

## **Going beyond multidimensional customer engagement - Does communicating CSR influence hotel cruise performance?**

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**Abstract** | Corporate social responsibility (CSR) is a valuable communicative resource. Although previous studies have highlighted CSR attributes in the hospitality industry, few studies have examined the combined effect of multidimensional cruise passengers' engagement to boost cruise performance. Therefore, the current paper examines the impact of initiated and communicated CSR on cruise customers' cognitive, affective, and conative engagement. Data were collected from 337 reliable questionnaires and then analysed using the partial least squares-structural equation modelling PLS-SEM 4.0 to gain insights into the various relationships and effects. The results suggest that CSR practices significantly impact consumer cognitive and affective engagement and, ultimately, their willingness to have higher conative engagement with cruise operations. Additionally, findings reveal that digital communication will likely mediate the impact of unidimensional CSR practices on multidimensional consumer engagement. However, the evidence-based study supports the potential of larger sharing, a high growth profile, and greater cross-buying engagement with cruise lines.

**Keywords** | corporate social responsibility, hotel cruise, consumer engagement, digital communication, hospitality operations

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## 1. Introduction

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has become a major global concern in company-wide compliance and policies (Vaughan, 2024). In the hospitality industry, responsible travel has grown as a noteworthy factor which promotes travelers' perceptions and business performance (Stevens-King & Bello, 2023; Ahn et al., 2020), even if the price is exceptional. In comparison, CSR approaches in the hospitality supply chain and among service providers deal with consumers' motivational attitudes, and responsible behavioural aspects (Al-Badarneh et al., 2024; Lee et al., 2023). The hotel cruise, in particular, has reported unprecedented growth in the last decade, with strong future projections (Papathanassis, 2025). Nonetheless, this creates environmental challenges and crucial socioeconomic aspects (Kulkov et al., 2023; Brito & Baptista, 2021).

Several hospitality studies related to CSR have used several constructs, among which are the relationship between CSR communication and the performance of firms operating in hospitality (Goffi et al., 2022); dodging reputations for being irresponsible (Rhou & Singal, 2020); brand identification (Ahn & Lu, 2021); consumer green advocacy behaviour (Ahmad et al., 2024); trust in brands and customer retention (Ahn & Lu, 2021); customer purchases and referrals (Islam et al., 2023; Bozkurt et al., 2020); content sharing (Herrero & Martinez, 2021); and the CSR contribution to revenue per customer can be mentioned (Kuokkanen & Sun, 2024; Kanaan, 2018). Recent research has also confirmed the correlation between CSR and product-related behaviours in the hospitality industry, such as consumers' attitudes, positive purchase intention through higher levels of intrinsic motivation for the hotel's CSR activities, their willingness to recommend the experience to others, and response engagement (Ahn & Dias Soeiro, 2022).

While a myriad of CSR studies has been recognised among various hospitality distribution chains, little has been conducted to reference context apropos customers' perspectives through hotel cruise operations (Kulkov et al., 2023). Additionally, the CSR concept has been largely examined as part of a single-perspective aspect (Peña-Miranda et al., 2023), with limited focus on the CSR weight together on consumer engagement (cognitive, affective, and conative), a subject to how passengers' perceive operative CSRs' policies, including actions of diversity and inclusion pledge, and business excellence awards. Wang et al. (2020) pointed out that more revisions are essential to expanding studies into the accurate contribution of hotel cruise operations and the value-added toward CSR. Consequently, this study analyses the connection between passenger engagement in cruise operations and the multiple dimensions of CSR

(environmental, social, and economic). Additionally, we aim to identify the relationship between the unidimensional aspects of CSR and passenger engagement to enhance performance in alignment with the CSR aspects. Lastly, this paper contributes significantly to the theory of CSR by highlighting the significance of CSR communication within the framework of cruise line policies.

## **2. Theoretical framework and hypotheses development**

### *2.1. Communication Blue CSR Approaches in Cruise Lines*

Most current approaches refer to CSR as relevant sources and content, with a lack of research examining their credibility in communicating CSR initiatives (Dalla-Pria & Rodríguez-de-Dios, 2022). Along with the top-level CSR programs, research suggests that appropriate communication strategies are a critical quality criterion in hospitality (Peña-Miranda et al., 2023). According to Żymkowska et al. (2019, pp 1-22), customer engagement refers to “customer activism in value formation”. Thus, the customer-brand relationship develops engagement processes through which customers perceive social responsibility. In addition, eco-friendly lodging establishments require actively promoting environmental communication during their stay, such as reducing waste, disposable toiletries, bed sheets, towel change frequency, saving energy, and adopting resource recycling (Ting et al., 2019). Indeed, the value of CSR improves employees’ psychological well-being, career satisfaction, performance (Kim et al., 2022), short-term revenue growth (Goffi et al., 2022), revenue efficiency perspectives (Nguyen et al., 2021), and creates algorithms to individual rate fences (Yeoman, 2019).

