



Corporate Social Responsibility Reporting in Locally Owned Hotel Chains in Singapore

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Keywords:

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Abstract.

This exploratory study looked at the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programmes of 10 locally owned and operated Singapore hotel chains. By using a Content Analysis methodology, the 10 hotel chains' CSR efforts were analysed vis-à-vis to their annual reports and websites. This gave clear indication of whether the hotel chains were complying with the promises and standards that they had stated and promised. This report found that the CSR reported by the hotel chains were inclined toward Environmental efforts. This could probably be due to this Environmental practice being more tangible and visible. It was also noted that while the initiatives taken by the hotel chains were relatively numerous, many failed to report on whether these efforts amounted to an achievement. Moreover, CSR reporting on the hotel chains' websites were almost non-existent. Given this, recommendations have been included to assist Singapore hotel companies manage their reporting of CSR activities.

Kata Kunci:

CSR, pelaporan, website, laporan tahunan, hotel, Singapura.

Abstrak.

Studi eksplorasi ini meneliti program Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) dari 10 jaringan hotel Singapura yang dimiliki dan dioperasikan secara lokal. Dengan menggunakan metodologi Analisis Konten, upaya penerapan CSR di 10 hotel jejaring dianalisis berdasarkan laporan tahunan dan website mereka. Studi ini menunjukkan indikasi yang jelas tentang apakah hotel jejaring memenuhi janji dan standar yang telah mereka nyatakan dan janjikan. Laporan ini menemukan bahwa CSR yang dilaporkan oleh hotel jejaring cenderung mengarah pada upaya perlindungan terhadap lingkungan. Ini mungkin karena praktik penjagaan lingkungan menjadi lebih jelas. Studi mendapati bahwa meskipun inisiatif yang diambil oleh hotel jejaring relatif banyak, banyak yang gagal melaporkan apakah upaya ini merupakan pencapaian. Selain itu, pelaporan CSR di situs web hotel jejaring hampir tidak ada. Mengingat hal ini, rekomendasi telah dimasukkan untuk membantu perusahaan perhotelan Singapura mengelola pelaporan kegiatan CSR mereka.

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1. Introduction

In our present day, there is greater awareness of Corporate Social Responsibilities (CSR) by the public, investors, customers and clients of private companies. People generally want companies that they deal with to have a greater sense of accountability to the needs of society, community and the environment. People are more inclined to work with companies that are more active and more in-tuned with their CSR efforts (Hsieh, 2012). Therefore, in order to appease the public, customers and stakeholders, many companies are driven to take a more proactive stance in their CSR efforts.

While there are many different understandings of what CSR means or is about (Holcomb, Upchurch & Okumus, 2007), it has been defined by Robbins and Coulter (2005) as the efforts that are taken by a company to go above and beyond what it is needed, i.e. in terms of its economic, financial and legal efforts to help society, community and the environment to its betterment. This can be in terms of donations, volunteerism, education and the reduction and/or recycling of resources. The World Business Council for Sustainable Development (World Business Council for Sustainable Development, 1999) has a similar understanding of CSR. It maintains that CSR is an organisation's commitment to long-term developments and improvements in the economy, environment, employees, families and communities around them. The European Commission's stand on CSR is also similar. It views CSR as the incorporation of the establishment's interest in the environment and its community in its daily routines and operations (Commission of the European Communities, 2001).

With people being more educated and socially aware, there is a greater demand from society to ensure that companies are accountable - socially and environmentally, for its policies and practices that can invariably damage the environment and its surrounding communities. As such, there is a great demand by society on the establishments to report them and to hold them accountable to their operational standards and promises (Holcomb *et al.*, 2007; Hsieh, 2012). In this way, the public and stakeholders are made aware of the companies' efforts and can influence the direction and decision-making of the companies. Discerning customers, investors and the government can also use the information shown to decide what to buy, where to invest and whom to support. This essentially impacts businesses and compels them to take on more and greater responsibilities to society, communities and the environment, instead of just earning a profit and being financially successful. While there are many differing views on the business such as Friedman (2007) who stated that the business establishments should only focus on the economic and legal aspects of the business and not be distracted by other non-business related issues, that are not directly related to its core offering. There is also a growing view that CSR needs to be incorporated into part of an organisation's business plan. Carroll (1979) mentioned that businesses are intrinsically linked to their communities and have a responsibility to see to the needs of them especially if the organisation is indirectly affecting them.

