broad understanding of what retailers want from the relationship'*. Suppliers needed to forget about upsetting buyers by providing their honest thoughts on the problem or situation and should no longer fear losing the business of the retailer if they could justify their claim, even against the 'status quo'. They

needed to be more assertive and make recommendations earlier in the negotiation process, suggesting new and differentiated recommendations. They also needed to be 'open' with the buyer and understand what the expectations were from them and how the buyer felt they could deliver them. Suppliers needed to drive change in the process, and not to continually ask the buyer. R5 (L, M) said this where value was co-created and that: *'Suppliers need to take the lead on category conversation.'*

Suppliers need to be aware that once category business had been awarded there were no guarantees that this would continue for a long time, and that there could never be loyalty in relationships as CM was always evolving and changing. Suppliers could therefore never be guaranteed anything within the relationship. Cossio-Silva *et al.*, (2016) stated within the relationship, attitude and behaviour from both parties was important and this led to loyalty. The findings differ from the literature therefore within CM.

Category management benefitted the shopper, and suppliers should always adopt a CM approach, as they did not own the fixtures in the store; these belonged to the retailer. However, if both stakeholders were working collaboratively, value would be created for the shopper. Retailer's further suggested that suppliers also co-created value by sorting out internal conflicts within the retailer organisation. Internal conflicts often existed across retailer departments, and with the recent inclusion of their own insights' teams, this problem had become amplified. A good category team would be able to support and cut through the bureaucracy in the retailers; this would include suggestions such as new packaging and how to implement the changes in packaging. R5 (L, M) confessed that:

'We are always looking to forward-thinking suppliers who come in and make their recommendations and can support this by communicating with and engaging all the necessary departments within the retailer; this will ensure a coordinated and consistent approach....'

Retailers also felt strongly that where suppliers did not align with their strategy, they would seek to find alternative suppliers. This was particularly relevant with private label suppliers, as they made a product to a retailer's recipe, which was easily transferable to other suppliers. The retailers also believed that the category team needed to operate independently of the

commercial team, as they worked more holistically and did not associate directly with the commercial objectives. R4 (L, M) stated:

'The other thing that makes me know if the category team has done a good job is when their internal commercial teams are a little bit 'pissed off' with them. If they are being challenged by their internal sides to say, 'listen, whose side are you on here?' one knows then that they are doing a good job, because from a category perspective, asking questions should be that way.'

As new sales channels were emerging in the market such as online shopping, the discounters, retailers, convenience stores, suppliers are expected to be responsive to change and operate CM in different sales channels. They also needed to be able to embrace new technology and understand how this would impact on CM, including Virtual Reality (VR) and mobile technology.

The above section has explained how the UK retailer businesses involved in the research understood the nature of value co-creation, no-value and value destruction. The views of the practitioners working within the sector have contributed significantly to establishing whether they felt they got value from the CM relationship. The next section will evaluate the main findings from the research relating to the nature of value and establish whether there were commonalities or conflicts between the suppliers and the retailers.

5.8 Comparisons of Value (Co-Creation, No-Creation and Destruction)

The findings have indicated both the nature of value and how the participants understood this. Previously, this chapter has demonstrated that both the suppliers and retailers perceived value as: (1) sales growth, profitability and sustainability; (2) product range and assortment; (3) consumer and consumer behaviour; (4) the provision of creative and innovative insights; and (5) collaborative relationships. The two areas, which generated the most comments from both the supplier and retailer sets of participants, were: (4) the provision of creative and innovative insights and (5) collaborative relationships. This feedback illustrated that the CM process was maturing, where both the suppliers and retailers understood and followed the concept of CM. S-DL has been identified as a framework surrounding this research, and the 5 axioms from Vargo and Lusch (2017) create a theoretical back drop to support the findings. The researcher

claims that the research findings are a practical example supporting the theoretical contribution of the 5 axioms, and this is discussed further in the contribution section of the thesis.

Cossio-Silva *et al.*, (2016) stated that there was growing interest in the business relationship literature, and how value was co-created. Category management will become a wider researched subject as a strong context for general relationships. It is relatively new and when operated correctly is very effective. The section on collaborative relationships had the highest number of comments and issues raised by the practitioners; 48% from the suppliers and 39% from the retailers. Table 5.1 summarises each of the five sections. It shows the S-DL axiom of each finding and the perceived nature of value for both the suppliers and retailers, and if value is co-created, co-destroyed or there is no-creation of value.

Issue	Value Co-creation		Value No-creation		Value Co-destruction	
	Supplier	Retailer	Supplier	Retailer	Supplier	Retailer
1. Sales Growth, Profitability and Sustainability (Axioms 2 & 4)						
Sales value growth	✓	✓				
Profit	✓	✓				
Sustainable business	✓	✓				
Underperformance					✓	✓
Private label supplier performance		✓			✓	
2. Product Range/ Assortment and Expectation of Suppliers (Axioms 1 & 3)						
Correct product range	✓	✓				
Range reduction			✓	✓		
Best account managers		✓			✓	
Supply chain issues		✓			✓	
3. The Consumer and Consumer Behaviour (Axiom 4)						
Shopper viewpoint	✓	✓				
Future trends / innovation	✓	✓				
Consumer behaviour insight	✓	✓				
Shopping missions	✓	✓				
4. The Provision of Creative and Innovative Insight (Axioms 1 & 5)						
Better shopper insight	✓					✓
Category insight - buyer meetings		✓			✓	
Category expert	✓					✓

PL and smaller suppliers' insight		✓			✓	
Insight from other markets	✓					✓
Honest and truthful category recommendations	✓					✓
Justified with reasons category recommendations	✓					✓
Supplier takes the lead					✓	✓
5. Collaborative Relationships (Axiom 2)						
Category team separate to commercial team			✓	✓		
Long-term relationship	✓	✓				
Holistic view of category	✓	✓				
Share resources, knowledge and leverage best efficiencies	✓	✓				
Clarity of supplier's role		✓			✓	
Assertive / differentiated supplier recommendations		✓			✓	
Sorting out internal retailer conflicts		✓			✓	
Align supplier strategy to the retailer's		✓			✓	
Suppliers to change / agile		✓			✓	

Table 5.1. Summary of the key issues suppliers and retailers perceive as the creators of value in CM relationships, mapped against S-DL Axioms. Source: Benson (2020).

The following section discusses the main issues identified by the suppliers and makes comparisons between the two stakeholder groups in relation to the CM and value literature. The purpose of the analysis was twofold. Firstly, to compare the similarities and differences between how the suppliers and retailers perceived value co-creation in CM relationships. The second objective of the discussion was to compare the key findings to the current CM and value literature, to highlight the contribution of the research study to the existing literature. The literature review has already identified weaknesses in the CM literature, as not being relevant to current CM practice. Table 5.1 raises several issues for both the suppliers and retailers where the nature of value creation in CM relationships was concerned. There were issues when one group believed value was co-created and the other group did not, which could potentially lead to value co-destruction. This was also evident for no-creation of value and co-destruction of value, and a discussion of each will follow in due course. To ensure focus, a discussion of only the most significant issues of value co-creation, no-value and co-destruction from the suppliers'

and the retailers' perspectives will follow. This will then link into the contribution section of the thesis to update the CM and value literature, to close the gap between CM theory and practice.

5.8.1 Category Management Value Co-creation

The CM literature states that value is co-created in a CM relationship from the interactions between suppliers and retailers (Aastrup, Grant and Bjerre, 2007). The literature has discussed how value creation is central to CM, but this was mainly from a power-trust point of view. Trust and power have been discussed throughout the thesis as both the supplier and retailer participants highlighted this as a significant issue during their interviews. Furthermore, this data resonates with the importance of trust and power in the relationship as discussed in the CM literature. The CM literature, however, makes little reference to value creation and value destruction, and indeed the significance of S-DL, although these can be formed through a trusting relationship (Kurtuluş, Nakkas and Ülkü, 2014). The co-creation literature, as previously observed, suggests that value can be created in collaborative relationships through the exchange of information (Wagner, Eggert and Lindemann, 2010). Echeverri and Skålén (2011) affirmed that the creation of value firstly through non-interactive value formation, was the value that was created by providers and consumed by customers. In CM, value formation was the value provided by the suppliers and consumed by the retailers. Secondly, IVF created value, as the value literature suggests; it stipulates that value is co-created when the provider and customer interact (Aastrup, Grant and Bjerre, 2007; Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004; Ramirez, 1999; Vargo and Lusch, 2004a). The interaction that creates value is often the interaction between the supplier and the retailer, and this two-way interaction creates value for the relationship. The findings from the interviews clearly showed the areas that created value through interaction, and where there was limited or no interaction; value destruction was seen to occur. The suppliers and retailers, therefore, saw interactive relationships or collaborative relationships as the best way to create value.

Sales growth, profitability and sustainability were found to be essential issues within value co-creation for both suppliers and retailers equally, as ultimately, they were collaborating in a commercial business relationship. They were two separate organisations, each one challenged with increasing sales and profits to maintain a sustainable and growing business. The previous sections have discussed the extent to which both stakeholder groups saw the importance of

sales, profit, and sustainability in value co-creation. S1 (M, B/PL), from a branded supplier, also added:

‘And yes, having a relationship with the retailers, we can prove that our business has grown by an increase in distribution, and helped to make us a more long-term sustainable business. We feel people try our brands and like them, and this has enabled us to tell a story to increase our distribution and an increase in sales and profit overall.’

The retailers agreed with the views of the suppliers, and stated that relationships, sales, profit and sustainability were fundamental to value co-creation. They did, however, believe that their business should be the supplier's focus rather than the other retailers they supplied. Retailers were only concerned with their own business and were not necessarily driven to increase the total category, but instead increase their share of the category at the expense of the competition. R5 (L, M) added:

‘... we want to increase sales and profitability, but as suppliers, one needs to support R7 (L, M) Ltd with the R7 (L, M) Ltd strategy, and decide if one wishes to support other retailers as well. Sales and profits need to grow at the expense of the competition. The supplier must decide with whom to work with ultimately, and at what level, because at some point there will be shared sales stealing. Sales add value in the relationship, and the supplier needs to decide whom to support the most.’

The consumer and consumer behaviour issues raised by the participants co-created value for the supplier and the retailer. Within the interactive relationship, the consumers were at the heart of category planning and strategies. The previous sections have reported the comments made by both stakeholder groups, and S9 (S, B/PL) from a relatively small supplier, has supplemented these findings by stating:

‘We have the customer at the heart of everything we do, so in terms of our business strategy and business structure.’

The retailer participants were in total agreement with the suppliers. R4 (L,M) stated that the consumer was one of only two stakeholders he needed to satisfy through CM; this was the consumer and the company shareholders (business owners), and the only way he felt he could satisfy the consumer was by ensuring that the suppliers had the same objectives, so that they could see his consumer in the same light. The two companies, therefore, needed to collaborate

and fully understand the expectations of the retailer's consumers. There were usually differences in consumer profiles between mainstream, premium and discounter consumers. R4 (L, M) stated:

'Ultimately, I am here to satisfy two people, the customer and the shareholder. That is the primary driver for our purposes. In terms of the relationship as the retailer and the manufacturer, the level of that depends upon how far one can get the alignment of those two objectives, i.e. for the customer and the shareholder. Because if a manufacturer's customer is over here, and one's customer is over there, then actually, we will never work together.'

Thirdly, both stakeholder groups felt that long-term relationships were fundamental to the co-creation of value within the CM relationship. Category management needed to be at a holistic level where suppliers made recommendations based on the best interests of the category, rather than individual companies and brands. Suppliers and retailers should share resources and knowledge to benefit the category, and where possible be continuously seeking to leverage efficiencies. However, the research has found that relationships varied depending on company missions, so this varied between retailers. Suppliers and retailers need to work collaboratively to understand each other better. S10 (L, B), from a large supplier, stated:

'If you look across customers, they are different; some relationships are very close and others, at times, quite stand-offish. In this case, it's very much a transactional relationship; over the years we have gone from being strategic partners to trading relationships with a number of guys including R7 (L, M) Ltd, R9 (L, M) Ltd, R10 (L, M) Ltd where, at some point, they have all had their moments. R2 (L, M) Ltd has been consistent, and has done so for a couple of years' now, where a lot of that is to do with team changes at R2 (L, M) Ltd, and their ability to see the value of what we can add.'

The retailers shared this view, and they were keen to ensure that CM relationships were long-term and meaningful. Retailers expected the suppliers to *'become one of them'* and almost join the two companies at the 'hip'. They encouraged the relationship to be open and for suppliers to be honest and truthful, and as category experts, lead the relationship. Data sharing was a fundamental aspect of long-term relationships; retailers wanted the suppliers to not only share

data but create differentiated and innovative insights with retailer-specific category recommendations. R1 (M, P) supported the comments of the suppliers and retailers in the previous sections by stating:

'I think an open relationship is important; it is where you feel comfortable in the relationship, and openly share data with them.'

Finally, the suppliers and retailers agreed that the provision of high-quality market data and insight was an essential aspect of the relationship. In the previous paragraph, it was stated that the retailers were looking for more innovative insights rather than just the provision of data. Suppliers accessed data from a variety of sources and were now starting to access data from different sources; this included finding data from the hospitality sector and then applying it to the retail sector. S1 (M, B/PL) explained how her company was trying to satisfy the provision of innovative insights to the retailer:

'With new insights making their job a lot easier to do, rather than the 'so what?'. In other words, do not just provide them with data they can get themselves, as experts in tea and coffee come up with some new innovative insights. So, it is 'what is it?' and 'what would you do about it? Therefore, its solution-based insight and advice that is required by the buyer, and not just about us regurgitating data. So, for example, if one has a penetration issue, so what should one do about it?'

The retailers knew exactly what they required from market data to implement differentiation strategies. They needed to clearly communicate their wishes to the suppliers to ensure both parties were working in collaboration. This collaboration emerged as one of the key findings of the current research study and contributed to both theory and practice. R1 (M, P) stated:

'Sometimes through that, one does not have that natural category insight that one would expect from these people; in terms of coming to us and saying, 'what do you think about stocking this product?', 'this product is not working, so what should we do about it?' As an example.'

The next section reviews the findings of the suppliers and retailers where they saw neither positive nor negative implications by neither adding nor destroying value.

5.8.2 Category Management Value No-creation

The findings revealed that both the suppliers and the retailers felt that reducing the product range or assortment did not always create value because consumers were often unhappy when products were no longer stocked nor available for purchase; this could influence shopping habits by causing shoppers to switch to alternative retailers or change their mode of shopping channels. S11 (L, PL) stated:

‘Over the last few years particularly, the range has shrunk, giving more space to higher volume lines because these lines are economically more profitable as they are easier to produce and cost-effective. So, it impacts choice. One does question whether the value is still there from that which was there previously by reducing that range.’

Alternatively, retailers found that slow-selling lines could be detrimental to operational efficiencies and profitability. Every product on the supermarket shelf must contribute to sales and profit for the category as well as to the aims and objectives of the category. S3 (S, PL), who was from a supply base and was speaking on behalf of the retailer R9 (L, M) Ltd, raised the following comments on the number of SKUs held by one retailer of the same product:

‘I went to an R9 (L, M) Ltd conference many years ago, and remembered the CEO at the time saying that at R9 (L, M) Ltd, they have thirty-two types of balsamic vinegar in their stores. One does not need thirty-two types of balsamic vinegar, perhaps maybe four. So, one can understand the need to reduce SKUs. Range reduction is a positive thing but then freeing up that space needs utilising in the right way.’

Secondly, the suppliers and retailers agreed that category teams should be separate from the commercial teams, and as each supplier had a different stance on this, this showed that it neither co-created nor co-destroyed value. Retailers expected the supplier CM and commercial teams to work independently of each other and to never share retailer data; fearing that it could accidentally get into the hands of the retailer's competitors. R4 (L, M) insisted that the two departments did not collaborate internally and stated:

‘Yes, I do think it is easier for the category team to have a franker conversation than the commercial teams because there is less direct repercussion if that conversation goes wrong.’

The next section will compare perceptions of value co-destruction between the suppliers and retailers.

5.8.3 Category Management Value Co-destruction

Makkonen and Olkkenon (2017); Prior and Marcos-Cuevas (2016); Laamanen and Skålén (2015); Gummerus (2013) have stated that value co-destruction was becoming increasingly apparent in different business situations as more empirical studies at a holistic level were being undertaken in various contexts. The research supports the evolution of the concept. S-DL axioms also demonstrate that not compliance with them can cause co-destruction. The participants from both the supplier and retailer perspectives believed that value co-destruction was caused firstly by, underperformance; this related mainly to financial performance. If neither business was profitable, they would eventually cease to trade, with no sustainability in the relationship. It can also be caused by ineffective collaboration within the category management relationship if none of the 5 axioms of S-DL are not achieved. Historically, performance has been retailer-focused, with an emphasis on profitability for the retailer. As CM was based on consumer needs but often founded on the retailer mission, the suppliers felt that it required a greater emphasis on the profitability of *their* business for collaborative sustainability. It was not in the retailer's interest to have to keep changing suppliers, whether branded or private label products. S11 (L, PL) from a small supplier stated:

‘However, with commercial pressures from suppliers and retailers, and let us be honest with individuals, as it is a 3-way partnership; the commercial element has just superseded everything else...’.

Suppliers also felt that retailers had too many expectations from them and were not always available to collaborate. The larger preferred suppliers or category captains were given the most airtime with the retailer. Often, they had implants (resources) in the retailer's office, so they were always close to the buyer and the retailer teams; this gave the preferred supplier an unfair advantage over their competitors in the category to influence the category, and make

recommendations in favour of their business. Private label suppliers reported that they were never consulted to make recommendations to the category but were only expected to produce the retailer's brand as cheaply as possible. They were never asked to provide data or category insight, as the perception of the retailer was that they had no resources to provide insight. Any production efficiencies needed to be invested by the private label supplier to reduce the price of the product, rather than purchasing data or resources to generate insight. Smaller suppliers felt that they were in a similar position to the private label supplier. However, recently they noticed that the buyers were increasingly including them in category planning, as they brought a niche contribution to the planning. The preferred suppliers were often large organisations who knew the entire market holistically but often did not have details on specific sub-categories. Smaller suppliers tended to be owned by entrepreneurs who had found a niche in their specialism, such as a micro-brewery, and could now provide insight that has a differentiated slant in order to supplement the wider views of the preferred suppliers; this was still causing frustration within the supply base and was one of the key findings and contributions of the research. S2.1 (S, B/PL) from a small supplier stated:

'It is about profiling as a supplier, and this is more frequent nowadays, as buying teams are being cut down. There are four categories as a supplier. If one is the preferred supplier or a significant supplier in the category, the buyer will fall or stand on that business. The supplier will be asked to participate in range reviews and meet regularly with the buyer. The supplier may have implants working with the buyer so heavily involved. Category two suppliers are often asked to comment on the proposals of category one suppliers but not often asked to initiate ideas. It is almost a validation process for the buyer. Category three is a transactional relationship, where the buyer gives the supplier very little meeting time, who presents their best price/range, and meets the supplier only once a year with no in-depth conversations. Category four is the exit-supplier, who has no contact with the buyer but only used when other suppliers let the buyer down. Not really fair is it?'

The second key finding of the research related to the retailer's frustration with the suppliers regarding the provision of insight. Section 5.7.4 explained that retailers often felt that the suppliers did not provide differentiated and innovative insights, but merely presented data back to them that was widely available to everyone in the market; this was also a significant finding and contribution of the current research study.

Thirdly, both the suppliers and retailers felt that value was co-destroyed where the suppliers tried to take the lead in the category relationship. For CM to work effectively, it needed to be a completely collaborative relationship, where both stakeholders had an equal contribution and commitment to satisfy the needs of the consumer. S1 (M, B/PL) stated:

'Everyone is looking at how they can be more powerful so they can create more value for themselves and to be more profitable and sustainable. The category management relationship is for the greater good of both organisations and the shopper; how can we work together for both of us.'

Finally, this section has highlighted the three key aspects from the findings where both the supplier and retailer agreed on those that caused value destruction within the CM relationship, and the importance of S-DL within these areas. The next section will show the practice reality of value co-creation, value no-creation and value co-destruction by providing evidence from practice. Company names have been anonymised to protect their identity.

5.8.4 Value Co-creation and Co-destruction in Practice

This section focuses on specific practical examples of value co-creation and value destruction from the supplier and retailer perspectives, respectively.

5.8.4.1 Suppliers' Perspective of Value Co-creation in Practice

In CM, value co-creation in practice is normal within the supplier and retailer collaboration. S10 (L, B) operated in the competitive bread market, where the sector reported sales growth and financial pressures over recent years, due to the growth of discounters within the UK grocery sector (IGD, 2020). The IGD (2020) have stated that pricing was an important factor for the success of discounters, but Morgan, Kaleka and Gooner (2007) believed companies would not create value for themselves nor the retailer, by permanently discounting the product. The company worked with the retail companies using leading-edge insights to create premium products, which satisfied the needs of the UK grocery sector they operated within. The company advised the retailers that price reduction did not always bring back customers. S10 (L, B) stated:

‘The discounters continue to grow through everyday low pricing, but development work with mainstream retailers is not to take value out of the category by reducing pricing but establish what it is the retailer's consumers are seeking. In this case, we talked to the shoppers and found that they wanted premium products at sensible prices. We created a range of products to meet this shopper expectation and sales have grown as a result.’

New products, in line with the needs of the shoppers, have resulted in co-creation of value between the supplier and the retailer, rather than devaluing the category. The outcome was a co-destruction situation that developed into one of value co-creation to benefit the shopper, retailer, and the supplier. The next section will provide an example of value co-destruction from a supplier's perspective.

5.8.4.2 Supplier's Perspective of Value Co-destruction in Practice

Suppliers interviewed within the research firmly believed they were secondary to the retailers in the CM relationship. The collaboration was not equal as the retailers controlled the relationship by continuously reminding suppliers to ‘produce their best price’ for the products. Suppliers also claimed they were being asked to create new and innovative retailer specific solutions when it always came down to price. If the supplier put together a new idea and the pricing did not give the retailer a high margin it was disregarded. The collaboration, according to the suppliers was based on the mission of the retailer rather than being consumer-led. S1 (M, B P/L) stated:

‘We try to stress the needs of their shopper, but it always reverts back to margin. They want us to come up with new ideas, but these are never really adopted by the retailer. The truth is we always follow the market to keep risk low, and then feel guilty for not innovating.’

The suppliers always sought to respond to the requests of the retailer as they wanted to protect the business but felt value co-destruction often resulted as they were not given free rein to create differentiated and retailer specific proposals. The suppliers felt the rhetoric did not reflect the reality of the buyer. S7 (L, B) claimed:

‘The retailers always ask about creative recommendations, but they never let us show them. I have attended conferences where retailers make these statements in public but when we sit around the table its only about profit. Where has the chance to test new ideas gone. If there is not an award they are not really interested.’

Most of the suppliers interviewed believed that the category captain supplier was the only supplier the buyer listened to. The research has however revealed that this role is changing to any supplier within the category if they demonstrate excellent product knowledge or differentiation. This is often the smaller supplier and private label suppliers who know their niche well. To relieve the co-destruction in the relationship, suppliers wanted a more open and honest relationship with the retailer and to be allowed time in the diary to meet the buyer. They claimed buyers turned up late for meetings, not interested in the bigger market picture, and only wanted to see what was in it for them. The suppliers worked for organisations who also needed to be profitable to survive in the challenging marketplace and hoped the retailers would start to understand this and respect their needs.

Within the dynamics of CM, value co-destruction in the relationship also existed where the category team were not taken seriously by the buyers. There was often internal friction between the sales team and the category team within the supplier organisation, and category managers claimed the buyers played one department off against another. S7 (L, B) stated:

‘Our business is diverse and as category teams we try to see what is happening in the wider market. We evaluate trends, other markets and sort of predict the next event. Our sales team just want to sell our products and they are not interested in what is happening in the marketplace. Often the trends take time, if we miss them, we get left behind; but the buyer only listens to our salespeople.’

To reduce value co-destruction with the category teams, retailers need to respect the different viewpoints of the supplier organisation departments, but if they seriously want to find solutions they should look beyond the ‘today’ and listen to the wider thoughts of the category teams. The next section reviews the retailer’s perspective of value co-creation in practice.

5.8.4.3 Retailers' Perspective of Value Co-creation in Practice

The buyer from R1 (M, P) Ltd provided an example of value co-creation from a retailers' perspective. R1 (M, P) Ltd are a premium UK retailer, presented with the task of a range review in the impulse drinks' category. A range review is where the buyer appraises the existing range of products sold in each category (known as the product assortment) and following changes in trends and sales patterns discontinues poor selling lines and introduces new ones to invigorate the category. The impulse drinks category was adjacent to crisps, nuts, and snacks, which had a different preferred supplier leading in this area. Although the preferred supplier in impulse drinks was S12 (L, B) Ltd, R1 (M, P) Ltd received better support for the range review from S13 (L, B) Ltd; a much smaller company operating within the category but from a niche perspective of energy drinks. S13 (L, B) Ltd presented high-quality data and market insight, using data from many high-quality data sources such as Kantar Worldpanel (2020); and the IGD (2020). R1 (M, P) Ltd approached S13 (L, B) Ltd and asked them to put together the range review, and although a small player in the market in terms of value and volume, they had a strong niche brand. The buyer was impressed with their work on insight; they presented directly without a 'barrage of questions' and put together a short-term and long-term strategic plan to benefit the impulse drinks category rather than their brand. The recommendation was flexing to the needs of R1 (M, P) Ltd., and more specifically, to the needs of the consumer profile. As R1 (M, P) Ltd was a premium retailer, the consumers were mainly from a high-end demographic with profiles and shopping mission objectives. S13 (L, B) Ltd offered to fully resource the project and fully review soft drinks as a category and their sub-categories including crisps, nuts, and snacks. The S13 (L, B) Ltd insight team came back with a recommendation that was fully independent of the sales team and the buyer (R2 (L, M)) reported that:

'The insight team's recommendations were detailed and precise. It talked about our soft drinks offer, along with other individual sub-categories. It was just a market, and they made observations on the full range of soft drinks offer and their brand; they made recommendations from a category perspective on the whole category and the reasons why.'

The buyer then reported, the commercials that resulted from the range review were the best the buyer had ever seen, considering he had been a buyer for several UK retailers for over a 20-

year career. As they were not 'pushing' their own brand, the contributions made in real terms were as objective as the buyer had ever seen from a supplier. They were not pushing the brand ahead of the market but at a level that what was right for the customer. S13 (L, B) Ltd were offering excellent selling lines in the category as a whole and were only asking for 30% of the space for themselves, as this was the reflection of their sales participation. The buyer was very pleased with the results of the range review and the objective way in which S13 (L, B) Ltd approached the work they were promoting to the preferred supplier (category captain). The buyer stated:

'It was one piece of work that worked. Promoting them to category captain for soft drinks was easy because they beat S12 (L, B) Ltd down in terms of supporting our team, and because of that, soft drinks increased by 14% up overall. Energy drinks increased by 22% and, of course, S13 (L, B) Ltd benefited from that. If category sales are 14% up, then everyone else benefits from the work as well. On previous years with Conway Ltd, we never saw such a significant increase as we did with this one. So impressed, the relationship just got stronger and stronger, and business overall grew as part of that.'

5.8.4.4 Retailers Perspective of Value Co-destruction in Practice

Category management relationships have historically been built on the provision of data by the suppliers and the retailers, with the data being sourced from several databases. These included the EPOS (Electronic Point of Sale) data from the individual retailer, transaction data from the supplier of the product to the retailer, and external data providers such as Kantar Worldpanel (2020), Mintel (2020) and IGD (2020). The data has shown historical trends such as sales value, volume, frequency of visits to retailers and average basket spend. The data also provided trending information, and often suppliers would look to other markets for trends, for example, the restaurant market to see how consumer's tastes were changing when dining out. The changing trends in taste would often influence the development of new products in retail stores. The level of data available to both suppliers and retailers has accelerated at an alarming rate and the IGD (2020) reported that there has been more data available in the last two years than the past 20 years combined. As technology develops consumers were increasingly using mobile technology, also while production technology improves, the amount of data available for CM will no doubt continue to expand. Although the industry saw this as a positive factor overall; providing the suppliers and retailers with information to help with decision-making, it also

created problems. The research has shown that retailers felt that they had not received 'cutting edge' insights but only a regurgitation of the existing data. Retailers believed that category managers should analyse the data and convert it into robust and differentiating insight or 'stories'. Category managers faced many challenges; there was now a large amount of data available. Which data should they focus on and convert into meaningful insights?

The retailers stated that they too had the same data as the suppliers, but they did not have the time to 'crunch' or analyse it and admitted to not being experts in the category. They relied on the supply base to be the experts in the category. Retailers were reporting that they were unsure about the quality of the insights provided by the suppliers, including the lead supplier. The role of the category captain is changing and is discussed in more detail in Chapter 6. Retailers felt that value was being destroyed in the CM relationship because the suppliers were not providing new and differentiated insights. They did not just require the 'numbers' or the raw data but needed to understand the reasons why suppliers were making the appropriate recommendations. Retailers were also advising that they no longer required one or two suppliers within a category providing the insights, but a range of suppliers depending upon their specialism. For example, within the tea category, there were a small number of sizeable companies providing brands and private labels into the black tea market. These companies provided insights, which were appropriate for their area of specialism but were not necessarily experts within the emerging tea markets such as green tea, fruit and herbal teas. The retailers would, therefore, ask companies who specialised in alternative tea products to provide the data and insights for these niche sub-categories. The tea category would, therefore, receive insights from several companies specialising in sub-categories within the whole category and together would provide the retailer with the insights to make decisions for the whole category. R4 (L, M) reported:

'Category management is about providing the insight and analysis to allow effective trading decisions, making the right ones for the customer and the strategy of that business.' ...

'Insight should be holistic, free of bias, and have absolute clarity to enable the right decisions making, and done internally with a team that provides the insight, the analysis, the data, the future trends, and where innovation is coming to enable one to make those decisions. Alternatively, one could leverage that from the supply base.'

'In terms of industry, we can do it from both. One has been in the industry for seven years now; category management is more widespread now than it used to be. Whereas previously there was one category captain for each area, there is now no area where there is not the opportunity to have multi-category people. This opportunity is due to no one giving one everything one wants; there is always bias. Somebody is always paying someone else and, ultimately, it is like everyone has a paymaster. Moreover, if the employer asks an employee to go into the retailer to do a job, then gets remunerated with a salary, bonus and so on, then bias naturally creeps in. The smart guys do it in a way that it does not become obvious what they are doing. Unfortunately, not all of them are very good at that. Because of that, one either needs a strong trading team and a robust internal team to cut through that bias, or one gets multiple perspectives that give the detail to formulate a decision. When thinking about the category process, we had three category advisors working on it when one occurred in our area. So, there was one private label manufacturer, and two branded manufacturers; they had all given us insight - not working together as there would have been a team of lawyers coming out of one's arse! (laughter lol) - plus an internal insight team.'

