

Article

# Corporate Social Responsibility Among Travel and Tour Operators in Nepal

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Received: 2 April 2019; Accepted: 9 May 2019; Published: 15 May 2019



**Abstract:** Travel and tour operators (TTOs) have become increasingly and positively engaged in Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) due to increased consumer awareness and responsible business practices. However, CSR engagement has not fully permeated the travel and tourism industry in Nepal as it is still considered ambiguous. There is a need to identify baseline knowledge, and to institute programs and policies for CSR engagement. This study formulated a conceptual model to empirically test the relationship between perceptions of CSR (comparative, benefits and favorability) and its association with the importance, participation and future engagement intentions among TTOs in Nepal. Data were collected via a questionnaire among TTO ( $n = 138$ ) that were registered with the National Association of Tour and Travel Agents. Based on the results, CSR was deemed to be important due to customers' favorability toward organizations that implemented related activities. This relationship influenced CSR participation and subsequently led to future intentions to engage. Overall, it was apparent that the TTOs which were essentially small and medium enterprises were focused on CSR implementation largely due to customers' pressure and/or demand. This study provides knowledge to devise appropriate strategies to drive CSR implementation in the tourism industry via TTO in Nepal.

**Keywords:** travel and tour operators; corporate social responsibility; tourism industry; path analysis; South Asia

## 1. Introduction

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) is now commonly accepted and endorsed by corporations, governments, non-governmental organizations, and consumers. CSR has been stated as “a concept whereby companies integrate social and environmental concerns in their business operations and their interaction with their stakeholders on a voluntary basis” [1]. The allure of CSR is that it intends to fulfill a firm's commitment to its consumers, employees, community and environment [2]. With the implementation of CSR practices, multiple research themes have been identified to examine its impact on stakeholders, along with associated outcomes such as financial, economic [3,4], and philanthropic ones [5] among various industry sectors [6], including the tourism and hospitality industry [7–10].

Despite the tremendous growth in interest, knowledge and investment, CSR has mostly focused on large industrial corporations [11]. While the conceptual underpinnings of CSR permeate all industry sectors regardless of size, the focus on adoption by SME (small and medium-sized enterprises) has been limited [12,13]. Generally, there has been a misconception that SME may not have enough financial resources and/or technological abilities to implement long-term CSR activities [14]. Thus, discrete attention to SME engagement in CSR has been considered redundant [15].

There has been an emergent growth in the importance and utilization of CSR practices by SME [16]. As CSR embodies business social responsibility, the motives for implementation may differ in comparison to large enterprises [17]. In the context of the tourism industry, where an extensive cluster of SME exists, the role of CSR is of importance due to its reliance on society and environmental resources [18]. While the size and scope of SME within the tourism industry varies, there is growing evidence of the adoption of CSR practices, as it is considered essential rather than a choice [19]. Conversely, a lack of awareness, resources, knowledge or value of CSR has been identified in relation to the lack of its adoption by SME in the tourism industry [14,20].

There has been increased interest in research on CSR in tourism for mainly two reasons—a close dependence on sociocultural and environmental resources, and sustainability [9,21]. As a result, there is a discernable link between sustainable tourism and CSR. Sustainable tourism ensures the optimal utilization of environmental reserves, respect, the preservation and promotion of socio-cultural aspects of host communities, and long-term economic benefits [22]. Based on the supply chain of the tourism industry, the role of travel and tour operators (TTOs) has been recognized for destination sustainability [23–25], along with implementation of the tenets of sustainable tourism [26]. As an intermediary in the supply chain, TTOs play a decisive role in promoting, in supplying products, and in aiding with information sharing [27–29], some of which are able to shape the volume and travel movements; combine and stimulate thoughts and practices of tourism stakeholders; and influence touristic places and communities [29]. Accordingly, TTOs have become progressively involved in employing CSR activities due to an increasing consumer's awareness and receptivity towards ecologically and socially compatible behaviors [30].

TTOs are vital for destinations in developing countries such as Nepal, as they tend to be largely SME and play a key facilitation role in tourism. Nepal is an emblematic developing country in South Asia (landlocked between India and China) where tourism is a vital industry that is largely based on natural and cultural heritage products [31,32]. In 2017, the country hosted 940,000 international visitors [33] and aspires to ultimately double this number in the upcoming decade [34]. The influx of visitors has led to the generation of income, notably foreign exchange, employment opportunities, and tax revenues that collectively contribute to the economic progress of the nation's economy [35]. While the economic effects of tourism are significant, the burgeoning environmental and social costs have plagued the country, as evidenced with issues related to deforestation, loss of biodiversity, pollution, cultural modification, and youth migration. [20,36–38].

