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THE IMPACT OF CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY ON LOCALS; THE CASE OF THE HOSPITALITY SECTOR IN CRETE

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ABSTRACT

The current paper focuses upon the impact of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) on locals' opinions regarding the hospitality sector in Crete. The main research aim driving the current study is to evaluate respondents' (locals') willingness to pay a premium for CSR activities in the hospitality sector. The paper utilizes primary data collected through a survey questionnaire in the region of Crete. In total, researchers collected 400 survey questionnaires over a course of three months during the pandemic period. The paper utilized a logistic regression framework. According to the results, respondents that were highly familiar with CSR were also very positive in supporting CSR actions. Whereas gender does not seem to exert a particularly strong influence on individual willingness

to pay a CSR premium, yet once the analysis distinguishes between different premium levels, females were found more likely to contribute at lower amounts, as compared to their male counterparts. The results indicate that businesses should adopt and adapt their CSR practices to new business discourses.

KEYWORDS

Corporate Social Responsibility; Crete; Hospitality; Willingness to Pay; Logistic Regression.

ECONLIT KEYS

M14; Z33; F6

1. INTRODUCTION

The recent covid-19 pandemic has introduced a number of changes in the tourism industry in Greece. *Inter alia*, one well documented change imposed upon the industry is the increased attention to the new localism agenda (Cresswell, 2020; Kourgiantakis et al., 2021). The new localism agenda refers to the increased attention the locality as a spatial unit of attention has received during the pandemic. More specifically, the literature argues that restrictions imposed by European governments on travelling (mostly at an international level) imply that local residents are now for many destinations the only source of tourism demand (Butcher, 2021; Kourgiantakis et al., 2021). This is the case in Greece, where international tourism demand has experienced an unprecedented shortfall. As a result, native tourism demand seems to be for the time being and for the foreseeable future, the next best alternative for the tourism and hospitality sectors. In addition to this observation, the literature is adamant in its recommendations regarding the role of local communities, and the rise of the native visitor/consumer as a significant factor shaping tourism demand (Porter & Cramer, 2006; Hamarneh, 2013). This development occurs at the time when the attention on local or domestic tourism demand, especially at mass tourism destinations, is at a very low point.

As a result, the domestic hospitality sector is now facing the predicament of operating within a highly contested, competitive and contracted market. Thus, hotel owners and managers alike would have to revise their marketing strategies in order to come up with alternative sources of competitive advantage, adapted to the new normal prevailing in the sector. Within this new framework, it is widely reported in the

literature the significance of corporate social responsibility activity, as a source of competitive advantage (Mombeuil et al., 2019; Tsourvakas & Yfantidou, 2018; Ceglinski & Wisniewska, 2016). Hotel owners and managers alike would thus need to revisit their marketing and promotion strategies with the purpose of aligning tested and trusted wisdom in the market, to the new uncharted conditions shaping the tourism and hospitality sectors currently.

The main research aim driving the current study is to evaluate local respondents' willingness to pay a premium for corporate social sustainability activities in the hospitality sector. The argument is that corporate social responsibility is considered as a source of competitive advantage within a highly contested market (Mombeuil et al. 2017; Porter & Kramer, 2006; Smith, 2007). The paper aims to evaluate locals' (i.e., those residing in Crete) opinions and approach towards corporate social responsibility actions, as implemented in the hospitality sector. More specifically, the paper aims to examine the degree to which local residents (as potential visitors, and co – creators of tourism services) would be willing to pay for corporate social responsibility (henceforth, CSR) actions, implemented at hotels. The argument being that those who are willing to pay for CSR actions are by default the ones who are mostly in favour, and perceive it as a potential source of competitive advantage.

Conceptually, the paper aims to contribute to the relevant discussion by focusing on the examination of CSR actions on the supply side, as opposed to the demand side. This approach has been adopted by Guzzo et al., (2020); Song et al., (2015); Lee et al., (2012) and Styliadis et al., (2015) albeit for employees only. Thus, the paper maintains that there is a research gap in the literature linking local residents and CSR initiatives in the tourism and hospitality sectors. Practically, the paper responds to a recent call by Wut et al., (2021) for academics in the tourism sector to address under-researched themes in CSR, including residents and locals.

