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## The Role of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in the Tourism Industry, Thailand

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### ABSTRACT

The paper is designed to provide a quantitative measure of corporate social responsibility for the tourism in Upper Northeastern Thailand. The purpose of this study is to develop the model of corporate social responsibility in tourism industry. Specifically, the objective of this study is to examine the validity and reliability of the four-factor model in corporate social responsibility. The research mainly involves a survey design. It includes a pilot test using undergraduate business and tourism students at UdonThani Rajabhat University for pretesting questionnaire items. In addition, this investigate into corporate practices, corporate social responsibility, corporate environmental responsibility, and corporate customer responsibility attributes necessitates uncovering variables of interest and this involves a large-scale field study. The data are collected via personal questionnaires from 359 samples. They include the tourists in 3 provinces such as UdonThani, Nongkhai, Loei. Respondents are asked to rate, on a five-point Likert scale, their agreement or disagreement on the corporate social responsibility attributes. LISREL program is used for data analysis since the proposed model is a simultaneous system of equations having latent constructs and multiple indicators. Quantitative data are analyzed by the statistical techniques, namely exploratory factor analysis and structural equation modeling. It is found from the study that the effect of corporate practices on corporate customer responsibility through corporate social responsibility and corporate environmental responsibility. The managerial implications are discussed.

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## INTRODUCTION

Due to earning first service trade value of the country, the tourism is a service industry which takes main roles in Thai economics system. Moreover, it is an industry contributing involved business, for instance; hotels, residents, restaurants, souvenir shops, transportation, etc., and attracting investment, employment and local income distribution. In 2009, Thailand could earn from foreign tourists approximately 527,326 million baht or about 8.5 percentages of total exporting values (51.1 percentages of service section exporting values) or approximate proportion 5.8 percentages of GDP. Meanwhile tourism business can cause employing over 2 million people or 6-7 percentages of entire labor system. In addition, this can improve income distribution and local employment (Ministry of Tourism and Sports).

Nowadays corporate social responsibility is recognized by scholars and practitioners in the tourism industry. Moreover, the corporate social responsibility have been leded to corporate sustainable. The Center for Sustainable Enterprise (2010) defined sustainability as a way of doing business that creates profit while avoiding harm to people and the planet.

The sustainability also refers to the three inter-linked elements of people, profit and planet (3Ps) or the triple-bottom line construct (Cronin *et al.*, 2011). Ecotourism for example is one of the fast growing sectors of the hospitality and tourism industries worldwide (Pomering *et al.* (2011; Bjork, 2000; Buckley, 2000). Ecotourism, a sub-category of sustainable tourism, is adopted by many Thailand rural communities as a new way to attract visitors and stimulate local economies through generating tour revenues while conserving the natural, social and cultural resources of communities (Rittichainuwat *et al.*, 2001).

The purpose of this study is to develop the model of corporate social responsibility in tourism industry. Specifically, the objective of this study is to examine the validity and reliability of the four-factor model in corporate social responsibility.

The paper starts with a review of the literature on the exploration variables of the proposed model. The following section presented the conceptual model and defines the sets of research objectives and hypotheses.

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The study proceeds with a description of methods applied, including information about the data and statistical procedures. Results are presented and some of their implications and limitations are discussed in the final section.

### **Literature Review:**

The notion of CSR is recognized by tourism scholars and practitioners. Carroll (1999) outlined it is a multidimensional construct that has evolved over recent decades. Initially Carroll's four dimensions of CSR comprised economic, legal, ethical and discretionary dimensions with his later work (Carroll, 1999) proposing the latter be replaced by a philanthropic dimension. . Nonetheless, while the meaning of CSR is contested, to aver, as Frankental (2001) does, that because CSR is a loosely intangible term it is effectively without meaning. The foundation of CSR is the acknowledgement that businesses have responsibilities to society that go beyond shareholder wealth maximisation. This belief is widely held, and hence a degree of shared understanding and common meaning exists.

Inoue, and Lee (2011) indicated that the 5 dimensions of CSR as (1) employee relations, (2) product quality, (3) community relations, (4) environmental issues, and (5) diversity issues. The CSR dimensions had a differential effect on both short-term and future profitability and that such financial impacts varied across the four industries.

Font *et al.* (2012) found that corporate policies, labour issues, socio-economic issues, environmental issues, customer engagement, and transparency have been important in CSR in a hotel industry.

van den Krink *et al.* (2006) indicate strategic CSR improves customer attitudes toward firms, and purchase intentions (Russel and Russell, 2010; Lafferty *et al.*, 2004; Hamlin and Wilson, 2004 ).