Orientation and cross-buying are the two components of cruise line CSR communication (Zhang et al., 2021). According to Esmaelnezhad et al. (2023), suppliers in the tourism industry use digital marketing strategies to enhance customer acquisition, engagement, satisfaction, and sales prospects. In this regard, Esmaelnezhad et al. (2023) assigned social media as a major priority marketing tool in tourism brand building, followed by search engine optimisation. Similarly, Ramos and Hassan (2021) pointed out that Social media travel is positively related to travel intention, directly and indirectly through the formation of positive attitudes. Troise and Camilleri (2021) imply that Facebook, LinkedIn, YouTube, Instagram, and Twitter affect audience engagement in CSR initiatives.

## 2.2. *Communication and cognitive engagement*

Cognitive engagement refers to customers as passive recipients through various outward-facing communication streams, such as social networks (Carvalho & Fernandes, 2018), including integrated marketing content communication. Hollebeek et al. (2021) suggested that a cognitive thought level deals with booking-specific interactions between consumers and brands. Moderate brand interaction and cognitive engagement can increase sales of perceived valuable products. Research demonstrates that CSR attributes are a consequence of consumer, and brand community engagement in the hospitality industry (Inoue et al., 2019; Wang et al., 2020). For example, Han et al. (2020) indicated that environmental values, concerns, and awareness are important cognitive triggers for pro-environmental intentions. Moreover, modern hotel companies take extensive measures to go green, such as recycling materials like towels and bedding, and accordingly communicate environmentally conscious behaviours during a hotel stay, such as towel reuse, waste reduction, and water and energy conservation.

Consumer cognitive engagement is shaped based on the flow of communication about service providers as they share information (Modica et al., 2020). Social CSR communications, such as supporting diversity and inclusion pledge (Brito & Baptista, 2021; Susaeta et al., 2024), ensuring employees with legal minimum age, and promoting a safe and healthy work environment, influence consumers' level of attention to cruise power dynamics conditions (Song et al., 2024; Kim et al., 2022). As per customer-related matters, service providers strive to satisfy customers when services are designed to enhance customers' travel experience in all details of operations (Kanaan et al., 2023). The author assumes that customers' cognitive engagement, including attention, and attitude toward the service, is associated with the social characteristics of CSR criteria:

*H1a. Environmental CSR initiatives within the cruise lines positively influence customers' cognitive engagement.*

*H1b. Social CSR initiatives within the cruise lines positively influence customers' cognitive engagement.*

*H1c. Economic CSR initiatives within the cruise lines positively influence customers' cognitive engagement.*

### *2.3. Communication and affective engagement*

Affective engagement refers to the degree of positive reactions to the impact of a brand (Hollebeek et al., 2014). Affective commitment, consequently, is evident in the conversion of commitment into loyalty and other motivational behaviours. These constructs induce willingness to purchase, customer loyalty beyond the initial transaction, sharing with the same brand, engagement in brand-related communities and platforms, product appreciation, and a sense of self-connection with the brand (Parihar & Dawra, 2020). Existing studies have shown that CSR manifestations of lodging companies positively affect brand trust and customers' appreciation of products (Han et al., 2020). Similarly, customers perceive green brand benefits such as recycled materials and environmentally friendly communication as an emotional commitment. Consequently, customers have green attitudes and product commitment to service providers (Latif, 2021).

Moreover, Social responsibility for employees can influence customers' emotional responses to job-related situations, an appropriate safe work environment, and employment diversity (Kim et al., 2022). However, scholars suggest that socially responsible frontline employees are associated with work-related variables in the hospitality industry (Liu et al., 2022; Shatnawi et al., 2019), leading to responsible organisational behaviour. In addition, hospitality companies' social actions toward customers improve their evaluation and reactions to further purchases (Modica et al., 2020). Therefore, the succeeding hypothesis was framed:

*H2a. Environmental CSR initiatives within the cruise lines positively influence customers' affective engagement.*

*H2b. Social CSR initiatives within the cruise lines positively influence customers' affective engagement.*

*H2c. Economic CSR initiatives within the cruise lines positively influence customers' affective engagement.*

### *2.4. Communication and Conative Engagement*

Conative engagement is a subsequent behaviour that emerges from the combined influence of cognitive (experiential) and affective (emotional) processes. It involves a customer's

knowledge or participation (behavioural) toward a product or supplier (Kuokkanen & Sun, 2024; Bozkurt et al., 2020). Thus, customers with conative engagement will adhere to develop behaviour and interaction. For instance, repurchase intention at all probable touch points and sharing experiences or content (Ali et al., 2019; Inoue et al., 2017). Customer engagement literature toward hospitality CSR has demonstrated various customers' willingness (high/low) to repurchase (Abuhjeeleh et al., 2023) and upgrade services. Latif (2021) suggested that engagement may happen when there is a level of consciousness of such green adoptions. Furthermore, conative engagement is associated with the behaviour of add-on purchases, expanding recommendations, and customers' commitment to a supplier (Hollebeek et al., 2021).