In particular, the main starting block of the paper rests on the fact that local communities are essential contributors to the tourism experience destinations and individual enterprises are offering to visitors. Natives that embrace and actively support CSR initiatives in the tourism and hospitality sector are more likely to infuse a positive attitude towards the same CSR actions to foreign or non – native visitors. What is more, natives that have bought into CSR activities are also more likely to

encourage others (visitors and non – visitors) to engage in similar activity, or behave in a similar fashion (Stylidis et al., 2015, Tsourvakas & Yfantidou, 2018). Hence, the paper considers locals as a type of an internal stakeholder group that could influence tourism behavior at a certain locale.

Correspondingly, the objectives of the paper are defined twofold. On the one hand, the paper examines the effect of respondents' socio-demographic characteristics on their intention (willingness) to pay a premium for CSR activities. Identifying the effect of respondents' socio-demographic variables on their willingness to pay for CSR actions could facilitate the development of more rational and targeted policy making in the field. Identifying who is willing to pay a premium, as well as the level of this premium could allow managers and practitioners alike to design more effective marketing and promotional CSR campaigns. On the other hand, and related to the first study objective, the paper provides a number of interesting decision making recommendations for policy makers, business people and managers alike. This is an important part in the discussion since policy implications put forward may alleviate some of the constraints that plague the local tourism sector in Crete. More specifically, there is increased concern over the last few years that the tourism and hospitality sectors in Greece are failing to retain key skilled labor force (Bulman, 2020; Varvitsioti, 2021). This is largely due to adverse working conditions and low employee morale. The paper maintains effective and credible CSR policy initiatives could reverse this trend (Song et al., 2015; Tsourvakas & Yfantidou, 2018).

The remainder of the paper is structured as follows: The next section provides a short literature review on the topic. Section 3 deals with the methodology of the research, whereas section 4 presents the empirical findings. Section 5 discusses the various policy and managerial implications, whereas section 6 concludes the discussion.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The concept of CSR has received increased attention lately (Taliouris & Trihas, 2017; Gonzalez-Rodriguez & Diaz-Fernandez, 2020). This is definitely the case in the tourism and hospitality sectors, especially when taking into consideration their

considerable environmental and socio-economic impacts (da Silva et al., 2019; Commission for the European Communities, 2016; United Nations World Tourism Organization, 2015). In fact, recognising the strong linkages between tourism activity and CSR initiatives, the UN World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) has incorporated CSR in its agenda, through the 'think global, act local' approach.

The extant literature in the field relating to CSR initiatives and the examination of CSR activity in a Greek context is rather limited (Skouloudis et al., 2011). Actually, Kavoura and Sahinidis (2015) argue that there is a complete absence of regulatory framework to support CSR initiatives in Greece. Thus, very little has been written about CSR and the tourism and hospitality sectors in a Greek context. Some notable examples on a purely academic context include *inter alia*, the work by Giannarakis et al. (2011); Taliouris and Trihas, (2017); Metaxas and Tsavdaridou, (2010); Skouloudis et al., (2011); and Kourgiantakis et al., (2018). Notably, the majority of research work on CSR in Greece that has been published revolves around the manufacturing and industrial sectors of production (Leonidas et al., 2012; Metaxas & Tsavdaridou, 2013; Korra et al., 2018). Considering the nature of tourism development in Greece (spatial as well as temporal concentration, over-dependence on natural conditions and the environment), it is of considerable surprise that the CSR concept has not been properly examined in this case (Ministry of the Environment, Energy and Climate Change, 2013).

As far as the reasons to justify the lack of businesses' (especially in the tourism and hospitality sector) interest to engage in CSR initiatives, the literature in the field provides a number of explanations. First, one has to take into account the small size of the average firm in the tourism and hospitality sector. A recent study on tourism entrepreneurship by the tourism observatory in the region of Crete (Apostolakis et al., 2022), indicate that approximately half of all businesses in the tourism and hospitality sector employ up to 4 people. In total, 85% of tourism firms are classified as SMEs (up to 49 employees). The small size of the business unit, imposes a serious (financial) constraint to the implementation of CSR campaigns in Crete. Hence, the relative small size, and correspondingly, the relatively limited availability of financial resources is one of the major constraints on CSR – related activities.

