


Recent Research Progress on Corporate Social Responsibility of Hotels[†]

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[†] Presented at the 2nd International Electronic Conference on Processes: Process Engineering—Current State and Future Trends (ECP 2023), 17–31 May 2023; Available online: <https://ecp2023.sciforum.net/>.

Abstract: The term “corporate social responsibility” (CSR) refers to a set of voluntary guidelines put in place by businesses to demonstrate their willingness to take responsibility for their actions and contribute to the betterment of their surrounding communities with environmental and social factors. This management action is based on the idea that businesses can and should care about the world around them by incorporating social and environmental issues into their daily activities and relationships with their stakeholders, as CSR helps companies balance economic, environmental, and social goals while meeting shareholder and stakeholder expectations. This research study synthesizes the literature in the duration of 2003–2023 on corporate social responsibility (CSR) in the hotel business. Articles that covered hotels with a 3BL (triple bottom line) approach were included in the current study. A total of 57 articles have been selected on the basis of “CSR-Practices”, “CSR-Reporting”, and “CSR-Impacts” with both the hotels’ and customers’ perspectives as inclusion criteria for article selection. The internal and external CSR impacts on hotel businesses were highlighted, and customer reactions to CSR were also studied. There are some significant gaps found in the understanding of the linkage between corporate financial performance (CFP) and corporate social responsibility in the hotel sector. The local community, which is an essential CSR stakeholder, was found to be under-researched in the existing literature. Research gaps such as the linkage between CFP and CSR, the role of local communities as CSR stakeholders, and corresponding future research dimensions were also suggested.

Keywords: corporate social responsibility; CSR practices; CSR reporting; CSR impacts; corporate financial performance; hotels



Citation: Singh, A.B.; Khandelwal, C.; Sarkar, P.; Dangayach, G.S.; Meena, M.L. Recent Research Progress on Corporate Social Responsibility of Hotels. *Eng. Proc.* **2023**, *37*, 41. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ECP2023-14726>

Academic Editor: Gade Pandu Rangaiah

Published: 25 May 2023



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1. Introduction

The interest in studying policies and procedures, especially those of major corporations, has increased over the past decade. There has been much talk about corporations’ social responsibilities since the global financial and economic crisis [1–3]. Private corporations are under growing pressure from society to adopt management strategies that emphasize the interests of the company’s many stakeholder groups [1].

There has been a great deal of scholarly focus on CSR in response to the growing interest in the actions of organizations and businesses in the public eye [2]. Practitioner interest in CSR and stakeholder management has also increased [3,4]. Managers are becoming more and more aware that firms are judged not just on their financial performance, but also on their social performance [5].

Furthermore, CSR has become a strategic requirement for many firms today due to the increased demand from various stakeholders and society [6,7]. CSR is being used by

an increasing number of companies throughout the world as a means to increase their credibility, acquire an edge over the competition, and secure their own long-term success [8].

CSR was first proposed by Merrick Dodd, who noted that business leaders should consider the communities from where their company's revenues originate. Economic, legal, ethical, and philanthropic dimensions are all part of the CSR paradigm proposed by Carroll (1979) [9]. According to this concept, a company can pursue both economic and social goals without compromising on either. Businesses should achieve their financial goals and run their operations lawfully, but they must also adhere to ethical norms even if they are not mandated by the government [10].

All CSR definitions boil down to the idea that businesses must serve not just their shareholders but also other interested parties [11]. Stakeholder theory, which has informed much empirical research on CSR, posits that businesses must meet the needs of the many constituencies that make up their operations or risk losing the support of those customers [12]. Customers, workers, investors, suppliers, and local communities are all examples of distinct types of stakeholders [13].

Many facets of CSR have been studied by researchers, including its adoption motivations, the attitudes of employees and customers, and the financial success of businesses (CFP). While there has been an astonishing amount of academic study on CSR, and many hotel chains have made progress toward responsible corporate behavior, there has been a dearth of CSR studies that focus on the hospitality industry. Many authors have brought this to light [14–18]. Furthermore, several research conducted in the past has mostly addressed environmental factors among all the three sustainability pillars namely environmental, social, and economical [19].

Taking into account the foregoing, the goal of this research study is to synthesize the existing research on the subject of corporate social responsibility (CSR) in the hotel business from 2003 to 2023, highlighting the many areas where scholars have focused their attention and providing suggestions for further study.