However, even though there is greater awareness of CSR for business establishments, there is scant research on CSR and CSR reporting in the hospitality and tourism industry, specifically in the hotels sector (Holcomb, Okumus & Bilgihan, 2010). While research in the western countries and societies are considered low, countries outside of Europe and North America especially in Asia is extremely limited (Hsieh, 2012; Tsai, Tsang & Cheng, 2012). This could probably be due to the high number of small, medium enterprises (SME) and local chains that need not comply to CSR regulations such as in Western countries. Moreover, according to Tsai, Tsang and Cheng (2012), there is limited research of hotel CSR especially in developing countries in Asia.

The study aims to address the research gap by look at the CSR reporting by the local hotel chains in Singapore. The study will explore how local hotel chains report their CSR activities in their annual reports and websites and investigate whether there is any dissonance. This study will

focus on locally owned and operated hotel chains in Singapore, ranging from the Meritus Group, Hotel Properties Limited to Far East Hospitality Trust, and others.

In order to ensure uniformity, these hotel chains need to fulfil the following requirements. Firstly, all the researched hotel chains must be in operation for a minimal of three years and have at least three hotels within their chain. Next, they are all owned by large and established public listed companies in Singapore. Due to the chain being linked to public listed companies allows them to draw from the funds of the parent company and from the financial market. Lastly, many of the hotel chains have been in operation for several years and have expanded their brand overseas and have gained international recognition.

This study on the hospitality industry in Singapore is importance and of great relevance because of the tourism and hospitality industry account for up to 4% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), making it one of the major contributors to the Singapore economy. It has contributed more than Singapore \$17.7 billion to the economy through direct sources (Singapore Tourism Board, 2019). Moreover, the hospitality and tourism industry, supported more than 169,500 jobs in Singapore and this is about 4.6% of the jobs in the city-state (Li, 2018).

While many hotel chains are starting to be more transparent in their disclosure of their practices, there is hardly any research made on CSR reporting by the local hotel chains in Singapore. As for nearby countries within the region of South East Asia, there has been some studies conducted in Malaysia. Wee and Ross-Smith (2018) conducted a research that investigated the CSR reporting Malaysian local hotels. There was another research that looked at sustainability in Malaysian hotels by Joseph, Lin, Nichol and Jussem (2014). Unlike this previous study, which was quantitative in nature, the current study is a qualitative in nature and is centred around the content analysis of the hotel chain's websites and annual reports on their CSR efforts.

This study has been organised along the following sections. The first part will introduce the objective of the study and the research gap. The subsequent parts will review the literature of CSR reporting in the hospitality and tourism industry. The research approach and research method will be highlighted in the Methodology section. The Discussion section will highlight the findings and issues raised and finally, the Concluding section will summarise the salient aspects and possible future research for this study.

2. Literature review

Hotels are known to be direct contributors to the economy. They help to increase the GDP of countries and indirectly drive tourism to specific regions within a country. Other benefits to the economy would be that of job creation, skills and knowledge creation. However, it is also known that hotels are a great consumer of resources and is directly linked to many forms of wastages, including food, water and electricity. Some of these wastes include linen, amenities, food, energy, sanitation chemicals and others (Kasim, 2007; de Grosbois, 2012). With an increase in the number of hospitality properties, higher wastages are postulated and will have a greater effect on the social and environmental level.

In terms of CSR, there is a greater awareness in an organisation's contribution to social, community and environmental causes. According to Font *et al.* (2012) and Hsieh (2012), there is a growing interest among stakeholders in the CSR affairs of their invested companies. Conscientious customers, stakeholders, partners and suppliers desire more information from the companies that they deal with so that they can align their business values with that of the organisation. While CSR reporting is optional in many countries, many organisations report CSR activities to obtain public approval and to generate publicity. Certain countries in Asia, such as Singapore and Malaysia have put in place CSR reporting as a requirement for listed companies (Abaeian, Yeoh & Khong, 2014).

In the hotel industry, many of the established brands are keen to report CSR activities as part of a public relations effort and for transparency reasons. However, a study by Holcomb *et al.* (2007) on the top ten hotels in the world as listed in the 'Hotels magazine' revealed mixed responses. Some hotels openly disclosed CSR efforts and had CSR accountable personnel in place to oversee their activities. Other hotels were less forthcoming in revealing their CSR efforts. With the study on the top 150 global hotels, de Grosbois (2012) found that most hospitality companies reported a commitment to support CSR activities and efforts, however, many did not reveal the exact activities, and execution efforts in these plans. Using the study from de Grosbois (2012) and with further examination, Font *et al.* (2012) applied the similar methodology to ten international hotel chains. They examined the CSR disclosure – performance gap of these hotels and found significant gaps between the variables. Font *et al.* (2012) noted that there was much disparity between what was committed and what was actually delivered by the hotels. Other studies have also found similar variations in actuality and reporting. Clarkson, Li, Richardson and Vasvari (2011) conducted a study on hotels in Australia and found that there were also considerable discrepancies between disclosure and the actual performance in terms of CSR reporting.