Bhattacharya and Sen (2004;) suggested that there were relationship among community involvement, diversity, employee relations, non-US operations, and product issues (KLD) (Bhattacharya, and Korschun, 2008).

Park *et la.* (2014) suggested that CSR consists of economic responsibilities, legal responsibilities, ethics responsibilities, and philanthropic responsibilities. They also indicated that the effect of CSR on expertise trust, and corporate reputation.

Having been reviewed the extant literature to outline which CSR activities and outcomes, Peloza and Shang (2011) stated that CSR activities have the potential to create stronger relationships between firms and stakeholders.

William and Lawson (2001) suggested that researchers who are interest in investigating antecedents of stakeholders or residents perceptions of tourism need to focus more on personal value and less on demographic factors.

Gursoy *et al.* (2002) aimed to model host community support for tourism development in Virginia, the United States of America. They showed that community concern, community attachment, ecocentric attitudes, utilization of the tourism resource base by residents, the state of the local economy, perceived benefits and costs are related to support for tourism based in two categories (cultural and historic attractions; and cultural and folks events).

However, the previous tests of the SCR construct yielded mixed findings. Therefore author aims to develop and to validate the measurement of the tourism SCR construct (TCSR) in Thailand (see Figure 1). Figure 1 shows the path diagram for TCSR model. This model consists of a structural equation:

$$\eta_i = \beta_i \eta_i + \zeta_i$$

Where  $\eta$  is a vector of 4 perceived TCSR constructs, B is a matrix  $4 \times 4$  coefficients relating each constructs its overall TCSR construct, and  $\zeta$  is a vector of 4 errors of TCSR constructs.

The structural equation links the four TCSR factors,  $\eta$  to the latent overall ecotourism,  $\xi$ . The measurement equation links the observed variable  $y$  to their respective hypothesized TCSR.

### **Objective and Hypothesis:**

The aim of this paper is to examine the tourism corporate social responsibility model (TCSR) construct in Thailand. The author proposed a model of the TCSR. The model, based on the structural equation model, consisted of four constructs, namely business ethics, social responsibility, environment responsibility, and customer responsibility. Shifting attention to the measurement part of the model, four latent variables are operationalised by 11 manifest variables acting as reflective indicators. Table 1 details the measure scheme.

On the basis of the literature discussed above (Carroll, 1997; Smith *et al.*, 2001), the TCSR model is developed (see Figure 1). Thus hypotheses are addressed as follows;

H<sub>1</sub>: there is a positive relationship between business ethics and social responsibility of tourism ( $\beta_{21} \neq 0$ ).

H<sub>2</sub>: there is a positive relationship between business ethics and environmental responsibility of tourism ( $\beta_{31} \neq 0$ ).

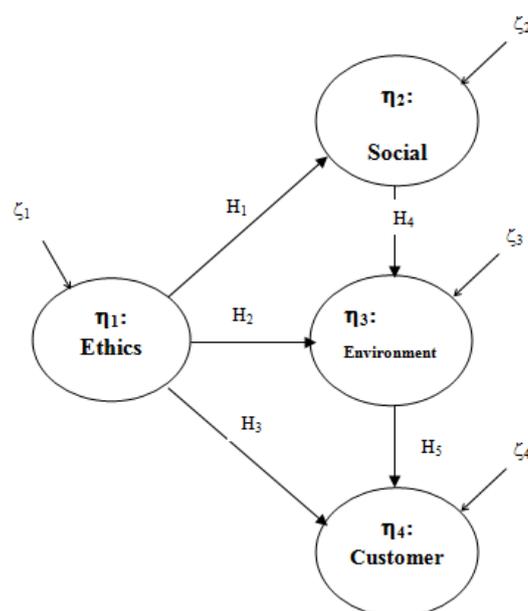
H<sub>3</sub>: there is a positive relationship between business ethics and customer responsibility of tourism ( $\beta_{41} \neq 0$ ).

H<sub>4</sub>: there is a positive relationship between social responsibility and environmental responsibility of tourism ( $\beta_{32} \neq 0$ ).

H<sub>5</sub>: there is a positive relationship between environmental and customer responsibility of tourism ( $\beta_{43} \neq 0$ ).