Second, cultural and sociological factors come also into play to explain the small take up of CSR activity by Greek and Cretan tourism firms. In particular, Tsourvakas and Yfantidou (2018), as well as Krittas et al., (2020) agree that inherent distrust and doubtfulness among entrepreneurs, associated with a strong element of masculinity and a business 'bravado' make it difficult for entrepreneurs (especially female and young ones) to engage in CSR initiatives. This is certainly associated with the well-reported under-representation of females on administrative positions in the tourism sector (Galanaki et al., 2009). Finally, the fact that Crete has a fairly short tradition of business accountability and transparency could also explain the absence of interest and enthusiasm for CSR – related activities (Tsourvakas & Yfantidou, 2018).

Overall, and following the rationale mentioned at the introductory parts of the discussion, the paper adopts the rationale of locals as 'internal stakeholders' and adopters of CSR policies at the tourism and hospitality sectors. In particular, the research argues that in tourism destinations focusing on mass tourism, the negative effect on local communities bears a considerable burden. Through CSR though, the tourism sector could mitigate some of these negative externalities for local communities (Bohdanowicz & Zientara, 2009). This mitigation though could only be achieved if local stakeholders are "actively involved in accomplishing them..." (Guzzo et al., 2020: 332). However, as Hughes and Scheyvens (2018) admit, the industry largely positions local communities at a passive role when considering the implementation and engagement on CSR activities.

In addition to the abovementioned discussion, the effects of the recent pandemic have affected in a major way the operations of the tourism and hospitality sector worldwide. With international traffic to a halt for several years now, many researchers and practitioners are turning to domestic and native tourism demand as a viable alternative to a crippling tourism industry (Jeon et al., 2021; Arbulú et al., 2021). This development has also been suggested in the case of Greece (Pavlatos et al., 2021) and Crete (Kourgiantakis et al., 2021). The paper takes these recommendations on board and puts forward the idea that tourism and hospitality firms would have to lean towards locals as potential substitute demand. However, for this to materialize, local tourism and hospitality incumbents would have to be relevant and credible to local and domestic tourism demand (Guzzo et al., 2020).

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The paper utilizes primary data collected through a survey questionnaire in the region of Crete. In total, researchers collected 400 survey questionnaires over a course of three months during the pandemic period. The survey questionnaire was directed exclusively at local residents. The basic criterion set by the research was that respondents were between 20 and 74 years old and fully or partially in charge of their household's purchases of food and groceries. The research instrument was initially tested through a pilot study, where a small number of local residents were asked to read and evaluate the questionnaire. The questionnaire was then adapted according to the feedback received by participants in the pilot study.

Notably, the current paper adds to the existing literature in the sense that it represents a fresh effort to evaluate local residents' perceptions and behaviour regarding corporate social responsibility in Crete. Apospori, (2018) has also dealt with corporate social responsibility in the same setting, albeit from an entrepreneurial perspective.

The survey adopted a convenience sampling approach in order to collect data. Unfortunately, the pandemic and the resulting lockdown conditions prevailing in Greece over the time of the research were not conducive at employing a more representative sample of respondents. The survey adopted a fairly common ground approach that has been adopted elsewhere in the literature (Anselmsson et al., 2014; Kang et al., 2012) in the sense that it utilizes logistic regression analysis to evaluate whether or not individuals were willing to pay (WtP) for CSR initiatives in the hospitality sector (table 2) and how much they would be willing to pay (table 3), depending on a number of independent variables.

The survey instrument was divided along five sections. In section 1, the questionnaire enquired about respondents' generic tourism behaviour. Section 2 dealt with respondents' awareness levels regarding CSR. Section 3 enquired about CSR in the hospitality sector, while section 4 focused on the relationship between customer satisfaction and CSR activity. Finally, the questionnaire concluded with section 5 on respondents' socio-demographic variables. Researchers utilized both

snowball and convenience sampling to collect the empirical data. Respondents were drawn exclusively from the region of Crete.

4. EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

The empirical findings of the study are based on the collection of 400 survey questionnaires that were collected through convenience and snowball sampling in Heraklion, Crete. Table 1 below summarises the sample's socio- demographic profile. According to the information provided therein, the average respondent in the sample was female (60%), in her middle 30s – early 40s (45%), with high educational qualifications (44.5%), employed in the private sector (39%), with fairly low income levels (10.001€ to 15.000€) (30.5%).

Tables 2 and 3 below, summarize the empirical findings from the econometric analysis. In particular, table 2 below presents the results of the binary logistic regression with the dependent variable enquiring whether respondents would be willing to pay (WtP) for CSR actions in the hospitality sector or not. According to the results, frequent travelers (traveling 4-5 times per annum), older and mature individuals (56 to 65 years of age), as well as those respondents with fairly low levels of income (10.001€ to 15.000€) were all less likely to pay for CSR activities.

