



## Discussion paper

## Online CSR communication in the hotel industry: Evidence from small hotels



Andrea Ettinger\*, Sonja Grabner-Kräuter, Ralf Terlutter

Department of Marketing and International Management, Alpen-Adria-Universität Klagenfurt, Universitätsstraße 65-67, 9020, Klagenfurt am Wörthersee, Austria

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## ABSTRACT

This paper examines how corporate social responsibility (CSR)-certified hotels communicate CSR on their websites, how guests comment on hotels' CSR engagement in online reviews and how hotels respond to online reviews. The CSR communication strategies of stakeholder information, response and involvement of Morsing and Schultz (2006) were used as conceptual framework. Three studies were conducted. Based on a sample of 47 Austrian CSR-certified hotels, the first study explored the extent to which hotels communicate CSR activities to stakeholders via their webpage. The second study analyzed 1383 customer online reviews of the same hotels on TripAdvisor® with regard to CSR references. The third study analyzed hotels' responses to online reviews. Results show that environmental issues and supplier relations receive highest attention from hotels and customer reviews. Employee relations are less frequently communicated and addressed in reviews. The three studies uncover opportunities for intensified stakeholder integration in CSR engagement and communication strategies.

## 1. Introduction

Tourism, hospitality and leisure is a sector, in which companies increasingly engage in actions of corporate social responsibility (CSR) (Coles et al., 2013), the industry thus being no exception regarding the rising importance of CSR in the business world. CSR concerns "actions that appear to further some social good, beyond the interests of the firm and that which is required by law" (McWilliams and Siegel, 2001, p. 117). Customers are increasingly more socially conscious and demanding of CSR adoption (Bonilla-Priego et al., 2011; de Grosbois, 2012; Miller, 2003; Smerecnik and Andersen, 2011) in most parts of the world (Diehl et al., 2016). Considering that "businesses cannot hope to enjoy concrete benefits from CSR unless they intelligently communicate about their initiatives to relevant stakeholders" (Maignan and Ferrell, 2004, p. 17), an appropriate approach to addressing consumers is essential.

This paper focuses on online CSR communication in the hotel industry, a topic that has attracted increasing research, but which is still considered under-researched (Coles et al., 2013; Line and Runyan, 2012). The Internet offers a wide array of possibilities to engage in different kinds of online CSR communication, e.g. through corporate websites or social media. For hotels, hotel websites and review platforms, as an example for social media in the tourism industry, are relevant CSR communication channels. Particularly smaller hotels can profit from the inexpensive, flexible and readily-available tools the Internet provides for CSR communication.

The present paper aims to investigate the relationships among hotels' CSR communication efforts via their websites, customer feedback

on hotels' CSR efforts via online reviews, and hotels' responses to reviews. It investigates smaller, non-chain hotels (often privately-owned) that are rather infrequent subjects of analysis, even though they are a frequent form of accommodation in many countries (Austria being one of them) (Thomas, 2000). In addition, the hotels analyzed in the current research have received CSR-related certification to account for their engagement in CSR.

The conceptual framework in this research draws upon Morsing and Schultz's (2006) typology of CSR communication strategies that is based on stakeholder theory (Freeman, 1984). The theory states that organizations have to establish and maintain relationships with their stakeholders, which requires communication. Thereby, stakeholders are offered all necessary information to learn about a company's CSR performance, e.g. through a CSR report on a company's website. Morsing and Schultz (2006) suggest a move from a purely informative one-way CSR communication (stakeholder information strategy) to two-way communication strategies, which call for dialogue with stakeholders to integrate their CSR concerns (stakeholder response strategy) and, finally, for installing iterative communication processes with the aim of actively involving and engaging stakeholders (stakeholder involvement strategy). To examine these CSR communication strategies in the hotel industry and hotels' online CSR communication, three studies were conducted. Study 1 examines the extent to which hotels communicate their CSR activities to their stakeholders via their webpages and the specific CSR issues communicated on hotels' websites. Study 2 focuses on consumers as sources of CSR information by analyzing which aspects of hotels' CSR commitments guests value enough to reference in their

\* Corresponding author.

E-mail addresses: [andrea.ettinger@aau.at](mailto:andrea.ettinger@aau.at) (A. Ettinger), [sonja.grabner@aau.at](mailto:sonja.grabner@aau.at) (S. Grabner-Kräuter), [ralf.terlutter@aau.at](mailto:ralf.terlutter@aau.at) (R. Terlutter).

reviews, which may serve as stakeholder feedback for hotels following two-way CSR communication strategies. Study 3 examines hotels' review responses with regard to CSR communication.

The chosen three-study research design allows to ascertain how hotels communicate about their CSR activities on their websites, which CSR issues are considered noteworthy by consumers in their reviews and which CSR activities hotels address in review responses. Through this, opportunities for intensified stakeholder integration in the CSR engagement and communication strategies of hotels are identified. Thus, the three studies contribute to our understanding of online CSR communication strategies in the hotel industry and of CSR as a means of differentiation and competitive advantage creation for hotels. Moreover, we contribute to the literature on CSR communication through advancing a CSR dimension framework for countries in which regional supplier relations and organic farming and food are highly valued (e.g. Austria), and through highlighting the relevance of these specific CSR dimensions for consumers and for the web presence of hotels.

## 2. CSR and CSR communication in the hotel industry

The responsibility of hotels towards their natural, economic, social and cultural environment is of utmost importance, as this environment is part of the tourist product, determining quality and satisfaction of the tourist's experience (Frey and George, 2010; García Rodríguez and del Mar Armas Cruz, 2007; Smerecnik and Andersen, 2011). Destination managers and decision-makers in the hospitality industries are increasingly implementing ecologically sustainable practices, providing ethical alternatives for tourists to spend their holidays (Dolnicar and Leisch, 2008; Smerecnik and Andersen, 2011). Irresponsibility on the corporate side can easily lead to irreversible detrimental environmental and socio-cultural impacts. For the hospitality industries, these could be environmental pollution, land consumption, loss of biodiversity, increasing energy consumption, loss of local heritage or financial exploitation of local populations (Jucan and Dolf Baier, 2012).

A challenge for hotels and, in fact, all companies wanting to conduct CSR measures, lies in the measurement of CSR performance. This includes the measurement of emissions, waste, resource use, occupational and customer health and safety, anti-competitive behavior and non-discrimination, among others (Skouloudis et al., 2009; Yadava and Sinha, 2016). Consequently, there are several initiatives aiming to aid companies with this endeavor. Among these are the Global Reporting Initiative and the Carbon Disclosure Project but also industry-specific initiatives such as the Hotel Sustainability Tool, the Hotel Carbon Measurement Initiative, the Hotel Water Measurement Initiative and the Hotel Footprinting Tool.

