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# Effects of Social Responsibility and Corporate Image on Online Word of Mouth in Cultural and Creative MICE industry

Kun-Yao HUNG<sup>1</sup>, Ming-Hung LIN<sup>2</sup>, Su-Ming WU<sup>3</sup>

## Abstract

The emergence of global cultural and creative industry in past years has the exhibition appear diverse function and complicated styles. It would test the decision making of curators or curating teams extending the influence of exhibition and creating new value with smart curating, loan, or renewal. In this case, it becomes a primary issue for curators or curating teams mastering points in the planning and conducting, deepening experience, and matching audience's needs to advance MICE events and drive innovative economic development. Aiming at consumers of cultural and creative MICE industry in Kaohsiung City, as the research objects, total 400 copies of questionnaire are distributed, and 284 valid copies are retrieved, with the retrieval rate 71%. The concept of corporate social responsibility is gradually emphasized in past years. Under the environmental trend, owners in the world realize the importance of corporate social responsibility and the irresistibility of the trend. The participation in corporate social responsibility of cultural and creative MICE industry indeed could enhance consumers' image of cultural and creative MICE industry. According to the result to propose suggestions, it is expected to help domestic cultural and creative MICE industry build good corporate image through social responsibility to effectively master online word of mouth.

*Keywords:* cultural and creative MICE industry, social responsibility, corporate image, online word of mouth.

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## Introduction

Along with innovative IT technologies, exhibition is no longer static display, but the visit experience and the comprehensive experience of various sensory stimulations. Such a trend is gradually expanded to the application to domestic exhibition units. The industrial correlation driven by meeting and exhibition events is tremendous that MICE industry is regarded as the key in enhancing national competitiveness in various countries. MICE industry results in huge economic benefits for hosting countries and cities. With the development of cultural and creative exhibition, MICE industry presents the effects to facilitate economic growth and drive trade export. In addition to business meetings and exhibition, cultural parks and creative exhibition are emerging domestically in past decade. MICE events are leading the development and business opportunities for domestic cultural & creative and MICE industries. The emergence of global cultural and creative industry in past years results in diverse functions and complicated styles of exhibition. It becomes a primary issue to extend the influence of exhibition and create new value with smart curating, loan, or renewal to advance MICE and drive innovative economic development.

Enterprises boom in the world. In the economic takeoff, the problems of overdevelopment of resources, environmental pollution, climate change, and financial crisis are gradually derived. The corporate social responsibility (CSR) atmosphere is therefore started internationally to effectively supervise the behaviors of enterprises through the establishment of relevant organizations and making standards. Corporate social responsibility is emphasized by both enterprises and the mass society. When devoting to making more profits, enterprises have to pay out the stockholders' equity, the employees, society, and environment. Enterprises have to stress on corporate social responsibility and get rid of the concept of regarding profits as the prior task, but contribute to consumers, society, and environment. Without the effectiveness from such three, enterprises would lose the survival and competition abilities. Since the attitudes of enterprises towards the responsibility for the society would affect the public image, the products with excellent social responsibility and brand image are the prior choices of most consumers. In order to enhance the corporate image and consumers' purchase intention, enterprises invest large efforts in social responsibility.

Along with the rapid and diverse development of technology, information could be exchanged and spread through various communication media. For enterprises and customers in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, "Internet" does not simply mean electronic virtual environment, but it overturns traditional marketing concept of enterprises and changes customers' purchase behavior. Emerging online communication media, with the characteristics of convenience, interactivity, real-time updating, individualization, without time limit, and translocality, allow customers searching information and communicating with others through the Internet. It reveals that any customers could save and deliver large amount of information in short period as

well as rapidly acquire the responses of Internet users from various areas through a “click”. Along with the globalized free trade and rising consumer awareness, enterprises have to constantly make innovation and breakthrough to enhance the competition. Corporate image would affect customers’ cognitive evaluation. For this reason, building good corporate image aiming at potential customers, who have not yet establish long-term relationship with enterprises, could result in customers’ identity and confidence and induce customers’ successive “positive online word of mouth”. It would be worthy of high emphasis for the sustainable development and profit making of enterprises. Under network characteristics and the relationship quality between enterprises and customers, “online word of mouth” is different from “word of mouth” in the past. Especially, enterprises have to focus on the effect of “online word of mouth” among customers in such an Internet advance era. The effect of “online word of mouth” might be positive or negative. Enterprises could understand the management and application by discussing the critical factors in “online word of mouth” to further effectively master the influence of “online word of mouth” in the market. Accordingly, the effects of social responsibility and corporate image on online word of mouth in cultural and creative MICE industry are discussed in this study, expecting to help domestic cultural and creative MICE industry build good corporate image through social responsibility and effectively master online word of mouth in the Internet advance era.