In summary, from the perceptions of the retailers, value co-destruction was being caused by the provision of insight by the suppliers in the CM relationship, and the relationship not complying with the 5 axioms of S-DL. The implications for this and recommendations for action will be proposed later in the thesis within the management implications and contributions section. The key findings from the research are summarised below in Table 5.2, stating the section of the finding, its implication to practice, the application to S-DL axioms, if it contributes to the research, and if further research is necessary. Each summarised finding is then transposed to other relevant areas of the thesis.

5.9 Supplier Findings Summary

Section	Finding	Implication	Comments
5.3	Value was created through value co-creation	Category management relationships must co-create value	
5.4	Value was not created by value no-creation	This had no positive impact on improving category management relationships	
5.5	Value was not created through value co-destruction	Value co-destruction had a negative impact on category management relationships	
5.6.1	Value was created by providing quality rather than the cheapest or quickest activity. This drove sales and profit	Smaller, niche and private label suppliers can be a lead supplier if they contributed something extra	Axiom 2 & 4
	Value was created by suppliers providing category expertise and capable of identifying the best overall category	The lead supplier role is open to all suppliers including niche and private label	Axiom 2 & 4
5.6.2	Value was created by presenting the correct range of products for the consumer	The range within the category must be suited to the retailer's consumer profile to attract them	Axiom 1
	Value was created by having the full range of products at any time in the day as stores were open 24 hours a day.	Suppliers need to be open and honest and recommend the correct space allocation to all products to maintain availability	Axiom 1
5.6.3	The consumer must be at the forefront of category planning and not the capabilities of the supplier or convenience for the retailer	This raises the profile of category management and consumer marketing in both organisations. Business needs to be consumer-led or else value destruction occurs	Axiom 4
	Consumer shopping behaviour was changing. They shopped more often and used multi-channel retailing	Consumer behaviours need to be the main driver of a category plan	Axiom 4 Further research
5.6.4	Value was created by the provision of effective, creative and innovative research, not repeating historical data	Suppliers need to adopt a more entrepreneurial approach when making recommendations	Axiom 1 & 5 Thesis contribution
	Value was created through open and honest relationships where both parties told the truth. Suppliers needed to include their competitors	Recommendations need to be holistic and include all products within the category	Axiom 1 & 5 Thesis contribution
	Value was created by suppliers questioning the market and understanding the sub-categories better	More suppliers need to be making recommendations including smaller niche ones and PL	Axiom 1 & 5 Further research
	Value was created where suppliers included other sectors, e.g. retail and foodservice trends as one often followed the other	Suppliers working in both markets have an advantage over others that do not	Axiom 1 & 5 Further research

	Value was created when academia took an interest in the discipline	This research has excited the practitioners as they were keen to work collaboratively with academics	Axiom 1 & 5
5.6.5	Value was created from a collaborative relationship between the supplier and the retailer	A reverse bow tie relationship is required where all departments from both organisations work together	Axiom 2 Thesis contribution
	Value was created where a category management relationship was different to a commercial one	Category teams meet the buyer separately from the commercials teams to discuss the whole category	Axiom 2 Thesis contribution
	Value was created through long-term planning	The supplier and retailer making commitments to each other	Axiom 2 Thesis contribution
	Value was created where trust was built over time	This evolves as and when each party sees the results of the other	Axiom 2
	Value was created where a supplier genuinely urged the retailer to succeed and helped them without bias	Failure to do this could result in loss of business for the supplier, potentially putting their business at risk	Axiom 2 Thesis contribution

5.10 Retailer Findings Summary

Section	Finding	Implication	Comments
5.7.1	Value was created by the suppliers driving rather than value growth by putting up prices	This builds the collaboration and trust develops	Axiom 2 & 4
	Value was created by suppliers focusing on planning, with the consumer at the heart of the recommendations	Allows the relationship to focus on consumer needs of the future	Axiom 2 & 4 Thesis contribution
5.7.2	Value was created where suppliers sent their best people to work on the retailer's account	The retailer receives the best service that leads to improved performance	Axiom 3
	Value was created where suppliers were always on hand to answer the retailer queries	This prevents suppliers being able to plan for the future as they are tied in the day to day	Axiom 3
5.7.3	Value was created by striving to save consumers money through a better understanding of the shopping mission	This arises from better negotiation, pricing and cross-category merchandising	Axiom 4 Further research
	Value was created through tactical efforts to attract shoppers for more visits to the store	The introduction of multi-channel retailing to maximise consumer needs	Axiom 4 Further research
	Value was created by providing the products needed by consumers	This allows more time for browsing and maximising sales volumes	Axiom 4

5.7.4	Value was created by providing creative and innovative insights that were retailer specific for the retailer's consumer profile.	This provides retailer differentiation. Suppliers to be experts within the category and opens category lead roles to all suppliers within the category	Axiom 1 & 5 Thesis contribution
	Value was created by the suppliers making sense of the data and synthesising it appropriately. They were required to purchase relevant data.	Suppliers are expected by the retailers to lead the category, provide resources to make innovative recommendations	Axiom 1 & 5
	Value was created by the suppliers making insightful recommendations which inspired the consumer to 'trade up'	Consumers will spend more time in the retailer store and increase spending, chance loyalty will develop	Axiom 1 & 5
	Value was created where the suppliers provided a sustainable category model that was a full 12 months plan including a promotions plan, new product introductions	Suppliers lead the category and provide sales, cash margin and category activity	Axiom 1 & 5
	Value was created by suppliers being honest and truthful and made recommendations for category rather than just their brand	Ensure the best product assortment is on sale to maximise sales. Retailers did not want 'yes men' but could say what they feel without fear of any repercussions	Axiom 1 & 5 Thesis contribution
	Value was created where all stakeholders focused on the consumer by visiting stores and directly speaking to the shoppers. Retailers and suppliers worked together to generate joint value creation	Primary feedback is much more powerful than secondary to provide consumer needs. This is seen as more important than data sharing	Axiom 1 & 5
	Value was created by joint value creation as both parties could make long-term plans and make appropriate investments	Provides security for joint planning and sharing	Axiom 1 & 5 Thesis contribution
	Value was created by suppliers being passionate about their category and experts, ahead of the category curve by exploring other markets and trends	Category experts that the retailers can rely upon to make the best category recommendations	Axiom 1 & 5 Thesis contribution
	Value was created by the suppliers providing practical insights. This was in effect an entrepreneurial approach	Suppliers to view the category as their own business to facilitate survival and growth	Axiom 1 & 5 Thesis contribution
5.7.5	Value was created by collaborative relationships where the supplier and retailer became aligned	Separate businesses that utilise the greatest resource of each one to maximise efficiency	Axiom 2
	Value was created by long-term collaborations with formal contracts	Allow all stakeholders to invest with confidence	Axiom 2

	Value was created where suppliers were 'open' to ask questions rather than fearing the buyer	Allow the real issues to emerge and get resolved early	Axiom 2 Thesis contribution
	Value was created by an internal alignment of both organisations before embarking on a collaboration	Issues within each organisation need to be correct for the relationship to work as both parties remain separate businesses	Axiom 2 Thesis contribution
	Value was created where suppliers followed the retailer's strategy, or else alternative suppliers would be found	This is not a true collaboration and shows the balance of the relationship	Axiom 2
	Value was created where category teams worked independently of commercial teams	Category teams need to focus on the whole category rather than their brands	Axiom 2
	Value was created where suppliers could operate category within all the emerging alternative sales channels	Suppliers should be flexible and be able to provide options for all sales channels	Axiom 2 Further research
	Value was created where suppliers embraced new technology	Improve efficiencies by embracing new technology	Axiom 2 Further research

Table 5.2. Summary of the key findings from the supplier and retailer, mapped to S-DL axioms. Source: Benson (2020).

5.11 Summary

It is evident from the findings that value creation was significant in CM relationships. Practitioners from the UK grocery sector representing the supplier and retailer perspectives have openly explained the reality of CM from their own experiences. The research has allowed, using qualitative interviews, the practitioners to say what actually happens rather than what was supposed to take place; this will therefore allow the CM literature to be updated and reflect reality rather than the continuum of written texts based upon previous documentation that is not always correct.

Value co-creation is momentous within the UK grocery CM and is seen as the cornerstone of a successful CM relationship. However, using the 5 S-DL axioms as a framework the findings have shown that value co-destruction was more evident in CM relationships than was previously understood. As it is fundamentally a commercial relationship, the suppliers were keen to please the retailers and would tolerate the demands put upon them to maintain a healthy

relationship with the buyer. The findings have also suggested that both parties wanted a more 'open' relationship and to build upon the competencies and capabilities of each other to produce a sustainable category growth. The chapter has discussed the perspectives of the suppliers and retailers, which were very similar without any prompting from the researcher; this shows positively that both stakeholders were keen to maximise the opportunities of CM and work as closely together as possible in a shared and unrestricted collaborative arrangement. The findings and discussion in this chapter, therefore, notably contribute to answering the main research question.

In conclusion, there are areas of value co-destruction that existed within the CM relationship. As a result of the research, it can be reported at this stage that one of the retail buying managers has already addressed the issues of value creation in collaborative supplier relationships with his team of buyers, and advised his team that they must liaise closer with their supplier category managers.

The data in this chapter has also started to demonstrate the importance of the category captain, and the researcher has deliberately kept discussions in this chapter to a minimum to avoid repetition as these are discussed in Chapter 6. The three key findings from this Chapter 5 relating to the nature of value and value creation that are to be taken forward as the main contributions in Chapter 7 are summarised in Table 5.3 – Thesis Research Mapping (Stage 3).

Thesis Research Mapping: Stage 3 Key findings from Chapter 5 - I Can't Get No Satisfaction: Value Co-creation c/f to Chapter 7 – Contribution	
Research Question	Three Key Findings Contribution (Chapter 5)
Question 1 What is the nature of value, and is there value creation or otherwise between the grocery manufacturer (supplier) and the food retailer within category management relationships?	1. Flexibility in the collaboration to be able to provide category management in all sales channels 2. Entrepreneurial, innovative, creative and practical supplier insight and recommendations that are retailer specific 3. Internal alignment of both organisations with the consumer at the heart, creating joint value to facilitate long-term planning and investment
Research Question 2 What is the role currently played by the category captain in category management relationships, and how will this role evolve as consumers switch from branded to private label products? Can other suppliers within the category in the new reality be allowed to demonstrate value creation and meet the selection criteria for category captain?	See Chapter 6
Research Question 3 What are the main differences between the current category management literature and category management in practice by comparing published academic category management literature against the views of present category management practitioners within the UK grocery sector?	See Chapter 3

Table 5.3. Thesis Research Mapping: Stage 3. Source: Benson (2020).

Chapter 6: Category Management Relationships and Evolution of the Category Captain

6.1 Introduction

This chapter will explore the positional nature and role of the category captain in the foreseeable future, but more specifically over the next five years, since it is very difficult to predict any further ahead due to the challenges being faced by the retail marketplace. The chapter will also consider the views of all the participants and therefore provide both supplier and retailer perspectives. As mentioned previously, most of the CM literature has largely focused on the retailers' perspectives and excluded supplier's perspectives and is therefore skewed. The findings are expected to contribute by updating the literature from a supplier's point of view; it was interesting to listen to the views of both suppliers and retailers regarding the role of the category captain, as they were similar. The extant literature has also suggested that private label suppliers are not likely to be considered for category captain roles as they did not generate enough margins to warrant marketing spend within the category (Kurtuluş, Nakkas and Ülkü, 2014; Kurtuluş and Toktay, 2009). The future role of the category captain within private labels will also be highlighted within this section; supported by the views of both suppliers and retailers. This may help to alleviate the fears currently expressed by private label suppliers, as the literature has suggested that private label suppliers have felt that captaincy sat with the larger branded suppliers, since they had the greatest influence on the category. The category captain role was therefore seen by the existing literature as being exclusive to the larger branded suppliers. This chapter will begin by explaining the current role of the category captain and how this currently sits within the UK grocery CM, and then explore the views of the practitioners and attempt to predict how the role will evolve, if at all, in the near future.

6.2 Business Collaborative Relationships

The literature review has highlighted the importance of collaborative relationships within CM, and the significance of S-DL to co-create value. Effective business relationships rely extensively on the collaboration of the partners involved. Category management develops through collaborative relationships between the supplier and the retailer to provide the best possible outcomes for the end-consumer (Nielsen, Karolefski and Heller, 2006). The IGD (2020) have stated that for CM to continue in the foreseeable future, a more meaningful and deeper collaborative relationship between the supplier and retailer was needed. The two parties

operated independently as they were two separate organisations, but the more they could understand each other's operations and focus on the needs of consumers, the more effective the relationship was likely to be. This raises the need for a greater collaboration and building on the strengths of each organisation. As explained in the literature review, it was frequently the supplier who was the expert in category, as often they operated in that category only. In contrast, retailer buyers tended to manage multiple categories due to the increase in the number of categories currently in-store, and so could never become experts in every category. R4 (L, M) asserted that *'buyers often moved within two years into another category due to promotion or the need for a change'*. The current research study has identified that prior to collaboration, each organisation needed to align internally to facilitate an external connection. For example, the supplier marketing team will need to align internally before reaching out to the retailer organisation's marketing team. The next section explores the importance of internal alignment prior to establishing external collaborations.

6.2.1 Internal Alignment First

The literature review has discussed the importance of a trusting relationship between the supplier and the retailer. This is a fundamental aspect of a successful business or CM collaboration (Aastrup, Grant and Bjerre, 2007). Furthermore, Nielsen, Karolefski and Heller (2006); and Unract (1997) stated that CM often started with the retailer's strategy but required the internal structure of both organisations to be aligned. Cooper *et al.*, (1997), stated that all the departments within each organisation needed to be aligned prior to the collaboration. The bow-tie effect in Figure 4.1 shows that each organisation had similar business structures, with similar departments within each. For example, each organisation would have a marketing, finance, distribution, and operations department. Nielsen, Karolefski and Heller (2006) averred that each department within each organisation should have a unique relationship to allow collaboration to be effective. Marketers, for example had their own jargon that was understood within their sector, and thus they could communicate more effectively to benefit marketing within the collaboration, rather than channelling communication through the category manager and buyer. This speeded up the process and facilitated better working relationships. It was only the supplier category manager and the retail buyer who had a relationship and communication channel. By aligning the same departments in both organisations, communication was expected to be much faster and more accurate and would allow the category manager and buyer more time to focus on the category and consumer. Internal collaboration is therefore significant to

co-create value internally. Figure 4.2 shows the 'reverse bow-tie' effect where the various departments within each organisation were aligned to ensure a more streamlined communication.

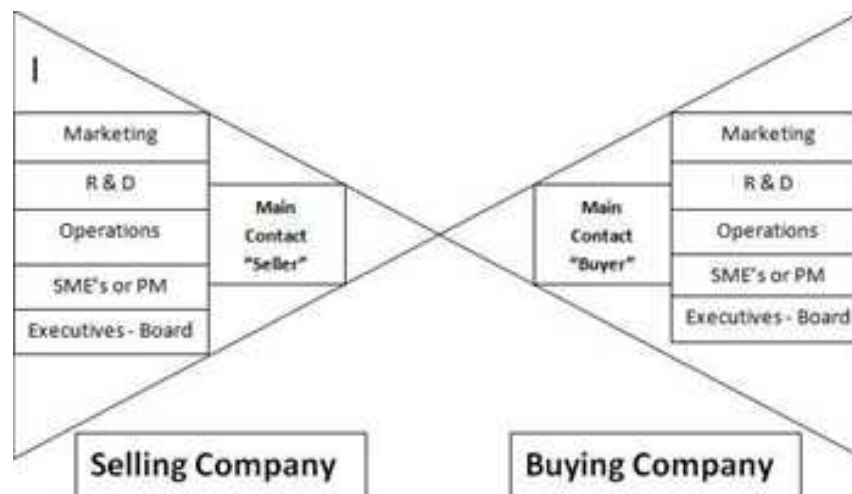


Figure 6.1. Category Management bow-tie effect. Source: Nielsen, Karolefski and Heller (2006).

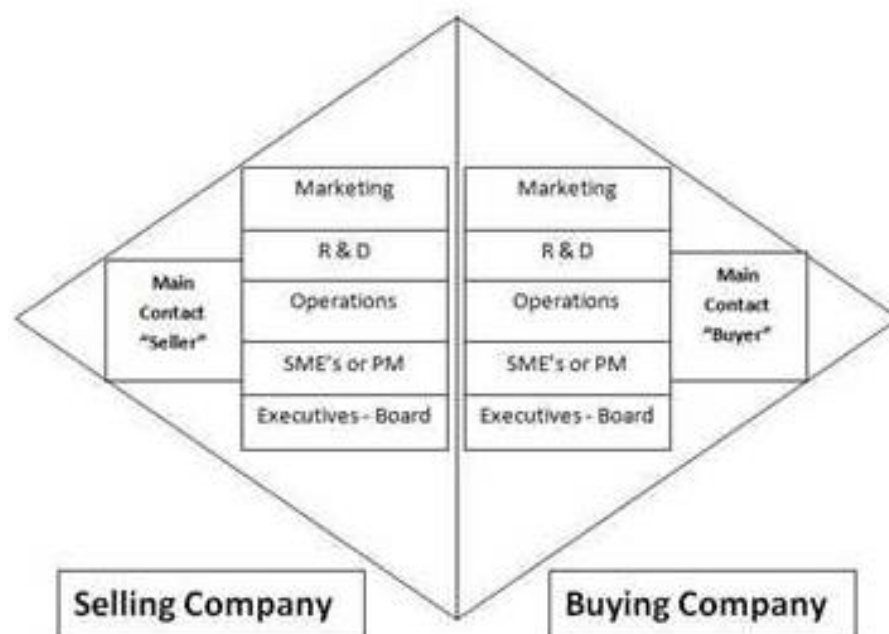


Figure 6.2 Category Management reverse bow-tie effect. Source: Nielsen, Karolefski and Heller (2006).

Furthermore, there was less chance for messages being broken down and misinterpreted. It was fair to say that marketers spoke their 'own language' so marketers from the supplier talking

directly to marketers from the retailer would facilitate more efficient and accurate working. The main focal point of the relationship remained between the category manager and the buyer. However, they were now free to concentrate on the category and the retailer's consumer type, to ensure that the correct CM decisions were made to maximise category growth, profitability, and meeting consumer needs. The literature has not identified the importance of internal alignment as it rarely discussed the implications for the supplier. The focus has been that CM begins and revolves around the retailer's strategy. From the interviews, the participants generally felt internal alignment was important as it created a base to join the companies together and initiate collaboration, as each entity began to understand the contribution of each other. This was particularly relevant now that the industry sector was becoming more competitive and changing. Retail store formats were changing, and the suppliers and retailers more than ever needed to collaborate and align their organisations to be lean and agile. The suppliers argued that:

'Yes, you are looking at different strategies for the different store models; and, the way people are shopping as they are moving away from the big basket shop, i.e. top up shopping where they want it here right now.' S1 (M, B/PL).

'If you're never aligned, for example the sales team are selling stuff that doesn't even have a category rationale.' S4 (L, B).

The retailers supported the views of the suppliers and claimed that they should align their own businesses and assign team members to work with their equivalents in the supplier's organisation.

'Ultimately, regarding the buyer and the supplier, the retailer is king in the relationship and in terms of what is done within that category. However, things are changing and we need to go back to what category management should be: alignment of your own organisation, then bring the two together to allow effective trading decisions to be made that are right for the customer and the strategy of that business.' R4 (L, M).

'You usually align their business with ours, putting the key players together, it would have to be collaboratively agreed together and I don't think we have been as good as we can be in encouraging that within our business, and we do need to be in the future.'

R1 (M, P).

Since little reference has been made in the literature to the internal alignment of both organisations it was not viewed as important as the beginning of the research. However, as this was raised by the supplier participants in this research it is now viewed as a significant contribution of the study. Murray (2019) stated that internal alignment was important so that both supplier and retailer strategies could be aligned together. Internal alignment demonstrated that teams within the collaboration needed to be aligned to the category strategy or else they would not be able to deliver long-term category development. For example, the sales team would need to collaborate internally before meeting the retailer. Category managers and the sales team staff often held different meetings with the buyer, and unless they were joined up with their thinking, this was likely to lead to confusion with the buyer. Conflict could develop internally and externally, and the supplier could start to lose credibility and trust with the retailer. Additionally, both the supplier and retailer recognise the importance of aligning internally, and that having a structured collaboration would create the best possible options for the consumer. The supplier's business needs to understand the strategy, as often decisions are made with the buyer, which would seem strange to them as it may conflict with their own strategy. For example, the category team may recommend discontinuing one of their own products as sales were poor if it does not align to a retailer's consumer profile or introduce a promotional strategy to increase sales (Bolton and Shanker, 2003). If the product was a premium product it could sell in premium retail but not mainstream. Conversely, not all the participants agreed that the business needed to be aligned internally. For example, one supplier stated:

'...if you just try and align with them [the commercial team], you end up again just repeating exactly what they want you to say externally.' S7 (L, B).

There were views on whether internal alignment was necessary. The retailers generally supported the idea, although they all stated that they *'are king'* and that all category decisions needed to be based on the retailer strategy. This meant that when suppliers were making internal decisions they would always focus on the retailer's needs and strategy, so everything lined up. The suppliers felt that the category teams needed to align internally with the commercial or sales teams, as the category teams felt that the sales teams had a more important role with the buyer and needed to follow their lead. The sales team were targeted to drive sales of their brands, whereas the category teams looked at the whole category holistically. This often resulted in a negative impact for their products but enhanced the performance of the overall

category. All of the retailers that were interviewed maintained that if there was no harmony between the commercial and category teams with the supplier, then they would sense internal conflict and become unhappy with the relationship, and most likely would ignore the category team and instead work solely with the commercial team. This would not help the role of CM, and without category team input the overall category approach would be lost and potentially have a negative effect on overall category sales. It has been suggested that the category team become 'middlemen' between the commercial team and the buyer and continue to advise the buyer independently of the holistic category view. This included the retailer's private label products, even if somebody else manufactured them. If suppliers continuously focused on commercials and the inclusion of their ranges, the retailers would feel that they were not considering the category and therefore should not be leading with CM. It has been stated by one retailer:

'We will become bored with the supplier, particularly if they are the lead supplier if they are not coming up with innovative and new ideas.' R2 (L, M).

The issue of suppliers not coming up with new category ideas was one of the biggest frustrations experienced by the buyers, and this will be discussed in greater detail in the next chapter. It is, however, worth highlighting here the frustrations of one buyer:

'It is very disconcerting when category teams or sales teams visit us and only present general recommendations based on the data alone. The proposals need to be specific to my customers.' R2 (L, M).

Another retail buyer became quite emotional when explaining what he needed from the suppliers, and as this situation happened on a regular basis, they were looking to invite other suppliers and private label suppliers into the category team, and potentially promote them to the lead supplier.

'A supplier arranged a meeting and came with a 6-month category proposal. The manager presented the recommendations and the power points had a competitor's logo on each slide.' R4 (L, M).

The buyer then stated:

'Clearly there is no thought going into the proposals, they are going to each retailer with the same data. That is not what we want.' R4 (L, M).

It was therefore important that the supplier organisation and the retailer organisation aligned their own teams before reaching out to the other party. Buyers could lose respect and even trust if the supplier organisation was not aligned, as there was no consistent approach. Each retailer also needed to be treated differently and suppliers needed to think more like entrepreneurs within their category. As CM was largely driven by the retailer's strategy it was important that the suppliers recognised this and aligned their entire business accordingly. The retailers needed to ensure that they paired up the appropriate members of their team with equivalents within the supplier's business. These attitudes were not recognised in the literature, which was partly due to the studies being of a quantitative nature and the truth not being reported by the participants. The current research study, using a qualitative method rises to the challenge of gaining an understanding of both parties within the CM relationship. Further research needs to be conducted in a qualitative way where the literature is naive of the truth.

6.2.2 Collaboration in Category Management Relationships

Both the suppliers and retailers highlighted the key factors, which created a collaborative relationship within a CM relationship. Both sides recognised that for CM to grow or even survive, both sides needed a more meaningful and deeper relationship. One supplier commented:

'It needs to be like a marriage where both sides throw their lot in and work together even though we are not directly joined at the hip. The children in this marriage are the shoppers and we together have to do what's right for them.' S2.1 (S, B/PL).

When businesses are aligned correctly and both parties are working for the consumers' benefit (children), then a trusting relationship was needed. Traditionally, category managers and sales teams had agreed with everything that the buyer had wanted and said. This was to always agree; the issues were never addressed. Often a lack of authenticity would creep in on both sides, resulting in a genuine lack of trust. One supplier testified that where an *'open and honest'*

relationship exists with the retailer it is easier to collaborate and together develop a stronger category proposal:

'I think an open relationship is important where you feel comfortable with the supplier without being threatened by brand power. It is easier working as one and openly share data together with them.' R1 (M, P).

And more importantly:

'The key for me really is that in these category collaborations, I think you have to talk the talk firstly, so if something is genuinely not working then you have to take action.' R1 (M, P).

Table 6.1 summarises the ten key factors identified in the literature and from the participant interviews that are necessary for a successful collaboration in a CM relationship:

Collaboration Key Factors (Literature and Interviews)	
Having trust in each other	Authenticity
Openness and honesty	Improved overall category sales
Retailer specific recommendations	Entrepreneurial thinking
Based on retailer strategy	Innovation
Working towards 'triple win'	Having a common agenda

Table 6.1. The ten key factors to a successful collaboration. Source: Benson (2020).

The conceptual framework and literature review have highlighted that trust was a central theme in CM collaborations. This was also evident in the findings from both the supplier and retailer perspectives. Ralston *et al.*, (2015) stated that trust was the focus of collaboration and was ahead of the supplier investment into CM or the retailer strategy. This, therefore, 'opened the door' for the smaller suppliers, or the private label suppliers to consider the role of the lead supplier. They may not have the large sums of money invested into the collaboration by the big brands, but they could convince the buyer of authenticity and innovative recommendations to build trust. Dupre and Gruen (2004) showed that when the retailer trusted the supplier, the

relationship was likely to grow in the long-term, which benefitted both the supplier and retailer. This was supported by the findings, for example, one retailer commented:

‘Once you establish a level of trust there, I think then it becomes more of a joint collaborative approach and easier to best develop the relationship’ R1 (M, P).

Trust, however, was difficult to measure and each organisation within the CM relationship wanted to maximise its own interests. One buyer felt that a total state of trust would never exist:

‘We can trust people so far, but this is my shop that is your factory, and let’s work together to make as much money as possible. My job is to pay you as little as possible; you can work together as much as possible but there is always going to be some degree of caution. The best relationships are where that cynicism is at the least.’ R4 (L, M).

Morgan and Hunt (1994) were clear and stated that trust was fundamental to the collaboration, and if the supplier and retailer built this it would result in long-term relationships. The practitioners were, however, a little more cautious; although they believed that trust was important ‘you should never entirely believe what you are told’. The KPI measurement remained the best measurement for ensuring both parties were being authentic; Aastrup, Grant and Bjerre (2007) referred to the ‘triple win’ where the supplier, retailer and consumer all benefitted from the activity. However, as one retailer stated, regarding the supplier:

‘If they break the trust they are absolutely goosed as you won’t use them again. We have instances where we have to have people moved off the account or stop using them, and nobody wants that.’ R4 (L, M).

The tone of the comment and expression of the retailer put fear into the interviewer, which demonstrated the frustration of the buyer. Often the rhetoric discussed issues created by the buyers where they were not showing interest towards the supplier, and often arrogant. Clearly in this case the suppliers also frustrated the buyers, but this had not previously been discussed in the literature and will be taken forward as one of the contributions of this thesis.

Trust is an essential part of a collaborative relationship as it allows a relationship to be developed between a supplier and retailer to grow the category. This supports the previous

research where Gruen and Shah (2000) claimed that if suppliers were seen to delist their own brands, then the trust grew as the suppliers were seen to be acting on behalf of the full category. The 'triple win' concept has been discussed throughout the CM literature and within this thesis. A large supplier has stated the importance of the 'triple win', and that retailers needed to trust and work with the supply base:

'Retailers are extremely busy people, and it would be crazy if they were no longer able to get the help, they require from the supply base, to enable them to make the best decisions. If suppliers do not see a value in providing this service and having a category team that can do that in developing the relationship, and the category growth will help the supplier as well. Trust will develop. It is a 'triple win' really.' S10 (L, B).

The second key factor for a successful collaboration was the requirement for the supplier to invest into resources; this included the implants placed in the retailer offices. It facilitated faster communication and problem solving:

'But again, it depends on whether or not they are prepared to invest in the category through data and insight and even be prepared to offer resources and implants into the offices of the retailer' R6 (S, M).

The research study has established that some of the participants believed that private label suppliers found collaboration difficult with the buyer, as they were not prepared to invest in resources. Contrary to this argument the research has also found that as the CM and role of the category captain was evolving, all suppliers had the opportunity to be category captains if they presented innovative new category ideas. The first argument that private label suppliers found the collaboration difficult is dated now. A small retailer and a small supplier have stated:

'Is the retailer only happy to accept the insight that comes from the branded manufacturers as they invest more money into data and providing us with a service?'

R1 (M, P).

'It's generally the bigger suppliers that have bigger teams ... and are able to invest in resources, not just people but data, research etc.' S3(P, L).

However, another relatively small retailer stated that if the supplier provided differentiation then they would be invited to collaborate:

‘One of the areas I see how own-label suppliers can help within the category is helping with packaging or coming up with ways to make things more efficient from a retailer operations perspective. That’s where they can really add value and benefit the retailer and ultimately the consumer.’ R6 (S, M).

Kurtuluş, Nakkas and Ülkü (2014) stated that the bigger suppliers made collaboration easier as they had greater resources and could gain access to the buyer easier, supporting the views of R1 (M, P), and S3 (P, L). Within the general literature Lindblom, Arto and Olkkonen (2008), carried out research, which suggested that bigger suppliers in business relationships had more power through available resources. Although this research was carried out in 2008, even today this was still the case in CM relationships. Suppliers delivering resources to the retailer gave them a competitive advantage so that they could become the lead suppliers. Cao and Zhang (2011) explored resource investment and how this allowed collaborations to develop and suggested that by providing resources this made the supplier more attractive to the buyer. The suppliers however, needed to protect that privileged position and even though they provided the resources they were often influenced by the threat from other suppliers, which could ultimately lead to poor recommendations for the overall category.

‘So, the lead supplier is not always a great place to be as they pay for the implants, extra resources but then still has to include the other suppliers and furnish them with data. To protect their business, they have to ‘weave’ the data as best they can, which takes even more time to do.’ S1 (M, B/PL).

The extant literature does not recognise the importance of smaller grocery suppliers or private label suppliers. They both have a relatively small market share and were less interested in making their brands the best sellers. They were not interested in carrying out sales promotions on the products, a tactic used by retailers to quickly grow volume sales. However, as the IGD (2020) has stated, private labels in all categories were seeing a resurgence in popularity due to lower prices and better quality. This was shifting the views of the retailers more towards private labels in their stores as it created more margin and store loyalty for the retailer.

