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**Generating Shared Value:
A Corporate Branding Perspective for SMEs
(Running until the end of August 2014)**

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Summary of the project

This research project investigates the emerging concept of shared value generation, which is a strategic approach for reinventing capitalism to create benefits for both the society AND organizations (Porter and Kramer, 2011). Having close links to Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) or discussions evolving around sustainability, the concept of shared value involves creating economic value in such a way that also creates value by addressing the needs and challenges of society as well, and so connects social progress with business success.

While legitimacy of many large businesses has fallen to levels not seen in recent years because of environmental, social or ethical scandals, some highly successful Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) seem to have intuitively adopted the concept of shared value as a way to generate trust amongst consumers and other stakeholders: For instance, the success of the UK-based smoothie maker Innocent Drinks (www.innocentdrinks.com) is based on two ingredients -unwavering commitment to keep their smoothie 100 % natural and a brand that is natural, engaging, and humorous. The company identity reflects the passion, vision, and personality of its founders, whose work ethos relate to the shared value concept. Ultimately, their form of shared value is ingrained in their history, lived throughout the entire company, and so includes their overall corporate brand which evolves around the five key values "Be Natural, Be Entrepreneurial, Be Generous, Be Commercial, and Be Responsible". More regional examples that work on the same principle include companies like Oekosolve (Liechtenstein) that promises to offer "easy and clean products" (www.oekosolve.com).

If shared value creation is to become a strategic branding opportunity, internal business processes and structures need to be in place that would allow meeting the aim of creating shared value intentions. Also, the impact of the market-related context on shared value generation needs to be understood as the SME is not an independent entity, but couched within a specific social system. Against this background, the purpose of this study is to develop a deeper understanding of the impact of 1) business processes and structures (organisational context) and 2) market-related context on shared value generation. In order to do so, the research project follows a mixed-method approach (Action learning/Action Research approach; in-depth interviews and survey) that builds on research results by the researchers which identified CSR entrepreneurs as 'ideal candidates' that create shared value as part of their corporate brands.