



**Master Thesis**

Social, Health & Organisational Psychology

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**Environmental CSR communication in the Hotel Industry**

The Effect of Environmental CSR Communication on Consumer Attitudes

**A case study: The Student Hotel**

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## Summary

An ever-increasing number of companies are including commitment to environmentally responsible values in their corporate social responsibility (CSR) strategies. The current research (experiment 1 N = 85; experiment 2 N = 184) contributes to the current CSR literature by increasing the understanding of the underlying mechanisms of environmental CSR, on an individual consumer level. Experiment 1 (part I) examined the relationship between consumers perceived environmental CSR and affective commitment. Experiment 1 (part II) and experiment 2 examined the effect of consumers increased awareness of a hotel company's environmental CSR activities on the consumer attitudes perceived organisational morality, perceived organisational competence, consumer intention, and perceived corporate greenwashing. Furthermore, the moderating effect of perceived environmental CSR, affective commitment, personal environmentally friendly behaviour and the relevance of COVID-19 was investigated. Study limitations, as well as future research directions are discussed.

*Key words:* environment, corporate social responsibility, affective commitment, perceived organisational morality, perceived organisational competence, consumer intention, perceived greenwashing.

## **Introduction**

Corporate social Responsibility (CSR) involves an organisation caring for its stakeholders, society as a whole, and in more recent years, the environment (Singa & Rhou, 2015). This triple bottom-line approach works in enhancing people, profit and the planet. An ever-increasing number of companies are including CSR in their business strategy and proudly displaying CSR reports alongside their annual reports (Font et al. 2012; Martínez, Pérez, & Bosque, 2013). The pressure for companies to engage in CSR has led to increasing attention on how they communicate these activities to stakeholders (Arvidsson, 2010; Tang & Li, 2009). CSR communication poses many challenges, such as the message lacking credibility (Morsing, Schultz, & Nielsen, 2008) and the target consumer lacking interest (Podnar & Golob, 2007). Therefore, future research should focus on how to communicate CSR to ensure positive outcomes, such as customer satisfaction (Saeidi & Sofian, 2015), purchase intention (Alniacik, Alniacik & Genc, 2011) and favourable consumer attitudes (Golob & Bartlett, 2007).

The majority of research addresses CSR from a broad perspective, however, the environment has been found to be the stakeholders central concern in a company's CSR efforts (Kassinis & Vafeas, 2006; Welford, Chan, & Man, 2007). The planet is heating up, and fast. Since the Industrial Revolution, carbon dioxide levels in the earth's atmosphere have increased by more than a third (Nunez, 2019), vast changes that have historically occurred over thousands of years. For the first time in history, environmental concerns have dominated the leading long-term risks presented in The Global Risks Perception Survey 2020, with fears surrounding biodiversity loss and failure of climate change mitigation and adaption (WEF, 2020). Consequently, people have begun directing their attention towards the responsibility of organisations (Laroche, Bergeron & Barbaro-Forleo, 2001) due to their involvement in the destruction of the natural environment, high levels of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and enormous amounts of waste (Bohdanowicz & Zientara, 2008).

One of the leading sectors in terms of growth rate, the hospitality industry is expected to account for 150,139,000 of jobs worldwide by 2028 (Pindžo & Radulovic, 2019). Hospitality companies, especially hotels, are experiencing the growing demand of satisfying consumer needs, thus negatively impacting noise and air pollution, biodiversity loss, and waste generation (Chan, 2011). Environmental CSR (ECSR) initiatives are being implemented across leading hotel companies, such as water reduction and energy conservation (Goeldner & Ritchie, 2006). This increasing interest is mainly due to ECSR activities being found to positively influence consumer loyalty, especially during times of growing business competition and high expectations of consumers (Han, Kimb, Kima, 2011). Subsequently, increasing

consumer loyalty can lead to financial improvements (Klassen & McLaughlin, 1996), increased purchase intention, as well as consumers being more likely to recommend the company (Harris & Goode, 2004). Therefore, involvement in ECSR is crucial in the hotel industry, to ensure positive stakeholder attitude, however, extra caution should be given to the communication of these activities to consumers to prevent negative accusations of corporate greenwashing (De Vries, Terwel, Ellemers, & Daamen, 2013).

Based on the review of current CSR literature, it is evident further research is needed on the environmental aspect of CSR. Furthermore, there is a lack of research into the effects of CSR activities on an individual level (Aguinis & Glavas, 2012). Gond and colleagues (2017, p. 226) importantly noted that “ignoring CSR evaluation processes might limit insights into how people experience CSR, cognitively and emotionally, yet these experiences can influence whether and how CSR initiatives produce effects”. Therefore, additional empirical research is required to help better understand the micro-foundations of CSR (Aguinis & Glavas, 2017; Gond et al., 2017). Furthermore, Rupp and Mallory (2015) suggest that the boundaries of micro-CSR research should extend to any member of a company’s stakeholders, not only within but outside the organisation too, as a consumer’s attitudes and behaviours towards a company can be shaped by the organisations CSR practices. For this reason, the current study proposes to add to the CSR literature by investigating the micro-foundations of CSR from a consumer perspective.

To address the previously mentioned knowledge gap, the present research will include an experimental condition to increase participants awareness of The Student Hotel’s ECSR initiatives and assess potential outcomes. The aim is to gain further understanding of the relationship between ECSR and consumer’s affective commitment towards the company, and to investigate to what extent awareness of a company’s ECSR initiatives affects consumer attitudes

### **Perceived Environmental CSR and Affective Commitment**

Not only do individuals identify with companies as employees, but they identify as consumers too (Farooq, Payaud, Merunka, & Valette-Florence, 2014; Stockburger-Sauer, Ratneshwar, & Sen, 2012). Much of the research into perceived CSR and affective commitment has focused on employees, whereas the current study offers further explanation into the relationship between CSR, affective commitment and the consumer.

Affective commitment “reflects an emotional attachment to, identification with and involvement in an organisation” (Meyer & Smith, 2000, p.320). From a consumer perspective,

feelings of desire can result in this affective force binding the consumer to the organisation (Bansal, Irving & Taylor, 2004). According to Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1985), the subjective status of an organisation can be determined by its perceived characteristics, and prompt individuals to affiliate with the organisation (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Ellemers, De Gilder, & Haslam, 2004; Haslam & Ellemers, 2005). Purchasing from a sustainable company can be seen as a symbolic act that an individual carries out to express themselves or define who they want to be (Belk, 1988; Mittal, 2006). Research has shown that consumers with a CSR-based perceived identity are cognitively closer to a sustainable organisation (Lichtenstein, Drumwright, & Braig, 2004; Sen & Bhattacharya, 2001) and feel motivated to initiate a long-term close relationship with them too (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003). This is due to the individual not having to alter company relations as it was possible to formulate part of their personal identity through the relationship (Dutton, Dukerich, & Harquail, 1994). Therefore, as affective commitment represents an identification or emotional attachment to the company, it is expected that higher perceived ECSR will be associated with stronger affective commitment.

*Hypothesis 1: A direct positive relationship is expected between perceived environmental CSR and affective commitment.*

Participants of experiment 1 are guests of the examined company: The Student Hotel, whereas participants of experiment 2 are prospective guest and may have no perception of perceived ECSR. Therefore, hypothesis 1 will only be investigated in Experiment 1.

### **Awareness of ECSR activities and Consumer Attitudes**

The current research will enhance the participants awareness of the company's ECSR initiatives, and examine the effect on a range of consumer attitudes. The influence of CSR communication on consumer attitudes has recently emerged in the CSR literature (Du, Bhattacharya, & Sen, 2010). Past research into CSR on an individual level has shown CSR can produce a number of positive effects, such as improve consumer satisfaction (Saeidi et al., 2015), as well as active environmental CSR initiatives increasing consumer purchase intention (Kim, 2015). However, if the communicated motives for the organisation participating in ECSR are not aligned with the company's product or service, this can arouse suspicions from stakeholders and lead to negative accusations of corporate greenwashing (De Vries et al., 2013). The effect of the experiment (enhanced awareness of environmental CSR activities) on the consumer attitudes perceived organisational morality, perceived organisational

competence, consumer intention, and perceived corporate greenwashing will be examined and further discussed in the next section.

### **Consumer Attitudes**

Two possible themes that people tend to use to understand and structure their lives are competence and morality. Competence refers to characteristics associated with goal achievement, task accomplishment and attainment, whereas morality refers to what is right and wrong, and ethics (Ybarra, Chan & Park, 2001). This competence Vs morality approach is increasingly used in Organisational Psychology research, for example, how we view organisations (Aaker, Vohs, & Mogilner, 2010) and which features are important to prospective employees (Prooijen & Ellemers, 2015).