In response, the concept of CSR and sustainability practices within the tourism industry in Nepal has gained some traction among stakeholders from the public, as well as private and non-governmental organizations. For example, a pioneering community-based ecotourism was implemented as Galekharka Sikles Ecotourism Project [39], followed by similar initiatives in other National Parks. A Sustainable Tourism Network was also established, with the intent to collaborate among key stakeholders in the tourism industry [40]. Furthermore, the nation's National Planning agency has advocated for sustainable tourism with priority afforded towards rural tourism, community-based tourism, and homestays programs [38]. At the TTO level, some aspects of CSR implementation exist among operators, as between 10–20% of earned profits is reinvested back into the community for social and environmental causes. Others have focused on environmental conservation activities, such as a ban on plastic bottles during treks, planting of tree saplings by tourists, and general clean-up programs [41]. However, with the exception of a few operators, CSR engagement has not fully permeated the industry, and is still considered ambiguous. Moreover, academic research within this sector in Nepal is non-existent, and needs to be assessed to assist in policy formulation and advocacy for implementation practices. Hence, it is considered prudent to examine factors that influence CSR participation and future engagement among domestic TTOs in the country. This would provide a baseline knowledge, and assistance to institute programs and policies for CSR engagement within this sector of the tourism industry.

Based on an exploratory perspective, this study examined the relationship of TTO (classified as SME) and CSR in Nepal. The purpose was to ascertain the relationships between CSR perceptions, perceived importance, current involvement, and future engagement with respect to adoption and practices. A conceptual model was formulated based on the existing literature to identify the role of perceptions of CSR and its linkage with the importance, participation, and intention of a future involvement among TTOs (Figure 1). The path model was empirically tested to investigate the following research questions:

1. What is the relationship between the perceptions and importance of CSR activities?
2. What is the relationship between the perceived importance and current participation in CSR activities?
3. What is the relationship between the current participation and intention for future involvement in CSR engagement?

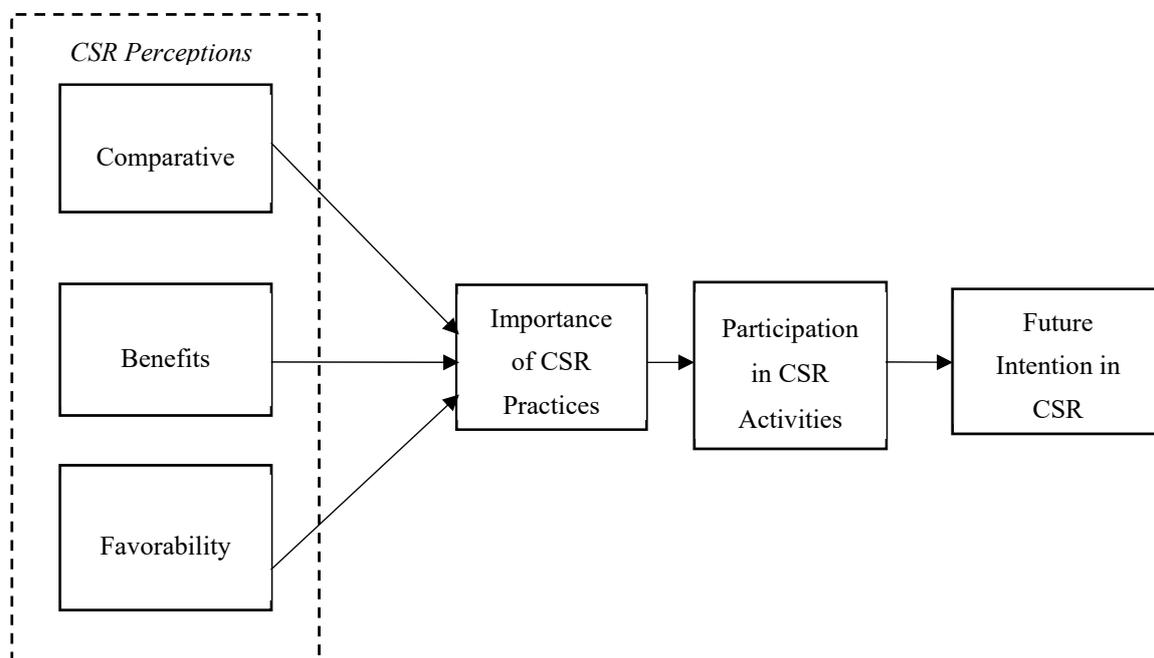


Figure 1. Research model.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Corporate Social Responsibility