According to Peña-Miranda et al. (2023), CSR social communication fosters positive actions from service providers and customers, while Gonçalves et al. (2021) show that user-generated content impacts perceived product value. Moreover, labour rights of providing a safe and healthy work environment are a signal of social performance in hospitality organisations (Kim et al., 2022), in harmony with customers' perceived attitude toward CSR digital communications, and highly linked with conative engagement, such as recommendation intention and willingness to buy further services (Bozkurt et al., 2020). Moreover, social accountability in communication while human characteristics are set with a brand identification (Darabseh et al., 2019). These traits of a brand consider the responsibility as well toward customers, such as travellers' rights, providing the right prices, valuable travelling experience without harming local cultures in host tourism destinations through travelling phases, and varied available communication tools (Kim et al., 2022). Similarly, Dalla-Pria and Rodríguez-de-Dios (2022) found that values-driven motives and a corporate source create more word of mouth. Based on the fundamental literature, the succeeding hypotheses are settled:

*H3a. Environmental CSR initiatives within the cruise lines positively affect customers' conative engagement.*

*H3b. Social CSR initiatives within the cruise lines positively affect customers' conative engagement.*

*H3c. Economic CSR initiatives within the cruise lines positively affect customers' conative engagement.*

Note that customers' perceptions of CSR practices may vary over time and according to communication context (Bigné et al., 2019). Hence, the subsequent hypothesis is framed:

*H4: Digital communication has a mediating positive effect between CSR and customer conative engagement.*

### **3. Methodology**

#### *3.1. Participants and Collection Data*

During the survey period, many travellers visited the Gulf of Aqaba to explore the archaeological sites of Petra and the Wadi Rum desert. These desert rural areas in southern Jordan are becoming increasingly popular due to their unique natural resources, and frequent appearances in international films (Kanaan, 2018). The survey focused on regular cruise travellers almost from Western European countries who have received CSR digital communication on cruise ships. The purpose has been clearly stated at the beginning of the survey, and only those who completed the questionnaire were considered. Out of the 337 completed questionnaires, 309 (91.6%) were analysed. Most of the respondents were men (66%), and most were aged between 36 and 50 (56.1%) or over 50 (32.5%). Likewise, 37.4% of the sample travel by cruise regularly for the second time, and 42.6% third or more. The demographic sample's features include group ages, income range, education level, and frequency of cruise travel.

#### *3.2. Instrument Measurement*

A voluntary questionnaire with questions on CSR was distributed between October 3 and 29, 2022, to test the field study hypotheses. A comprehensive review of previous literature was used to define the measurement scales. As part of content validity, the instrument was refined and verified by four academics. This protocol helped to eliminate vague and leading questions that might confuse participants and affect the usefulness of their responses. Correspondingly, the questionnaire items were discussed with three cruise customers who regularly travel with different cruise lines, a step to determine if the instrument is reliable. A pilot study was conducted with thirty cruise travelers from different cultures to determine the feasibility of the main experiment. As a rule, to ensure private and secure responses, participants completed the questionnaire based on the anonymity and confidentiality policy. This may help prevent the impact of the social desirability bias. To measure the theorised relationships, the study variables were gathered using a printed survey as presented and cited in table 1.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of the study variables