Prooijen & Ellemers (2015) contributed to this field by showing that young individuals prefer seeking employment in a morally perceived organisation than that of a competent one. This is because moral judgements are the dominant feature of impressions one forms of others in a group or individual context (Goodwin, Piazza & Rozin, 2014). Morality is also a source of positivity (Leach, Ellemers & Barreto, 2007) that offers an individual a positive self-image and is supported by the previously mentioned social identity theory (Tajfel & turner, 1986). Furthermore, Ellemers and colleagues (2011) found CSR initiatives to be an antecedent for perceived organisational morality. Therefore, if an individual identifies an organisation as being engaged in environmental CSR as a moral act, increasing one's awareness of environmental CSR initiatives should have a positive effect on perceived organisational morality. Perceived organisational competence will be tested to verify that it is not simply a general positive effect.

*Hypothesis 2a: Increasing participants awareness of the company's environmental CSR activities will have a positive effect on perceived organisational morality.*

As mentioned previously, purchasing from a sustainable or socially responsible company can be seen as a symbolic act used by an individual to express their identity. Research has shown that consumers with a CSR-based perceived identity are more motivated to regularly purchase from a sustainable company (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003). Furthermore, previous research has found effective CSR communication to increase consumer purchase intention (Alniacik et al., 2011), as well as consumer loyalty (Martinez & Bosque, 2013). Therefore, it

is expected that increasing awareness of the company's environmental CSR will positively affect consumer intention towards purchasing from or recommending the company.

*Hypothesis 2b: Increasing awareness of environmental CSR activities will positively affect consumer intention.*

Companies communicating environmental CSR activities could result in a positive effect on attitude, however, negative accusations of 'corporate greenwashing' could occur (De Vries et al., 2013). Corporate greenwashing refers to the concept of a company intentionally framing its actions as 'green' in order to be perceived as environmentally friendly by its stakeholders (De Vries et al. 2013). Perceived greenwashing can negatively affect financial performance (Walker & Wan, 2012), as well as put perceived organisational integrity at risk (De Jong, Harkink, & Barth, 2018), however, this depends on the industry (De Vries et al., 2013). In the hotel industry, research has found that by only stating a hotel has agreed to green CSR practices is insufficient in preventing greenwashing accusations. To avoid greenwashing accusations, green initiatives should be clearly communicated to the consumer (Punitha & Rasdi, 2013). In the current study, the ECSR text clearly describes the company's current environmental CSR initiatives across all areas of the business. Therefore, it is expected that increasing awareness of the hotel company's environmental CSR activities will decrease perceived greenwashing (hypothesis 2d).

*Hypothesis 2c: Increasing awareness of the company's environmental CSR activities decreases perceived greenwashing.*

### **Moderating effects**

A number of relevant moderators from literature will be tested to see if the hypothesised relationship between ECSR communication and consumer attitudes is affected.

#### *Experiment 1: Perceived Environmental CSR and Affective Commitment*

It is expected that the consumers attitude scores mentioned above are dependent on their perceived ECSR of the hotel company and level of affective commitment. If the guests of the hotel company have already observed a high level of ECSR, they will hold a positive view and reading the text on environmental initiatives should increase their perceived morality, consumer intention, and further reduce perceived greenwashing. Guests who have perceived

low environmental CSR of the company, will hold a negative view in this area and reading the text could arouse suspicion (De Vries et al., 2013), reducing their perceived morality, consumer intention and, potentially increase greenwashing.

Furthermore, the moderating effect of affective commitment will be analysed. It has been found that effect of CSR communication on consumer attitudes can depend on the degree of commitment a consumer feels towards an organisation (Sen & Bhattacharya, 2001; Lichtenstein et al, 2004). Previous research has found affective commitment to be a predictor of organisational trust (Garbarino & Johnson, 1999; Gilliland & Bello, 2002; Morgan & Hunt, 1994). Additionally, CSR activities have been found to increase affective commitment and organisational trust (Farooq et al., 2015). As trust is identified as one of the main construct of morality (Leach et al., 2007), it is predicted that participants high in affective commitment will score higher on perceived organisational morality and consumer intention, and lower on perceived greenwashing after reading the text. Consequently, participants low in affective commitment will score lower on organisational morality and consumer intention, and higher on perceived greenwashing.

#### *Personal Environmental Friendly Behaviour*

The third moderating effect to be analysed is personal environmental friendly behaviour. Based on the social identity theory (Tajfel, & Turner, 1985) and research showing that consumers with a CSR-based perceived identity are more motivated to regularly purchase from a sustainable company (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003), it is expected that participants who score high on personal environmental friendly behaviour will be associated with higher scores on consumer intention after reading the experimental text.

#### *COVID-19*

Lastly, at the time of the data collection, the global pandemic COVID-19 was taking place which could potentially affect the results. This was taken into consideration and questions were included in the questionnaire to ask participants how affected they were by COVID-19. As this is a new and ongoing pandemic, ECSR and COVID-19 have not yet been previously studied together, therefore the moderating effect of COVID-19 in the relationship between ECSR communication and consumer attitudes will be analysed.



## Overview of the Current Research

In order to test the hypothesis', two experiments have been designed. Participants of experiment 1 are current guests of The Student Hotel (TSH) and participants of experiment 2 are prospective guests. TSH is an Amsterdam-based hotel chain and co-working space. The hotels are located in 6 European countries and have a hybrid model that includes long-stay students, as well as short-stay business guests and tourists. TSH is committed to contributing to a sustainable world, actively improving their sustainability strategy and environmental footprint.

To sum, the present study aims to increase the previously mentioned knowledge gap by combining ECSR research on an individual consumer level with an experiment. The aim is to gain further understanding of the relationship between ECSR and a consumer's affective commitment towards a company, and to investigate to what extent awareness of a company's ECSR initiatives affects consumer attitudes.

### Experiment 1

Experiment 1 consists of two parts: Part I examines the relationship between perceived ECSR and affective commitment (Hypothesis 1). Part II of the study examines the effect of consumers increased awareness of the company's ECSR activities on the consumer attitudes perceived organisational morality (Hypothesis 2a), consumer intention (hypothesis 2b), and perceived corporate greenwashing (2c). Furthermore, the moderating effect of perceived environmental CSR, affective commitment, personal environmentally friendly behaviour and COVID-19 will be investigated.

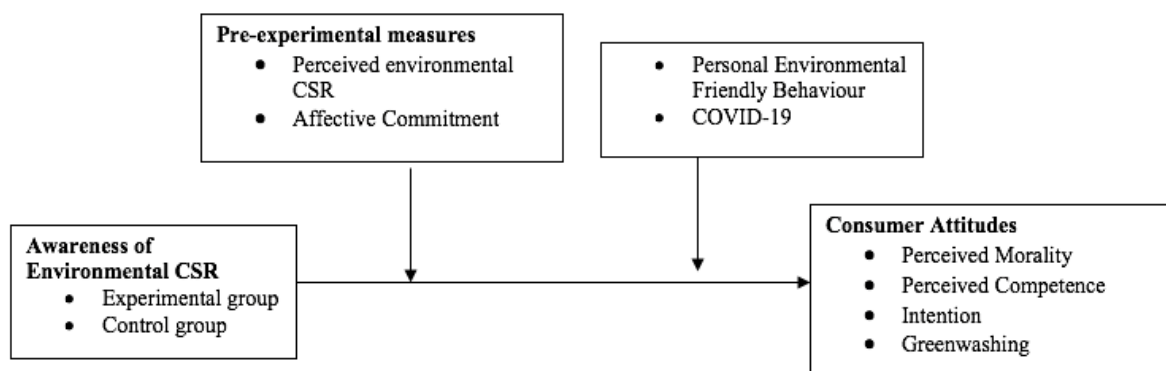


Figure 1: Experiment 1 (part II) Research Model

## **Method**

### **Participants**

The participants are long-stay guests of The Student Hotel (TSH) and had been staying at a TSH location for approximately 8 months at the time of the study. The sustainability department sent out the questionnaire to the long-stay guests of multiple Dutch locations. The total number of participants was  $N = 85$  (44.7% men; 55.3% women). The participants ages ranged from 18-34: 64.7% of the participants were 18-24 age range, 34.1% were 25-29 and 1.2% were 30-34.

### **Design**

The experiment consisted of two parts. Part I implemented a correlational design and part II consisted of a between subject's experimental design with two conditions. All participants completed part I of the study. In part II, participants were randomly allocated to either the experimental group ( $N = 43$ ) or the control group ( $N = 42$ ). Qualitative data was gathered for further understanding of the consumers view of ECSR activities at TSH.

