

SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY BY MP TOURISM IN TIMES OF NEED: COMMUNITY SUPPORT DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMICS

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Abstract

Since the outbreak of COVID-19, the tourism industry has been engaged in various social responsibility initiatives with local communities. This research examines the impact of post-pandemic tourist arrivals preparedness initiatives with positive publicity. Our experimental results suggest community support for the intention of providing accommodation to people, spreading positivity, discharging social responsibility, thereby promoting tourism after the pandemic.

Keywords: Social responsibility (CSR) Crisis management Experimental studies COVID-19, MPTourism.

1. INTRODUCTION

The current corona virus pandemic has had a huge impact on the tourism sector, with the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) estimating a contraction of the tourism sector by 20–30% in 2020. Despite the associated financial difficulties, since the outbreak of COVID-19 the hotel sector has engaged in various social responsibility initiatives,

Social Responsibility initiative in the hotel sector is community support during crisis where hotels make voluntarily contributions to help local communities withstand and recover from crisis. One example of such community support is in-kind contributions such as providing accommodations to local residents during the current COVID-19 pandemic. The key purpose of our research is to examine the impact of a hotel's community support during COVID-19 on tourists' intentions to spread positive word-of-mouth (WORD OF MOUTH) and their intentions to visit when the pandemic ends. This can address three key limitations in extant tourism research: first, in terms of crisis management, while the importance of the tourism sector's support of local communities during a global crisis is widely acknowledged, extant literature has provided little insights into this issue. Second, in a recent review, point out that the extant literature on social responsibility in tourism mainly focuses on Social Responsibility initiatives directed towards employees, shareholders and consumers, with local communities receiving little attention. Third, previous research on the business case for social responsibility in tourism provides inconclusive and even contradictory results. This is perhaps because the impact of social responsibility initiatives may depend on their targets. For example, during the current COVID-19 pandemic Madhya Pradesh Tourism did two things some hotels have provided free accommodation to medical professionals, and other providing accommodation with basic facilities to those who were coming from outside to be quarantined. These may lead to different impacts but, to our best knowledge, no research has compared the impacts of such Social Responsibility initiatives when directed towards different targets.

2. BRIEF LITERATURE REVIEW

Local communities are crucial to the success of the hotel business, partly because tourists' memorable experiences are significantly influenced by destination attributes such as the friendliness of the local people. However, recent reviews suggest crisis and disaster management research in tourism mainly focuses on recovery after crisis, using recovery marketing, public relations with government, and media to attract tourists. It provides little insight about how tourism (and the hotel sector in particular) can support local communities during global crisis.

The lack of attention to community support is also evident in the extant social responsibility literature in tourism. For example find social responsibility directed towards local communities, such as disaster relief, has been ignored in the current hospitality literature. This is surprising given hotels do use various social responsibility initiatives to support local communities during crisis time In order to demonstrate the impact of community support during COVID-19, our research examines tourists' intentions to spread positive word-of-mouth and their intentions to visit when the pandemic ends.

We focus on word-of-mouth because suggest that how social responsibility might generate positive word-of-mouth is an important gap in extant literature on Social Responsibility in the hotel sector. Using the stereotype content model (SCM), demonstrate that a hotel's Social Responsibility initiatives can lead to perceptions of warmth (trust- worthiness and sincerity) because they reflect a hotel's altruistic orientation towards social welfare We further argue that providing accommodation to homeless people leads to higher perceptions of warmth than providing it to medical professionals. This is because during the current COVID-19 pandemic, expressing gratitude towards medical professionals has become a social norm in many countries and providing free accommodation to homeless people is, therefore, more likely to reflect a hotel's genuine regard for social welfare because it goes *beyond* the current social norm. This, in turn, increases the likelihood that tourists will spread positive Word Of Mouth further suggest that perceptions of hotel warmth mediate consumers' behavioral intentions towards the evaluated hotels. Thus, our hypotheses:

H1. Social Responsibility initiatives toward homeless people lead to higher intentions to spread positive Word Of Mouth than Social Responsibility initiatives toward medical professionals or the control (no Social Responsibility initiatives).

H2. Perceptions of hotel warmth mediate the impact of social responsibility initiatives on tourists' intentions to spread positive Word Of Mouth.

