YOUNG RESEARCHERS' SECTION

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DO THE EMPLOYEES COUNT? HUNGARIAN HOTEL MANAGERS' ATTITUDE TOWARDS EMPLOYEE-RELATED CSR ACTIVITIES

This study analyses the attitudes of the Hungarian four- and five-star hotels toward employee-related corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities. Workforce is one of the most important dimensions of corporate social responsibility (CSR). In spite of rising interest in CSR in various industries, including the lodging industry, employee-related activities are a rarely examined subject in the hospitality context, even though employees in the lodging industry are one of the key factors of hotels' quality service delivery. They have direct connection with hotel guests, consequently they can largely contribute to customer satisfaction through appropriate service delivery. Thus this study examines the Hungarian high-quality hotels' attitude towards employee-related CSR activities. According to a survey based on the opinion of the Hungarian four- and five-star hotel executives, the most important initiatives tended to ensure healthy and fair working conditions, ensure non-discrimination and equal opportunities for new candidates and ensure internship opportunities to students. Hotel executives reported that customer satisfaction, cost savings and branding-related outcomes were the main reasons for CSR implementation.

Introduction

Over the last decades CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) has became an increasingly important and actual issue (Tsai et al., 2012; Li et al., 2017) in the field of management literature and more and more researchers are concerned with the question whether companies have other obligations toward the society beyond profit maximalization or not. (Fatma, 2016; Reid, et al. 2017)

In the 1990s the idea of the triple bottom line, (TBL) and its three pillars of economic, environmental and social action gained popularity and this theory have been demonstrating growing awareness of the social and environmental consequences of business operation. (Fatma, 2016; Reid et al., 2017; Grosbois 2012)

Different stakeholders including the public, governments, customers, employees, suppliers and others (Bohdanowicz – Zientara, 2008; Grosbois, 2012) expect companies to recognize their social and environmental responsibilities and adopt various CSR initiatives into their business operation to minimize the negative impacts of their operations. (Grosbois, 2012) The significance of CSR policies has increased in the tourism-related industries as well. (Li et al., 2017)

Connected with tourism predominantly the environmental practices receive distinguished attention because this industry is contributor to and victim of the impact of climate change. (Reid et al., 2017) CSR-related studies focusing on employees have been scarce in the Hungarian context despite of the importance of the topic. Employees in the lodging industry are one of the key factors of hotels' quality service delivery. They have direct connection with hotel guests, consequently they can largely contribute to customer satisfaction and customer loyalty through appropriate service delivery. (Hallowell et al., 1996)

Because of the above mentioned reasons hotels' managements have to regard their employees' needs and increase their well-being. (Rodríguez-Antón – Alonso-Almeida, 2011) Consequently this study has the following objectives: to examine the attitudes of the Hungarian hotels' executives toward employee-related CSR activities and to understand the reasons why the Hungarian hotels apply different CSR activities.

The concept of CSR

The concept of CSR is defined in different ways. (Fatma, 2016; Grosbois, 2012) According to Kucukusta et al. (2013) CSR has five dimensions: social, voluntariness, stakeholders, economic and environmental. Some definitions emphasize and cover only one dimension. Highlighting the social area, CSR is defined as a management practice that reduces the company's negative impact on the environment and strengthens its positive impacts. The dimension of voluntariness can be defined as "the degree of moral obligation that may be ascribed to corporations beyond simple obedience to the laws of the state." (p.20.)

The stakeholder dimension can be explained as a contract between society and business in which the community allows the company to operate in and in return it has to fulfil certain obligations and operate accordingly.

However in practice the definitions which include the majority of dimensions or all of the five dimension are widely known and widespread. According to one of the most commonly used definition CSR is "a concept by which companies integrate social and environmental concerns in their operations and in their interaction with stakeholders on a voluntary basis." (Commission of the European Communities 2001, p.6.) The World Business Council for Sustainable Development (1999) explains CSR as „the business commitment for contributing to sustainable economic development, employees, their families, the local community and society to improve their quality of life." Another definition of WBCSD interprets CSR as „a continuous commitment by business to behave ethically and contribute to economic development by improving the quality of life of workforce and their families, as well as the local community." (World Business Council for Sustainable Development, 1999, p. 3)

Fatma et al. (2016) similarly defines CSR. Accordingly, CSR is the companies' commitment in the interest of the long-term economic, social and environmental well-being through business practices, policies and resources. According to Ettinger et al. (2018) CSR is a set of actions that keep the social goods in view beyond the interest of the company, in a manner controlled by law.