### **Procedure**

Participants were first contacted by the company CSR manager via email. The email contained an invitation to participate in the survey, as well as the link to the questionnaire in Qualtrics (see Appendix I). The questionnaire could be completed on a phone or computer and the inclusion criteria were that the participant was a guest of TSH and they were 18 years or older. Before starting the questionnaire, participants were presented with the informed consent (see Appendix II). By continuing, the participants agreed to participate in the study and confirmed that they were 18 years or older. Following on from the questionnaire, a debriefing was displayed to explain the purpose of the study (see Appendix III).

### **Measures**

The questionnaire consisted of two parts. The part I contained demographic detail questions and the subscales Perceived ECSR and affective commitment. Part II started with the experiment. Participants were randomly allocated to either the experimental or the control groups. The participants in the experimental group were asked to read a text describing The Student Hotel's current initiatives regarding ECSR (See appendix IV). For the complete survey, see appendix V.

After reading the text, a control question asked participants to confirm they had read the text. An open question followed, asking the participant to comment on which of TSH's activities regarding ECSR they liked. After that, the survey continued. People in the control group did not read the text and immediately continued to the subscales in part II. The subscales in part II were Perceived Organisational Morality, Perceived Organisational Competence, Consumer Intention, Perceived Greenwashing and Personal Environmentally friendly behaviour. Participants were also asked questions on COVID-19 before the debriefing.

### *Demographic Details*

At the start of the survey, participants were asked questions regarding several demographic details: age range, gender and hotel location they are residing in.

### *Perceived Environmental Corporate Social Responsibility*

Perceived Environmental CSR was measured using three items adopted from the subscale by Ellemers et al. (2011) and three items were added to the current research. Participants answered six items on a 7-point Likert scale ( $1 = \text{not at all}$ ;  $7 = \text{very much}$ ), such as 'To what extent do you feel The Student hotel limits the use of environmentally unfriendly products?' (Ellemers et al., 2011) and 'To what extent do you feel The Student Hotel reduces CO2 emission?'. A factor analysis indicated that these six items loaded on one factor,  $KMO = .91$ ,  $\chi^2 (15) = 507.7$ ,  $p < .001$ , explaining 76.8% of the variance. Cronbach's alpha showed high reliability .95.

### *Affective Commitment*

Affective commitment was measured using Bansal & Taylor's (2016) three-item scale, answering on a 7-point Likert scale ( $1 = \text{not at all}$ ;  $7 = \text{very much}$ ), such as 'I feel like part of the family with The Student Hotel'. A factor analysis indicated that these three items loaded on one factor,  $KMO = .78$ ,  $\chi^2 (3) = 283.7$ ,  $p < .001$ , explaining 92.8% of the variance. Cronbach's alpha showed high reliability .96.

### *Perceived Organisational Morality & Perceived Organisational Competence*

Perceived Organisational Morality was measured using the three-item subscale adopted from Leach et al. (2007). Participants indicated on a 7-point Likert scale ( $1 = \text{not at all}$ ;  $7 = \text{very much}$ ) to what extent they find TSH trustworthy, honest, and sincere. Perceived Organisational Competence was measured using the three-item subscale from Leach et al. (2007). Participants indicated on a 7-point Likert scale ( $1 = \text{not at all}$ ;  $7 = \text{very much}$ ) to what extent they find TSH

intelligent, competent, and skilful. A factor analysis, with varimax rotation indicated that these six items loaded on two factors, explaining 84.3% of the variance. Cronbach's alpha showed high reliability .90.

#### *Consumer Intention*

Consumer intention was measured using a two-item scale. Questions reflected participants intention to recommend TSH or stay with them again, answering on a 7-point Likert scale ( $1 = \text{strongly disagree}$ ;  $7 = \text{strongly agree}$ ), 'Please rank how likely you are to recommend The Student Hotel to others' and 'Please rank how likely you are to be a guest of The Student Hotel in the future'. A factor analysis indicated that these two items loaded on one factor,  $KMO = .50$ ,  $\chi^2(1) = 75.4$ ,  $p < .001$ , explaining 77.3% of the variance. Cronbach's alpha showed high reliability .85.

#### *Perceived Greenwashing*

Perceived Greenwashing was measured using a five-item scale adopted from De Vries et al. (2013). Participants answered on a 7-point Likert scale ( $1 = \text{strongly disagree}$ ;  $7 = \text{strongly agree}$ ), for example, 'I think that The Student hotel aims to improve its reputation by presenting itself as being engaged in corporate social responsibility activities'. A factor analysis indicated that these five items loaded on one factor,  $KMO = .86$ ,  $\chi^2(10) = 326.6$ ,  $p < .001$ , explaining 70.4% of the variance. Cronbach's alpha showed high reliability .96.

#### *Personal Environmental Friendly Behaviour*

Personal environmental friendly behaviour was measured using a six-item scale. Participants answered on a 7-point Likert scale ( $1 = \text{strongly disagree}$ ;  $7 = \text{strongly agree}$ ), 'I buy environmentally friendly products whenever possible'. A factor analysis indicated that these six items loaded on one factor,  $KMO = .89$ ,  $\chi^2(15) = 424.6$ ,  $p < .001$ , explaining 70.4% of the variance. Cronbach's alpha showed high reliability .96.

#### *COVID-19*

To assess the relevance of COVID-19, a two-item scale was added. Participants answered on a 7-point Likert scale ( $1 = \text{strongly disagree}$ ;  $7 = \text{strongly agree}$ ), 'I feel strongly affected by the current COVID-19 situation' and 'I feel COVID-19 makes environmental CSR activities (taking care of the environment) more important than ever'. A factor analysis indicated that

these two items loaded on one factor,  $KMO = .50$ ,  $(1) = 12.1$ ,  $p < .001$ , explaining 68.5% of the variance. Cronbach's alpha showed acceptable reliability .54.

### Data analyses

All data were transferred from Qualtrics to IBM SPSS Statistics 24. Prior to analyses, all data was examined for potential outliers or absent data. No data was absent. Factor analyses were performed to determine the factors within the questionnaire, and the subscale reliabilities were reported. Demographic details were analysed to report the means and standard deviations, and variables were computed. To predict the likelihood of the demographic details being predictors of the IV's, regression analyses were conducted. Furthermore, correlation analyses were conducted to test hypothesis 1. To test hypothesis 2a, 2b, 2c and 2d, (M)ONVA analysis was used to look at the univariate effects of the experiment on the dependent variables (experimental vs. control group), and to assess moderation effects, PROCESS (Hayes, 2012) was performed.

### Results

To test hypothesis 1, the bivariate association between perceived environmental CSR and affective commitment was examined. The results of a Spearman's test showed a significant, positive correlation between the two variables ( $r = .86$ ,  $p < .001$ ). This is a strong effect and supports hypothesis 1 (see table 1).

Table 1. *Research Variables: Means, Standard Deviations & Correlation Coefficient (Spearman's).*

	M	SD	1
1. Perceived Environmental CSR	4.2	1.6	.855*
2. Affective Commitment	4.6	2.0	

\*  $p \leq .001$ ,  $N = 85$

To test hypotheses 2a, 2b and 2c, it was then examined whether reading the ECSR text affected a range of participants attitudes. To test between-group differences, of the experimental group (1) and control group (2), a (M)ANOVA was conducted. The results found a significant difference between the experimental and control group when considered jointly on the variables perceived morality, perceived competence, perceived greenwashing and intention, Wilks  $\lambda = .636$ ,  $F(4, 80) = 11.43$ ,  $p < .001$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .36$ . Univariate effects of each variable

were investigated, at an alpha level of .05. The significant difference between groups (experimental vs. control) indicates that the effect of the experimental condition on attitudes may solely depend on reading the text describing the company's environmental CSR.

There was a significant difference between groups on perceived organisational morality,  $F(1, 83) = 18.9, p < .001, \eta^2 = .19$ , with experimental group scoring higher ( $M = 5.9$ ) than the control group ( $M = 4.7$ ). This supports hypothesis 2a, as it was predicted that the experimental text would increase participants perceived organisational morality.

There was not a significant difference between groups on perceived competence  $F(1, 83) = .09, p < .001, \eta^2 = .76$ , with experimental group ( $M = 5.4$ ) and control group ( $M = 5.3$ ) scoring almost the same on perceived competence, thus supporting hypothesis 2b.