2. Method of Research

All scholarly publications on hotels published between 2003 and 2023 and indexed in the two most prominent scientific databases (the Science Citation Index and Scopus) have been revised. As a result, the scope of the review was broadened to include both specialized tourism and hospitality publications, and more general academic journals. Corporate social responsibility, hotels, and travel were some of the terms utilized in the search. Only those articles were selected for review from the acquired list of articles that met both criteria (dealing solely with hotels and addressing the problem of CSR from an economic, social, and environmental standpoint). Therefore, publications that focused on hotels but just on environmental elements of CSR were not included, nor those included that focused on other subsectors of the hospitality industry (such as casinos or restaurants) or that mixed hotels with other tourism-related enterprises. Content, methods, and outcomes were evaluated across articles. Thus, the purpose of this paper is to evaluate and synthesize the current business literature concerning the importance of CSR in the hospitality sector. The primary aim of this study is to provide a clear comprehension of what has already been examined and the key discoveries that have been uncovered. The gaps in the current literature are highlighted, and suggestions for future research are offered as a result of this study.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Studies of Corporate Social Responsibility in the Hotel Sector

After conducting the literature review and analyzing the papers' contents, 57 articles covering CSR and the hotel industry between 2003 and 2023 were identified and classified into three categories: (a) CSR practices, (b) CSR reporting, and (c) CSR impacts from consumer and company perspectives. Each segment has its own set of factors and issues under investigation.

3.2. CSR Practices

The first stream of study is to analyze the corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities of hotels (such as philanthropy and contributions) to determine the primary motivations for and challenges to their adoption (one issue that has attracted the attention of more than half of the papers). The range of these activities, the views of managers, and the incorporation of CSR into business strategy are also examined. Throughout this body of study, suggestions for improved CSR practice management are also presented.

Hotels' CSR activities may be broken down into categories: social, economic, and environmental. There are some measurable steps, starting with the economic, followed by the social, and then the environmental. The listed CSR initiatives within the economic component are geared toward protecting consumer rights [20], having adequate tourist data [21], and encouraging its customers to buy regional goods [14,15,21].

Hospitality companies' corporate social responsibility (CSR) efforts within the environmental sphere focus on issues of sustainability and the natural world [16], mitigation of pollution, conservation of energy, control of water and waste, reuse of discarded materials [14,17], connection maintenance, environmental program development, and awareness of or participation in environmental preservation [20,21] or the betterment of vehicular flow and public safety [21]. Hotels engage in a wide variety of corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities, mostly focused on the social component [18], charitable and welfare-oriented deeds [20–22], strong ties to the neighborhood, support for workers' rights [20], creating strategies for inclusiveness, and partnering with colleges and institutions in the area to spread tourist education [21] to ensure that the tourism destination's history and culture are protected and celebrated [14]. To legitimize themselves in the eyes of their stakeholders and attract and retain customers, hotel companies increasingly prioritize CSR initiatives for both humanitarian and economic/competitive reasons (cost reduction, improved image, environmental preservation) [23], for their manager's own personal morals and ethics [24], and pressures from regulators [25,26]. Gu et al., 2013 [20] noted that in China, a hotel manager's political ties might affect how open they are to adopting CSR measures. The operational size, quality retainment and star category of the hotel are not the most important factors in the decision whether to conduct CSR initiatives or not [27]. Instead, financial constraints are the biggest stumbling block [23], as well as managers not understanding what CSR is or not knowing what it means [28]. In general, the views and understanding of CSR held by managers appear to play a pivotal role as either a driver or a barrier to CSR being put into practice. Tsai et al. (2010) found an integrated approach to CSR management by employing complex programs of structural relationships to assist managers of international hotels in choosing CSR programs that are both cost-effective and well suited to achieving the dual "firm-society" goal of enhancing the hotel's competitive position while also positively impacting the local community. The outside-in and inside-out management approaches, based on the Deming cycle of plan-do-check-act, may be employed by large hotel chains and independent motels. In order to be certified, the first group follows CSR requirements, while the second group follows material sufficiency to assure long-term sustainability [29]. According to Levy and Park (2011) [26], Most US CSR programs concentrate on the environment to minimize expenses and improve the company's image. Hotel owners and managers can expect long-term benefits from CSR in the form of higher profitability, stronger worker relationships, and ongoing professional growth. The hotel can also incorporate CSR into its product line as a means of standing out from the competition [30]. CSR has been explicitly integrated into one company's strategy to assist in creating organizational identity, as Martinez 1., 2014 [31] note in their analysis of a case study of an international Spanish hotel chain.

