CSR for Employees' and e-WOM Relationship: Case Study in Maritime Business Organization in Turkey

Nihan Senbursa, Ali Tehci

In the competitive contemporary landscape, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) holds paramount importance for enterprises, fostering ethical management and nuanced business understanding while supporting strategic marketing. The transformative impact of information technologies, exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, reshapes corporate communication dynamics. Amidst this, the symbiotic relationship between CSR initiatives and internal communication becomes crucial for organizational success. This research examines the intricate link between CSR and electronic word of mouth communication (e-WOM) intentions among employees. Additionally, it explores whether employment duration significantly influences e-WOM intentions. The research is theoretically based on a model that supports the impact of CSR on behavioral intentions with stakeholder theory and results in e-WOM. The quantitative research method of survey has been implemented. The relationships between the variables were tested using the Correlation and ANOVA analysis. Based on data from 246 employees serving at operations, sales and marketing, sea logistics and business administration departments by convenience sampling method in a Turkish maritime organization serving in container business, the findings reveal a positive correlation between the CSR initiatives and employees' e-WOM intentions. The study also identifies a discernible impact of employment duration on e-WOM intentions, indicating statistical significance.

University of Ordu, Fatsa Marine Sciences Faculty, Marine Business Management Department, Ordu, Türkiye
e-mail: nihan.senbursa@gmail.com

1. INTRODUCTION

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is a managerial framework encompassing the multifaceted interactions between a company and its various stakeholders, with a particular emphasis on addressing social and environmental reflections within the context of commercial endeavors (Tehci and Senbursa, 2023). In essence, the CSR embodies the voluntary integration of a company's social and environmental concerns into its operational framework, concurrently acknowledging and nurturing its relationships with stakeholders (Ishak et al., 2016). The CSR encompasses the economic, legal, ethical, and philanthropic obligations inherent in the operations of corporate entities. Economic responsibilities necessitate the provision of value to consumers and stakeholders, adherence to legal obligations, and compliance with relevant laws. Ethical responsibilities encompass the ethical norms and principles that businesses ought to uphold, even when not explicitly mandated by legislation. Philanthropic responsibilities involve both material and moral contributions to society (Chang and Lee, 2020). The efficacy of business returns derived from Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is contingent upon the level of awareness among stakeholders regarding a company's CSR initiatives. In the management science, a substantial portion of existing academic research has focused on unravelling the psychological mechanisms and outcomes associated with stakeholder behaviors influenced by the CSR. However, much of this research has either presumed or mandated the CSR awareness among relevant test populations, often observed in controlled laboratory studies.

Recent empirical investigations involving real stakeholders have presented a contrasting perspective. These studies have uncovered that the awareness of a company's CSR activities among both external stakeholders (such as consumers) and internal stakeholders (including employees) is frequently low. This dearth of awareness poses a significant obstacle to a company's pursuit of strategic benefits stemming from its CSR undertakings, as highlighted in studies by Bhattacharya et al. (2008), Du et al. (2007), and Sen et al. (2006). In essence, the identified knowledge gap underscores the critical challenge faced by companies in realizing the strategic advantages of the CSR, necessitating a reevaluation of approaches to enhance stakeholder awareness and engagement with the CSR initiatives. Organizations strategically implement social responsibility initiatives to foster growth and contribute to societal well-being. The extant literature delineates various dimensions of the CSR initiatives, offering guidance to organizations. Scholars such as Visser (2008) and Carroll (1991) proposed an extensive framework that incorporates four primary CSR dimensions, comprising economic, legal, ethical, and philanthropic aspects. In addition to these overarching dimensions, other scholars advocate for a focus on internal CSR practices within firms. These internal practices cover aspects such as health and safety, maintaining work-life balance, providing employee training, ensuring equal opportunities, implementing diversity and inclusion measures, and adhering to fair labor practices, as highlighted in works by Boadi et al. (2019, 2018) and Strobel, Tumasjan and Welpe (2015).

