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CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY PERCEPTIONS ON ACCOMMODATION INDUSTRY: A RESEARCH ON TOURISM MANAGEMENT BACHELORS

KONAKLAMA ENDÜSTRİSİNDE KURUMSAL SOSYAL SORUMLULUK ALGILARI: TURİZM İŞLETMECİLİĞİ LİSANS ÖĞRENCİLERİ ÜZERİNE BİR ARAŞTIRMA

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ABSTRACT

Social responsibility issues are in the focal point of practitioners and academicians due to their emerging nature. It might be claimed that recent studies and efforts on social responsibility revealed that conscious consumers are in need of being satisfied socially additional to the satisfaction by goods and services provided by corporations. Within the context of globalized business environment corporations are seeking ways of gathering competitive and financial advantages in order to sustain and develop their operations and sales. In this regard communicating operating results became a vital process for the corporations which are trying to inform their stakeholders. Additional to financial and non-financial reports published periodically these corporations have involved in socially responsible actions in their operations and have started communicating social responsibility actions in their reports or in various media in order to create affirmative perceptions on their stakeholders. Major aim of this study is to reveal the social responsibility perceptions of tourism management bachelors who might be evaluated as informed and conscious about accommodation industry. Various research questions combined on a survey questionnaire are submitted to the Tourism Management bachelors of Necmettin Erbakan University by means of web based applications and responses are analyzed by means of SPSS software.

Keywords: Corporate Social Responsibility; CSR Perceptions; CSR and Accommodation Industry

ÖZ

Sosyal sorumluluk konuları gelişen özellikleri ve tabiatı gereği akademisyenlerin odak noktasında olmaktadır. Son zamanlarda yapılan çalışmaların ve sosyal sorumluluk konusundaki çabaların, bilinçli tüketicilerin, şirketler tarafından sağlanan mal ve hizmetlerden toplumsal olarak tatmin olmaya ihtiyaç duydukları sonucunun ortaya çıktığı söylenebilir. Küreselleşen piyasa ortamında şirketler, faaliyetlerini ve satışlarını sürdürmek ve geliştirmek amacıyla rekabetçi ve finansal avantajlar geliştirmek için yollar aramaktadırlar. Bu bağlamda, işletmenin faaliyet sonuçlarının iletilmesi, paydaşlarını bilgilendirmeye çalışan şirketler için yaşamsal bir süreç haline gelmiştir. Periyodik olarak yayımlanan finansal ve finansal olmayan raporlara ek olarak, bu şirketler faaliyetlerinde sosyal sorumluluk odaklı eylemlerde bulunmuşlardır ve paydaşları üzerinde olumlu algılamalar oluşturmak için raporlarında veya çeşitli medya kuruluşlarında yaptıkları sosyal sorumluluk faaliyetlerini iletmeye başlamışlardır. Bu araştırmanın temel amacı konaklama endüstrisi konusunda bilgi sahibi olan turizm işletmeciliği lisans öğrencilerinin sosyal sorumluluk algılarını ortaya koymaktır. Araştırma anketinde bir araya getirilen çeşitli araştırma soruları web tabanlı uygulamalar vasıtasıyla Necmettin Erbakan Üniversitesi Turizm İşletmeciliği lisans öğrencilerine sunulmuş ve cevaplar SPSS yazılımı ile analiz edilmiştir.

Anahtar kelimeler: Kurumsal sosyal sorumluluk, Kurumsal sosyal sorumluluk algısı, Kurumsal Sosyal sorumluluk ve konaklama endüstrisi

1. INTRODUCTION

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) could be accepted as relevant with the needs and social aims of people additional to the relevant issues on related to economic aspects of community (Eells and Walton, 1974). Another definition includes the incorporation of risk management associated with economic, social and environmental developments. This definition additionally states that there might be opportunities that may create value for the organization in the long term (Holcomb, Upchurch, and Okumus, 2007). Carroll constructed a model for social responsibility concept which is based on four foundations as to be economic, legal, ethical and volunteer activities. Carroll stated that business related responsibilities needs to be incorporated to social responsibility concept in order to make this concept acceptable by the business world (Carroll, 1999).

