Unveiling the Nexus between Corporate Social Responsibility and Hotel Financial Performance: Case of Hotel Chains in Zimbabwe

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Abstract

Hotels in Zimbabwe are actively engaged in various corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities, including tree planting, clean energy initiatives, water conservation, and youth empowerment programmes. Despite the growth in CSR implementation and reporting, there is limited empirical research on how CRS initiatives impact hotel revenue per available room (RevPAR) in Zimbabwe. This research examines the nexus between CSR initiatives and hotel RevPAR in Zimbabwean hotel chains. Using Taro Yamane's table of sample size determination, a sample size of 204 was determined from a population of 19 000 employees permanently employed in the hotel sector. Stratified random sampling was used to draw the sample. SPSS Version 22 was used to analyse data. Multivariate Regression Analysis was used for statistical analysis. Secondary data from hotel websites was also used for the study to collect financial performance data. Findings from the analysis of the regression model revealed that environmental, economic, and social responsibilities have a significant impact on revenue per available room (RevPAR) within the hotel industry in Zimbabwe. It is concluded that the positive coefficients for CSR dimensions indicate that an increase in environmental, economic, and social responsibilities is associated with a corresponding increase in RevPAR, holding other factors constant. It is recommended that hotels should focus on implementation of sustainable practices such as energy efficiency, waste reduction, and water conservation, focus on ethical business practices, transparent financial reporting, and community investment and engage in community outreach programmes, support local causes, and prioritize diversity and inclusion within the workforce.

Keywords: Corporate Social Responsibility, Hotel Performance, Revenue per Available

Introduction

Room

In the views of seminal theorists, in today's business world, enterprises are mostly involved in responsible business through a new business strategy, which takes into account the triple bottom line (Elkington, 1997). The contemporary researchers also highlighted that, organisations in the contemporary world should not only focus on profit making but rather also focus on environmental and social pillars (Thörnqvist & Kilstam, 2021; Fernhaber & Hawash, 2023; Cheng, Ahmad, Irshad et al., 2023). With the global village striving to become more environmentally friendly, consumers are beginning to notice many businesses, particularly hotels, going green (Appiah, Adong & Abdul-Rafiw, 2023, Thörnqvist & Kilstam, 2021; Fernhaber & Hawash, 2023; Cheng, Ahmad, Irshad et al., 2023). Since the

specifics of hotels' extensive operational activity, the impact of hotels on the surrounding communities and environment is thought to be more significant than that of other types of buildings of a similar size (Shin, Sharma, Nicolau & Kang, 2021). As a result of this consideration, as well as growing public awareness and government pressure, many hotels are increasingly incorporating CSR practices into their operational activities (Peña-Miranda, Guevara-Plaza, Fraiz-Brea & Camilleri, 2022).

Hoteliers are realising that incorporating CSR into hotel operational activities can boost profitability, increase customer loyalty, contribute to the overall image, and aid in compliance with governmental regulations, aside from an external factor pushing the accommodation sector to embrace CSR practices (Peña-Miranda et al., 2022; Yousaf, Radulescu, Nassani, Aldakhil, & Jianu, 2021). The rise of CSR initiatives implementation in the hotel sector, has also raised an area of intellectual curiosity. Researchers are finding it interesting to conduct research. Thus, numerous researchers have emphasized the growing importance of CSR in the hotel industry (Babajee, Seetanah, Nunkoo & Gopy-Ramdhany, 2022; Ishaq, Sarwar, Franzoni & Palermo, 2023; Yousaf et al., 2021; Latif, Pérez & Sahibzada, 2020; Ng & Tavitiyaman, 2020; Teanpitthayamas, Suttipun & Lakkanwanit, 2021; Wong, Kim, Lee & Elliot, 2021; Santos-Jaén, León-Gómez, Ruiz-Palomo, García-Lopera & Valls Martínez, 2022; Palacios-Florencio, del Junco, Castellanos-Verdugo & Rosa-Díaz, 2020; Jarkovská & Jarkovská, 2022; Otieno, Mwanza & Melly, 2023; Ramkissoon, Mavondo & Sowamber, Pasamehmetoglu & Gokoglu, 2020, Aspridis, Lagkona, Metaxidou Koukoumpliakos, 2021, Caceres & Brito, 2023; Srivastava & Singh, 2021). However, a closer look at the aforementioned studies, a limited number focused on the nexus of CSR and hotel financial performance (Alatawi, Ntim, Zras & Elmagrhi, 2023; Otieno et al., 2023; Uyar et al., 2020; Babajee, et al., 2022). A few studies were from the African continent (Babajee, et al., 2022; Otieno et al., 2023). Nonetheless, the studies above were conducted in different countries from apart from Zimbabwe, which makes it difficult to generalise the findings to the hotel sector in Zimbabwe.