The imperative for businesses to adopt a comprehensive rather than a materialistic approach in their CSR initiatives, underpinned by a strategic vision and management, has been emphasized (Kim, 2013). This strategic management concept, the CSR, is posited as affording businesses opportunities through the utilization of social, environmental, or sustainability considerations to innovate and develop novel products, services, processes, and methodologies (Kim, 2013). Scholars advocate the delivery of high-quality services and the maximization of stakeholder benefits as essential for fulfilling the CSR (Chang, Lee, 2020). Concurrently, WOM, recognized as one of the oldest informal mechanisms for sharing perspectives on products or services (Westbrook, 1987), exerts a profound influence on behaviors (Goyette et al., 2010).

In the contemporary digital landscape, the phenomenon of expressing opinions and experiences regarding products, services, or companies through web-based platforms is encapsulated by the term electronic Word of Mouth (e-WOM) (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004). The ascendancy of social media, propelled by technological advancements, has elevated the significance of virtual communication and interaction, thereby augmenting the potency and facilitation of WOM (Vo, Xiao and Ho, 2017). The transformative impact of

information and internet technologies on communication practices is particularly evident in the realm of online social networks, which have fundamentally reshaped the dynamics of interpersonal and organizational connections (Cortado and Chalmeta, 2016). Recognizing this paradigm shift, organizations have embraced virtual environments and online social networks as instrumental tools for strategic management and marketing endeavors across various domains. For organizations engendering value through products or services that intersect with societal issues, the CSR assumes paramount importance. Consequently, e-WOM emerges as a potent source of information pertaining to service efficacy, innovation, attitudes, and behaviors, thereby positively influencing consumer behavior (Chang and Lee, 2020).

As a pivotal informant in consumer behavior, WOM enables companies to disseminate their CSR initiatives authentically from credible sources to a broader audience, leveraging technological capabilities. The dual communicative function of the CSR activities on social platforms not only signifies a novel avenue for disseminating information but also presents new communication opportunities for engaging stakeholders within business organizations (Choi *et al*., 2019). Organizations engage in the CSR initiatives for diverse motives. The philanthropic dimension, situated at the apex of Carroll's (1991) CSR Pyramid conceptual framework, delineates organizational contributions and endeavors aimed at enhancing societal welfare, thereby functioning as responsible corporate citizens (Türker and Altuntaş Vural, 2016). An additional impetus for these activities lies in their capacity to stimulate intentions (Vo, Xiao and Ho, 2017). Existing literature has explored the WOM surrounding an organization's CSR undertakings (Skarmeas and Leonidou, 2013; Xie *et al*., 2015) and scrutinized its repercussions on e-WOM (Vo, Xiao and Ho, 2017).

While the CSR research has traditionally centered on activities pertaining to environmental pollution prevention, energy conservation, and sustainable production or services at the institutional and organizational levels, it has been observed that there is a relative dearth of attention paid to the implications of the CSR for employees (Hu *et al*., 2019). Furthermore, within the maritime industry, which encompasses both conventional maritime activities and enterprises offering innovative products and services (Ishak *et al*., 2016), the significance of the CSR initiatives undertaken by organizations has gained prominence within contemporary economic and social contexts. According to the literature review, there is a scarce number of studies that touch upon employees, the CSR and e-WOM in the maritime sector. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to shed light on the relationships between corporate social responsibility initiatives and employees' electronic word of mouth in the maritime sector. Consequently, this research is anticipated to contribute meaningfully to both the maritime industry and the extant academic literature.