We focus on intention to visit as a proxy of behavior because many hotels are temporarily closed due to lockdown. Thus, tourists' actual behavior is difficult to collect. Suggest that social responsibility initiatives affect tourists' choices minimally. This is supported by whose research reports that Social Responsibility information is rarely discussed in tourists' online reviews, suggesting that Social Responsibility initiatives are not an important factor in their decision-making.

Thus, following these studies, we argue that tourists' intentions to visit are less likely to be influenced by a hotel's Social Responsibility initiatives during the corona- virus pandemic than by their perceptions of hotel cleanliness due to the health risks associated with COVID-19. Supporting this, suggests cleanliness is the key factor for tourists to decide whether to visit hotels. Find self-protection against health risks is a key factor influencing tourists' choices of hotels. Indeed, extant literature has repeatedly demonstrated tourists consider health risks when they make their travel decisions and choose holiday destinations However, to our best knowledge, there is no research on tourists' risk perceptions towards existing clients of hotels. Thus, our argument is built on the SCM that explains how different people in the society are stereotyped. According to the SCM, homeless people are negatively stereotyped, particularly in their cleanliness Thus; we argue that providing free Accommodation to homeless people reduces tourists' perceptions of hotel cleanliness, which, in turn, reduces their intentions to visit when the pandemic ends. Thus, we further hypothesize:

H3. Social Responsibility initiatives toward people lead to *lower* intentions to visit than Social Responsibility initiatives toward medical professionals or the control (no Social Responsibility initiatives).

H4. Perceptions of hotel cleanliness mediate the impact of Social Responsibility initiatives on tourists' intentions to visit.

3 METHOD

The research methodology was then formulated considering the area of research. The criteria used for selecting studied reviewed were both primary and secondary issued faced by during covid-19 pandemic. We focused on the sample group because it is the main target of hotels' current crisis communication (e.g. cancellation policy and commitment to cleanliness). The data of 1470 identified hotels was prepared by Madhya Pradesh Tourism, on which this facility was made available along with basic facilities.

The experiment was a one-factor (Social Responsibility community support: medical professionals vs Quarantine people vs control) between-subject design. We first collected details of participants' intended travels (purpose and destination), their perceptions of the severity of the current COVID-19 pandemic, and their perceived susceptibility to it. Then participants were randomly allocated to one of the three experimental scenarios.

To control for participants' pre-existing attitudes toward existing hotels, all participants were exposed to the same experimental stimuli: Madhya Pradesh Tourism hotel chain. In the control scenario, participants were informed about the focal hotel's commitment to cleanliness and its cancellation policy as its responses to COVID-19. Participants in the other two scenarios were exposed to information about the hotel's community support that was consistent with their Particular scenario as well as the same information (commitment to cleanliness and cancellation policy) provided to the control group. For example, participants in the scenario of community support for medical. The rest of the material provided was identical across all three scenarios. Participants then answered an attention-check question, and those in the two community support

scenarios also answered a Social Responsibility manipulation- check question (To whom has the hotel provided accommodation?). We then gathered all participants' perceptions of hotel warmth (generous, kind and warm: Participants' intentions to spread positive Word Of Mouth were measured using a three-item.

4 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

- 1-The study is Restricted to the selected sample therefore results of the study cannot be generalized.
- 2-The statistical tools used to analyze the data have their own limitations.
- 3- All the Limitations are applicable in primary data of this study.

5 RESULTS

The presented paper describes the social responsibility work done by the Madhya Pradesh Tourism Department at the time of Covid-19. Various places of Madhya Pradesh have been included in the above research on which work has been done by the tourism department.

There's a saying in India, "Athithi Devo Bhava", which means "The Guest is God". Indians consider it huge honors to have guests in their home, and go out of their way to please them. There's nothing like Indian hospitality.

Madhya Pradesh Tourism Board introduced schemes giving opportunity to all those house owners of urban and rural areas who are willing to give a portion of their house as a tourist accommodation for domestic and international visitors. These unique and profitable schemes will enable property owners to introduce tourists to the rich culture, cuisine, customs and lifestyle of "The heart of India". To promote balanced and sustainable tourism which enables socio-economic development and establishes Madhya Pradesh as a destination that provides a complete tourism experience.