This disparity between the actual result and the reported CSR is also prevalent in larger hotel companies (Font *et al.*, 2012) to the point where it has now been noted by a particular vernacular, i.e. 'greenwashing'. This term of 'greenwashing' is generally referred to companies who only highlight the positive action and effects of their sustainable and eco-efforts, while hiding the negative aspects of their doings (Lyon & Maxwell, 2011). The companies only report positive aspects of their CSR, so that they can garner favourable public relations and put seen in a 'good light' (Holcomb, 2007).

In terms of hotel CSR reporting, there has been a shift of CSR from community and employee action to the environment. A study by Holcomb *et al.* (2007) mentioned that hotels generally favoured CSR on community and employees in the early 21st century. About 80% of all hotels which had CSR actions plan focused on community and 60% had programmes to help their employees. In recent years, there has been a greater emphasis on environmental CSR (Font *et al.*, 2012; de Grosbois, 2012; Cherapanukon & Focken, 2014; Hsieh, 2012). This can be attributed to a greater awareness on environmental trends and issues and green practices.

In terms of benefits, CSR has ensued many benefits for hospitality companies. The most compelling of the benefits would that be of cost-savings. Such savings are usually attributed to savings in the areas of utilities management, i.e. water, energy and heating (Levy & Park, 2011; Sprinkle & Maines, 2010). Another area that hospitality companies looked at was in the areas of employees and their guest. All these CSR efforts ultimately led to improving the public relations image of the hospitality company and greater guest satisfaction (Martinez, Perez & Del Bosque, 2014; Martinez & Del Bosque, 2013).

CSR activities also affects employees in terms of their loyalty (Brammer, Millington & Raton, 2007), their retention and affinity to join an organisation (Sprinkle & Maines, 2010) and their motivation to work (Kim & Scullion, 2013). These CSR activities has also been shown to increase investor relations (Petersen & Vredenburg, 2009) and competitive advantage (Kramer & Porter, 2006). On a whole, CSR helps to increase the positive well-being, image and financial success of an organisation (Sinha, Dev & Salas, 2002).

There are many ways by which hospitality companies convey their CSR efforts. There are traditional and technological means. Traditional methods of highlighting CSR activities would be through annual reports, press releases, newsletters, and other forms of print media. With internet being used more frequently and a choice medium of conveying information, more companies are keen to use this technological platform as a channel. The use of the internet is also seen as a CSR effort with the minimal use of resources. Hsieh (2012) and Jose and Lee (2007) highlights that the internet allows quick dissemination of information to their employees, customers and stakeholders in a cost-effective manner.

From a technological perspective, the use of websites has been the most popular means by which hospitality companies share CSR activities, efforts and measurements. Most hospitality companies imbed their CSR information as part of their corporate websites to give the public a holistic understanding of the mission of the company and their direct and indirect goals. A study was undertaken by Basil and Erlandson (2008) on Canadian corporations' website on their CSR efforts. They found that 67% of these companies had some form of CSR reporting in 2006, compared to 2004, where only 27% reported their CSR activities online. Another study by Gomez and Chalmeta (2011) which examined 50 corporate websites from the USA, revealed that 80% of these organisations reported their CSR efforts on their webpages.

In Singapore, there has been much interest in the CSR reporting and activities within the hospitality trade. Singapore developed the 'ASEAN Green Hotel Awards' which was initiated by ASEAN member countries (Chung & Parker, 2010), based on assessing environmental and energy conservation methods taken. However, despite the interest in CSR in hospitality companies in Singapore, the Brand Company (2012) in their study on CSR reporting in luxury chains in Singapore only listed one Singapore company in their top 10 Asian international hotel companies. While this report only reflects international luxury chains in Singapore, this lack of CSR reporting might be reflective of other categories of hotels in the city-state.

3. Methodology

This study looked at the CSR reporting of Singapore hotel chains. The objective is to investigate the content and nature of CSR reporting by local hotel companies. This study uses content analysis to identify and describe the patterns and congruency emerging from the data samples. The use of content analysis has been used as a research method as it is advantageous in gathering and analysing text-based content (Neuman, 2007).