For the public perception of a hotel's practiced social responsibility what counts is not only what the hotel does, since stakeholders would rarely know about that, but what the hotel communicates that it does and how this is then perceived by its stakeholders (Öberseder et al., 2013). However, before CSR can be communicated, it is essential that hotels can measure their CSR actions. Consumers and other stakeholders must then receive correct and relevant information about a hotel's CSR engagement to consider it in their decisions (Crane and Glozer, 2016; McWilliams and Siegel, 2001). Morsing and Schultz (2006) indicated that corporate CSR engagement necessitates more sophisticated and continuous stakeholder awareness, which requires increasingly sophisticated CSR communication strategies. Therefore, CSR communication is of utmost importance for hotels, so that their investment in CSR initiatives does not stay invisible (Moisesescu, 2015; Pérez and Rodríguez del Bosque, 2014). If the communication is managed successfully, it will be rewarded with higher consumer awareness of CSR, with strong and mostly positive reactions from stakeholders and higher brand equity (Andreu et al., 2015; Morsing and Schultz, 2006; Öberseder et al., 2011). CSR-washing, the practice of using "a false CSR claim to improve a company's competitive standing" (Pope and

Wæraas, 2016, p. 175) must also be acknowledged at this point. Such unethical practices in CSR communication must certainly be avoided, as they undermine the core of corporate social responsibility through irresponsible behavior, and, besides, deviations between a company's CSR communication and business practices disclosed by other sources can have negative effects on a firm's image and sales (Wagner et al., 2009).

CSR communication can be disseminated via various channels, including CSR reports, corporate websites, CSR advertising, public relations and social media. Within the domain of online CSR communication, corporate websites are among the most common and important tools (Du and Vieira, 2012; Wong et al., 2015). Social media also lend themselves to corporate CSR communication. In the tourism and hospitality sector, social media platforms, such as TripAdvisor®, are strongly frequented by the key stakeholders, former and potential guests, thus providing a further channel for corporate CSR communication (Mkono and Tribe, 2016). Online CSR communication thus has great potential for smaller companies or hotels, seeing that the Internet is a cheap, easy and flexible way to present companies in whatever way is desired and this 24/7, to all stakeholders imaginable (Du and Vieira, 2012).

## 3. Conceptual framework and research questions

Based on stakeholder theory (Freeman, 1984), Morsing and Schultz (2006) developed a framework of CSR communication strategies, to incorporate stakeholders as elements of corporate strategy development, which might bring competitive advantages to companies. These are (1) the stakeholder information strategy, (2) the stakeholder response strategy and (3) the stakeholder involvement strategy.

The stakeholder information strategy is a one-way strategy, whereby communication is issued from the company to its stakeholders. It is a strategy of 'telling', not of 'listening'. The goal is informing the stakeholders about the organization and its good intentions and deeds, thus ensuring positive stakeholder support (Morsing and Schultz, 2006). The stakeholder response strategy is based on a two-way asymmetric communication model. The company issues communication to its stakeholders and the stakeholders return communication to the company. The goal is to change public attitudes and behavior, gaining endorsement from external stakeholders, e.g. consumers. With the issued communication, the company wants to convince its stakeholders of the company's attractiveness. However, this strategy is still rather one-sided and the company risks shutting its eyes to the truth and only hearing its own voice reflected back (Morsing and Schultz, 2006). The stakeholder involvement strategy has companies enter into dialogue with stakeholders, influencing but also seeking to be influenced by them. Thus, the company is also expected to change its CSR activities when stakeholders challenge the predominant ones. When following the stakeholder involvement strategy, companies should constantly and systematically invite negotiations with their stakeholders (Morsing and Schultz, 2006). Such stakeholder dialogue often happens via online discussion forums and social media interaction.

The crucial idea behind stakeholder dialogue is the engagement of stakeholders so that it is guaranteed that their voice is heard and their needs are met (Golob and Podnar, 2014). Stakeholder engagement, often erroneously simplified to be synonymous to corporate responsibility in action, can be defined as "practices the organisation undertakes to involve stakeholders in a positive manner in organisational activities" (Greenwood, 2007, p. 315). This may lead to stakeholder empowerment to the degree of joint decision-making, inducing stakeholder-driven changes in organizational behavior. How different stakeholder strategies affect corporate behavior and thus CSR reporting has already been researched, e.g. by Herremans et al. (2016); Manetti, 2011; Manetti and Toccafondi (2012). Still, the greatest managerial task is ensuring that such ongoing, systematic interaction with multiple stakeholders can occur. However, there is little evidence that such

symmetric two-way communication processes are commonly adopted in practice (Morsing and Schultz, 2006). Likewise, they are most infrequently studied, as found by Bowen et al. (2010), who investigated a similar conceptualization of community engagement strategies, ranging from transactional engagement, to transitional engagement and transformational engagement.

For hotels, websites are important tools for one-way communication to provide information to their stakeholders (Dawkins, 2005), e.g. as part of a stakeholder information strategy. Websites offer the possibility to describe the hotel to (prospective) guests by providing information on hotel facilities and services, information typically researched before booking. Hotel websites are indeed used by consumers. For instance, Google's analyses show that online research before taking a buying decision is done by a large majority of Europeans (Moisesescu, 2015). Online CSR communication also provides opportunities for differentiation, particularly for smaller hotels that have fewer resources than bigger chain-affiliated hotels. Moreover, smaller hotels, often privately-owned and run, have entirely different structures concerning communication responsibilities and access to communication technologies (e.g. customer-relationship-management tools) (Sigala, 2005). Hence, study 1 investigates how smaller hotels exploit the possibilities to provide information on their CSR activities on their websites to learn about hotels' stakeholder information strategies. The following research question is addressed:

**RQ 1: Which CSR activities do smaller hotels communicate to their stakeholders via their webpage?**

To answer this research question, CSR activities communicated on hotel websites were assigned to different CSR dimensions. Drawing mainly on the categorizations suggested by Clarkson (1995), Inoue and Lee (2011) and de Grosbois (2012), a classification framework of CSR goals and measures is elaborated that allows the clear assignment of different aspects of CSR engagement hotels communicate online. The dimensions supplier relations, environmental issues, diversity issues, employee relations, community relations and product and service quality are derived. Supplier relations include the installation of a sustainable supply chain, environmental issues deal with corporate support for the natural environment and diversity issues concern measures taken to accommodate minorities. Employee relations consider a company's degree of involvement with topics concerning the hotel's personnel. The dimension of community relations includes a company's support of the community it is situated in, and product and service quality concerns the relations with customers about the core product or service itself. Our framework highlights supplier relations as a separate CSR dimension, in contrast to Inoue and Lee (2011), who allocated suppliers under the dimension of diversity issues and de Grosbois (2012), who subsumed them under the dimension of 'economic prosperity'. Particularly in the context of Austria, supplier relations are expected to be more prominent than in other countries, seeing that Austria has the second-highest share of organic farmland in the world, the fifth-highest share the organic market has of the total market and the sixth-highest per capita consumption of organic food worldwide (FiBL and IFOAM, 2017).

Morsing and Schultz (2006) assumed that the pursuit of one-way communication strategies might be counter-productive. A risk is that managers conduct and communicate CSR efforts they themselves find important, yet other stakeholders might not care for the information communicated. To prevent this, Morsing and Schultz (2006) recommended integrating stakeholder feedback in the CSR strategy implementation. Following this line of thought, this paper also looks into two-way communication on the Internet, considering the voices of consumers with regard to hotels' CSR efforts.