There was a significant difference between groups on consumer intention,  $F(1, 83) = 26.1, p < .001, \eta^2 = .24$ , with experimental group scoring higher on intention ( $M = 6.3$ ) than control group ( $M = 4.9$ ). This result supports hypothesis 2c, as increasing awareness of the company's environmental CSR led to an increase in consumer intention.

There was a significant difference between groups on perceived greenwashing,  $F(1, 83) = 28.9, p < .001, \eta^2 = .26$ , with experimental group perceiving less greenwashing ( $M = 2.4$ ) than control group ( $M = 3.8$ ). This supports hypothesis 2d, as increasing awareness of the company's environmental CSR led to a decrease in perceived greenwashing

*Table 2. Control and Experimental Between Group Differences*

	Control Group		Experimental Group		Between-Group Difference
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>p</i>
Perceived Organisational Morality	4.70	1.44	5.90	1.08	.000
Perceived Organisational Competence	5.3	1.30	5.38	.79	.764
Perceived Greenwashing	3.88	1.29	2.42	1.20	.000
Consumer Intention	4.87	1.5	6.27	.97	.000

## **Moderation Effect**

### *Perceived Organisational Morality (Hypothesis 2a)*

To examine the effect of the experimental text on perceived organisational morality, moderated by affective commitment, perceived environmental CSR, and COVID-19, PROCESS (Hayes, 2012) was used to conduct a moderation analysis. The results showed a significant model using affective commitment as moderator,  $F(3, 81) = 24.2, p < .001, R^2 = .49$ . Affective commitment

had a significant main effect on perceived organisational morality,  $b = .49$ ,  $SE\ B = .09$ ,  $t = 5.7$ ,  $p < .001$ , however, no interaction effect was found.

A significant model was found when perceived environmental CSR was assessed as a moderator,  $F(3, 81) = 34.8$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $R^2 = .47$ . Perceived ECSR had a significant main effect on perceived organisational morality  $b = .60$ ,  $SE\ B = .09$ ,  $t = 6.7$ ,  $p < .001$ , however, no interaction effect was found.

Lastly, analysing COVID-19 as a moderator found a significant overall model,  $F(3, 81) = 7.23$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $R^2 = .211$ , and no significant interaction effect was found.

### *Consumer Intention (Hypothesis 2c)*

A significant model was found when assessing affective commitment as a moderator in the relationship between the experimental text and consumer intention,  $F(3, 81) = 52$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $R^2 = .59$ . Affective commitment had a significant main effect on consumer intention,  $b = .49$ ,  $SE\ B = .09$ ,  $t = 5.6$ ,  $p < .001$ , however, no significant interaction effect was found.

A significant model was found when perceived environmental CSR was assessed as a moderator,  $F(3, 81) = 74.4$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $R^2 = .57$ . Perceived ECSR had a significant main effect on consumer intention,  $b = .61$ ,  $SE\ B = .09$ ,  $t = -1.1$ ,  $p < .001$ , no interaction effect was found.

A significant model was found when using personal environmental friendly behaviour as a moderator,  $F(3, 81) = 43.2$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $R^2 = .36$ , with a significant main effect on consumer intention,  $b = .41$ ,  $SE\ B = .13$ ,  $t = 3.2$ ,  $p < .002$ . No interaction effect was found.

Lastly, analysing COVID-19 as a moderator found a significant overall model,  $F(3, 81) = 13.7$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $R^2 = .28$ . A significant interaction effect was found for COVID-19 in the relationship between the experiment and consumer intention,  $b = -.35$ ,  $SE\ B = .16$ ,  $p = .030$  with a 95% confidence interval. Johnson-Neyman technique showed the moderation was significant when COVID-19 was below 6.25. Figure 3 shows that participants who scored highly on COVID-19 score overall the lowest on consumer intention in the experimental group but highest in the control group. In addition, those participants score significantly higher on consumer intention compared to the control group.

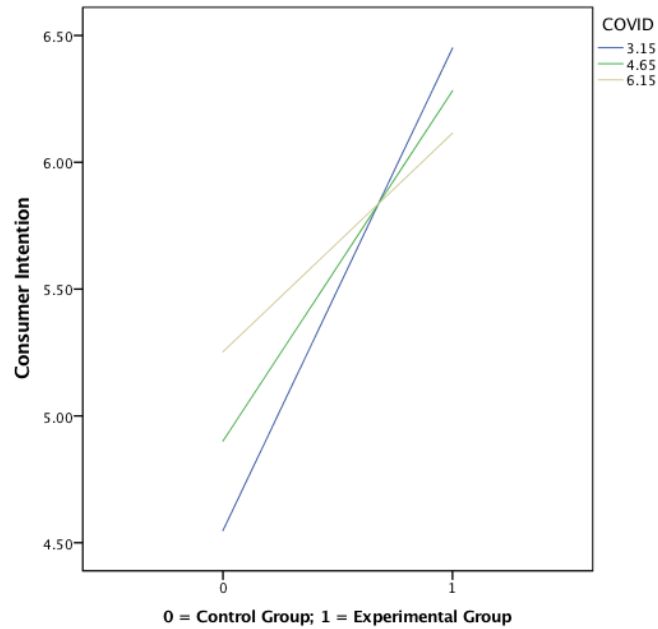


Figure 3: The effect of the experiment on consumer intention, moderated by COVID-19. High COVID = 6.15, moderate COVID = 4.65, low COVID = 3.15.

#### Perceived Greenwashing (hypothesis 2d)

A significant model was found when assessing affective commitment as a moderator in the relationship between the experimental text and perceived greenwashing,  $F(3, 81) = 31.4$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $R^2 = .64$ . Affective commitment had a significant main effect on perceived greenwashing,  $b = -.36$ ,  $SE\ B = .09$ ,  $t = -4.1$ ,  $p < .001$ , however, no significant interaction effect was found.

A significant model was also found when the perceived environmental CSR was assessed as a moderator,  $F(3, 81) = 28.3$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $R^2 = .63$ . Perceived environmental CSR had a significant main effect on perceived greenwashing,  $b = -.42$ ,  $SE\ B = .12$ ,  $t = -3.4$ ,  $p < .001$ , no interaction effect was found.

Lastly, analysing COVID-19 as a moderator found a significant overall model,  $F(3, 81) = 18.1$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $R^2 = .551$ . A significant interaction effect was found for COVID-19 in the relationship between the experiment and perceived greenwashing,  $b = -.38$ ,  $SE\ B = .16$ ,  $p < .020$  with a 95% confidence interval. Johnson-Neyman technique showed the moderation was significant when COVID-19 was below 6.27. Figure 4 shows that participants who scored high on COVID-19 score significantly lower on perceived greenwashing than those who score highly on COVID in the control group. In addition, the participants who score higher on COVID in the experimental condition score significantly higher on perceived greenwashing than those who score moderate or low on COVID.



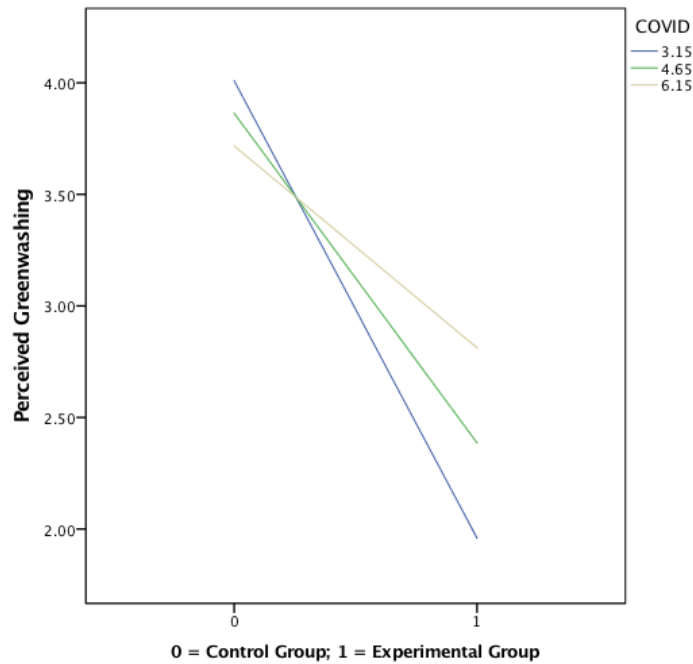


Figure 4: The effect of the experiment on perceived greenwashing, moderated by COVID-19. High COVID = 6.15, moderate COVID = 4.65, low COVID = 3.15.

### Qualitative Data

Qualitative data was collected in the experimental group, by asking participants ‘Which of The Student Hotel’s CSR activities do you value the most’. Their answers provided a detailed insight into their current guests view on the company’s CSR activities. An overview of their answers can be seen in Table 4.