There have been previous studies which used this methodology of content analysis to measure CSR reporting in hospitality organisations, i.e. Holcomb *et al.* (2007) study on CSR reporting on 10 international hotel chains; Font *et al.* (2012) study on CSR disclosure and performance gap; and Hsieh (2012) looked at sustainable practices and policies of over 50 hotel chains in Europe, the USA and in Asia. These studies have showed that the Content Analysis methodology is reliable and valid for this form of analysis.

Using content analysis, a set of sustainable related concepts must be identified. These concepts should have in turned been identified and have been used in the earlier literature reviews. In past studies, Levy and Park (2011), Holcomb *et al.* (2007) and de Grosbosis (2012) identified 5 categories of CSR activities that hotels actively participated in. These included Community, Environment, workplace (Employee Welfare), Marketplace and Mission. However, for this study, only 4 of the 5 activities will be reviewed, namely Community Affairs, Environmental Concerns, Employee Welfare and Marketplace Interest.

The data that will be examined is determined from the hotel and corporate websites, annual financial statements and annual report from the 10 Singapore owned and operated hotel chains. Only 2017 and 2018 financial and annual reports were examined. Data was taken from the websites in the month of November 2019. From the data set, the commitments, initiatives, plans and achievements of the 4 CSR categories of each hotel chain were noted, recorded and tallied.

It should be noted that the hotel chains sampled were all part of a larger parent companies. Table 1 displays the names of these companies and their parent establishments. Table 1 also list the number of hotels under each respective chain. The number of hotels is shown as it is important to depict the size of the company due to the relevance of this study. Hsieh (2012) has noted that

larger companies in terms of size and capital are more likely to acknowledge the benefits of CSR activities and are more likely to report them.

Another reason for choosing larger, established hospitality companies gives accessibility to obtaining data from their annual reports and from their corporate websites. While most companies are not obligated to disclose their corporate dealings of a financial year, other than for listed companies, many companies openly list their corporate finances to ensure transparency and accountability to their stakeholders. These reports are generally a credible source of data and false reporting can be noted as a criminal offence. Many companies also derive these data after they have been audited and accounted for, so that their account reports are a true and fair representation of their companies' business and financial well-being.

Therefore, this focus of this study is to examine how the local hotel chains in Singapore report their CSR activities. This study will use the content analysis to analyse the websites and annual reports of the Singapore hotel companies, specifically regarding the category of the CSR reporting. The result of this study will be analysed and presented in accordance to the categories which has been mentioned earlier, i.e. Community Affairs, Environmental Concerns, Employee Welfare and Marketplace Interest.

Table 1. List of sampled Singapore Hotel Companies

Hotel Name	Listed Parent Company	Location of Headquarters	Number of Properties
Meritus Hotels and Resorts	Overseas Union Enterprise	Singapore	3
Frasers Properties	Frasers Hospitality Trust	Singapore	71
Banyan Tree	Banyan Tree Holdings	Singapore	39
Far East Hospitality	Far East Hospitality Trust	Singapore	51
Concorde Hotels	Hotel Properties Limited	Singapore	4
Park Avenues Hotel	United Engineers	Singapore	4
Fragrance	Fragrance Group	Singapore	8
Amara Hotels	Amara Holdings	Singapore	5
Parkroyal-Pan Pacific Hotels	UOL Group Limited	Singapore	29
Millennium and Cophthorne	City Developments Limited	London, United Kingdom	129

4. Results

The results of the analysis of commitments, initiatives and achievement on the four categories of Community Affairs, Environmental Concerns, Employee Welfare and Marketplace Interest are depicted on Appendix A. The results are from the analysis of samples hotel companies' websites, annual financial and/or sustainability reports.

All the hotels listed provided a fair amount of information on CSR. Despite the information obtained, each company depicted CSR differently. Most of the companies had their CSR information on their annual report downloaded from their corporate website or on their parent companies' webpage. Some companies reflected these CSR activities on both former and latter webpages, although some were listed differently, and cross referencing was necessary.