Our state has limited resources for disaster management, to deal with it, we need social responsibility, that is why the tourism industry has come forward to help medical staff and people for social responsibility during the Covid-19 epidemic.

Descriptive statistics and correlations are reported in. Participants' perceptions of COVID-19 severity, their COVID-19 susceptibility, and hotel competence did not differ between scenarios

Table 1

Descriptive statistics and correlations.

M		SD	Correlations									
			1	2	3	4	5	6	7			
1	Severity	8.89 2.14	0.44		***	0.20	***0.2	***0.21	***0.1*	0.19	***	
2	Susceptibility	6.25 2.92	0.44	***		0.14	***0.1**	0.16	***0.1*	0.06		
3	Warmth	8.04 2.22	0.20	***	0.14	***		0.6	***0.71	***0.3	***0.06	
4	Competence	8.51 1.74	0.19	***	0.13	**	0.56	***	0.55	***0.4	***0.14	***
5	WORD OF MOUTH	8.16 2.25	0.21	***	0.16	***	0.71	***0.6	***	0.4	***0.07	
6	Cleanliness	8.55 1.83	0.08	*	0.08	*	0.30	***0.4	***0.37	***	0.3	***
7	Intention to visit	8.73 2.31	0.19	***	0.06		0.06	0.1	***0.07	0.3	***	

6. CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this research was to recapitulate the initiatives, practices, and responses of the mp tourism and hotel industry during the COVID-19 pandemic. To achieve this aim, subjective content analysis is employed to examine newspapers, magazines, T.V channels, and official pages on Facebook to determine the initiatives and practices adopted by the mp tourism. The results have shown that the mp tourism has set a good example in managing COVID-19 and supporting its hospitality industry through a number of initiatives and practices.

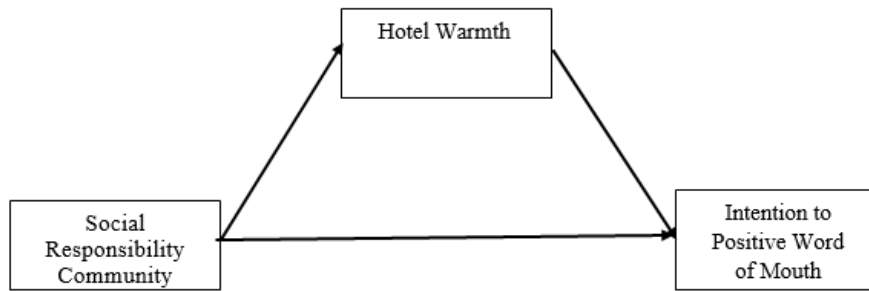


Fig. 1. The mediating role of hotel warmth on positive word-of-mouth.

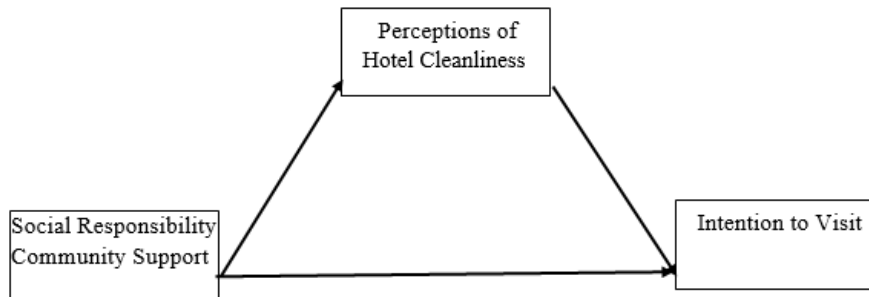


Fig. 2
 The mediating role of hotel cleanliness on intention to visit.

The mediating role of hotel cleanliness on intention to visit. Since the outbreak of COVID-19, the Madhya Pradesh Tourism hotel sector has engaged various Social Responsibility initiatives to show solidarity with local communities. The current dominant approach is to provide accommodations to medical professionals. But our research suggests this does not bring any reputational benefits. Instead, providing accommodations to Quarantine people increases tourists' intentions to spread positive word-of-mouth (WORD OF MOUTH). But it also reduces their intentions to visit when the current pandemic ends.

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