## **Literature review**

Kim, Lee, & Khang (2018) explained corporate social responsibility as enterprises facilitating the relationship with customers, suppliers, employees, and communities through the formulation and practice of environmental protection and human rights related policies to support the society. Enterprises, with the practice of corporate social responsibility, were appreciated by the public, as it created positive externality exceeding legal requirements. According to stakeholder theory, Remisova, Lasakova, & Kirchmayer (2019) mentioned that enterprises, with the practice of corporate social responsibility, would present the consistent goal with other stakeholder groups to create precious intangible assets and assist enterprises in the implementation of long-term stability and further growth. Corporate performance growth depended on the interaction between various tangible and intangible assets, the competitive advantage of more valuable, rare, or special assets than competitors, and the effective organization and deployment of such resources.

The measurement of corporate social responsibility should take various dimensions into account and the policies are completed or in practice; especially, issues related to society and environmental protection are extremely important.

The corporate social responsibility items proposed by Du & Wu (2019) are applied to evaluate corporate social responsibility in this study.

Fornell & Larcker (1981) indicated that the external effect of corporate social responsibility on brand image would further build the positive image of corporate brand. Hummel, Schlick, & Fifka (2019) proposed that corporate social responsibility could reinforce organizational performance and improve corporate brand image. Muslu *et al.* (2019) pointed out the positive effect of corporate social responsibility on corporate image and the indirectly effect of corporate social responsibility on corporate image. On the other hand, corporate image would directly affect consumers' perception, satisfaction, and loyalty. Amini, Bienstock, & Narcum (2018) proposed that including social responsibility into the company strategy of an enterprise could enhance the corporate image. In other words, social responsibility would positively affect corporate image as well as perceived quality, consumer loyalty, and satisfaction. Su *et al.* (2018) regarded the effect of corporate social responsibility on corporate image that enterprises implementing the social responsibility would build and largely enhance good corporate image as well as confirm the market advantage. According to above literature review, the following hypothesis is deduced in this study.

*H1: Social responsibility presents significant and positive correlations with corporate image.*

Pan *et al.* (2018) defined corporate image as the comprehensive image of the public about an enterprise. It was related to the material and behavioral characteristics of the enterprise, such as corporate name, building appearance, products, and service. Soo (2018) regarded corporate image as consumers' subjective attitudes, feelings, and impression derived from an enterprise and the performance, as consumers' overall subjective perception. Garcia-Ortega, De Miguel-Molina, & Galan-Cubillo (2019) proposed similar opinions and considered the formation of corporate image as consumers' experience, feelings, and opinions about an enterprise and the behaviors, including corporate name, business philosophy, and product diversity.

Referring to the factors of corporate image and corporate reputation in consumers' decision-making proposed by Chih & Lin (2019), the items are slightly revised in this study, expecting to conform to the measurement of "corporate image".

Mendoza, Gallego-Schmid, & Azapagic (2019) stated that past corporate marketing focused on products and stressed on product functions and characteristics; nevertheless, enhancing online word of mouth through corporate image could give customers beyond the value acquired from products. Kambalame & Cleene (2006) mentioned that corporate image could enhance value for customers as well as promote customers' online word of mouth of an enterprise. In the research on customer satisfaction and loyalty in online media environment, Leal Filho *et*

al. (2019) indicated that customer loyalty would not simply enhance repeated purchase intention, but would facilitate customers recommending the service providers to others through the Internet. Hoogendoorn, Van der Zwan, & Thurik (2019) proposed that network presented the characteristics of not being restricted to time and space as well as low costs to enhance consumers' communication willingness and accelerate the spread of word of mouth in network environment. Bastos, Souza, & Hoffmann (2019) also pointed out the positive effect of corporate image strategies on word of mouth. Kim & Ferguson (2018) found out the effect of corporate image on customer behavior; especially, the spread of word of mouth showed no exception in network environment. In this case, customers with better evaluation of corporate image would induce the loyalty to actively and positively spread positive word of mouth of the enterprise through network media. Based on above literature review, the following hypothesis is deduced in this study.

*H2: Corporate image shows remarkable and positive correlations with online word of mouth.*

Chiu & Walls (2019) regarded word of mouth as the major informal communication channel of consumers. Word of mouth played an important role in customers' consumption behavior and affect customers' short-term and long-term purchase decisions. Rivera, Bigne, & Curras-Perez (2019) stated that the Internet allowed customers, by browsing webpages, collecting product information and topic discussion provided by other consumers and allowed customers sharing personal experience, opinions, and relevant knowledge aiming at specific topics; it therefore formed electronic word of mouth or online word of mouth. Patel (2018) mentioned that online word of mouth did not simply provide diverse information search channels for potential customers, but enterprises, in comparison with market survey or mailing questionnaire, could find out customers' potential needs and opinions about products from network discussions; especially, computer software/hardware manufacturers revealed extremely emphasis on such a process of customers indirectly participating in product development.