**Table 1:** the measure of the TCSR construct.

| Scale                       | Scale Items   |
|-----------------------------|---|
| Business ethics,            | B1Travel Agent Service quality and standards<br>B2Travel Agent Service with a fair price<br>B3Travel Agent Notification costs                               |
| Social responsibility,      | G1Travel Agent Volunteering<br>G2Travel Agent Training to educate youth<br>G3Travel Agent Development tourism location                                      |
| Environment responsibility, | F1Travel Agent Social assistance<br>F2 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Travel Agent Non-biodegradable products<br>F3Travel Agent Landscape improvements |
| Customer responsibility     | D1Travel Agent Service as promised<br>D2Travel Agent Indemnification  |



**Fig. 1:** TCSR model.

### Research Methodology:

The proposed research design embedded in a quantitative approach. It included a two-stage process. The first stage is a pilot study (i.e., pretesting questionnaire items) of undergraduate business students conducting data collection in Udon Thani Rajabhat University. In addition, cross-section survey design of this investigation into TCSR attributes necessitated uncovering the variables of interest and their relationship (Anderson and Gerbing, 1988; Baumgartner and Homburg, 1996). This entailed conducting a large-scale field study.

#### 1. The Sample and Data Collection:

The focus of this survey research was on scrutinising the link of TCSR dimensions. The sample was drawn from a list of all Internal tourism UdonThani province (1,941,219 peoples) at Nongkhai district in Nongkhai province (1,012,510 peoples) and Loei province (734,082 peoples) (Department of Tourism, Thailand 2012). From the number of Tourist, a sample of 359 heads of the tourist was quota selected. The data were collected via self-administered questionnaires. Respondents were asked to rate, on a five-point Likert scale their agreement or disagreement on the TCSR dimensions. In November 2012- February 2013, 359 questionnaires were distributed to the sample in upper northeast, Thailand.

#### 2. Research Instrument:

This study utilized nondisguised - structured questionnaires, based on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The questionnaire consisted of two sections, each designed to elicit responses for the followings. Part 1, background information of the characteristics of the respondent including age, gender, income, and level of education. Part 2, TCSR attributes including business ethics, social

responsibility, environment responsibility, and customer responsibility (Carroll, 1999; Smith *et al.*, 2001) (see Table 1).

**Table 2:** Mean, standard deviation, covariance matrices.

|      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |
|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
|      | B1   | B2   | B3   | G1   | G2   | G3   | E2   | F2   | F3   | D1   | D2   |
| B1   | 0.59 |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |
| B2   | 0.41 | 0.73 |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |
| B3   | 0.26 | 0.46 | 0.72 |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |
| G1   | 0.25 | 0.22 | 0.23 | 0.75 |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |
| G2   | 0.29 | 0.30 | 0.32 | 0.58 | 0.92 |      |      |      |      |      |      |
| G3   | 0.31 | 0.37 | 0.41 | 0.57 | 0.84 | 1.11 |      |      |      |      |      |
| E2   | 0.24 | 0.25 | 0.29 | 0.26 | 0.31 | 0.39 | 0.74 |      |      |      |      |
| F2   | 0.19 | 0.25 | 0.31 | 0.33 | 0.37 | 0.43 | 0.28 | 0.72 |      |      |      |
| F3   | 0.20 | 0.26 | 0.33 | 0.35 | 0.39 | 0.45 | 0.33 | 0.57 | 0.76 |      |      |
| D1   | 0.15 | 0.18 | 0.18 | 0.22 | 0.25 | 0.26 | 0.16 | 0.14 | 0.17 | 0.45 |      |
| D2   | 0.20 | 0.24 | 0.22 | 0.21 | 0.26 | 0.32 | 0.24 | 0.18 | 0.21 | 0.31 | 0.52 |
| Mean | 3.54 | 3.61 | 3.54 | 3.22 | 3.12 | 3.10 | 3.56 | 3.43 | 3.38 | 3.83 | 3.62 |
| S.D. | 0.77 | 0.85 | 0.85 | 0.87 | 0.96 | 1.05 | 0.86 | 0.85 | 0.87 | 0.67 | 0.72 |

### 5. Analytical techniques:

LISREL VIII (Joreskog and Sorbom, 1996) was mainly used for data analysis since the proposed model was a simultaneous system of equations having latent constructs (unobservable variables) and multiple indicators (Bollen, 1989), was a powerful methodology for assessing validity and reliability of marketing constructs. In LISREL an important consideration was to demonstrate that the model is properly identified. Quantitative data will be analyzed by multivariate statistical techniques, such as structural equation modeling.