	(%)
Gender	
Male	40,4
Female	59,6
Age	
18-25	6,5
26-35	25,6
36-45	45,1
46-55	17
56-65	4
>65	1,8
Educational Attainment	
High School	12,8
University Degree	23,3
Technical Degree	14,8
Post-Graduate Degree	44,4
Other	4,7

Professional Status	
Employed in the Private Sector	39,1
Employed in the Public Sector	25,8
Entrepreneur	19
Unemployed	6,8
University student	4,5
Pensioner	2,5
Other	2,3
Annual Net Income (€)	
<10.000	27,1
10.001 - 15.000	30,6
15.001 - 20.000	12,8
20.001 - 25.000	12,8
25.001 - 30.000	4,3
>30.001	6,5

Table 1: Sample Socio – Demographic Characteristics.

On the other hand, those with medium levels of familiarization with CSR activity, as well as those that were extremely familiar with the concept of CSR activity were more likely to financial contribute towards CSR activity, as compared to the base category (not familiar with CSR). The fact that respondents with both medium and high levels of familiarization with CSR are more likely to pay for it may be an indication of heterogeneity in our sample and its preferences towards CSR activity. Those that had participated on charitable activity more than once in their lifetime are more likely to financially contribute towards CSR activity. Hence, as one would anticipate, respondents' reciprocal behaviour seems to be a strong indicator of support for CSR activity (Hughes & Scheyvens, 2018, 2021). Respondents in the early middle ages (36 to 45 years of age) are also more positively disposed, as are those on medium to high income levels (20.001€ - 25.000€).

Interestingly, respondents' gender, educational attainment levels, as well as professional status do not seem to exert an influence on WtP for CSR activity. This final point is also confirmed elsewhere in the literature (Kourgiantakis et al., 2018), albeit at a different setting. At the same time though, males in table 3 appear to be more likely to contribute 1% to 5% more for CSR activities in the hospitality sector as compared to their male counterparts (base category).

A more careful reading of the empirical findings from Table 2 provides some interesting points for reflection. First, the evidence regarding the impact of the income

variable on individuals' WtP intention for CSR activity is the one anticipated and supported from the extant literature in the field (Rosati et al., 2018; Olya et al., 2021). Indeed, respondents with higher levels of disposable income are more likely to financially support CSR activities, as compared to respondents with low levels of disposable income (base category). The exact opposite applies in the case of respondents with relatively low levels of disposable income. Hence, respondents' levels of disposable income seem to be greatly influencing their stance towards CSR activity. Intuitively therefore, it emerges from the empirical results that CSR campaigns in the hospitality sector need to be particularly relevant to affluent individuals. To put this into a marketing perspective, managers and policy makers in tourism and hospitality would have to be particularly selective as far as the execution of the CSR campaign. In particular, managers and practitioners would have to ensure the selection of the relevant marketing channels of communication and the message they convey therein. In the opposite case, the CSR campaign would fail to relate to the specific segment of the population, and thus fail to motivate them.

Second, frequent past participation in reciprocal activities seems to be positively associated with support (and thus willingness to pay) for CSR initiatives at the hospitality sector in Crete.

	Beta [β] Coefficient	Sign. level
Constant	-.314	.857
Travel_Never (left over category)		
Travel_Once	-1.04	.251
Travel_2-3 times	-.426	.642
Travel_4-5 times	-1.76	.089***
Travel_5+ times	-.587	.628
No familiarization_CSR (left over category)		
Some Familiarization_CSR	-.281	.654
Medium Familiarization_CSR	1.03	.096***
Very Familiar_CSR	.626	.313
Extremely familiar_CSR	.654	.005**
Participate in Charity_No (left over category)		
Participate in Charity_1 time	.604	.048
Participate in Charity_1+ times	1.04	.015**
Gender (male)	.665	.511
>65 years of age (left over category)		

18-25 years of age	.779	.588
26-35 years of age	1.24	.340
36-45 years of age	1.38	.001*
46-55 years of age	.356	.782
56-65 years of age	-1.99	.094***
Other_education (left over category)		
Technical University degree	.380	.663
High School degree	.765	.372
University degree	.897	.311
Post-Graduate degree	.365	.657
Employee_Private Sector (left over category)		
Employee_Public Sector	.351	.430
Entrepreneur	.156	.752
Student	.013	.987
Unemployed	-.478	.459
Retired	1.11	.358
Other	-.100	.919
Income_ <10.000 € (left over category)		
Income_ 10.000-15.000€	-.880	.057***
Income_ 15.001-20.000€	-.466	.425
Income_ 20.001-25.000€	1.52	.013**
Income_ 25.001-30.000€	.401	.562
<i>Significance: *=0.001, **=0.05, ***=0.10</i>		

Table 2: Binomial Logit Results.