Table 2. Analysis of CSR reporting in annual reports and websites

CSR Activities	Commitments	Initiatives	Achievements
Environmental Concerns			
Water Savings	5	5	5
Energy Management	5	5	5
Waste Recycling	5	5	3
Green Products	4	4	4
Nature Conservation	5	5	5
Employee Welfare			
Health & Safety	7	7	4
Fair & Equitable Wages	4	4	0
Employee Assistance Programme	2	2	1
Opportunities for Training & Development	7	7	4
Diversity & Equal Opportunity	7	7	3
Work Life Balance	2	2	2
Community Affairs			
Scholarship & Grants	1	1	0
Blood Donation	1	0	0
Community Giving	6	6	1
Gifts to Disadvantaged Groups	5	5	3
Marketplace Interest			
Quality Products	3	3	1
Supplier Diversity	3	3	2
Ethical Behaviour	4	4	0
Fair Trade & Negotiation	3	3	0

Most of the CSR efforts and activities were listed on the hotel's sales and marketing / corporate communications webpages. These webpages often depict the properties and establishments under their purview. The pages often showed images of their staff in the course of their work. The annual reports also focused in its entirety on the financial status and economic well-being of the hospitality parent companies. The CSR efforts were marginally depicted, both pictorially and informatively. Most of the CSR information was on the annual reports imbedded on the websites and not directly placed on their webpages per se.

As mentioned, the CSR information on the hotel websites were very scarce. Only 1 out of the 10 hotel studies had details of their CSR activities wholly embedded their corporate websites. Most of the other hotels had their CSR information listed on the parent holding companies' corporate websites and their annual report were imbedded on their parent companies' websites. In most of the CSR reported for all 10 companies, CSR activities were often not detailed and were ambiguous with no measurement of the activities. Moreover, the CSR activities described were generally related to the parent company, rather than the specific hotel chain or specific properties.

While most of the companies were legally bound to report their endeavours, financial or otherwise to the public, non-public listed companies were obligated to do so. Nonetheless, all 10 companies' information on CSR were obtained either through their (proprietary or parent companies) websites, or from print media. It was noted that the CSR information of each

company were often found towards the end of the qualitative content of the report (prior to the financial statements section). The CSR information were generally not detailed and vague.

On the same note, the CSR information on most parent companies are difficult to find. Financial and accounting information dominated the annual reports. Little information, i.e. less than 5% of the reports reflected the CSR activities, which amounted to 2 – 5 pages for each report. As mentioned earlier, the activities reported were general superficial and non-detailed and listed the actions taken without any form of accountability, measurements or standards (national or international). The results of the findings are highlighted in Appendix A. The below sections break the findings into their different categories, namely Community Affairs, Environmental Concerns, Employees Welfare, and Marketplace Interest.

4.1 Community Affairs

Many of the hotels are generally into community giving, especially to disadvantaged groups. These disadvantaged groups are represented by elderly groups to children welfare and illness societies. This form of CSR is generally one of the highest of CSR efforts with almost half of the hotel group sample helping out in this aspect. From the annual reports, many companies feature pictorial aspects with visits to elderly homes, disadvantaged groups, such as children with illness and disabilities. Donations and gift presentation have been clearly noted in the pictures. In terms of scholarship and grants, there is a clear indication that CSR to schools and educational institutions are generally low with only a single hotel group supporting this form of CSR. Unknowingly, blood donations are generally not a form of CSR practised for Singapore hotel groups.

4.2 Environmental Concerns

In terms of environmental CSRs, about half of the sampled hotels practised environmental CSR. The range of CSR covered all aspects of water saving, energy management, waste recycling, nature conservation and green products. Almost all the commitments and initiatives taken were back up with quantitative data of achievements in the annual reports. From the data collected, hotels take the most effort in their environmental CSR practices, probably it has the greatest tangible and visible effect on guest and on their operational cost.

4.3 Employee Welfare

Under Employee Welfare, the most practised CSR would be that of Health and Safety, Opportunities for Training and Development and Diversity and Equal Opportunity- each with similar rankings. The least practised and committed CSR efforts were that of employee assisted programmes and work-life balance. Unlike the Environment achievements which were consistently highlighted with measurable data, the results of employee-related CSR practices were not featured on the annual reports.

4.4 Marketplace Interest

Marketplace CSR practices were only highlighted in about a-third of the hotel group's annual report. The highest committed CSR effort was that of having ethical behaviour when dealing with their suppliers. The other efforts i.e. having quality products, having supplier diversity and fair trade and negotiation were equally matched in terms of being highlighted in the annual reports. It is noted that in terms of achievements, these CSR practices were not mentioned if they attained their desired target.