As Caruana et al. (2014, p. 118) point out, tourists "both consume and constitute responsible tourism". On the one hand, consumer social responsibility and ethical consumption (Bray et al., 2011; Öberseder et al., 2011) are connected to CSR. On the other hand, part of consumers' constituting activity is word-of-mouth following the

consumption of the tourist product or service. Word-of-mouth is increasingly conveyed online, turning into electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM), which is "any positive or negative statement made by potential, actual, or former customers about a product or company, which is made available to a multitude of people and institutions via the Internet" (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004, p. 39). It thus has the potential to reach a wide audience (Cantalallos and Salvi, 2014; Dellarocas, 2003; Lu and Stepchenkova, 2012). Writing and reading online reviews of hotels has become common practice and an important consumer decision criterion. In this way, customers become objective voices communicating about the company's products and services (Vermeulen and Seegers, 2009), offering potential for incorporating them into stakeholder response and involvement strategies (Morsing and Schultz, 2006).

According to Xie et al. (2014), about 75% of consumers consider online reviews when planning a holiday. Moreover, online reviews are increasingly ousting other business-to-consumer and offline word-of-mouth communication with regard to service provider quality (Xie et al., 2016). Online reviews are a communication channel beyond a company's control and have the power to play a major role in CSR communication (Öberseder et al., 2011), considering that non-corporate sources of CSR communication are perceived as more credible by stakeholders and should be encouraged by companies (Du et al., 2010). Previous studies researched large hotel chains (e.g. Bohdanowicz et al., 2011; Bohdanowicz and Zientara, 2009; de Grosbois, 2012; Holcomb et al., 2007) or asked customers about their experience with responsible tourism in more general terms (e.g. Caruana et al., 2014; Miller et al., 2010). Lu and Stepchenkova (2012) tackled a CSR-related topic (ecotourism) in connection to online reviews and focused on attributes increasing consumer satisfaction in reviews of ecolodges. This research wants to explore this important research field further in the context of CSR communication strategies and stakeholder engagement by addressing the following research question:

**RQ 2: Which aspects of hotel CSR engagement do guests reference in their online reviews?**

While research on responses to negative word-of-mouth in other industries has received attention from academia already (e.g. van Noort and Willemsen, 2012), only few studies focus on responses to online reviews of hotels. For instance, Park and Allen (2013) conducted case studies of how four American hotels respond to customers' reviews, finding that review response behavior depended strongly on management style. Xie et al. (2014) investigated the business value of consumer reviews and management responses, by analyzing reviews and management responses of 843 hotels. Some findings are that overall rating, variation and volume of consumer reviews and the number of management responses are significantly related to hotel performance. Sparks et al. (2016) studied consumer perceptions and evaluations towards negative reviews and hotel responses and found that online responses (versus no responses) enhance assessments of hotels' trustworthiness.

In the context of CSR, online review responses present a relatively new opportunity for CSR communication and its analysis. Online review responses are particularly relevant for stakeholder involvement strategies (Morsing and Schultz, 2006), as they provide valuable opportunities to listen, respond and interact with customers, gaining feedback and offering the potential to use hotel review responses as an additional medium for CSR communication. To learn more about the current use of this tool of online review responses from hotels, a third research question is devised:

**RQ 3: How do hotels use their responses to online reviews to communicate their CSR engagement?**

#### 4. Study 1—website analysis of CSR-certified hotels

##### 4.1. Method

The sample of hotels whose websites were analyzed is made up of those Austrian hotels certified with either the EU-Ecolabel certificate

([http://ec.europa.eu/environment/ecolabel/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/environment/ecolabel/index_en.htm)) or that are members of the BioHotels association (<http://www.biohotels.info/en/the-bio-hotels-association>) as well as those hotels that are heralded as best-practice examples by the Austrian Federal Ministry of Science, Research and Economy and that have won national awards for their CSR activities. The above-named certificate and membership were chosen from the large number of certificates, awards and associations, as their criteria are well-defined and inclusive. Key criteria of the EU-Ecolabel for the product group ‘tourist accommodation’ are found in the areas general management (among them staff training, information to guests and consumption monitoring), energy, water, waste and wastewater and other (e.g. no smoking in common areas) (European Commission, 2017). Criteria for the BioHotels association concern the areas food and drinks (products from certified, organic agriculture; local products preferred; natural by-hand preparation; vegetarian offers), cosmetics (certified natural products) and sustainability (use of green electricity, recycled paper, etc (eco hotels certified) certification) (BioHotels, 2017). This certificate and membership cover only certain CSR dimensions, particularly environmental and sustainability issues, community and society relations and product quality, neglecting employee relations. Therefore, hotels heralded as best-practice examples with regard to employee relations in official “CSR in the tourism industry” brochures by the Ministry were also included in the sample. In total, the final sample consists of 47 hotels all over Austria that we will henceforth denominate ‘CSR-engaged hotels’, none of them belonging to a major hotel chain, and the large majority being small hotels with less than 100 rooms (Baker et al., 2000). Table 1 describes the characteristics of the sample.

The respective hotel websites were analyzed by means of quantitative content analysis to extract which CSR issues and activities are communicated and to what extent. CSR activities were analyzed with regard to which CSR dimensions were addressed, thus showing which CSR content CSR-engaged hotels use for their stakeholder information strategies. Leaning on the procedure of de Grosbois (2012), one researcher collected and coded the data in full, while a second researcher used the specified coding system to analyze 20% of the sample (i.e. ten hotel websites) to check for inter-coder reliability, which resulted in a level of agreement of 89%, indicating high reliability (Miles et al., 2014, p. 85). The website analysis was conducted in April 2016.

#### 4.2. Results and discussion

The hotels all had websites and all but two hotels communicated CSR-related information on them. The two exceptions, although certified with the EU-Ecolabel or the BioHotels membership, did not even communicate their certificate or membership with these two organizations, respectively. This study shows that there is still unused potential for hotel CSR communication, as not even all CSR-engaged hotels that made up the sample (i.e. hotels specifically chosen for their CSR activities, as proven through CSR certificates) communicated their CSR engagement at all. All hotels have websites and could follow at least one-way stakeholder information strategies (Morsing and Schultz, 2006). However, two hotels of the sample do not make use of this – because of either a deliberate choice or an unseen opportunity.

Table 2 reports the results of the website analysis. The communicated CSR goals or measures belonging to the different CSR dimensions are listed with the percentage of websites addressing the respective CSR goal or measure (wording adopted from de Grosbois (2012)). In total, supplier relations were addressed by 89.36% of hotels in the sample, environmental issues were raised by 82.98%, diversity issues by 44.68%, employee relations by 36.17% and community relations were communicated by 51.06% of hotels. Product and service quality was addressed by all hotels of the sample. Considering the sample composition of 16 hotels being members of the BioHotels association, these findings might not seem particularly surprising.

However, Cramer’s V of 0.043 shows an insignificant ( $p = 0.766$ ) association between BioHotels membership and communication of supplier relations, thus presenting no evidence that the importance of supplier relations strongly depends on this one criterion. Likewise, since 32 hotels were certified with the EU-Ecolabel, one might be inclined to make this criterion responsible for the environmental issues’ dimension’s importance. However, Cramer’s V of 0.067 is again insignificant ( $p = 0.682$ ). It thus becomes clear that despite the rather narrow sample, supplier relations, including a sustainable supply chain, and environmental issues, including sustainable resource use, are key CSR efforts communicated by hotels. In contrast, diversity issues and employee and community relations were communicated far less.