The literature review has highlighted that the existing CM literature was mainly from a retailer's perspective and that control often sat with the retailer and the retailer's strategy. This research study has revealed that suppliers were now starting to take a stance of their own. One participant described the supplier benchmarking as a 'will and skill' process exercised by their organisation. It was a matrix for suppliers to understand how the collaborative relationship worked between the supplier and retailer and measured using key performance indicators. The model recognised that suppliers too needed to evaluate the retailer and who they chose to collaborate with. The key questions the matrix asked were:

'What is the willingness of the retailer to work with us (supplier)? Do they have a good relationship with us? Is there a willingness to help us deliver our own objectives and not just theirs? Is the collaboration open and can we be honest and truthful in discussions and recommendations? Is it really just about money'? S8 (L, B/PL).

The findings show that suppliers should carefully consider whether they wanted to collaborate with a retailer and use the 'will and skill' matrix, to see if they would invest time into making category decisions. This would give the supplier more power to make their own choices and to assess if the collaboration would work for them also. This is an area which the research study has suggested needs further exploration, and thus will be included as a further research proposal later in the thesis. It would be interesting to see if suppliers could make category decisions independently or if the power remained totally with the retailer. This raised questions around whether the retailer had ultimate control over who oversaw the category and gave more opportunity for the supplier to be collaborative. This appears to be an area where CM is likely to evolve in the future, where a fully collaborative relationship is needed to deliver consumer needs.

Private labels are showing a renaissance as their quality has improved over the past 20 years. Their price is significantly cheaper than branded equivalents. Private labels are increasing market share as more and more people are switching from the traditional brands (IGD, 2020). The research study has shown that this private label growth is damaging brands. One large supplier has stated:

'They haven't shouted about it enough, and within their strategy this year there is much more of a focus on own-label, so they are starting to drive own-label ahead of brands.'

S1 (M, B/PL).

The previous literature has acknowledged that private labels are a key technique, which allows retailers to differentiate themselves from their competitors (Niles and Natter, 2012). The supplier may suffer from this as the retailer focuses on their private labels. The literature agrees and has stated that brands were essential in a retailer's range, as shoppers were brand loyal (Glanfield and Ackfoldt, 2018). Although private labels might reduce shelf space for other brands, the category team must offer secure advice to ensure that the retailer had the correct balance of private labels and brands. Ultimately, if the category team are working to grow the category, they should just consider private labels as another brand, and act in the same way. The retailer may be more lenient towards their private labels, meaning they might not take the advice of the category team, even if it was for the good of the category.

6.2.3 The Effect of Collaboration on Non-Captain Suppliers

The next interesting finding from the literature has been that if a strong collaboration existed between the category captain and the buyer, this usually had an adverse effect on the other category suppliers. The literature has claimed that a category captain may disadvantage non-captain suppliers, as the category captain can subtly promote their own brands at the expense of the other supplier's brands. This included private labels and would therefore influence the category proposals at category review meetings (Ellström and Rehme, 2016; Gruen and Shah, 2000). Conversely, the literature has also stated that strong collaborations with the category captain did not put the other suppliers at any disadvantage if they introduced the correct assortment of products based on category performance. The outcome of the correct alignment of products was that the category was likely to increase sales within the retailer. If private labels saw increases and less promotional activity was implemented, the buyer would see both the category and cash margins improve (Bandyopadhyay Rominger and Basaviah., 2009).

There is the idea that category captains are likely to be biased and could take advantage of their position whilst using product placement to do so (Kurtuluş and Toktay, 2011). However, according to a small brand and private label supplier, non-category captains were only at a disadvantage if they placed themselves in that position. However, it was down to manufacturers

to create a 'point of difference' to provide unique recommendations to retailers that were different to those of the category captain. They have stated:

'You build up a rapport, you build up a relationship and you feel like your buyer is starting to understand you, the category what you are saying, but you have to offer something different. Niche suppliers can do this.' S9 (S, B/PL).

Suppliers can therefore contribute to the development and success of the category by providing ideas on the category. Often smaller suppliers operate in a niche within the category and so can provide expert advice in that sub-sector. Category captains are not able to do this as they usually only see the larger category picture. They are often unaware of the activity of the smaller companies as they usually hold only a smaller market share. The grocery market was changing and according to the IGD (2020), consumers want healthier products, often from smaller local suppliers. This addresses the changing food trends, the environmental and ethical changes demanded by the modern discerning and eco-friendly shoppers. The suppliers now needed to be more dynamic and 'think out of the box'. They would need to dismiss the standard proposals for inventive and entrepreneurial suggestions and provide their retail customers with differentiation to satisfy the end consumer. This would also help to generate shopper loyalty to that retailer if the category offer were different to other retailers. Other suppliers who were interviewed also supported this suggestion. They stated that if CM were implemented correctly it would not be to the detriment of any of the category suppliers. The entire category would grow, and this would be at the expense of other related categories. If, for example, the coffee category showed growth and good performance within all sub-categories, and maybe the introduction of new ideas such as coffee pods, then the tea and other hot beverage categories would be expected to show a decline. Kantar Worldpanel (2020) stated that as the UK grocery market was growing at a rate of 1.2% year-on-year, then if the coffee category increased by 5% then another category would suffer a 3.8% decline. The following two large suppliers stated:

'If we are doing category management right then we will be impartial, and we will give retailers advice and if a competitor's product is right to stock, we will say that.'

S7 (L, B).

'I think if you're doing category management properly you should be, as a category captain, giving them the objective view of the category.' S10 (L, B).

Qualitative research has found that if category captainship were always done correctly each supplier would be treated fairly. Category management is a simple technique based solely on product placement within the category. To provide the best recommendations for the retailer and for the category to succeed, all products should be positioned on the shelf in a way that will bring value to the customer. In support of this, a large retailer stated:

'Category management is as simple as putting the right product on the right shelf, at the right place, at the right time.' R4 (L, M).

Products need to be placed upon the fixture, in line with consumer shopping behaviour requirements. Mintel Academic (2020) has stated that the best-selling lines should be displayed at eye level based on a 1.65m tall person and located in the middle of the shelf with optimum shelf space. This means that the product would have enough space on the shelf to ensure it does not go off-sale in between supply chain deliveries. This process of space management is almost a science within itself, which looks at a products rate of sale, delivery patterns, seasonality, and promotions to ensure that availability was maximised (Nielsen, Karolefski and Heller, 2006). Often faster-selling lines would be allocated more shelf space, regardless of the nature of the product. If it were a famous brand that did not sell well in a retail store, it would give way to another product, brand or private label that did sell well. Retailers have argued that if the right decisions are made within the category then this was creating value for the consumer. Alan, Dotson and Kurtuluş (2017) found that by placing leading category products next to other category suppliers, both supplier products were equally successful. The non-category leader's products were important to the category and as they were positioned in the correct position, this generated consumer purchases. Therefore, the research study supports the literature in that it was unlikely that suppliers were treated differently based on their category leadership. It may be that the type and size of the product or the price was causing the disadvantage, and not the supplier relationship (Alan, Dotson and Kurtuluş, 2017).

The research has however, revealed that the participants were unsure of what the outcomes would be if CM were not implemented correctly. Corstjens and Lal (2000) suggested that if it was not done correctly then competitive exclusion was very likely to take place. The literature, therefore, disagrees with what the participants in this study have said. Further research studies will be proposed later in the thesis to explore the point at which CM competitive exclusion existed, as the role of the category captain changed. The participants have stated that the retailer

was always the party that made the final decisions, and this leads to the question that if retail buyers fulfil their roles diligently non-captain suppliers can still be included in category decision making. One supplier stated:

'Retailers will be the final judges of the category recommendations. They often ask other suppliers what they think. As we are always unbiased, we are happy for the sense check.' S6 (L, B).

Although suppliers may argue with retailers that their proposal was the best one, it was always the retailer who decided. Tzokas and Saren (1997, 1999) stated, it was the retailer who decided on the actions to take for the category, and they had the final say regarding CM decisions. Where a strong relationship existed that was built on trust between the category captain and the retailer, the buyer would often follow that lead. However, if this were not the case, and the retailer did not fully trust the category captain, they would turn to the other suppliers. If the other suppliers made recommendations for the category that worked, and both sales and margins increased, then this improved their opportunity to progress to category captain (Subramanian *et al.*, 2010).

The literature refers to the category captain trying to gain an advantage within CM using 'opportunistic' behaviour, and other suppliers suffer from 'exclusion' in the category decision making process. The research participants claimed that opportunistic behaviour was unusual, and in their experience most category captains were making recommendations to involve all the best-selling products within the category. They were not permitted through competition law to liaise directly with the other suppliers but could make proposals through the buyer. Often the other suppliers would then be consulted and would be asked by the buyer to make counter recommendations. A large supplier who also acted as a category leader within their category, stated:

'It doesn't necessarily work that it is only the category captain who has the ear of the buyer' S1 (M, B/PL).

The findings from the research study have shown that it was often better to be a trusted supplier rather than the category captain, as the buyer would rely more on these suppliers. One of the suppliers stated:

'As long as you are a trusted adviser and can put your point across at the right time, in many instances it's better to be a trusted adviser than the category captain.' S5 (S, B).

It was for the reasons of trust that the category captain would not operate opportunistically as they would not want to damage the relationship with the retailer. Both the literature and the findings of this research study were consistent regarding the supplier's responsibility to maintain a strong relationship with the buyer. If a buyer saw individual brands growing faster than the category, they would ask the category captain to step down, and on occasions delist that supplier. Gooner, Morgan and Perreault (2011) have stated that, retailers can 'measure' their suppliers, to see if they are acting opportunistically. This was clear from the literature, which has stated that retailers could see when suppliers were acting opportunistically, rather than acting to grow the category (Gooner, Morgan and Perreault, 2011). The literature also acknowledged that the lead supplier should not act in an opportunistic way but should provide recommendations to give every supplier in the category a fair chance (Alan, Dotson and Kurtulys, 2017; Carameli, 2004). It did not however, provide the depth of insight provided by the current research. The research study has therefore contributed qualitative findings from the UK food industry and from the views of practitioners, and so has provided new knowledge to update the literature. It has suggested that the role of captain was less important now because retailers understood that all suppliers had knowledge and recommendations. Arguably, the role of category captain is going to disappear altogether as CM develops. Consumer trends and changes in technology and data meant that retailers would need to collaborate with many suppliers, to gain different perspectives and sub-category insights. To manage resources successfully, retailers could choose a 'lead supplier', whilst still considering other suppliers in the category.

Finally, there can be advantages to be the non-captain. Smaller suppliers can prioritise a new innovative product that was growing in their specialised market, unknown to the category captain as they had more knowledge about the smaller sub-category. Larger (most likely category captain) suppliers may not operate in that area and therefore the retailers were forced to ask the non-captains. This was also likely to apply to private label suppliers who had a deeper understanding of the own-brand market. They could therefore focus on their niche and carry out the correct market analysis and product development to make informed recommendations (Chimhundu, Kong and Gururajan, 2015). The research found that category captains needed to continuously invest money into the relationship to maintain captaincy, whereas non-captains

did not. Non-captains therefore gained the overall profit growth without investing the capital themselves. However, if a smaller supplier did want to obtain captaincy, previous research has implied that this would be more difficult, due to the size of the business (Hamister and Fortsch, 2016; Chimhundu, Kong and Gururajan, 2015). Previous research has shown that the larger suppliers tended to gain captaincy, but if the smaller ones or private label ones did, this was due to the operant resources provided, for example, due to their ability to analyse data and make intellectual recommendations that surpassed those of their competitors (Harrison-Walker, 2001). The next sub-section will look at how trust often leads to loyalty and possible satisfaction within the CM relationship.

6.2.4 Trust, Loyalty and Satisfaction from Collaboration

Jarratt and Ceric (2015) stated that in both goods and service industries, companies have recognised the benefits of moving from transaction management to co-creating value through collaboration. Although this is not a new contribution to the literature, it has been discussed in the literature for around 50 years. The recognition that trust between organisations and individuals has not been fully explored, and that as trust is a determinant of a longer-term business relationship needs to be explored further (Huang and Wilkinson, 2013). They stated that trust existed in collective and individual behaviours of managers in different organisations. This situation requires further research in different contexts. As CM is a new discipline that relies on an effective relationship between the supplier and the retailer, the introduction of trust in collaboration is explored in this study. Jarratt and Ceric (2015) explored trust drawn from marketing literature but reviewed the context of value co-creation shaped by social factors of the actors in business relationships. They found that the actors learn and change, and through collaboration respond to changing factors. They found that actor communication behaviour between actors in a collaboration influence the others perception of trust. This can create changes in the business relationship strategy (and the nature of trust in the relationship), and consequently the trusting relationship of the actors. Huang and Wilkinson (2013) were also custodians of this view and stated, one way to resolve changing business environments is to have a more flexible, collaborative business relationship for a sustained and loyal business relationship. The industry literature agrees with the academics. Welty and Becerra-Fernandez (2001) were early adopters of collaborative relationships through trust and leading to commitment and loyalty. They focused on the supply chain benefits, and it was clear, CM had an interest in supply chain. They suggested further research in this area. More recently the IGD

(2020) were focusing the growth of CM through the improvement of collaborative relationships between food suppliers and retailers. They stated satisfaction was never achieved as the position always moved forward (movement of the goal posts by the retailers). However, they said that a trusting relationship took time to achieve, but when it worked it led to a loyal relationship. Participant R1 (M, P) supported this view. During the interview they claimed that where they had developed trust in a carbonated drinks supplier (who was not the category leader) enabled that supplier to progress to category captain. They trusted this supplier and it formed the basis of a loyal and collaborative business relationship.

6.2.5 Service Dominant Logic

The literature review and the previous chapter have identified the importance of S-DL in CM relationships. Vargo and Lusch (2006) explained that S-DL is a move away from the traditional G-DL of exchange, where goods were the focus of exchange and services. This was a shift in emphasis from the exchange of operand resources to operant resources, which they claimed was the application of specialised skills and services to other people (Lush and Nambisan, 2015). Under the traditional goods exchanged or G-DL, operand resources such as products and goods exchanged were considered as providing a competitive advantage (Kowalkowski, 2010). However, an increasing number of researchers are now recognising operant resources as creating value and providing a competitive advantage (Gummesson, 2011; Ueda *et al.*, 2009). Operant resources were the competencies (mental and physical) of the actors involved in the relationship and when used correctly created value. These were both dynamic and difficult to transfer; in fact, often they were unique as they offered a source of sustained competitive advantage (Lush and Nambisan, 2015). The research is supported by S-DL and the 5 axioms of (Vargo and Lusch, 2017) have been used as the theoretical framework, and this research an empirical example and justification of the theory. The most appropriate axioms are highlighted in the Category Captain Summary in Table 6.2 at the end of the chapter.

The research study has identified that the provision of operant resources was becoming more and more important within the CM relationship. The thesis has already stated that the UK grocery sector was experiencing unprecedented challenges, and retailers were struggling to find ways to compete within the market and gain market share. The practitioners were looking for something different from the proposals of the suppliers, rather than the traditional strategies. Buyers were no longer experts in their field of purchasing and were becoming more reliant on

the suppliers as experts in their field. A retail buyer from a medium sized premium retailer who had control of multi-categories within grocery, BWS and even some non-food lines stated:

'I wanted a realistic proposal of the market of soft drinks, and so appoint the right people and they are the right people to give me data but also an understanding of the trends in the sector. This has now become more important than the brands themselves. We used to have the brand leader in this market, but it was only about sales. This new supplier gives us extra help and knowledge, and so the trust is nicely building with this team.' R2 (L, M).

A larger retailer also shared the view of the smaller retailer, but they were mindful. The category teams were employed by the supplier rather than them, but they were asked to provide a service above and beyond the products and brands:

'If the person who you are being paid by is then asking you to go into a retailer and do a job and you are remunerated from that person with salary, bonus and so on, then bias is naturally going to creep in. The smart guys do it in a way that is does not become obvious what they are doing. Unfortunately, not all of them are very good at that.'

R4 (L, M).

The retailers therefore continuously wanted the operant resources within S-DL from the suppliers, and for them to make proposals to set the category 'alight' for their customer profiles. This was another key finding from the research, which has had minimal exposure within the literature. The future of CM was likely to develop through suppliers being a source of category knowledge beyond merely discussing data and providing expertise and support for the retail customer. The retailers were keen to develop their own brands and so they still required category input but on a more holistic level, rather than a supplier exclusively discussing their own brands. The suppliers also believed that S-DL was important in the relationship and they were keen to provide the retailer with as much succinct information as possible to carry out their job better. Ultimately this benefitted both the category and supplier:

'Where I would like to see the team at the next stage is to be in a position to provide our customers with monthly updates of what they are doing from a category point of view so they can have current insight to hand and quickly go to their sales meetings.'

So, in three bullet points say why it is up or down, and so providing a simple tool to help them do their job better. ' S1 (M, B/PL).

A smaller supplier who operated within a niche category also echoed this view:

'By streamlining presentations and providing a good service to the buyer makes easier for them to take out the key bits of information, it's this service that enables them to do the job more quickly and get them to deliver the results they need to deliver. Large suppliers don't always do that. ' S11 (L, PL).

The primary research has shown that the more pro-active suppliers, who recognised the importance of S-DL claimed to have a stronger relationship with the buyer. This is recommended as a further research study later in the thesis. Private label suppliers were claiming that they were the 'poor relations' within the collaboration and only price was important to the buyer. Often, they operated in a single category only, and had a good understanding of their market. They were willing to contribute operant resources through knowledge and skills, rather than making a financial contribution. Availability of the product remained the highest priority to the retailer, particularly with private label products as they were the retailer's own brand. A small private label only supplier stated:

'Actually if you are not getting to the 99% service level you are not getting past first base and regardless of the promises of the relationship, if you cannot achieve this then there will be no relationship, no co-creation and as such no value can be created. Until you can deliver a product that they actually want there is no point talking about anything else. ' S3 (S, PL).

Another supplier who supplied both branded products and private labels echoed the most important part of the supplier's role is fulfilling the 'everyday role' of delivering against the agreed key performance indicators previously agreed. Retailer's measure suppliers and they need to deliver in line with the agreement or risk losing the business. Private label suppliers often do not receive a second chance. Private label supplies could quickly be switched to another supplier if the first supplier did not deliver effectively. The supplier stated:

'Certain retailers will name and shame if we do not hit the delivery availability percentages. We are targeted to achieve 100% but an allowance of 99% is verbally agreed but we would always work to achieve 100% and for that reason we keep production ahead of orders.' S2.1 (L, B/PL).

The same view resonated with the retailers. They openly explained to the suppliers that the delivery service would remain a priority, as off-sales in the supermarket were lost sales and potentially a lost shopper. Consumers always expected products to be on-sale within the trading day, even in stores that were open 24 hours a day. Why should a shopper who worked shifts and could therefore only shop in the evening or night-time be penalised? Modern supply chains in all the retailers were so efficient that stores often received deliveries daily and certain larger stores received two or three deliveries a day. Suppliers therefore needed to ensure that products were delivered into the supply-chain network. One retailer stated:

'If you are a supplier who cannot deliver on service you are very unlikely to get yourself into a position where there is trust or become a category champion.' R4.1 (L, M).

The next section will look at the future role of the category captain (preferred supplier), and the non-captains.

6.3 Future Category Roles of Captains and Non-Captains

The literature review has defined the nature and role of the category captain. It is currently a role that is enjoyed by the branded suppliers as they in the main have enough margin in their products to offer back to the retailer a 'marketing contribution'. This can include attaching key colleagues to the retailer, providing money to fund deep cut promotions and supplier colleagues to be based in the retailer's offices to work as an extra resource for the buyer, including the provision of implants into the buyer's offices. The role of implant was often beneficial for the supplier as well as the retailer, as the implant became an integral part of the retailer team. They were often invited to attend meetings, analyse retailer data, become involved in confidential discussions and this information was relayed back to the supplier organisation, thus giving them a competitive advantage over non-captain suppliers (Alan, Dotson and Kurtuluş, 2017). One of the most prevalent themes arising throughout the literature was the collaboration between the supplier and the retailer as discussed in the previous section, and the current role

of the category captain, which the participants believed was outdated. What was quite disturbing for the researcher was that the extant literature often referred to the category captain. This was a key finding from the research where the literature has stated that the role exists, but the practitioners said that it no longer existed. The role disappeared over five years ago in the UK. The researcher was laughed at by the participants when he asked the suppliers if they were category captain or to the retailers if they had category captain suppliers within the category. Conversely, many practitioners still refer to the term 'category captain' as this was ingrained in the category jargon, even though the role had fundamentally moved forward to the category leader position. Retailer participant R4.1 (L, M) stated that:

'I am a main board director, but I have not heard any of the buying teams mention the category captain around the office, they now refer to lead suppliers' R4.1 (L, M).

Further research into the role of category captain was required and was also recommended because of the current research. A comparison to the role of the category captain in the USA was required because participant R4.1 (L, M), who previously worked in CM in America believed that the literature must have been referring to the situation there:

'All I can assume if the literature is talking about the category captain is this must be research from the USA. I am not sure if it still exists over there.' R4.1 (L, M).

The main board member then went on to state:

'Is it possible the literature is not correct; we don't have category captain anymore.'
R4.1 (L, M).

The researcher felt very embarrassed at this stage in the interview, as this was a main board practitioner challenging the credibility of the literature. The research makes a strong recommendation for further research into the role of the category captain using qualitative data. The literature comprises largely of quantitative data and is not in line with the current reality of the practitioners. The current research study, which has used a qualitative research approach is what the practitioners said was their reality; the research therefore claims to have updated the literature. The research study has already established that both smaller suppliers and private label suppliers may not have the manpower or funds to purchase data, but they had the ability

to present a 'sell-in' proposal to the retailer. This was differentiated from the larger suppliers and provided a point of difference to deliver margin, satisfaction, and loyalty to the retailer. Retailers have traditionally looked for the 'one-stop' shop provision from the category captain. The literature describes how the factors affecting supplier size and the relationship with the retailer were no longer limited to price, brand of choice, shelf space, product selection and brand power (Kurtuluş and Toktay, 2011). If a retailer could have a unique proposition from a supplier that could encourage consumers to visit their supermarket rather than one of their competitors through differentiation, they believe adds value to the relationship. To create differentiation, retailers often engaged with smaller suppliers as they were often start-ups and created a product that was trending and drove consumer loyalty. The hope is that the increased footfall would drive sales of other products and profitability. However, despite all this, the literature has stated that the retailer always had the final say on fixture; having an impact on trust and the supplier's ability to influence (Chimhundu, Kong and Gururajan, 2015). Bringing together the retailer's intentions with the supplier's knowledge on what was motivating the shopper; where they were shopping (and where not), could drive category strategy. All these factors could be used to bring together a plan that was likely to be consistently implemented across all tactics in the store. Traditionally it was the larger suppliers that the retailer gravitated towards, however with a greater emphasis on being competitive, smaller suppliers were now much more valued. A buyer from a large retailer argued that suppliers traditionally had to be unbiased with category recommendations and decision-making, and stated that:

'It is no good appointing young's if all they are going to do is a 'Y' supplier cabinet. They have to take an unbiased view, and I would say with Y supplier it worked very well. ' R2 (L, M).

The retailers also shared this view and they predicted that from their point of view the same responsibilities would be required in the future. The large retail buyer went on to say that the role was essential in the future, and that speculation in the press that the CM and category captain roles were 'dead', was not how the practitioners saw it: He stated:

'I think in five years it will be as important as it is today. It will be essential going forward, in fact more so than at present because resource is naturally tight in any retail commercial team. Therefore, if resources are available, even if it is a sounding board then the role will be just as important. The supplier however needs to take on the

responsibility seriously, because there is no point accepting the role of CC if you are not going to make the investment of the input whatever that input is. ' R2 (L, M).

The retailers view continued to be positive for the future role of the category function within the collaborative arrangement. The IGD (2020), have stated that the role would evolve and become the centre of business relations between the supplier and the retailer. The IGD (2020) are a charity that work in the UK retail grocery sector and liaise regularly with both suppliers and retailers on all issues relating to grocery, including CM. In fact, they have a unique database called 'Shopper Vista' (IGD, 2020) that is dedicated to supporting CM. Another retailer in unison with the width of retailers interviewed stated that:

'The relationship will continue to develop; the role of the category champion as an insight provider and analyst will continue to strengthen. The breadth of data will increase, partly as technology allows us to record and give us more information. Time will get more demanding and needs to be more targeted. It will be strong relationships with a smaller number of bigger suppliers; and many smaller niche specialists. '

R3 (L, P).

The retail participants' views differed from the literature. Kurtuluş, Nakkas and Ülkü (2014) challenged the importance of the role in the future, and it was these unfortunate narratives, which often alerted the press to publish incorrect data. This research has aimed to correct such views. Nielsen, Karolefski and Heller (2006: p.v), also stated in their book's forward section:

'Reports of category management's depth have been greatly exaggerated. Consultants and academics offering their new twist and titles are all too happy to declare the practice as dead - so much the better to promote their own offerings. But the reality is that category management is very much alive and, well, continuing to evolve. '

(Nielsen, Karolefski and Heller, 2006: p.v).

Nielsen, Karolefski and Heller (2006); Kurtuluş and Nakkas (2011); and Kurtuluş and Toktay (2004) collectively believed that in certain countries, CM was 'a stretch goal' that was a new concept still with potential and still full of untapped potential. In countries such as the USA and UK, refinements were being made to the process, which placed the consumer at the forefront and centre of the relationship. They felt that collaboration and the inclusion of all

suppliers within the category would help retailers achieve this end-goal. Nielsen, Karolefski and Heller (2006) also suggested that CM was a fundamental business discipline required by both the supplier and retailer, but the use of CM was inconsistent due to the complexities of different companies. They stated, in the future, CM would generate new ideas from 'trip management' to 'aisle management' to 'customer management'. They also suggested that the name might change in the future, that is:

'Offering consumers, the right selection of products that are marketed and merchandised based on a complete understanding of the consumers they are committed to serving.' (Nielsen, Karolefski and Heller, 2006: p.vi).

The suppliers were asked the same question regarding their understanding of CM and the role of the category captain in the future. They shared the same views of the retailers who also claimed that the literature did not reflect their reality. A large retailer stated that:

'It is quite cyclical, a full category approach rather than trying to deliver short-term gains. I think as retailers we have started to realise the suppliers need to present differentiated proposals and how in the longer term, they distinguish themselves from the competition, particularly in the light of the growth of discounters.' S1 (M, B/PL).

and then claimed:

'At the moment they are more leaning to the category management approach rather than quick 'wins'. Rather than changing the CM function, I think it is changing the way particularly account managers and even other people in the business work with the retailers. So, it's about more people adopting a CM or more for more approach.'

S1 (M, B/PL).

Another very large supplier who worked with all the UK retailers stated that the relationship they had with each retailer was different, and it was the level of collaboration that differentiated the relationships and success of the partnership:

'If you look across customers, they are different, some relationships are very close and others at times some customers are quite stand-offish. In this case, it is very much a

transactional relationship; over the years we have gone from being strategic partners to trading relationships, and it is these trading relationships who find the greatest success. ' S10 (L, B).

The views of smaller niche suppliers and private label suppliers did not always agree with those of the larger suppliers. This was because historically they had never had a 'seat at the table' and had never been asked to contribute to the category decisions. Consumers' switching from branded products to private labels was evidence of a shifting market and therefore a changing level of importance of the private label suppliers. Private label suppliers claimed in their interviews to have a poor relationship with the buyers as they were just seen as providing a product to the retailer's specification at the right price.

'We are never asked to provide category recommendations just threats from the retailer to produce the product for a low price or they will find another manufacturer.' S3 (S, PL).

They claimed to have had a non-collaborative relationship with the buyers and felt if they could not produce the product at the right price they would be dismissed, and another supplier would be appointed. The shift in demand in the grocery market has prompted changes, and consumers now wanted private labels and smaller specialised products. Alan, Kurtuluş and Wang (2019) in the most up to date contextualised category management academic journal stated that suppliers who sell different product categories can gain a competitive advantage by a spillover of categories. This improves distribution efficiencies. Therefore, the views of the practitioners suggesting private label suppliers are getting more time with the buyers is supported by this recent research journal. The smaller suppliers claimed that they were now becoming more and more involved with decision-making and understood that if they provided a good service and worked with the buyer, this involvement would continue to grow. Improved sales, they believed were the ultimate measure, as this in the end led to increased margins and profits, and stated:

'Yes, you will always have category management. Retailers will always want help, a buyer will always want help, your first objective is to retain and get the buyer promoted' S2.1 (S, B/PL).

The IGD (2020) has stated that consumers were switching to private labels as quality has improved and pricing has become competitive and close to the discounters' pricing strategy, and consumers were switching at a rate of 6% year-on-year. Thus, they stated:

'I think there will be more of a switch to private labels in the next couple of years. I do think that inflation will continue, and prices rise, retailers and suppliers will do their best to absorb what they can.' S3 (S, PL).

Private label only suppliers did, however, need to consider the implications of keeping 'all their eggs in one basket' as the sector faces further uncertainty with a changing market and external influences such as Brexit and the USA government led by Donald Trump. A private label only supplier stated that they would need to diversify their business slightly without entering new markets. They were experts in the tea and coffee sector, and were comfortable with expanding within their specialism to spread the risk:

'We are looking to spread our risk a bit across different categories. This breadth of supply is potentially a good thing as there is now a change to the 'savvy shopper', the Aldi/Lidl effect is here to stay. The risk is the brands don't like to lose market share and will fight us with aggressive promotions.' S3 (S, PL).

Retailers have argued that changes in the sector were happening partly due to the influx of the discounters, and the category captains need to be adaptive and be able to progress with the changes, thus R1 (M, P) stated:

'Possibly category captain could actually become more important as the discounters get a stronger foothold, because that means brands, or the leading brands are more important to some of the multiples, to establish a difference within those.'

R1(M, P).

Suppliers shared this view about the importance of CM and the category captains' role in the future. As shopping behaviour was constantly changing due to new entrants into the market, and the macro environment was becoming uncertain, CM needed to adapt to be in line with these changes. Category management, they felt was a process that retailers would rely on more and more:

'Within category management that is developing more as a fall-back as the way people shop is changing, and the more we know about the way people shop. People do not shop in the same way twice, it depends upon what they need, attitudes, as well; so, I think category management and what we know about category is changing. This is its survival.' S10 (L, B).

S10 (L, B) therefore believed that the survival and growth of CM was for the suppliers and retailers to really understand the needs of their consumers. This must go beyond reviewing historical data and now needs to be differentiated to address the needs of a changing sector. The suppliers also claimed that retailers were bringing the CM function in-house as they did not always trust the supplier. They stated:

'Retailers think they understand their customers better than we do, that may be true, but they do not understand the different markets as we do.' S2.1 (S, B/PL).

If, a company is prepared to develop trust within the relationship this will open more opportunities for them. Retailers do not really have the resources to over-provide CM in-house. One supplier stated:

'As knowledge progresses, as technology progresses there is a shift in the way people are shopping and that affects how we stand in CM. CM practitioners, in particular the retailers, are becoming more cynical towards the process and the need to remove bias; and now the retailers are starting to bring it more in-house, so that is changing as well. The retailers can think that we don't need category managers, and we can do all of this ourselves so the buyer's become our category managers and not the supplier.'