Despite limited research on the relationship between CSR and hotel financial performance, hotels in Zimbabwe are actively engaged in various corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities, including tree planting, clean energy initiatives, water conservation, and youth empowerment programmes (Cresta Sustainability Report, 2021; Rainbow Group of Hotels Sustainability Report, 2019; African Sun Limited Annual Report, 2022; African Albida CSR Report 2023; Meikles Hotel Annual Report, 2022). However, no study has been conducted to examine the relationship between CSR efforts on Zimbabwean hotel's financial performance. Previous research in developed countries emphasizes the significance of CSR for organizational performance (Park, 2020; Mijatov, Blešić & Dragin, 2018). Nevertheless, research on CSR in the hotel industry has primarily focused on metrics such as Return on Assets (ROA) and Tobin's q, while overlooking Revenue Per Available Room (RevPAR), a key indicator of long-term financial performance for hotels (Kang, Lee, & Huh, 2019; Inoue & Lee, 2018). Understanding the relationship of CSR on financial performance, particularly in the hotel industry, requires a comprehensive analysis that incorporates RevPAR (Holcomb & Smith, 2017; Mackenzie, Stone, Mogomotsi, & Mogomotsi, 2021). Though some studies have explored the relationship between CSR and financial performance in general (Magbool, Hussain & Aslam, 2020; Ghaderi, Mirzapour, Henderson, & Richardson, 2019), empirical research specifically focusing on CSR in the hotel context, especially in Zimbabwe, remains limited (Mapingure, Zengeni, Mahachi, Mwando & Mboto, 2015; Taru & Gukurume, 2013). An audit of current studies reveals the existence of a gap in knowledge on the nexus between CSR and hotel financial performance (RevPAR) in Zimbabwe. Therefore, using a quantitative methodology, this study sought to assess the relationship between CSR and financial performance of hotels in Zimbabwe.

Methodology

A positivist research philosophy was adopted for this study. The influence of the dimensions of corporate social responsibility (Social, Environmental and Economic dimensions) on RevPAR performance were tested in Zimbabwe's chain hotels namely African Sun Limited, Rainbow Group of Hotels, Cresta Hotels, Meikles Hotel and African Albida. Using Taro Yamane's table of sample size determination, a sample size of 204 was determined from a population of 19 000 employees in the hotel sector (Statista, 2021). Stratified random sampling was used to draw the sample. A 70% response rate was attained for this study. On the other hand, data from websites from a sample of 5 chain hotel firms over a period of three years (2021-2022) were also used. A self-administered Google forms 5 Likert scale questionnaire was used to collect dat. For data analysis, a regression analysis model was used to test the research hypotheses that there was a significant relationship between CSR dimensions and hotel RevPAR. The regression model was as follows:

$$Y_{OP} = X_{11} + X_{SI} + X_{LI}$$

Where,

 $Y_{op} = CSR$

 X_{11} = Social Responsibility (SR)

 X_{SI} = Environmental Responsibility (ER1)

 X_{LI} = Economic Responsibility (ER2)

In carrying out research on the Revenue per Available Room (RevPAR) of five prominent hotel chains in Zimbabwe, the researcher also used secondary data from a variety of sources to gain comprehensive insights. Using a methodical approach, the study meticulously examined each hotel chain's website to identify and evaluate their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives, gaining valuable insight into their commitment to sustainable and ethical practices. Furthermore, to assess these hotel chains' financial performance, the study obtained and analysed their 2023 annual reports, extracting relevant data that provided a comprehensive understanding of their operational and economic landscapes. This comprehensive examination of secondary data not only allowed for an indepth assessment of each hotel chain's RevPAR, but also revealed critical information about their CSR efforts and financial standing, broadening the scope and depth of the research.