Table 4

*The Student Hotel’s CSR activities valued by experimental participants*

	Frequency	Percentage
Reducing waste	13	30.2%
Building greener buildings	10	23.3%
Replacing single use packaging	4	9.3%
Eco-friendly lights and heating	3	7%
Challenging stakeholders to be sustainable	2	4.7%
Donating unwanted items	2	4.7%
Partnering with charities	2	4.7%
Encourage bike usage	1	2.3%
Reclaimed building with heritage	1	2.3%
Clean towels monthly to reduce water	1	2.3%

*\*N = 43 (experimental group) – More than one answer per participant*

Participants also gave recommendations for areas of improvement, such as increasing the number of recycling bins mentioned, as well as making linen changes optional and a better re-use policy of student's equipment at the end of the year. One participant also mentioned that as a hotel company, they should have less emphasis on food waste and more focus on the sustainability of the buildings, such as saving water in showers and automatic hallway lights.

## **Discussion**

### *Part I*

The results of part I support Hypothesis 1, with a direct positive relationship found between the organisation's perceived ECSR and consumers affective commitment. This supports previous research, that found CSR to positively affect the degree of commitment a consumer feels towards an organisation (Sen & Bhattacharya, 2001; Lichtenstein et al, 2004). However, as the results are correlational, no conclusions regarding the causality of the relationship can be made. The Student Hotel's ECSR could increase the consumers affective commitment, but one's affective commitment with the company could also result in a more positive view on the TSH's involvement in ECSR.

### *Part II*

As a significant difference was found between groups (experimental vs control), the findings from part II support the hypothesis that increasing consumers awareness of the company's ECSR activities would influence the measured attitudes. However, the direction of this effect was not dependent on the level of affective commitment, perceived environmental CSR or personal environmental friendly behaviour as expected. This indicates that the effect of the experimental condition on attitudes depends exclusively on reading the text describing the company's ECSR activities. Regarding affective commitment, past research focuses on employee rather than consumer identification (Ellemers et al., 2011), which may offer an explanation to the discrepancy in results.

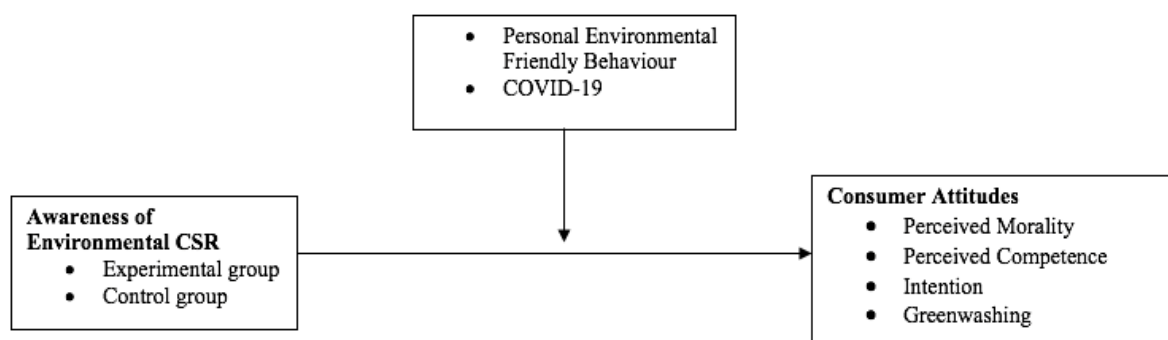
Despite not finding a significant moderating effect of affective commitment, perceived ECSR and personal environmental friendly behaviour on the consumer attitudes, it was found that high scores on each moderator variable were related to higher scores on perceived organisational morality, consumer intention and lower scores on perceived greenwashing. The results suggest that increasing consumers awareness of ECSR activities can be particularly beneficial for a hotel company, as this can increase consumer intention and perceived organisational morality, as well as decrease perceived greenwashing. Focusing on

greenwashing, these findings are in-line with research by De Vries and colleagues (2013), that individuals with high perceptions of a company's environmental CSR perceive less greenwashing in the experimental condition, as their view of CSR activities at TSH and the information read in the text are in-line.

A significant interaction effect was found for COVID-19 in the relationship between the experiment and consumer intention, as well as perceived greenwashing. This result showed that in the experimental group, participants who were more effected by COVID-19 perceived significantly more greenwashing than those who scored low or moderately on COVID-19. Several comments from the qualitative data mentioned the relevance of COVID-19 and the environment, suggesting that people have stopped caring for the environment during these times, increasing single-use plastic, overstocking and wasting food, as well as panic buying large quantities of toilet paper. If participants with this view score highly on the COVID-19 measure, reading the company's environmental CSR may arouse suspicion as what they have seen in the hotel may not align with the information in the text.

## Experiment 2

Experiment 2 examines the effect of a prospective consumers increased awareness of The Student Hotel's ECSR activities on perceived organisational morality (Hypothesis 2a), consumer intention (hypothesis 2b), and perceived corporate greenwashing (2c). Furthermore, the moderating effect of personal environmentally friendly behaviour and COVID-19 will be investigated.



*Figure 5: Experiment 2 Research Model*

## **Participants**

The participants from this study are all prospective guests of The Student hotel. The total number of participants was N = (184) (49.5% men; 50.5% women). The participants ages ranged from 18-50+ :32.1% of the participants were in the 18-24 age range, 48.4% were 25-29, 7.1% were aged 30-34, 2.2% were aged 35-39, 1.1% were aged 40-44, 1.1% were aged 45-49 & 8.2% were age 50+.

## **Design**

The experiment consisted of a between subject's experimental design with two conditions. Participants were randomly allocated to either the experimental group (N = 97) or the control group (N = 87). Qualitative data was gathered for further understanding on the consumers view of ECSR activities at TSH.

## **Procedure**

Participants received an email containing an invitation to participate in the survey, as well as the link to the survey in Qualtrics (see Appendix I). The questionnaire contained the same set up as experiment 1 (part II). Before starting the survey, participants were presented with the informed consent (see Appendix II). By continuing, participants agreed to participate in the study and confirmed they were 18 years or older. Following on from the survey, a debriefing was displayed to explain the purpose of the study (see Appendix III).

## **Measures**

Participants were first shown a control text describing the company (see appendix VI). After reading the text, the experimental group were asked to read the text describing the company's current environmental CSR initiatives (see Appendix IV). The items of each subscale were randomized in Qualtrics. For the complete questionnaire, see Appendix VII.

The consumer attitudes perceived organisational morality, perceived organisational competence, consumer intention, perceived greenwashing, as well as personal environmental friendly behaviour and COVID-19 were all measured using the same subscales as described in experiment 1. Consumer intention was also measured using the experiment 1 subscale but the opening statement was altered to fit the 'prospective client' participant group, for example, '*please imagine you are a client of The Student hotel...*'. Factor analyses were performed to determine the factors within the questionnaire, and the subscale reliabilities were reported.

### *Perceived Morality and Perceived Competence*

A factor analysis, with varimax rotation indicated that these six items loaded on two factors,  $KMO = .735$ ,  $\chi^2 (15) = 906.1$ ,  $p < .001$ , explaining 78.3% of the variance. Cronbach's alpha showed high reliability .75.

### *Consumer Intention*

A factor analysis indicated that these two items loaded on one factor,  $KMO = .50$ ,  $\chi^2 (1) = 308.9$ ,  $p < .001$ , explaining 89.9% of the variance. Cronbach's alpha showed high reliability .95.

### *Perceived Greenwashing*

A factor analysis indicated that these six items loaded on one factor,  $KMO = .86$ ,  $\chi^2 (10) = 707.2$ ,  $p < .001$ , explaining 68.3% of the variance. Cronbach's alpha showed high reliability .91.

### *Personal Environmental Friendly Behaviour*

A factor analysis indicated that these six items loaded on one factor,  $KMO = .89$ ,  $\chi^2 (15) = 740.7$ ,  $p < .001$ , explaining 64.2% of the variance. Cronbach's alpha showed high reliability .91.

### *COVID-19*

A factor analysis indicated that these two items loaded on one factor,  $KMO = .50$ ,  $\chi^2 (1) = 30.4$ ,  $p < .001$ , explaining 38.7% of the variance. Cronbach's alpha showed acceptable reliability .56.