CSR is generally understood as voluntary undertakings that include environmental and social matters in a wide span of business operations (i.e., production to the sale of products/services), and an interdependence between a company and stakeholders (e.g., employees, suppliers, consumers, communities, society, and the natural environment) [42]. To implement CSR for a business, the social and environmental parameters should be integrated into its modus operandi to maximize the firm's long-term viability [43].

There has been a major growth in academic research with respect to CSR [44]. Key aspects relate to defining the various dimensions of CSR, such as economic (i.e., producing services and products efficiently to generate acceptable profits), legal (i.e., pursuing profits according to the rules of the law in society), ethical (i.e., doing what is fair, just, and right by preventing harm), philanthropic (i.e., contributing positively to society), environmental (i.e., reducing the negative influences of business operations on the natural environment), socio-cultural (i.e., protecting and preserving the cultural values of society), consumer-based (i.e., protecting consumers' rights), and understanding

the motivations for implementation [45–47]. For example, the drivers to implement CSR activities have been related to intrinsic motivations (e.g., a company's moral leadership and ethical values, employee commitment, customer loyalty, and its profits), extrinsic motivations, such as the degree of affluence for a society (i.e., a firm that operates in an affluent society possesses a higher level of demonstration of creating value for stakeholders), globalization (i.e., a firm that conducts business in multiple countries needs to consider cultural subtleties and social norms to appropriately implement CSR activities), and amendments of laws and regulations, as well as a combination of intrinsic and extrinsic factors [47].

## 2.2. CSR—Tourism Industry

Globally, the tourism industry has generally been positively perceived for its economic impacts, given the bond with local communities in which it operates, and the fact that it actively shapes socio-economic progress [48]. However, there is growing evidence of its negative socio-cultural (e.g., commodification, exploitation, etc.) and environmental impacts (e.g., pollution, waste, etc.), which has received additional scrutiny [43]. The tourism industry utilizes sizeable amounts of water, energy, and disposable products [49], and has negative effects in comparison to other industries [50]. Hence, the need to be environmentally responsible with regards to the use of natural resources is evident and essential for the industry [10]. The implementation of CSR within the tourism industry has resulted mostly in major changes of business models with a supplementary emphasis on improvements (e.g., energy conservation, green production/service, support for non-profit environmental organizations, and pollution prevention), enhancement of the quality of life of residents, and safeguarding of employee welfare [7,10,51].

## 2.3. Perception of CSR

The perception of stakeholders toward a company's participation and contribution in socially responsible and sustainable practices is a vital component of corporate social performance [52]. Consumers' attitudes and behaviors tend to be positively influenced when businesses act in a socially responsible way [53]. Small businesses, such as TTOs, can shape their culture and enact values other than profit with clear perceptions of CSR [54]. Additionally, participation in CSR activities cannot be influenced without a knowledge of consumers' CSR perceptions, which can be examined from three perspectives—*Comparative*, *Benefits*, and *Favorability*.

### 2.3.1. Comparative

During the past two decades, the strategic competency and relationship between CSR and competitive advantage has become more germane [4]. CSR within the tourism sector has been a source of innovation and competitive advantage, and also managed to enhance destinations' sustainability [55]. Additionally, tourism organizations tend to face more environmental and social problems and view CSR as a priority and mechanism to respond [56]. Thus, the need to engage in CSR activities offers a comparative advantage for a business, including TTO.