It might be stated that corporate social responsibility concept has become an emerging issue in 1950s, evolved to an official issue by businesses in 1960s and evaluated as an international or global issue by the public and private organizations in 1970s (Kang, Lee and Huh, 2010; Carroll, 1999). In 1990s it might be observed that several public and private organizations carried out social responsibility related activities (Öztürk, 2013). Main activities and organizational structures focusing on social responsibility might be listed as follows:

- ✓ International Association for Business and Society founded (1990)
- ✓ Business Ethics Quarterly journal started publishing corporate social responsibility related studies and materials (1991)
- ✓ Coalition for Environmentally Responsible Economies (CERES) which was founded in 1989 made some efforts in order to make sustainability reporting a common practice in 1997. As a result of this movement CERES in the late 1990s set out with the Tellus Institute to establish sustainability reporting as a common practice worldwide. What emerged was the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI), the most ambitious worldwide effort to boost corporate disclosure on environmental, social and human rights performance. After five years of incubation at CERES, GRI was spun off to become its own organization, now located in Amsterdam.
- ✓ Rio Declaration (1992) which is evaluated within the scope of United Nations Conference on Environment and Development
- ✓ Copenhagen declaration of United Nations (1995)

Additional to the main steps listed above which might be evaluated as the movement or evolution points there are several organizations and efforts made on the national, international or global level. Contemporary approach towards corporate social responsibility states that use of corporate resources in order to attain the additional goals such as contributing the wealth of society as a whole and being evaluated as a beneficial organization and an individual of society with all its aspects and to attain the primary goals of organization such as profit generation, employment and market share. Social responsibility activities are considered as prerequisites for attaining primary corporate goals (Sarıkaya, 2009).

2. ACCOMMODATION INDUSTRY AND CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Tourism could be defined as a labor intensive industry which has varying degrees of detrimental effects on society and which is formed by the combination of transportation, accommodation, recreation and some other activities of participants (Henderson, 2007). It might be said that corporate social responsibility and related issues are evaluated and considered within the scope of sustainability in Tourism (Wells et al., 2015). Prevention of identity, culture and life style of host community, preserving and maintaining historical sites and structures, minimization of contamination caused by waste, conscientious use of natural resources are major issues focused for the sake of tourism sustainability.

It might be claimed that corporate social responsibility and sustainable development have intersecting areas. Even it might be said that these are almost overlapping concepts. Due to the wide area of intersection it is possible to observe that these concepts are used or mentioned interchangeably in literature reviews. Corporate social responsibility is based on similar foundations correspondingly sustainability. In this regard an accommodation enterprise which is considered within the scope of sustainable tourism might be considered within the scope of corporate social responsibility intrinsically. Hence it might be inferred that accommodation establishments need to fulfill the requirements of sustainability and social responsibility correspondingly (Henderson, 2007).

Due to the higher rates of energy and water consumption corporate social responsibility issues and studies are generally focused on accommodation establishments within tourism industry compared to many other establishments within other industries (Wells et al., 2015). Especially, upon the developments related to energy efficiency matters and environmental concerns in 1990s tourism and accommodation industry focused on social responsibility issues. EFFAT (European Federation of Food, Agriculture and Tourism Trade Unions) and HOTREC (Hotels, Restaurants & Cafés in Europe) are cooperating organizations in Euro zone and are serving as counterparts of a model organization for the global initiatives (Holcomb, Upchurch and Okumuş, 2007). According to this initiative CSR is a concept whereby enterprises integrate societal and environmental concerns in their business operations and in their interaction with their stakeholders (employees, consumers, customers, shareholders, suppliers, public authorities and, more generally, the community where the enterprise is located) on a voluntary basis and it is mention within the organizational documents that CRS is about core values and the way a business is run (<http://www.fffat.org>). World Travel and Tourism Council which is constituted by the largest tourism and transportation companies of the world declared their support regarding to corporate social responsibility and promoted the companies which are voluntarily operating in harmony with social responsibility issues (Camilleri, 2014). Increased communication abilities, and number of communication tools and media provided the chance of communicating their social responsibility activities by accommodation enterprises all over the world (Holcomb, Upchurch and Okumuş, 2007).