Moving on, the empirical evidence presented on table 3 below summarizes the impact of socio – demographic variables on the intensity of individual support on CSR initiatives at the hospitality sector in Crete. The first general point worth mentioning is that the effect of the variables that exerted an impact onto willingness to pay for CSR in table 1 earlier on in the discussion, is uniform across the different WtP categories (1-5% more and 6-10% more) reported in table 2. This is an encouraging sign that would also help in the interpretation of the empirical findings. Additionally, it appears that breaking down willingness to pay for CSR (WtPCSR) initiatives into different categories indicates that there are now more significant relationships. One explanation for this phenomenon could be attributed to the existence of heterogeneity that may be hidden within respondents' opinions.

What is more, the evidence from table 3 indicates that the relationship between WtPCSR levels and income appears to be stronger in the lower income categories, as compared to the higher income categories. Low income respondents were less

likely to spend money on CSR activities across the board, whereas relatively medium income groups (20.001€ to 25.000€) were more likely to spend on CSR only at the lower bound (1% to 5%). Thus, income levels do seem to exert a statistical significance on CSR activity, but this impact seems to be stronger among the lower income groups (negative effect on CSR activity). This is a very interesting finding for two reasons. First, it confirms earlier findings regarding the overall effect of income on CSR support. Second, it provides support to the claim that managerial practices and policy initiatives in the area do not have to be uniform, but instead adopt a more targeted approach across the population.

The same arguments apply regarding the influence of the age variable on individuals' WtP decision, albeit on a reversed pattern. More specifically, younger responders were more likely to pay for CSR activity, as compared to their retired counterparts. On the opposite side, older individuals were less likely to financially support CSR in the hospitality sector across the board. It is interesting to note that the age variable may be hiding an underlying pattern here. Considering that individuals are on their prime (professionally speaking) during their early years, and less well off during when they are older, this could imply that indirectly the age variable is closely associated (correlated) with the influence of the income variable. This is not something that has not been discussed in the literature. Age as well as individuals' financial state seems to affect individual willingness to pay levels (Manente et al., 2014). Considering the fact that older individuals are expressing similar (negative) WtPCSR activities across the board, this indicates that the effect of the age variable is qualitatively a very strong one.

Familiarization with the concept of CSR also helps to develop a positive stance towards it as a business practice. According to the empirical findings in table 2, familiarization with CSR exerts a positive effect on WtP for it. Respondents that were highly familiar with CSR were also very positive in supporting CSR initiatives. This result aligns with the literature in the field (Fatma, 2016; Fatma & Rahman, 2015). The literature has recognized from early on a strong relationship between familiarity with the concept and intentions to support it (Kourgiantakis et al., 2018). Admittedly, this positive association implies that strategies utilizing CSR as a source of competitive advantage require particular attention and by default are especially

challenging from a business perspective. In order for these campaigns to make an impact, decision makers and managers would first have to lay the foundations to the potential audience, or they have to make sure that the campaigns are focusing on the type of audience that is ready and able to appreciate them.

This is a very interesting and useful piece of insight considering the fact that up till now the majority of CSR campaigns were performed in a uniformed fashion and with no real effort to target specific groups in the population. This is especially true and at the same time a challenge in the Greek business environment where CSR uptake is at a primitive stage (Metaxas & Tsavdaridou, 2010; Kavoura & Sahinidis, 2015). The abovementioned point reflects a market turn from current policy and managerial practices in the field. Hospitality firms in Greece would have to cultivate some sort of familiarization with CSR initiatives, through appropriate training and educating latent local tourism demand, in order to instil positive feelings towards these actions in the future. More specifically, similar to the discussion earlier on, familiarization with CSR activity seems to be extremely important in explaining WtPCSR levels in the hospitality sector. This finding is true for both low (1-5%), as well as higher (6-10%) premium levels. Rather interestingly, those reporting the highest levels of familiarity with CSR activities were also the ones more likely to pay a higher premium (6-10%) (Olya et al., 2021).