Referring to the viewpoint proposed by Lu, Cahan, & Ma (2019), it is considered in this study that online word of mouth is the fastest information transmission method. Reputation would be delivered to various areas through online word of mouth. Aiming at the research topic, the items in the online word of mouth questionnaire are revised for this study. Ali & Sohail (2018) indicated that consumers perceiving the implementation of corporate social responsibility of an enterprise would positively affect the satisfaction, brand loyalty, and attachment to the brand to present brand loyalty performance of strong identity and repeated purchase of the products. Under the mediating effects of consumer satisfaction, brand loyalty, and attachment to brand, the enterprise could acquire the marketing effectiveness from the positive word of mouth of consumers. Kucukusta, Perelygina, & Lam (2019) considered that good corporate social

performance could enhance consumers' identity and support of an enterprise to create more benefits for the enterprise and provide positive word of mouth about the enterprise. Mbah & Fonchingong (2019) regarded the positive impact of corporate social responsibility on consumers' attitudes toward a company, e.g. consumers' brand loyalty, purchase intention, and willingness to actively spread positive word of mouth; such influence would result in the core competitive advantage of the enterprise. Beretta, Demartini, & Trucco (2019) considered that an enterprise, after implementing corporate social responsibility, would deliver the ethical trust to consumers, who then comprehensively evaluated and enhanced the loyalty and were willing to actively spread positive word of mouth to enhance the price tolerance and repeatedly purchase the products of the enterprise. Saxton *et al.* (2019) proved that corporate social responsibility would positively enhance the marketing effectiveness of consumers' online word of mouth. It revealed that corporate social responsibility was not meaningless activity to sink costs, but could effectively enhance company value, as a win-win strategy. From above literature review, the following hypothesis is deduced in this study.

*H3: Social responsibility reveals notably positive correlations with online word of mouth.*

## **Methodology**

### *Method model*

The indicators to evaluating internal quality of model in LISREL contain (1)SMC (square multiple correlation) of individual manifest variable, as R<sup>2</sup> of manifest variables and latent variables, which should be higher than 0.5, (2) composite reliability ( $\rho$ ) of latent variables, as the Cronbach's  $\alpha$  of observed indicators in latent variables, which should be higher than 0.6, and (3)average variance extracted of latent variables, calculated by dividing R<sup>2</sup> sum of manifest variables in a latent variable by the number of manifest variables to show the percentage of the latent variable being measured with manifest variables, which should be higher than 0.5.

### *Research sample and object*

MICE industry (MICE), covering meeting, incentive, convention, and exhibition, is a locomotive service industry integrating trade, transportation, finance, and tourism. It has been developed for more than a century, is a high-income and high-profit industry as well as an industry with high business threshold, and could be promoted in the areas with mature urban development conditions. Aiming at consumers of cultural and creative MICE industry in Kaohsiung city, total 400

copies of questionnaire are distributed for this study, and 284 valid copies are retrieved, with the retrieval rate 71%.

### *Reliability and validity test*

Since the questionnaire content is based on past theories and referred to the actual situation of research objects, the measurement tool which could authentically express the essence of affairs and complete representativeness is designed to ensure the content validity. The final communality estimates of the factor analysis result are applied to test the construct validity; the acquired validity appears in 0.7~0.9, revealing good validity test of the questionnaire. In basic research, reliability coefficients above 0.8 show high reliability of a scale, while the reliability of 0.7 is acceptable in exploratory research. The Cronbach's  $\alpha$  measured in this study appears in 0.80~0.95, apparently conforming to the statement of high reliability in 0.70-0.98.

## **Results**

### *Factor analysis*

With factor analysis, *Table 1*, the social responsibility scale is extracted a factor (eigenvalue=4.235,  $\alpha=0.88$ ), and the cumulative covariance explained achieves 80.166%; the corporate image scale is extracted a factor (eigenvalue=3.588,  $\alpha=0.90$ ), and the cumulative covariance explained reaches 83.215%; and, the online word of mouth scale is extract a factor (eigenvalue=3.842,  $\alpha=0.92$ ), and the cumulative covariance explained achieves 85.762%.

*Table 1.* Factor analysis

variable	eigenvalue	Cronbach's $\alpha$	cumulative covariance explained
social responsibility	4.235	0.88	80.166
corporate image	3.588	0.90	83.215
online word of mouth	3.842	0.92	85.762



### Correlation analysis

From *Table 2*, social responsibility, corporate image, and online word of mouth show significant correlations, revealing the possibility of multicollinearity among research dimensions. The remarkable correlations among research dimensions also reveal the consistency with researchers' hypotheses.