3. METHODOLOGY

Within the scope of this research a questionnaire, formed of 12 Questions, is directed to 150 bachelors of Tourism Management Department of Necmettin Erbakan University – Konya – Turkey. Demographics, CSR related questions and questions related to the perceptions of bachelors constitute the major parts of research questionnaire. 116 valid responses gathered by means of web based applications are analyzed by means of SPSS v:21 software. Due to the emerging nature of corporate social responsibility concept prospective employees of tourism industry are chosen as research sample in order to depict a general view about CSR. Sampling choice aims to shed light over the relationship between the interests of potential intellectual labor force of tourism industry and emerging issues such as social responsibility. Research questionnaire is based on the previous studies of academicians and majority of the questions are adopted from the dissertation of Lars Heesbeen which is submitted as the partial fulfillment of an academic study. 10 of the questions serve directly to the aim of the research and 2 questions are directed in order to measure the sincerity of respondents and consistency of the answers provided by these respondents. All the responses gathered are controlled and provided valid and consistent answers. Within the scope of this study due to the space restrictions of conference requirements 10 questions are analyzed and evaluated.

4. FINDINGS

Due to the enrolling requirements mandated by higher education system in Turkey demographic properties of participants such as age, income level, professional status and similar ones are omitted and supposed to be analogous. Regarding to the sexual demographics of study sample table 1 summarizes the findings as follows:

Gender Distribution of Participants	
Male	52
Female	64

Regarding to the sample distribution it might be claimed that sex is not an affective determinant of the research results because the number of male and female contributors is close enough and generates indifference on the distribution of participant gender. On the other hand, regarding to the research findings it might be claimed that there are slight differences regarding to the perceptions of males and females but statistically females seem to be more sensible regarding to their accommodation choices with respect to social responsibility activities carried out by accommodation facilities.

Table 2 summarizes the responses related to the factors affecting the accommodation facility preferences of participants. This question was designed to reveal the rank of perceived corporate social responsibility activities of accommodation facilities compared to other determinants such as price, location, safety, brand loyalty and service quality.

Table 2: Factors affecting accommodation facility choice

	Not that all important		Slightly important		Moderately important		Very important		Extremely important	
	f	%	F	%	F	%	f	%	f	%
Price	4	3,4	22	19,0	5	4,3	52	44,8	33	28,4
Location	-	-	10	8,6	4	3,4	48	41,4	54	46,6
Service	-	-	8	6,9	1	0,9	38	32,8	69	59,5
Sustainability Policy	2	1,7	10	8,6	20	17,2	63	54,3	21	18,1
Safety	-	-	12	10,3	2	1,7	35	30,2	67	57,8
Brand Loyalty	14	12,1	21	18,1	29	25,0	38	32,8	14	12,1

Findings revealed that service quality is considered as the most important determinant of accommodation facility choices of participants with a cumulative indication of approximately 90% of very important and extremely important responses. In this question, ranking of the factors are made by use of cumulative responses of very important and extremely important. Location and safety are ranked equal with a percentage of 88 and are standing out as the second most important factors. Price is ranked as the third most important factor with an importance indication of 73%, corporate social responsibility is ranked as the fourth and brand loyalty is ranked as the fifth with 72% and 45% respectively. Findings revealed that social responsibility activities of accommodation facilities are not perceived as important as service quality, location, price and safety.

One of the questions was designed to reveal the personal characteristics of participants regarding to corporate social responsibility and responses are summarized in table below.

Table 3: Personal responsibility about corporate social responsibility

I have personal responsibly about corporate social responsibility	Completely disagree		Disagree		Neither agree nor disagree		Agree		Completely Agree	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
	6	5,2	6	5,2	13	11,2	58	50	33	28,4

Findings revealed that nearly 78 % of the participants believed that they behave responsibly regarding to their accommodation facility choices. This finding seems to be conflicting regarding to the findings revealed in table two. As it is mentioned before, social responsibility was ranked as the fourth important factor compared to service quality, location, price and safety. It might be stated that social responsibility issues are ranked as less important when other determinants are incorporated to the choice process. On the other hand, if social responsibility is evaluated as the sole determinant about accommodation facility choice it is apparent that a big majority of respondents claimed they prefer the facilities sensitive about social responsibility. Table 4 summarizes the responses as below.