	Beta Coefficients [βs]	
	(1-5%)	(6-10%)
Constant	-.890 (.593)	-1.18 (.601)
Travel_Never (left over category)	(left out category)	
Travel_Once	-.756 (.391)	-1.12 (.281)
Travel_2-3 times	-.120 (.892)	-.517 (.620)
Travel_4-5 times	-1.27 (.009)**	-1.93 (.014)**
Travel_5+ times	-.954 (.441)	.123 (.926)
No Familiarization_CSR (left over category)	(left out category)	
Some Familiarization_CSR	.722 (.733)	.947 (.524)
Medium Familiarization_CSR	.932 (.035)**	.758 (.058)**
Very Familiar_CSR	1.22 (.013)**	.583 (.329)
Extremely familiar_CSR	.428 (.531)	1.08 (.040)**
Participate in Charity_No (left over category)		
Participate in Charity_1 time	-.059 (.437)	.164 (.821)
Participate in Charity_1+ times	.875 (.048)**	.661 (.022)**
Gender (male)	.883 (.009)**	.336 (.389)

>65 years of age (left over category)	(left out category)	
18-25 years of age	.687 (.645)	2.15 (.300)
26-35 years of age	.567 (.673)	2.38 (.015)**
36-45 years of age	.781 (.552)	2.07 (.275)
46-55 years of age	-.107 (.935)	1.62 (.392)
56-65 years of age	-2.39 (.074)***	-3.32 (.097)***
Other education (left over category)	(left out category)	
Technical University degree	1.14 (.006)**	.187 (.860)
High School degree	.951 (.308)	.008 (.993)
University degree	1.30 (.061)***	.208 (.844)
Post-Graduate degree	.600 (.486)	-.393 (.693)
Employee_Private Sector (left over category)	(left out category)	
Employee_Public Sector	.684 (.030)**	.354 (.493)
Entrepreneur	.154 (.744)	-.002 (.995)
Student	-.088 (.923)	-.631 (.561)
Unemployed	.024 (.970)	-2.53 (.033)**
Retired	1.33 (.281)	1.91 (.342)
Other	-0.17 (.987)	-.276 (.850)
Income_ <10.000 € (left over category)	(left out category)	
Income_ 10.000-15.000€	-.772 (.061)***	-.836 (.071)***
Income_ 15.001-20.000€	-.062 (.903)	-.666 (.270)
Income_ 20.001-25.000€	1.60 (.072)***	.858 (.392)
Income_ 25.001-30.000€	.857 (.530)	.181 (.407)
<i>Significance: *=0.001, **=0.05, ***=0.10</i>		

Table 3: Multinomial Logit (MNL) Results.

Further, it appears that pro-social behavior in the form of participation on charitable activity on multiple occasions in the past seems to exert a significant and positive impact on WtPCSR activity. Again, this seems as a rather intuitive point in the sense that CSR itself is a form of pro-social behaviour from a business perspective. In other words, individuals that exhibit reciprocal behaviour are also more likely to appreciate and support CSR activity in the hospitality sector (van Aaken et al., 2013). The empirical findings in table 3 also confirm earlier results as far as participation in charitable activity is concerned. Pro – social behavior seems to exert a positive effect on CSR WtP low (1% to 5%) as well as medium (5% to 10%) levels. Thus, exhibiting reciprocal behavior seems to affects both WtP levels in the same (positive) way.

5. DISCUSSION

In terms of policy and managerial recommendations stemming from the discussion of the empirical findings earlier on, there are a number of interesting points to arise. First, taking into consideration the effect of familiarization on respondents' WtP for CSR initiatives, the message coming out of the analysis of the empirical findings is that practitioners, managers and decision makers have to impose it on themselves to create programmes for familiarizing (especially) young people with the importance and practicality of CSR implementation and its role in improving competitiveness. There is a direct, strong and positive linkage between familiarization with CSR initiatives and WtP for such initiatives. Hence, in order for businesses to make sure that local consumers perceive CSR initiatives as a source of competitive advantage and differentiation from the competition, they would need to educate local consumers about the concept, its usage and the associated benefits it brings to local communities. The argument is that the more educated local consumers are, the more familiar with the concept they will become and ultimately the more likely to support it in the long run.

