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Do Hospitality Industry Players Practice Corporate Social Responsibility Towards People With Disability?

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Abstract

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is a concept that describes the relationship between industry and society. There is no doubt that CSR is an important component of businesses leads to customer loyalty as well as support from stakeholders. One of the CSR policies is concerning People with Disabilities (PWD). However, there is a lack of the CSR agenda on disability community, particularly in Malaysia hospitality industry. Therefore, this paper aims to investigate the commitment of Malaysian hospitality companies towards PWD. This paper will use sustainability indices that include stakeholders, visibility, human resource and accessibility to show responsible behavior of hospitality industry players. This conceptual paper looks into the CSR information regarding PWD in their sustainability reports or similar documents accessible through their websites. The contribution of this study will provide CSR guidelines in relation to PWD and the importance of their inclusion.

Keywords: Corporate Social Responsibility, People with Disability, Hospitality Industry and CSR Index

1. INTRODUCTION

The hospitality industry is one of the world's fastest growing sectors in tourism and its development. Due to this, there are many negative impacts such as pollution, biodiversity loss, waste generation, non-compliance labor standards, as well as growth of many negative activities (Chan, 2010). Therefore, a corporate social responsibility (CSR) practice has become one of the strategies for companies in the hospitality sector to reduce the negative impacts of their activities on natural, cultural and social environments. However, too much attention been given to CSR practice mainly on green sustainability or environmental issues within this industry. At the same time, CSR is a comprehensive approach that encompasses the economic, legal, ethical and philanthropic activities (Min, Ai, Choo, Wah, & Yang, 2015). According to Siwar & Harizan (n.d.) CSR is a good strategy for companies to gain comparative advantages and ensure long term business successful. So far, however, there has been little discussion about PWD as CSR agenda. Although companies, in general, are attempting to help PWD with cause-related marketing and philanthropy actions, but it is still insufficient (González & Fernández, 2016).

Hospitality industry must provide quality service to its guests without any discrimination. Guests or travellers can come from both able and disable group with varies of background. Research within the hotel sector focusing on disadvantaged groups includes mainly gender, age, and ethnic minorities related aspects (Gröschl, 2007). In order to provide quality service to both , the industry should focus on the practices and challenges that affect the

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attraction and integration of PWD in a wide range of hotel organizations (Groschl, 2012; Groschl, 2011). Furthermore, it has been proved that the information given by the companies who practices CSR as their business strategy, found the positive impact from consumer behavior even when the offer price is high (González & Fernández, 2016; Mohr & Webb, 2005). Hence, these kinds of actions are usually seen by society as a good thing and therefore they are legitimized (González & Fernández, 2016; Marin, Cuestas, & Roman, 2016). However there is a lack of study in this area particularly in Malaysia as a context. Therefore this paper will investigate the CSR practices towards PWD in hospitality industry.

This paper is structured as follows. Section one provides some background and literature review on CSR, CSR in hospitality industry, food sector and the definition of disability. Section 3 explained on proposed methodology and finally, section 4 concludes this paper and propose future work.

2. CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY (CSR)

CSR has gained increased attention in Malaysia and becomes a major concern in Malaysia. The assigned regulatory bodies introduce guidelines for the companies to follow and at the same time non-government organizations (NGOs) play active roles to urge the companies respect the right of the society (Lo & Yap, 2011). This leads to a growing publicity of CSR and raises social responsibility as well as environmental awareness (Amran & Devi, 2007). Based on previous studies, the development of CSR in Malaysia can be categorized into two categories that are corporate governance and social responsibility (Aaijaz & Ibrahim, 2012; Esa & Anum Nazli, 2012). But, this study will only focus on social responsibility implementation amongst companies.