1.1. Employees' CSR Perceptions

In the contemporary corporate landscape, the integration of the CSR initiatives tailored specifically for employees has emerged as a pivotal strategy, reflecting a nuanced commitment to ethical management practices, and fostering a symbiotic relationship between organizations and their workforce. The presence of the CSR initiatives within a company engenders a heightened sense of pride and commitment among employees, as their personal identities become intertwined with the organizational affiliations they maintain. The effect of the CSR on bolstering an organization's reputation within its employee cohort, thereby augmenting motivation and engagement levels, is a facet that is potentially undervalued. This oversight assumes particular significance for organizations characterized by inconsistencies in the implementation of the CSR initiatives (Gazzola and Mella, 2017). Employees are one of the stakeholders with regards to the execution of the CSR (Lee, Park and Lee, 2013; Meyer, 2015). Nowadays it is an undeniable fact that the CSR exists without reference to the stakeholders of organizations. In accordance with the investigations conducted by Rodrigo and Arenas (2008), the perception that an organization has assumed a novel role, coupled with a positive response to this transformation, induces a notable shift in the perspective of numerous employees. Individuals, who previously regarded the organization solely as a workplace, come to perceive it as an institution aligned with their own social viewpoints (Tehci and Senbursa, 2021; Tehci and Senbursa 2023).

Consequently, employees cultivate a sense of identification with the organization. The results of their research reveal the presence of employees exhibiting a favorable disposition subsequent to the implementation of the CSR programs, alongside others who display an indifferent or dissenting stance. Notably, the research did not identify a category characterized by a cautious disposition, one that might hold a favorable overall perception of these initiatives while adopting a reserved stance, awaiting observable long-term social and corporate outcomes. In a study conducted by Schaefer, Terlutter and Diehl (2021) involving 432 employees from a prominent European energy provider, it was discerned that the paramount determinant influencing the assessment of the CSR engagement across all the CSR domains is the alignment between the cause and the company. In the domains of customer orientation, environment orientation, and philanthropy, the credibility of the CSR message is a crucial factor, while ad-liking notably impacts the employee-oriented domain. The evaluation of the CSR significantly influences job satisfaction, organizational pride, and word of mouth across all four CSR domains, with variations observed in outcomes corresponding to specific domains. Similar literature from other sectors is cited in the subject of this research because the subject matter appears to be analogous to our own. Moreover, the CSR and e-WOM researches are limited in the maritime field. Thus, within the South Korean hotel industry, Kim *et al.* (2017) managed a study revealing that employees' perceptions of CSR towards the organization and its initiatives exert a positive influence on their affective commitment. A parallel conclusion was drawn by Su *et al*. (2017) in the context of China. Park and Levy (2014) posit that within the hotel sector, employees' perception of the CSR plays a crucial role in shaping their organizational identification. This organizational identification, considered as a precursor to employees' affective commitment, subsequently emerges as a predictor of turnover intentions. Stakeholder activities encompass various facets' examples including financial returns to investors, initiatives for community development, behaviors towards employees, and the oversight and regulation of suppliers' behavior (Dahlsrud, 2008).

On the other hand, the research conducted by Kim *et al.* (2017) in Seoul, South Korea, focusing on an upscale hotel sample, and the study by Bohdanowicz and Zientara (2009) examining 13 prominent hotel firms in Europe, both illuminate the concept of Employee Perceived Quality of Work Life (QWL). These investigations reveal that the QWL, as perceived by employees, encompasses the allocation of resources by firms to enhance the well-being of their workforce both within and beyond the organizational context. Acknowledging that the characteristics of both the QWL and patterns of motivation of employees may carry consequences for employee attitudes and behaviors, a deliberate implementation of the QWL programs and a thorough comprehension of the motivation patterns of employees by senior managers, and employers could have a significant impact on the interplay between the employee perceptions of the CSR and its consequential effects on internal outcomes within firms. The findings from Boadi *et al*. (2020) study affirm that a favorable perception of the CSR by employees can be relied upon by rural bank managers to enhance both performance of employees and organizational identification. Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) encompasses the economic, legal, ethical, and philanthropic responsibilities of corporate organizations. Economic responsibilities entail satisfying consumers and stakeholders and complying with laws while fulfilling obligations. Ethical responsibilities involve the behaviors that a business should adhere to, even if not explicitly outlined in the law, and philanthropy encompasses both material and immaterial contributions to society (Chang and Lee, 2020). Businesses engaging in the CSR activities should adopt a holistic approach rather than a purely materialistic one and should possess a corporate vision. Companies, often referred to as corporate citizens (Mattila, 2009), perform their relationships with stakeholders as the CSR, which is described as a voluntary rather than mandatory activity conducted with a sense of responsibility (Sucu, 2020).