Variables		Items	Mean	S D
Corporate environment	CE	<i>adopted from Ahmad et al., 2024; Ahn &amp; Lu, 2022; Han et al., 2020.</i>		
	CE1	The cruise promotes its environmental travel policies (e.g. recycled materials, zero emissions,...)	4.09	0.67
	CE2	The cruise displays its environmentally friendly certificates. (e.g. certificate of excellence, as Green Key, Blue Star,...) +	4.09	0.60
Corporate social	CS	<i>Song et al., 2024; Susaeta et al., 2024; Al-Badarneh et al., 2024; Kim et al., 2022; Brito &amp; Baptista, 2021; Ahn, 2019; Serra Cantallops et al., 2018.</i>		
	CS1	Personnel and staff are working in harmony as a team	3.98	0.66
	CS2	The staff appears to be legal, adults and mature.	4.31	0.90
	CS3	The crew seems to be from different origin countries	4.29	0.72
	CS4	The cruise provides measures that ensure safe and healthy conditions.	4.41	0.55
	CS5	The cruise cares about travellers' rights.	4.41	0.59
	CS6	The cruise is keen to improve customers' travel experience.	4.16	0.62
	CS7	The cruise responds to complaints from all consumers promptly.	4.26	0.50
Corporate economic	CEC	<i>Kuokkanen &amp; Sun, 2024; Goffi et al., 2022; Kim et al., 2022</i>		
	CEC1	The cruise offers the right prices for its products and services.	3.88	0.89
	CEC2	The cruise offers valuable products and services.	4.20	0.64
	CEC3	The cruise assigns noteworthy trips to travellers.	4.36	0.51
Corporate social responsibility	CSR	<i>Bialkova &amp; Te Paske, 2021; Goffi et al., 2022</i>	4.20	0.41
Digital communication	MEDs	<i>Bialkova &amp; Te Paske, 2021; Goffi et al., 2022.</i>		
	MED1 CE1	The cruise allocated appropriate concerns to environmental protection. (via collaborative platforms, social software, blogs, wikis, etc.)	4.66	0.50
	MED2 CE2	The cruise provides environmentally friendly directions and instructions (via its staff, sales, text messages, tour guides, etc.)	4.52	0.50
	MED3 CS1	The cruise communicates its safe and healthy work environment (through its staff, sales, text messages, tour guides, etc.)	4.50	0.50



	MED4 CS2	The cruise is keen to implement customer relationship management. (Via its staff, through sales, text messages, tour guides, etc.)	4.43	0.55
	MED5 CS3	The cruise offers detailed information about local cultures and indigenous people. (via its staff, through sales, text messages, tour guides, etc.)	4.50	0.55
	MED6 EC1	The cruise encourages customers to buy handmade products directly from local producers (via its staff, through sales, tour guides, etc.)	3.80	0.76
	MED7 EC2	The cruise offers more in-demand destinations based on local and abroad knowledge sources (via OTAs, Tripadvisor, CRM, social media, etc)	3.80	0.59
Engagement cognitive	EC	<i>Hollebeek et al., 2021; Vander Schee et al., 2020; Ahn et al., 2020.</i>		
	EC1	I paid a lot of attention to what happened on board this cruise.	4.36	0.71
	EC2	The cruise has great product and service categories.	4.22	0.65
	EC3	I will deal with this cruise as long as it is available.	3.83	0.73
	EC4	I consider this cruise my first choice when thinking about travelling.	4.04	0.82
Engagement affective	EA	<i>Kuokkanen &amp; Sun, 2024; Parihar &amp; Dawra, 2020; Ahn et al., 2020</i>		
	EA1	I feel committed to this cruise	4.37	0.48
	EA2	I'm so confident about this cruise	4.29	0.59
	EA3	I will travel on board this cruise as I have a positive impression of this cruise.	4.20	0.62
	EA4	I am delighted to be travelling on this cruise.	4.12	0.33
	EA5	I am pleased to buy the cruise service.	3.86	0.61
Engagement conative	ECO	<i>Ahmad et al., 2024; Hollebeek et al., 2021; Wang et al., 2020; Inoue et al., 2019; Ahn, 2019.</i>		
	ECO1	I'm optimistic about this travel experience.	4.36	0.48
	ECO2	I intend to stay with this brand.	4.48	0.50
	ECO3	I intend to use Facebook or any social media to share the cruise posts.	4.20	0.60
	ECO4	I encourage my friends and relatives to buy the cruise services.	4.33	0.73

The diagonal is the square root of the average variance extracted; SD = Standard deviation; CR = Composite reliability.

Source: Own Elaboration

### 3.3. *Descriptive statistics of constructs*

CSR constructs were identified and measured using established scales. CSR environmental communication was assessed with items adapted from Ahmad et al. (2024), Ahn and Lu (2022), and Han et al. (2020). The social dimensions of CSR were measured using items adopted from Song et al. (2024), Susaeta et al. (2024), Al-Badarneh et al. (2024), Kim et al. (2022), Brito and Baptista (2021), Ahn (2019), and Serra Cantallops et al. (2018). CSR economic variables were assessed using scales derived from Kuokkanen and Sun (2024), Goffi et al. (2022), and Kim et al. (2022). The mediating communications were adopted from Bialkova and Te Paske (2021) and Goffi et al. (2022). Cognitive engagement was measured using scales from Hollebeek et al. (2021), Vander Schee et al. (2020), and Ahn et al. (2020), affective engagement using scales from Kuokkanen and Sun (2024), Parihar and Dawra (2020), and Ahn et al. (2020), and conative engagement using scales from Ahmad et al. (2024), Hollebeek et al. (2021), Wang et al. (2020), Inoue et al. (2019), and Ahn (2019) to assess customer perceptions. All items were rated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). So far, to prevent the threat of Common Method Variance (CMV), the research design has used measures derived from varied sources of information. In particular, the customers' engagement variables were planned using key measures from diverse sources than the CSRs models and collected data from multiple cruise lines in the host destination. Another procedural remedy in designing and directing the survey has considered the unidimensional CSR to diminish the probability of CMV. A confirmatory factor analysis of all items indicates that no determinant factor emerged. Thus, CMV is not a pervasive matter. Based on the nature of the study, a causal-predictive structural equation modelling (SEM) technique has been used with PLS 4 software. PLS–SEM option (partial least squares–structural equation modelling) has been set to examine the hypotheses, with Smartpls 4.0. Hair et al. (2013) demonstrated that PLS-SEM is a quality assessment choice. Since the empirical work examines the relationships among various latent variables such as perception, attitude, and intention. Furthermore, PLS-SEM runs with a small sample size, and is insensitive to non-normality.