S4 (L, B).

As discussed in the literature review, there is a gap in the knowledge relating to whether retailers still considered if there was a role for a category captain or whether nowadays retailers were likely to use multiple suppliers to facilitate decisions. The qualitative data obtained from the respondents identified just that. According to participant S4 (L, B), the role of the category captain was dying. There was a view that the retailer would listen to the captain and then the captain would be able to direct the retailer. However, as time has gone by, retailers have

realised that they did not want to listen to just one supplier. Category captainship is now based around having a ‘preferred supplier’ or having two or three smaller suppliers to facilitate the decision-making process and provide their perspectives on the overall category.

‘I probably would say the idea of the category captain is dying. I think if you went back 10 years ago the category captain was a really talked about thing and as the supplier, we have always wanted to be the category captain. [...] But I think as time has gone on, suppliers have realised that if you are a retailer why would you just want to listen to one person [...] I think retailers now don’t have a category captain say, they would probably have a supplier in category who would be their sort of go-to supplier. [...] or maybe two or three smaller suppliers.’ S4 (L, B).

Participant S4 (L, B) explained that CM was not as structured as it used to be, whereby retailers knew exactly who their category captain was and what they could expect from them. They implied that nowadays suppliers no longer aimed to be the category captain due to the idea of retailers not valuing the relationship anymore and preferring to work with more than one supplier to obtain recommendations on the category. Therefore, it was questionable whether value could be created for the retailer if there was no longer trust in the category captain. Additionally, similar to Misra (2012), participant S4 (L,B) implied that the retailer now preferred smaller suppliers to help them make category decisions due to they being able to provide more detailed insights into a category, which may not have been identified by the leading manufacturers.

Furthermore, participant S3 (L, B) identified the category captain to be the ‘lead supplier’ but suggested that retailers would still ask other suppliers for information despite this.

‘I think [category captainship] has definitely evolved [...] there’s still a category captainship relationship there and we are still seen as a lead supplier but that’s not going to stop them asking other folk. If other people’s advice is good, then they will listen to it. [...] it makes sense for the retailer to speak to other people.’ S3(L, B).

Retailers were more likely to ask other suppliers for additional recommendations because one supplier may be more suited to a specific area in the category than another supplier. Therefore, it may be necessary for retailers to speak to several suppliers within the category to see if they agreed with the decisions being made. These could be referred to as ‘sub captains’. By doing

so, this would create the most value for the retailer, the customer, and the category. This includes ensuring the correct assortment of products are available on the shelf and may not be from the category captain's organisation. Bauer, Kotouc and Rudolph (2012) stated that the retail buyer will measure the assortment provided by the category captain by asking the other suppliers to validate the recommendations. Category captains may be frequently replaced if they were not meeting the expectations of the retailer or providing inappropriate recommendations (Kurtuluş, Nakkas and Ülkü, 2014; Subramanian *et al.*, 2010). On the other hand, participant R1 (L, B/PL) referred to the preferred supplier and category captain as two different positions compared to the previous participants, who suggested that the category captain had been replaced by the preferred supplier. Where a preferred supplier may not be given the resources to be the category captain, they may still be given the title.

'You may get preferred supplier status, but you may not actually necessarily have the resources to actually be the category captain for that particular category [...] a preferred supplier may be someone that you just prefer or works well with the retailer but they may not have all the resources, to be capable of being the category captain.'

R1 (L, B/PL).

Retailers may decide to do this if, for example, the preferred supplier developed their own label products and the category captain produced branded products. They may believe that the branded supplier deserves to be the category captain and have the resources, in order to provide the best recommendations. But they might also believe it is necessary to have an own label supplier on hand to provide recommendations from a private label perspective. As a result, there may be more than one preferred supplier but only one category captain. This enabled the retailer to have a variety of suppliers on hand in the event they needed additional help in creating value within the category.

6.4 Research Findings - The Role of Category Captain

Table 6.2 shows the research findings drawn out of this chapter (Chapter 6) regarding the role of the category captain and the CM relationship. The findings are listed along with the implications to practice, and then each one categorised as a thesis contribution, further research required, or no further action is taken with this study.

6.5 Category Captain Findings Summary

Section	Finding	Implication	Comments
6.2.1	The internal structure of both organisations needed to be aligned before developing a category management relationship	The supplier and retailer organisations needed to ensure that they had clear individual strategies and the internal departments were aligned in both businesses e.g. marketing with marketing.	Axiom 2 & 5 Thesis contribution
	Category management began and revolved around the retailer's strategy	This may not fit with the supplier strategy or capabilities and needed to realign their entire business	Axiom 5
6.2.2	Deeper and more meaningful relationships were required to provide consumer needs	Both sides needed to be more authentic, open and honest to allow trust growth and achieve triple win.	Axiom 4 & 5 Thesis contribution
	All suppliers in the category including private labels could aspire to category captain	Innovative and entrepreneurial ideas needed to be proposed by the supplier to the buyer	Axiom 4 & 5 Thesis contribution
	Provision of resources was still evident today to help nurture a category management relationship	Despite buyer rhetoric that any supplier could become category captain, contribution still played a significant part in the relationship	Axiom 1 & 4
	A dichotomy exists as private label suppliers could aspire to category captain if quality and price were correct. Private label suppliers felt they could not aspire to be category captain	Contradicts the previous point so further research was necessary.	Axiom 1 & 4 Thesis contribution
	Suppliers were developing a 'will and skill' model to see how the relationship worked	This gave suppliers the power to find that no value was created in the relationship for them and they should move their business elsewhere	Axiom 3 Thesis contribution
6.2.3	Suppliers created differentiation in their offer to prevent the category captain taking advantage	All suppliers needed to propose a differentiated proposal and focus on their strengths within the category when presenting to the buyer	Axiom 5 Thesis contribution
	All suppliers needed to demand airtime with the buyer and develop a relationship	If suppliers did not do this the category captain or lead supplier would take advantage	Axiom 3
	Suppliers claimed that if category management was implemented correctly it would not be to the detriment of non-captain suppliers	Buyers needed to provide more airtime for all suppliers to present their ideas and suggestions to implement category management correctly with correct product assortment and placement	Axiom 3 Thesis contribution
	There was fear from suppliers in the research that category	Buyers needed to assess the category captains and make a final decision, and get other suppliers to	Axiom 2

	management was not being executed correctly	provide category feedback and measurements	
	Trusted suppliers were empowered more by the buyer than category captains	Suppliers needed to develop trusting collaborative relationships with the buyer and develop a mechanism to maintain this trust if the buyer moved on	Axiom 3 & 5
	If the buyer saw a product outperforming the category this was seen negatively	The product or the supplier would be discontinued, raising the need for authenticity and honesty	Axiom 4
6.2.5	There is a shift in the exchange of operand resources to operand resources, claimed by suppliers and retailers	Suppliers needed to provide retailers with additional resources rather than relying upon the actual products. This included insights and entrepreneurialism	Axiom 1 Further research required
	Suppliers needed to be a source of category knowledge beyond just data, providing new entrepreneurial and innovative ideas	Suppliers needed to use data only as a starting point, but predict future trends and create new ideas	Axiom 1
	Retailers would not provide any second chances for suppliers. Once the trust was broken the relationship ended and delisting's occurred	Suppliers needed to ensure they operated honestly and built trust with the retailer	Axiom 4
	Availability was still one of the main retailer objectives	Suppliers needed to maintain service as well as quality	Axiom 1 & 5 Further research required
6.3	Suppliers and retailers both believed the role of the category captain was extinct and needed to reinvent itself	There was a growing need for category management within the UK grocery sector, so the category captains' role needed to evolve with this change	Axiom 2 Thesis contribution
	Bringing together the retailers' intentions and suppliers' knowledge to motivate the shopper could drive category strategy	This could only be achieved by a collaborative and trusting relationship between the supplier and the retailer	Axiom 2 & 5 Thesis contribution
	For category management to work, the suppliers and retailers must have equal responsibility and input	Category management needs to consider the needs of consumers first and then satisfy both the supplier and retailer strategies. This would include joint investment	Axiom 2 & 5
	Private label suppliers claimed that they had limited relationships with the buyers and were only contacted if there was a price change	Private label was growing in the UK grocery sector and the knowledge of private label suppliers as experts in their field had become necessary within the category	Axiom 2
	Category management needed to change in line with changes in the macro environment	Failure to change with the external landscape was likely to result in	Axiom 1 & 2

		new market entrants and a shift in the market share	
	Retailers claimed they did not trust the supplier's recommendations and so brought category management in-house	The retailers had the same data at their disposal as the suppliers, and could create totally objective recommendations	Axiom 1 Thesis contribution

Table 6.2. Summary of the key findings from the role of the category captain. Source: Benson (2020).

6.6 Branded and Private Label Exclusion in Captaincy

The collaboration process between a supplier and a retailer has different factors that affects the relationship. For example, with the rise of PL there was potential for dictatorship to arise out of the relationship.

S11 (L/PL) stated that: *'this unique asset [PL] is its [retailers] point of difference from the competition and so provides an element of competitive advantage.'*

Branded suppliers were now competing with PL suppliers who were viewed as being on the side of the retailer and were squeezing out branded suppliers or copying them, to drive profitability and loyalty. S11 (L/PL) stated that it comes back to accountability - the retailer had personnel who were accountable for category growth and if a supplier did not deliver, the retailer could adopt a dictatorship position to get the supplier to fulfil its needs. S9 (S, B/PL) stated that:

'It is ultimately the retailers that decide who to work with/ how many people to work with and they decide which initiatives they take forward/ don't take forward. On the other side though, a lot of suppliers don't act proactively in this area; they almost leave it to the retailer in a way. As well as being a dictatorship, the suppliers often fit into whatever the retailer wants.'

Supermarket loyalty was an important issue with price and quality being key drivers, and consumers shopping around to best fulfil their needs, therefore making the power of supplier brands even more important than ever to the retailer. In an ideal scenario, a retailer may wish

to sell only PL products to give them a point of difference from competitors who had a loyal shopper base, and to drive profitability (Chimhundu, Kong and Gururajan, 2015). However, S4 (L, B) stated:

'Retailers need brands with strong consumer loyalty, and they need them to give them the point of difference. When you look at huge brands, retailers must have them because customers are loyal, and if they don't have them consumers won't shop there.'

This emphasised the importance of larger brands in leading categories as they benefitted the retailer directly through their own brand loyal shopper base. It was therefore confounding that retailers wished to dictate to suppliers (in some instances), how they wished for the category to be developed with profitability being a key driver. This came back to and was affected by retailer competition, particularly the rise of discounters. S6 (L, B) views CM as:

'A category development process whereby the supplier will offer guidance to the retailer to grow and develop the category in which its products sit.'

The category captain was therefore no longer exclusive to the large, branded supplier. Any of the suppliers within the category were now able to get their feet under the table and offer category recommendations and services to the retailer. Retailers were looking for suppliers with expert product knowledge who understood their customers properly and could make appropriate recommendations. These needed to be innovative to encourage footfall. Retailers were finding it more difficult to secure consumer loyalty, so the supplier's recommendations needed to be demographically focused and in line with the retailer's profile. This was a fundamental shift from the understanding of the literature where, for example, Alan, Dotson and Kurtuluş (2017) stated that CM was a retailing practice where one manufacturer collaborated with the retailer, and they argued that this was the category captain. The participant's reality has shown that one or more suppliers from branded, private labels or both could fulfil the lead CM role, and the term captain is no longer used in the UK market. Further research into the American market is needed as the CM literature was mainly produced in the USA, for example, Alan, Dotson and Kurtuluş (2017) published their findings in the American Marketing Association's Journal of Marketing. Alan, Dotson and Kurtuluş (2017); and Gooner, Morgan and Perreault (2011) stated that retailers picked one supplier to act as a category captain, and that this supplier needed to pay significant marketing monies into the

collaboration. Moreover, Kurtuluş, Nakkas and Ülkü (2014); and Kurtuluş and Toktay (2011) mirrored the views of Alan, Dotson and Kurtuluş (2017); and Gooner, Morgan and Perreault (2011). However, the current research study has found that this simply was not the case. The next section will summarise this chapter and raise the key issues that will be taken forward to the research contribution and will make suggestions for further research.

6.7 Summary

In an ideal scenario, retailers should respect suppliers to facilitate collaboration and trust, and to drive forward long-term category strategies, thus embracing a futuristic way of working rather than focussing on instant financial results. R1(S, B/PL) viewed an ideal scenario as category captain status coming from the retailer to lead suppliers in this way, as the retailer knew what they wanted for their consumers. With the future of CM being uncertain and a potential move away from a supplier led system, a category leadership model could supersede or work jointly with the current ‘management’ principle. This would be a model where retailers welcomed supplier recommendations, but led from their side, developing a joint vision and an aligned collaboration whereby the status quo was challenged. Also, both parties would be inspired and persuaded to work together for the common good to deliver what the consumer wanted (Bird and Mendenhall, 2016; Donate and de Pablo, 2015; Dunnhumby, 2020; O'Brien, 2014; Wedel *et al.*, 2015). Throughout the literature, Lunenburg (2011) has described leadership as a model for developing a vision, coping with change, and executing with excellence, whereas management was more about coping with complex works/problems at the present time. The future of CM is currently unknown, but it is recognised by the research that it will play a bigger role in helping to deliver consumer needs, and act as the core facilitator between the supplier and retailer. Organisations who invest in CM will reap the benefit of sales growth and margin improvement. It will become a leadership function both internally and collaboratively and has been described as the *‘glue to cement the collaborative business together’*. R1(S, B/PL) emphasised that a change in attitude could prevail, putting evolving consumer behaviours at the centre of the CM planning process and cementing the foundation to achieve a more fulfilled supplier and retailer relationship with strong leadership and management from both sides for optimal strategic effectiveness. The retailers should be inspiring and leading their suppliers to provide category developing and category leading strategies that will navigate the complex and changing environment, but with the retailer making clear their expectations of the category performance. This would benefit not just the

retailer, but also the consumer and supplier too. Through this process, value co-creation could occur. The participants have highlighted that there has been a move to align CM with the sales functions, which should help ensure objectives are aligned, and value co-created.

It has generally been agreed throughout from both the literature and the primary research findings that larger companies had an advantage over smaller suppliers in a CM context, due to a better collaboration and their larger scale, providing them with more resources and expertise to do so (Lindblom *et al.*, 2009; Lindblom, Arto and Olkkonen (2008). S3 (L, B) stated that this was through resources, such as manpower, funds and research, whereby the larger suppliers secured the role of category captain and could therefore act opportunistically to the demise of their counterpart brands Lindblom, Arto and Olkkonen (2008). However, with the future of the CM landscape being uncertain in a fast paced industry, a move away from category captains, and a new emphasis on data insight and point of difference driving strategy, smaller suppliers may not always lose out, based on one or more of these variables. Larger suppliers may have an advantage by providing analysis and insight to better deliver category results over a smaller supplier through data access. However, the additional factors highlighted above now play an increasingly important role in the relationship between the supplier and retailer.

The category captain's role was one that has been hugely important over the years of CM development. There has been potential for this role to change; one which could benefit both parties of a CM relationship for the good, with neither being disadvantaged. The future of this role in terms of a dictatorship could be one, which includes no dictatorship between the retailer and supplier, in which they work collaboratively to gain the best from each other. Collaboration between the buyer and the supplier of the retailing relationship was one of the key drivers to value co-creation for the relationship. The industry might want a deeper collaboration between the supplier and buyer to get these businesses to work as a solid unit, and almost as one. When the two were supportive of what each other was trying to do within the business, this was when it was likely to work well. The key findings from this chapter have been drawn out of Table 6.3 and mapped against research Question 2. The findings are carried forward to the contribution chapter (Chapter 7). Table 6.3 shows the three key findings carried forward from this chapter to help address the relevant research question. The fundamental question raised in this chapter is the role of the category captain and how it will revolve in CM relationships. The three findings in Table 6.3 demonstrates that the study answered question 2.

Thesis Research Mapping: Stage 4 Key findings from Chapter 6 – Category management relationships and the evolution of the category captain c/f to Chapter 7 - Contribution	
Research Question	Key Finding
Question 1 What is the nature of value, and is there value creation or otherwise between the grocery manufacturer (supplier), and the food retailer within category management relationships?	See Chapter 5
Question 2 What is the role currently played by the category captain in category management relationships, and how will this role evolve as consumers switch from branded to private label products? Can other suppliers within the category in the new reality be allowed to demonstrate value creation and meet the selection criteria for category captain?	1. The category captain role no longer exists in the UK market and will need to re-invent itself. 2. Private labels and smaller suppliers can aspire to category captain by providing retailer specific proposals 3. Internal alignment needs to take place before category captains are selected
Research Question 3 What are the main differences between the current category management literature and category management in practice by comparing published academic category management literature against the views of present category management practitioners within the UK grocery sector?	See Chapter 3

Table 6.3. Thesis research mapping (Stage 4). Source: Benson (2020).

Chapter 7: Contribution

7.1 Introduction

This chapter summarises the contribution of the thesis to both academia (knowledge), and practice (the UK grocery industry). The contribution points made in this section have previously been discussed throughout the document. In each of the discussion chapters (Chapters 5 and 6), the findings were compared against the thesis objectives and research questions. This ensured that the objectives of the thesis were achieved. The chapter takes forward the summaries from each section, defined as the Thesis Research Mapping Stages in Table 3.1; Table 5.3; Table 6.2. The contribution of the thesis is explained, followed by the major implications of the research to the practitioners in the food industry within CM. The research limitations will then be established. This thesis is the first qualitative study of senior grocery managers to understand their reality and close the gap between academia and practice within this discipline.

Category management is still in its infancy stages and almost seen by the sector as the ‘secret weapon’ to rectify the retail management crises (IGD, 2020). The current thesis contributes to the existing literature and to the practitioners who work in the field of CM within the UK grocery market. The contribution, however, is not exclusive to the UK grocery sector and will be of benefit to all categories of food, non-food and fresh food, both internationally and globally. The international contribution of this thesis is important, as CM is increasing in popularity in most advanced economies. Category Landscapers (2020) stated that: as different retail sales channels emerge; effective CM was one of the key essentials for the sector to address the challenges faced by the industry. The researcher hopes that the thesis will raise the profile of CM across the sector and in universities. It will facilitate UK grocery suppliers and retailers to understand each other's businesses and concerns better, as well as the significance of the collaboration and what this should look like. The researcher's own experience of working in CM was not included in the research, and efforts were made not to allow this to influence any part of the research. However, the researcher is now able to advise that one of the biggest concerns within CM was the fear of upsetting the partner, as this could lead to loss of business. As the UK grocery sector is worth £220bn per annum IGD (2020), it follows that large sums of money are exchanged and so the traders need to protect this business. The researcher now advises that it was mainly the suppliers who worried about this issue, but retailers also worried about it. A breakdown in supply can have catastrophic effects for a retailer. Loss of business

for the supplier can ultimately destroy their company, as the sales volumes with one retailer can be significant. The number of retailers in the UK grocery market is reducing. IGD (2020) have stated that the mainstream market has been reduced to big four retailers: Sainsbury (2020), Tesco (2020), Morrisons (2020) and Asda (2020); two premium retailers: Waitrose (2020), Booths (2020); and two Discounters: Aldi (2020) and Lidl (2020). The dependency of the relationship, particularly for the suppliers is therefore becoming more and more important as the value of business with one retailer is continuously increasing. Losing that business can have a catastrophic impact on the supplier. Sometimes the loss of business is not due to anything that the supplier has done wrong. The researcher now reveals that when working for a large privately owned beef and lamb producer, it had half of its volume going through one of the big 4 retailers. This retailer had two companies each supplying approximately 50% of the beef business to them. They had to improve their efficiencies and reduce costs and so turned to only one supplier. The researcher's company lost £400m of beef business, which was half of the company's turnover and had a dramatic effect on the company. The risk is no longer nicely spread across a range of retailers. Retailers also depended upon the suppliers, but they were always other suppliers waiting to step in and supply the retailer, so the risk for the retailer was less.

As previously explained the researcher is passionate about CM and the inspiration that motivated him was explained in Chapter 2. Hind and Moss (2007) stated that, inspiration comes from practical learning, mentoring, knowledge sharing and networking. The contents of the thesis have recently been used in teaching and learning and have been shared with students studying various modules in the business school at (SHU, 2020). The findings from the research have been used as 'informed learning' for the students, as they are current and directly from key industry practitioners. Informed learning (Bruce and Hughes, 2010), is a relatively new pedagogical construct which seeks to expand learners' experiences of using information to learn and bring about changes to the ways in which they understand or interact with their world. As students are studying retailing and CM, use of the current research is invaluable for them to learn about industry. Contemporary findings are essential as in retailing, events change, and activities move forward quickly. The provision of current research findings by interviewing existing practitioners, the researcher believes this is a contribution of the thesis. Furthermore, the opportunity for students to meet with the research participants in workshops, again is a significant contribution of the thesis. Students get to understand first-hand how category works

in practice and begin to forge networks and relationships with CM practitioners. Many students have gone on to work for the companies involved in the research.

Additionally, how as a strong networker, the opportunity for involving genuine contributors has inspired the research. Finally, the changes in the marketplace and the need for practitioners to move forward were equally inspirational. The inspiration explained earlier in the thesis is summarised in the next section, and through this inspiration the researcher therefore claims that this has helped the thesis to contribute to both academia and practice.

In the next sections the research aim, objectives, gaps, and research questions will be benchmarked against the findings, to establish if the thesis has achieved its aim and objectives.

7.1.1 Academic Gap

The academic gap identified in the CM literature is that it is limited to discussing the co-creation of value within collaborative CM relationships. The literature is also mainly written from a retailer's perspective, and the CM process is not collaborative, as it revolves around the retailer's strategy rather than including any of the supplier's strategy. Moreover, the previous research studies within CM are mainly from a positivist quantitative perspective, using large survey data. However, to gain a deeper understanding of how value can be co-created within the CM relationship, the literature suggests that further research into the co-creation of value is required from both supplier and retailer perspectives, as it needs to be a collaborative arrangement to meet the changing economic climate and consumer demands.

7.1.2 Practice Gap

The practice gap, or the gap for practice identified from practitioner based literature, including IGD (2020), The Grocer (2020), Progressive Grocer (2013), and previous industry experience of the researcher, revealed that a collaborative relationship has existed between suppliers and retailers, but this was always rhetorical and superficial. Suppliers would simply agree with the retailers to keep their business, rather than trying to represent the consumer or even the interests of their own business. This situation is not sustainable and in the current climate where consumers demand more, value needs to change and evolve. IGD (2020) have stated that both suppliers and retailers need to work closer together, and their organisations need to be transparent, with the consumer being integrated into the relationship as the most important

factor. This view was supported by most of the participants interviewed in the research. They all claimed that the collaboration needed to be more genuine where both parties had an equal voice. This needs to consider not only the category captain suppliers, but both suppliers, branded and private labels, regardless of their size. The relationship needs to be more transparent with open and honest discussions between the suppliers and retailers, without fear of recrimination, to meet the changing economic and consumer demands.

7.1.3 Research Aim

The aim of the research was to explore and map the relationships between value co-creation, no creation and co-destruction in food manufacturing and retailer inter-organisational relationships. It has extended the understanding of interfirm relationships in the food industry, to realise value outcomes through an empirical study of CM relationships in the UK grocery sector. The primary research question and the supporting research objectives and questions follow in the next section.

7.1.4 Primary Research Question

How do inter-organisational CM relationships realise value co-creation, value no creation and value co-destruction outcomes within the UK grocery sector, and to what extent is the category captain role important in the future?

7.1.5 Research Objectives

Objective 1

To, examine and critically assess the nature of value and establish if value is created or otherwise between the grocery manufacturer (supplier) and the food retailer within CM relationships.

Research Question 1: *What is the nature of value, and is there value creation or otherwise between the grocery manufacturer (supplier) and the food retailer within category management relationships?*

This objective together with the supporting research question has been achieved. This was the primary focus of the research and examined what was understood by the term value in the context of CM relationships between a food manufacturer (supplier), and the retail buyer within the UK grocery sector. It investigated value creation through the lens of value co-creation, no-creation, and value co-destruction within the CM relationship in a changing environment. It intended to explain if value was co-created or if no-value was created at all, or if indeed value co-destruction occurred because of the CM relationship. The research has revealed that value creation does exist within CM relationships. This position is more by default than good collaborative relationships, particularly on the part of the supplier trying to please the buyer and maintain the business. Value was therefore created, but often the practitioner rhetoric regarding value co-creation was that this was not necessarily the case. The belief of the suppliers was that the collaboration was not equal, and they felt that value was being created for the retailer only. The retailers felt that the suppliers were required to provide support and resources that would ultimately create value for the shopper and consumer.

Objective 2

To investigate the changing role of the category captain in a changing retail marketplace (where consumers are switching from branded to private label), and evaluate in the new reality if any category supplier can be allowed to demonstrate value creation and meet the selection criteria for category captain.

Research Question 2: *What is the role currently played by the category captain in category management relationships, and how will this role evolve as consumers switch from branded to private label products. Can other suppliers within the category in the new reality be allowed to demonstrate value creation and meet the selection criteria for category captain?*

The role of category captain is a dominant focus in the literature and with the practitioners. Furthermore, as the environment has changed significantly the study has gained an understanding if this is the same in the future. Exclusion of the private label and smaller niche suppliers within a category has always been an emotive discussion as the suppliers would like to be more involved in category development, for example in product selection, new product implementation and innovative category solutions. Categories often have specialised sub-categories of which a traditional category captain does not have enough knowledge to make

the necessary decisions. Other suppliers are often being encouraged by buyers to provide expertise. Particularly if there are niche and sub-categories within a category and smaller suppliers work in these sub-sectors, and almost have specialist knowledge. As the grocery markets become more competitive, improvements are needed to navigate through these events. The research has shown that an urgent review of the role of category captain is required. In addition, all suppliers now need to substantiate their achievements within the category, rather than 'having a seat at the table' for simply being the biggest brand within the category, or for making previous financial contributions or their brand presence. Thus, the research study has clarified the criteria that suppliers need to achieve with the retailers in this new reality.

Objective 3

To explore the main differences between the current CM literature and CM in practice, for a deeper collaborative understanding by comparing published academic CM literature against the views of present CM practitioners within the UK grocery sector.

***Research Question 3:** What are the main differences between the current category management literature and category management in practice. Comparing published academic category management literature against the views of present category management practitioners within the UK grocery sector?*

The main difference identified from the research is that the role of the category captain was different compared to what was stated in the literature. The role no longer existed (see objective 2 above) but was being replaced by innovative and creative suppliers who were focusing on the retailer's consumer profile and offering a differentiated proposal. Although the research study did not extend to the American market, it has however discovered that the role of category captain is discussed at length in the current USA literature. As CM originated from the USA, further research is suggested in this market to explore whether the role of category captain still exists, and if it does then what is its future. An extension of this research would be to examine the differences in the USA and UK grocery markets.

The researcher claims that all three of the research questions have been fully answered and have advanced the understanding of CM within the literature. Next the thesis will summarise the contribution to academia and practice.

7.1.6 Thesis Research Mapping Summary

This section brings together the summarised findings from Chapter 2 (Literature Review), Chapter 4 (Category Management Relationships and the Evolution of the Category Captain discussion), and Chapter 5 (I Can't Get No Satisfaction: Value Co-creation, No-creation and Co-destruction discussion). The thesis has made a significant contribution to both academia and practice; however, the researcher believes that contributions listed in Table 6.1 are the most important and the main claim of the thesis.

Thesis Research Mapping: Stage 5 Key findings from Chapter 3, 5 & 6 c/f to Chapter 7 – Contribution Summary (Table 7.2)	
Research Question	Three Key Contributory Findings
Question 1 What is the nature of value, and is there value creation or otherwise between the grocery manufacturer (supplier) and the food retailer within category management relationships?	1. Flexibility in the collaboration to be able to provide category management in all sales channels. 2. Entrepreneurial, innovative, creative and practical supplier insights and recommendations that are retailer specific. 3. Internal alignment of both organisations with the consumer at the heart, creating joint value and facilitating long-term planning and investment.
Question 2 What is the role currently played by the category captain in category management relationships, and how will this role evolve as consumers switch from branded to private label products? Can other suppliers within the category in the new reality be allowed to demonstrate value creation and meet the selection criteria for category captain?	1. The category captain role no longer exists in the UK market and will need to be re-invented. 2. Private label and smaller suppliers can aspire to category captain by providing retailer specific proposals. 3. Internal alignment needs to take place before category captains are selected.
Research Question 3 What are the main differences between the current category management literature and category management in practice, by comparing the published academic category management literature against the views of	1. There is limited category management literature despite the discipline being in high demand. 2. The category captain role no longer exists in the UK market. It does however appear in

present category management practitioners within the UK grocery sector?	<p>the literature; further research is required to understand if this is incorrect or [correct] from the USA market.</p> <p>3. The existing category management literature is mainly from a retailer's perspective, but further studies from a supplier's perspective are required to better understand the collaborative process.</p>
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Table 7.1. Thesis Research Mapping: Stage 5. Source: Benson (2020).

The next chapter brings together the final stage of the research mapping and shows the research aim, related research questions and the contribution to academia and practice.

7.1.7 Thesis Research Mapping

Table 7.1: The Thesis Mapping Stage 6 is the final stage of the mapping of the academic and practice contribution to the research aims and research questions. These are the key contributions that have answered the primary and secondary research questions and provided evidence that the research aims and objectives have been achieved. The contribution claims are further explained in sections 7.6 and 7.7.

Thesis Research Mapping: Stage 6 Contribution Summary Research Aims and Objectives Results			
Research Aim	Primary Research Question	Academic Contribution	Practice Contribution
The aim of the Research was to explore and map the relationship between value co-creation, no creation and co-destruction in inter-organisational relationships. It, therefore, sought to extend our understanding of interfirm relationships and realise value outcomes through an empirical study of category management	How do inter-organisational category management relationships realise value co-creation, value no creation and value co-destruction outcomes within the UK grocery sector, and to what extent is the Category Captain role important in the future?	Achieved	Achieved

relationships in the UK grocery sector.			
Research Objectives	Research Question		
Objective 1 To examine and critically assess the nature of value, and is value created or otherwise between the grocery manufacturer (supplier) and the food retailer within category management relationships.	Question 1 What is the nature of value, and is there value creation or otherwise between the grocery manufacturer (supplier) and the food retailer within category management relationships?	Achieved	Achieved
Objective 2 To investigate the changing role of the category captain in a changing retail marketplace (where consumers are switching from branded to private label), and evaluate in the new reality if any category supplier can be allowed to demonstrate value creation and meet the selection criteria for category captain.	Question 2 What is the current role of the category captain in category management relationships, and how will this role evolve as consumers switch from branded to private label products? Can other suppliers within the category in the new reality be allowed to demonstrate value creation and meet the selection criteria for category captain?	Achieved	Achieved
Objective 3 To explore the main differences between the current category management literature and category management in practice for a deeper collaborative understanding by comparing published academic category management literature against the views of present category management practitioners within the UK grocery sector.	Research Question 3 What are the main differences between the current category management literature and category management in practice by comparing published academic category management literature against the views of present category management practitioners within the UK grocery sector?	Achieved	Achieved

Table 7.2. Thesis Research Mapping (Stage 6)– Contribution Summary. Source: Benson (2020).