1.2. e-WOM

It has been stated in the literature that WOM, the oldest source of information, is likely to influence behavior (Huete-Alcocer, 2017). WOM is conceptualized as informal verbal communication about a product or service (Shao-Chang, 2013). However, thanks to developments in information and communication technologies, people around the world can now share their product or service experiences with the help of the internet. In this

way, people can convey their ideas to all over the world (Tehci, 2022). Within the marketing literature, employees are perceived as internal customers, and the satisfaction of external customers is contingent upon the performance of internal customers (Çoban and Nakip, 2007). When analyzed through the lens of the service profit chain, internal customer satisfaction is deemed essential for the success of businesses (Heskett *et al*., 1994). Furthermore, negative customer experiences serve as motivation for customers to communicate these situations to others (Anderson, 1998; Philip and Ashworth, 2013). While earlier research has explored employee responses to the CSR actions by companies, there is limited understanding of how the CSR influences positive electronic word of mouth from customers (e-WOM). An organization's CSR strategies seem to be especially susceptible, as research indicates that consumers exhibit a more robust reaction to negative CSR news compared to positive CSR news (Hai Ming *et al.,* 2022).

Recognized to a growing extent, employees play a pivotal role as organizational ambassadors by actively creating and spreading information about the organization beyond its boundaries (Kim and Rhee, 2011). Internal members of the company, including employees, can emerge as influential champions for an organization's reputation and strategies of communication through the expression of positive feedback about the organization (Morhart, Herzog and Tomczak, 2009). Nevertheless, the risk arises when employees engage in negative WOM communication, which circulates through their informal networks and ultimately harms the organization (Kim and Rhee, 2011; Lee and Kim, 2017). Sanjaya and Yasa (2018) determined that patient satisfaction has a positive impact on word of mouth (WOM) and corporate image. Kırcova *et al*. (2020) similarly asserted that the perceived service quality, corporate image perceptions, and customer satisfaction of customers using maritime transportation services in Istanbul are fundamental determinants of loyalty. In their studies, they concluded that customer satisfaction has a significant positive effect on customer loyalty, and corporate image has a positive impact on both customer satisfaction and loyalty.

On the other hand, research findings from another study revealed that negative messages concerning the CSR, when disseminated by employees through in-person communication, had a more pronounced impact on diminishing the favorable attitudes and behavioral intentions of the public compared to those disseminated through social media platforms like Facebook. Nevertheless, the significance of the communication channel became negligible when employees shared positive messages about the CSR (Lee and Tao, 2020). Another empirical study investigated the specific restaurant experiences that prompt customers to participate in positive e-WOM. A positive encounter with the food influences the inclination to support the restaurant. Satisfactory interactions with restaurant service employees trigger the customers' positive motivation to support the restaurant and express positive sentiments. The superior ambience and the appearance of restaurant employees, representing the atmosphere, evoke positive motivation centered around the concern for others. Notably, price fairness does not emerge as a primary driver of positive e-WOM (Jeong and Jang, 2011).

Similar to e-WOM from consumers, employees, as vital internal stakeholders of an organization, have the ability to communicate both positive and negative comments about their companies on social media. These actions significantly impact the public, shaping perceptions in either a positive or negative direction (Miles and Mangold, 2014). Due to the developing information and communication technologies today, it would be useful to investigate and think about the e-WOM behaviors of all stakeholders. Earlier research has indicated that positive electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) is more prevalent than negative e-WOM (Lopez and Maria, 2014). The study of Cheng *et al*. (2021) theorized that brand attitude positively affects E-WOM and purchase intentions of customer. The overarching CSR facilitation within Human Resource Management (HRM) involves operational functions designed to support both internal and external Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives. Diverging from Shen and Zhu (2011) perspective, Mory *et al* (2016) offer a more specific definition of the Employee-Centric Corporate Social Responsibility (EC-CSR). According to Mory *et al*., the EC-CSR is narrowly delineated as encompassing socially responsible behavior exhibited by a company toward its employees. This involves activities such as employee development, fostering diversity, empowering employees, and cultivating

a positive work environment. It has been observed that there is a scarce amount of research have been conducted in the maritime area. This means that the scientific novelty of this study is quite satisfactory.

