

You have my back; I have your back.

Corporate social responsibility



Tourism companies cannot operate in isolation. They are dependent on the natural environment, society, and cultural heritage of the place they are operating in. Making good choices about the neighbourhood and its people makes good business sense. A concept such as Batho Pele (putting people first) is central to every South African and should be reflected in the business practise. Initiatives such as corporate social responsibility (CSR) encourage organisations to have sustainable operations. Even though it has become a widely accepted business practice, there is no blueprint. It is multi-dimensional and highly context specific.

A research study was conducted by Nerissa Stevens-Kings, a [Master's](#) student in the [Department of Marketing Management](#) to investigate how small, medium and micro enterprises (SMMEs) within the hospitality industry currently engage in CSR activities. What drives and inhibits these SMMEs in their engagement in CSR? This study utilised stakeholder theory, which focuses in building relationships and creating value to all stakeholders of an organisation.

Findings from 102 owners or managers of hospitality SMMEs in South Africa revealed that they do engage in CSR practices. The environmental, social and economic responsibility are driven by an owner's or manager's personal lifestyle choice to engage in CSR. The environmental practices include utilising water and energy saving techniques in their operations. Their social responsibility is achieved through the promotion of gender equality in employment practices. Respect for different cultures

and the celebration of different languages is also exercised. These organisations consider their economic responsibility to their employees to be above industry average. They promote a healthy and safe working environment for them as they are considered a key stakeholder. However, owner or managers philanthropic responsibility are motivated by external drivers to save costs or improve their marketing and image of the SMME. Their philanthropic responsibilities are though encouraging their customers to purchase or consume local products (support local initiatives). Overall, these firms have limited resources (especially financial means) resulting in a slack corporate social responsibility.

To overcome the economic barrier, SMMEs should consider CSR as a strategic approach and should be included it in the objectives and budget of the company. Organisations can save money by complying with legislations (BBBEE) or obtain funding through grants (The Green Tourism Incentive Programme (GTIP)). These funds can be channelled into the corporate responsibility budget as investments. SMMEs should develop a cohesive CSR strategy, and the interests of society should guide CSR implementation. A voluntary board of directors with key stakeholders such as, community members, employees, suppliers, tourism associations, etc can lead this process. The interaction between these stakeholders will result in sustainable strategic partnerships, where SMMEs can access resources and reach all their CSR goals.

Whether CSR initiatives are seen as a form of environmental protection, philanthropy, or even advertising for a company, they matter. When done right, they validate the positive perceptions stakeholders, especially consumers have about the company. This is due to the shared beliefs and values.

This research was conducted as part of the fulfilment of the [Master's degree in Marketing Management](#) in 2021 with the [Department of Marketing Management](#) by Nerissa Stevens-Kings under the supervision of [Dr Felix Bello](#).