7.2 Thesis Contribution

The thesis has stated that it is grounded in phenomenological research to gain an understanding of the day-to-day activities of CM practitioners, and what they believe was their reality. Category management is an under-researched discipline, which is astonishing as it is an important method to help resolve some of the problems facing the UK grocery sector. The literature review has shown that previous studies have mostly been quantitative studies but have suggested that qualitative studies are required. As an under-researched area this thesis contributes new knowledge and insights into the creation of value in collaborative CM relationships, and the role of the category captain. This has given meaning to the nature of value in CM relationships from the perspective of the participants. It has drawn attention away from outdated theoretical assumptions in CM and focused it on CM practice. Additionally, it has uncovered new insight and shown that within the UK grocery market the role of category captain no longer exists, despite currently being discussed in the literature. The following sections bring forward the 'gaps' in the literature and show how these were developed into the research objectives and questions.

It is proposed that the researcher has achieved the objectives of the research study by providing an empirically grounded interpretation of the notion of value creation in CM and the role of the category captain. By conducting a qualitative study, the researcher has created a social perspective of what happens during the day-to-day CM activities. The findings are specifically relevant at an individual level to suppliers and retailers, as opposed to most previous studies, which have focused on the retailer's perspective only. The current study is therefore distinct from previous studies that are conceptual in nature and have used a quantitative research approach. By considering the points of view of practitioners, this thesis fills the gaps identified in the literature. Salomonson, Ådberg and Allwood (2012) have stated that CM practitioners can explain what is going on in the sector. Moreover, the level of authority and seniority of the participants from both the supply and retail sides was unique, which further contributed to the study. The participants were key decision makers rather than administrators, and it was because of the 'networking capability' of the researcher that they agreed to participate in the study. The participants have asked for a copy of the thesis once it has been completed. This request has also come from practitioners not directly involved in the research but because they view it as an invaluable tool to help them raise the profile of CM within their organisations, as often its importance is overlooked by senior management.

The results of the research study have suggested that CM needs to shift from a management function to a leadership and facilitating role. No longer is there just one main contributor, but all suppliers within the category should be considered based on their individual strengths. The author has also contributed to the literature by proposing that the name of category captain be changed to 'preferred supplier', as this is what is currently being used in practice; is more appropriate for the role and one that all suppliers can relate to and aspire to. As the research has found that the term 'preferred supplier' can relate to multiple suppliers in a category contributing to the category, rather than just one category captain supplier, this reduces the suppliers' concerns of exclusion. This is a major shift in title and responsibility as it allows multiple suppliers to support the buyer and provide insight into sub-sectors within the category. In summary, the researcher is claiming that the thesis provides new and innovative insights into CM, but also to the theoretical knowledge of value creation, trust and S-DL. To date, the value creation literature has not included the context of CM but has only discussed business relationships in general. The trust literature can also use a CM framework to demonstrate the importance of trust as well as how difficult it is to develop, and how easy it is to destroy. The impact of trust on food industry practitioners within CM relationships is sizable and can either make or break a trading relationship.

The study's contribution to knowledge can be in respect of a contribution to marketing theory within the field of S-DL, value creation, but more specifically within the context of value co-creation, value no-creation and value co-destruction. The contribution can also be considered with regards to the CM literature, as this will be updated to reflect the current activity of the discipline, and the practitioners that work within it from both supplier and retailer perspectives. The findings have identified a possible weakness in the existing literature in that it has previously stated does not represent what is currently being practised in industry. Through updating the literature from a qualitative based research study and interviewing supplier and retailer practitioners, the findings have allowed the existing literature to be challenged. The weakness in the CM literature is a significant contribution of the thesis. It is important that the theory reflects current practice so that the theory can benefit practice and make recommendations, and therefore practice will follow the lead of the theory. The researcher has travelled to many parts of the world delivering the findings of the study during the various stages of its development, to ensure its progress was supported globally by marketing academics. Professor Philip Kotler, the father of modern marketing, confirmed at the 2nd Global Value Conference in New York City (2019) that academic research needs to be in parity with

practice, to ensure there were benefits to both parties. This is a strength of a DBA as opposed to a PhD as it considers practical contribution as well as academic.

Presentation of the research at the IGD (2020) conference confirmed that CM practitioners wanted the literature to be in line with practice, and for academics to carry out research to find solutions to the problems they faced. Academics are often detached from the daily grind of practice but sought to find solutions by comparing CM to other business and marketing disciplines. The study's contribution to practice is already raising the profile of CM in both the UK and further afield. Within the UK grocery market, the thesis has proved that better collaborative relationships within CM create more value, and this thesis has helped to raise the profile through empirical evidence. The thesis has also raised the profile of the importance of private label CM, and by following the recommendations in this thesis a private label supplier could have as much status as a branded supplier in the relationship. Private label assortments across retail categories are growing in importance due to the rise in market share from the discounter stores. Private label is one of the strategic priorities of discounter stores as this gives retailer exclusivity, higher margins, and higher quality products. Smaller suppliers, who often niche within their category are rising in importance within the CM relationship, as retail buyers often rely upon their sector knowledge. Relatively smaller suppliers tend to be more aware of the trends within their market and future opportunities, as they are specialist businesses who have identified a niche within a category. They are often new start-ups who are owned by enthusiastic and often young people who have high energy and are keen to break into the wider market. The relatively larger companies are often only interested in their own branded products rather than trying to explore new opportunities within the market and can often have multiple categories within their portfolios. Retailers require recommendations to be specific to their shoppers and consumers, and in a fast-changing world this requires innovation, higher risk, and entrepreneurial recommendations. Private label and niche products are best placed to address this need as they can react quickly to change and provide differentiation.

As the thesis has shown there is a lack of understanding from both academia and practice of what the other does, and often there is little or no collaboration between academia and practice within the context of CM. The researcher wishes to close this gap by bringing both parties closer together to support each other. Practitioners within the food-retailing sector have historically 'fought fires', which means that they have spent a considerable amount of time dealing with crisis management, rather than spending time to reflect on the operations and

develop corrective action plans. The thesis will also contribute to supporting both parties to address each other's concerns and is a result of working in both academia and practice that has given the author a unique position to identify this gap. By researching and studying the literature, combined with interviewing key practitioners has contributed to closing the gap. This ensures that the thesis is of value for practice and has academic rigour, both necessary for a doctoral level DBA study (Hodgkinson and Rousseau, 2009). Corley and Giola (2011); and endorsed by Kelly (2017) have provided a framework to show contribution to knowledge and practice. The framework demonstrates how contribution to knowledge should reflect what is happening in practice with a view to closing the gap between the two perspectives.

7.2.1 Contribution to Academia (Knowledge)

The thesis has contributed significantly to academia (knowledge). The original conceptual research framework model (Figure 4.1) was developed by the researcher before the literature review was completed, and before the interviews were carried out. Following the interviews, it became clear the framework needed to be updated. The development and discussion of the conceptual model in Chapter 4 (Figure 4.2) [and shown again below], is the main contribution of the study to knowledge. Value is the key construct of the research, and the model also takes a holistic viewpoint of co-creation, co-destruction, and no-creation of value within collaborative UK grocery CM relationships. The model identified the use of trust and power in the CM relationship, and how S-DL plays an important role in the building of trust in the relationship, which in turn results in a stronger collaboration and value creation. The research contributes a practical example to S-DL theory by applying the findings to the 5 S-DL axioms defined by Vargo and Lusch (2017). This practical example of category management contributes to the literature by informing the theory of the viability of the 5 axioms of value creation from a practice perspective. It also identifies that further practical research testing the nature of the 5 axioms needs to be carried out in the future. The research is therefore helping to close the gap between academia and practice.

The model (Figure 4.2) further explores if satisfaction within the relationship is ever achieved. The contextual constructs review the supplier and the retailer perspectives to understand if they have the same or different views on value creation within the relationship. The context also reviews if there are differences between private label suppliers and branded suppliers within

the UK grocery sector. The research has shown that there is no longer a difference between suppliers and where any supplier can provide support and insight to drive growth, they will be considered. The final contextual construct is the role of the category captain, comparing the role today and assessing its potential future role. The model can be developed and used in a wider range of studies within a food retailer setting, but also by non-food retailers in the UK markets and overseas markets. The use of CM is increasing amongst all categories in food and non-food retailers, and this model provides a framework for further studies. The model can also be developed to include the consumer, and assist with further research, which is directly targeted at the consumer. The scope of this study was limited to the supplier and the retailer to understand the relationship and provide collaborative value creation.

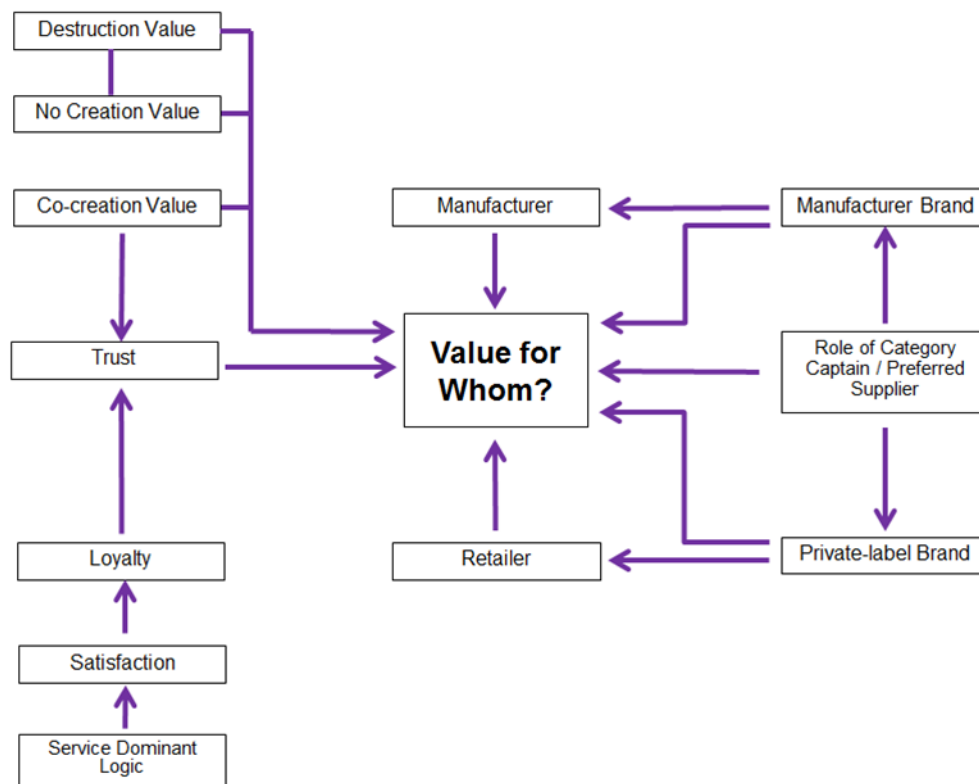


Figure 4.2. Revised conceptual framework – Value Creation in Category Management Relationships in the UK Grocery Market. Source: Benson (2020).

The data collected around power, loyalty, trust, and relationships has contributed to the thesis. The theory from these critical areas has informed the 5 axioms of S-DL established by Vargo and Lusch (2017). The research has already shown that the 5 axioms play an important part in value co-creation or value co-destruction through the context of category management. The thesis contributes to power literature by stating that the relationship should no longer be

asymmetrical towards the retailer. The power needs to be equal between the supplier and the retailer to gain maximum benefit for the consumer. Where the power remains biased a collaborative relationship will not be present and the outputs will benefit the retailer's business and not the consumer. Loyalty literature is updated through the application of S-DL as more loyalty will emerge where the supplier and retailer are working collaboratively and the trust between them develops. A supplier will be more loyal to the buyer by presenting the best offer and vice versa where the buyer will continue to work with the same supplier. The trust literature benefits from the research contribution as it provides a category management example. S-DL ensures that both parties will enter more meaningful category management relationships and the trust in each other develop. Finally, the researcher states that applying S-DL (5 axioms) to the category management context helps to inform power, loyalty, trust and relationship theory, as it defines the importance of service relationships and how working together seeks to improve value co-creation in the relationship. This is a major contribution of the thesis.

The thesis also contributes to knowledge by using senior practitioners from suppliers and retailers within the UK grocery market. These participants were selected for the research study by the researcher, as they were the key decision makers within their respective organisations. The research has provided an up to date snapshot of the beliefs and views of senior practitioners. No previous research study within CM has interviewed practitioners with this level of seniority from a qualitative perspective. The previous research studies have mainly been quantitative and have involved a range of participants without clear explanations of their seniority, or if they were direct CM practitioners. The researcher feels that the findings reflect the current reality of CM, and academic journal papers are currently being written to update the literature. The study findings have already been presented at eleven academic conferences and contributed to the researcher winning the 2019 British Academy of Management (BAM) Educational Practice Award (Aston University). Following the oral presentation 'Value Creation or Destruction: The Role of Private label in UK Grocery Category Management Decisions' at the BAM Conference (Aston University, September 2019), resulted in a request from the editor of The Journal of Marketing Development and Competitiveness (JMDC) in the United States, for the submission of a full paper as it was 'best in track' from the conference Marketing and Retail track. The note received from the editor follows with the evidence of the e-mail shown in Appendix (4.1), and the full paper in Appendix (4.2).

'Michael,

The Journal of Marketing Development and Competitiveness (JMDC) is reviewing the best track papers for publication in the summer issue and a member of the editorial board has referred your paper, 'Value Creation or Destruction: The Role of Private label in UK Grocery Category Management Decisions,' for further consideration. To give you a little more information:

JMDC is a double-blind reviewed journal that is dedicated to publishing in-depth articles that cover the marketing arena and the interface between marketing and firm competitiveness. The journal's h-index impact factor for 2018 is 21, and it is indexed by Cabell's Directory of Periodicals, UMI-Proquest-ABI Inform, EBSCO Host, Google Scholar. JMDC is also listed with Cabell's Directory of Periodicals, Ulrich's Listing of Periodicals, Bowkers Publishing Resources, the Library of Congress, the National Library of Canada, and Australia's Department of Education Science and Training. The targeted acceptance rates run between 12% and 18%, and articles in JMDC support the Academically Qualified (AQ) faculty classification by the AACSB and all other recognized business school accrediting bodies. All papers are reviewed by appropriate topic scholars and acceptance decisions are made within forty-five days of submission.

We would especially like to invite your paper, 'Value Creation or Destruction: The Role of Private label in UK Grocery Category Management Decisions,' to be reviewed for JMDC. Please visit our website at: <http://www.nabpress.com/marketing-development-and-competitiveness> for further information regarding the journal. If you would like to have your paper reviewed, then you can submit it directly to me.

Best Regards,

Michael Berry, Ph.D., Editor

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Next, the thesis contributes to knowledge as it directly updates the literature on value co-creation, value no-creation and value co-destruction in the context of CM. The value creation literature is widely applied to business marketing contexts but there has been limited application to CM. The literature review chapter has explained that value co-creation and value no-creation are fundamental in a CM relationship, but the findings of this thesis have discovered that value co-destruction was prevalent within the CM relationship. The literature has not demonstrated this, as there is an assumption in academia and practice that both parties are content and always achieving value co-creation. Issues between the parties are having negative impacts on value creation and often result in frustration and value co-destruction. Further research into value co-destruction is recommended based on the results of the thesis. The use of qualitative interviews rather than extensive quantitative analysis has allowed the CM practitioners to explain value creation in practice. The thesis will, therefore, update the value co-creation, value no-creation and value co-destruction literature by introducing the concept of CM into theory. It is also expected to raise the profile and importance of value co-creation, value no-creation and value co-destruction in the CM literature, which is currently scant. Academics need to understand the importance of value creation in CM from the perspective of what is happening, as opposed to developing knowledge from previously inaccurate reports. The voice of the practitioners has helped to address this need. The CM literature still refers to the role of the category captain. However, following the practitioner interviews in the current study, both the supplier and retailer participants advised that the position became extinct in the UK over five years ago and was replaced with the role of 'preferred supplier'. The research has examined the role of the category captain and has continued to use the term for simplicity but will imminently update the CM literature and inform academia that the position has changed in the UK grocery market. The role of category captain, however, still appears to be in use in the USA grocery market, and it is suggested that further research into the USA market is conducted to establish if this is the case. Monitoring the evolution of the role in the USA is important to ensure that the relevant CM literature can be updated.

The research findings have had a significant exposure to business and marketing academics at eleven conferences (see Figure 1.2: Academic Conference Contributions). These have been over the duration of the research from 2014-2020. This commenced in 2015 when the research won the Best Poster at the SBS Doctoral Conference, and although still in its infancy this confirmed that there was a strong interest in the research and its methodology. Following the

win in 2015 the researcher presented full and developmental papers each year at BAM conferences, and other academic conferences. The feedback was always positive from the delegates; never once was anything negative said about the research. Management scholars understand food retailing and its importance to the UK economy, and so any research that will facilitate its understanding is welcome. Examples of the conferences presented at or attended are the First and Second Global Conferences in Value Creation at De Montfort University (Leicester); and Fordham University (New York City), respectively. The research has also been presented at the international European Institute of Retailing and Services Studies (EIRASS) Conference in Madeira (2018), as well as a further nine conferences either nationally or internationally.

The next section will focus on the contribution to practice, since in order to meet the requirements for a DBA, a contribution to practice is equally as important as a contribution to academia.

7.2.2 Contribution and Implications to Management Practice

The previous section confirmed the contribution of the thesis to academia (theory). This section will now consider the contribution to practice. The thesis has highlighted the 2020 business and market context and how the turbulent times within the macro economy and the food industry were influencing how the industry will need to react and change. The thesis has identified the key issues facing the food market and how CM could help to address some of these issues. The Advantage Group (2020) stated that the high street traders were facing a financial crisis where Arcadia, Debenhams and House of Fraser have all re-financed their businesses and were still faced with the prospect of store closures. Regrettably as the researcher reads the thesis for a final time in January 2020, this section is updated with the sad news of the closure of Debenhams (BBC, 2020). Within the food retail market, Waitrose and Marks and Spencer have also closed stores, whilst some retailers including Tesco Supermarkets (2020) were backing a change to business rates to ensure they could compete fairly with online retailers. Advantage Group (2020) also claimed that the UK Discounter market share had risen to 13.8% and was continuing to grow. Aldi are planning 1,000 new store openings in the UK by 2022. This sector is also experiencing growth from relatively new entrants such as Iceland Stores and B&M Bargains.

Brexit is having a significant impact as the rise in business and political uncertainty is forcing food retailers to stockpile SKUs, which is affecting the supply chain and increasing supplier and retailer costs. As the researcher updates the content for the final time Britain has now been confirmed for exit from the EU on 31st January 2020 (UK Government, 2020). The thesis has also explained that there has been a growth in private label products within food retailing, driving shopper value and increasing retailer margin. IGD (2020) have stated that private labels now account for 52% of the grocery market share, and retailers are targeting fewer supplier partnerships to simplify the supply chain and increase profitability. The Grocer (2020) claimed that online retailing was affecting the change within the UK grocery market. Furthermore, the IGD (2020) have stated that by 2023 online retailing is expected to grow by 52% and account for 7.9% of the total sales. Also, Advantage Group (2020) stated that final mile delivery costs were driving the growth in 'Click and Collect'. A final challenge to the market was changes in the environment and health. For instance, single use plastic was the number one environmental issue, which gives the food industry a challenge to reduce its usage, whilst maintaining the integrity of the products for food safety and hygiene.

The challenges facing the sector have resulted in the research study providing a significant contribution for practice. It has highlighted that CM was becoming an increasingly competitive function and to add value in the CM relationship, suppliers were building capabilities and increasing knowledge of their sector in order to provide more support for the retailers. Retailers have reduced the size of their internal support functions, and it is no surprise that retailers have put this pressure back onto the suppliers through CM, and by-passing costs and expertise back down the supply chain. Retail buyers are continuously changing roles and managing larger numbers of categories, so become category experts is becoming difficult. Thus, the suppliers are fulfilling this role as experts in their categories.

Most grocery categories undergo a range review once or twice every year. A range review according to R4 (L, M) is where the buyer appoints the category, and/or other suppliers to review the products sold within the category. Do the products on the shelf sell, what products are trending, and the review adds new lines and discontinues others. Location on the shelf is also considered. The buyer produces a merchandising plan of product location on the shelf, the correct numbers of facings (packets, jars etc., that are visible). The retailers range reviews defined by Advantage Group (2020) as 'range reset programmes', have created important challenges for suppliers. This is where retailers reviewed their category product merchandising

and added new products and discontinued poor sellers. Retailers were looking for fewer SKUs in each category but wanted to see an increase in category growth and differentiation. Supplier's knowledge of the category supports the inclusion of the bestselling ranges and removes products from the range that do not sell. The research has shown that retailers want to reduce the number of suppliers but make the category role available to all suppliers, rather than the market leader supplier. The suppliers therefore need to demonstrate value to the retailers not just in pure commercial terms, but also how they could support and align with the retailer's strategies in an open minded and flexible way that promotes category growth and increased shopper footfall.

The thesis also contributes to practice by asserting that there was pressure on the growth of the grocery market and that suppliers needed to provide innovative ideas in various forms, such as the introduction of novel in-trend products, and that recommendations needed to be retailer specific. This was creating value as the suppliers needed to tailor their offer to the retailer, based around that retailer's shopper demographic and that retailer's strategies. This ensures the offer is differentiated for that retailer and they can sell products unique to them in line with their mission and that fits their shopper profile.

There was real tension as demonstrated in the thesis between suppliers and retailers, in new product launches. Retailers were looking for differentiated products with exclusivity to them and not available to other retailers. This included exclusive innovation, exclusive product variants and exclusive launch periods. The thesis has shown that this change was becoming the norm in practice, and that deeper collaborations, increased trust and sharing of data and insight would help the partnership to achieve this. The need to drive end-to-end efficiencies and take costs out was also fundamental in driving growth through collaboration. The research has shown that retailers were unhappy with the standards of the insight presented by the suppliers, as they felt that the insights were re-engineered data presented to other retailers. R4 (L,M) reported that *'one supplier came to the review meeting with slides that had a competitors logo still on the slides'*, and clearly the slides were being used generically and tailored to the retailer without any new or retailer specific suggestions. The retailers were frustrated and wanted the suppliers to be more creative and innovative. The research study was carried out objectively and by listening to both the supplier and the retailer views, it contributes by sharing these views and feelings. Unfortunately to protect each other's business and maintain the relationships, neither the supplier nor the retailers were completely honest with each other, and this research

has exposed this sentiment. The reality identified from the research was that neither side were happy with the other but keep quiet. This had an impact on the authenticity of the collaboration. The thesis was able to communicate this to the industry in an unbiased way to enable both sides to be more open with each other and thrash out any differences. Suppliers were unhappy with the demands placed upon them by the retailers, and CM began with the retailers' mission rather than that of the consumer. Suppliers were also frustrated because profit was the key driver for the retailer, rather than shopper satisfaction. Smaller suppliers and private label suppliers were frustrated because they did not have an equal chance to have a seat at the buyer's table, and the preferred supplier continued to be the chosen partner. The thesis once again highlighted these issues so both parties were aware.

Finally, the thesis contributes to practice by demonstrating how 'preferred suppliers' created value within the CM relationship. Suppliers who could demonstrate the findings from the thesis would be more likely to be selected to make category recommendations. They needed to demonstrate an objective, unbiased and fact-based category perspective. This needed to include multiple sources of data, and the insights needed to be fact-based but also have an entrepreneurial perspective to provide differentiation. These needed to be innovative and have risk elements that would ultimately fuel growth. The recommendations needed to be flexible and able to change quickly in line with moving challenges. Suppliers were encouraged to be pro-active with ideas rather than waiting to be asked and use ideas from other categories and other countries. The collaboration needed to be mutual; suppliers expected buyers to be more open and honest with what they required within the category and not just focus on commercials. The retailers asked for innovation, but the suppliers claimed that they always reverted to profit. Suppliers needed the freedom to evaluate their markets and provide recommendations that would lead to longer-term growth, rather than quick profit wins. The suppliers wanted to be category experts, as they understood their markets better than the retailers, but wanted the retailers to operate with more patience. They understood consumer needs within the category, and by working collaboratively with the retailers could share data and insights to plan these needs for the future. They were better placed for future trends as they were forever assessing market trends globally and how these would impact the UK market in the future.

The thesis has contributed to practice as it has been widely used and discussed at practitioner conferences, meetings and sharing practice. In June 2018, the research was presented to 300 UK food and drink manufacturers and all the UK retailers at the Category Management and

Shopper Marketing Summit in the City of London (IGD, 2018). The researcher was the only academic, who has ever presented at this prestigious annual event, and it was a testament to the quality of the research and seniority of the participants involved. Although the names were anonymised the industry practitioners talked amongst themselves and un-officially some of the company names were shared. Many of the practitioners knew each other and had worked together and so there was no inappropriate disclosure. However, due to the participants involved in the research many industry practitioners have asked for a copy of the thesis when it is finished, as it will help them to guide CM in the future. It is also felt by the researcher that the thesis would 'open the door' of truth between suppliers and retailers and disclose to both parties what the other dared not say in day-to-day business activities. Often suppliers feared to communicate what they felt as they were afraid to lose the business. This thesis therefore acts as an honest bridge between the two sides.

The research was also presented at the Category Landscapers (2020) forum, a group of category managers from companies across the UK grocery sector. This included large brands, private label suppliers and those who supplied both. It consisted of large and small companies to ensure there was a balanced cross-section of the industry being represented. The purpose of the group was to review existing CM practices from a practitioner's perspective, and to look for ways to improve the collaboration and share this learning with industry. The researcher presented the thesis to the group and the findings resonated well with the group, with many of the suggestions being taken forward and implemented in their organisations. The researcher was invited to join the group, and now contributes to the group by including the theory of CM, value, trust, and collaboration and by using the literature to help inform practice. The researcher also considers this to be closing the gap between academia and practice; one of the objectives of the thesis. Finally, the thesis has provided significant contribution to practice by informing the industry of realities, but as is often the case in research this creates more questions than it answers. Further research into CM, value creation and trust theory are proposed in the next section.

7.3 Future Research

The research findings have been significant and have contributed to academia and practice. However, as identified there were limitations to the study, and opportunities for further research have been identified. These have already been discussed in the thesis within the appropriate chapters. The conceptual model (Figure 3.2) contributes to knowledge and can be used for CM

and business relationships in future research studies. It has been suggested that it needs to be developed further to include the consumer and multi-channel retailing in both food and non-food categories.

The thesis was limited to the UK grocery sector and had a limited sample of UK grocery sector category managers, and UK grocery retailers (buyers and buying directors). Therefore, generalisations for practice beyond the UK grocery sector are limited. Moreover, the research did not include participants from UK discounters, as access to these stakeholders was difficult. Discounter supermarkets have a very flat management structure and a high expectation of the buying teams to perform tasks beyond traditional buying functions, and so had limited time to participate in research. Further research using a more extensive range of participants beyond grocery, and including a large-scale quantitative study, would have therefore provided additional insights. Future research needs to include the opinions of all suppliers from branded, private label and both, regardless of size. Alan, Dotson and Kurtuluş (2017) have stated that further research needs to be carried out into private label suppliers from more than a pricing and percentage margin perspective, as they only reviewed organisations with poor financial returns. The research therefore looked at private label suppliers becoming the category captain, as the practitioners believed it was more about collaboration and the provision of additional support and resources, than mere price and margin. The researcher has proposed further qualitative studies, for instance, these will include a wider range of retailer stakeholders from other areas of the business, including merchandising, retail operations, marketing, distribution, and finance. The literature has suggested that a qualitative approach would be more suited to acquire a deeper understanding (Kurtuluş, Nakkas and Ülkü, 2014). The research also discovered that food and drink trends in the supermarkets often originated from the consumer, but premium retailers also analysed the market from the latest trends in restaurants. Thus, food service operators should also be included in further research studies.

Value was created in the CM relationship where the supplier and retailer better understood the shopper's mission. Further research needs to be targeted directly at the shoppers to understand more clearly their views and identify potential retailer differences. For instance, how could retailers implement tactics to attract more shoppers to their stores, and how could CM add value to different store types and internet shopping? CM will play a part in all the sales channels including internet shopping as shopper's habits are changing. It is for this reason CM is experiencing a growth curve in the UK and international food and drink markets. Academics

and practitioners alike need to take hold of CM and the advantages generated through effective collaboration and value creation for the shopper. This would include efforts to understand whether suppliers were flexible enough to provide CM options to the retailers, and if indeed, CM needed to evolve to satisfy these needs. This may involve embracing new technologies to improve efficiencies throughout the whole supply chain. To gain a deeper understanding of how value can be co-created within the CM relationship, the literature suggests that further research into the co-creation of value is required from both supplier and retailer perspectives, as it needs to be a collaborative arrangement to meet the changing and challenging economic climate and consumer demands. Further research into value co-creation applying context to the 5 axioms is suggested. This is recommended to be business collaboration extensions of grocery retailing, so include fresh foods, non-foods. Involving the value co-created by the consumer is also recommended. As the beneficiary they are particularly relevant for axiom 2 (Vargo and Lusch, 2017).

The primary research has shown that suppliers who were more pro-active and recognised the importance of S-DL, claimed to have had a stronger relationship with the buyer. The thesis recommends further research into S-DL using CM as the context. Category management collaboration is seeing a greater need for the exchange of operant resources such as the exchange of value creating resources rather than the exchange of operand resources, the historical exchange of the product itself. Future research needs to explore how suppliers co-create value from the sharing of additional service resources, rather than relying upon the actual products. This research will need to examine product availability on-shelf as the retailer participants reported this during the study.

The category captain role is likely to evolve in the future, but the research has shown that the 'preferred supplier' role was available to any category supplier, regardless of size and product range if they could provide new innovative ideas for category growth. The extant literature currently focuses on the category captain role (now known as the 'preferred supplier'), and it is suggested that this role continues to be the focus of the research, as it makes the largest impact within the collaboration. The research has shown that PL suppliers could become the preferred supplier, but further research into different categories examining this issue in more detail is proposed. For example, chilled meats are mainly PL products rather than branded. The final suggestion for further research into the category captain role is carrying out a comparison between the UK and USA markets. Therefore, the research makes a strong recommendation

for further research into the role of the category captain / preferred supplier using qualitative data.

The findings have demonstrated that suppliers should carefully consider whether they wanted to collaborate with a retailer using the 'will and skill' matrix, to see if they could invest time into making category decisions. This would give the supplier more power to make their own choices and to assess if the collaboration would also work for them. The research study has advocated further exploration into those suppliers who did not feel that they needed to enter collaboration at the behest of the retailer. It would be interesting to know if suppliers can genuinely make category decisions independently or if the power remains completely with the retailer. The researcher suggests that further research is also carried out using the research framework for the analysis of IVF in inter-organisational relationships (Figure 3.1 in section 3.4.1).