### Results:

#### 5.1 Hypothesis Testing:

##### 5.1.1 Assessing fit between model and data:

The analysis started with the calculation of the mean and standard deviation for each unweighted, interval scale. We also report covariance between each scale in Table 2. The overall adequacy of the proposed theoretical framework was examined using LISREL causal modeling procedures (Joreskog, and Sorbom, 1996), and the maximum likelihood method of estimation and the two-stage testing process were adopted. A substantial portion of the variance in the TCSR has been explained by the model. The results are shown in Table 2. The model is a close fit to the data at  $\chi^2_{(36)}$  value of 71.21 ( $P = 0.00042$ ); GFI = 0.96; AGFI = 0.92; RMSEA = 0.05; CFI=0.99. GFI and CFI revealed the unacceptable level and the large chi-square value indicated the model closed to fit the data. Therefore, the TCSR model could be acceptable (Bentler, 1990; Bentler and Bonett, 1980).

**Table 3:** Properties of the CFA for TCSR.

| Construct indicators         | Standardized loadings | t-value | Composite reliability | Variance Extracted Estimate:AVE | Cronbach's Alpha |
|------------------------------|-----------------------|---------|-----------------------|---------------------------------|------------------|
| Business Ethics              |                       |         | 0.78                  | 0.54                            | .84              |
| B1                           | 0.60                  | 6.37*   |                       |                                 |                  |
| B2                           | 0.66                  | 8.18*   |                       |                                 |                  |
| B3                           | 0.71                  | 5.06*   |                       |                                 |                  |
| Social Responsibility        |                       |         | 0.90                  | 0.76                            | .81              |
| G1                           | 0.70                  | 7.78*   |                       |                                 |                  |
| G2                           | 0.84                  | 6.67*   |                       |                                 |                  |
| G3                           | 1.00                  | 2.62*   |                       |                                 |                  |
| Environmental Responsibility |                       |         | 0.62                  | 0.36                            | .72              |
| E2                           | 0.53                  | 10.36*  |                       |                                 |                  |
| F2                           | 0.53                  | 9.91*   |                       |                                 |                  |
| F3                           | 0.58                  | 9.39*   |                       |                                 |                  |
| Customer Responsibility      |                       |         | 0.63                  | 0.47                            | .88              |
| D1                           | 0.50                  | 7.31*   |                       |                                 |                  |
| D2                           | 0.60                  | 3.74*   |                       |                                 |                  |

The composite reliability (CR), average variance extracted estimates (AVE), convergent validity were examined. Composite reliability reflects the internal consistency of the indicators in measuring a given factor (Bagozzi, and Yi, 1988). The composite reliability values for each of the TCSR dimensions is shown in Table 3 which reveals that the composite reliability score for each dimension is satisfying (0.78, 0.90, 0.62, 0.63). In addition, the Cronbach's alpha values for each of the TCSR dimensions are shown in Table 3, which in each

case is greater than 0.60 (Bagozzi, and Yi, 1988). In addition, the result was that the variance extracted estimates construct are greater than .50 (0.54, 0.76, 0.36, 0.47).

Besides the reliability test, convergent validity was demonstrated when different instruments were used to measure the same construct, and scores from these different instruments are strongly correlated (Bagozzi, and Yi, 1988; Fornell, and Larcker, 1981). The *t*-test for each indicator loading is shown in Table 3. In the result of this analysis the construct demonstrates a high convergent validity because all *t*-values are significant at the .01 level.

## 2. Test Hypotheses:

Table 4 contained the maximum likelihood LISREL estimates of the model's parameters and their *t*-values. All estimated parameters (i.e. the structural coefficients contained in B) were positive and significant at the 0.05 level. As shown in Table 4, the H<sub>1-5</sub> are supported.

**Table 4:** Hypotheses testing for TCSR.

| Hypothesized Paths     | Expected Sign | Standardized Coefficients | t        | A/R |
|------------------------|---------------|---------------------------|----------|-----|
| H1: ethics → social    | +             | 0.56                      | 7.48***  | ✓   |
| H2: ethics → environ   | +             | 0.55                      | 6.08***  | ✓   |
| H3: ethics → Customer  | +             | 0.56                      | 6.48 *** | ✓   |
| H4: social → environ   | +             | 0.45                      | 5.36 *** | ✓   |
| H5: environ → Customer | +             | 0.22                      | 2.64 **  | ✓   |

Notes: A/R, acceptance or rejection of hypothesis. <sup>a</sup>Hypothetical sign of the relation, \*\*p<0.05 and t>1.96; \*\*\*p<0.01 and t>2.58

H<sub>1-3</sub> suggested that there are positive relationships between business ethics and social responsibility and environmental responsibility and customer responsibility of tourism were supported ( $\beta_{21} = 0.56$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ;  $\beta_{31} = 0.55$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ;  $\beta_{41} = 0.56$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Additionally, H<sub>4</sub> predicted that there is a positive relationship between social responsibility and environmental responsibility of tourism was supported ( $\beta_{32} = 0.45$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ).

