

# CSR Communication of Hotels and Consumer Responses Towards it: An Abstract



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**Abstract** Whereas corporate social responsibility (CSR) has been an established concept in the world of business and academia for several decades, in the hotel industry, CSR has become a subject of more intensified research only recently. Consumer perceptions about CSR and the communication thereof as well as the inclusion of such matters in their hotel online reviews have not received deeper attention in literature so far, although it is of vital importance to gain this information as feedback on the success of hotels' current CSR engagement. This paper reports on the results of four studies that investigated consumers' perceptions of CSR measures in the hotel industry, online CSR communication of hotels, consumers' references to CSR in online reviews and hotel responses to customer online reviews.

To uncover consumers' perceptions of CSR measures and their opinions towards including comments on a hotel's CSR engagement in online reviews, we conducted three semi-structured focus groups. To study which CSR activities smaller hotels communicate to their stakeholders via their webpage, a website analysis was conducted, based on a sample of CSR-certified hotels. To investigate which aspects of hotel CSR engagement guests reference in online reviews, we analysed all customer reviews provided for these hotels on TripAdvisor® over a 1-year time period. Finally, to learn how hotels use their responses to online reviews to communicate their CSR engagement, we analysed the responses of the hotels to customer reviews of their hotel on TripAdvisor®.

The focus groups revealed that CSR initiatives of hotels were unanimously considered positive. Generally, the view was held that hotels still do not engage themselves enough and much more CSR action should come from them. There is still great consumer unawareness regarding the potential to talk about CSR issues in online reviews. The review analysis uncovered that most guests that do address CSR activities reference food-related CSR measures, e.g. offering organic food. Hotels

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do not yet interact much with customers on online review platforms, particularly not regarding CSR activities, but rather communicate CSR via their websites.

Implications for hotels are to include customer reviews as a vehicle for involving stakeholders in dialogue and also online review responses in the CSR communication strategy to make it more successful. Focus group participants specifically said more communication from hotels is necessary, also for customer education purposes. For hotels, listening to these stakeholder responses would be crucial for advancing to two-way stakeholder response or even involvement strategies.