Corporate Social Responsibility (hereafter CSR) continues to draw substantial interest from both academics and business. While most of this research attention has emphasized the benefits to be derived from CSR, there is less evidence to explain why firms adopt CSR activities. That is, what are the firm’s motivations? This project extends on the current CSR and hospitality literature and on CSR antecedents related to the context of a developing country. Given that the regulatory environment is seldom enforced within the hotel industry in Thailand, this project aims to investigate what motivates hotel managers to undertake CSR activities, by providing a unique model that brings together several CSR theories. The primary focus of this paper is to explore the nature of staff benefits as a motivating factor for undertaking CSR. A sequential mixed methods research design was used to collect data. This paper presents preliminary findings from semi-structured interviews and reveals new insights relating to staff benefits, which is expected to offer beneficial opportunities to the hotel industry. It should be noted that this paper presents material which is part of a broader project.

Given the significant amount of interest in CSR, the term ‘CSR’ has been defined differently by researchers. For instance, the scope of CSR includes the ‘pyramid’ of CSR (Carroll, 1991) to complementary frameworks of ‘sustainability’ and ‘corporate citizenship’ (Schwartz & Carroll, 2008). Furthermore, the term CSR used in hospitality literature is more likely to emphasize environmental responsibility (Graci & Dodds, 2008). Thus, the concept of CSR used by this project is broad and involves any activities that demonstrate the inclusion of social and environmental concerns in business operations and in voluntary interactions with stakeholders (van Marrewijk, 2003). In general, the majority of empirical studies have emphasized the consequences of undertaking CSR. That is, a large number of studies have attempted to link CSR activities with positive outcomes for the firm – with mixed results. For instance, Peloza (2006) found a positive relationship between CSR and firm performance, while Aupperle, Carroll, and Hatfield (1985) found no relationship. While the relationship between CSR activities and firm outcomes has been a dominant stream, there has been less exploration of the motivations for firms to engage in CSR, especially in hotels. The general aim of this project is to investigate what motivates hotel managers to engage in CSR activities.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Two key streams of CSR antecedents are found in the literature that relate closely to firm motivation. The first stream reflects the business case, in which there are strong grounds to believe that undertaking CSR brings potential benefits to businesses (Carroll and Shabana, 2010). In contrast, the second stream of CSR antecedents, the normative case, has received less attention. Rather than being motivated by profit, the normative case argues that CSR is undertaken because it is the right thing to do (Bansal & Roth, 2000). In addition to these two approaches, recent studies have brought an alternative perspective of legitimacy and stakeholder theories to uncover the reasons underpinning any CSR decision. That is, firms engaged in related CSR activities are serving the interests of specific stakeholder groups (Vidaver-Cohen & Bronn, 2008). While this project integrates these three strands of CSR antecedents, consisting of strategic benefits, personal norms, and stakeholder expectations, as key motivating factors to understand why hotels undertake CSR, this paper presents information relating to strategic benefits only.
Of these three strands, strategic benefits represent the main focus of researchers. The business case approach refers to the idea that businesses pursue CSR because of financial and other benefits (Carroll & Shabana, 2010) and thus, CSR offers strategic benefits to firm performance. A large body of empirical research has indicated that firms adopt CSR activities as they are believed to provide advantages in different areas, including cost savings (Stabler & Goodall, 1997), enhanced image (Kirk, 1998), and benefits to their staff (Njite, Hancer, & Slevitch, 2011). Given the importance of these first two advantages to firms, less attention has been paid to staff benefits. Furthermore, most of these latter studies have focused on the relationship between CSR and employee attitudes. For example, employees reported that various job-related skills were developed through their participation in CSR (Petterson, 2004). However, a limited number of studies have explored benefits accruing to staff from employees participating in CSR. In the hotel industry, Graci and Dodds (2008) argue that one of the greatest benefits to hotels’ adoption of environmental practices is a positive flow-on impact on employees. This generalised conceptualisation is empirically supported by Kirk (1998), who found that managers from chain hotels are likely to perceive improved employee satisfaction as a benefit derived from hotels undertaking environmental practices. While more recent studies have also found that increased employee retention and satisfaction are reasons for hotels undertaking CSR (Njite, Hancer, & Slevitch, 2011), there is a lack of research that seeks to understand the full nature of the possible benefits that could accrue to employees. Many of these previous findings simply indicate the general area of employees as a possible motivating factor for firms. Accordingly, the primary research objective for this part of the project is to gather insights into the nature of the staff benefits that could form motivating factors for hotel managers.