Second, there is a very noticeable effect as far as the impact of the age variable on CSR initiatives is concerned. More specifically, the present study confirms the empirical findings reported in Cho and Hu, (2009) and Coutinho et al., (2018). Both of these studies revealed that younger respondents were generally more positively disposed towards CSR initiatives, as compared to older ones. The explanation put forward is that ageing is linked to higher cynicism and distrust levels among individual consumers. As a result, one could argue that older Greek consumers are more cynical, more demanding and less trustful as compared to their younger counterparts. What this implies is that managers, practitioners and decision makers in the tourism and hospitality sector should make an effort to gear their CSR campaigns more towards the younger consumers, and make them more relevant to them.

On the one hand, since this part of the population is more 'open' to CSR initiatives, focusing on them makes more business sense. They would be more likely to appreciate these initiatives and be more responsive to them. Hence, business people and practitioners in the tourism and hospitality sector that want to appeal to the

younger native population would have to devise initiatives that are close to their hearts and interests. This practically implies that managers and practitioners in tourism and hospitality would have to target their efforts more closely to specific segments of the population. Such an example could be the establishment of digital communication channels and strategies. These digital communication channels could offer to possibility for personalized engagement and interconnected, since they could blend images, videos and mental stimuli. Adopting a uniform business stance would certainly not be effective. This point is particularly topical, at the time where businesses and corporations are starting to question their investment on CSR activities (Kourgiantakis et al., 2018).

On the other hand, since younger individuals are considered to be the ‘future consumers’, practitioners and managers in the tourism and hospitality sector would find it beneficial for their business interests to make a lasting impression on them as soon as possible, and certainly before their direct competitors in the field. When one considers the effect of familiarization and age variables on approval levels for CSR initiatives among local residents in Crete, it becomes apparent that efforts to educate the local population on the positive outcomes of CSR activity should commence at the early stages of one’s lifetime. In particular, tourism and hospitality firms should make it their priority to build and develop lifetime linkages (through capacity building) with the local population from early on.

Building community linkages, engaging with the local population, establishing a lasting presence with the community from early on could generate positive outcomes later on, on locals’ lifetime. Thus, building organizational commitment is a key policy implication for businesses in tourism and hospitality in Crete. Rather than perceiving their role and presence as temporal in the locale, firms should emphasize on their long lasting presence in the local community (i.e., being more transparent, law abiding and compliant with environmental and employment legislation). In other words, employing and supporting a system of internal marketing operations would definitely contribute towards the main objective of the study. *Inter alia*, this could be translated into more effort from businesses’ side to pursue more intensively value co-creation with the local community. This could range from ensuring a better work – life working environment for local employees, to engaging with them in certain aspects of

the service provision. The idea is to make locals active participants, as opposed to passive onlookers.

Moving on, the empirical results revealed that whilst gender does not seem to exert an influence on CSR WtP, when it comes to the level of CSR contribution levels, female respondents were more likely to support 1% - 5% price premiums, as compared to their male counterparts. At first, this finding could be taken to imply that there is some degree of heterogeneity in our sample. On a second reading, this observation aligns with the recent (Haski-Leventhal et al., 2017), and more distant literature (Roxas & Stoneback, 2004; Albaum & Peterson, 2006; Luthar et al., 1997), albeit not necessarily in a tourism and hospitality context. Apparently, leaving aside the element of heterogeneity, the empirical findings do seem to indicate that there is a positive connection between females and CSR approval (or WtP). In other words, female respondents indicated stronger ethical and moral orientation, as compared to their male counterparts (although this observation applies only to low levels of WtP).

From a business perspective, these finding could potentially have far fetching implications. Indeed, the fact that female respondents (in a Greek context) appear to be more ethically and morally bound, as compared to their male counterparts could serve as evidence for even greater involvement of women in managerial positions in the tourism and hospitality sector. As it was argued at the earlier stages of the paper, tourism and hospitality sectors are strongly related to sustainability and they both exert significant environmental, as well as socio-economic impact on local communities. Engaging females in managerial positions in the industry would provide a direct signal as far as businesses' ethical and moral stand towards these local communities and destinations. In turn, this could trigger a stronger approval record for these organizations. In turn, a higher approval record from the local community could initiate a stronger competitive advantage for these organizations during the era of glocality. Indeed, as Visser (2010) pointed out the concepts of circularity and glocality run at the core of the new concept of 'CSR 2.0'. Indicatively, Visser (2010) argued that the new face of CSR should cater for the local community and employees' well-being. What is more, this development would also fit well with the new localism agenda that has been mentioned earlier on in the paper.