In terms of Achievements, the hotel chains that showed and met their targets, often related their target to some to some form of international standard and abided by proper certification systems. While there might be certain variations in the standards based on the different certifications such as ISO, SERQUAL, HACCP etc. for standards in assurances, all these provide corporate companies as a yardstick of measurement (Cherapanukorn & Focken, 2014). In terms of sustainability and CSR standards, many of the hotels adopt standards from Earth Check and Green Globe as a form of adherence and measurement. The hotel groups in the sample that used these international standards were Banyan Tree, Frasers Properties and Far East Hospitality.

5. Discussion

From the findings, it can be surmounted that CSR is an important aspect of the business of Singapore hotel chains. Many hotels chains perceive the implementation CSR as a means by which their guest see them as caring for the world. (Holcomb *et al.*, 2007; Chung & Parker, 2010; Levy & Park, 2011). It has also been noted that in terms of comparison of a study by Wee and Ross-Smith (2018), the hotels chains in Singapore had comparable CSR efforts and commitments to their Malaysian counterparts. This clearly reinforced that CSR is indeed important to the business well-being and public image of the Singapore hotels.

The factors within the Employee category which are rated the highest is that of Health and Safety, Opportunities for Training and Development and having a Diverse and Equal Opportunity. The reasons these factors having a higher rating could be because of the direct impact they have on the business returns for the hotel companies, as compared to other factors such as Employee Assistance programmes and having a balance-work life. Moreover, the factor of a Diverse and Equal opportunity is in-line with Singapore's national multi-racial and cosmopolitan population and equity policy where all people are given equal opportunities and racial mix in a hospitality company is highly encouraged for operational sustainability reasons.

The Environmental Concerns factors are seen to be rated highly in terms of commitments, initiatives and achievements. These factors are often of high emphasis for most hotels as it brings about positive economic gains to a hotel's bottom line (Font *et al.*, 2012). Moreover, these factors are often the most noted by hotel guest and they are easiest to quantify by means of measurement tools (Levy & Park, 2011). This can be noted from the researched annual reports where almost all commitments are validated and accounted for through actual achievements. Lastly, in terms of CSR for hotels, many guest equate CSR generally to the environmental action taken, rather than factors associated with the well-being of staff and to suppliers (Font *et al.*, 2012).

In terms Community Affairs, it is the lowest category of CSR. In terms of grants and scholarships, it has been noted that only a single commitment from the Singapore hotel chains. The reason for this non-committal could be due to a perceived biasness by the hotel chains towards specific educational institutions, resulting in low participation in this area. Moreover, most schools, while not considered as charity organisation or causes, within the Singapore fall under the purview of the Ministry of Education. These schools have already received funding through the Government and from social and racial associations such as the Chinese Developmental Assistance Council, the Singapore Indian Development Association and the Mendaki Association. However, in terms of community giving and gifts to the disadvantaged groups, the Singapore hotel chains are more inclined to provide assistance through their CSR endeavours. The reason for this could be due to the community and disadvantaged groups being registered as charity organisations and deemed for organisation donations. Likewise, CSR efforts linked to aiding disadvantaged group are often perceived to have greater mileage from a public relations perspective (Frankental, 2001).

As for Marketplace Interest, there is consistently low CSR activities in this category. The reason for this could be because at the Marketplace level, there is minimal publicity. There is generally greater public awareness when activities are carried out on a Business-to-Consumer than on a Business-to-Business level. Moreover, it is presumed that there is greater public relations mileage when CSR is conducted from an Environmental and Community level as compared to it being done on a marketplace level. In terms of Achievements, there is not many international industry yardstick or measurements for the Marketplace, as compared to Environment issues. Furthermore, activities such as Ethical Behaviour is arbitrary and subjective. Hence, the achievements quantified are generally low.

From the findings, it has been noted that despite the quantitative data obtained, the annual reports do not feature details of the CSR efforts, other than for several hotel chains, such as Banyan Tree, Frasers Hospitality Trust, Far East Hospitality Trust and Millennium and Copthorne. Many of the hotel chains are generally not very forthcoming in terms of the specifics of their activities, often giving generic and scant information. Many did not feature the implementations of the CSR programmes, initiative developed, and achievement made, resulting in difficulties in obtaining the relevant data. This is supported by studies conducted by de Grosbois (2012) and Font *et al.* (2012) that many hotel chains often do not detail their CSR efforts in terms of execution and performance. Singapore hotel were also similar to their Malaysian counterparts, where CSR effort mentioned in their annual reports were often more narrative rather than focused on objectives, targets and performances (Wee & Ross-Smith, 2018).