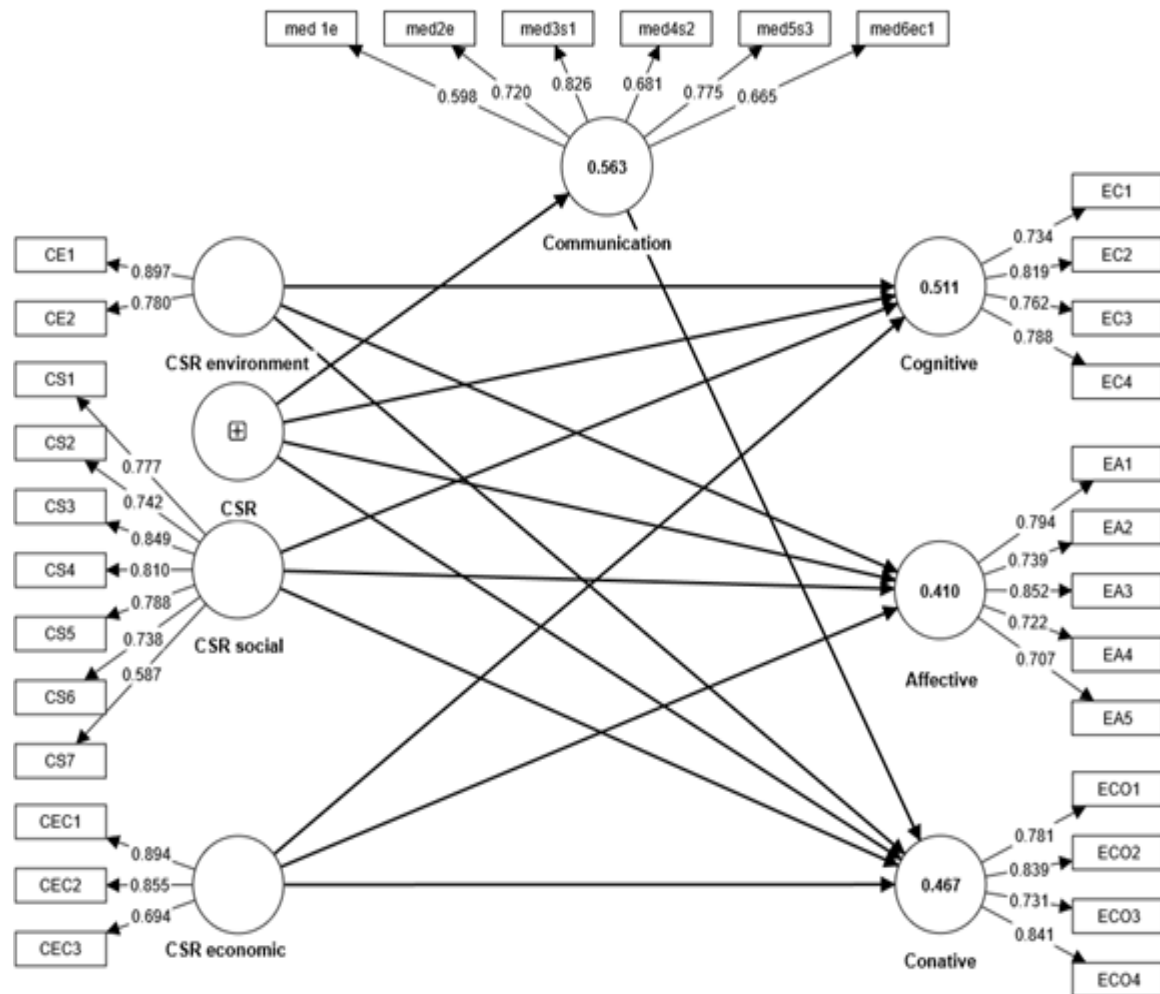


Figure 1. Descriptive statistics of study constructs

Source: Own Elaboration

#### 4. Results

The Smart-PLS analysis has been set to assess the quality of the constructed model, which is intended to attain a satisfactory level of reliability and construct validity. Based on this criterion, Cronbach's alpha ( $\alpha$ ) and composite reliability values have been assessed as reliability indicators. At the same time, other assessments of construct validity have been correspondingly established via convergent and discriminant validity. The indicator convergent validity has been applied using the indicator Average Variance Extracted (AVE). Statistically, an AVE value greater than 0.50 is recommended. The model in Figure 1 displays the indicators involved in the structural analysis. Alpha ( $\alpha$ ) and composite reliability scored and exceeded the 0.70 thresholds (Fornell & Larcker, 1981), therefore, the results in table 2 have indicated adequate reliability.

Based on the Smart PLS criteria, the average AVE exceeded 0.50, indicating the convergent validity of the undertaken measurement is ascertained.

Table 2. Reliability & convergent validity

Instruments	A	CR	Rho	AVE	R <sup>2</sup>
Affective	0.823	0.922	0.868	0.571	0.294
Cognitive	0.781	0.781	0.859	0.603	0.357
Digital communication	0.808	0.814	0.861	0.510	0.544
Conative	0.812	0.855	0.875	0.637	0.262
CSR	0.902	0.913	0.918	0.452	-
CSR economic	0.750	0.764	0.858	0.671	-
CSR environment	0.593	0.605	0.830	0.710	-
CSR social	0.878	0.886	0.906	0.581	-

Notes:  **$\alpha$** : Cronbach's Alpha; **CR**: Construct Reliability; **Rho**: composite reliability. **AVE**: Average Variance Extracted; **R<sup>2</sup>**: R-squared.

Source: Own Elaboration

Besides, discriminant validity has been established using the Fornell-Larcker criterion (Fornell & Larcker, 1981), and as shown in table 2, the AVE of every single construct stands higher than the correlation of the precise construct among any of the others (Zait & Berteau, 2011). The R-squared results submit that 35.7% of the variance of cognitive engagement is explained, 29.4% of affective engagement, 26.2% of conative engagement, and 54.4% of the variance of digital communication is thus considered substantial by Cohen (1988).