Finally, as far as reciprocal behavior is concerned, the empirical results indicate that participation in pro-social activity is positively associated with CSR endorsement. Indeed, the more one exhibits pro-social behavior, the more positively disposed towards CSR initiatives that individual would be. Following van Aaken et al. (2013), this could be easily justified utilizing Bourdieu's social capital theory. Those individuals with high social capital (hence more likely to engage in pro-social behavior), are also more likely to consider positively, potential CSR initiatives in the tourism and hospitality sector.

Considering the fact that CSR is a form of pro-social behavior, these results could be interpreted twofold. On the one hand, businesses would need to realize, at least in the case of Crete, that CSR initiatives cannot be considered as a panacea or a policy initiative appealing to a broad range of consumers. According to the empirical results, CSR has a limited impact as far as the range of population it appeals to. However, it exhibits great depth in terms of the impact it exerts to those that are really affected by these policy initiatives. In this respect, this finding echoes the recommendations offered by Apospori (2018), in the sense that firms would need to become more aware and knowledgeable about their actual and latent clientele in order to offer more tailor made CSR policy initiatives. Coupled with earlier findings (i.e., the effect of income on CSR approval), this finding calls for deepening of current business practices in tourism and hospitality sectors in Crete. This deepening of policy making regarding the adoption of CSR practices in the hospitality sector could imply greater targeting of policy initiatives and better screening in terms of relevance of initiatives.

On a second reading, the abovementioned results could potentially signify a considerable departure from the current policy discourse. At the moment, CSR initiatives are cause specific (i.e. they target specific social problems, i.e., protecting the forests). What these results suggest is that CSR initiatives become segment specific. In other words, rather than supporting a good cause, to support individuals with a particular reciprocal behavior. In a climate of instant reward, and where relationship creation is increasingly becoming a norm of the past, individuals (especially those exhibiting pro-social behavior) would need instant or direct gratification in order to feel more valued. This represents a considerable departure from current business practices, especially in the tourism and hospitality sector.

6. CONCLUSIONS

The current study examined the case of CSR initiatives in the tourism and hospitality sector in Crete, Greece. The reason being that tourism and hospitality firms in Greece would have to search deep in order to overcome the challenges posed in the industry as a whole, as a result of the recent covid-19 pandemic. One such mean is through the utilization of corporate social responsibility as a potential source of competitive advantage, especially among the local population. Correspondingly, the paper aimed at evaluating respondents' (locals') willingness to pay a premium for CSR activities in the hospitality sector. The current research endeavor aims to shed some light to the extant literature in the field. Given that this is one of the first studies on the effect of CSR on local tourism demand, the empirical findings may generate some interesting policy initiatives for managers and practitioners alike.

Adopting a primary quantitative research methodology, the authors collected 400 survey responses through the utilisation of snowball and convenience sampling. The empirical findings generated a number of thought provoking policy and managerial implications for the tourism and hospitality sector in Greece.

Initially, the empirical findings tend to suggest that tourism and hospitality business should provide more targeted education through one's lifetime about the concept and the logic of CSR to local communities. The argument is that the more educated local consumers are, the more familiar with the concept will become and ultimately the more likely to support CSR initiatives would be. Second and in short, the empirical results revealed that CSR cannot be considered a panacea solution for all the problems facing businesses in the related field. In this sense, businesses should drive away from a marketing – related approach to CSR initiatives and towards a more pragmatic and focused approach, whereby CSR initiatives are utilized as part of a business strategy that aims at specific audiences with a specific (business) objective in mind. As Visser, (2010) put it, the era of the marketing approach to CSR is long gone and can be largely attributed to the failure of the concept. What is needed now is for a more specific, targeted and persistent effort.

Finally, the empirical finding suggest that tourism and hospitality firms engaging in CSR initiatives a source of competitive advantage should adapt to current business conditions and revise their operations according to the new breed of consumer. What this means is that firms would need to overhaul their operations in relation to CSR campaigns. Rather than providing a generic cause – related CSR campaign, firms and organizations in the tourism and hospitality sectors should provide a more direct and relevant recognition to individuals that are engaging in pro-social and reciprocal behavior.

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