

The Communication of Corporate Social Responsibility Among Stakeholders for Selected Senior Managers in the Accommodation Section of Thailand's Tourism Industry

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: The overall aim of this research was to identify and examine the practices and communication of social responsibility initiatives among senior managers in Thailand's tourism industry, primarily the accommodation section. The main objectives of the research were to investigate the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) practices of a company and the nature of the communication of their commitments to CSR to industry stakeholders (management/owners, employees, suppliers, customers and the community). CSR was defined as 'a strategic approach of incorporating social concerns into business operations and relations with stakeholders'.

Design/Methodology/Approach: Seventeen semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted using open ended questions with senior managers in the accommodation sector of Thailand's tourism industry. Snowball Sampling (chain referral sampling) was used to identify qualified subjects for the in-depth interviews.

Results: The data revealed variations of the definition of CSR in the sample of the accommodation sector in Thailand; each senior manager viewed CSR with different interpretation. Asking the respondents to describe the requirements of a legitimate CSR initiative provided a multitude of views with the common feature being that CSR initiatives are people oriented. The general consensus among senior managers centered on whether the primary focus of the CSR strategy should be employees or the community, provides a basis for understanding. The results of the research indicate the need of an effective communication strategy which should, ultimately, tell a story about the company's CSR philosophy, goals, programs and initiatives. The various dynamics of each stakeholder relationship, should be considered and the appropriate communication strategy should be used by the senior managers to reach each specific stakeholder with clear message relating to their CSR initiative.

As a result of this research, recommendations for effective communication of CSR efforts emerged. A framework for CSR communication and practical guidelines for the best practice of effective communication of CSR in this sample of the accommodation industry in Thailand was developed. While no company would exemplify all best practices exactly as presented, successful companies demonstrated many of the best practices described. A myriad of initiatives were provided by interviewees and methods of communication of the initiatives considered. Saturation was achieved when subsequent interviews failed to add no new data. Interviews were conducted with senior managers representing a wide range of accommodation styles and locations, representing ten 5 star hotels in Bangkok, three Community Based Tourism (CBT) lodges in Northern Thailand, and four beachside resorts in Hua Hin and Ko Samui.

Limitation of the Research: The inductive exploratory research required to analyze the communication of CSR initiatives, focuses on the communication strategies between senior managers and major stakeholders including; shareholders, customers, suppliers, employees and the community. The study represents a sample of seventeen senior managers in Thailand's tourism industry, primarily the accommodation sector, to the exclusion of other sectors that comprise the tourism industry. The uniqueness of the service industry further limits the scope of the research when compared to other industries such as manufacturing or agriculture as the customer is further removed from the product development.

Key Words: Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), Communication, Thailand, CSR Communication, Stakeholder Communication, Cultural Communication