Results and discussion

This section presents and discusses findings of the study. A multiple regression analysis results are presented below. Reliability table, model of summary table, ANOVA table and Coefficients tables present the findings.

Table 1: Reliability test results

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.769	4

The reliability test results show a high level of internal consistency among the scale's items, with a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of.769. This indicates that the scale's items consistently measure the same underlying construct. Furthermore, the fact that the scale has only four items suggests that it is relatively short, which may be beneficial in terms of reducing burden on respondents as well as improving the accuracy of the information. Ultimately, the results indicate that the scale used in the regression analysis is reliable and valid for measuring the construct of interest.

A data normality test was also done to ascertain regression analysis assumptions. A data normality test is important in regression analysis because it determines whether the data follows a normal distribution, which is a necessary assumption for many statistical tests. Figure 1 presents normality test results.

Dependent Variable: RevPAR 400 300 100 Regression Standardized Residual

Figure 1: Normality test results

The histogram shows a normal distribution. This means that the values are symmetrically distributed around the mean, with the majority of observations clustering around the centre. This is significant because it allows for more precise statistical analyses and interpretations of data. A normal distribution also allows us to make reliable predictions and inferences from the data.

Table 2	': M	lodel	Sun	nmary
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Model Summary ^b								
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted F	Std. Error of the				
			Square	Estimate				
1	.771 .594		.593	1.07310%				
a. Predictors: (Constant), Social Responsibility, Economic Responsibility, Environmental								
Responsibility								
b. Dependent Variable: RevPAR								

Based on the regression analysis results, the model (Table 2) has an R (multiple correlation coefficient) of 0.771. This indicates a moderately strong positive relationship between the (Social Responsibility, Environmental Responsibility, Responsibility) and the dependent variable (RevPAR). The R Square value of 0.594 suggests that approximately 59.4% of the variance in the RevPAR can be explained by the predictors used in the model. In other words, these three predictors collectively have a moderate predictive power for the dependent variable. The Adjusted R Square is also 0.594, which indicates that the addition of the three predictors contributes to the model's explanatory power without any excessive complexity. The Standard Error of Estimate (1.07310%) is a measure of the average deviation between the observed values of the dependent variable and the predicted values obtained from the regression model. The lower the standard error, the more accurate the predictions were likely to be. In this case, a small standard error indicates that the model provides reasonably accurate estimates of the RevPAR. Overall, the findings suggest that Social Responsibility, Environmental Responsibility, and Economic Responsibility have a significant influence on the RevPAR. However, it is essential to note that other variables not included in the model might also be contributing to the variation in RevPAR. Findings corroborates with the findings of Babajee, et al. (2022) who also discovered a moderate variance in the RevPAR explained by CSR variables.

Table 3: ANOVA Results

ANOVAa							
Mod	el	Sum	of	df	Mean	F	Sig.
		Squares			Square		
1	Regression	2106.047		3	702.016	609.632	.000
	Residual	1439.425		1250	1.152		
	Total	3545.472		1253			
a. Dependent Variable: RevPAR							

b. Predictors: (Constant), Social Responsibility, Economic Responsibility, Environmental Responsibility

The ANOVA table provides valuable information about the overall fit of the regression model. The Total Sum of Squares (3545.472) represents the total variation in the dependent variable, RevPAR. The high F value of 609.632 and a very small p-value (Sig is .000) indicate that the overall regression model is statistically significant, suggesting that at least one of the predictor variables significantly predicts the dependent variable. The predictors, Social Responsibility, Environmental Responsibility, and Economic Responsibility, seem to collectively contribute to explaining a significant amount of the variation in RevPAR, as evidenced by the highly significant F value. This suggests that these predictors, taken together, have a strong influence on RevPAR. Findings resonates well with existing studies have reported positive results on the impact of CSR on financial performance. Some research shows a positive relationship between CSR activities and financial performance (Babajee et al., 2022; Franco et al., 2020; Alatawi et al., 2023). Moreover, it is worth noting that the significant F value and small p-value indicate that there is evidence to support the claim that at least one of the predictors has a significant effect on RevPAR. However, it's important to remember that correlation does not imply causation, and other unmeasured factors may also influence the relationship between CSR and RevPAR.