However, the concept of CSR is best illustrated by the stakeholder theory devised by Freeman (1984). According to the assumption that serves as a basis for the concept, the values should be the part of business operation. Managers need to take not only the companies' shareholders into consideration, but also a wider layer.

CSR in tourism

The tourism industry makes a significant contribution to the positive performance of the world economy. According to the World Travel and Tourism Council (2016) the travel and tourism industry generated around USD 7.2 trillion for the global economy in 2015. Besides, approximately 284 million jobs were created by tourism. Furthermore approximately 5% of the world's investments are realized in the tourism sector. (Reid et al., 2017) According to forecasts this performance will continue to grow over the next period. (Reid et al., 2017)

Despite the above mentioned positive facts, tourism is one of the industries that are the most obvious contributors to climate change. Companies operating in the sector produce a significant contribution to greenhouse gas emissions which is the main cause of climate change. In addition, tourism businesses emit considerable proportions of carbon dioxide, produce large amount of waste and consume large quantities of energy and water. (Reid et al., 2017) As a result, in the past few decades, social responsibility is increasingly emphasized in both literature and practice. At the same time, the number of environmentally-conscious travelers is growing and during their travel decision processes they will prefer hotels' providing large scale of CSR activities related to the environment. Recognizing this growing trend, numerous tourism businesses – not only hotels – make an effort to meet the new trend. (Li et al., 2017)

Rhou et al. (2016) analyzed restaurants' CSR activities, reporting that people between 20-35 are the most frequent visitors of restaurants and for this generation not only quality but restaurants' CSR activities are also an important factor when they are choosing the most ideal option.

In addition, airlines have also recognized the importance of CSR initiatives. Leading airlines, including British Airways, SAS and Dragonair launched joint carbon-emission compensation programs to support environmental projects. (Kang et al., 2010) British Airways, TUI, Thomas Cook and Carnival Cruises are also the members of the British consortium whose main vision is a truly successful future, in which tourism takes on a broader responsibility for society as a whole, with partners who have a leading role in sustainable tourism. (Coles et al., 2013)

CSR in the lodging industry

As we mentioned before the lodging industry has a significant role in tourism and it is one of the fastest growing industries since the 1950s. (Prud'Homme – Raymond 2013; Grosbois 2012) At the same time, the hotel industry, as with the tourism sector generally, has a significant impact on the natural, social and economical environment, including climate change, air pollution, noise pollution and waste management. (Li et al., 2017; Grosbois, 2012; Singh et al., 2014; Prud'Homme – Raymond 2013) Consequently the above mentiond triple bottom line concept can be applied to hotels as well. Besides profit maximalization and economical results they also need to take care with social and environmental issues. (Braun, 2015)

Therefore CSR practices are motivated by different objectives. (Levy – Park, 2011) Adoption of environmental friendly solutions not only reduce energy and water consumption, but reduce the operation costs as well. (Bowe, 2005; Dodd et al., 2001) CSR activities can create a competitive advantage for hotels (Chen, 2015; Bowe, 2005; Dodd et al., 2001) as CSR can improve the hotel's brand image, thus increasing customers' loyality and satisfaction. (Levy – Park, 2011; Berezan et al., 2013) The communication of CSR activities towards the potential customers can lead to higher income and more repeat business, because environmentally conscious customers are willing to pay more for „green services" and ethical behaviour in business. (Vassilikopoulou et al., 2005; Li et al., 2017) Consequently consumers can boycott hotels operating in unethical ways. (Li et al., 2015)

Implementation of CSR practices can enhance employees' loyalty, morale and retention rate and this can definitely result in a more productive workforce. Furthermore happy employees lead to happy customers enhancing customer satisfaction and loyalty. (Kucukusta et al., 2013; Berezan et al., 2013) Through engaging in and communicating CSR programs to current and potential employees, hotels can also reduce staff turnover, strengthen employee engagement and recruit high-performing candidates. (Levy – Park, 2011; Kim et al., 2017)

All of this shows that CSR has various benefits to the different stakeholders, which explains why Luck and Bowcott (2009: p 297) assert that "a CSR strategy is not only needed but highly recommendable" (quoted by Kucukusta et al., 2013)

Identitification of the employee-related CSR activities

CSR studies related to tourism, focus mainly on environmental issues. Besides environmental initiatives CSR has other dimensions. Table 1 illustrates the CSR dimensions and activities, from internal perspective, where CSR initiatives have an important role related to employee relations and workforce.