Finally, the primary research has produced over 150,000 words of verbatim data, of which a limited amount (approximately 25%), has been used in this thesis. There is, therefore, additional data available for further research and there is scope for publication(s) in high impact peer-reviewed journals. The thesis is concluded in the next chapter where the researcher brings the study to a close but leaves it open to invite further research.

Chapter 8: Concluding Remarks

The research has been framed in value creation to understand exactly who in the CM relationship creates the value, and then what is required by the supplier and the retailer to ensure a deeper collaboration, and co-creation of value, using the theoretical lens of S-DL. The rhetoric has always been 'happy clappy' between both stakeholders, but the truth of the matter as exposed by the current research is that neither side is happy with the current arrangements. Suppliers are terrified of losing business with the retailer and so are vulnerable within the relationship. The researcher himself can confirm, as a category manager with the Dunbia (2020) group he never said no to any request of the retail buyers. There was a situation in late October where the ferries from Belfast to the UK mainland were 'grounded' because of adverse weather conditions. The ports assured the researcher that they would be open the following day. The researcher as a diligent category manager advised the retail buyer of the situation, and unfortunately, they would not receive their fresh meat delivery to various RDCs across the UK until the following day. The buyer refused to accept the situation and argued it was not their problem that the cutting site was in Northern Ireland and that they needed their delivery. The outcome was Dunbia (2020) had to respond or risk losing the £100M per annum contract, and so flew the meat over at a cost of £300,000. The retailer then sued Dunbia (2020) for a loss of profit in the two hours the products were off sale. As the researcher was impartial in the research, these types of examples were not included in the data nor could influence the study. The reality was that the suppliers felt that they were at the behest of the retailers, and it is hoped that this thesis will convey this position to retailers, so they can seek to address these issues in the future. Equally the retail buyers were not satisfied with the recommendations presented by the suppliers, as they were still driven largely by historical data of the marketplace, and suppliers never came forward with new, innovative and creative ideas appropriate to a specific retailer and their consumer profile. The retailers wanted the suppliers to be more adventurous and take bigger risks to ensure their stores developed a competitive advantage over other retailers. The retail buyers were indeed fully aware that the bigger suppliers were working across the overall grocery market. Basically, they wanted to be made to feel 'special'. Value co-destruction was therefore apparent across the sector. Both stakeholders needed to work closer together and collaboratively develop category plans that were fit for purpose and reflected the changing marketplace. The focus needed to move away from price but offer consumers more value to their shopping basket. The researcher is in a privileged position as an academic and was impartial to make these claims in a hope that the practitioners from both suppliers and

retailers would strive to improve the position. The suppliers and retailers' perceptions of reality or the 'actors thought worlds' of the day to day business activities are of prevalent concern for CM practitioners. The suppliers and retailers ran different businesses with differing priorities, but for the collaboration to work more effectively, all parties needed to appreciate each other's business missions and capabilities and how these would benefit the overall category aims and objectives. Thought worlds with the notion of establishing identity provide CM practitioners representing different business perspectives and sub-cultures, that have different beliefs about the desired outcomes and means of achievement (Deshpande and Webster, 1989; Shrivastava and Mitroff, 1984; Lyles and Mitroff, 1980). From an academic standpoint more attention needs to be paid to the non-formative factors in their interplay, with typical normative suggestions being made, for example internal alignment, collaboration and the retailer's shopper (Snyder, McKelvey and Sutton, 2016; Kotler, Rackham and Krishnaswamy, 2006; Strahle, Spiro and Acito, 1996). Further research in these areas is recommended as the discipline of CM is still in its infancy, and these areas will provide the retail practitioners with valuable help and insight to help them resolve the ever growing number of issues they face due to the changing retail landscape both at home and overseas. This will bring academia and practice closer together.

In addition to further academic studies from both qualitative and quantitative perspectives, the researcher proposes a CM centre of excellence based at SHU. This will be a central point for CM research, closing the gap between academia and practice with a vision to deliver best practice for the UK food and drink industry. Category management representatives from a cross-section of UK food and drink businesses have set up a trail blazer group to scope out the business opportunity for the university and the sector. The findings of this business case will be presented to the university in March 2020 and following this to the industry by May 2020. Many of the trail blazer group participants have been involved with this thesis.

In conclusion, I present this thesis as a step forward in thinking, conceiving an arena where academia and practice will work closer together to develop the discipline of CM. It has also brought together suppliers and retailers to raise the profile of category, and from an impartial perspective demonstrate the good that is being done alongside the areas that can be improved. The thesis is not a closure of the research on CM, but in fact the opposite; it has created an awareness to encourage other academics and practitioners to take the position forward. Finally, the researcher proposes that a new level of understanding for the food and drink industry has

been established. The researcher hopes anyone reading this thesis has enjoyed reading it and welcomes any thoughts, feedback, and further recommendations. Thank you for supporting what the researcher describes as one of the most important aspects of his life.

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Appendix 1 – Participant Interviews

Appendix 1.1

Consent form retailer participant

Sheffield Hallam University | Sheffield Business School

Participant Consent Form - Michael Benson DBA

Research Title: Value Creation in Category Management Relationships: A Comparative Analysis

Please answer the following questions by ticking the response that applies:

1. I have read the Information sheet for this study and have had the details of the study explained to me. ☒ Y ☐ N
2. My questions about the study have been answered to my satisfaction and I understand that I may ask further questions at any point. ☒ Y ☐ N
3. I understand that I am free to withdraw from the study within the time limits outlined in the Information Sheet, without giving a reason for my withdrawal or to decline to answer any particular questions in the study without any consequences to my future treatment by the researcher. ☒ Y ☐ N
4. I agree to provide information to the researchers under the conditions of confidentiality set out in the Information Sheet. ☒ Y ☐ N
5. I wish to participate in the study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet. ☒ Y ☐ N
6. I consent to the information collected for the purposes of this research study, once anonymised (so that I cannot be identified), to be used for any other research purposes. ☒ Y ☐ N

Participant's Signature: _____

Participant's Name (Printed): _____

Date: 5/5/11

Contact Details: Brown Mops

Researcher's Signature: [Signature]

Researcher's Name (Printed): Michael Benson

Researcher's Contact Details: 07926 844678

Please keep your copy of the consent form and information sheet together

Appendix 1.2

Example of participant interview - R4.1 (L, M)

Coding	R4.1 (L, M)
Company	R4.1 (L, M)
Manufacturer / Retailer	Retailer
Pilot / Full	Full
Interview Number	17
Date	15 02 18
Participant Name	R4.1 (L, M)
Participant Position	Main Board
Interviewer	Michael Benson (MB)
Pre-interview Briefing	Yes
Duration	1 hour
Further Sessions	
Supervisors	Dr. Craig Hirst; Professor Peter Schofield

<i>Retailer Profile</i>			
Company Name	R4.1 (L, M)		
Size - Turnover	£2.7bn	Size - Employees	500,000
Level Responsibility	Board Director	Senior Manager	Negotiator

MB: Thank you R4.1 (L, M) for agreeing to participate in my DBA research. I just need to explain that the interviews are qualitative, confidential and will be anonymous. The research is looking at the co-creation of value between a food manufacturer and retail buyer. The research is designed to understand your reality from the point of view of a practitioner. It focuses on the CC role and considers comparisons between brands and private label. It gives you the opportunity to say what you want to say in an anonymised situation. The theoretical framework is the co-creation of value, the theoretical underpinning of knowledge trust is one aspect that will hopefully come out, loyalty satisfaction and service dominant logic. Power is starting to emerge from the research, i.e., where does the power in the relationship sit.

R4.1 (L, M): Yes that's fine

MB: As you were involved in the early days of category management it is a pleasure to be able to interview you today. It is about co-creation of value, value destruction of that relationship. The interviews have been going on for over a year now with most of the retailers and grocery manufacturers. It's interesting about some of the assumptions we make about relationships are not quite what we think. So today I will just ask some general questions around the conceptual model but it's for yourself to explain how you see things as you feel appropriate. Firstly, how do you see a category management relationship?

R4.1 (L, M): Well I have seen it evolve and I started in 1991 where I was working at P&G. My team was responsible for all the analytics for the sales guys talking to the Walmart (2020) buyers. We would often equip them with where many of the categories we were the category captain which included a lot of space management, using tools Apollo space planning tools. In those days errm some of the core expectations of the category captain that was a coveted bought out to win role and fortunately P&G were category captain. It was always the leading brand that fulfilled that role and it was the goal and was the reason you do it. You need to lose what you are supposed to loose, and win where you are supposed to win. That will give you a chance to win ties and that is the reason to play. It certainly did have a labour transfer from the retailer to the supplier in those days because they were using it for a lot of capacity. To do that the category player the CC would take a holistic view, look at Nielsen data look at the market; the data may not be what the buyers are looking at every day. It was a lot about space planning and that kind of leadership. That was just in the context of those categories that they worked.

MB: Was there any particular criteria that the retailer, in this case Walmart would look at when selecting that CC?

R4.1 (L, M): For sure you had to be the leading number 1 supplier in the category as a brand. So number 1 share was the best place to start, and they would value how they grew the total category, and not just their share so it was almost a watch out where the CC had to be very careful it was not just to benefit their brand but the whole category. There were some rules around collaboration and what data you can share and cannot share that was shared with the CC so how they treated that data was very important. So that brought in rules of trust.

MB: Ok, so if we can come back to trust. So, sharing the data that would just be with the CC?

R4.1 (L, M): Well mainly but everybody had access to their brands data in the category as a supplier through Retail Link. So, there was that opportunity for everyone to see their own data but for you to be able to look at a total category to fulfil your planograms you had to see more than that. So, as CC you did get to see more, but how you use that data that in a really key sell. I think where I have seen it go on pendulum swings throughout the years where it goes back to more in-house with the retailer, and I think it's where I see us in the UK right now there is definitely key suppliers, and the growth of the customer function has supplemented that in how we are looking at the total box. The challenge of category management is that you are looking at customer trip and you really want to get growth as a retailer. If she comes into the store with 50 quid to spend if one category does a fantastic job in over promoting, so whatever they do to promote and drive that category does not necessarily mean that she is going to spend more than her £50. It just means she will spend the rest of it at some other place, so the importance of looking at the total basket which is beyond the scope of CM has now become much more important than necessarily just CM. This is because CM does not consider its role that much in the total box store; the CC does not really care as they are not measured on that. We can look at the total trip in an environment like this market where you really do need to look at the total basket and see what is happening by looking at growth. It's the customer view from the basket trip that is really important factor than say just how is my laundry category competing against other shops with retailers that carry laundry. So that category view of just laundry you do really have to put it in the context of the rest of the box and how that works. So how B&M does laundry is very different than how we might do laundry in how it is promoted, how it is managed and all that kind of stuff. But you then must marry that up to what is the role of that category in that store, that retailer within the customer trip. So what I have seen happen is a lot more of the traditional pieces of category management that I grew up with in the 90s and early 00s has really to become embedded in cat planners or brought into insights function that has customer data and analysts that are sitting on top of that customer data so they inform the cat manager process more. Every now and then there will some categories that you get some really deep category knowledge from suppliers, but most of the time the implants that are working here are no longer doing planograms and setting out modular in trying to do the assortment that way. That is part of their old-style view of pitching for the joint business planning process. Now most of the implants are working on supply chain issues, working on availability and forecasting logistics in their promotion planning. And so given two different experiences here there was almost pure EDLP in the US and Walmart (2020), where 95% of the volume is on the side-counter they had their modular set up and that's really all you have got. In this market

you may see 35% or 38% promotion participation. Number two you have got 50% own-brand penetration in a category which in the USA is only 15% so suddenly, some dynamics here to identify what is the real issue. If you have a category where 35% of the sales are promoted then most of that activity and most of the retailers are the same Asda, Sainsbury, Tesco are pretty similar amounts in category. The nature of your work is therefore around promotional planning activity and you know when and how low you go, depth of roll back. How do you market through that promotional period, how do you do rate of sale, how do you stay in stock, how do you support the category and in a true EDLP environment how do you forecast as it is easier to deal with than in a highly promoted environment. 10.39. Category management here is through planogramming is a twice a year process, and category management would look more like looking at regional and ethnic geographical anomalies. You may have 300-400 versions of the modular based on different types of store trade, so as a category planner looking at Nielsen and see how people buy. In laundry detergent for example in the North East it's a heavy liquid market and in Florida it's a heavy powder market. This is due to age and so a national planogram in terms of liquid and powder and how it is set out with the SKU mix it will be flexible for both markets. A good category planner would know that the rate of sale from Nielsen that the dynamics of each are different and that the modular need to be 60:40 either way in those markets to optimise the sales. So that is the shape of that where very little is put on promotional planning where there will only be one or two events a year. So, if you are doing a baby event its planning on the event and making sure that the promotional dollars gained on back margin are well planned.

MB: Can you explain more about margin?

R4.1 (L, M): Well, there is marketing investment money by the suppliers where they provide funds to help motivate sales in those areas so those funds need to be planned and executed in a collaborative way, so that is where back margin came from. For advertising and shopper marketing that trade fund is not used to influence price but is used to motivate the customer. Whether that's on display, newsprint, whatever or the in-store radio network; those things were funded by the brands when they wanted to grow sales. This is allocated and defined in the JBP. The UK market that I see different is the traditional duties of category management are a bit more split up and its more around key supplier relationships with joint business planning and how do we grow together through category management. So, the JBP is where all the marketing activity would happen.

MB: Ok, so you have given many examples of success and positive within the relationship are there any instances you can think of where there has been a negative outcome?

R4.1 (L, M): Well there will always be tension in the process, for example Sam Walton had this well documented and started the ball rolling back in the 80s, in 1986 he flew to P&G the biggest supplier at the time as Walmart (2020), wasn't terribly huge at that time but still a sizeable piece of business for Procter. He sat down with the CEO who I think was Jack Smale and said you would probably treat us differently as a supplier if you saw us as an extension of your company to reach the consumer. What would we do differently together if you just saw Walmart (2020) as a retailer; we are just a path to get to your consumer and its one system? How would we change things, so that began the reverse bowtie where the bow tie had the buyer and the seller and then they flipped it around to join up all the departments of both organisations? This gave multi-functional connections all working together to build that relationship, in the UK market it's still more the traditional bow tie with just the buyer and seller collaborating; most of the joined up is in logistics and supply. But working in a different relationship with suppliers we use this to take on some of the bigger challenges like the USA model. I have been trying to do this here with top suppliers, working with Coke and put together plans that only Coke and R4.1 (L, M) can do. What kind of programmes can we create that would create value for both of us? Joint value creation to me has a couple of different places to it, one is the way we talk to the consumer; there is plenty of value to be created there. Money does not need to change hands; we accept we are both going to be spending on advertising and on other things so let us do these together. That includes sharing data and insight.

MB: Can I ask where that all starts, does it start from the consumers' needs or does it start with the business profile and strategy.

R4.1 (L, M): It starts with the mission trip, so FMCG brands those kinds of suppliers they are always looking at ways to understand more usage occasions for their brands. So, lets figure out how to make cereals and an after-school snack. So, to grow they need to convince moms that rice krispies can do this, so that is a usage occasion. If you follow that logic all the way through, they can press that thinking all the way through the store in any way they want and that would then result in the cereal aisle laid out differently. So, you might have cereals for breakfast, co-locate some into the after-school snacks section as they see it to deliver that clarity about usage occasions. Make it clear! Retailers think a little differently, they look at it by mission trip, and so we are looking at what triggers the trip for a customer. How do we become top of mind, and

what is the most salient option? That will be many, many trips and we get one in eight over a 12-week period in grocery trips. So, for us the whole game is trips, and so as a retailer I do not care about the usage occasion, that does not come into play. So, it is the inter-section between us getting more trips and the supplier hitting the usage occasion that together we are going after. So we say if mom is going to go on a shopping trip for after school snacks what retailer will come to mind first; well it's going to be the one who has chosen to position themselves as the best destination for after school snacks. When we start ranking trips and trip types we would put at the top everyday essential items. That is the number one reason people go to the grocery store. The second win for us might be a simple meal, I want simple night meals which might be vegetables, fruit to make quickly; feed a family and so we are working very actively in advertising to be the most relevant when she thinks of a need to go shopping for simple meals. So now I need to go and find suppliers that their brand is going to be as relevant, that they are also trying to get into simple meals. Very few of them are going to be relevant for getting into everyday essentials, but simple meals may be one that they might. That is then a connection point where we can work together with that common interest because they are going to shop in that way and time is much more relevant to us than brands and suppliers. We might look at September to get the range into the stores, one of the mission trips that comes to mind is packed lunches and these start in September. School lunches packed lunches start in September after the summer break. Very few retailers say they have these things, to be a bit cleverer to say can R4.1 (L, M) get in top of mind on packed lunches and maybe we do that with Coke or other branded suppliers who go with us on that journey. We can collaborate on advertising to own what is in your lunch box kind of idea. Then we both win on that one. That's where it works, but I guess it goes wrong in many places such as forecasting, promotions for example a big pack and a small pack end up being the same price and will influence rate of sale. The retailer and supplier will spend a lot of time working on availability. Getting it right on-shelf and that is the nature of most of the conversation. Could be the factory went down, the weather was bad and impacted, or it gets to the back of the store but does not make it to the shelf. So, availability is from a customer lens, so that's just the challenge of really good forecasting.

MB: Where for example if we carry on the theme of the packed lunch, so you have got Coke and yourselves on-board, there might be a sandwich and a bag of crisps, Hellmans, etc., how would you realistically manage different categories simultaneously?

R4.1 (L, M): Well that is the challenge as some of those events are cross-category. It really does challenge the way we think about grocery retailing, a category model and so we stood up

last year with a multi category execution team to help, because otherwise its marketing and trying to talk about an idea like that to multiple buyers to get them on-board, and sync up there promotional categories and that is really difficult, so having a central team inside of trading that helps with events and can work with the buyers to really understand what is going on. That is what we do the way we work.

MB: Ok so how do the buyers continue to deal with their supply base as normal

R4.1 (L, M): Yes, they would, and we try to sync up where timelines are difficult. In an ideal world we would go to the trading team, central merchandising team and say we want packed lunches for September. We want some brands involved, we think it's some kind of salad dressing and maybe some baked beans; we would have a sense and we would brief to them products that we are looking for and they would look at the JBP and see who is in good shape, and its then up to the trading team to pick that up in the range that has the best fit. And make sure that the supply line is good, has availability been poor and pick one of those guys. Anyone of those suppliers if they know that you are going to put TV weight behind with one of the brands featuring in the spot, they will come to the table well and get behind it. They will move a lot of volume. So that is the considerations you need to look at to do that

MB: How would you get that kind of commitment from them such as Coca Cola where their customer base is yourselves, Tesco, Sainsburys; how do you get that buy in to ensure they deliver for you?

R4.1 (L, M): Well you know it is a long game. If we do work together and if we do not have the product then we will make sure it does not happen again. So, there is a bit of that longevity that does give you some insurance.

MB: Do you feel it is the relationship that has already built up, in this case Coca Cola over the years.

R4.1 (L, M): Definitely a long-term relationship is better than a short-term relationship. We just said at our supplier conference at IGD, so you talk about category management and well we had a couple of thousand suppliers there. Twice a year we have a supplier conference, and we try to level the playing field. So, what we have is a stage session where me the chief merchandising officer will talk about the shape of the customer. Here is some of our big merchandising priorities, what are we trying to do in the market and then we go into afternoon break out broken down into core areas i.e., ambient, chilled frozen etc. Those depts have the

senior directors there breathing the suppliers that play in those spaces, what is the top message and how does that work out. Innovation is a good example, what is going to drive in our categories is new and so we put out an innovation award this year and in return we want a disproportionate number of your products. For that to work, I know the scope of this is about category management, but it wouldn't come through that model, it would come through throwing out a challenge to all suppliers and saying here is what's up for grabs. We are going to give an innovation award; we are trying to commit to all suppliers and build long term relationships; so, put out there the key challenges and those that want to step forward to the challenge can step forward. Brands do not spend that much on innovation; we are asking if you have a growing brand how we can be exclusive for six months. 27.18. We would say let's talk about that and they may get a disproportionate amount of space, so if you are a number one player in a category and you don't have a lot of innovation scheduled and you are setting up the modular. You would set up a lot of space for tertiary brands how are they going to get that innovation on-shelf, so that works against the category captain. I do think category management should have a bit more retail leadership to it for it to work better, than the supplier. I have been on both sides; I do not think the retailer can use category management just to off-load labour to suppliers which is traditionally what happens with space planning and stuff like that. I think if it is about working out issues of logistics then supply, keep us in stock that is brilliant, however, if it is trying to man-handle / manage the assortment then that is bad. I think if you have to promise the supplier a vertical 4' bay in order to get the margin to work out in your category that's where it goes wrong from my opinion which is a customer standpoint. You can tell if you go in a retailer if they have been 'bought' by a supplier, where the index for that supplier is great they have a lot of space and probably getting profit on the back of that from the 'back margin' rather than the 'front margin'. So that is a definite watch out, you know you have gone too far when you start seeing stuff that is out of proportion.

MB: If a CC proposes a merchandising brief is that just a recommendation or is that this is what we are doing?

R4.1 (L, M): They would have some insights in the JBP to back it up, they will have done some research to recommend that. There is nothing that would stop us from saying we will test it in a few stores and see if it works. We would give it to our own internal insights team to look at the data and validate it, and make sure we challenge to data to see if it is on track from a consumer standpoint. Those conversations are encouraged, and they may see something we are just missing, from a market share perspective and everything else that goes with that.

MB: Ok, would a buyer go out to two or three suppliers or stick with the incumbent?

R4.1 (L, M): No, we would talk to multiple suppliers and say this is what we are thinking. There are also category advisers who are 3rd party people contracted to give us advice. They might not always be right, but we must trust them.

MB: We talked a lot about brand; people are switching to Aldi and own label. How do you see the own-label supplier being in with a shout to be CC?

R4.1 (L, M): First of all, I think we have so much private brand in our portfolio with objectives to grow that. The own-brand suppliers have cost structures that do not allow for the analytics and data that it takes to come back with recommendations. So only the branded suppliers have the horsepower to come back with that kind of analytics and have it in the cost structure. 31.36 So we typically have category planners in trading that have those skills because we do want to ensure our own brand is represented, we have our strategy to grow that. We would lean on them for more information to keep driving it forward versus how to manage the category better. We keep that pretty much in-house and challenge them on innovation, and so that is a different type of relationship. If you look at Aldi, I will guess they have a much more developed model for working with own-brand suppliers than we do. That is because that is 90% what they do. We are probably underdeveloped in this area, but we also try to work with the branded suppliers as we will carry much more of their range than what Aldi is going to carry. So, I think that is an opportunity for us to leverage the brands, we would make a better partner for them. Aldi do not carry many brands, so I think that is our opportunity.

MB: Ok, so you mentioned earlier on about trust within that relationship, how important do you think trust is towards the buyer with the supplier?

R4.1 (L, M): Roger talked about that in the preliminary session at IGD and he was very clear about it, he said our vision is to be the most trusted retailer. So that is trust with our colleagues, and trust with our suppliers. Supplier trust is crucial; the whole of last year has been about rebuilding that trust and so that has been a major piece of work to do that. It is several things, things we will do different to help build better trust with suppliers. This includes longer term collaboration as this was one of the problems and became apparent at the IGD supplier conference. It was said this is what collaboration looks like, we want to be in the best place for innovation and you want to come to us with innovation. Because we will get behind it and we are going to match the marketing behind it and really get it to work and put it in full distribution.

We will invite you back into the store to really understand the back-room processes and how it is working. There is a high invitation to suppliers to collaborate with innovation at the conference a couple of weeks ago. I think that is an important tone from the top on how to do that. Roger also had an internal project working with the GCA (Grocery Coding Administrator) to ensure we are very clear as we have done a lot of work here. This will make sure that we look at payment terms, small suppliers, price changes, and make sure that we become again the most trusted retailer. I feel it's on the right track with that.

MB: Ok good. So, we have looked at brand, PL. We have used the term the category captain, how do you see that role developing in the future? Is it still called CC?

R4.1 (L, M): To be fair you need to supplement this with one of the trading VPs to get a little more depth and clarity. In all my 2.5 years here, I have never heard the word Category Captain. I hear names like key suppliers, joint business planning, JBP is a common anchor point, cat planning, embedded suppliers by category. So, I have not come across it. Also, for those I spoke to preparing for today that it no longer exists in the old format. The word category captain is itself very off putting particularly the non-captain suppliers.

MB: Over the last few years I have read the literature and the word CC is always used as the authors have written for example a journal based upon a previous incorrect journal and never taken the time to explore the truth of the role and how it is used today with the practitioners.

R4.1 (L, M): That is what I am saying; I cannot find anywhere where it exists anymore. It's funny it wasn't that long ago when it existed, and I just thought it was a USA vs UK market thing. Interestingly in the USA it is still a big thing, for example at Walmart (2020) they still use the term CC.

MB: Maybe that's some future research into the USA market!

R4.1 (L, M): Yeaah, I can't tell you why...

MB: For this research one of my contributions is to bring the literature closer to practice by speaking to practitioners such as yourself.

R4.1 (L, M): Yes, that makes sense, well done Michael. In practice we welcome that and would like the literature to be closer to what we do, we can then use it and it will help us to solve many of our challenges faced today. Yes, the literature is wrong, and something has changed in the last five years maybe. It's not the same, I don't know if we went too far one way and

came back. I don't know, maybe it was fair competition rules, the rules of competition in this market maybe different than in the USA. Maybe that is part of it to make sure there is a level playing field. Although we always talk about a level playing field in the USA but there are different levels of level.

MB: I see, how does the whole process of category management evolving, do you think it will evolve or become extinct?

R4.1 (L, M): I think in the UK we obviously have some issues with Brexit in terms of supply wise and how we face that together, it is however an opportunity to collaborate. I think we must collaborate on total system cost and so it can't just be a negotiated process. It will be how do we take off each other's systems, and so an end to end look at costs. I think things like plastics will drive more collaboration by reducing packaging and costs. That's going to require innovation and we need to go after that. It's funny it's a full circle from paper bags to plastics and going around. These are the things that drive collaboration a bit more, but it's also about collaborating at a more technical level. For example, big brands like Nestle have massive technical skill, so for example many plastics are not recyclable so where do we go from here. So these changes are future areas for the collaboration.

MB: We have talked about service so that pitches around availability; loyalty falls on the back of trust do you feel the retailers give loyalty in the relationship?

R4.1 (L, M): Yes, I do, I mean it's a meritocracy it's a performance-based culture because we all have short-term metrics. For a long time, some suppliers have difficulties on their side, and we will bend over backwards to help them get back on their feet. That might be some extra grace points before you delist them. This is to make sure we get a healthy supply base, and it's important to keep a healthy supply base. In the USA there are rules that you couldn't have a supplier if more than 25% of their business was Walmart. That was an insurance policy to make sure we didn't destroy a supplier. That might be we limit the number of stores they supplied so we didn't topple them over. I call that loyalty as its preventative maintenance in the interests of the supplier. They will only see the benefit later in the relationship and not at the beginning.

MB: Great thanks R4.1 (L, M). Finally, is there anything else that perhaps I have not identified in the conceptual model that you feel can co-create value to a category management relationship?

R4.1 (L, M): Yes, if I were a top supplier today and looking at the retail challenges, I think there are so many things that retailers are struggling with that a progressive supplier could co-create value together. Give you an example: if the average customer spends 17 hours a month grocery shopping in R4.1 (L, M) then one of the things that is challenging is how long it takes to work out value at the shelf. That's a supplier thing. P&G came to us one time and said we shop your stores in the laundry category and we took some smart people with us to shop along, these were people with Masters Degrees and with calculators we could not work out the best value. What would be the best value from customer perspective, that is something if I am a supplier what do I want to have. Some of the Shopper Marketing research did show that let's say ice cream - 70% of the time she has the products on her list but then she gets to the ice cream category and in the USA 80% of people would buy vanilla, then chocolate and strawberry. In her mind, she only wants to spend 24 mins in the store and there is a lot on her list but if she spends more than 90 seconds looking for the thing she came in for being the vanilla ice cream she will leave the aisle and not buy it. She won't let it suck up her entire 25 min in the store, and a buyer who knows vanilla is on the list will often deliberately put vanilla on the bottom shelf as they know the shopper will look for it. Make her walk past the premium, the Ben & Jerrys or Haggen-Dazs to try and upsell to her. Because you know you are going to sell vanilla anyway try and get a premium price. The real behaviour that happens is when she gets in front of that category if she finds vanilla straight away, she will double back and give browsing behaviour and then may pick up the Haggen-Dazs. So that is where suppliers can really add value if they fully understand their market. Their shopping insight goes beyond what we would expect as we are looking at transactional data rather than behavioural data. So to co-create value any supplier could come in here and say I can improve the speed of shopping in the categories I am competing within if you let me show you how. I would be 100% over that. That is where the game is being played right now as that is where the consumer proposition is right now ... value seeking, busy families. So how do we reduce that friction of busy, increase the speed so put the vanilla at eye level and the other stuff around it. With razors as customers look for the refills, don't try and upsell a new razor as I am getting the refill anyway. Another don't put the milk at the back of the store to hold people in the store. There used to be a philosophy is that the longer a consumer is in the store the more they will buy; truth is that means less trips to the store so in the long run spend less. Customers don't want to think in the store they just want to fly, so if you put 10% off that takes longer to work out than save £5. So how do you quickly communicate a saving to a customer don't do a % saving as you are asking me to do the maths. Just show me the saving. Another area is technology how do we use the

mobile, how does that category shop differently to the rest of the store. I can think of tens of challenges I am up against on how to win more trips, suppliers are stuck in the availability trap, but they need to look wider on getting consumers to come to the store more often. The idea of collaboration and partnership and solving issues together is there and we are still in the early stages of this. The idea of giving category to just planogramming with assortment management there is not a lot there. That may be because we have high penetration of own brand that they don't know about this area and obviously an opportunity.

MB: R4.1 (L, M) many thanks, that was very interesting and informative and if I have any further deep dive questions from this interview is it ok to contact you again?

R4.1 (L, M): Of course, Michael, thank you very much for inviting me.

Word count: 6182

Appendix 1.3

Reflection of interview with S1 (M, B P/L)

Coding	S1 (M, B P/L)
Company	Anonymous
Manufacturer / Retailer	Manufacturer
Pilot / Full	Full
Date	13/02/17
Participant Name	S1 (M, B/PL)
Participant Position	Category management & Shopper Marketing Controller
Interviewer	Michael Benson
Pre-interview Briefing	Yes
Duration	1 hour
Further Sessions	N/A
Supervisors	Dr. Craig Hirst; Professor Peter Schofield

Notes	Actions	When
<p>This was the 2nd interview with S1 (M, B P/L). This was in the relaxed environment of Tamper coffee shop in Sheffield as S1 (M, B P/L) had just delivered a guest lecture. I asked S1 (M, B P/L) to follow up from her original interview back in November 2016 as the research had progressed with other company interviews. I advised her I had received feedback from my suppliers that I needed to play the 'dumb researcher' with absolutely no previous category management knowledge or experience. This will never run totally true as I have over 25 years' experience in the process at both retailer and manufacturer levels. S1 (M, B P/L) seemed relaxed with this and recognised that within the discipline certain terminology and jargon is used, and she accepted it is an assumption everyone understands this. The example given was 'implant' i.e. the person offered in the main by category captains to a retailer organisation to support the category process within the retailer's offices, but they belong to and paid for by the manufacturer. The purpose of the role is to support the category, and often crunch data for the retail buyer.</p> <p>The agreement to 'deep dive' and explains what the participant understands in more detail was met with a small smile, but she fully understood my reasoning for this, and agreed to explain all terminology. The relationship I have with S1 (M, B P/L) has significantly developed where there is</p>	<p>Need to understand what the participants understand by 'service'?</p>	<p>Next interview and ongoing</p>

mutual respect, and she is keen to work with academia as she believes we should work together to help practice and contribute to academia. As a result of the development of the relationship S1 (M, B P/L) agreed to deliver a guest lecture to my retailing students as category management is a fundamental part of International Food Marketing module at L5. The presentation was well received by the students; S1 (M, B P/L) acknowledged that fact and agreed to come back again in the future. This will also enable me to continue ongoing dialogue with S1 (M, B P/L).