Table 3. Divergent validity based on the Fornell-Larcker approach.

Measures	EA	EC	MED	ECO	CSR+	CEC	CE	CS
Affective (EA)	<b>0.760</b>							
Cognitive(EC)	0.755	<b>0.777</b>						
Digital communication(MED)	0.459	0.473	<b>0.714</b>					
Conative(ECO)	0.694	0.695	0.372	<b>0.798</b>				
CSR(CSR+)	0.542	0.598	0.737	0.512	<b>0.836</b>			
CSR Economic(CEC)	0.530	0.546	0.539	0.403	0.672	<b>0.819</b>		
CSR Environment(CE)	0.344	0.340	0.504	0.250	0.737	0.653	<b>0.842</b>	
CSR Social(CS)	0.519	0.594	0.714	0.556	0.942	0.651	0.546	<b>0.762</b>

Source: Own Elaboration

PLS-SEM analysis has been conducted to measure the relationship among the study variables (e.g., CSRs' eco aspect, CSRs' social aspect, CSRs' economic aspect, cognitive engagement, affective engagement, and conative engagement). According to the results presented in Table 4, passengers perceived the environmental CSR ( $\beta = 0.566$ ,  $t = 1.851$ ), social ( $\beta = 3.210$ ,  $t = 4.136$ ), and economic ( $\beta = 1.425$ ,  $t = 4.119$ ) initiatives positively and then significantly evaluated their hotel cruise experience. While H1a has not been supported because the p-value is greater than 0.05 and zero crossed the confidence interval values, H1b and H1c are supported. Therefore, the intention is to be favourably engaged in the cruise activities when customers perceive that the cruise includes proper environmental and socio-economic CSR activities. H2a, H2b, and H2c are correspondingly supported since the level of perceived CSRs' environment ( $\beta = 0.668$ ,  $t = 2.069$ ), social ( $\beta = 3.251$ ,  $t = 3.428$ ), and economic ( $\beta = 1.591$ ,  $t = 3.613$ ) aspects resulted in a high perception level of affective response for the cruise activities.

Table 4. Path coefficients, standard errors, significance, and latent variable correlations.