According to Levy – Park (2011), Kucukusta et al. (2013) and Holcomb et al. (2007) activities cover five different aspects of CSR. This dimensions are defined more specifically and each factor cover fewer areas. Consequently, the importance of employee relations or workforce was emphasized as a differentiated dimension. Dahlsrud (2008) and Fatma et al. (2016) also determined five different dimensions of CSR. The dimension of stakeholders or social dimension involves workforce-related CSR activities, as different stakeholders include not only the public, governments, customers, but the employees as well. (Bohdanowicz – Zientara, 2008; Grosbois, 2012)

Author	CSR dimensions and activities				
LEVY - PARK (2011)	community relations	diversity issues	employee relations	environmental issues	product quality
KUCUKUSTA ET AL. (2013)	community	policy	mission and vision	workforce	environment
DAHLSRUD (2008)	social	voluntariness	stakeholders	economic	environmental
HOLCOMB et al. (2007)	community	environment	vision and values	marketplace	workforce
FATMA et al. (2016)	economic	social	environmental		

Table 1 CSR dimensions and activities
Source: Levy – Park (2011), Kucukusta et al. (2013), Dahlsrud (2008),
Holcomb et al. (2007), Fatma et al. (2016) own editing

The employee-related CSR activities were identified through the analysis of CSR-related literature. These CSR items are illustrated in *Table 2*.

First of all non-discrimination and equal treatment appear to be the most important employee-related CSR factors. During the recruitment process and the hotel's daily operation discrimination is not allowed. Since most people spend most of their time at work, work plays a very important role in their life. Consequently companies are expected to create healthy and fair working conditions and provide work-life balance policies. Besides working conditions the possibilities for various training and development programs are also significant, and here we can note that many hotels encourage womens' management positions as well. Another important issue relates to the employees' income, which means fair wages and benefits, different allowances and recognition of excellent work. Last but not at least it is essential to assess employees' satisfaction regularly in order to recognize the employees' opininons and needs.

Employee-related CSR activities
ensure non-discrimination
provide healthy and fair working conditions
equal opportunities, new candidates have an equal opportunity
provide fair wages and benefits for the employees
provide internship opportunities to students
recognize excellent performance
employ local workforce
provide work-life balance policies
provide possibilities to the employees to participate in professional training programs
career development/ opportunities for career advancement
encourage womens' management positions
provide Code of Conduct for employees
provide allowance for employees
provide opportunities for learning and development
employ workforce with disabilities
employees' satisfaction assessment
sport programs for employees
hotel open days for students
children's day for employees' family
provide health programs for employees

Table 2 Employee-related CSR activities
Source: Levy – Park (2011), Kucukusta et al. (2013), Dahlsrud (2008),
Holcomb et al. (2007), Fatma et al. (2016) own editing

In the service industries, including tourism and the lodging industry, the human factor has an essential role during service delivery because the interactions between guests and employees are primary. According to Randall – Senior (1996) all service providers are considered as an opportunity to serve their guests and encourage them to return and promote the hotel's reputation. In this context the role of the frontline staff is particularly important, as they are in face-to-face contact with guests during their everyday work.

Consequently, their attitudes, their loyalty and their overall satisfaction with their work have an impact on service quality and on guest satisfaction. (Karatepe et al., 2006; Karatepe – Sokmen, 2006; Williams – Buswell, 2003) Thus employee-related CSR activities have growing importance to engage hotels' staff, strenghten their loyalty, motivate the employees and increase their satisfaction.

Employee-related CSR activities in the Hungarian lodging industry

Research method

The aim of this research is to explore the Hungarian four- and five-star hotels' attitude towards employee-related activities. The study focuses only on the four- and five-star hotels because of the following reasons: Kucukusta et al. (2013) highlighted the relationship between "luxury consumption" and CSR initiatives. According to them mainly luxurious hotels tend to implement CSR programs in order to achieve long-term competitive advantage. Furthermore, customers consider two factors to evaluate the quality of a product or a service: price and brand. Potential customers have higher expectations of upscale hotels, including their CSR activities as well. (Kucukusta et al., 2013)

Afterwards it was essential to determine the exact group of hotels which could be analysed because in Hungary not all of the hotels are categorised. There is an organization in Hungary (MSZÉSZ – Hungarian Hotel & Restaurant Association) which represents hotels and it has a database containing the members' type, category and contacts which made the research process easier. Besides, numerous Hungarian hotels have already received Hotelstars Union classification in the four- and five-star categories. Consequently, the sample of the study was determined as a group of the members of Hungarian Hotel & Restaurant Association and/or possessors of Hotelstars classification. This group can be the right sample because they are conscious about the actual situation of the Hungarian hotel sector.