The websites were further analyzed according to whether they feature a CSR report. Only 8.51% of hotel websites (i.e. 4 of 47) did. In all four cases, the same goals and measures as already communicated on the webpage were reported, albeit in greater depth. It would hence be easily possible to report on hotel CSR efforts completely, e.g. to indicate in CSR reports which measures hotels undertake (Font et al., 2012; Holcomb et al., 2007; Morsing and Schultz, 2006). This structured reporting of CSR activities might not only provide a clearer and more comprehensive picture for customers but it might also enable hotels to detect weaknesses in their CSR strategy.

In 87.23% of hotel websites (41 of 47 hotels), the CSR communication strategy that seems to be followed is a one-way communication strategy that does not appear to incorporate or encourage feedback from stakeholders. Settling this into the CSR communication strategies identified by Morsing and Schultz (2006), the majority of hotels appear to follow a stakeholder information strategy. Only four hotels (8.51%) said they incorporate feedback from customers or employees on how to improve their CSR efforts, thus obviously following a two-way communication strategy. The remaining 4.26% constitute the two hotels that did not communicate their CSR efforts at all. Clearly, there is ample opportunity for improvement of stakeholder integration and competitive advantage creation.

### 5. Study 2—analysis of online reviews

#### 5.1. Method

The same 47 CSR-certified hotels used for the website analysis were used for the analysis of online reviews. All hotels were looked up on the hotel review platform TripAdvisor®. In total, 1383 German and English reviews were written for the 47 hotels in 2015. Using qualitative content analysis (Mayring, 2010), all reviews for all hotels were analyzed with regard to comments on the hotels’ CSR initiatives. They were collected in a database and given unique IDs. The outcome of qualitative content analysis is a system of categories (Mayring, 2010). The construction of categories was conducted with the denomination of CSR measures and goals from de Grosbois’ (2012) framework in mind. The CSR dimensions of environmental issues, employee relations, community relations and diversity issues were taken from de Grosbois (2012). For instance, for the dimension of diversity issues, anything related to an increase or embrace of diversity in workforce, among affiliates and suppliers and among customers was coded under this category. Environmental issues included elements relating to the mitigation of the impacts of climate change, the reduction of CO2 emissions, energy consumption, water consumption, water and soil pollution as well as air pollution, waste reduction and recycling, the use of renewable energy sources, responsible design, construction and renovations, the contribution to biodiversity conservation and the prevention of ozone depletion, for instance. CSR measures for employee relations were only coded if they went beyond simple sentences such as “the personnel was friendly”. Certainly, it could be argued that friendly personnel results from CSR measures in the employee relations dimension but this does not have to be so. Thus, only measures more specifically connected to



**Table 1**  
Sample characteristics of the 47 analyzed hotels.

| Hotel | Location    | Size (number of rooms) | Stars | Number of reviews | Number of CSR certificates   | TripAdvisor® Green Leader |
|-------|-------------|------------------------|-------|-------------------|--|---------------------------|
| 1     | City        | Small (79)             | 3     | 189               | 17, among them CSR best practice example (Ministry brochure), EU-Ecolabel        | Yes                       |
| 2     | Countryside | Medium (120)           | 5     | 86                | 6, among them CSR best practice example (Ministry brochure), national CSR prizes | No                        |
| 3     | Countryside | Medium (100)           | 4s    | 76                | 4, among them CSR best practice example (Ministry brochure), national CSR prizes | No                        |
| 4     | Countryside | Small (45)             | 4s    | 30                | 6, among them national CSR prizes, EU-Ecolabel                                   | No                        |
| 5     | Countryside | Medium (108)           | 4s    | 39                | 3, among them national CSR prizes  | No                        |
| 6     | City        | Small (39)             | 3     | 15                | 12, among them national CSR prizes, EU-Ecolabel, BioHotels membership            | Yes                       |
| 7     | Countryside | Small (65)             | 4s    | 8                 | 3, among them EU-Ecolabel  | No                        |
| 8     | Countryside | Small (56)             | 4     | 31                | 3, among them EU-Ecolabel  | Yes                       |
| 9     | Countryside | Small (17)             | 3     | 2                 | 1, EU-Ecolabel   | No                        |
| 10    | Countryside | Small (17)             | 4     | 2                 | 1, EU-Ecolabel   | No                        |
| 11    | Countryside | Small (55)             | 4     | 26                | 3, among them BioHotels membership   | Yes                       |
| 12    | Countryside | Small (49)             | 4     | 24                | 7, among them EU-Ecolabel, BioHotels membership                                  | Yes                       |
| 13    | Countryside | Small (16)             | 3     | 18                | 11, among them national CSR prizes, EU-Ecolabel, BioHotels membership            | No                        |
| 14    | Countryside | Small (19)             | 3     | 3                 | 6, among them BioHotels membership   | No                        |
| 15    | City        | Small (73)             | 3     | 198               | 1, EU-Ecolabel   | No                        |
| 16    | Countryside | Medium (150)           | 5     | 7                 | 2, among them EU-Ecolabel  | Yes                       |
| 17    | Countryside | Small (41)             | 4s    | 47                | 2, among them EU-Ecolabel  | Yes                       |
| 18    | City        | Medium (103)           | 4s    | 193               | 3, among them national CSR prizes, EU-Ecolabel                                   | Yes                       |
| 19    | Countryside | Small (73)             | 4s    | 6                 | 4, among them national CSR prizes, EU-Ecolabel                                   | Yes                       |
| 20    | Countryside | Small (61)             | 4     | 4                 | 4, among them national CSR prizes, EU-Ecolabel                                   | No                        |
| 21    | Countryside | Small (44)             | 4s    | 15                | 2, among them EU-Ecolabel  | No                        |
| 22    | City        | Small (20)             | 4     | 5                 | 2, among them EU-Ecolabel  | Yes                       |
| 23    | Countryside | Small (20)             | 4     | 2                 | 6, among them EU-Ecolabel  | No                        |
| 24    | Countryside | Small (31)             | 4     | 23                | 3, among them EU-Ecolabel  | Yes                       |
| 25    | Countryside | Small (44)             | 4     | 6                 | 4, among them national CSR prizes, EU-Ecolabel                                   | No                        |
| 26    | Countryside | Small (26)             | 3     | 4                 | 4, among them EU-Ecolabel  | Yes                       |
| 27    | Countryside | Small (54)             | 4     | 2                 | 1, EU-Ecolabel   | No                        |
| 28    | Countryside | Medium (106)           | 4     | 27                | 3, among them national CSR prizes, EU-Ecolabel                                   | Yes                       |
| 29    | Countryside | Small (41)             | 4     | 19                | 7, among them national CSR prizes, EU-Ecolabel                                   | No                        |
| 30    | Countryside | Small (55)             | 4s    | 62                | 8, among them national CSR prizes, EU-Ecolabel                                   | Yes                       |
| 31    | City        | Small (70)             | 4     | 40                | 2, among them EU-Ecolabel  | Yes                       |
| 32    | Countryside | Small (15)             | 3     | 4                 | 3, among them EU-Ecolabel  | No                        |
| 33    | Countryside | Small (30)             | 4     | 6                 | 15, among them national CSR prizes, EU-Ecolabel                                  | No                        |
| 34    | Countryside | Small (17)             | 4     | 80                | 4, among them EU-Ecolabel  | Yes                       |
| 35    | Countryside | Small (46)             | n.a.  | 2                 | 1, EU-Ecolabel   | No                        |
| 36    | Countryside | Small (34)             | 4     | 4                 | 2, among them EU-Ecolabel  | No                        |
| 37    | Countryside | Small (47)             | 4     | 2                 | 5, among them BioHotels membership   | No                        |
| 38    | Countryside | Small (20)             | 3     | 1                 | 4, among them BioHotels membership   | No                        |
| 39    | Countryside | Small (15)             | 3     | 2                 | 2, among them BioHotels membership   | No                        |
| 40    | Countryside | Small (16)             | n.a.  | 4                 | 3, among them BioHotels membership   | No                        |
| 41    | Countryside | Small (50)             | 4     | 30                | 5, among them national CSR prizes, BioHotels membership                          | No                        |
| 42    | Countryside | Small (40)             | n.a.  | 1                 | 3, among them national CSR prizes, BioHotels membership                          | No                        |
| 43    | Countryside | Small (50)             | 3     | 8                 | 2, among them BioHotels membership   | No                        |
| 44    | Countryside | Small (41)             | 4     | 12                | 3, among them BioHotels membership   | No                        |
| 45    | Countryside | Small (60)             | 3     | 2                 | 3, among them BioHotels membership, EU-Ecolabel                                  | No                        |
| 46    | Countryside | Small (23)             | 3     | 11                | 3, among them BioHotels membership   | No                        |
| 47    | Countryside | Small (18)             | 4     | 5                 | 2, among them BioHotels membership   | No                        |