### 2.3.2. Benefits

The engagement in CSR comes from a realization of its benefits, which relate to a rise in positive image, prospect to attract and hire top quality employees, and a positive influence on a company's financial performance [57]. Likewise, Inoue et al. (2011) also outlined the favorable effects of CSR on business performance by consumer satisfaction, reputation, competitive advantage, and organizational commitment [8]. These findings resonate in the tourism and hospitality context as hotels monetarily benefit from CSR engagement [58,59]. Furthermore, the benefits of CSR implementation far outweigh the lack thereof, as tourists are likely to consider a company's CSR connection prior to consideration of their vacation options [60].

### 2.3.3. Favorability

Customers' interest in responsible tourism coupled with insight into a destination and the TTO brand play a vital role to shape attitudes and loyalty [61]. Additionally, customer satisfaction is positively affected by the credible communication of sustainability paybacks and responsible activities [62]. Essentially, customers tend to favor those organizations which are involved in responsible and sustainable business, since those engagements get translated into a recurrence of more commerce [63], play a part in service revival [64], grow customer faithfulness [65], generate affirmative word-of-mouth and combat against negative information [66].

### 2.4. CSR's Importance, Participation, and Engagement Intentions

Recently, environmental erosion, climate change, natural reserves diminution, human right disputes, and trade fairness have enhanced the value of CSR by the travel and tourism industry [9]. Consequently, tourism companies have acknowledged the importance of CSR [67]. The impetus for CSR implementation among TTO is different for large enterprises due to the varied nature of SME and its underlying motivations [17,68]. The TTO priority and preference for various CSR activities are often guided by their distinctive features, such as a scarcity of wealth, management configurations, planning, evaluating, information regulation, financial uncertainty and risk exposure [69,70]. Overall, the diversity of businesses within the tourism sector results in multifarious CSR actions with environmental management, community discourse, and employee bonding being the most common [71].

CSR demands a business' continued commitment to act in a sustained manner instead of a cross-sectional endeavor to ensure focus on long-term goals [72]. However, TTOs that are SMEs have their own challenges to participate in CSR activities and often scale down to fit their own capabilities [73]. The majority are fixated on short-term goals for profit maximization [18,73]. Thus, actual participation of TTOs in CSR activities is a matter of interest. Nevertheless, consumer awareness has placed tremendous stresses on tourism businesses to change and be responsible [74]. Since consumers' attitudes are generally tied to their consumption behaviors based on business responsible practices [75], it becomes paramount to be involved and engaged in CSR practices. Based on this literature review, this study explores CSR among TTOs within the context of Nepal.

## 3. Method

### 3.1. Data Collection

The sample consisted of TTOs registered with the National Association of Tour and Travel Agents in Nepal. Only TTOs that had an office located in Kathmandu (capital city) were selected ( $n = 472$ ) from the registered list. It should be noted that the overwhelming number of TTOs are principally based in the capital city, as it is the first point of tourist entry with access to the nation's only international airport. A paper-based survey was delivered at their respective offices during the summer of 2018, and responses were collected between two to three weeks. Collectively, 148 questionnaires were distributed, of which 138 were used, which accounted for a response rate of 93%.

### 3.2. Operationalization of Variables

TTOs were asked to share their opinions about CSR related issues. The perceptions of CSR were based on three key dimensions: Comparative and Benefits (comprised of five items each) [9], and Favorability (seven items) [76–79]. The responses were indexed in a 7-point Likert type scale that ranged from strongly disagree = 1 to strongly agree = 7. To measure the importance of CSR activities, TTOs were requested to rate their importance on the six most recurrent activities [9]. The responses were indexed on a 10-point Likert type scale that ranged from 1 = not at all important to 10 = highly important. Likewise, participation in CSR activities was dichotomous, with 0 = no participation and 1 = participation. Future intention to engage in CSR in the next five years was noted with a single item indexed on a 3-point Likert type scale: 1 = not likely, 2 = somewhat likely, and 3 = very likely.

### 3.3. Data Analysis

The linear structural relationships amongst CSR perceptions (i.e., comparative, benefits, and favorability), importance of practices, activities involvement, and future intentions to engage were examined via a path analysis. Based on bivariate and multiple linear regressions, a path analysis examines the structural relations between the variables of a specific model [80]. A path analysis also offers researchers several advantages, such as the identification of indirect as well as direct influences in complex relationships between the variables and the inclusion of intervening variables [81]. In this study, the path model and the supposed directions between the variables were established.