As we are developing a relationship I asked if it was possible to underpin the interviews with a deeper level 'participant observation' at her offices. She thought this was an excellent idea and suggested I came for a week, crunch some numbers, work with the category and shopper teams and then follow this trail through to meet the Asda buyer. I agreed and said I would also ask Asda when I meet their VP Consumer Affairs in a couple of weeks as they are also keen to support my research. This will allow me to observe and participate in the category management process from supplier through to retailer. This will provide deeper insight into the 'lives' of the practitioners. I feel this is ethnography, but my supervisors advised that as it's only a couple of weeks it is more 'participant observation', so I will return to the literature for more information.

The 2nd interview was less formal as S1 (M, B P/L) and I are comfortable with each other. She has realised the study is highly confidential and starting to open up more with the answers. The session lasted 25 minutes and reviewed her understanding of business relationships (not necessarily category management). The evolvement of category management was discussed, and it is becoming clear from all my participants' that the CC role is almost becoming extinct in its current guise. The marketing contributions, although perceived to be important, the category and the retailers are wanting deeper shopper insight to try and find that 'something different'. The traditional number crunching of Kantar and Nielsen data is still important; but that

<p>'next thing' product on the shelf is the only way one retailer will differentiate. The insight therefore needs to be retailer specific and sit within their consumer profile and business model. This is resulting in the retailer turning to their most trusted supplier rather than the CC. Sometimes the CC is the most trusted, but not always. I feel this will be a fundamental finding from the research, but retailer views are still needed. S1 (M, B P/L) talked further about trust in the relationship and how this evolves over time. The word 'time' has also emerged, and S1 (M, B P/L) discussed this in regard to her relationships. The 'power' concept has emerged from the interviews but all participants' including Unilever say this still sits with the retailer as they are the vehicle to market and online is still a small part of the sales channel pie.</p> <p>It is getting time now to start the interview with the retailers for their perspective, and I am worried that I have not yet met a CC. The brand suppliers all say the same 'we used to be CC but are not any longer'. I need to explore further why they are not CC any longer, and that includes Unilever who own the PG Tips brand and probably the biggest player with all their brands in the retail arena.</p>		
<p>New Coding</p> <p>Trust - all suppliers Power Time Devolvment of CC Hard to find a CC Shared relationship Security Help each other</p>		
<p>Additional areas of literature required</p> <p>Time shopper Qualitative insight from shoppers Participant Observation Ethnography Sharing Security Power Trusted relationships</p>		

Conclusion

S1 (M, B P/L) has said she wants to maintain our relationship, and available for further interviews in the future. The participants appear to 'like' me and happy to be involved in the research. As I insisted my first interviews were face-to-face this allows the researcher and participant to connect invisible ties. This breaks down barriers, trust develops, and they are happy to meet again and even get more involved in academia such as guest lectures, and other collaborative activities.

The relationships developing between me and the participants mirror the work that I am doing, i.e., meet face-to-face, allow trust to develop from a shared passion of CM, leading to a more secure relationship; and the commitment both ways to help each other.

Appendix 2 – DBA Global Presentations in Pictures (Academia and Practice)



Appendix 2.1: DBA Global Presentations

Images right to left and top to bottom:

Image 1: Research Presentation IGD Conference, London (June 2018)

Image 2: Winning DBA Research Poster, SBS Doctoral Conference (May 2015)

Image 3: Research Presentation at 2nd Global Conference in Value Creation with Professor Philip Kotler, Gabelli Business School, New York City (May 2019)

Image 4: Winning Research Poster, displayed in Stoddart Building (2015 – 2018)

Image 5: Research Presentation at IGD Conference, London (June 2018)

Image 6: Research Presentation at Fordham University, New York City (May 2019)

Image 7: Student Research (based on research) to Category Landscapers (Jan 2019)

Image 8: Student Presentation (based on research) at 2nd Global Conference in Value Creation Gabelli Business School, New York City (May 2019)

Full list of DBA presentations (see Table 1.1 Academic Conference Contributions and Table 1.2 Practitioner Conference Contributions).

Appendix 3: Research Ethics

Appendix 3.1

ShuRec 2a - Application for SHU Ethics Approval (Cover Sheet Only)



APPLICATION FOR RESEARCH ETHICS APPROVAL (SHUREC2A)

SECTION A: Research Protocol

Important Note - If you have already written a research proposal (e.g. for a funder) that answers the methodology questions in this section please include a copy of the proposal and leave those questions blank. You **MUST** however complete **ALL** of Section B and C (risk assessment).

1. Name of principal investigator: Michael Benson

Faculty: SB S

Email address: m.benson@shu.ac.uk

2. Title of research: Value Creation in Category Management Relationships: A Comparative Analysis

3. Supervisor (if applicable): Professor Peter Schofield

Email address: p.schofield@shu.ac.uk

4. CONVERIS number (applicable for externally funded research):

5. Other investigators (within or outside SHU)

Title	Name	Post	Division	Organisation
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

6. Proposed duration of project

Start date: 1 Aug 2016

End Date: 1st Feb 2018

7. Location of research if outside SHU: Employees workplace

8. Main purpose of research:

- ☒ Educational qualification
☐ Publicly funded research
☐ Staff research project
☐ Other (Please supply details)

Appendix 3.2

Data Management Plan

Data Management Plan - Michael Benson DBA

Problem Identification	Risk Factor (H-M-L)	Action Taken	Comments
1. Notes taken by researcher from participants	L	Details entered onto lap-top and the hand written copies destroyed with SHU confidential waste (white bags).	
2. Video recordings of the interviews	L	Use SHU equipment only which is pre-checked.	
3. Data entered electronically on lap-top	L	Lap-top is SHU issue and is encryption protected. Copy the files regularly onto the SHU secure Q Drive. Also personal login required on lap-top.	
4. Lap-top is locked to my desk at work	L	Continue current security locking of lap-top	
5. Share relevant data with participant before publishing	L	Prior to writing up thesis all relevant data to be shared with appropriate participant	
6. At the end of the research when Doctorate awarded data to be returned to participant or destroyed confidentially	M	All relevant data returned to participant. Lap-top to be cleared of all files. Q Drive to also be cleared of all files. Data used in the DBA thesis to be agreed with participants for use in future journal publications.	

Appendix 3.3

Risk Assessment Plan (Cover Sheet Only)



STANDARD FORMAL RISK ASSESSMENT

Description of the Process/Activity: UK Based, guided non-residential visit / off site activity by students (Insert course / group of students involved and dates)					Location(s): Various in UK (see schedule)			
					RA Ref: MB DBA 1			

Hazard	Who could be harmed?	Existing safety precautions	Risk level	Additional safety precautions needed to reduce the risk level?	Revised risk level	Action by whom?	By when?	Date completed
Transport - possibility of road traffic accident	Students Researcher	Driving on business insurance in own car. Previous position travelled 1,000 miles per week.	Low	No	Low	MB	April 2017	
Participants unaware of the arrangements for the visit.	Participants Researcher	Ensure that participants are appropriately briefed as to the arrangements for the interview and the need to volunteer to comply with instructions given.	Low	No	Low	MB	April 2017	
Participant experiences a medical emergency.	Participants Researcher	Participants are requested to declare (in confidence) any known underlying medical condition which may compromise the interview. Researcher to familiarise themselves with the first aid procedures of the host organisation. Researcher to carry a mobile phone at all times	Low	No	Low	MB	April 2017	

Appendix 3.4

Organisation Letter

ORGANISATION LETTER - Michael Benson DBA

|

SHU Letter head

Date

HR Manager

Address of organisation
(Manufacturer or Retailer)

Dear Sir / Madam

DBA Research - Category Management

I am a research student at Sheffield Hallam University studying a Doctorate in Business Administration (DBA), and the Institute of Grocery Distribution (IGD) kindly gave me your contact details. My research is related to value creation in category management relationships between the food manufacturer and retailer, and how collaboration with the category captain influences relationships comparing branded and unbranded products. Attached is the research brief which explains the research questions, and the aims and objectives of the research.

The area of focus is the grocery coffee category, and I should be grateful for your permission to contact the relevant category manager within your organisation to invite them to participate in the research. The findings will remain anonymous, and prior to writing up I will share the data with the participant if they choose. I also plan to video the interviews to ensure all the discussion is captured. It will focus on semi-structured questions relating to the research questions, but as the industry is experiencing change the participants will be able to voice their own views in a confidential setting. This I believe will improve the value of my findings, and help contribute to category management literature and practice. The research is proposed to commence in September 2016; I shall, however, liaise directly with your colleague the participant for convenient dates and times.

If you have any further queries please do not hesitate to contact me on 07826 844678 or m.benson@shu.ac.uk

I look forward to working with your organisation,

Yours faithfully,

Michael Benson

DBA Student - Sheffield Hallam University

Appendix 3.5

Participant Letter

PARTICIPANT LETTER - Michael Benson DBA

SHU Letterhead

Date

The Participant (Category Manager / Buyer)
Address of organisation
(Manufacturer or Retailer)

Dear Sir / Madam

DBA Research - Category Management

I am a research student at Sheffield Hallam University studying a Doctorate in Business Administration (DBA), and the Institute of Grocery Distribution (IGD) kindly gave me your contact details. My research is related to value creation in category management relationships between the food manufacturer and retailer, and how collaboration with the category captain influences relationships comparing branded and unbranded products. Attached is the research brief which explains the research questions, and the aims and objectives of the research.

The area of focus is the grocery coffee category, and as your responsibility is within this category I should be grateful if you will be able to participate in my research by providing your thoughts and views to the research questions; but also give you the opportunity to discuss confidentially the issues and obstacles you are faced with within the remit of the research questions. The discussion will be analysed and coded confidentially using anonymous names to protect yourself and your organisation. The output, I am confident will help with the progression of category management development in both academia and industry. The findings will remain private, and prior to writing up my thesis if you wish to see the data first I will share with you. I also plan videoing the interviews to ensure all of the discussion is captured. The interview will focus on semi-structured questions relating to the research questions, but as the industry is experiencing unprecedented change you will be able to voice open and honest views of reality in a confidential setting. This I believe will improve the quality of my findings, and allow us all to see what are the real issues faced by practitioners, and then through academia we can work together to find solutions. The interview phase of my research are planned to commence in September 2016; and if you will confirm you are happy to participate we can then agree a specific date and time for the interview where I will come to your premises.

I should be grateful if you will email confirmation or rejection of participation in my study, and if in the meantime you have any further queries please do not hesitate to contact me on 07826 844678 or m.benson@shu.ac.uk

I look forward to meeting and working with you.

Yours faithfully,

Michael Benson, DBA Student - Sheffield Hallam University

Appendix 3.6

Participant Briefing (Cover Sheet Only)

Participant Information Sheet

Research Title:

Value Creation in Category Management Relationships: A Comparative Analysis

Will you please take part in my research?

The research is about value co-creation within category management. Category management is the collaborative approach between food manufacturers and the retailers to manage product categories rather than individual brands. The study is to understand the value created by the current role of the category captain and how this role needs to evolve to create value during times of industry change. The role of category captain is extensive and varies across sectors and categories, the research will therefore focus specifically on the hot beverage category (tea and coffee) comparing the differences in the value created between branded and non-branded manufacturer category captains and what they then need to do for future category captain selection.

Why have you asked me to take part?

You have been asked to take part because you are involved in category management, and as a decision maker your views and opinions are important for inclusion in the research. Historically the research has been more based on quantitative data and number crunching, but now we want to explore the 'real' issues you face in your day-to-day activity, and see how this will influence the research and provide practitioner contribution as well as academic contribution to the literature. Category management is a relatively new discipline which came to the UK via Wal-Mart in the mid-1990s, and little is currently written in the literature. It was felt appropriate to interview participants at your level as you have seniority to make changes and influence the category management relationship internally and externally. The interviews are totally anonymous, but the research will be available after completion of the thesis.

What will I be required to do and where will it take place?

The session will be video recorded and audio recorded for dual data collection to minimise loss of data. The data will be selectively transcribed at a later date for inclusion in the analysis and synthesis process, and ultimately to make recommendations to the research. You will be asked a series of semi-structured questions to help guide the discussion, but as this is qualitative research you are encouraged to talk in much more detail about your own personal experiences, to ensure we capture reality. The sessions will take place in your offices away from the day-to-day activity and the findings will not be discussed within your organisation until the final thesis is completed. The session will last a maximum of 2 hours, and will cut off at this point, and then the researcher will recap the main points discussed as part of the de-brief element. There will be no requirement for any follow up interviews.

Who will be responsible for all of the information when this study is over, who will have access to it, and what happens to the information after the study?

Once the study is completed the researcher will have sole responsibility for the data and information captured. This will then be stored on the confidential Q drive of Sheffield Hallam University which can only be accessed by the researcher. Once the data is transcribed onto the Q drive it will be coded for example as Supplier A stated "....." Following the study the final thesis will be available to all participants, the researcher will forward a copy to each organisation, this will as previously stated be anonymous. The raw data will be kept by the researcher for a further 2 years after the thesis completion as further quantitative studies are planned based on the qualitative findings. This does not form part of the DBA research, but for further journal publications. Future work will always remain anonymous.

How will you use what you find out?

The findings from the research will be used primarily in the researcher's DBA thesis, however two journal publications are planned on the back of the research, and then subsequent quantitative analysis

Appendix 3.7

Scoping Document (Cover Sheet Only)

Value Creation in Category Management Relationships: A Comparative Analysis

Sheffield Business School

DBA - Research Scoping Document FINAL

Author: Michael C. Benson

Research Title

Value Creation in Category Management Relationships: A Comparative Analysis

Summary

Category management is a collaborative approach between food manufacturers (suppliers) and retailers to manage product categories rather than individual brands. The purpose of the research is to explore value creation within category management and category partnership relationships through data resource sharing to meet changing consumer needs. The literature informs that there are gaps comparing branded and unbranded (private / commodity / own-label) product suppliers. For consistency the paper will refer to these as unbranded label products. Consumers are switching to unbranded label products in food retail categories for improved value and better perceived quality products than available five years ago. The research will focus on the role of the Category Captain, now known as the Category Partner, and how they and other partners' facilitate the category comparing unbranded and branded products. IGD (2016) state, that the next phase in the development of category management to meet the industry changes is through improved collaboration between the supplier and retailer, and includes sharing improved resource data from advancing technology, and together creating better shopper insight. A qualitative methodology approach is proposed as this will allow the researcher to understand from the practitioner's what are the real issues they are facing from changing market influences. The hot beverages category has been selected for the research as this is a category which historically has performed well within category management, and the research will help to understand its future, as it develops through the introduction of new innovative products. The category lends itself well to category management as the sector is sold in all UK retailers regardless of their customer profile, and hot beverages has a spread of supplier types ranging from large manufacturers to local bespoke products. This includes category partners' and non-category partners' in both branded and non-branded product areas. A total of 18 qualitative interviews will be carried out across the category, and as this is a large sample size it is hoped will deliver meaningful insight and findings to both academia and the food and drink industry. The research will form the basis of academic journal outputs from a supplier and retailer perspective. The research will contribute to the literature by using relevant data from gaining privileged access to senior category managers in both manufacturing and retailing. It is positioned within marketing, retailing, and supply-chain literature, and also theoretically positioned within the value creation and trust literature.

Appendix 3.8

Participant Consent Form

Participant Consent Form - Michael Benson DBA

Research Title: Value Creation in Category Management Relationships: A Comparative Analysis

Please answer the following questions by ticking the response that applies:

- | | |
|--|-------|
| 1. I have read the Information sheet for this study and have had the details of the study explained to me. | Y / N |
| 2. My questions about the study have been answered to my satisfaction and I understand that I may ask further questions at any point. | Y / N |
| 3. I understand that I am free to withdraw from the study within the time limits outlined in the Information Sheet, without giving a reason for my withdrawal or to decline to answer any particular questions in the study without any consequences to my future treatment by the researcher. | Y / N |
| 4. I agree to provide information to the researchers under the conditions of confidentiality set out in the Information Sheet. | Y / N |
| 5. I wish to participate in the study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet. | Y / N |
| 6. I consent to the information collected for the purposes of this research study, once anonymised (so that I cannot be identified), to be used for any other research purposes. | Y / N |

Participant's Signature: _____

Participant's Name (Printed): _____

Date: _____

Contact Details: _____

Researcher's Signature: _____

Researcher's Name (Printed): _____

Researcher's Contact Details: _____

Please keep your copy of the consent form and information sheet together

Appendix 3.9

Ethics Approval Letter

From: Benson, Michael <sbsmb8@exchange.shu.ac.uk>
To: Nicholson, John; m.benson@shu.ac.uk
Cc: Bennehan, Claire; Lynn, Tony
Subject: RE: Ethics Feedback

Message Interview Schedule.docx (127 KB) Participant Briefing rev1.docx (47 KB) Rev1 shurec-2a MCB.docx (312 KB) Risk Assessment DBA Research.docx (71 KB)

Dear John

Thank you for the feedback regarding my Ethics submission.

Please note my comments below in red in response to the comments, along with the updated attachments to justify the recommendations have been actioned.

Please let me know if you need any further detail or clarification.

Kind regards
Michael

From: Nicholson, John [<mailto:sbsjn4@exchange.shu.ac.uk>]
Sent: 15 September 2016 13:24
To: m.benson@shu.ac.uk
Cc: Bennehan, Claire; Lynn, Tony
Subject: RE: Ethics Feedback

Please find below the feedback from your application to the SBS Research Ethics Committee on 21st July 2016. This was dealt with by Chairs Action

RESEARCH ETHICS REVIEWER'S FEEDBACK FORM (SHUREC3)

Principal investigator : Micheal Benson **Reference number:** SBS109

Other investigators: Peter Schofield

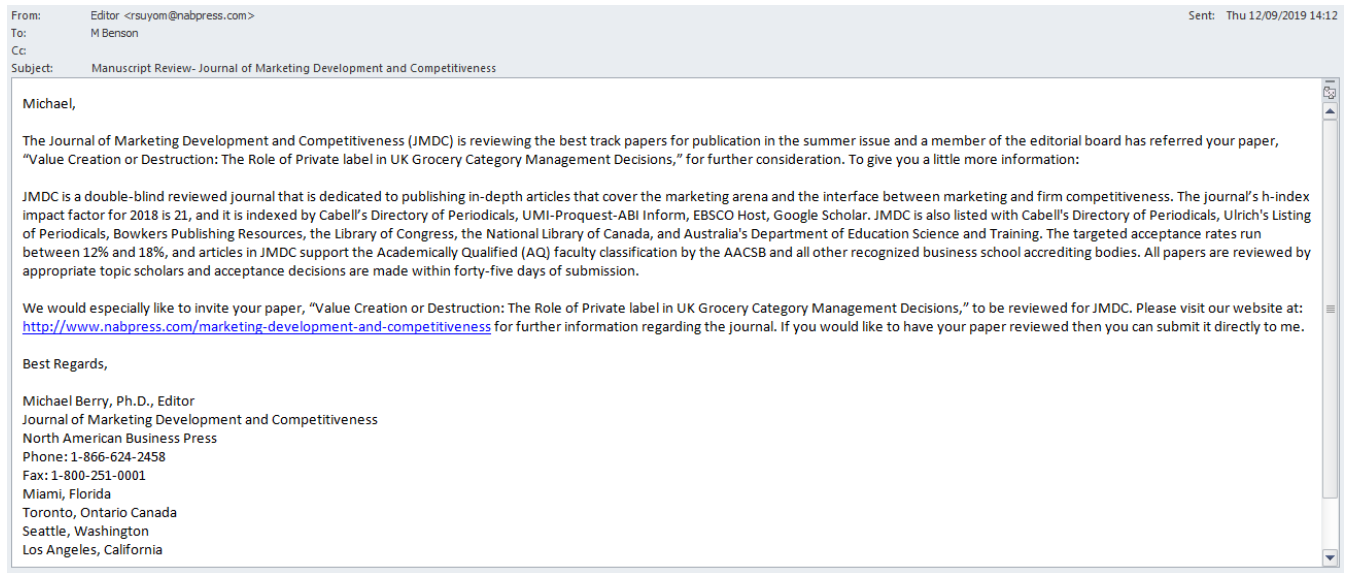
Title of project:
Value creation in category management relationships.....

The Committee agreed the application should be (tick one box):

Appendix 4 – Research Conference Referrals

Appendix 4.1

Journal of Marketing Development and Competitiveness - Referred Confirmation (September 2019)



Appendix 4.2

Full paper presented at 2019 BAM Conference at Aston University

BAM 2019 Conference

*Building and Sustaining High Performance Organisations during Uncertain Times:
Challenges and Opportunities*

Aston University, Birmingham

3rd - 5th September 2019

Research Title (Full Paper)

Value Creation or Destruction: The Role of Private label in UK Grocery Category
Management Decisions

Authors

Authors: Benson, Michael C., Beresford, Paul and Hirst, Craig

Authors: Contact Details

Lead Author: Michael Benson m.benson@shu.ac.uk

Paul Beresford p.beresford@shu.ac.uk

Craig Hirst c.hirst@shu.ac.uk

University Affiliation

Sheffield Business School, Sheffield Hallam University, City Campus, Howard Street,
Sheffield, S1 1WB.

Key words: Category Management, Retailing, Value Creation, Value Destruction, No Value, Loyalty, Branded, Non-Branded, Own-label, Private-label, Change, Insight.

Word count: 5252 (Ex Tables, References)

Introduction

Category management is a collaborative approach between food manufacturers (suppliers) and retailers to manage product categories rather than individual brands (IGD, 2020; Gooner *et al.*, 2011; Hubner, 2011; Nielsen, Karolefski and Heller, 2006). Category decision making is a fundamental aspect and output of category management and this process is now used extensively in the UK grocery sector. This research is to explore value co-creation and value co-destruction in a category management relationship within the context of the increased use of private label in the UK grocery sector. Kantar Worldpanel (2020); IGD (2020); Shopper Intelligence (2020); Mintel Academic (2020) state consumers are switching to unbranded label products at an exponential rate to take advantage of lower prices and improved quality. Today, private label is holistically the biggest brand in the world (Lincoln and Thomassen 2008). IGD (2020) state its growth is outpacing that of national brands, and, in countries with established private label markets such as the UK, consumer acceptance of private label products is significant. There is growing acceptance that private label are just as good as traditional branded products. In some cases, private label goods have moved into premium product territory due to improvements in actual quality and consumer quality perceptions (Lincoln and Thomassen 2008; Dunne and Narasimhan 1999). UK premium supermarket Booths (2019) say that their private label fresh ready meals range is of a higher quality than branded equivalents, as they strive to ensure only fresh, traceable ingredients are used. Private label products are no longer competing on price alone and now have lines developed to respond to specific consumer needs, such as organic, gluten, wheat or milk-free. According to McNeill and Wyeth (2011) retailers find private label to be an attractive option as they provide higher margins and in turn greater profitability. They state that alongside higher margins they generate strong visual identity and brand message to help retain consumers and increase consumer loyalty. Recently food manufacturers (suppliers) have been concerned with the growth in private label products as they have progressed from generic cheaper alternatives lagging in technology and quality to taking shape as products comparable with the true brands (McNeill and Wyeth 2011). McNeill and Wyeth (2011) state that premium private label is now comparable to international brands where effective marketing has directly influenced consumer buying behaviour. IGD (2019) state that the growth in private label purchasing by consumers is growing exponentially and shoppers are switching to private label in all three of their product marketing tiers (basic, standard, and premium). Makkonen and Olkkonen (2017) state that value is created, or not, in

collaborative business relationships, and have begun to explore and map the relationship between value co-creation, no creation and co-destruction in interorganisational relationships.

This research investigates to what extent value is co-created for private-label food manufacturers (suppliers) and the retail buyer in a category management relationship. As the UK grocery sector has experienced a significant shift from branded to private label (own label), the findings will be of interest to category management practitioners. The research employs a qualitative study using one-hour interviews of senior category managers from private label and branded suppliers alongside interviews with retail buyers. All participants are senior decision makers within their organisations, and in response to recommendations made by Lindholm and Olkkonen (2008), this study encapsulates privileged data due to the seniority of the participants. The participants used within the study are made up of 25 practitioners with two-thirds from the supplier side and the remainder from the retailer side. The research findings reveal that the co-creation of value by a private label supplier will contribute to a strong category management relationship in the same way as traditional branded suppliers. Furthermore, it may well lead to the private label supplier being appointed as the category captain; something that was not possible previously as the branded suppliers always dominated the market. The next section will detail the research aims and objectives, along with the research question.

The Research

Research Aim:

To explore the position of private label products within the UK grocery product mix, and examine if private label suppliers can aspire to the role of category captain in a changing market, and do they co-create value, add no value or cause value co-destruction within a category management relationship.

Research objectives:

- To explore the shifting position of UK private label within the UK grocery product mix
- To ascertain if the private label manufacturer (supplier) can aspire to the role of category captain
- To determine whether a private label manufacturer (supplier) co-creates value, adds no-value, or causes value co-destruction within a category management relationship in a changing UK grocery marketplace

Research Question:

What is the changing role of private label products within the UK grocery product mix, and can a private label manufacturer (supplier) co-create value, add no value or cause value co-destruction within category management relationship in a changing marketspace?

The following section explains the literature that has been used within the research. This includes the theoretical lens of value, value co-creation and value co-destruction and the effects of S-DL. The contextual lens of the research focuses upon category management, category captain and UK private label grocery products.

Literature Review

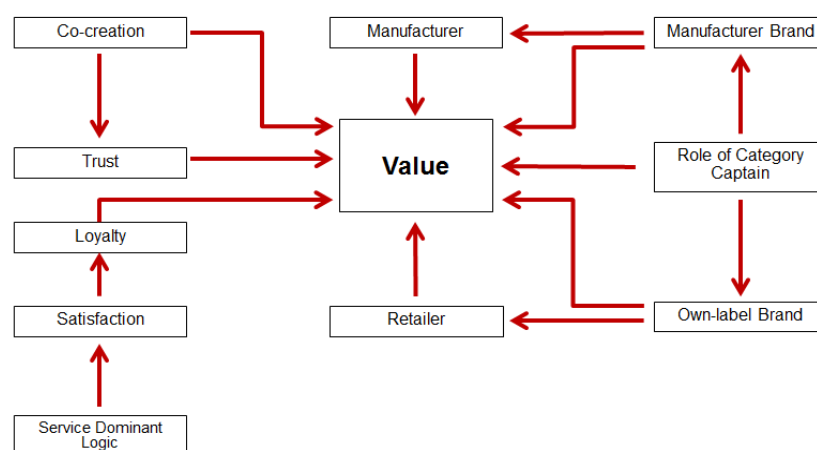
Category management research is currently mainly empirically based using a quantitative approach, and this scholars believe does not directly address the issues faced by the practitioners (Kurtuluş, Nakkas, and Ülkü 2014; Kurtuluş and Toktay 2011; Chun and Cadeaux, 2010; Lindblom *et al.*, 2009; Georges and Eggert, 2003). As the UK grocery retail marketplace is changing, the experience and understanding of the practitioners has become increasingly more important for future research. Qualitative research seeks to understand these issues by asking questions of the practitioners (Kurtuluş, Nakkas, and Ülkü, 2014; Kurtuluş and Toktay 2011; Chun and Cadeaux, 2010; Lindblom *et al.*, 2009; Georges and Eggert, 2003). Nielsen, Karolefski and Heller (2006) state, the gathering of information by the suppliers and retailers is critical to understanding the impact of category management. IGD (2019); Kantar Worldpanel (2020) claim consumers are switching from well-established branded products to retailer private-label or own-label products (unbranded) as the quality and value for money has improved over recent years. Kurtuluş and Toktay (2011) state that a non-branded product supplier has little control over the category management relationship and is unlikely to be considered as category partner or category captain. These are suppliers chosen by the retailer to manage the category on their behalf and make recommendations for the category. How then does a non-branded supplier develop a category management relationship with a retailer to add value to meet the retailer criteria and then progress to category captain? Aastrup *et al.* (2007) argue that value creation is central to category management, and that the closer the supplier-retailer interactions the greater potential for increased value creation through sharing information and resources; improved co-ordinated tactical efforts and an alignment of category aims and objectives.

Value creation is fundamental to category management; initially this was placed with the retailer where they had to create value themselves for the consumer (Gummerus, 2013). More recently the introduction of S-DL has placed value creation within the interactions between the supplier and the retailer (Vargo and Lusch (2008). Category management by nature brings the supplier and the retailer closer together, and IGD (2019) state that the success of category management in the next few years will come from more collaborative working between the supplier and the retailer to create more innovative consumer solutions. Chandler and Vargo (2011) argue that co-creation exists in a collaborative relationship, however if the relationship is not equitable then value co-destruction can occur. This argument is supported by Echeverri and Skalen (2011) who say it is the downside to the relationship, for example where there is no alignment of supplier and retailer strategies. Finally, Makkonen and Olkkeeonen (2017) have explored the idea of value no-creation which is where both the supplier and retailer get no benefit from the relationship. Neither party gain or lose from the relationship, but as both parties enter into a category management to deliver value for the consumer it can lead to value co-destruction in the future. The next section will review the conceptual model used in the research with value being the theoretical lens of the research, and category management, the category captain and private label products the context of the research.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework in Fig.1 shows the linkages between the perceived variables of the research. These formed the basis of the semi-structured interview research questions asked of the practitioners. The interviews have been transcribed and currently being analysed and it is hoped responses will validate the accuracy of the variables and introduce new ones to the framework.

Fig. 1 Conceptual Framework - Value Creation in Category Management Relationships:
A Comparative Analysis



Research Methodology

The research is inspired by value theory, and sits within the paradigm of interpretivism, having a subjectivist epistemology and ontology. The paper has adopted a phenomenological methodology to understand the question using practitioner's views of their daily activity. This explores how private label; category management and the category captain appear to be in the minds of the practitioners rather than the actual phenomena themselves. Lewis and Staehler (2010) state that in phenomenology things do not just appear they need to appear in our conscious minds and so can be believed to be true. The research grounded in phenomenology uses participant discourse analysis. Cassell and Symon (2011) state discourse analysis is concerned with how individuals use language in specific social contexts including the workplace. They state that research participants are able to produce an explanation of themselves, their world and construct their own realities. In this research so enable the participants to openly explain what they believe to be their individual reality within category management activities and how they perform their roles. Cassell and Symon (2011) argue that critical discourse analysis is underpinned with a social constructionist epistemology and assumes that where people construct their own reality helps them to 'make sense' of it, but also to challenge ideals that exist within their world.

