

Corporate Social Responsibility in Indian Tour Operation Industry

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Abstract Today, corporate social responsibility (CSR) has become increasingly pivotal in tourism because tourism companies have to take their responsibility for the impacts produced by their actions and contribute to sustainable development. This has become imperative for tourism businesses that they should implement strategies for being responsible towards social, economic and environment aspects. In the past two decades, corporate social responsibility (CSR) in tourism management has been the primary subject of research among the academicians. However, most of the studies have focused on macro level approaches. To conduct well established grounded body of knowledge developing models/approaches a greater critical engagement with mainstream thinking on CSR is required as well as greater conceptual and methodological sophistication in travel and tourism. Therefore, this study aims primarily to understand the literature towards CSR in tourism industry context and identify main corporate social responsibility practices used in the Indian tour operation Industry.

Keywords: Tour Operation, Industry, CSR, India

INTRODUCTION

Today, Tourism has been recognized as a pivotal instrument of economic, social, and cultural development in many countries. The tourism industry is appreciated as a largest generator of jobs worldwide and is the main national economic recovery tool for many countries. Tourism in China has received a major expansion since the adoption of economic reforms in 90s. According to World Travel and Tourism Council (2017) statistics, in 2016, the travel and tourism sector contributing direct GDP growth of 3.1% and supporting 6 million net additional jobs in the sector. In total, Travel & Tourism generated US\$7.6 trillion (10.2% of global GDP) and 292 million jobs in 2016, equivalent to 1 in 10 jobs in the global economy. The sector accounted for 6.6% of total global exports and almost 30% of total global service exports. According to WTTC (2017) travel and tourism generated INR 14.1 trillion in 2016, which is the world's 7th largest in terms of absolute size, the sum is equivalent to 9.6 % of India's GDP. Additionally, this sector supported 40.3 million jobs in 2016 which ranks India 2nd in the world in terms of employment. In 21st century, Tourism

has become one of the fastest growing economic sectors in Indian economy. CSR plays a major role in every industry including the tourism industry. Significantly, competition in the tour operation industry is becoming quite fierce; therefore, maintaining existing customers is a crucial way for tour operator to obtain a continuous competitive advantage over other businesses. The tour operation industry continues to seek diverse strategies to improve its brand image and maintain its customer loyalty. Tour operation company leaders have introduced Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) as a strategy for achieving these goals. In fact, Tour operations' profit strategies encourage them to be more socially responsible because of reputation enhancement. There are many tour operation organizations especially MNCs, as innovators involved in CSR initiatives and policies. The tourism industry nowadays is dominated by small-and medium-sized enterprises (SME) namely travel agency and tour operation business. Most recently, there has been an increasing interest in the role of travel agency and tour operation business regarding social, economic and environment issues. According to Ministry of Tourism (2016), Travel agency and tour operator can contribute to

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sustainable tourism development through demonstrating corporate social responsibility (CSR) performances. Although some tourism & hospitality scholars have recently drawn their attention to issues regarding travel agency/tour operator and CSR, however, there are very few empirical studies that examine the tour operation industry attitudes toward CSR practices. Therefore, this study aims primarily to understand the tour operation industry' attitudes toward CSR in Indian context. Moreover, the present paper aims at identification of main corporate social responsibility practices used in the Indian tour operation Industry.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Over the past few decades, the on-going debate regarding the empirical researches has largely revolved around the concept of corporate social responsibility. Today, most of the companies are expected to behave ethically and to act as good corporate citizens. In fact, companies are focusing on fairly dealing with employees, suppliers, customers and society by promoting environmental sustainability. Thus, both academicians and corporate professional emphasised conceptually to promote an understanding of CSR beyond its legal, social and economic obligations. Ali et al., (2010) have found that there was a strong positive relationship between CSR practices and employees' dedication towards organization. Similarly they also revealed that there was a significant relationship between CSR activities of the companies and their financial performance in the markets. They have recommended that companies can invest in CSR practices to boost the morale of the employees which will further enhance organizational performance in the long run. Artiach et al., (2007) analyzed the association between corporate social performance (CSP) and corporate financial performance (CFP) and particularly to find out whether businesses need to invest in Corporate Social Performance or not. For this purpose Dow Jones Sustainability Index (DJSI) has been used to recognize leading Corporate Social Performance companies and applied a matched pairs design to make comparison between leading corporate social performance companies and conventional companies. The findings demonstrated that leading CSP companies have stronger financial performance than conventional companies, which was uniform with the view that companies those invest in CSP have improved financial performance than other companies.