Relationships	B	T	P
Communication -> Conative	3.181	3.932	0.002
CSR -> Affective	4.343	3.027	0.002
CSR -> Cognitive	3.992	3.421	0.001
CSR -> Digital communication	0.750	19.620	0.000
CSR -> Conative	5.588	3.568	0.000
CSR economic -> Affective	1.591	3.613	0.000
CSR economic -> Cognitive	1.425	4.119	0.000
CSR economic -> Conative	1.648	3.602	0.000
CSR environment -> Affective	0.668	2.069	0.039
CSR environment -> Cognitive	0.566	1.851	0.045
CSR environment -> Conative	0.808	2.445	0.015
CSR social -> Affective	3.251	3.428	0.001
CSR social -> Cognitive	3.210	4.136	0.000
CSR social -> Conative	4.288	4.291	0.000
CSR -> Digital communication -> Conative	3.136	3.921	0.003
<b>Note:</b> $\beta$ , beta value; $\rho$ , p-value; t, t-value			
Note: ** $p < 0.01$			

Source: Own Elaboration

Customers hold a positive attitude when environmental and socio-economic issues are handled in a friendly manner. Consequently, customers' conative engagement is persuaded by the cruise's CSR environmental ( $\beta = 0.808$ ,  $t = 2.445$ ), social ( $\beta = 4.288$ ,  $t = 4.291$ ), and economic ( $\beta = 1.648$ ,  $t = 4.119$ ) initiatives. Henceforward, H3a, H3b, and H2c are supported. The environmental, social, and economic cruise operations affect travellers' behavioural intentions, including recommendations, and purchasing add-on services. Even though all hypotheses are confirmed, the perspectives of CSR activities inversely impact the customers' engagement in the cruise setting. Referring to the mediation effect of digital communication in CSR and conative engagement ( $\beta = 3.136$ ,  $t = 3.921$ ), the results display that digital communication strengthens the positive implication between both constructs (H4).

## 5. Discussion and Practical implications

### 5.1. Discussion

Results in the current study illustrate that identified aspects of CSR initiatives (environmental, social, and economic) were associated with the multidimensional engagement of cruise passengers. This is consistent with previous studies that found a relationship between CSR initiatives and customers' behaviour (Kim et al., 2022; Wang et al., 2020; Ahmad et al., 2024).

The supremely significant verdict of this study is that eco-friendly CSR practices have a higher stimulus on conative engagement. In contrast, socio-economic CSR practices have a higher relationship with cognitive and affective engagement. Simply put, travellers show positive feelings about cruise activities if they believe there is respect for labour rights and that the cruise is committed to enhancing the customer's travel experience. Similarly, they feel positive if the rights of local cultures and indigenous people at the destinations are respected. Simultaneously, travellers demonstrate purposeful engagement (e.g., positively review the cruise posts, and share the experience via social media) when they believe that the cruise follows an eco-friendly system overseas. Consequently, the evidence-based study supports attaining superior margins, a better growth profile, or greater engagement among customers onboard the cruise lines. Furthermore, the results revealed that social CSR regarding local cultures and indigenous people was positively significant in association with their cognitive perception, including affective and conative engagement. Digital communication also significantly exposed mediators in the bond between CSR initiatives and behavioural intention (Kuokkanen & Sun, 2024).

The verdicts of the current study contribute to the hospitality CSR realm threefold. First, the study proposes that when CSR strategies are initiated, digital communication will significantly influence cruise customers' attitudinal engagement through cognitive, affective, and conative levels. Since establishing CSR initiatives alone is not enough to engage customers, recent research recommends mediating some factors, such as communication, as the driving motives of engagement (Bigné, 2019) or under other certain conditions, such as time. This is a vital outcome, demonstrating that initiating CSR aspects functions as motives but has diverse resonance with adequate communication, in alignment with Bialkova and Te Paske (2021). However, when examining the recent CSR communication literature, initiating environmental and social aspects, by contrast, is not certainly associated with moral engagement but rather with communicating (marketing) economic causes as revenue objectives. The willingness to further engage was highest when digital communication combined value- and purchase-driven motives (H3c confirmed), and this outcome appeared for both large sharing and cross-buying engagement. Attitude and engagement intention (in line with H4) also changed, being maximised when digital communication combined value- and purchase-driven motives. Yet, the effect of economic responsibility was an important cue in CSR digital communication.

Additionally, this study demonstrates the considerable direct effect of the three sets of CSR approaches on cruise travellers' behaviour. A limited number of studies have included the economic dimension of CSR, as this study does. Indeed, similar to Goffi et al. (2022), the social aspect considers not only the cruise staff but also customers and local communities in hosted destinations as a cue for enhancing revenue. Accordingly, this study contributes to the CSR literature by participating in the three CSR aspects and multidimensional custom engagement. The present article broadens the findings of previous CSR attributes by including economic responsibilities and the customers' engagement at its three levels: cognitive, affective, and conative towards the cruise operations. In agreement with Ahn et al. (2020), the preceding research has suggested the importance of CSR strategies with partial dimensions on partial consumers' agents, which is not enough to understand the consumer's rooted behaviour.