Table 4: Social responsibility activities of accommodation facilities as the sole determinant of accommodation facility choice

Choice of socially responsible or socially irresponsible hotel	Frequency	Percent
More likely a socially responsible hotel	101	87,1
It does not matter	15	12,9
More likely a hotel which does not care about social responsibility	-	-

Regarding to the price and corporate social responsibility activities of accommodation facilities it might be stated that nearly one third of the respondents, 32% tend to be prepared about extra payments due to social responsibility activities performed by establishments and nearly half of the respondents, 43%, responded that they are reluctant about the overpricing applications caused by social responsibility activities carried out.

Table 5: Perception of over pricing due to social responsibility activities

	Frequency	Percent
I would pay more	37	31,9
I would pay the same	50	43,1
I would pay less	8	6,9
My company pays, therefore it does not matter to me	5	4,3
I do not know	16	13,8

A small minority of the responses, 14%, revealed that some of the participants have no idea or perception regarding to the relationship between pricing behaviors of accommodation facilities and their social responsibility activities. As a result, it might be claimed that there is a perceived relationship between the

pricing policies of accommodation facilities and social responsibility activities carried out by these facilities and it might be inferred that some of the participant believe that accommodation facilities are reflecting the costs of social responsibility activities in their prices.

Within the scope of research, participants were asked to evaluate the importance of factors listed in table 6. In this part it is possible to evaluate the importance degrees of each factor on two different bases. If the factors are evaluated on the "very important" scale it seems that participants evaluate the commitment of accommodation facilities to social responsibility values as the first important factor to be considered, 50,9%. Coming up with innovative social responsibility solutions (49,1%) and renewable energy source usage (41,4%) are the second and third important factor to be considered by accommodation facilities regarding to the perceptions of participants. If the factors are evaluated on "extremely important" basis transparency provided and environmental measures considered by accommodation facilities seem to be the most valuable factors with an equivalent response rate of 39,7%. With respect to the responses it might be claimed that commitment to social responsibility values, transparency and environmental issues seem to be the most important factors which are expected to be considered by accommodation facilities.

Table 6: Social responsibility factors evaluation.

	Not at all important		Slightly important		Moderately important		Very important		Extremely important	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Commitment to social responsibility values	3	2,6	12	10,3	10	8,6	59	50,9	32	27,6
Having all information available for guests	1	0,9	12	10,3	10	8,6	47	40,5	46	39,7
Environment / Water / Waste measures	1	0,9	13	11,2	11	9,5	45	38,8	46	39,7
Having sustainable products in the hotel	-	-	14	12,1	13	11,2	45	38,8	44	37,9
Having socially responsible partners	2	1,7	12	10,3	13	11,2	52	44,8	37	31,9
Coming up with innovative social responsibility solutions	2	1,7	13	11,2	9	7,8	57	49,1	35	30,2
Using renewable energy sources	2	1,7	12	10,3	15	12,9	48	41,4	39	33,6

One of the research questions was designed to reveal the perceptions of participants regarding to the social responsibility investments of accommodation facilities and they are asked to rank three reasons for such an effort by enterprises. As it is shown in table 7 findings revealed that meeting the expectations of customers is ranked as the first important reason for caring about social responsibility issues with a response rate of 23.1%. Attracting, motivating and retaining qualified employees and improving efficiency and lowering costs seem to be ranked as the second and third most important reasons with response rates of 19,4% and 17,7%. Regarding to this question it might be inferred that employee related issues are perceived as an area of investment with respect to social responsibility activities.