Table 4: Coefficients Results

Coefficients ^a								
Model		Unstandardized		Standardized	t	Sig.		
		Coefficients		Coefficients				
		В	Std.	Beta				
			Error					
1	(Constant)	2.0051	.067		-1.733	.083		
	Environmental	1.003	.000	1.327	29.413	.000		
	Responsibility							
	Economic Responsibility	1.000	.000	.169	3.822	.000		
	Social Responsibility	1.002	.000	.837	11.745	.000		
a. De	pendent Variable: RevPAR							

The coefficients table provides insight into the individual effects of each predictor on the dependent variable, RevPAR. The constant (B) represents the expected value of RevPAR when all predictors are zero. The positive coefficients for Environmental Responsibility (1.003), Economic Responsibility (1.000), and Social Responsibility (1.002) indicate that as each of these predictors increases by one unit, RevPAR is expected to increase by the corresponding coefficient value, holding other predictors constant. The t-values and associated p-values (Sig) are used to determine the statistical significance of each coefficient. A high absolute t-value and a small p-value (usually less than 0.05) indicate that the coefficient is significantly different from zero. In this case, Environmental Responsibility, Economic Responsibility, and Social Responsibility all have highly significant t-values and very small p-values, indicating that they have a significant impact on RevPAR.

Furthermore, the coefficients table shows that Environmental Responsibility has the highest t-value, implying that it has the greatest individual effect on RevPAR among the predictors. This finding are consistent with literature highlighting the growing importance of environmental sustainability in the hotel industry and its potential impact on financial performance. Economic and social responsibility also have strong individual effects on RevPAR, as evidenced by significant t-values and coefficients. Over and above, the coefficients table confirms that environmental, economic, and social responsibilities all play an important role in predicting RevPAR. Existing literature has demonstrated that CSR initiatives, particularly those related to environmental, economic, and social responsibility, can positively impact financial performance metrics such as revenue per available room (RevPAR) (Babajee et al., 2022; Franco et al., 2020; Alatawi et al., 2023). Studies have indicated that consumers increasingly favour businesses with strong CSR practices, which can lead to improved customer loyalty, positive brand perception, and ultimately higher financial performance.

Conclusion and recommendations

The analysis of the regression model revealed that environmental, economic, and social responsibilities have a significant impact on revenue per available room (RevPAR) within the hotel industry in Zimbabwe. It is concluded that the positive coefficients for CSR dimensions indicate that an increase in environmental, economic, and social responsibilities is associated with a corresponding increase in RevPAR, holding other factors constant. Additionally, the high t-values and small p-values for these coefficients demonstrate their statistical significance in predicting RevPAR. Thus, the study accepted the alternate hypothesis which

states that there is a positive relationship between CSR initiatives and hotel financial performance (RevPAR).

Based on the results of this analysis, it is recommended that hotel businesses prioritise and invest in environmental, economic, and social responsibility initiatives to enhance their financial performance. Specific recommendations include:

- Implementation of sustainable practices such as energy efficiency, waste reduction, and water conservation.
- Consider obtaining environmental certifications and promoting eco-friendly initiatives to attract environmentally conscious customers.
- Focus on ethical business practices, transparent financial reporting, and community investment.
- Prioritize stakeholder engagement and sustainable financial decision-making to build trust and loyalty among stakeholders.
- Engage in community outreach programmes, support local causes, and prioritize diversity and inclusion within the workforce.
- Establish partnerships with social organizations and integrate socially responsible practices into the core business operations.

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