After the sample determination, the final survey was e-mailed to 292 hotel managers in Hungary on 13 December 2017, and two e-mail survey reminders were sent before the survey closing date on 8 January 2018. A total of 61 people responded to the survey and all of their responses were complete and usable, resulting in a 20.9% response rate. This study was directed to hotel general managers best situated to answering CSR-related questions.

The questionnaire contained 20 questions related to the employee dimension. In order to explore the importance of the different employee-related CSR activities, respondents were asked to rate their levels of importance of each using a 6-point scale.

The majority of the hotels in which the respondents worked were independent operators (70.5%), and 29.5% of the hotels belonged to a hotel chain. Four-star hotels accounted for the majority of hotels in this study (96.7%), although five-star operators were also represented (3.3%). Medical and/or wellness hotels represented nearly 46% of hotels surveyed but city hotels and boutique hotels were also represented.

Study limitations include the small sample size of the respondents, which did not allow for more advanced statistical analyses.

Results

As seen in Table 3 the most highly rated employee-related CSR activity was found to be providing healthy and fair working conditions (x=5.46), while ensuring non-discrimination (x=5.33) and equal treatment and equal opportunities for new candidates (x=5.3) closely followed in importance. Respondents agreed that internship possibilities for students (x=5.13), providing fair wages and benefits (x=4.95) and employing local workforce (x=4.93) are also important. The recognition of excellent working (x=4.87) and encouraging and supporting womens' management positions (x=4.85) were found to be relatively less important. According to the analysis, providing work-life balance (x=4.74) and career development programs (x=4.67) are found to be less important. From the managers' point of view encouraging and ensuring employees' participation in professional training program (x=4.54) cannot be neglected. Providing Code of Conduct for employees (x=4.07) and providing allowances for employees (x=4.03) are rated lower in importance. The next four activities, providing opportunities for learning and evelopment (x=3.89), employees' satisfaction assessment (x=3.33), employing people with reduced work (x=3.26) and sport programs for employees (x=3.13),

were ranked lower in importance. Hotel open days (x=2.74), organizing children's day for employees' families (x=2.57) and providing health programs for employees (x=2.46) were rated below average. (The table shows both the mean and frequency of answers.)

To illustrate the frequency of answers, I plotted two different diagrams. (*Figure 1* and *Figure 2*) In these figures those CSR activities are described where the distribution of the answers is undoubtedly unequal. The curves of the first Figure represent a growing trend. They clearly show that the importance of these factors is obviously significant. As seen in Figure 1 most of the respondents evaluated the importance of these factors, namely provide healthy and fair working conditions, ensure non-discrimination, equal opportunities for new candidates, internship opportunities to students, encourage and support womens' management positions, recognize excellent performance, 6 on a six-grade scale.

On the contrary, it is essential to describe the activities that have less importance based on the hotel managers' opinions. As it was experienced children's day for employees' families, employ people with reduced work, sport programs for employees, hotel open days, provide health programs for employees, sport programs for employees were evaluated lower in importance. The curves that illustrate these factors are characterized by dramatically declining trends. These factors were ranked lower in importance. Most of the respondents evaluated them 1 or 2 in some cases on a six-grade scale.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	Mean
provide healthy and fair working conditions	0	2	2	4	11	42	5.46
ensure non-discrimination	1	3	2	2	14	39	5.33
equal opportunities for new candidates	0	3	3	8	6	41	5.3
internship opportunities to students	3	3	2	6	8	39	5.13
fair wages and benefits	1	2	6	4	25	23	4.95
employ local workforce	2	2	4	9	17	27	4.93
recognize excellent performance	4	2	7	3	14	31	4.87
encourage and support womens' management positions	3	0	9	10	8	31	4.85
provide work life balance policies	2	4	4	8	23	20	4.74
career development	3	3	6	10	16	23	4.67

