An exploration of CSR development in heritage tourism

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ABSTRACT

Although research on Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in tourism has seen increased attention, few studies have focused on CSR at the micro level. In addition, while stage models of CSR development have been extensively proposed these studies are rarely examined in actual organisations and, hence, lack empirical validity. This article explores the consolidative model of CSR, mainly via employees' but also via visitors' viewpoints in a large heritage tourism organisation. The research locates the organisation within the broad 3 phase-model and notes that differing parts of the organisation may be at different stages. However it is more difficult to locate the organisation within the narrower 7-stage model because of heritage tourism specific characteristics such as intergenerational drivers and cliques.

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Introduction

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is an innovative way to engage with social and environmental issues (Henderson, 2007). While CSR strategies are core to environmental and socially-responsible tourism (Caruana, Glozer, Crane, & McCabe, 2014), CSR tourism research is undeveloped (Coles, Fenclova, & Dinan, 2013), and lags behind mainstream CSR research (Ayuso, 2006). Inferences made about CSR in one organisation tend not to apply directly across similar organisations, let alone across industries (Dahlsrud, 2008). Further, CSR research in industries other than tourism is unlikely to be relevant to tourism. Thus, more needs to be done to understand CSR's role in the tourism industry.

Stakeholders "who may be affected by corporate actions, including employees, customers, partners….the public" (Valenti, Carden, & Boyd, 2014, p. 2) are of importance (Maon, Lindgreen, & Swaen, 2009), but both wider and tourism CSR research has focused on institutional (e.g., laws, standards) and organisational (macro boards and management) aspects, while ignoring 'meso' functional/ departmental level aspects (Mason & Simmons, 2011) and the individual micro level stakeholders (e.g., employees; Aguinis & Glavas, 2012; Chun, Shin, Choi, & Kim, 2013; Hansen, Dunford, Boss, Boss, & Angermeier, 2011). While tourism CSR research has explored the micro level of visitors, employee behaviours remain largely unknown (e.g., Chou, 2014; Deery, Jago, & Stewart, 2007). This is despite employees being the core target for behaviour change in CSR initiatives, particularly in the services industry due to close relationships between employees and consumers (Coles et al., 2013), their role as ambassadors (Maon et al., 2009), their responsibility for implementation of CSR strategy (Costa & Menichini, 2013) and suggested vital role in CSR's success (Bolton, Kim, & O'Gorman, 2011). Maon et al. (2009) note the importance of engaging employees in CSR initiatives and communicating the organisation's CSR approach and reasoning.

In 2010, Maon, Lindgreen and Swaen proposed a 'consolidative model of CSR development'; designed as a practical model of CSR implementation to understand organisational engagement in CSR. Its proposed consolidation of "cultural, moral, strategic and organisational elements that characterise an organization at different stages in its CSR development" (Maon, Lindgreen, & Swaen, 2010, p. 22). The model focuses on the need to internalise CSR values at institutional, organisational and individual levels, and to integrate CSR principles into an organisation's long-term strategy and decision-making. While the model has been extensively cited, it has not been examined fully in a business case. Therefore, by seeking to explore the model within environmental CSR in heritage tourism, at the micro level (employees and visitors), this paper responds to calls for attention at this level (Aguinis & Glavas, 2012) and acknowledges employees as a key driver of organisational environmental change and a true identifier of CSR adoption.

The specific research objectives are: (a) to assess how much the model reflects CSR properties in the heritage tourism context; (b) to locate, if possible, the organisation's phase/stage of development using the model; and (c) to evaluate whether the model helps provide workable strategies to further the organisation's CSR development. In doing so, this study will provide tourism organisations with an example of how the model can deepen understanding of their CSR status and how to audit current CSR practices (Ditlev-Simonsen & Gottschalk, 2011). Study outcomes include recommendations on how to adapt Maon's et al. (2010) model to benefit tourism organisations implementing CSR initiatives.

CSR, stage models and micro level environmental behaviour

CSR is defined as "organisational actions and policies that take into account stakeholders' expectations and the triple bottom line of economic, social, and environmental performance" (Aguinis, 2011, p. 855). Drivers of CSR include enhanced reputation (Coles et al., 2013), cost savings (Ayuso, 2006) and management support (Kasim & Ismail, 2012). Implementing CSR is challenging due to a lack of resources (Coles et al., 2013), technical and management barriers, poor communication, administrative heritage (Bohdanowicz, Zientara, & Novotna, 2011), environmental regulations, supply chain issues, and poor tourist and community demand (Kasim & Ismail, 2012) as well as expense (Frey & George, 2010). Many studies focus on the tangible and financial benefits (Weber, 2008) expected to come from CSR involvement. This includes: reduced cost/risk, increased competitive advantage,