## **Results**

Repeating the steps in experiment 1, to test hypotheses 2a, 2b, 2c, and 2d, it was examined whether reading the environmental CSR text (experimental condition) affected the measured attitudes. To test between-group differences, of the experimental (1) and control (2) group, a (M)ANOVA was conducted. The results found a significant difference between the experimental and control group when considered jointly on the variables perceived morality, perceived competence, perceived greenwashing and intention, Wilks  $\lambda = .385$ ,  $F (4, 179) = 71.4$ ,  $p < .001$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .62$ . Univariate effects of each variable were investigated, at an alpha

level of .05. The significant difference between groups (experimental vs. control) indicates that the effect of the experimental condition may solely depend on reading the experimental text.

There was a significant difference between the experimental and control group on perceived organisational morality,  $F(1, 182) = 194.8, p < .001, \eta^2 = .19$ , with experimental group scoring higher ( $M = 6.3$ ) than the control group ( $M = 4.4$ ). This supports hypothesis 2a, as it was predicted that the experimental text would increase participants perceived organisational morality.

There was a significant difference between groups on perceived competence  $F(1, 182) = 15.9, p < .001, \eta^2 = .097$ , with experimental group scoring slightly lower ( $M = 5.3$ ) than the control group ( $M = 5.9$ ) on perceived competence.

There was a significant difference between groups on consumer intention,  $F(1, 182) = 203.2, p < .001, \eta^2 = .35$ , with experimental group scoring higher on intention ( $M = 5.9$ ) than control group ( $M = 3.8$ ). This result supports hypothesis 2c, as increasing awareness of the company's environmental CSR led to an increase in consumer intention.

There was a significant difference between groups on perceived greenwashing,  $F(1, 182) = 203.1, p < .001, \eta^2 = .35$ , with the experimental group perceiving less greenwashing ( $M = 2.4$ ) than control group ( $M = 4.2$ ). This supports hypothesis 2d, as increasing awareness of the company's environmental CSR led to a decrease in perceived greenwashing.

*Table 3. Control and Experimental Between Group Differences*

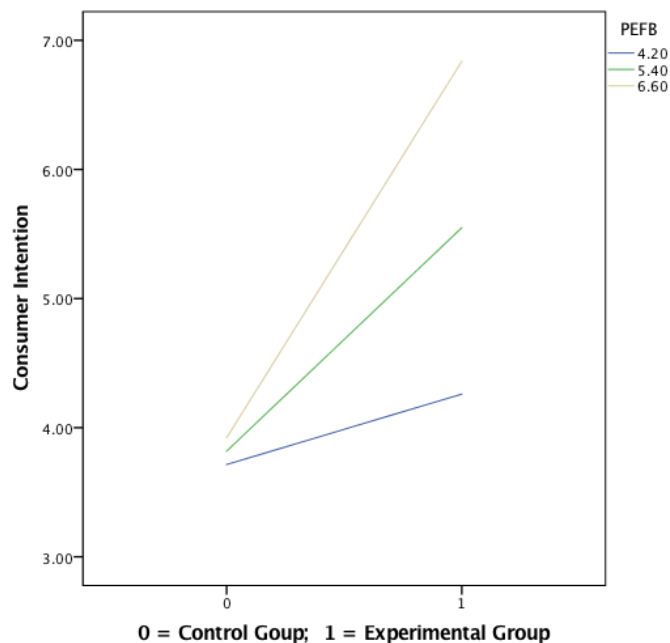
	Control Group		Experimental Group		Between-Group Difference
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>p</i>
Perceived Organisational Morality	4.36	.91	6.27	.95	.000
Perceived Organisational Competence	5.91	.95	5.32	.86	.000
Perceived Greenwashing	4.24	1.43	2.44	1.01	.000
Consumer Intention	3.79	1.48	5.90	1.52	.000

## **Moderation effect**

### *Consumer Intention*

A significant model was found when using personal environmental friendly behaviour (PEFB) as a moderator,  $F(3, 180) = 81.2, p < .001, R^2 = .76$ . A significant interaction effect was found for PEFB in the relationship between the experiment and consumer intention,  $b = .99, SE B = .15, p < .001$ , with a 95% confidence interval. Johnson-Neyman technique showed the

moderation was significant when personal environmental friendly behaviour was above 4.17. Figure 5 shows that participants with high PEFB score significantly higher on consumer intention than participants with high PEFB in the control group and that their overall intention is higher than that of participants with moderate or low personal environmental friendly behaviour.



*Figure 5. The effect of the experiment on consumer intention, moderated by personal environmental friendly behaviour (PEFB). High PEFB = 6.60, moderate PEFB = 5.4, low PEFB = 4.2.*

### COVID 19

No direct or interaction effects were found when analysing COVID-19 as a moderator in the relationship between the experimental text and the consumer attitudes perceived morality, perceived competence, perceived greenwashing and consumer intention.

## Discussion

The findings are consistent with experiment 1 (part II) and suggest that consumers awareness of ECSR activities play an important role in the consumer attitudes perceived organisational morality, consumer intention and perceived greenwashing. Furthermore, as the participants in

this experiment are prospective guests, this demonstrates that ECSR communication can affect the attitudes of individuals, even if they have not heard of the company before.

The results also support hypothesis 2c, indicating that the relationship between increased awareness of a company's ECSR and consumer intention is dependent on the consumers personal environmental friendly behaviour. Participants who scored higher on personal environmental friendly (PEFB) behaviour scored higher on consumer intention in the experimental group, compared to participants with high PEFB in the control group. This finding supports previous research showing that consumers with a CSR-based perceived identity are more motivated to regularly purchase from a sustainable company (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003), as well as ECSR activities making consumers more likely to recommend the company (Harris & Goode, 2004).

Despite a significant effect of the experimental text on perceived organisational competence, participants perceived the organisation as more moral than competent after reading the text, suggesting that it is not just a general positive relationship between ECSR and perceived morality. Furthermore, as the experimental text significantly increased participants perceived morality of The Student Hotel, this supports Ellemers and colleagues (2011) research that found CSR initiatives to be an antecedent for perceived organisational morality.

### **General Discussion**

The findings of the two studies demonstrate the effects of a hotel company actively engaging in environmental CSR activities on its consumers. Experiment 1 (part I) found perceived ECSR activities of a hotel company to be positively related to a consumer's affective commitment. Experiment 1 (part II) and experiment 2 demonstrated the effect of increasing awareness of ECSR activities on consumer attitudes. The results have shown that actively communicating ECSR activities to consumers can positively increase the attitudes consumer intention, perceived organisational morality, and decrease perceived greenwashing.

Both experiments found the experimental ECSR text to positively influence the participants perception of The Student Hotel's morality in both experiments, which can produce numerous benefits for the company. Past research has found young individuals prefer seeking employment in a morally perceived organisation than that of a competent one (Prooijen & Ellemers, 2015), suggesting that actively communicating ECSR activities can be beneficial for organisations like The Student Hotel, when seeking to expand their workforce.

Despite not finding a moderation effect of perceived ECSR and affective commitment, past research can provide a possible explanation for this insignificant result. For example,



employees and consumers have different relationships with companies. Employees interact with the company on a more frequent basis (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003) and if an organisation participates in CSR activities, this can grow employees self-esteem, as well as provide work-life balance through active employee participation in CSR initiatives (Korschun, Bhattacharya, & Baruch, 2009). Therefore, the higher level of organisational involvement of employees compared to consumers may explain the differing levels of affective commitment and perceived ECSR.

Covid-19 was found to moderate the relationship between increased awareness of ECSR activities and consumer attitudes in experiment 2, however, no significant effect was found in experiment 1. The discrepancy in results of COVID-19 as a moderator may be due to the participant samples (current guest's vs prospective guests). As participants of experiment 1 are currently staying in one of the hotel's, they will have had more of a first-hand view into how the company is dealing with COVID-19. This observation may not align with what is portrayed in the experimental ECSR text, causing a discrepancy in views that participants of experiment 2 won't experience. Furthermore, guests of the company may have been more affected by COVID-19 many of them had to travel home, leaving their residence within the hotel and also lose out on money. This could result in a negative view towards TSH which may explain the moderation effect of COVID-19 in the relationship between ECSR and increased greenwashing, and ECSR and decreased consumer intention.

Overall, the results of both experiments have contributed to the CSR scientific literature in a number of ways. Investigating the micro-foundations of CSR from a consumer perspective reduces the previously mentioned knowledge gap of individual level CSR research (Aguinis & Glavas, 2012). Furthermore, the experimental ECSR text has helped increase the understanding of CSR's underlying mechanisms, providing further insight into how consumers experience ECSR, and the benefits associated with an organisation actively communicating it's ECSR initiatives. Lastly, the results support previous findings that consumers attitudes towards a company can be shaped by the organisations CSR practices (Rupp & Mallory, 2015).