Therefore, the primary aim of this research is to scrutinize the correlation between the CSR strategies targeted at employees and their subsequent e-WOM intentions. Concurrently, the study endeavors to ascertain whether the duration of employment significantly influences employees' e-WOM intentions.

2. MODEL

The importance of the CSR and fostering positive communication among employees stands as a critical determinant for the success and longevity of organizations. The current body of literature confirms that satisfaction and commitment have a favorable influence on the intention to engage in WOM. The research is theoretically based on a model that supports the impact of the CSR on behavioral intentions with stakeholder theory and results in e-WOM. According to this theory, socially responsible actions and behaviors of the business are directed towards its stakeholders (Tehci, 2022; Tehci and Senbursa, 2023). Therefore, the primary aim of this research is to scrutinize the correlation between the CSR strategies targeted at employees and their subsequent e-WOM intentions.

Concurrently, the study endeavors to ascertain whether the duration of employment significantly influences employees' e-WOM intentions. In this study, the relationships between the variables were tested using the Correlation and ANOVA analysis. The quantitative research method of survey has been implemented based on data from 246 white-collar employees by convenience sampling method in a Turkish maritime organization serving in container business, the findings reveal a positive correlation between the CSR initiatives and employees' e-WOM intentions. The conceptual model devised to align with the research objectives is shown in Figure 1.
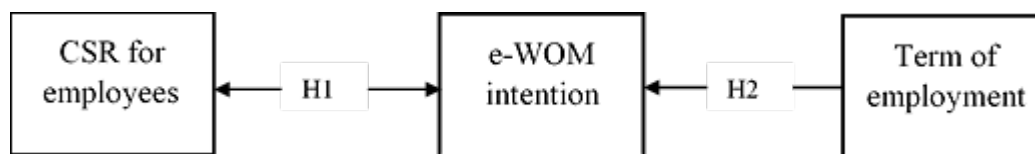

Figure 1. Research Model

In parallel with advancements in technology, organizations have increasingly conducted a portion of their operations through digital channels. However, during COVID-19 pandemic, a substantial shift has transpired wherein communication pertaining to a significant portion of business activities and interactions with employees is now occurring within virtual environments. Notably, individuals engaged in professional capacities on social networking sites are purported to experience an enhancement in their e-WOM intentions through the CSR communication, thereby necessitating managerial engagement in disseminating information regarding the CSR initiatives on digital platforms to positively shape employees' e-WOM behavior (Fatma *et al*., 2020). The study by Vo *et al*. (2017) asserts that a company's enhancement of its corporate image through the CSR activities has a favorable effect on WOM. In the present investigation, it is postulated that the CSR initiatives targeting employees may exhibit a correlation with the positive e-WOM intentions of the workforce. Additionally, it is anticipated that the duration of employment will introduce a significant variance in employees' e-WOM intentions. Within this framework, the ensuing hypotheses have been delineated:

H1: *There is a significant positive correlation between the CSR for employees and e-WOM intention of employees;*

H2: *Term of employment causes a significant difference on the e-WOM intention.*

3. METHOD

In this research, a survey was used as the principal instrument for data collection. Ensuring the study's validity and reliability commenced with a massive amount of review of the existing literature, wherein resources pertinent to the research subject informed the design of the questionnaire. The CSR scale for employees was synthesized from the scholarly works of Brown and Dacin (1997) as well as Klein and Dawar (2004), while the e-WOM intention scale was drawn from the frameworks presented by Zeithaml et al. (1996) and Fatma et al. (2020). The escalating significance of the CSR for organizations and businesses is underscored, paralleled by the growing importance of WOM in marketing literature, particularly in the context of ongoing technological advancements. Despite the proliferation of studies on the CSR and e-WOM, there exists a notable dearth in the literature concerning maritime management—an area of strategic importance in national economies.