Prior to the path analysis, the frequency distributions of the items were assessed, followed by correlations of each construct (Table 1). Also, Cronbach's alpha was employed to assess reliabilities, which ranged from 0.70 to 0.86 and were all deemed acceptable. Similarly, based on the model, a series of multiple regression analyses was performed to assess the path coefficients. The magnitude of a variation in a predictor variable that influences a dependent variable is depicted by path coefficients. AMOS 25.0 statistical software was employed to evaluate the path model to get maximum-likelihood estimates of the model's parameters and its goodness-of-fit indices.

**Table 1.** Operationalization of variables.

<i>Perceptions Towards CSR *</i>	Mean	SD
<b>Comparative <sup>1</sup> (<math>\alpha = 70</math>)</b>		
CSR is particularly important for the travel industry because it is so dependent on the destination's environment and society.	5.28	1.56
CSR is more important now than ever before.	5.71	1.40
In the future, more companies will conduct CSR activities.	5.57	1.25
The travel industry has a moral obligation to implement CSR activities.	4.96	1.57
The travel industry participates in CSR activities as much as other industries.	4.91	1.53
<b>Benefits <sup>1</sup> (<math>\alpha = 74</math>)</b>		
Advertising our CSR practices is a good way to market our company.	5.39	1.41
CSR is important for our company's strategic competitive advantage.	5.40	1.45
Travelers will pay more to support travel industry organizations that practice CSR.	4.58	1.76
CSR is important for our company's bottom line.	4.95	1.50
The potential environmental benefits of CSR are more important than the social benefits.	4.98	1.56
<b>Favorability <sup>2</sup> (<math>\alpha = 79</math>)</b>		
Consumers support socially responsible businesses.	5.09	1.49
Motivation to implement CSR due to customer concerns towards businesses being socially responsible.	5.06	1.48
Implementation of CSR activities increases customer loyalty.	5.09	1.37
Consumers are more likely to purchase from businesses that are involved in CSR activities.	4.79	1.36
Our organization tends to be involved in CSR activities because of pressure from external stakeholders, notably consumers.	3.53	1.87
Involvement in CSR activities also increases the company's reputation with consumers.	5.39	1.52
Involvement in CSR activities makes business competitive.	5.07	1.57
<b>Importance <sup>1</sup> of CSR ** (<math>\alpha = 86</math>)</b>		
Environmentally responsible business practices	8.67	1.71
Socially responsible practices	8.29	1.74
Corporate social marketing	7.91	1.99
Community volunteering	7.89	1.69
Value-based programs within the firm	7.77	1.87
Cause promotion	7.94	1.75
<b>Participation in CSR</b>		
	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
Has your organization implemented any CSR practices?	79.1%	20.9%

Table 1. Cont.

Future Intention to Engage in CSR ***	Mean	SD
What are your intentions for CSR engagement in the next five years?	2.1	0.828

\* Each statement measured on a 7-point scale, where 1 = 'strongly disagree' and 7 = 'strongly agree'; \*\* Each statement measured on a 7-point scale, where 1 = 'not important at all' and 10 = 'highly important'; \*\*\* Each statement measured on a 3-point scale, where 1 = 'not likely' and 3 = 'very likely'. SD = Standard Deviation; <sup>1</sup> Sheldon & Park (2011); <sup>2</sup> Mohr et al. (2011); <sup>2</sup> Sindhu et al. (2017); <sup>2</sup> Maden et al. (2012), <sup>2</sup> Helmig et al. (2016).

## 4. Results

### 4.1. Sample Profile

Males represented 74% of all respondents. 28% were in the age group of 18–25 years, 43% were between 26–35 years old, and 15% were between 36–45 years old. Only 2% of respondents were above 60 years old. The majority were business owners, followed by officers, managers, and assistants. 26% of the TTOs were family-operated, 68% were independently established, and 6% were start-up institutions that were in operation in the past year. The average number of employees was 8, with an average of eleven years in operation.

### 4.2. Correlation Coefficients

Pearson correlation coefficients between the variables, along with the mean, standard deviation, and internal consistency reliability (Cronbach's alpha), are illustrated in Table 2. Most variables were found significant ( $p < 0.01$ ) and correlated in the envisaged direction. Multicollinearity was not identified as the bivariate correlations were not above 0.80 [82]. However, the correlation analyses were not robust enough, and were therefore subsequently followed by a path analysis based on regression.

Table 2. Correlation matrix.