### **Limitations and Future Research**

The study consists of several limitations. Firstly, the sample size in experiment 1 is N=85 which is much less than what was expected. A small sample size can reduce the power of the results (Button et al., 2013), which may provide a reason as to why the expected moderation relationships were not found. However, at the time of data collection, the survey was sent to the remaining participants of the hotels, which was significantly reduced due to COVID-19. A

similar study with a larger sample size may produce significant results in the moderation analysis.

The samples of both experiments were homogenous in regard to age. The majority of participants fell within the 18-29 age range. Research has shown environmental attitudes differ and vary in degree, depending on the age of the individual (Wiernik, Ones, & Dilchert., 2013). Future research might replicate this study with older participants to compare the effects of ECSR communication on consumer attitudes of older age ranges.

Lastly, the current study focuses solely on the hotel industry. Previous research has found perceived greenwashing to depend on the industry of the company communicating their environmental CSR activities, for example, energy companies have been found to be more susceptible to greenwashing accusations as their communicated message and service are not aligned (De Vries et al., 2013). Therefore, it might be that a future study similar to the current one, but with a different industry of focus may produce different results on consumer attitudes.

### **Conclusion**

Organisations play a vital role in the protection of our planet and engaging in environmental CSR activities offers them the chance to take responsibility and reduce numerous negative effects on the environment. Both experiments studied the effect of an organisations environmental CSR activities from a consumer perspective. The consumer attitudes perceived organisational morality, consumer intention and perceived greenwashing were positively influenced after increasing their awareness of The Student Hotel's environmental CSR activities. Therefore, this study contributes to the current literature on understanding the micro-foundations of CSR. Positively influencing consumer attitudes should encourage hotel companies to actively engage in and communicate environmental CSR activities to their stakeholders, and most importantly, work towards creating a more sustainable world for future generations.

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## **Appendix I – Email Invitation**

Dear student,

In the context of thesis research by Laura Bland, for the master Social, Health, and Organisational psychology at Utrecht University, the sustainability department invite you to participate in an investigation into the environmental awareness and sustainability of The Student Hotel and your visions of it.

I would like to ask you to complete an online questionnaire, which will only take up to 10 minutes of your time. Your participation is voluntary and all information is confidential. The results are analysed in general and the answers cannot be traced back to individual participants.

To participate in this study, click on this [\(link\)](#).

If you have any questions, please reach out to the sustainability department.

Thank you in advance for your time and contribution.

Best,

(employee name)



## Appendix 2 – Informed Consent

**Dear respondent,**

Thank you for taking the time to take part in this study!

**What does the study entail?** During the study, you will be asked to complete some simple questions about your view about The Student Hotel. The study takes about 10 minutes and can be completed via your phone or computer.

**What will happen to the information about you?** The samples and data that are registered about you will only be used in accordance with the purpose of the study as described above. All the data and samples will be processed without name, ID number or other directly recognisable type of information. It will not be possible to identify you in the results of the study when these are published.

**Voluntary participation.** Participation in the study is voluntary. In order to participate you need to be 18 or older. You can withdraw your consent to participate in the study at any time and without stating any particular reason. This will not have any consequences for your further treatment.

**Privacy.** Information that is retained about you are only the answer you give in the questionnaire. No identifiable information, such as IP address, is saved.

**Releasing material and data to other parties.** Your answers are merged with the answers of the other participants in a large database; your answers cannot be traced back to you. This database will be posted in an open repository upon completion of the project, which is recommended best practice in any psychological research.

**Information about the outcome of the study.** You are entitled to receive information about the outcome/result of the study. Please contact the research team to do so.

The results of the research will only be used for scientific purposes. The research is for my thesis and it is part of a larger scientific research project carried out by Utrecht University.

Kind regards, Laura Bland, [l.h.bland@students.uu.nl](mailto:l.h.bland@students.uu.nl)

### **Appendix III – Debriefing form**

Thank you for participating in the survey!

You have just taken part in a scientific study conducted by Laura Bland, under the supervision of Tatiana Chopova, a PhD candidate at Utrecht University. This page provides background information to help you understand why we are conducting this research. If you have any questions and / or comments regarding the research, please do not hesitate not to contact us.

The purpose of this study is to explore the relationship between corporate social responsibility (in terms of sustainability and environmental awareness) of the organisation and the consumer. This research looks at how the consumer views the companies Environmental Corporate Social Responsibility involvement, if the consumer is thereby more committed to the company, has positive intentions, what kind of influence personal environmentally friendly behaviours play, and whether the consumer finds credible what the company says it does with regard to corporate social responsibility.

In addition, participants in the study were randomly divided into two experimental conditions; one group read a text halfway through with what the company is doing to to be more sustainable and environmentally conscious; the other group was unable to read any text. We are interested in the effect this text has on respondents' answers. To ensure the integrity of the investigation, we were unable to provide this information in advance. We expect to more participants from The Student Hotel to complete this survey and that is why we would like to ask you to not to talk to another guests of TSH about the content of the questionnaire or the survey. The reason for this is that inside information may influence their expectations among other respondents, leading to bias in results. We count on your cooperation.

If you have any questions, please contact Laura Bland.

Thank you for your cooperation, Laura Bland, l.h.bland@students.uu.nl

#### **Appendix IV – Experimental condition: Environmental CSR text**

Please read the text below on The student Hotel's activities aimed at improving the environment:

"We take our environmental responsibilities very seriously at The Student hotel. We started by looking at our properties and the certifications that benchmark the sustainability of our buildings. We invest in building greener buildings. We aim to reduce our residual waste by 40% in all our Dutch locations by 2021. We introduced new waste management facilities in the student kitchens and reached out to Voedselbank (a food bank) and the salvation army to arrange collection of food and textiles during the student-check out. We aim to make our food & beverages division waste-free by 2021, starting by replacing all products that come in single-use packaging and introducing eco-friendly alternatives for disposables. We've also partnered with Too Good to Go to prevent leftover food from going to waste. As you can see, sustainability is a huge focus of The Student Hotel".

## **Appendix V – Questionnaire (Experiment 1)**

### **Demographic data**

The questions below are intended to form a picture of your demographic data. I would like to emphasize that your answers are treated confidentially and the study does not include personal information that identifies you.

- What is your age?
  - 18 - 24
  - 25 - 29
  - 30 - 34
  - 35 - 39
  - 40 - 44
  - 45 - 49
  - 50 +
- What is your gender?
  - Man
  - Woman
  - Other
- What TSH location do you stay in?
  - Amsterdam
  - Barcelona
  - Berlin
  - Bologna
  - Delft
  - Dresden
  - Eindhoven
  - Florence
  - Groningen
  - Maastricht
  - Paris
  - Rotterdam
  - The Hague
  - Vienna

### **Perceived Environmental CSR**

I would like to ask you to think about the degree of corporate social responsibility from The Student Hotel in the field of sustainability and environmental awareness and to answer the following questions on a scale from 1 to 7. (1 = not at all; 7 = very much).

To what extent does you feel The Student Hotel ...

1. Reduces and recycle waste?  
1   2   3   4   5   6   7
2. Limits the use of environmentally unfriendly products?  
1   2   3   4   5   6   7
3. Considers the environment when choosing / building its facilities?  
1   2   3   4   5   6   7
4. Tries to reduce water consumption?  
1   2   3   4   5   6   7
5. Tries to reduce CO2 emissions?  
1   2   3   4   5   6   7
6. Takes the protection of nature into consideration?  
1   2   3   4   5   6   7

### **Affective Commitment**

I want to ask you to think about how you feel towards The Student hotel and answer the questions below on a scale from 1 to 7.

(1= not at all; 7 = very much)

1. I feel “emotionally attached” to The Student Hotel  
1   2   3   4   5   6   7
2. I feel like “part of the family” with The Student Hotel  
1   2   3   4   5   6   7
3. I feel a strong sense of “belonging” to The Student Hotel  
1   2   3   4   5   6   7

## Experimental Condition

Please read the text below on The student Hotel's activities aimed at improving the environment:

"We take our environmental responsibilities very seriously at The Student hotel. We started by looking at our properties and the certifications that benchmark the sustainability of our buildings. We invest in building greener buildings. We aim to reduce our residual waste by 40% in all our Dutch locations by 2021. We introduced new waste management facilities in the student kitchens and reached out to Voedselbank (a food bank) and the salvation army to arrange collection of food and textiles during the student-check out. We aim to make our food & beverages division waste-free by 2021, starting by replacing all products that come in single-use packaging and introducing eco-friendly alternatives for disposables. We've also partnered with Too Good to Go to prevent leftover food from going to waste. As you can see, sustainability is a huge focus of The Student Hotel".