Aupperle et al., (1991) used a detailed, forced choice instrument, to constraint the ideological prejudice in analyzing the relationship between corporate social performance and profitability. This instrument was given to corporate managers but unfortunately findings revealed no association between the two. The results of the study also indicated that there was no difference in performances of the

organizations those involved in social welfare programmes. Banerjee et al., (2009) investigated the relationship between corporate governance score (CG) and the company level performance by applying CG score taken from CRISIL, as a proxy for firm level governance quality. Study used Tobin's Q as measure of firm level performance and employed the fixed effect regression technique to test the nature of relationship between CG score and market value and indicated positive relationship.

Barnea and Rubin, (2010) shown their apprehensions regarding the CSR funds increased by a large number of company's managers in an arbitrary manner. They argued that company's internal stakeholders particularly the managers and large block holders can attempt to over spending in CSR activities for their own image enhancement at global level, resulting in "warm-glow" impact. The study indicates that higher CSR score of companies significantly related with higher spending in CSR activities. Thus, the hypothesis proved true that managers over invest in CSR practices to build their own image globally. Barnett and Salomon, (2002) stated that various previous studies shown a negative, positive and neutral relationship between corporate social performance and corporate financial performance. They analyzed this relationship (relationship between CSP & CFP) in mutual funds those engaged in socially responsible investment (SRI). Their findings revealed that there was curvilinear relationship between CSP and CFP. In addition to this, they also postulated that financial performance was the effect of the kind of social screens applied.

Interestingly, Baron et al., (2009) estimated a three-equation structural model depending upon a theory that associated corporate financial performance (CFP), corporate social performance (CSP), and social pressure. It has been reported in their findings that there was no significant relationship between CSP and CFP as well as augmenting social pressure. The study also established that social pressure was enhancing in CSP and diminishing in CFP. They disaggregated the measure of social pressure which signals that the relationships among CFP, CSP, and social pressure were as a result of private politics and not caused by public politics. Further, they supported that consumer industries with better CSP was associated with better CFP, however this relationship was opposite for industrial industries. Bassen et al., (2006) established that Corporate responsibility (CR) matters received increased value within the financial community due to expansion of academic and research departments, augmented introduction of mutual funds distributed according to sustainability criteria, dissemination of online references and publication of corporate responsibility reports. Unfortunately their study has not found any significant relationship between CR and financial performance, although CR and financial performance were indirectly related to firm risk. This

study has provided evidence that CR performance was strongly related to financial risk measures. There was also endorsement for the assumption that CR issues were likely to be regulation-driven. Further, they suggested that non-engagement in CR led companies to unnecessary high risk. Bedi, (2009) investigated the relationship between social and financial performance of large Indian companies for the financial year 2007-08, as listed by NGO Karmyog. This study analyzed 37 companies which invested some amount of their financial resources on CSR activities. The relationship between their financial performance and expenditure on CSR was then evaluated using correlation and regression. The findings revealed a positive relationship between CSR and financial performance. The descriptive and inferential measures demonstrated that corporate social expenditure depends upon the financial performance of a company. Bird et al., (2006) scrutinized large number of US firms to measure the association between CSR activities and corporate performance for the period of 1991 to 2003. They found that the accessibility of discretionary resources was the leading motivating factor that stimulated managers to spend in CSR practices. This study has utilized a Granger causality test 3 and an impulse-response function with variance decomposition for long time series of data to measure the sign, frequency, intensity and, specially, the order of the relationship between the variables. The study demonstrated significant relationship between Free Cash Flow and CSR practices whereas there was less significant relationship between performance tools and CSR practices.

Blazovich and Smith (2010) measured the relationship between ethical corporate citizenship and financial performance (profitability and efficiency and cost of capital). In addition to this, the study also investigated whether ethical corporate behavior was related with a market-value premium. For this purpose the study has taken a sample of "The 100 Best Corporate Citizens" as their ethical companies. They used univariate test and results of their study concluded that there was statistically strong relationship between being responsible company and market value of equity. Finally, with ameliorated financial performance and less risk, they propounded that responsible corporate citizenship undoubtedly will prove advantageous for companies. Bouquet and Deutsch, (2008) taken a sample of 4244 company years to analyze whether and how corporate social performance (CSP) impacts a firm's potential to meet enhanced profitable sales in foreign destinations. Their findings revealed that multinational enterprises (MNEs) need to be considerably devoted to social performance targets if they were to recuperate the cost of their CSP spending, and ameliorate their potential to strive against foreign markets. MNEs involved in mediate levels of CSP attained lower levels of multi-nationality than companies operating at either anchor of the social performance scale. Further, their study propounded that CSP lessen a well-established association

in international business literature - the association between R&D spending and a company's multi-nationality.