Moreover, the unidimensional nature of CSR demonstrates a greater influence on the mediating role of digital communication on the three types of attitudinal engagement. Customers' perceived CSR activities present a stronger relationship when mediating digital communication among onboard customers on the cruise lines (H4 confirmed). Like the previous studies (Ahmad et al., 2024; Han et al., 2020; Latif, 2021), the existing research found that economic CSR exerts a higher relationship on conative engagement than both cognitive and affective

engagement. The experimental evidence of the present study supports that economic CSR is the key driving motive that improves customers' conative engagement.

### *5.2. Practical implications*

To broaden the context of CSR literature, which examined the interactions between CSR and cruise operations, the multi-level framework found six structural processes by which CSR is related to cruise performance. Each has a vibrant opportunity for practitioners. Predicting the consequences of CSR strategies with each aspect is imperative for profiling broad information about customer engagement. This information helps to maintain the cruise's competitive performance. The results propose that value-driven CSR approaches positively result in cognitive, affective, and conative engagement. For instance, customers increase their purchases if they believe the service supplier operates in a friendly environment. Additionally, customers hold a preferable cognitive once they distinguish that the cruise team is being respected fairly, with similar fairness addressed to both customers and locals in host destinations. Ultimately, the communication system between the cruise operations and passengers results in larger social media sharing, a high growth profile, and greater cross-buying engagement with cruise lines.

Starting from the cruise blue environmental operations, this study demonstrates a significant relationship between eco-responsibilities and customers' cognitive, affective, and conative engagement. Cruise lines must conjure up thoughts regarding their related environmental responsibilities, including sustainable policies, such as switching to new energy-efficient appliances and engines. Moreover, recycling schemes reduce the volume of hazardous waste and toxic substances generated on the cruise. Outcomes indicated that pollution prevention perceived a particular conative engagement response. Thus, cruise lines need to consider blue environmental concerns. This is essential to establish a competitive advantage for their operations, as a cue to set effective customer engagement in alignment with Song et al. (2024). For example, an organisation can drive its communication with customers by including competitive environmental value and engagement in such ethical programs. This consumption may motivate people to engage in such environmental activities either by purchasing or sharing information in public.

Equally, among the aspects of social CSR, customers who experienced higher status employees built considerable cognitive engagement, while responsibility toward customers received higher affective engagement, and the highest correlation linked social CSR with conative engagement. For example, guests positively perceive social staff CSR, are more likely to



respond effectively when customers' relationships are accurately managed, and a conative engagement is successfully achieved if the organisation addresses social responsibilities to the host destination. Thus, CSR can enhance effective human resource performance, which is related to committed, talented employees, greater work satisfaction, and team cohesion. Employee engagement results in cost savings and advanced opportunities. Then, CSR can drive customers' loyalty and favourable engagement with quality CSR initiatives. Additionally, communication with consumers based on the value of the host destination can establish multiple revenue opportunities.

Effective communication with cruise passengers enhances on-board purchasing decisions and adds value for passengers. Allocating appropriate collaborative platforms may improve communication and ease access to knowledge for customer groups. Likely, digital tools such as social software enable customers to navigate and share experiences simply and quickly. Indeed, most first-time cruise passengers become repeat cruisers. Furthermore, the Cruise Excellence Awards are a content communication tool between the management and the board guests. Celebrating the CSR recognition programs increases customers' engagement, or large-scale sharing engagement for the cruise's exceptional performance and achievement. The cruise should promote its environmental travel policies, such as recycled materials and zero emissions (e.g. certificate of excellence, as Green Key and Blue Star). Through the communication content with cruisers, cruise management can set its target as profitable and optimised with the most adequate drivers. For example, the combination of sailing and extended stays on land enriches the conative engagement of customers, and their on-board purchase decisions. In summary, to create a high growth profile of a diverse CSR, cruise lines could address their board customers, their CSR strategies, actual actions in all diversity dimensions, and indicator statements.

### *5.3. Limitations and Future Research*

Although this study expands the scope of CSR in hospitality literature, it is not free of limitations. First, the population was collected from only Western European customers, while the CSR activities related to customer engagement may vary culturally. Therefore, future studies may investigate the projected model with participants from different origin areas and expand the scope of SCR based on socio-economic characteristics, with the potential for application in other maritime or transport contexts. Second, the study examines the medium of cruise communication with onboard customers through varied communicative agents. The

factors related to customer engagement may encounter several situations. For instance, travellers are familiar with new digital communications. Future studies can specify experimental communicative methods, such as humans or technologies, to measure the variations in customer engagement in different situations. Lastly, the study only considered the relationships of CSR-related variables on the customers' responses concerning the wide engagement conception, and more environmental variables. Future research may encompass this model by counting customers' perceptions regarding revenue management in the cruise setting (e.g., forecasting, segmentation, targeting, pricing, distribution channel, encounter selling, and more).

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