This study adopts CSR definition made by World Business Council, European Commission and Malaysia. The World Business Council for Sustainable Development defined CSR as a continuous process to behave ethically by improving the quality of life of the employees, local community and society at large while doing the business (WBSCD, 2000). As for European countries, CSR is defined as the concept where social and environmental concerns are integrated in business operations and the disclosure is based on a voluntary basis (European Commission, 2001). In Malaysia, the definition of CSR is stressed on a good corporate governance of business operations and it is designed to deliver sustainable value to society at large (Bursa Malaysia, 2011). As what can be concluded from these three entities on CSR definition is about concern on the relationship between business and society or social contract. The study showed in Malaysia, CSR practices are unstructured and limited to philanthropic works, CSR programs and activities are based on an ad-hoc basis, short term, very loose and no proper reporting or monitoring being carried out (Nooriani & Ismail, 2011). However, Malaysia Institute of Account (MIA) reported that there is a growing acceptance of CSR in Malaysia but it is considered inadequate because only a few of large and multinational organizations take part in the CSR projects (MIA, 2005). This means that Malaysian managers are getting aware of the concept of CSR and the level of awareness has slightly improved.

Internet penetration in Malaysia also becomes one of the factor on the increase of CSR awareness amongst society. There is no doubt that Malaysians are increasingly becoming more IT savvy and depending more on the Internet to obtain the latest news (Aaijaz & Ibrahim, 2012). Since companies need to build and nurture relationship with the users, they must know how to strategically utilize the Internet to manage and organize activities aimed at their stakeholders. This scenario highlights the need to increase CSR awareness among Malaysian companies. The education, family upbringing and traditional values are also the key to shape attitude towards CSR (Ramasamy & Ting, 2004).

Furthermore, most of the previous studies investigated Government Link Companies (GLCs), Public Listed Companies (PLCs) and financial institutions (Nooriani & Ismail, 2011). There is a need to look at different angles of CSR in different industry which is hospitality industry.

2.1 CSR in Hospitality Industry

Martínez & Bosque (2013) claimed hospitality industry is one of the world's fastest growing sectors in tourism, and is delivered by individuals which brings to pleasurable experience, transportation, convenience and entertainment (Mobin, Khan, & Rahman, 2016). It has provided sources for job creation, improvements to infrastructures and cultural understanding to support the economic for decades (Bohdanowicz & Zientara, 2009).

Sustainability has always been a barrier in this industry. According to (Jones, Hillier, & Comfort, 2014) developing sustainability plans and programs increasingly important element in their corporate strategies and

prefer to disclose their commitment to build their image and to differentiate themselves from competitors within the marketplace. After the global economic crisis in 2008, society became more conscious about social, economic and environmental issues (Mobin et al., 2016). Despite the increased awareness among consumers towards social and environmental issues, nonetheless, research on CSR in tourism and hospitality focusing on PWD is still underdeveloped (Mobin & Rahman, 2015)

Martinez and Bosque (2013) stated that hospitality companies can seek differentiation through product features, locations, services, employees, and many other strategies including CSR. This insightful finding is agreed by Kalargyrou (2014) and Mobin (2016) where CSR can really become a tool for product differentiation in hospitality and tourism industry. In essence, Kalargyrou (2014) found companies that implement inclusion initiatives of PWD as part of the CSR practice made an impact on their corporate reputation perceived by consumers. Therefore, their corporate reputation would improve because consumers favor companies that support PWD. Following on that, (Mobin et al., 2016) found CSR has a positive and significant influence on customer trust and created customer loyalty. Hence, this current research could have added more weight to this argument by focusing on consumers perceived CSR in the context of hospitality and food service companies that support the inclusion of PWD.

Many studies examined the barriers and concerns of PWD in the hospitality industry. Amongst the concerns when having PWD in the industry were stereotyping issues, potential higher costs of accommodation and facilities, shape customers' attitudes and management challenges (Bohdanowicz & Zientara, 2009; A. Houtenville & Kalargyrou, 2014). At the same time, recent evidence suggest intergration of PWD is as important and able to improve the public image of the company (Lysaght, Ouellette-Kuntz, & Lin, 2012). Some benefits of disability inclusion initiative in the hospitality industry entailed to the increase of loyalty, dependable, increased psychological safety, and a source of competitive advantage (Groschl, 2012; Gröschl, 2007; Houtenville & Kalargyrou, 2014).