Brammer & Pavelin, (2006) designed a model of corporate market reputation by using data from large companies. This study has established that many factors like companies social practices, financial performance, decide the reputation, magnitude of long term institutional proprietorship and the kind of its business operation. Further, the study has established that reputational ramification of social performance vary within specific sector and across sectors. The findings of the study have revealed the need to attain a 'fit' among the kind of corporate social practices done and the companies stakeholder environment. The study also demonstrated that different social practices have different impacts on the stakeholders' decision making. Brammer et al., (2009) studied a large number of factors that determine the image of the company. Sample of this study consists of managers and market experts from large companies in United Kingdom. Further, it has been noticed that women representation at board level played a crucial role in determining market image of the company while at the same time, impact of other attributes on firm's reputation cannot be neglected. The influence of female members presence varies in different sectors and stakeholder's perspective also determine whether it will benefit or harm firm's image. The pattern that came to the limelight revealed that the presence of women on the board was conveniently considered in merely those sectors that deal with end consumers. The study argued that the nature of this impact showed an imperative for equality of participation that highlights the need to reflect gender diversity among customers. Campbell, (2007) propounded the theory of corporate social responsibility encompassing various propositions setting the circumstances under which firms were likely to respond in socially responsible way. This study has established that several factors viz. Internal and external regulations, monitoring of firms operations by non-governmental and independent organizations, played significant role in determining the relationship between financial performance and social activities. At the same time, conversation among firms and their stakeholders also played role in deciding the relationship between corporate social responsibility and corporate financial performance.

Chand, (2006) investigated the relationship between corporate social performance (CSP) and corporate financial performance (CFP). He has scrutinized many existed studies to clearly understand the rationale for not having common view about CSP and CFP. To evaluate the relationship between CSP and CFP he has set a boundary of Industry type. Further, he postulated that there was crystal clear and positive relationship between these two variables by applying few conditions.

Choi et al., (2010) evaluated the relationship between corporate social responsibility and financial performance in

Korea. This study used a sample of more than one thousand company years from 2002-2008. This study has applied an equal-weighted CSR index and stakeholder weighted CSR index to calculate corporate social responsibility. Financial performance has been assessed by using ROE, ROA and Tobin's Q. Interestingly, this study has also found positive and high association between corporate financial performance and the stakeholder-weighted CSR index. However, the study did not find any relationship between corporate financial performance and equal-weighted CSR index. This result was down-to-earth to substitute model specifications and various other tests, made available evidence to assist the instrumental stakeholder theory. Besley and Ghatak, (2007) strongly endorsed the view that not fulfilling CSR promises will lead to less profits, companies doing business in more responsible way will make higher profits due to their ideal image in the eyes of customers. Similarly, Benabou and Tirole (2010) have shown their concern as to whether CSR helps the companies in long term. On the other hand, Margolis et al. (2009) propounded that engagement in CSR assist companies to have a competitive advantage. They have found a positive relationship between CSR and financial performance of most of the companies. Similarly, Barnett and Salomon (2002, 2006) conducted a study in finance, also supported that companies with a higher CSR ratings have better performance in comparison to companies having a lower CSR ratings. In the same way, longitudinal study by Margolis et al. (2009) conducted from 1972 to 2007 also established the positive effect of CSR on accounting and market based profits.

Coles et al., (2013) presented a critical review of recent progress in research on corporate social responsibility (CSR) in tourism management, and possible directions for future research. Studies have primarily focused on three macro level topic areas: implementation; the economic rationale for acting more responsibly; and the social relations of CSR. Interest in responsibility as an approach to tourism governance and management is nevertheless growing as several policy prescriptions and corporate vision statements reveal. Manente et. al. (2015) focused on explaining the main policies and behaviour that tourism companies should adopt in order to reorganize their internal processes and correctly implement CSR in their business. Particularly attention is paid to the needs of small and medium enterprises (SMEs), since they represent the majority of the tourism industry and those companies who face more difficulties in implementing CSR. The paper also applied a mathematic model (the Analytic Hierarchy Process - AHP), in order to identify the most suitable reporting systems for appropriately evaluating CSR from a social, economic and environmental perspective. Moreover, Sun and Yu (2015) conducted a study to find out the association between CSR and employee performance. The study revealed that there was positive association between company commitment

in CSR practices and employee performance. Further, the investigation also demonstrated that firms with increased budget on CSR paid higher remunerations to their employee in comparison to companies having less concern for CSR.

Jae-Joon Han, et al., (2016) examined the relationship between Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and corporate profit by testing the ESG performance score on the firm's Financial Performance (FP), specifically for Korea Stock Market (KOSPI) listed firms for the period of 2008-2014. They used three separate individual Environmental, Social and Corporate Governance (ESG) disclosure scores from Bloomberg for the CRS proxy measure, as well as the Return on Equity (ROE), Market-to-Book Ratio (MBR) and Stock Return for the FP measures. The study found that the ESG disclosure scores (the measures of environmental, social and governance responsibility performance) in the Korean corporations' shows diversified results between the social responsibility performance score and FP.