CSR motivations were counted, e.g. “The ethic of hospitality is continued with the hotel’s commitment to staff training”. Changes to de Grosbois’ (2012) framework were made, since supplier relations are not a distinct dimension of de Grosbois’ (2012) and her dimension of economic prosperity seemed too broad, as not only supplier related measures contribute to economic prosperity. Thus, we created a separate dimension of supplier relations that includes all supplier-related elements. The entire corpus of online reviews was analyzed by two researchers to derive a measure of reliability of the category system. When considering the category system built, inter-coder reliability was 91.6%. With regard to the allocation of reviews to the respective categories, inter-coder reliability was 81.4%, yielding an acceptable level of agreement. Frequencies were then calculated for all categories, sub-categories and individual elements to analyze the data set descriptively.

## 5.2. Results and discussion

### 5.2.1. Review corpus description

Of the 1383 reviews that were analyzed, 65.15% were written in German and 34.85% in English. The average number of reviews per hotel was 29.43, ranging from 1 to 198. 42.01% of all reviews (581 of 1383) contained one or more references to CSR activities. In total, 1421 singular CSR-related elements were mentioned in these 581 CSR reviews.

### 5.2.2. System of categories

The 1421 singular elements were sorted into categories, resulting in ten main categories that can be seamlessly assigned to the respective CSR dimensions. When summarizing the respective singular elements under the main categories, those reviews that commented on several

**Table 2**  
Results of the website analysis.

| CSR dimension               | Communicated CSR goal or measure   | Percent of hotels in the sample |
|-----------------------------|--|---------------------------------|
| Supplier relations          | Sustainable supply chain (sourcing of local, green or organic products, building materials and services)       | 87.23%                          |
|                             | Raising supplier awareness of sustainable development  | 10.64%                          |
| Environmental issues        | Reduction of energy consumption  | 57.45%                          |
|                             | Use of renewable energy sources/own production of clean energy   | 53.19%                          |
|                             | Waste reduction and recycling  | 48.94%                          |
|                             | Responsible design and constructions   | 40.43%                          |
|                             | Water and soil pollution reduction   | 38.30%                          |
|                             | CO2 emissions reduction and minimization of carbon footprint   | 29.79%                          |
|                             | Water consumption reduction  | 29.79%                          |
| Diversity issues            | Embracing diversity among customers  | 38.30%                          |
| Employee relations          | Employee career advancement, learning and development  | 36.17%                          |
| Community relations         | Awareness creation for sustainable development of employees, customers or the public                           | 31.91%                          |
|                             | Contributing to local or global economic prosperity through job creation, local employment and local suppliers | 19.15%                          |
|                             | Protection and preservation of heritage and local culture  | 10.64%                          |
| Product and service quality | Rooms, facilities, cuisine, location   | 100%                            |

CSR aspects in one category were counted only once, to learn how many reviews had contributed to that particular category as a whole. The CSR dimension to which most reviews contributed was “environmental issues”, with 323 reviews raising such issues (23.36% of all 1383 reviews). In this CSR dimension, 198 reviews (14.32%) contributed one or more elements to “eco-concept/environment”, 140 reviews (10.12%) added one or more elements to the category “conservation of natural resources” and 123 reviews (8.89%) contributed to the category “sustainability”. “Supplier relations” were addressed by 256 reviews (18.51%) and “diversity issues” by 179 reviews (12.94%). The other CSR dimensions included far fewer reviews with one or more CSR elements, namely “employee relations” (15 reviews) and “community relations” (37 reviews). Product and service quality, i.e. the hotel’s key offer, was raised by 100% of reviews, as was to be expected. Table 3 lists all formed categories under the respective CSR dimensions with their most frequently named elements.

The analysis of online reviews showed that food, including locally-sourced, organic and self-made food, was important for guests, with about 19% of all reviews mentioning this point. Even more frequently commented on, in 23% of all reviews, were hotels’ practices concerning environmental issues. This suggests that guests are indeed aware of hotels’ CSR strategies and find them valuable. Diversity issues were also of interest to guests, showing that the needs of minorities are important for hotel guests. It must be noted that minorities that were addressed often concerned food-related minorities, e.g. vegans and people with food intolerances. The interpretation must be made cautiously, with the sample composition of CSR-engaged hotels in mind. Most hotels were certified with the EU-Ecolabel or members of the BioHotels association. Likely, such CSR-engaged hotels attract CSR-conscious consumers, thus making results non-generalizable.

### 5.2.3. Positive/Neutral vs. negative reviews

While the large majority of references was of a positive or neutral nature (92.89%), 7.11% of all CSR references were negative, in that reviewers either disapproved of certain CSR measures conducted by the hotel or that they decried the non-implementation of highlighted or essential CSR measures. Belonging to the first category were mainly CSR actions connected to energy-saving, in particular the lack of air-conditioning to save energy or the lack of Wi-Fi availability. Belonging to the second category was, for instance, the violation of the guest’s action of hanging up towels for reuse, which was ignored by the cleaning personnel, who always provided fresh towels. Furthermore, the unsuitability of certain hotels for handicapped people was deplored.

For hotels, listening to these stakeholder responses would be a crucial step for advancing to two-way stakeholder response or even

involvement strategies. As outlined before, online review platforms provide a cheap and easy way for hotels to collect customer feedback, a step that Morsing and Schultz (2006) saw among the greatest managerial challenges. Review platforms even enable hotels to respond to guest reviews, thus truly interacting with stakeholders on a continuous basis.