Saldanha and O'Brien (2013) states that, if inductive research is used then the real world of the participants will start to emerge, and so the methodology followed an inductive approach. In the research the practitioners provide answers they believe correct at the point of interview. Many of the initial one-hour interviews were followed by a further one-hour interview once the researchers had transcribed the first session that required further investigation. This included asking further questions and expanding the points raised at the first interview. The interviews consisted of semi-structured questions, and so allowed the practitioners to expand on the interviewer's question in any way they felt appropriate. The interviewer was however able to keep the interview relevant to the question by keeping referring to the aims and objectives of the research. The research was conducted interviewing both the manufacturer (supplier) and the retailer to ensure both perspectives were obtained. The semi-structured questions allow the participants to freely discuss their day to day activities from the privileged position of a category management and buying decision maker. The main research was able to secure participants from having strong networking contacts from previously working in the UK grocery sector. The participants varied from senior operational managers to strategic decision makers including main board level. The difficulties associated with engaging with this level of

management, and the privileged data this produces is seen as a significant contribution to the research.

The research has produced over 150,000 words of verbatim data from voice recordings and then transcribed by the lead author. The interview transcripts were coded and divided into two main sections being from the suppliers and the retailers. The transcripts were coded with NVivo software, and it was surprising most of the themes that emerged were consistent across both groups. There were approximately 160 nodes (codes) established within both the supplier and retailer folders, and this was then further analysed to produce three main themes. These were in line with the research aim and objectives, notably the participants' view on the positioning of private label, the impact of private label suppliers on category management, and if it is possible for a private label supplier to become the category captain. The findings from the three themes are discussed in the next section but are still being analysed. It is hoped by the time the paper is submitted in June the findings will be complete, and justified recommendations, contribution, management implications and further research established. The full paper will still be in the final stages of development, but subject to feedback and input from academics at the BAM 2019 conference the paper will be ready for writing up as a journal submission. The authors will submit the paper to the British Journal of Management (BJM) Journal. The main findings from the data are discussed in the next section, and these findings lead to the contributions and limitations of the research and the identification of areas for future research.

Findings and Discussion

The paper is still in development and not all the transcripts have yet been analysed, though the full findings will be available in the June 2019 submission. Early findings support the view that private-label grocery products are growing in popularity and reveals that the co-creation of value by a private label supplier will contribute to a strong category management relationship in the same way as traditional branded suppliers. Furthermore, it may well lead to the private label supplier being appointed as the category captain; something that was not possible previously as the branded suppliers always dominated the market.

Research objective one was to explore the shifting position of UK private label within the UK grocery product mix. Consumers are switching from branded to private label, a claim that is also supported by the literature (Kantar Worldpanel, 2020; IGD 2020; Shopper Intelligence (2020); Mintel 2020). Kantar (2020) state, consumers are switching at a rate of 6% every year,

and this is predicted to rise even further every year for the foreseeable future. This change signifies a shift in consumer behaviour where consumers are looking to benefit from lower price and recognise that private label quality has improved. This is being reported as one of the main reasons for the growth in market share of the Discounters including Aldi and Lidl. Findings from this research demonstrate that this shift in consumer purchasing behaviour has moved the attention of retailers towards the private label manufacturers. The retailers operate very stringent food safety and quality controls which the private label manufacturers must adhere to. Private label manufacturers are at the behest of the retailers, as it is the retailer that owns the brand and if the private label suppliers cannot compete commercially the retailer will quickly change supplier. The private label only suppliers are therefore reporting they are now operating under more pressure than the branded suppliers as they are manufacturing products directly for the retailers.

Research objective two was to ascertain if the private label manufacturer (supplier) can aspire to the role of category captain. As consumers require more flexibility private label manufacturers need to be more innovative and be in touch with worldwide trends. Private label suppliers operate to tighter operating profit margins and cannot afford to provide the same levels of resource as do their branded equivalents. This puts them in a weaker position for category captaincy. Branded suppliers have historically made the recommendations to the buyer; however, the early findings reveal that this category captain role can now be fulfilled by private label suppliers. Deeper insight and knowledge of the sector and the shopper are required to satisfy the buyer. The data indicates that private label suppliers are often closer to their products and categories than the branded equivalents and so put them in a stronger position. Some of the branded suppliers, who supply different categories, for example hot beverages, adopt a more generic approach to category management which viewed negatively by buyers as each category is different and should be treated differently. It's reported that smaller suppliers and private label suppliers who specialise have a much more flexible approach and deeper knowledge and understanding of their sector to provide the buyer with this differentiated insight and new and creative ideas. If any supplier cannot produce new ideas and indeed if trust towards the category manager is low, then the buyer will turn to other suppliers.

The final objective of the research was to determine whether a private label manufacturer (supplier) co-creates value, adds no-value or causes value co-destruction within a category management relationship in a changing UK grocery marketplace. The findings state that as

category captains private label supplier are able to co-create value and often have multiple categories within their portfolios to create generic category management strategies. Effective category management is where the category is a unique entity and strategies are introduced specific to that category only. A generic approach does not work. As private label or own brand is growing with consumer choice and private label suppliers are often only involved with a single category, they have a much deeper understanding of the category market than does a company with multiple categories. The concern for the private label suppliers that can lead to co-destruction is where the retailer expects to make a relatively high margin at the expense of the private label supplier or will simply take their own label product to another private label supplier who is happy to make a small margin.

The research findings suggest that the new reality has made the opportunity for the private label to aspire to category captain if they can create retailer specific strategies aligned to both businesses and create a competitive advantage for that retailer. One of the most controversial issues that have emerged is that the category management function needs to evolve to from a management function to be a leadership function. Traditionally, category management has been the supplier category team looking holistically at the category range, merchandising and store location with a detailed understanding of the retailer customer's competitors. This service operated independently of the supplier's sales team so it would remain objective considering the whole category first and foremost, and their own branded products secondary. The category function was managerial and sat in the middle of the supplier's organisation and the retailer, with limited influence to make recommendations only based on insight and research. The retailer would make the final decision and often encourage other suppliers to input their category recommendations, and so taking the responsibility away from the preferred supplier. This caused frustration with the preferred supplier as they often contributed resource and significant time to propose the recommendations. The retailers have been unhappy with the service provided by the preferred supplier, arguing they only propose data from third party sources rather than taking an entrepreneurial approach to making game changing recommendations. The suppliers are equally frustrated and argue that to make step changes in the category they need to take a lead role and be given the freedom to lead both the supplier (their own organisation) and the retailer with the best overall category decision. This will encourage them to think deeper about the retailer's consumer demographic, and what really needs to be implemented into the category to make a significant difference. The next section will review the contribution of the research for both academic and practice.

Contribution

This section will explain the contributions of the research to academia and practice. It is the main author's desire to close the gap between academia and practice where the literature reflects the activities of practice and are not just theoretical. In response the practitioners will follow the academic recommendations to stop the existing culture of solving problems through 'firefighting'. The quality and relevance of the data established from the researcher through gaining unique and privileged access to senior category management practitioners has significant contribution to the literature. The data is 'rich' and presents the everyday real issues faced by the industry decision makers considering both the supplier and retailer perspective.

Category management literature is limited, and during researching the literature it was found that most of the academic journals are pre 2010, and the latest book published in 2006. Practitioner category management information is kept up to date through the work of the IGD who have an insights department focused on UK grocery category management. The next contribution is that the research has identified the weakness of the detail in existing category management literature as it discusses the role of the category captain which has now been replaced by the preferred supplier status in either branded or private label suppliers. The papers recommend marketing and retailing academic research this area further and use more qualitative studies to gather data relevant to daily category management practice.

Referring back to the research aim: To explore the position of private label products within the UK grocery product mix, and examine if private label suppliers can aspire to the role of category captain in a changing market, and do they co-create value, add no value or cause value co-destruction within a category management relationship, it is evident the research has achieved this and contributions to academia and practice made. The research explores the co-creation or destruction of value in the use of private label products within UK grocery category management relationships. The consumer switching to unbranded products has facilitated the focus on the differences between branded and non-branded suppliers, and the use of sharing resources including data for improved consumer insight. This includes how companies progress to being selected as the category captain (category partner); and why certain suppliers are selected over others (Kurtuluş, Nakkas, and Ülkü, 2014). The existing literature is limited addressing problems mainly from a quantitative retailer perspective, so the research includes both the supplier and retailer perspectives using qualitative methods. The significance of the supplier remains important as they often commit most of the resources within the sharing

process and add the most value (Gooner *et al.*, 2011). The research has found that is no longer necessary, and the provision of resources known as a 'marketing contribution' is no longer necessary. Private label suppliers, who historically work on lower margins than branded suppliers can now be considered for category captaincy. The research has identified that the retailers want the suppliers to be more imaginative and entrepreneurial when making recommendations for the category. The recommendations also need to have that retailer's consumer at the heart of the strategy, and so relevant to that retailer.

There will be a contribution to marketing and retailing theory, value co-creation and value co-destruction theory, and business relationship and category management theory. The research will also help practitioners to see the importance of value co-creation in category management relationships, and the private label suppliers to recognise they are now very much part of the process and able of aspiring to the category management role. The author presented the research at the June 2018 Institute of Grocery Distribution, IGD Shopper Marketing and Category Management Conference in London (IGD, 2018). This was the first time in the twelve-year history of the conference that an academic has been allowed to present to the audience of over 300 suppliers and retailers. The presentation was very well received by the delegates, and this has led to many of the practitioners wanting to work with the lead author and look to SHU becoming a Centre of Excellence for Category Management. The lead author has also been asked to sit on the committee of the Category Landscapers (2020) forum, which is a committee of senior category managers from leading blue-chip fmcg grocery companies. The author is an ex-practitioner and wishes to close the gap to ensure the theory reflects practice, and practitioners learn from academia. Academic journal publications will also result from the research. The final section of the paper will conclude the research and make recommendations for further research due to the limitations of this study.

Conclusion and Further Research

To conclude, the contributions that have been made from this research are shown in points (1) (2) and (3).

1. The first contribution is the research has closed the gap between academia and real-life practice. The aim of the paper was to explore the position of private label products within the UK grocery product mix, and examine if private label suppliers can aspire to the role of category captain in a changing market, and do they co-create value, add no value or cause value co-destruction within a category management relationship. The context of the research focused

on the category management literature, and by use of qualitative interviews established the views of the practitioners to help to bring the literature up to date. Previous studies are quantitative and have never got close enough to the practitioners to try and understand their perspective. The research was also taken from a supplier and retailer perspective. Once the literature is updated the key author is confident that the practitioners will engage with it further and use academic support to help them address the current industry challenges. Further qualitative studies are required to supplement the findings of this study, and it is suggested using a wider range of categories and participants. Once a platform of practitioner opinion is found a bigger quantitative study across the full UK grocery sector would increase the number of participants and reflect the needs of the wider category sector. The qualitative studies are still required first to ensure the questions asked in the quantitative study are relevant to practitioner needs.

2. Understand if the private label supplier can aspire to the role of category captain. The research shows that both parties believe there is a bigger opportunity for the private label supplier to aspire to the category lead or 'preferred supplier' role within the category management relationship. The term 'category captain' is not used very often now in UK category management despite the claims in the literature the role is still dominant. Retailers require all their suppliers to have an equal opportunity to provide differentiated, almost entrepreneurial recommendations to the category and ensure the strategy reflects the needs of the retailer and their consumer. Further research is required to establish if the category captain role is still prevalent in the USA grocery market and the literature updated accordingly. Retailers argue that the role of the private label supplier will become more important as consumers switch to private label and specific strategies around private label will need to be introduced. Private label products also meet the needs of point (1) as the products are suited to the individual needs of retailer's shoppers and unique to that retailer only.

3. Traditionally branded suppliers were the only suppliers who can co-create value within a category management relationship as they were often selected to be the category captain due to the resources, they were able to afford to the retailer. This 'marketing contribution' was made up of a payment to support the category, the use of analysts paid for by the supplier but based in the retailer's offices, data and insight and regular category meetings between the category captain and the retailer. The recommendations did not always create value, and often disappointed other category suppliers including the private label suppliers as their products

were not always considered. The category captain favoured their own brands. The growth in the popularity of private label and the needs of the retailer to be differentiated has led to the growth in own-label products. These give the retailer a higher margin, retailer brand recognition and the ability to quickly introduce and discontinue products if they are not selling. Private label is often tailored to that retailers' consumers and meet the demographic expectations of their shoppers. Quality in private label has improved in recent years, and as the selling prices are less than brands consumers continue to switch. Branded manufacturers are often multi-category suppliers and only have generic strategies within category management and so create value co-destruction. Different categories require different strategies, and this is an opportunity for further research to review the use of private label suppliers as preferred suppliers within a range of categories. Private label suppliers usually concentrate on one category only, and like smaller niche suppliers have a wider understanding of that categories market. They can then recommend store specific category recommendations which are equitable for the brands within the category, but at the same time raise the profile of own brand. As the retailers require a more entrepreneurial approach to category recommendations there is less of a need for too much data. Private label suppliers do not always have the margin to purchase data, but providing they have the key data a more creative and retailer specific recommendation to category strategy co-creates value. Private label suppliers are therefore now as likely to work as a category partner with the retailer as any. This finding disagrees with Kurtuluş, Nakkas, and Ülkü (2014) who state that private label suppliers are unlikely to be considered for the role of category captain due to their limited resources and margin aspirations. they do not have the marketing budgets enjoyed by the bigger brands. As the market is changing the traditional approach to category management is no longer enough to manage the assortment, as it requires the specialised knowledge of suppliers who are experts in their product area. Large brands often have multiple brands within their portfolio that are often from un-connected categories and simply operate a generic approach. The detail afforded by private label and niche suppliers are what the retailers are looking for to provide insight into the needs of the consumer and meeting the growing expectation of private label.

Finally, the findings contribute to the literature as the role of private label has not been previously considered due to the dominance from the brands. The category captain role changing to a preferred supplier is not discussed in the literature despite this has been happening in practice in the UK for the last five years. Suppliers will however be expected to continue to make category recommendations more from a leadership perspective rather than a

management perspective. The supplier with the most creative ideas that deliver sales to the category will always have a seat at the table with the buyer. The suppliers who only regurgitate data will not be the suppliers providing the category decisions anymore. Further research is needed into how suppliers can fulfil a leadership role over a traditional management role and obtaining this research will be better speaking directly to the practitioners through qualitative research.

The research has limitations as it is a small study of 25 participants from a qualitative perspective. The aim of the study was to understand practitioner's views from a small number of participants; this would not have been possible from a larger quantitative study. However, as now the initial findings are published a quantitative study would attract a larger audience to establish if the findings are consistent across many grocery and chilled food categories. Further research is therefore suggested to satisfy the research limitations.

The authors will present the paper at the 2019 BAM Conference in Aston University in September 2019. The feedback will then be reviewed, and a paper submitted to the British Journal of Management (BJM) or the International Journal of Management Reviews (IJMR) depending upon the suggestions from the academic delegates. The paper will be ready for submission by January 2020.

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Appendix 5 – Research Nodes

Hierarchical Name	Nickname	Aggregate	User Assigned Color
Node			
Nodes\\Retailer			
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Nodes\\Retailer\\Behaviour\\Belief		No	None
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Nodes\\Retailer\\Category Captain		No	None
Nodes\\Retailer\\Category Captain\\Non Captain Supplier		No	None
Nodes\\Retailer\\Category Management	Catman	No	None
Nodes\\Retailer\\Category Management\\Category Review		No	None
Nodes\\Retailer\\Category Management\\Category Teams		No	None
Nodes\\Retailer\\Category Management\\Implants		No	None
Nodes\\Retailer\\Category Management\\Transactional		No	None
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Nodes\\Retailer\\Change\\Importance		No	None
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Nodes\\Retailer\\Collaboration\\Marriage		No	None
Nodes\\Retailer\\Collaboration\\Mutual		No	None
Nodes\\Retailer\\Collaboration\\Pull Push		No	None
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Nodes\\Retailer\\Collaboration\\Work together		No	None
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Nodes\\Retailer\\Commercials\\Economy		No	None
Nodes\\Retailer\\Commercials\\Financials		No	None
Nodes\\Retailer\\Commercials\\KPIs		No	None
Nodes\\Retailer\\Commercials\\Marketing Contribution		No	None

Hierarchical Name	Nickname	Aggregate	User Assigned Color
Nodes\\Retailer\\Commercials\\Performance		No	None
Nodes\\Retailer\\Commercials\\Price Engineering		No	None
Nodes\\Retailer\\Commercials\\Price Inflation		No	None
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Nodes\\Retailer\\Consumers\\Focus Groups		No	None
Nodes\\Retailer\\Consumers\\Purchase		No	None
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Nodes\\Retailer\\Future		No	None
Nodes\\Retailer\\Future\\Success		No	None
Nodes\\Retailer\\Insight		No	None
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Nodes\\Retailer\\Insight\\Differently		No	None
Nodes\\Retailer\\Insight\\Hospitality Insight		No	None
Nodes\\Retailer\\Insight\\Innovation		No	None
Nodes\\Retailer\\Insight\\Not being done		No	None
Nodes\\Retailer\\Insight\\NPD		No	None
Nodes\\Retailer\\Insight\\Open Environment		No	None
Nodes\\Retailer\\Insight\\Opportunity		No	None
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Nodes\\Retailer\\Loyalty		No	None
Nodes\\Retailer\\Power		No	None
Nodes\\Retailer\\Private Label		No	None
Nodes\\Retailer\\Qualitative		No	None
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Nodes\\Retailer\\Recommendations		No	None
Nodes\\Retailer\\Relationships		No	None
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Nodes\\Retailer\\Relationships\\Decision Making	No	None
Nodes\\Retailer\\Relationships\\Personal Relationships	No	None
Nodes\\Retailer\\Relationships\\Personalities	No	None
Nodes\\Retailer\\Relationships\\Understanding	No	None

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Hierarchical Name	Nickname	Aggregate	User Assigned Color
Nodes\\Retailer\\Retailers		No	None
Nodes\\Retailer\\Retailers\\Aggressive Retailers		No	None
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Nodes\\Retailer\\Supermarket Shelf\\Switching		No	None
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Nodes\\Retailer\\Suppliers\\Air Time		No	None
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Nodes\\Retailer\\Suppliers\Expert	No	None
Nodes\\Retailer\\Suppliers\Fair Treatment	No	None
Nodes\\Retailer\\Suppliers\Flexible	No	None
Nodes\\Retailer\\Suppliers\Genuine	No	None
Nodes\\Retailer\\Suppliers\Holistic	No	None

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Hierarchical Name	Nickname	Aggregate	User Assigned Color
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Nodes\\Retailer\\Technology		No	None
Nodes\\Retailer\\Technology\Virtual Reality		No	None
Nodes\\Retailer\\Trending		No	None
Nodes\\Retailer\\Trending\Hunches		No	None
Nodes\\Retailer\\Trust		No	None
Nodes\\Retailer\\Trust\Truth		No	None
Nodes\\Retailer\\Value		No	None
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Nodes\\Retailer\\Value\No Value		No	None
Nodes\\Retailer\\Value\Value Creation		No	None
Nodes\\Retailer\\Value\Value Destruction		No	None
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Nodes\\Supplier

Nodes\\Supplier\\Behaviour	No	None
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Nodes\\Supplier\\Category Captain\Non Captain Supplier	No	None
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Nodes\\Supplier\\Category Management\Category Plans	No	None

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Reports\\Node Structure Report

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Hierarchical Name	Nickname	Aggregate	User Assigned Color
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Hierarchical Name	Nickname	Aggregate	User Assigned Color
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Nodes\\Supplier\\Insight\\Occasion (2)		No	None
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Nodes\\Supplier\\Loyalty		No	None
Nodes\\Supplier\\Power		No	None
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Hierarchical Name	Nickname	Aggregate	User Assigned Color
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Nodes\\Supplier\\Relationships		No	None
Nodes\\Supplier\\Relationships\2-Way Relationship		No	None
Nodes\\Supplier\\Relationships\Business Relationships		No	None
Nodes\\Supplier\\Relationships\Personal Relationships		No	None
Nodes\\Supplier\\Relationships\Transactional Relationship		No	None
Nodes\\Supplier\\Retailer		No	None
Nodes\\Supplier\\Retailer\Buyer		No	None
Nodes\\Supplier\\Retailer\Purchase		No	None
Nodes\\Supplier\\Risk		No	None
Nodes\\Supplier\\Sales		No	None

Nodes\\Supplier\\Sales\Drivers	No	None
Nodes\\Supplier\\Sales\Growth	No	None
Nodes\\Supplier\\Satisfaction	No	None
Nodes\\Supplier\\S-DL	No	None
Nodes\\Supplier\\S-DL\Service Level	No	None
Nodes\\Supplier\\Stakeholders	No	None
Nodes\\Supplier\\Stakeholders\Commitment	No	None
Nodes\\Supplier\\Stakeholders\Competition	No	None
Nodes\\Supplier\\Stakeholders\Competitive Advantage	No	None
Nodes\\Supplier\\Stakeholders\Conflict	No	None
Nodes\\Supplier\\Stakeholders\Curiosity	No	None
Nodes\\Supplier\\Stakeholders\Educationalist	No	None
Nodes\\Supplier\\Stakeholders\Entrepreneur	No	None
Nodes\\Supplier\\Stakeholders\Health	No	None
Nodes\\Supplier\\Strategy	No	None
Nodes\\Supplier\\Supermarket Shelf	No	None
Nodes\\Supplier\\Supermarket Shelf\Product	No	None
Nodes\\Supplier\\Supermarket Shelf\Range	No	None
Nodes\\Supplier\\Suppliers	No	None
Nodes\\Supplier\\Suppliers\Experience	No	None
Nodes\\Supplier\\Suppliers\Expert	No	None
Nodes\\Supplier\\Suppliers\Hero	No	None
Nodes\\Supplier\\Suppliers\Holistic	No	None
Nodes\\Supplier\\Suppliers\Impartiality	No	None
Nodes\\Supplier\\Suppliers\Implants	No	None
Nodes\\Supplier\\Suppliers\Influence	No	None
Nodes\\Supplier\\Suppliers\Information	No	None
Nodes\\Supplier\\Suppliers\Integrity	No	None
Nodes\\Supplier\\Suppliers\JBP	No	None
Nodes\\Supplier\\Suppliers\Key Skills	No	None

Reports\\Node Structure Report

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Hierarchical Name	Nickname	Aggregate	User Assigned Color
Nodes\\Supplier\\Suppliers\Knowledge		No	None
Nodes\\Supplier\\Suppliers\Preferred Supplier		No	None
Nodes\\Supplier\\Suppliers\Premium		No	None
Nodes\\Supplier\\Suppliers\Resource		No	None
Nodes\\Supplier\\Suppliers\Specialism		No	None
Nodes\\Supplier\\Suppliers\Specifications		No	None

Nodes\\Supplier\\Supply Chain	No	None
Nodes\\Supplier\\Sustainability	No	None
Nodes\\Supplier\\Switching	No	None
Nodes\\Supplier\\Technology	No	None
Nodes\\Supplier\\Technology\EPOS	No	None
Nodes\\Supplier\\Technology\Face time	No	None
Nodes\\Supplier\\Technology\Online	No	None
Nodes\\Supplier\\Technology\Technical	No	None
Nodes\\Supplier\\Trending	No	None
Nodes\\Supplier\\Trust	No	None
Nodes\\Supplier\\Trust\Truth	No	None
Nodes\\Supplier\\Value	No	None
Nodes\\Supplier\\Value\Add Value	No	None
Nodes\\Supplier\\Value\Co-creation Value	No	None
Nodes\\Supplier\\Value\Disagreement	No	None
Nodes\\Supplier\\Value\Expectations	No	None
Nodes\\Supplier\\Value\No Value	No	None
Nodes\\Supplier\\Value\Value Creation	No	None
Nodes\\Supplier\\Value\Value Destruction	No	None
Nodes\\Supplier\\Value\Value Drivers	No	None
Nodes\\Supplier\\Value\Value Sales	No	None
Nodes\\Supplier\\Value\Worth	No	None

Appendix 6 – Key Stakeholder testimonials

Appendix 6.1 Retailer: R4 (L, M)

‘The researcher conducted 2 interviews with me. He conducted himself to the highest levels of ethics and professionalism. Everything was explained to me before the interviews commenced, and he sent through the consent form, and participant information before we met. He came to my workplace, so it had a minimal impact on my workday. The research is welcomed as a practitioner of category management for 20 years. The industry is changing, and we need to work with academics to develop the discipline and help each other. This has raised the profile of category management within my organisation and help me to influence the senior team.’

Appendix 6.2 Retailer: R1 (M, P)

‘Thank you for including me in the research. It has helped to focus me and my team on the importance of category management in helping to resolve the endless problems we face due to a competitive marketplace and the introduction of different types of competitors and sales routes.’

Appendix 6.3 Supplier: S8 (L, B/PL)

‘I have had many years working in category for the largest food and drink brands in the UK. Never has such attention been targeted at the sector to raise profile and help align the manufacturers and retail customers closer together. The research focuses on the supply chain to help us find solutions and deliver consumer excellence. A pleasure to be involved and has led to a closer relationship between us and universities. Hopefully, we will see more students entering roles in category on the back of the research.’

Appendix 6.4 Supplier: S1 (M, B/PL)

‘The researcher has significant experience within category management. Its rare to see an individual who has worked as a supplier and retailer in this discipline. In fact, to take this experience into academia is special as it has helped to close the gap between us and universities. The researcher is passionate about category management and is determined to narrow the gap and publish in line with practice, resulting in a much stronger collaboration and meaning within the literature.’

Appendix 6.5 Student: Food Marketing Management (Level 6)

'I worked with the researcher with my final year research project. The question was based on his DBA. I chose this project because it was an applied topic, and I knew the researcher had previously worked in category management and understands the subject. We also had the chance to work with practitioners to see what their reality was in category and compare this to the category literature. The module was a success and my research were selected to be presented to the Category Landscapers (2020) and then to present again at the 2nd Global Conference in Value Creation in New York City'

Appendix 6.6 Student: Food and Nutrition (Level 6)

'The research was the best topic from the choice we were given. I wanted to work in category and saw the opportunity to meet practitioners and work on a subject that will help practice as well as inform the literature. The researcher was an inspiration, but he kept his personal views out of the work with us and his own thesis'

Appendix 7: Interview Data

2017 18 Companies and Interviews (NEW Rev.6)													
Company Detail					Participant Detail		Interviews & Coding						
Supplier / Retailer	Thesis Code	Categories	Size	Brand or PL Premium Mainstream	Thesis Code	Role	1st or 2nd	Date	Interview	Transcribe	Interview Word Count	NVivo Node 1	NVivo Node 2
Supplier	S1 (M, B/PL)	Hot Bevs	M	B / PL	S1 (M, B/PL)	Category Manager	1st	02 11 2016	Y	Y	6,599	Y	Y
Supplier	S1 (M, B/PL)	Hot Bevs	M	B / PL	S1 (M, B/PL)	Category Manager	2nd	13 02 2017	Y	Y	2,990	Y	Y
Supplier	S2 (S, B/PL)	Hot Bevs	S	B / PL	S2 (S, B/PL)	Category Manager	1st	09 11 2016	Y	Y	6,129	Y	Y
Supplier	S2.1 (S, B/PL)	Hot Bevs	S	B / PL	S2.1 (S, B/PL)	Commercial Manager	1st	09 11 2016	Y	Y	5,588	Y	Y
Supplier	S3 (S, PL)	Hot Bevs	S	PL	S3 (S, PL)	Category Manager	1st	18 01 2017	Y	Y	7,742	Y	Y
Supplier	S4 (L, B)	Hot Bevs	L	B	S4 (L, B)	Category Manager	1st	01 02 2017	Y	Y	8,640	Y	Y
Supplier	S5 (S, B)	Hot Bevs	S	B	S5 (S, B)	Category Manager	1st	08 02 2017	Y	Y	7,129	Y	Y
Supplier	S6 (L, B)	Hot Bevs	L	B	S6 (L, B)	Category Manager	1st	15 02 2017	Y	Y	5,616	Y	Y
Supplier	S7 (L, B)	Hot Bevs	L	B	S7 (L, B)	Category Manager	1st	15 03 2017	Y	Y	5,977	Y	Y
Supplier	S8 (L, B/PL)	Dairy	L	B / PL	S8 (L, B/PL)	Category Manager	1st	01 08 2017	Y	Y	6,369	Y	Y
Supplier	S8 (L, B/PL)	Dairy	L	B / PL	S8 (L, B/PL)	Category Manager	2nd	22 04 2018	Y	Y	1,587	Y	Y
Supplier	S9 (S, B/PL)	Sauces	S	B / PL	S9 (S, B/PL)	Category Manager	1st	02 08 2017	Y	Y	7,821	Y	Y
Supplier	S10 (L, B)	Bread	L	B	S10 (L, B)	Category Manager	1st	01 11 2017	Y	Y	5,092	Y	Y
Supplier	S10 (L, B)	Bread	L	B	S10 (L, B)	Category Manager	2nd	10 04 2018	Y	Y	1,753	Y	Y
Supplier	S11 (L, PL)	Cooked Meat	L	PL	S11 (L, PL)	Category Manager	1st	28 11 2017	Y	Y	4,524	Y	Y
Retailer	R1 (M, P)	Hot Bevs	M	P	R1 (M, P)	Buyer	1st	02 05 2017	Y	Y	6,018	Y	Y
Retailer	R2 (L, M)	Dairy	L	M	R2 (L, M)	Buyer	1st	16 06 2017	Y	Y	5,806	Y	Y
Retailer	R2 (L, M)	Dairy	L	M	R2 (L, M)	Buyer	2nd	01 03 2018	Y	Y	1,662	Y	Y
Retailer	R3 (L, P)	Dairy	L	P	R3 (L, P)	Buyer	1st	05 05 2017	Y	Y	4,846	Y	Y
Retailer	R4 (L, M)	Grocery	L	M	R4 (L, M)	Buyer	1st	25 10 2017	Y	Y	7,266	Y	Y
Retailer	R4 (L, M)	Grocery	L	M	R4 (L, M)	Buyer	2nd	02 03 2018	Y	Y	2,856	Y	Y
Retailer	R4.1 (L, M)	Grocery	L	M	R4.1 (L, M)	Board Director	1st	15 02 2018	Y	Y	6,182	Y	Y
Retailer	R5 (L, M)	Grocery	L	M	R5 (L, M)	Category Manager	1st	28 06 2017	Y	Y	5,560	Y	Y
Retailer	R5 (L, M)	Grocery	L	M	R5 (L, M)	Category Manager	2nd	06 02 2018	Y	Y	2,367	Y	Y
Retailer	R6 (S, M)	Grocery	S	M	R6 (S, M)	Buyer	1st	28 06 2017	Y	Y	5,565	Y	Y
										Total Word	131,684		