Table 7: Reasons for social responsibility

	Responses	
	N	Percent
Maintaining or improving brand	55	15,7%
Improving efficiency and lowering costs	62	17,7%
Meeting consumer expectations	81	23,1%
Creating new growth opportunities	32	9,1%
Government regulations	20	5,7%
Standing out from competition	23	6,6%
Meeting the expectations of partners and distributors	10	2,8%
Attracting, motivating and retaining employees	68	19,4%
Total	351	100,0%

Participants were asked to rank the actions to be taken by accommodation facilities in order to realize social responsibility and responses revealed that transparency took the first order by a response rate of 28,9%. It is apparent that transparency is one of the prerequisites perceived by conscious new generation about the realization of social responsibility. Second and third most important reasons are environmental issues and energy efficiency and employee related issues respectively with the response rates of 27,3% and 22,1%.

Table 8: Actions to be taken for achieving social responsibility

	Responses	
	N	Percent
Be more environmentally friendly, create energy efficient products	69	27,3%
Treat employees well, give them equal opportunities and better pay	56	22,1%
Give more back to the community	21	8,3%
Donate to charity	34	13,4%
Be more transparent about their business	73	28,9%
Total	253	100,0%

Participants were asked to respond about the most frequently used and effective path of information gatherings related to social responsibility efforts of accommodation facilities. As it is summarized in Table 9 findings revealed that internet media is the most common way of being aware of social responsibility activities. Websites of establishments and social media applications are the first and second widespread ways of communication on social responsibility efforts of accommodation facilities with the response rates of 31,6% and 24,8%. Newsletters were ranked as third with a response rate of 21,4% and signs and information tables or notes inside the facility were indicated as the fourth important source of social responsibility evaluations by participants with a response rate of 15%.

Table 9: Information paths about social responsibility efforts

	Responses	
	N	Percent
Website	65	31,6%
Newsletter	44	21,4%
Social Media	51	24,8%
In-room signs and information	31	15,0%
There is no communication	15	7,3%
Total	206	100,0%

Table 10 summarizes the responses regarding to the subjective evaluations of participants related to the potential outcomes of social responsibility efforts made by accommodation facilities. Participants were asked to indicate their subjective opinion if the listed outcomes increased or decreased during the last twenty years.

Table 10: Consumption, waste and environmental perceptions

	Decreased a lot		Decreased a little		Increased a little		Increased a lot	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Energy consumption per guest night	2	1,7	10	8,6	43	37,1	61	52,6
Water consumption per guest night	3	2,6	11	9,5	46	39,7	56	48,3
Unsorted waste per guest night	2	1,7	9	7,8	35	30,2	70	60,3
Emissions of Co2 per guest night	3	2,6	9	7,8	47	40,5	57	49,1

Findings revealed that participants perceived a remarkable increase related to all issues listed. Especially, unsorted wastes as a result of guest accommodation per night and energy consumption per guest night are perceived as the most increased outcomes. Carbon emissions and water consumption per night are believed to be increased outcomes by participants.

5. CONCLUSIONS

With respect to the research findings it might be concluded that research participants are conscious about social responsibility issues. With respect to research findings it is possible to claim that social responsibility activities of accommodation facilities are not perceived as important as service quality, location, price and safety. Meaning that participants are considering social responsibility efforts of accommodation facilities during their choice process but it is not considered as a primary determinant. This might be due to the emerging nature of social responsibility issues, as a result people are aware of the subject but they seem to be reluctant about incorporation of social responsibility into their choice process. With respect to the price and social responsibility activities carried out by accommodation facilities it might be concluded that nearly one third of the participants have a perception of overpricing caused by social responsibility activities performed. Regarding to the expectations of participants related to the approaches of accommodation facilities towards CSR Commitment to social responsibility values, transparency and environmental issues seem to be the most

important factors which are expected to be considered by accommodation facilities. Participants indicate meeting the expectations of customers as the first important reason for caring about social responsibility issues. Regarding to the perceived ways of achieving social responsibility it might be concluded that transparency is one of the prerequisites perceived by conscious new generation about the realization of corporate social responsibility. Internet media and social media applications seem to be the most common ways of communicating CSR activities by accommodation facilities. As a result, it might be concluded that participants who are assumed to be conscious about the emerging issues related to contemporary business seem to be sensitive and considering with respect to corporate social responsibility activities of accommodation enterprises.

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