	1	2	3	4	5
1 Comparative					
2 Benefits	0.64 *				
3 Favorability	0.35 **	0.42 **			
4 Importance CSR	0.34 **	0.32 **	0.40 **		
5 Participation in CSR activities	0.25 **	0.18 **	0.13	0.22 **	
6 Future Intention for CSR Engagement	0.26 **	0.10	0.08	0.10	0.64**

\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ .

### 4.3. Preliminary Path Analysis

The preliminary path analyses were executed to detect significant variables for the right model identification (Table 3 and Figure 2). The fit indices indicated that the model was statistically appropriate to test the hypothesized relationships. Generally, a root mean square error of the approximation marks that is close to 0.05 demonstrates a good model fit [83]. The results revealed that the scores for the normed and comparative fit indices were above 0.9, which implied a good model fit: Chi-square = 11.244, d.f. = 7,  $p > 0.05$ , GFI = 0.974, AGFI = 0.922, NFI = 0.950, CFI = 0.980, and RMSEA = 0.066.

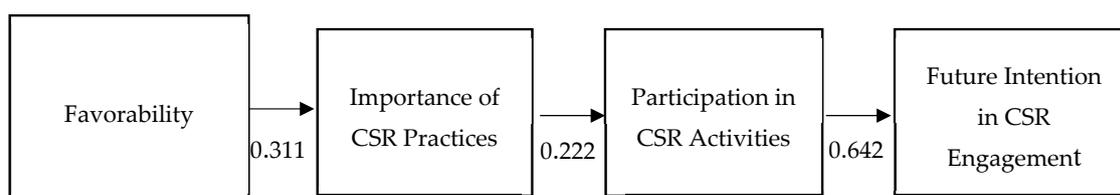


Figure 2. Estimates of the path analysis.

**Table 3.** Standardized parameter estimates.

<i>Path Coefficients of the Recursive Model</i>				
<b>Path</b>	<b><i>b</i><sup>a</sup></b>	<b>Standard Error</b>	<b>Critical Ratio</b>	<b><i>p</i></b>
Comparative → Importance of CSR practices	0.183	0.140	1.845	0.065
Benefits → Importance of CSR practices	0.072	0.131	0.706	0.480
Favorability → Importance of CSR practices	0.311	0.114	3.706	0.001
Importance of CSR practices → Participation in CSR Activities	0.222	0.025	2.679	0.007
Participation in CSR Activities → Future Intention in CSR Engagement	0.642	0.132	9.842	0.001

R<sup>2</sup>: Importance = 0.212; Participation in CSR Activities I = 0.049; Future Intention in CSR Engagement = 0.412;<sup>a</sup> Standard coefficients.

#### 4.4. Direct and Indirect Effects

The results for the significant direct paths were as follows: (1) Favorability → Importance of CSR Practices (0.311,  $p = 0.001$ ); (2) Importance of CSR Practices → Participation in CSR Activities (0.222,  $p = 0.007$ ); and (3) Participation in CSR Activities → Future Intention in CSR Engagement (0.642,  $p = 0.001$ ) (Table 4). The results for the indirect paths via the mediators were: (1) Comparative → Participation in CSR Activities (0.041,  $p = 0.046$ ); (2) Favorability → Participation in CSR Activities (0.069,  $p = 0.004$ ); (3) Comparative → Future Intention in CSR Engagement (0.026,  $p = 0.043$ ); (4) Favorability → Future Intention in CSR Engagement (0.044,  $p = 0.004$ ); and (5) Important of CSR Practices → Future Intentions in CSR Engagement (0.143,  $p = 0.010$ ).