METHOD

The project employs a sequential mixed methods design consisting of two phases. The first phase is a qualitative exploratory study. This phase employs semi-structured interviews to gain insights into the dimensionality of motivating reasons for CSR. The results from the interviews will be used to assist in scale refinement for the survey questions. However, the focus of this paper is to present the findings from the interviews. A total of 23 interviews were conducted with individuals that were highly involved in the adoption of hotel CSR activities and were responsible for decision making regarding the hotel CSR practices. The interviewees ranged from human resource managers, general managers, and owners of 3- to 5- star hotels, independently-owned and chain affiliated hotels. The interviews were fully transcribed, and translated. Thematic analysis was utilised to identify, analyse, and report different patterns of responses (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The responses were then coded under different themes, and categories, according to pre-established concepts from the literature. Terms and phases were used as identifiers for each of the motivating reasons. For example, a code of “save money” was filed under the theme for cost savings; “enhanced image” under the theme for marketing benefits; and “team-building” was filed under the theme for staff benefits.

FINDINGS

Respondents spoke about a broad range of reasons underpinning their decisions to undertake CSR. These reasons corresponded to several pre-established concepts from the strategic benefits literature. In addition, respondents recognised the benefits derived from involving staff in CSR. A number of aspects were evident in relation to staff benefits. Accordingly, the pattern
of responses within this theme of staff benefits was categorised into five discrete categories and exemplar statements which are shown in Figure 1.

**Figure 1: Exemplar statements for five discrete categories of staff benefits theme**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Exemplar Statement</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Having fun</td>
<td>“we are like a market for our colleagues and they can buy the vegetables and we make it really fun”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Feeling pride</td>
<td>“they are really proud of what they do”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Unifying process</td>
<td>“they (new employees) will know more friends from other departments”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Developing skills</td>
<td>“this would bring great opportunities for our staff when they turn to gain leadership skills.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Building teamwork</td>
<td>“the purpose of these [CSR] activities was […], building teamwork”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These five different categories were identified under the staff benefits theme, namely, having fun, feeling pride, unifying process, developing skills, and building teamwork. The first category of **having fun** involved the positive emotions associated with participating in CSR including terms such as relaxing, and enjoyment. That is, some respondents spoke of how their CSR activities could be a good source for staff enjoyment while at work. Secondly, the category of **feeling pride** was indicated by respondents who had experiences of seeing employees feeling proud about their participation in CSR. Thirdly, the **unifying process** category related to the process of developing and intensifying relationships among staff. Many respondents talked about the need to organise CSR activities for new employees. This opportunity allowed new staff to make new friends and mingle with other staff from other departments. Fourthly, the term **developing skills** was identified by respondents who sought to promote CSR activities as they offered opportunities to uncover the hidden skills of staff. Lastly, respondents indicated that CSR activities were used as **team-building** exercises for staff development programs with the aim of achieving specific team-building goals.
In brief, these responses appear to indicate that hotels which undertake CSR provide beneficial opportunities to both the staff and the hotel. That is, staff could enjoy CSR activities at work while, in turn, CSR also created a better workplace environment at the hotel. The benefits of this project are that it is expected to gather fresh insights relating to key antecedents resulting in a new conceptual framework. Furthermore, it is anticipated that the practical contribution of such empirical knowledge offers benefits to policy makers engaged in fostering CSR type activities within business communities. For example, CSR activities can be designed to offer a unique opportunity to hotels, thereby allowing managers to fulfil their specific needs, especially in staff development.

REFERENCES