## 6. Study 3—analysis of hotels’ responses to online reviews

### 6.1. Method

To study the potential pursuit of a stakeholder involvement strategy with regard to hotels’ CSR engagement, the responses of the 47 hotels to the customer reviews of their hotel on TripAdvisor® were analyzed. Again, qualitative content analysis (Mayring, 2010) was employed in the same way as in study 2.

### 6.2. Results and discussion

18 of the 47 hotels (38.3%) responded to at least one of the reviews written for the respective hotel in 2015 up to a selected cutoff date in September 2016. Among the 943 reviews written for these 18 hotels, 43.37% received responses from hotel management. In total, 409 hotel responses were provided for the 1383 reviews (29.57%). Of these 409 responses, 111 (27.14%) included comments related to the hotel’s CSR engagement. Of 18 hotels, 12 raised CSR issues in their review responses, thus proving to use the medium of hotel online review responses for CSR communication.

The fact that 18 of 47 hotels responded to reviews and 12 of them with specific CSR communication (25.53%) shows that this approximate third of hotels is willing to enter into dialogue with their stakeholders about CSR, thus possibly following stakeholder involvement strategies. Some hotels highlighted the importance of customer reviews for hotels in their review responses, e.g. “Through an exchange of ideas such as this it is possible for us to cater to the different needs of our guests and to improve our offer”.

This study shows that many hotels do not yet pursue a fruitful two-way CSR communication strategy. 29 hotels still did not respond to customer online reviews, hence not showing appreciation for customer opinions and demands. It cannot, however, be deduced whether the hotels not responding to online reviews read the customers’ reviews for their hotel at all, thus potentially following a stakeholder response strategy.

In total, 47 different CSR goals or measures were addressed by hotels in their review responses. Since, of course, several of these were

**Table 3**

The (condensed) system of categories and sub-categories.

| CSR dimension               | Name of category and sub-categories         | Absolute number of reviews | Percentage of all 1383 reviews |
|-----------------------------|---|----------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Supplier relations          |   | 256 <sup>a</sup>           | 18.51%                         |
|                             | Food  | 256 <sup>a</sup>           | 18.51%                         |
|                             | Organic                                     | 131                        |                                |
|                             | Locally-sourced                             | 62                         |                                |
|                             | High-quality                                | 40                         |                                |
|                             | Self-made                                   | 33                         |                                |
|                             | Healthy                                     | 25                         |                                |
|                             | Ecological                                  | 10                         |                                |
|                             |   |                            |                                |
|                             |   |                            |                                |
| Environmental issues        |   | 323 <sup>a</sup>           | 23.36%                         |
|                             | Eco-concept/environment                     | 198 <sup>a</sup>           | 14.32%                         |
|                             | Cool, great, genius, impressive             | 37                         |                                |
|                             | Commendable, worthy of imitation            | 27                         |                                |
|                             | Well-thought-through, coherent              | 11                         |                                |
|                             | Pleasant and laudable                       | 6                          |                                |
|                             | Seminal, innovative                         | 5                          |                                |
|                             | Conservation of natural resources           | 140*                       | 10.12%                         |
|                             | Energy use                                  | 113*                       | 8.17%                          |
|                             | Zero-energy balance                         | 25                         |                                |
|                             | Solar or photovoltaic system                | 21                         |                                |
|                             | Lack of minibar (as CSR)                    | 26                         |                                |
|                             | Lack of AC (as CSR)                         | 21                         |                                |
|                             | Energy-conscious, energy-saving             | 18                         |                                |
|                             | Passive house                               | 12                         |                                |
|                             | construction                                |                            |                                |
|                             | Lighting                                    | 11                         |                                |
|                             | Water use                                   | 35                         | 2.53%                          |
|                             | Heating                                     | 6                          | 0.43%                          |
|                             | Sustainability                              | 123 <sup>a</sup>           | 8.89%                          |
|                             | Sustainable                                 | 45                         |                                |
|                             | construction (local timber)                 |                            |                                |
|                             | Domestic farming (herbs, fruit, vegetables) | 23                         |                                |
|                             | Practiced and implemented                   | 22                         |                                |
|                             | Waste behavior                              | 25 <sup>a</sup>            | 1.81%                          |
|                             | Recycling                                   | 12                         |                                |
|                             | Waste prevention                            | 9                          |                                |
|                             | Upcycling                                   | 7                          |                                |
|                             | Mobility                                    | 23                         | 1.66%                          |
| Diversity issues            |   | 179 <sup>a</sup>           | 12.94%                         |
|                             | Minorities                                  | 179 <sup>a</sup>           | 12.94%                         |
|                             | Child-friendly                              | 51                         |                                |
|                             | Vegetarian-friendly                         | 47                         |                                |
|                             | Vegan-friendly                              | 39                         |                                |
|                             | Animal-friendly                             | 12                         |                                |
|                             | Accessibility for the handicapped           | 9                          |                                |
|                             | Gluten-free                                 | 9                          |                                |
|                             | Lactose-free                                | 6                          |                                |
|                             |   |                            |                                |
| Employee relations          |   | 15 <sup>a</sup>            | 1.08%                          |
|                             | Employees                                   | 15                         | 1.08%                          |
| Community relations         |   | 37 <sup>a</sup>            | 2.68%                          |
|                             | Strengthening the local economy and culture | 37 <sup>a</sup>            | 2.68%                          |
|                             | Local cuisine, wine, beer                   | 20                         |                                |
|                             | Regional products (other than food)         | 11                         |                                |
|                             | Promotion of local culture, literature      | 6                          |                                |
|                             |   |                            |                                |
| Product and service quality |   | 581 <sup>a</sup>           | 100%                           |

**Table 3 (continued)**

| CSR dimension | Name of category and sub-categories | Absolute number of reviews | Percentage of all 1383 reviews |
|---------------|-------------------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------------|
|               | General product and service quality | 581                        | 100%                           |
|               | Certificates/awards/memberships     | 22                         | 1.59%                          |

<sup>a</sup> This number is not the sum of the elements of the sub-categories, as reviewers often contributed to more than one sub-category but were counted only once in the main category, and sometimes reviewers only mentioned the category itself and not a sub-category. Moreover, less frequently named elements are not listed.

communicated by hotels more than once, the number of total references of CSR goals or measures was 230. Supplier relations were addressed 53 times in the review responses, environmental issues 41 times, diversity issues 11 times, employee relations 3 times, community relations 20 times and product and service quality 308 times. An example for a hotel response to the CSR dimension of supplier relations is: “We are delighted that you praise our controlled organic cuisine (in Hotel XXX we are offering 100% organic quality)”. Concerning environmental issues, an exemplary review response is: “Environmental protection and low ecological footprint are of course a special concern of ours. We are committed to this issue both in large (investment into the biggest solar plant in the [local] hotel industry which covers our entire hot water demand in summer, extensive soundproofing measures, etc.) and small dimensions (waste collection and waste prevention up to the use of energy-saving lamps, etc.)”.

56.76% of hotels made their CSR references in their review responses in response to the customer reviews, thus reactively, versus 43.24% proactively, meaning CSR communication was issued by hotels in their review responses without prior mention by the customer. Of the reactive review responses, 71.43% answered to a review in which the CSR issue was mentioned as positive, while 28.57% answered to a review in which the comments on CSR activities were mentioned as negative. Three hotels only answered to negative comments on CSR issues.