	1	2	3	4	5	6	Mean
participation in professional training programs	4	3	7	8	20	19	4.54
provide Code of Conduct for employees	9	6	8	6	13	19	4.07
provide allowance for employees	4	11	10	6	14	16	4.03
provide opportunities for learning and development	6	7	12	9	17	10	3.89
employees' satisfaction assessment	17	7	8	10	6	13	3.33
employ people with reduced work	18	9	7	6	8	13	3.26
sport programs for employees	17	8	12	7	8	9	3.13
hotel open days	22	16	5	3	4	11	2.74
children's day for employees' families	29	7	8	5	2	10	2.57
provide health programs for employees	23	14	7	7	5	5	2.46

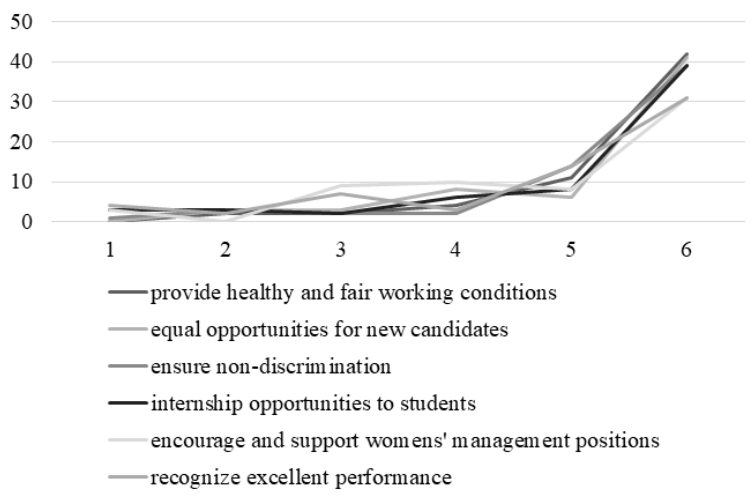Table 3 The importance of employee-related CSR activities
Source: own editing

Figure 1 The distribution of the most important CSR activities
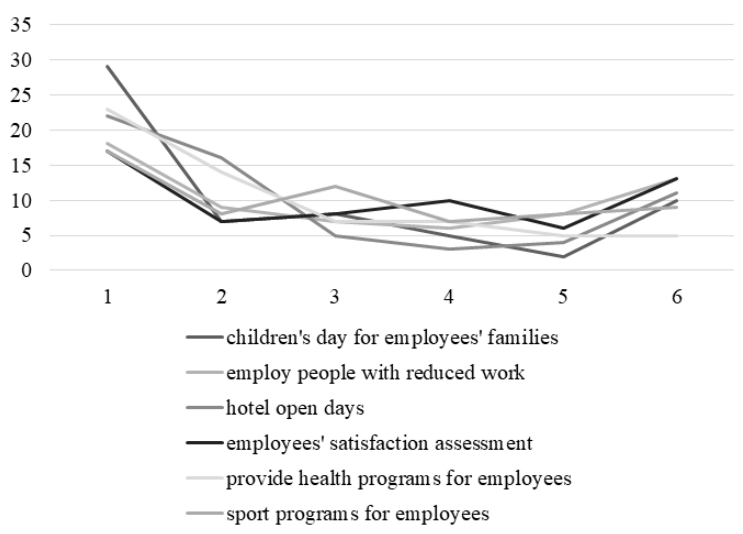Source: own editing

Figure 2 The distribution of the less important CSR activities
Source: own editing

After exposing the importance of employee-related CSR activities in the context of the Hungarian hotel sector, the study analysed the motivating factors of CSR implementation. (Figure 3) Respondents were able to choose more possible answers. 63.93% of the respondents considered enhancing and strengthening customer satisfaction and guest loyalty as the main motivating factors of implementing CSR policies. Cost saving (59.02%) was reported as the second important reason to apply CSR initiatives. This factor belongs primarily to the environmental dimension because environmentally conscious practices (for example: waste management programs, installing energy-efficient appliances, implementing linen and towel re-use programs) can reducing significantly the operational costs. Enhancing hotel image among guests (57.38%) and reducing hotel exposure to public scrutiny (54.1%) are found to have less important role in CSR implementation, which was followed by hotel reputation among guests (37.7%).