*Table 2.* Pearson correlation analysis

research dimension	Cronbach's $\alpha$	social responsibility	corporate image	online word of mouth
social responsibility	0.88			
corporate image	0.90	0.36**		
online word of mouth	0.92	0.28**	0.31**	

### Model fit test

LISREL (linear structural relation) model combines factor analysis and path analysis in traditional statistics and adds simultaneous equations in econometrics to simultaneously calculate multiple factors and multiple causal paths. Goodness-of-fit of model could be evaluated from preliminary fit criteria, overall model fit, and fit of internal structure of model.

*LISREL model indicator:* The research data are organized in *Table 3*. In terms of overall model fit, the overall model fit standards  $\chi^2/Df=1.762$ , smaller than the standard 3, and RMR=0.003 show proper result of  $\chi^2/DF$  and RMR. Furthermore, chi-square is sensitive to sample size that it is not suitable for directly judging the fit. However, the overall model fit standards GFI=0.975 and AGFI=0.936 are higher than the standard 0.9 (the closer GFI and AGFI to 1 revealing the better model fit) that this model presents better goodness-of-fit.

*Table 3.* Overall fit analysis result

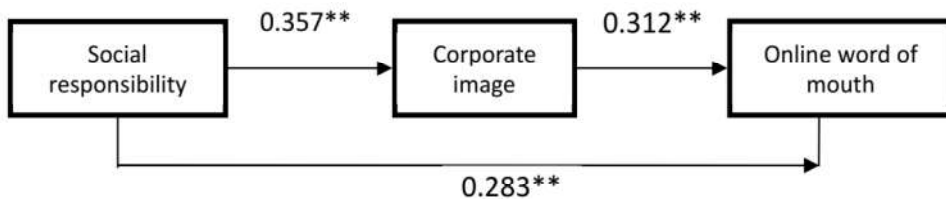
evaluation item	parameter/evaluation standard	result
overall fit	$\chi^2/Df$	1.762
	GFI	0.975
	AGFI	0.936
	RMR	0.003

*Note:* \* stands for  $p<0.05$ , \*\* for  $p<0.01$ , and \*\*\* for  $p<0.001$ .

*Path model analysis:* From the organized data, the preliminary fit of model is explained as followings. The item of social responsibility could notably explain social responsibility ( $t>1.96$ ,  $p<0.05$ ), the corporate image item could significantly

explain corporate image ( $t > 1.96$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), and the online word of mouth item could remarkably explain online word of mouth ( $t > 1.96$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Apparently, the overall model shows good preliminary fit. The research data, *Figure 1*, show positive and notable correlations between social responsibility and corporate image (0.357,  $p < 0.01$ ), corporate image and online word of mouth (0.312,  $p < 0.01$ ), as well as social responsibility and online word of mouth (0.283,  $p < 0.01$ ) that H1, H2, and H3 are supported.

*Figure 1.* Correlation path diagram



*Table 4.* Hypothesis table

## Discussion

The research results prove the emphasis on corporate social responsibility in past years. Under the environmental trend, owners in the world clearly realize the importance of corporate social responsibility and the irresistibility of the trend. Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that the establishment of an enterprise aims to make profits. The promotion of corporate social responsibility aims to have owners understand the positive effect of the implementation and promotion of corporate social responsibility, under the premise of making maximal profits, is a win-win strategy, rather than social feedback of resource exhaustion. The participation in corporate social responsibility of cultural and creative MICE industry could indeed enhance consumers' image of cultural and creative MICE industry. Cultural and creative MICE industry should be grateful for the use of social resources and give returns. Holding charities, providing secure and reliable service, and emphasizing the cultivation of employees would leave consumers with better impression. Apparently, the participation in social affairs of cultural and creative MICE industry would actually affect enterprises.

### *Recommendations*

By organizing the research results and findings, the following practical suggestions are proposed in this study.

- 1) In terms of the international general standards of corporate social responsibility, environmental issues, job security of employees, and maintenance of human rights are parts of corporate social responsibility. Nonetheless, it is suggested in

- this study that cultural and creative MICE industry should actively invest in the implementation of corporate social responsibility and concentrate on “contribution to education and culture”, “participation in public affair management”, and “product and service security” which are observable by consumers.
- 2) Along with the time change, corporate social responsibility does not simply do well on environmental protection or engage in charities. Cultural and creative MICE industry, under the driving of global society, should be a responsible enterprise, beyond profit making, and create positive and healthy environment for the society as the mission.
  - 3) The government should positively promote social responsibility, enrich official websites of corporate social responsibility, and hold social responsibility forums for cultural and creative MICE industry. Moreover, close cooperation relationship should be established between the government and enterprises; in addition to building a stable and effective business environment, the government should practice reward systems to encourage enterprises in cultural and creative MICE industry taking social responsibility as the duty. In this case, in addition to the goal of contributing to the society, the competitiveness of cultural and creative MICE industry would be enhanced to collaboratively implement social responsibility strategies and management and further present the ambition to connecting to global networks.

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