While the hotel chains in Singapore depict a fair amount of CSR practices within the companies, it should be noted that the CSR practices found in the annual reports of the hotel chains as well as the parent companies of these chains. An example of that would be City Development Limited (CDL). The CSR practices of the Millennium and Copthorne hotels, a subsidiary business unit under CDL, were obtained from CDL's annual reports. While diligent work has been put in to ensure that the CSR practices were specific to the hotel group, this could be the reason why the details of CSR were scant, i.e. being part of the entire holding company's annual report.

With a greater awareness of CSR and more initiatives taken by the global hotel chains, it would seem that more hotels would be keener to take on greater CSR activities. Moreover, with Singapore being a headquarters of many such global chains, it would have been presumed that local Singapore hotel chains would follow suit. However, the CSR efforts noted in the annual reports are generally similar to a study conducted on Malaysian hotels by Wee and Ross-Smith (2018). They concluded that the results (like this current study) is lacking in the expected CSR efforts.

The reasons for the lack of expected CSR efforts as reflected in the annual reports could stem from several reasons. Firstly, the costs attributed to CSR might be a substantial amount, impacting their overall operational cost. While hotels might see CSR as part of the business or as a cost, these costs can be managed and trimmed without an impact their profits. Moreover, for many hotel companies there is no definitive mandate from their owners, guest and stakeholders. To many hotel chains, CSR efforts are a 'want-to-have' rather than a 'need-to-have'. Another reason for the lack of interest in CSR activities is that of the lack of awareness of CSR practices and the benefits that they offer. According to Tsai *et al.* (2012), Hong Kong hotel staff were not aware of the benefits of CSR. This is further supported by Kasim (2009) who mentioned that small and medium sized hotels (SME hotels) in Malaysia were severely lacking in their awareness of CSR practice and the reciprocal benefits. The lack of understanding and awareness can often result in the lack of CSR initiatives and expedition (Scanlon, 1997).

While most of the chains provided some form of CSR efforts, it has been noted a single hotel chain failed to provide any information on their CSR efforts. This hotel group which did not

mention any CSR effort was that of Hotel Properties Ltd (HPL), which had several local and overseas properties including the Four Seasons Singapore, Concorde Hotel Singapore, Hilton Singapore and others. The possible reason for the lack of CSR could have stem from the fact that HPL represent an owner hotel company, rather than an operations management company. Hence the prerogative of the company is essentially to depict the profitability of the organisation and leave the operational aspects including CSR endeavour to the respective brands to showcase.

It has also been noted that this study has sort to obtain CSR practices from annual reports and from the online hotel chain proprietary websites. However, almost all information derived for this report were obtained from only the annual reports. The reason is due to the lack of CSR information and programmes on the hotel chains proprietary websites. Most hotel websites depicted their operational aspects of the hotels. Several of the hotels showed the financial successes of the hotel chain. Banyan Tree hotels was the only hotel chain in the study that cleared stated their CSR mission and programmes. Therefore, from this, we can see that CSR can be used to better inform the public of the hotel's pursuits and to better integrate holistic digital marketing.

From the study, it has been noted that most corporate information on the hotels can be found on the websites, other than their CSR efforts. This could be because CSR reporting on websites are still a relative phenomenon, and CSR does not help to contribute to the top line of finances, therefore by deeming it as unimportant by the hotel chains (Holcomb *et al.*, 2007). However, websites being used as a source of information and as a point of booking (Shin, Pang & Kim, 2015). Therefore, the Singapore hotel companies would need to leverage on their websites to a platform where the public can access more of their information. By doing so, they can use their websites to generate greater positivity and customer loyalty through CSR (Cyr, 2008). However, it should be noted that while CSR depicted in a non-professional manner on a poorly designed website with vague information might create customer distrust.

Vague and limited CSR information on hospitality corporate websites might not be desirable and might hurt the image of the organisation. It has been noted by Vassilikopoulou, Siomkos and Mylonakis (2005) that consumers are generally willing to support businesses that practise CSR and meet their expectations. On that note, they are also not hesitant to boycott businesses that are damaging the environment and the community. From the above, hotels should leverage on their internet corporate websites to feature more of their CSR practices and efforts. In current times, websites are often perceived by guest to be the first-stop hub for information. Therefore, with added attention on the hotel chains' commitment and implementation on CSR will not only create more awareness, brand loyalty and guest demand in terms of patronage.