If following a stakeholder involvement strategy, CSR-engaged hotels should not only listen to their stakeholders' feedback and interact with them but also be willing to change their CSR activities based on stakeholder wishes. For instance, this concerns particularly the negative CSR references provided by guests. Most importantly, the non-implementation of communicated or basic expected CSR measures should be taken to heart, e.g. providing access for the handicapped. Furthermore, CSR activities that the hotel carries out but that are challenged by consumers should be reviewed and changed (Morsing and Schultz, 2006), for instance lack of Wi-Fi availability as a deliberate CSR activity.

## 7. General discussion and implications

This article set out to provide a status quo of CSR-certified hotels' use of online CSR communication via their website, of guests' feedback about hotel CSR engagement and of hotels' online responses to these customer reviews. We examined which CSR issues and activities are communicated on hotels' websites and if and how CSR-conscious hotel guests comment on the hotel's CSR engagement in their online reviews. In this respect, our research contributes to a better understanding of online hotel CSR communication and of customer electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) about CSR issues. Our research showed that a large number of reviews remark upon CSR efforts of hotels, proving that some socially and environmentally-conscious hotel guests do indeed care about CSR engagement of smaller, family-owned and family-run hotels and are willing to provide feedback that CSR-engaged hotels can use in two-way stakeholder communication strategies. Our

recommendation for CSR-engaged hotels is thus to include customer reviews as vehicles for involving stakeholders in dialogue, and also review responses in the CSR communication strategy to make it more 'sophisticated' and ultimately more successful, as proposed by Morsing and Schultz (2006).

### 7.1. Implications for tourism practitioners

This research indicates that there is unused potential for CSR communication of CSR-engaged hotels on the Internet. All hotels have a website and are thus able to potentially follow at least one-way stakeholder information strategies. Apart from two hotels, all hotels were doing that. Moreover, about one fourth of hotels made use of the opportunity to communicate CSR issues via the medium of review responses in addition to the core concerns of hotels, product and service quality considerations. So far, 42% of customer online reviews included one or more references to CSR aspects. Taking into consideration the existing and cheaply available feedback via these online reviews that guests voluntarily provide would enable CSR-engaged hotels to follow two-way stakeholder response strategies quite easily. Going one step further and interacting with guests over CSR issues, e.g. through review responses, as done by a quarter of hotels, would allow CSR-engaged hotels to follow stakeholder involvement strategies (Morsing and Schultz, 2006). This stakeholder integration in hotels' communication strategies can also improve customer relationships and can equally further consumer social responsibility that also constitutes responsible tourism (Caruana et al., 2014; Überseder et al., 2011).

To add authority to CSR communication, correct measurement of CSR performance is a prerequisite (Yadava and Sinha, 2016). Hotels could thus seek help from (industry-specific) initiatives, such as the Global Reporting Initiative, among others.

Regarding the alignment of hotel CSR communication and consumer perceptions of hotel CSR engagement on an aggregate level, this study contributes important insights for tourism practitioners and scholars alike. Fig. 1 merges the results from the three studies.

Concerning supplier relations, the sustainable sourcing of local, organic and self-made products were CSR measures strongly

communicated on the websites and also prominently taken up by reviewers, with 18.51% of reviews featuring this CSR dimension. In the online review responses, hotels again prominently communicated these issues. All three key elements in this dimension concern food, which was the most important category mentioned in online reviews. The importance of food, as something that physically affects consumers, corroborates findings, who found "personal concern" to be a core factor influencing the assessment of CSR as a purchasing criterion. For CSR-engaged hotels, it thus makes sense to communicate strongly CSR efforts that concern sustainable and local sourcing of food and for CSR-conscious tourists to comment on this in their reviews, which might attract more guests in turn.

CSR engagement regarding environmental issues was strongly highlighted in the hotels' websites and in the hotel review responses. It was also the CSR dimension that was most commonly featured in online reviews, with 23% of reviews belonging to the CSR dimension of environmental issues. Some environmental CSR activities, while certainly ethical and laudable, might, however, not be as well suited for CSR communication to (potential) customers as others. For instance, 18 of 47 hotels reported on the use of biologically degradable cleaning supplies on their websites but only one out of 1383 reviews referred to it. Moreover, hotels need to be careful with regard to which CSR measures they undertake to be environmentally friendly – not all are equally well-received. For instance, not offering air-conditioning, Wi-Fi and minibars for reasons of energy-saving with reference to CSR engagement displeased guests rather than enthused them. Perhaps the hotel might find low-energy-consuming alternatives. If, however, a hotel truly does not want to offer Wi-Fi, e.g. to relieve itself of electric smog, as advertised by some hotels on their websites, then this commitment should be unmistakably communicated. There were reviewers who described their irritation when not learning about this CSR measure until on site.

Another aspect belonging to environmental issues that hotels have to be careful about concerns advertised CSR actions that are not carried out in reality. This includes particularly the towel change that should only occur when customers want it, but in several cases was ignored by the cleaning personnel. Not meeting those criteria that hotels commit

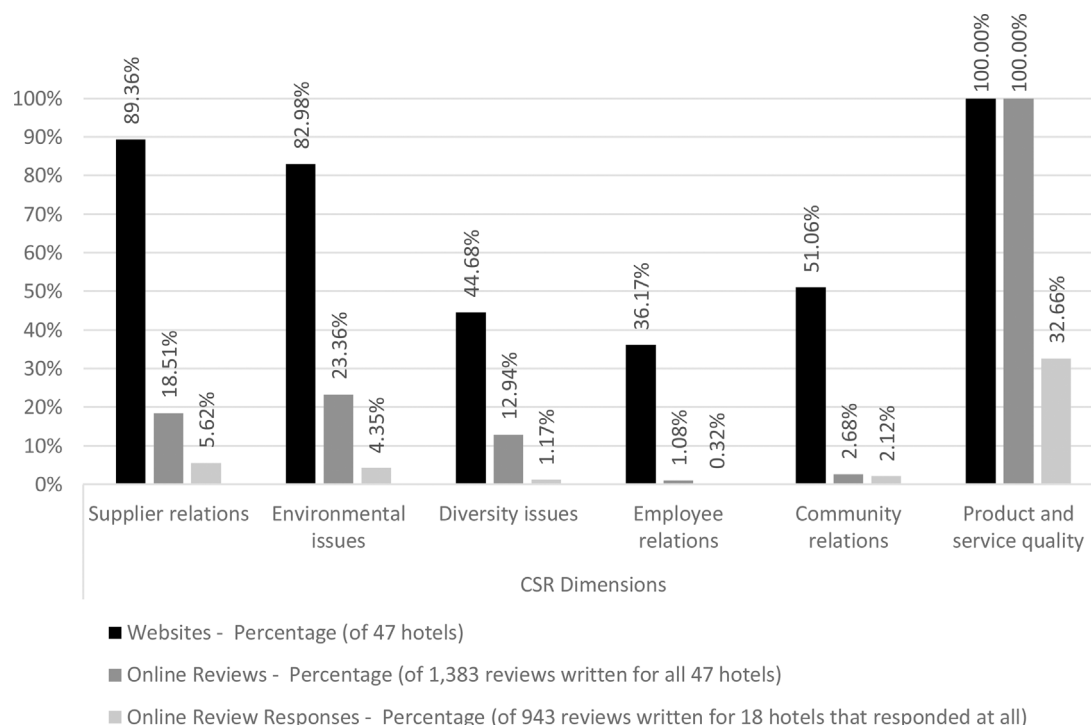


Fig. 1. Online CSR communication via the various channels.



themselves to is exceptionally dangerous, as then the entire CSR strategy is questioned (Font et al., 2012; Parguel et al., 2011).