Other studies have attempted to explain CSR agenda specifically in employability of PWD. A national survey in the U.S. found that 92 percent of consumers feel more favorable toward companies that accept PWD as workers, and 87 percent agree that they would prefer to give their business to organizations that support PWD. This detailed examination of consumers behavior towards CSR by (Siperstein, Romano, Mohler and Parker, 2006) showed that almost all participants indicated that companies that include PWD in their workplace naturally care about their workers. The same authors also found companies that implement this as part of the CSR initiatives, would improve their corporate reputation because consumers favor companies that employ PWD. Another major study in Canada examined the workers with intellectual disabilities and noted that more than half of respondents viewed diversity at workplace is as important (Groschl, 2012). The same study reported that inclusion of PWD can improve the public image of the company. Similarly, Marriott International has been a leader in addressing PWD. Marriott International has its own nonprofit organization to practice CSR by establishing a prominent program called Bridges. The objective of this program is to connect special education high school graduates with local business through competitive job placement (Hull, 2007). This key player in the hospitality industry encourages managers to think creatively about reasonable accommodation, and works with community-based organizations to find inexpensive but efficient facilitation. Marriot also make managers explain accommodations to non-disabled coworkers, and matches PWD to appropriate jobs tasks (Houtenville & Kalargyrou, 2011). Lack of studies that illustrates the complete pictures of PWD as employee or customer in hospitality industry become a reason for us to investigate further.

This study will focus on CSR practices by hospitality companies with the emphasis of food service sector. Furthermore, CSR in te food industry are distinct from other business. Jones et al. (2005) had examined UK's ten leading food retailers website and the finding revealed that each of the leading food retailers has its own approach to CSR but there is some common ground in their agenda that different from other industries. On the contrary, to generalize the outcome of the current study, researchers found that majority of research on CSR has been carried out in western nations (Maignan, 2001). Therefore, the generalisability of much published research in developed countries would only prohibit the enrichment of information. There are evidences in the literature mentioned about the limited studies published in an Asian context (Fatma & Rahman, 2015; Ramasamy, Yeung, & Au, 2010) and less attention being given towards this phenomenon in emerging countries like Malaysia. Hence, more research in different contexts is required to get a deeper understanding of CSR in food industry underlying issues (Mobin et al., 2016). As food companies are constantly facing challenges and are facing harsh criticism from the stakeholders regarding their activities, implementing CSR initiatives become an agenda for them. According to Aiking and Boer (2004, p.359), 'the relationship between food and sustainability dates back to the 1980's, when sustainable development became an overarching policy objective for all nations'. The study

of the differences of CSR in the food industry is not being widely studied. The next section will discuss the dimension of CSR in the food industry.

2.2 CSR in Food Industry

In the highly competitive restaurant industry, satisfying customers should be the critical objective of businesses that wish to build repeat purchase. A crucial challenge facing restaurant industries today is to enhance restaurant image that is not only compelling for the customers but also can be superior to business competitors and gain competitive advantage (Namkung & Jang, 2007). The linkage of PWD as service staff is made on the platform of CSR. In relation to the current study, the critical linkage among PWD inclusion, restaurant image, and customer behaviour has greater impact on CSR. Due to that, customers may depend significantly on the image of a restaurant when making dining decisions (should they have practiced CSR). According to Namkung & Jang (2007) customers are more likely to choose a restaurant with a stronger positive image with the inclusion of PWD. This is consistent with (Mohr & Webb, 2005) that found strong positive image influenced public to purchase.

There are six major U.S fast food companies and successful strong brand in Malaysia (Mohamed & Daud, 2012). They are Kentucky Fried Chicken or better known as KFC who is under the management QSR (M) Holdings Sdn Bhd. QSR (M) Holdings not only manage KFC operations but also Pizza Hut and Kedai Ayamans with 350 outlets and 85 outlets respectively, nationwide. Another well-known fast food brand is McDonalds. Under the management of Golden Arches Restaurants Sdn. Bhd, McDonalds established themselves as the leading quick service restaurants chains worldwide. In Malaysia McDonalds has been operating all year round with a total of 250 restaurants outlets nationwide. Following that is the Kenny Rogers Roaster franchise. Berjaya Roasters (M) Sdn. Bhd. is the franchise holder for Kenny Rogers ROASTERS in Malaysia. The company is a wholly owned subsidiary of Berjaya Group Berhad and was incorporated in 1994. In April 2008, Berjaya Corp Bhd wholly owned subsidiary of ROASTERS Asia Pacific and master franchise for Kenny Rogers ROASTERS fully acquired the chain's parent, US-based NF Roasters. Next, is another US based brand; the A&W. A&W Malaysia was bought over by KUB Malaysia Berhad in 2001. Currently, A&W Malaysia has over 34 outlets throughout Malaysia and planning to increase its number. A&W is a well-known brand for its Beef Coney, Mozza Burger, Waffles and the classic beverage of Root Beer. Another familiar brand with similar services is Nando's. Nando's restaurants are operated by Nando's Chickenland Malaysia Sdn Bhd. To date, it has a total of 69 outlets through-out Malaysia. Lastly, favourite coffee place for Malaysians, the Starbucks Coffee. Starbucks in Malaysia is operated by Berjaya Starbucks Coffee Company Sdn Bhd., a licensee of U.S based company, Starbucks Coffee International. It was first opened in Kuala Lumpur on 1998 and has expanded to East Malaysia with over 190 stores by 2015.