3.3. CSR Reporting

The second school of thought examines "accountability" in CSR reporting and its distribution through ICT. This line of research also assesses and characterizes CSR activities, but it uses "content analysis" in all of its investigations. Most research in this field has

looked at CSR reports and come to the following primary conclusions: there are conflicts between commercial and charitable endeavors [32]; many CSR reports focus on donations and the mention of CSR policies without providing evidence in the field [15]; CSR issues have a positive impact on human resource management, community service, and environmental sustainability [33]; and CSR activities help to increase internal and external legitimacy [19]. Interestingly, while many hotels have stated CSR objectives, only a fraction of them have provided specifics on projects and actual performance [34]. Instead, corporate social responsibility (CSR) systems are not reflected in operations, eco-savings form the basis of environmental performance, compliance with local legislation is the primary goal of labor policy, socioeconomic policies have no bearing on the tourism destination, and commitment to the customer is shallow [18]. Furthermore, firms prioritize financial concerns over environmental and social ones [35]. Findings from other sources, however, indicate that CSR information transmission in the hotel industry is now dispersed throughout the reports and websites of the firms; hence, it is advised that CSR communication is enhanced. Particularly, Pérez, 2015 [36] recommends that hotels reconsider their communicative connection with certain stakeholders, such as suppliers, and take steps to arrange CSR information online. Studies in this line have investigated the reporting procedures of the world's top hotel chains; therefore, they cover practically all geographical areas, unlike the "Practices" line of study. In recent years, there has been less interest in studying this phenomenon.

3.4. CSR Impacts

Thirdly, CSR studies are divided into two categories: (a) studies that examine how CSR relates to hospitality companies' marketing actions and strategies, with the goal of describing or measuring the effect of CSR actions on customers' perceptions and behavioral intentions (external stakeholders); and (b) studies that examine CSR from within the company, with the goal of analyzing the effects of CSR on the company's internal stakeholders. Internal influences are researched more than external ones. The near-total dominance of Asian market research, especially in China, is startling. In addition to structural equation modelling, most research in this topic involves in-depth interviews and content analyses. Quantitative research outperforms qualitative research. Surprisingly, as per the literature available most of the hotel managements largely surveyed regarding potential implications for corporate social performance. Only two pieces in this series poll consumers/customers, and practically all are Chinese. US and Spanish studies seldom exclude Asian buyers.

3.4.1. CSR Marketing

Tourists' propensity to select hotels according to environmental and social criteria has been the focus of studies in the field of external marketing [37,38]. Researchers were trying to identify attributes such as culture and local cuisine and the positive, helpful, and knowledgeable attitude of the staff as factors that add to the overall quality of the stay. Customers respect the company's connection to the local community, its political position, workplace culture, purpose and vision, and environmental policies, with a focus on the latter two in terms of loyalty, price-sensitivity, service quality, and brand identification [37]. Several research studies suggest that CSR affects customers' purchase intentions for hotels with significant ornamental design. Externally focused CSR activities (business philanthropy, environmental conservation) in luxury hotels influenced the connection between conspicuous decoration style and purchase intention more than internally oriented ones (e.g., staff treatment) [39].

3.4.2. CSR Business Performance

Researchers have largely examined CSR's influence on employees. Some researchers studied how CSR impacts workers. Workers' CSR opinions have been extensively explored. The employees' understanding of CSR initiatives is related with better levels of job satisfaction and engagement [40,41], and it has a positive impact on organizational identity and commitment, and, thus, on organizational citizenship behavior [42–44]. When it comes to

corporate social responsibility (CSR), workers place a premium on leadership styles that emphasize innovation and environmental stewardship [45,46].

4. Conclusions and Future Scope

There is a lot of research on customer responses to CSR initiatives in general management, but less on how they affect hotel guests' buying choices, loyalty, and advocacy. To understand how CSR influences marketing and long-term competitiveness, one must address all of these issues. Thus, a hotel's CSR involvement needs more persuasive grounds. In terms of understating and implementation, the bottom line is that CSR will ultimately compel corporations to operate responsibly in their fields. Consumer awareness is crucial. Most big hotel chains prominently promote CSR on their websites. Do consumers and the public know about these CSR initiatives? Do these policies impact their spending? How do consumers learn about CSR? Academics have ignored these simple, important issues. If consumers and customers are uninformed of CSR practices, how can firms expect a positive response? How can hotels use CSR to boost their brand, client preference, goodwill, and advocacy?

No research has examined hotel stakeholders' CSR perceptions. Locals are a hotel's most significant clients, yet few empirical studies have examined their opinions. A hotel's reputation and good status in the community boost guest satisfaction (since engaging with locals is part of every trip) and government officials' and regulators' favor. Researchers should assess the local community's CSR knowledge and attitudes. Customers, employees, and the neighborhood are diverse. Researchers have ignored the likelihood of different CSR reactions within these groups, assuming they share the same views, values, and viewpoints. These stakeholders' requirements and reactions to hotels' CSR initiatives may vary greatly. Thus, segmentation may disclose new CSR-related consumer, worker, and community results.

Author Contributions: A.B.S.: Conceptualization, Methodology. C.K.: Visualization. G.S.D.: Writing—Original Draft Preparation. P.S.: Visualization, Investigation. M.L.M.: Writing—Reviewing and Editing. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Institutional Review Board Statement: Not Applicable.

Informed Consent Statement: All of the authors have given their permission for the paper to be published in the journal.

Data Availability Statement: Not Applicable.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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