H<sub>5</sub> predicted that there is a positive relationship between environmental and customer responsibility of tourism was supported ( $\beta_{43} = 0.22$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ).

## Discussion and Conclusions:

The purpose of this study is to develop the model of corporate social responsibility in tourism industry. These findings would be consistent with the research by Inoue, and Lee (2011) indicated that the 5 dimensions of CSR as (1) employee relations, (2) product quality, (3) community relations, (4) environmental issues, and (5) diversity issues had a differential effect on both short-term and future profitability and that such financial impacts varied across the four industries. Font *et al.* (2012) found that corporate policies, labour issues, socio-economic issues, environmental issues, customer engagement, and transparency have been important in CSR in a hotel industry.

van den Krink *et al.* (2006) indicate strategic CSR improves customer attitudes toward firms, and purchase intentions (Russel and Russell, 2010; Lafferty *et al.*, 2004; Hamlin and Wilson, 2004).

Bhattacharya and Sen (2004;) suggested that there were relationship among community involvement, diversity, employee relations, non-US operations, and product issues (KLD) (Bhattacharya, and Korschun, 2008).

## Research and Managerial Implications:

For the researcher, this article has provided a comprehensive evaluation for understanding the measurement of TCSR in Thailand. However, several limitations are acknowledged, leading to suggestion for directing future research. First, this research was limited to validating the model of residents' perception on ecotourism based on confirmatory factor analysis. Whereas, many researchers have used the resource-based and strategy-structure-performance views to examine the associations between residents' perception on ecotourism, tourists' motive, tourists' satisfaction, and tourist loyalty, future research could apply these views to ascertain antecedent and consequent relationships among natural resources, human capability, and competitive advantage.

Second, cross-sectional data were used in the paper. Subsequently, the time sequence of the residents' perceptions on ecotourism structure cannot be determined unambiguously. Therefore, the results might not be interpreted as proof of a causal relationship, but rather as lending support for a prior causal scheme. The development of a time-series database and testing of the residents' perception on ecotourism structure relationship with performance in a longitudinal framework would provide more insight into probable causation.

Finally, the LISREL methodology may be construed as a limitation because the results presented here are based on the analysis of a causal non-experiment design. The future research could conduct the quasi-experimental and experimental designs.

From a managerial perspective, the results provide an initial empirical evidence of the importance of implementing the CSR strategies holistically rather than piecemeal. These suggest that local residents evaluate the CSR construct on five basic dimensions but that they also view overall the ecotourism construct as a higher order factor that captures a meaning common to all dimensions. That is tourism managers cannot be selective in implementing certain CSR dimension practices and regardless of others due to all subcomponents serve as building blocks of one concept. However, they should pay more attention on utilized resources and benefit of CSR for developing the favorable tourism.

Specifically, destination managers, tourism planners, political authorities and other groups who implements strategies in different environment settings cannot have an ethnocentric view about management imperatives. This study provides some guidelines for stakeholders handling residents' perceptions on CSR activities across the country.

For example, the results demonstrate that 'tourism changed our precious traditional culture has important implications for the perceived costs of tourism. The stakeholders should conserve, preserve traditional cultures such as Thailand Vassa's wax sculpture, Bun Bang Fai Fair (Bamboo Rocket) or Songkarn festival. Furthermore, this study found that 'tourism increased revenue for local government is strongly correlated to perceived benefits of tourism, use of the tourism resource base. The destination managers, tourism planners, political authorities should place emphasis on preserving the natural resources. Also, they should build facilities e.g., homestay, restaurants, and transportation for tourism effectiveness.

Furthermore, the study found a significant link among economic and ethical, and legal dimension. The tourism managers with insights into which dimensions of CSR activities would improve their companies' financial performance. Also, stakeholders should increase communication channels, or develop information systems for integrating CSR activities. Collaboration should be strengthened among Thailand officials in different government departments and agencies, such as Tourism Authority of Thailand, Department of Agricultural Extension, The Thai Chamber of Commerce, Community Development Department and Commission on Higher Education.

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