The above mentioned fast food chains are companies that practice CSR in their business operation. Their capacities together with their strong base of customers are among other reasons it has been chosen. These seven food service companies use CSR not only to address environmental issues but as their commitment to show their support to the less fortunate society. This is also in line with the government policy for the private sector to focus on PWD in term of employability or providing facilities to accommodate PWD. However, due to lack of knowledge and understanding of this particular group of special needs, this study will focus on CSR practice in Malaysia. Hence, it is hoped that this current study would be able to provide informative evidence in the attempt to the commitment of Malaysian fast-food companies towards PWD.

2.3 Definition of Disability

The Malaysian Disability Act (2008) defines persons with disabilities as those who have long term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments; which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society (Ta & Leng, 2013). In another study (Hashim & Wok, 2014) defines disability according to the Malaysian Persons with Disabilities Act of 2008 (Act 685). It mentioned persons with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society. If an individual is unable to perform major life activities including caring for oneself, walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, breathing or learning, to the extent of the average person, that individual is considered as an individual with disability. In addition, persons with disabilities include individuals who were disabled in the past or who are considered to be disabled by some other people or organizations. In addition, persons with disabilities include individuals who were disabled in the past or who are considered to be disabled by some other people or organizations. This study use the definition of PWD as Malaysian Disability Act (2008).

Essentially, according to Massie (2006) the function of Act is to recognise that equality is not about treating everyone in the same way. It is about responding to different needs in the different ways that best suit them. Furthermore, due to the disabilities, it become the most common barrier for inclusion and participation in all aspects of national development without any discrimination. Unfortunately the exact number of disabled people in Malaysia is unknown since the registration of disabled people in Malaysia has been and is still being done on a voluntary basis (Ramayah, 2013). The official figure of registered number of people with disabilities in Malaysia is 409,269 (*Statistik Pekerjaan Dan Perburuhan. Siri 11 Bilangan 1/2017, 2017*)

3. METHODOLOGY

This study aims to investigate the commitment of hospitality industry towards PWD particularly in the fast-food sector that listed in Bursa Malaysia. This is in line with Lopez et al. (2012) and Robinson et al. (2011) that posited the companies that listed in in stock exchange possess good management or good practices in social responsibility.

This study will review the information related to the PWD available on their websites through their annual reports and CSR reports in order to analyze their commitment with the PWD based on four identified dimensions; Stakeholders, Visibility, Human Resources and Accessibility (Segovia-san-juan, Saavedra, & Fernandez-de-Tejada, 2017). The following are the items that will identified using the content analysis.

Table 1: Indicators for assessing the PWD commitments

Topic	Indicator
Stakeholder	Employees with Disability
	Clients with Disability
	Society
Visibility	Code of Conduct
	Sustainability Report Other
Human Resource	Specific Programs
	Recruitment
Accessibility	Website
	Facilities
	Accessibility Clients with Disability
	Accessibility Employees with Disability

4. CONCLUSIONS

This paper proposes to investigate the commitment of the hospitality industry towards companies socially responsible with PWD based on four dimensions that are stakeholder, visibility, human resource and accessibility. Future studies will implement this conceptual paper into empirical evidence. Result from the study may contribute to improve the structure definition of indicators on disability existing up to now. Another contribution of this paper is that the proposed indicators can be used in other countries, by sectors and in any type of company.

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