Recently Franco & Suguna (2017) investigated the relationship between corporate social responsibility activities and employees attitude towards them. They have identified three major domains (high employee turnover, employee absenteeism and low morale of the employee) where most of the companies found themselves unable to cope with these problems. They further suggested that companies can enhance its performance in these areas by engaging itself in CSR practices or giving back to the society. Similarly, KPMG (2017) conducted a study on CSR and sustainable development. The study strongly holds the view that simply associating CSR to sustainable development was not sufficient. Since different stakeholders particularly the local community wanted to see the actual results of CSR on ground level. Further, society at large also wanted to know whether the operations of companies aggravated the problems of sustainable development goals or vice-versa. The study has also demonstrated that it was not just the civil society and NGOs which shown their interest in implications of CSR on grass root level, although institutional investors shown their interest too.

Many scholars (Abaeian, Yeoh, & Khong, 2014; Al, 2015; Caven & Nomathemba, 2014; Albahussain, and El-Garaihy, & Mobarak, 2014) have suggested that corporate social responsibility (CSR) is important in the hospitality industry because of its potential added financial and non-financial benefits. They also opined that CSR helps businesses in gaining competitive advantage by improving customer satisfaction and corporate image. Many tourism and hospitality companies have been able to build a positive image and better workplace environment that enhances their bottom line by implementing CSR practices. Moreover, the implementations of CSR practices have resulted in improvement of the property's occupancy rate, achieve increased profits, higher customer appreciation, positive image, and reputation.

Summarizing the above literature shows that the literature findings have been mixed until now, and so further research is needed. On this basis, our study identified the common set of CSR practices (table-1). In India, recently, various studies of CSR have been conducted on managerial orientation, ownership structure and CSR, and on financial reporting

quality, corporate governance and CSR. However, none of them identified the most common set of CSR practices. Thus, we attempt to critically examine the review of literature and develop a common set of CSR practices which is most significant for Indian tour operation industry.

Table 1: Identified Corporate Social Responsibility Practices from Existing Review of Literature

CSR practices related to customer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide all customers with very high quality service Provide all customers with the information needed to make sound purchasing decisions Satisfy the complaints of all customers about the company's products or services Adapt products or services to enhance the level of customer satisfaction Charge all customers with fair prices Consumer awareness campaign Consulting service & complaint management Provide benefits to budget tourists
CSR practices Related to employees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Your company Provide fair compensation to all employees Reward employees for best performance Suitable working environment & conditions for employees Support all employees who want to pursue further education Incorporate the interests of all employees into business plans/decisions Treat all employees with respect & dignity regardless of gender or ethnic background Help all employees to maintain balance between professional and family life
CSR practices related to natural environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Incorporate environmental performance objectives in organisational plans Measure the organisation's environmental performance Financially support environmental initiatives Use of clean energy Support tree plantation Sustainable products & services Voluntarily exceed government's environmental regulations Preserving natural resources like soil & water conservation
CSR practices related to local community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support welfare of children and the empowerment of women Give money to charities in the communities where you operate Help to improve the quality of life in the communities where you operate Financially support community activities (arts, culture, sports, literacy/education, skill development) Financially support education in the communities where we operate Support housing for vulnerable people in the community where you operate
CSR practices related to destination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The responsible use of natural & cultural tourist resources Infrastructure development at the destination Financial support in the rejuvenation of local arts & crafts Cleanliness campaigns at the destination Supporting cultural fairs & festivals Minimization of pollution and waste at the destination Fair use of products & services at the destination
CSR practices related to shareholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Incorporate the interests of all your investors into business decisions Provide all investors with a competitive return on investment Seek the input of all your investors regarding strategic decisions Meet the needs and requests of all your investors Sustainable growth & long term profitability of investor's fund

CSR practices related to government	Your company comply with law Cooperation with governments Contribution to government revenue by paying taxes honestly Contribution to Govt. exchequer
CSR practices related to suppliers	Develop strong relationship with local suppliers Offer all suppliers of products and services some price guarantees for the future Involve all suppliers in new product or service development Inform all suppliers of products and services about organisational changes affecting purchasing decisions Collaboration with supplier in regard to CSR practices

CONCLUSION

In the present study, we scientifically examine the existing literature in the field of corporate social Responsibility in general and tourism & hospitality industry in particular and identified a common set of CRS practices which are most significant for the tour operation industry in Indian context.

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