6. Conclusion

The general theme of this study is on the CSR reporting by Singapore hotel chains in terms of their activities and efforts. For most of the hotels that were investigated, they generally focused on the commitments and implementations of their CSR efforts. However, in many of the annual reports, most of the companies did not digress into their achievement criteria and failed to mention if they met their targets. This limited reporting in CSR could be because the hotels do not use website holistically and strategically – aiming only at obtaining economic benefits for their companies (Schmidt, Cantalops, & Dos Santos, 2008). In this sense, the holistic development of hotels in Singapore seen to be relatively weak. Welford (2005) mentioned that there is a close link between CSR and economics. Hence this clearly reflects that the Singapore hotel chains are still 'economically' developing.

The limited reporting could possibly raise the issue of 'greenwashing', which means that CSR efforts and reporting are generally seen as the way of making a company look good in the eyes of the public. It has been noted by Hsieh (2012) and Holcomb *et al.* (2007) that many companies

look at CSR as a public relations tool to generate a positive image for the corporation or to recover from negative criticism. Although many a times, this helped in building the image of the corporation, it can cause companies to become blind-sighted to the goal and purpose of the CSR effort and in way trivialise the benefits of CSR. Therefore, non-profit organisations and ministerial boards in Singapore, such as the Singapore Environment Council, Zero Waste SG and Ministry of Environment respectively should continue to accredit and educate Singapore hotels about the benefits of the CSR movement, encourage better reporting and avoid 'greenwashing'.

On the matter of reporting, it has been noted that there is no requirement by the hotel chains to report their CSR efforts in their annual reports. Moreover, non-public listed companies are not obligated to publically feature their annual reports, yearly endeavours and CSR efforts. It was reported by Tsang (1998) that many hotels and food and beverage establishments only disclosed scattered information on the CSR efforts and hardly any 'bad news' were disclosed. This is because CSR reporting is not mandatory under the Singapore law and all information disclosed is on a volunteer basis. Moreover, it was mentioned by de Grosbois (2012) that most hospitality companies were generally hesitant to disclose their CSR effort and provide only sporadic information. The hotel chains on a whole did not disclose much on their corporate websites. Therefore, to promote more CSR reporting, the Singapore Environment council and other green movement groups could provide more guidelines to companies on website reporting. As mentioned earlier, there is no mandate for companies in Singapore to provide CSR activities openly, websites are the 'go-to place' for obtaining information on the companies. This is especially so for the millennial generation who are more computer savvy. The corporate websites are the public face of the company. Therefore, it would be advisable for the Singapore government to mandate corporate organisation to conform certain standards of CSR report to ensure consistency in reporting with the country.

In order to encourage more CSR efforts and reporting, more education, training and encourage is needed from both the management corporate headquarters, the government and from non-profit green organisations. Kasim (2009) has noted that there is a lack of knowledge and the importance of raising awareness and appreciation of the benefits of CSR especially in the SME hotels. The management corporate headquarters could incentivise CSR efforts implemented in their subsidiary hotels and even place CSR efforts as part of the hotels' key performance indicators. The companies can even work with the owners of the properties as part of their operating cost and revenues. The government, with the non-profit green organisations can organise workshops, lecturers and seminars for the local hotels on the benefits of a comprehensive CSR and CSR reporting regime in the annual reports and websites. It is only by having a transparent reporting of CSR system, coupled together with the commitments and targets achievement that transcend all levels of the hotel employee hierarchy, can a hotels monitor their CSR results and have a holistic appreciation of CSR practices and activities.

Finally, many studies on companies listed on the New York Stock Exchange indicates that the financial performance of companies that take sustainability and CSR importantly and proactively tend to surpass companies that don't (Kasim, 2009). On the similar note, these companies are equally well supported by investors. These findings go to show that at present times, CSR is of great importance in the corporate world. Companies who choose to ignore taking CSR seriously would no doubly face harsh consequences.

This study contributes to the overall literature on CSR and CSR reporting in the hospitality line. It gives a microcosm aspect of the said topic within the sphere of the Singapore hotel chain terms of their CSR actions taken and their reporting through the various mediums. This study also looks at the different CSR practised by the different hotel groups and which category is

deemed the most popular and the probable reasons why they are so. Finally, this study identifies companies which provide useful and informative CSR reporting. As for limitations, the study looks at only 10 Singapore based hotel groups through their websites and annual reports. While it might be conclusive to obtain the CSR efforts from these mediums, the results might be represented if interviews were conducted on the staff and management of the hotels. There could have been CSR efforts conducted that might have not be published on the researched mediums.

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