---

On the previous page, I read about The Student Hotel involvement in sustainability and the environment?

Yes

No

---

I would like to ask you to reflect on The Student Hotel's activities in the field of environmental awareness and sustainability.

What do you like the most about the Student Hotel's activities aimed at improving the environment?

(ANSWER)

---

### **Perceived Organizational Morality & Competence**

I want to ask you to think about how you see The Student hotel as a company and answer the questions below on a scale from 1 to 7.

(1 = not at all; 7 = very much)

To what extent do you find The Student Hotel ...

1.... honest?

1   2   3   4   5   6   7

2....sincere?

1   2   3   4   5   6   7

3.... trustworthy?

1   2   3   4   5   6   7

4.... Competent?

1   2   3   4   5   6   7

5.... Skilful?

1   2   3   4   5   6   7

6.... Intelligent?

1   2   3   4   5   6   7



## Perceived Greenwashing

I want to ask you to think about The Student Hotel and it's Corporate Social Responsibility activities and answer the questions below on a scale from 1 to 7 (1 strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree)

I think that The Student Hotel....

1. Pretends to be more engaged in environmental corporate social responsibility activities than it actually is  
1   2   3   4   5   6   7
2. Has insincere reasoning for engaging in corporate social responsibilities  
1   2   3   4   5   6   7
3. Is not fully transparent in its communications about corporate social responsibilities  
1   2   3   4   5   6   7
4. Has a hidden agenda  
1   2   3   4   5   6   7
5. Aims to improve its reputation by presenting itself as being engaged in corporate social responsibility activities  
1   2   3   4   5   6   7

### **Consumer Intention**

As I client of The Student hotel, I want to ask you to answer the questions below on a scale from 1 to 7.

(1 = not at all; 7 = very much)

1. Please rank how likely you are to continue being a client of TSH

1   2   3   4   5   6   7

2. Please rank how likely you are to recommend TSH to others

1   2   3   4   5   6   7

### **Personal Environmentally Friendly Behaviour**

Sustainability and environmental awareness apply not only to the workplace, but also in your personal environment. I would like to ask you to indicate to what extent the following positions fit you on a scale from 1 to 7. (1 totally disagree; 7 = totally agree)

1. I buy environmentally friendly products whenever possible  
1   2   3   4   5   6   7
2. I am concerned about vulnerable (nature) areas.  
1   2   3   4   5   6   7
3. I reduce household waste whenever possible  
1   2   3   4   5   6   7
4. I used products made from recycled material whenever possible  
1   2   3   4   5   6   7
5. I try to reduce my water consumption at home  
1   2   3   4   5   6   7
6. I take the environment into consideration when choosing transport  
1   2   3   4   5   6   7

## COVID-19

Finally, since we are carrying out this survey at the time of the corona-pandemic, we would like to ask you your view about the corona-virus situation to see if that affects your perceptions.

(1 strongly disagree 7 strongly agree)

1. I feel strongly affected by the current COVID-19 situation

1   2   3   4   5   6   7

2. I feel that COVID-19 makes environmental CSR activities (taking care of the environment) more important than ever

1   2   3   4   5   6   7

Do you have any comments and / or observations that reflect your views on the topics in this study?

(Open)

## **Appendix VI – Control Text**

The following survey will ask questions relating to The Student Hotel, in the field of environmental corporate social responsibility. Please read the text below before continuing.

The Student Hotel (TSH) is a hotel chain and co-working space with 15 hotels spread across The Netherlands, Germany, Spain, Austria and Italy. The company uses a hybrid model, meaning their guests consist of tourists, business travellers and long-stay students (for the full academic year). The hotel also includes co-working spaces for entrepreneurs, a restaurant and event spaces.

## **Appendix VII – Questionnaire: Experiment 2**

### **Demographic Data**

The questions below are intended to form a picture of your demographic data. I would like to emphasize that your answers are treated confidentially and the study does not include personal information that identifies you.

- What is your age?
  - 18 - 24
  - 25 - 29
  - 30 - 34
  - 35 - 39
  - 40 - 44
  - 45 - 49
  - 50 +
  
- What is your gender?
  - Man
  - Woman
  - Other

## **Control Text**

The following survey will ask questions relating to The Student Hotel, in the field of environmental corporate social responsibility. Please read the text below before continuing.

The Student Hotel (TSH) is a hotel chain and co-working space with 15 hotels spread across The Netherlands, Germany, Spain, Austria and Italy. The company uses a hybrid model, meaning their guests consist of tourists, business travellers and long-stay students (for the full academic year). The hotel also includes co-working spaces for entrepreneurs, a restaurant and event spaces. The Student Hotel actively engages in Corporate social responsibility (CSR).

## Experimental Condition

Please read the text below on The student Hotel's activities aimed at improving the environment:

"We take our environmental responsibilities very seriously at The Student hotel. We started by looking at our properties and the certifications that benchmark the sustainability of our buildings. We invest in building greener buildings. We aim to reduce our residual waste by 40% in all our Dutch locations by 2021. We introduced new waste management facilities in the student kitchens and reached out to Voedselbank (a food bank) and the salvation army to arrange collection of food and textiles during the student-check out. We aim to make our food & beverages division waste-free by 2021, starting by replacing all products that come in single-use packaging and introducing eco-friendly alternatives for disposables. We've also partnered with Too Good to Go to prevent leftover food from going to waste. As you can see, sustainability is a huge focus of The Student Hotel".

---

On the previous page, I read about The Student Hotel involvement in sustainability and the environment?

Yes

No

---

I would like to ask you to reflect on The Student Hotel's activities in the field of environmental awareness and sustainability.

What do you like the most about the Student Hotel's activities aimed at improving the environment?

(ANSWER)

---



### **Perceived Organizational Morality & Competence**

I want to ask you to think about how you see The Student hotel as a company and answer the questions below on a scale from 1 to 7.

(1 = not at all; 7 = very much)

To what extent do you find The Student Hotel ...

1.... honest?

1   2   3   4   5   6   7

2....sincere?

1   2   3   4   5   6   7

3.... trustworthy?

1   2   3   4   5   6   7

4.... Competent?

1   2   3   4   5   6   7

5.... Skilful?

1   2   3   4   5   6   7

6.... Intelligent?

1   2   3   4   5   6   7

## Perceived Greenwashing

I want to ask you to think about The Student Hotel and its Corporate Social Responsibility activities and answer the questions below on a scale from 1 to 7 (1 strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree)

I think that The Student Hotel....

1. Pretends to be more engaged in environmental corporate social responsibility activities than it actually is  
1   2   3   4   5   6   7
2. Has insincere reasoning for engaging in corporate social responsibilities  
1   2   3   4   5   6   7
3. Is not fully transparent in its communications about corporate social responsibilities  
1   2   3   4   5   6   7
4. Has a hidden agenda  
1   2   3   4   5   6   7
5. Aims to improve its reputation by presenting itself as being engaged in corporate social responsibility activities  
1   2   3   4   5   6   7

### **Consumer Intention**

Please imagine you are a guest of The Student hotel and answer the questions below on a scale from 1 to 7. (1 = not at all; 7 = very much)

1. Please rank how likely you are to continue being a client of TSH

1    2    3    4    5    6    7

2. Please rank how likely you are to recommend TSH to others

1    2    3    4    5    6    7

### **Personal Environmentally Friendly Behaviour**

Sustainability and environmental awareness apply not only to the workplace, but also in your personal environment. I would like to ask you to indicate to what extent the following positions fit you on a scale from 1 to 7. (1 totally disagree; 7 = totally agree)

7. I buy environmentally friendly products whenever possible

1   2   3   4   5   6   7

8. I am concerned about vulnerable (nature) areas.

1   2   3   4   5   6   7

9. I reduce household waste whenever possible

1   2   3   4   5   6   7

10. I used products made from recycled material whenever possible

1   2   3   4   5   6   7

11. I try to reduce my water consumption at home

1   2   3   4   5   6   7

12. I take the environment into consideration when choosing transport

1   2   3   4   5   6   7

## COVID-19

Finally, since we are carrying out this survey at the time of the corona-pandemic, we would like to ask you your view about the corona-virus situation to see if that affects your perceptions (strongly disagree 7 strongly agree)

1. I feel strongly affected by the current COVID-19 situation

1   2   3   4   5   6   7

2. I feel that COVID-19 makes environmental CSR activities (taking care of the environment) more important than ever

1   2   3   4   5   6   7

Do you have any comments and / or observations that reflect your views on the topics in this study?

(Open)