**Table 4.** Direct and indirect effects of variables.

<b>Paths</b>	<b>Total Effect</b>	<b><i>p</i></b>	<b>Direct Effect</b>	<b><i>p</i></b>	<b>Indirect Effect</b>	<b><i>p</i></b>
Comparative → Importance of CSR Practices	0.183	0.065	0.183	0.065		
Benefits → Importance of CSR Practices	0.072	0.504	0.072	0.480		
Favorability → Importance of CSR Practices	0.311	0.002 **	0.311 **	0.001		
Comparative → Participation in CSR Activities	0.041 *	0.046			0.041 *	0.046
Benefits → Participation in CSR Activities	0.016	0.391			0.016	0.391
Favorability → Participation in CSR Activities	0.069 **	0.004			0.069 **	0.004
Comparative → Future Intention in CSR Engagement	0.026 *	0.043			0.026 *	0.043
Benefits → Future Intention in CSR Engagement	0.010	0.383			0.010	0.383
Favorability → Future Intention in CSR Engagement	0.044 **	0.004			0.044 **	0.004
Importance of CSR Practices → Participation in CSR Activities	0.222 *	0.012	0.222 **	0.007		
Importance of CSR Practices → Future Intention in CSR Engagement	0.143 *	0.010			0.143 *	0.010
Participation in CSR Activities → Future Intention in CSR Engagement	0.642 **	0.002	0.642 **	0.001		

\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ .

## 5. Discussion

The objective of this study was to explore CSR among TTOs in Nepal. More specifically, whether the three-dimensional CSR related perceptions (comparative, benefits and favorability) affected the assessment of CSR as being important. In addition, other relationships were examined, amongst the importance, participation, and future intention to engage in CSR activities. The linear direct relationship was only identified for one dimension-favorability perception. The results showed that CSR was

deemed to be important due to customers' favorability toward organizations that implemented related activities. This relationship influenced TTO participation in CSR, and subsequently led to a future intention for further engagement in the next five years. These findings are consistent with a study about Spanish hotels where a key reason for CSR adoption and implementation was customer demand [74]. Likewise, the lack of demand from customers has been noted as one of the barriers against tourism organizations to implement CSR activities [11]. Furthermore, benefits and comparative advantage were anticipated to also produce similar results, but were not statistically supportive. Additionally, the comparative perception dimension yielded an indirect path with a future intention to engage in CSR activities, while the benefits dimension lacked any statistical relationships.

It is reasonable to expect that businesses adapt to demand, and such findings further illustrate that CSR implementation needs to make financial sense along with increased pressure from consumers. Generally, TTOs are SMEs which lack sufficient human and financial resources [84] and need to concentrate their efforts on short-term goals due to the highly competitive nature of the industry [85,86]. Additionally, TTOs within a developing country context such as Nepal face immense internal competition as well as from external operators. Consequently, TTOs are more inclined to be tactical in their approach, with their primary focus on customers who are the direct source of immediate and short-term revenues, subsequently considering strategic objectives such as competitive advantage, branding, etc. Hence, economic subsistence is the first and foremost agenda among TTOs.

Despite the prominence of CSR in the tourism industry, the execution still faces its own challenges [14]. In reality, financial resources play a role in decision making with respect to CSR engagement, especially among SMEs that are more capable of implementing the principles of sustainability [29]. While tourism stakeholders such as government institutions, destination marketing organizations, and national and international non-profit organizations are interested in CSR implementation, economic incentives such as tax credits could provide an avenue to increase participation. Furthermore, businesses can be persuaded by consumer pressure to implement CSR [54,79]. It has been documented that consumers demand and favor businesses that are engaged in responsible and sustainable practices [63]. Thus, TTOs should also be directed towards the creation of favorability among customers.

In conclusion, this study advances knowledge related to TTOs and CSR within the context of Nepal. While it was apparent that the TTOs are essentially SMEs and were largely focused on CSR implementation as a result of customers' pressure and/or demand, this research provides an initial baseline knowledge for developing appropriate strategies. Given the exploratory aspect of this study, the sample size was relatively limited and comprised of TTOs only. Research on CSR and TTOs could continue in several directions. First, additional variables could be added to further identify other factors that influence the implementation of CSR. Second, the findings cannot be generalized as data were collected among TTOs in Nepal, mostly concentrated in the capital city, Kathmandu. Future studies in comparable and similar markets could validate the results. Lastly, this study could be conducted among SMEs from other related tourism sectors such as lodging, transportation, and travel distribution networks. Given the challenges and opportunities for CSR implementation, it is prudent to assess the multiple types of businesses along the supply chain of the tourism industry.

**Author Contributions:** R.B. and B.T. conceived and designed the research. M.-S.K. analyzed the data; R.B. and B.T. wrote Sections 1–5 of the manuscript.

**Funding:** This research received no external funding.

**Acknowledgments:** Publication of this article was funded by the University of Florida Open Access Publishing Fund.

**Conflicts of Interest:** The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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