The workforce-related motivating factors have relatively less importance. 39.34% of the respondents reported that employee motivation plays a role in CSR strategy. As the study shows there were also initiatives aimed at employee retention (27.87%) and employee recruitment (13.11%). Respondents gave the lowest importance to the idea of competitive advantage in the marketplace (14.75%) and reducing the threat of government regulations (19.67%).
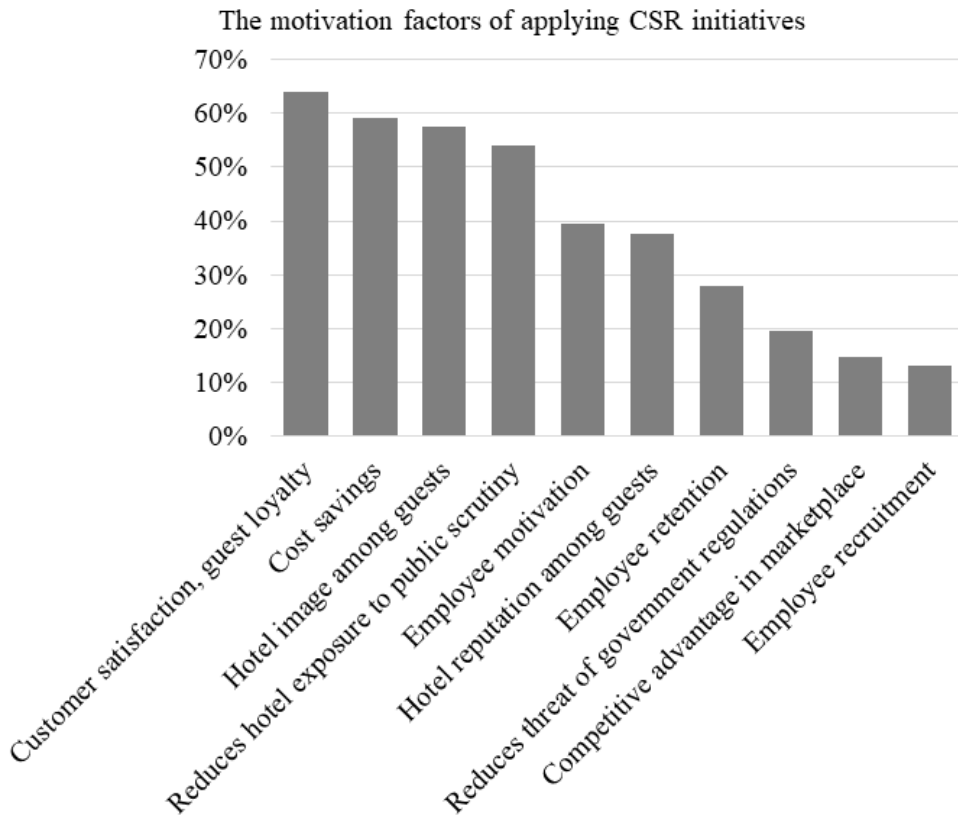

Figure 3 The motivation factors of applying CSR initiatives
Source: own editing

Conclusion / Summary

This study explored current employee-related CSR activities in the Hungarian lodging industry. As employee-related CSR practices are rarely examined in the Hungarian context, this study contributes to the national hotel management literature by identifying and classifying 20 CSR activities utilising the analysis of the importance of these factors as seen by hotel managers.

Although most of the CSR-related studies focus on the environmental dimension this study provides an insight into CSR in the lodging industry taking into consideration the employees and workforce dimension from the managers' point of view.

The results of this study show that respondents answered that most of the workforce-related CSR activities were important to varying degrees. The most highly rated factor was to ensuring healthy and fair working conditions followed by ensuring non-discrimination and equal opportunities for new candidates and ensuring internship opportunities to students.

Besides the workforce-related activities it is necessary to take into consideration the main motivating factors of CSR strategy appliance. CSR implementation can contribute to enhancing employee loyalty and retention and can positively influence the recruitment process. According to the survey, this issue has a less important role in the participating hotels. The most popular goals were: enhancing and strengthening customer satisfaction and guest loyalty, cost savings and enhancing hotel image among guests. The summary of the results echoes well the insights provided by Levy-Park (2011):

"As hoteliers continue to learn about and appreciate the ways in which hotels contribute to society, as well as the ways in which these actions return to benefit hotels, it is believed that the CSR movement in the lodging industry will continue to strengthen and gain prominence." (p.154.)

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