Concerning the CSR dimension of diversity, rather little is communicated on hotel websites and this regards mostly food intolerances and children. Of all reviews, 179 reviews mentioned elements assignable to this category, showing that consumers might care more for that category than hotels, as hinted at by the rather meager 44.68% of hotels communicating about this CSR dimension and by the few comments in the review responses. If a hotel is dedicated to a minority, e.g. vegetarians, then it is indispensable that the hotel communicates this accordingly.

The CSR dimension of employee relations was not communicated strongly or within the main frame of the hotel websites. Mostly, communication about it was found in the section career/jobs that is often located in the footer of webpages, corroborating de Grosbois' (2012) findings. This CSR dimension also received few mentions in the reviews and review responses. Possibly the stakeholder interaction with employees and applicants happens via other channels than online reviews and hotel websites.

Concerning the dimension of community relations, rather few reviews referred to this CSR dimension. On websites, this dimension was more frequently addressed, with just over 50% of hotels communicating measures in this CSR dimension. The most important activities include awareness creation for CSR issues and contributing to local or global economic prosperity through job creation, local employment, and protection and preservation of heritage and local culture. Very few hotels commented on their websites that they support local, national or international causes financially. This might be more relevant for bigger hotels or hotel chains with more substantial financial means and reach.

Further potential for stakeholder integration into the CSR communication strategy lies in CSR reports. At present, only four out of 47 hotels provided a CSR report on their websites. Morsing and Schultz (2006) proposed to integrate stakeholders' voices in these non-financial reports. The authors believe that such integration will demonstrate to stakeholders that they are being heard and that the hotel is truly interested in changing for the better. Such integration would be a further operationalization of the stakeholder involvement strategy. Online reviews might provide valuable input for such stakeholder integration in CSR reports.

As the review analysis showed, the average number of reviews per hotel was roughly 30. These reviews are then 30 objective voices on average that other consumers can listen to and trust (Vermeulen and Seegers, 2009), and thus provide much more relevant information for decision-making processes than the one subjective voice – the hotel website. On booking platforms the essential hotel information is also listed, which results in some people not even considering the hotel website any longer. Therefore, a hotel must make sure that its profile on platforms, such as Booking.com® or TripAdvisor®, is carefully crafted and managed (O'Connor, 2010). One way to strengthen a CSR-engaged hotel's presence is by applying for CSR-related programs on booking platforms (e.g. the "GreenLeaders" program of TripAdvisor®). This could constitute a further differentiating factor and competitive advantage for hotels. Membership in the Green Leaders program, for example, also allows introducing a "Green Features" rating criterion. Through this, hotels could differentiate themselves from their competitors and thus better turn their CSR engagement into a competitive advantage.

## 7.2. Implications, limitations and research suggestions for tourism scholars

Many of the above-named implications for tourism practitioners are equally valid implications or suggestions for further research for tourism scholars. However, three important implications must be highlighted here separately.

It becomes obvious that in the context of Austria, a separate CSR dimension of 'supplier relations' is necessary, irrespective of the rather

narrow sample. For countries with an equally high importance of organic sourcing, the application of our adapted CSR dimension framework might be reasonable, so that the supplier effect does not distort the importance of another dimension under which supplier relations might have been subsumed.

This study also finds evidence for the growing importance of review platforms for consumer decision-making, as posited by Xie et al. (2016) and Du et al. (2010). Researchers will find a rich ground of research opportunities for CSR communication and stakeholder engagement in this current area of consumer behavior and decision-making.

Not only are issues of stakeholder engagement, whether conceptualized as stakeholder involvement strategies in the framework of Morsing and Schultz (2006) or as transformational engagement strategies in the framework of Bowen et al. (2010), least implemented in practice but they are also least studied in academia (Bowen et al., 2010). Thus, we propose that tourism scholars place more emphasis on these interactive relationships between hotels and (prospective) guests, seeing that there remain many questions to be answered regarding reciprocal fruitful stakeholder engagement.

For our research, limitations are the temporal discrepancy between the website analysis (April 2016) and the period chosen for the review analyses (January to December 2015). Possibly, some measures have only been introduced over the course of 2015 or even 2016, which would mean that reviews could not even comment on them, as they had not been implemented by the time the review was written. In addition, only reviews published on the review platform TripAdvisor® were analyzed. It is undoubtedly a very established and highly used review platform (Mkono and Tribe, 2016; Xie et al., 2016), also in Austria. In addition, the choice of TripAdvisor® in contrast to competitors such as Booking.com® and Holidaycheck® was made because of its "Green Leaders" program. Through this, TripAdvisor® allows hotels to highlight their CSR activity, which is then specifically asked for in the "Green Features" rating.

Further limitations of this study concern constraints relevant to all qualitative studies with limited sample sizes, namely the non-generalizability of results. A limitation thus lies in the selection of hotels for the sample. Only those either certified with the EU-Ecolabel or members of the BioHotels association or that were heralded as best-practice examples by the Austrian Ministry were included, thus being 'pioneers' in the hotel industry but not representative of the industry as a whole. Although the selection of certificates was made advisedly, numerous other criteria could have been used.

The selection criteria of certification and/or membership also might exclude hotels from analysis that do not have formal CSR strategies but nevertheless follow sustainable and social principles in their daily business or that deliberately do not want to participate in certification schemes (Coles et al., 2013).

It must be acknowledged that the mere fact that a hotel communicates its CSR efforts does not mean that the CSR actions are really implemented as communicated (Font et al., 2012; Parguel et al., 2011) – there remains the danger of CSR-washing (Pope and Wæraas, 2016).

Future research could reproduce this study with a different composition of the sample of hotels to erase the preselection criterion of a definite CSR interest, e.g. only study top-rated hotels or hotels in a given geographical area. This would allow more substantiated statements concerning the generalizability of results. Additionally, future studies could research whether the propensity to engage in CSR communication, the CSR communication itself or the stakeholder strategy differs between accommodation types (e.g. hotel, hostel, apartment), types of hotel (e.g. spa hotel, sport hotel, business hotel, beachside resort) or between privately vs. publicly owned hotels or hotel chains. Moreover, a comparison between locally, nationally and internationally-operating hotel chains could be conducted. One could further reach out to guests of particular hotels that practice CSR activities and ask them, by way of questionnaire or interview, specific questions about particular CSR measures of the hotel, whether they had noticed

them during their stay and whether they would comment on them in social media. Moreover, future research should delve into the area of CSR actions with little customer endorsement, e.g. the mentioned discontent with the unavailability of air-conditioning, minibars or Wi-Fi as CSR measures. Lastly, consumers could be asked about their opinions towards proactive vs. reactive CSR communication in review responses.

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