Consequently, the research focused on an organization within the maritime sector in Turkey, with the primary demographic being the employees of the selected organization. Given the logistical challenges and cost considerations associated with reaching the entire population, the convenience sampling method was considered appropriately pragmatic for this study. Data for the research were garnered through an electronic questionnaire administered to 246 white-collar employees serving at operations, sales and marketing, sea logistics and business administration departments, utilizing a 5-point Likert Scale during the period spanning from 28/02/2021 to 30/03/2021. Table 1 provides a breakdown of the demographic characteristics of the participants.

Gender	F	%	Educational Status	F	%
Female	83	33.7	Elementary education	5	2.1
Male	163	66.3	High school	29	11.8
Term of employment (year)	**F**	**%**	College/University	175	71.1
1-5	98	39.8	Postgraduate	37	15
6-10	43	17.5	**Age**	**F**	**%**
11-15	50	20.3	18-26	40	16.3
16-19	44	17.9	27-35	104	42.3
20 and older	11	4.5	36-44	80	32.5
Marital Status	**F**	**%**	45 and older	22	8.9
Married	125	50.8	Total	246	100
Single	121	49.2			

Table 1. Demographic Information About Participants

Table 1 shows that around 34% of participants are women, while 66% are men, and their marital status rates are similar. The study reveals that 71% of the participants hold university degrees, with the majority falling within the age range of 27-44.

4. RESULTS

The research data were analyzed in the IBM SPSS 24 package program, and the reliability of the survey questions was tested with the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient. Cronbach's Alpha coefficients of the CSR and e-WOM scales for the employees in the study were found to be 0.851 and 0.943, respectively. The research demonstrates high reliability, as indicated by the alpha coefficient falling within the range of 81% to 100% (Nakip,

2013). Therefore, it is possible to say that this research is quite reliable. Factor analysis involved the application of principal components analysis and varimax transformation, with the outcomes presented in Table 2.

Variable	Question	Factor Load	Eigenvalue	Total Variance%
CSR for employees	CSR1	0.768		
	CSR2	0.842		
	CSR3	0.843	5.695	56.945
	CSR4	0.640		
	CSR5	0.713		
e-WOM intention	eWOM1	0.855		
	eWOM2	0.876		
	eWOM3	0.909	1.603	72.976
	eWOM4	0.853		
	eWOM5	0.804		
Kaiser Meyer Olkin (KMO)		0.884		
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity		Approx. Chi-Square:1855.194 df 45 Sig: 0.000		

Table 2. Results of Factor Analysis

The outcomes of Bartlett's sphericity test presented in Table 2 reveal a significant relationship between variables for factor analysis ($p < 0.05$). The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) Sampling Adequacy Test, which evaluates the appropriateness of the dataset for factor analysis by comparing the size of the partial correlation coefficients with the observed correlation coefficients, yields a favorable value of 0.884 (Kaiser, 1974). Each variable utilized in the study demonstrates a total eigenvalue exceeding 1 and is consolidated under a single factor. The cumulative variance exceeds 70%. Furthermore, it is noted that the factor loadings for each scale in the study are 0.50 and above.

4.1. Hypothesis Test Results

In the study, the relationships between the CSR for employees, which is the independent variable, and the e-WOM intention of the employees with the dependent variable, and the direction of the relationships (H1) were examined by correlation analysis. In addition, the determination of whether the working time causes a significant difference on the e-WOM intention of the employees (H2) was tested with one-way ANOVA analysis. The results of the analysis are presented in the tables below.

Mean	Standard Deviation		CSR for employees	e-WOM intention
4.33	0.704	CSR for employees	1	0.557*
4.30	0.750	e-WOM intention		1

* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level

Table 3. Results of Correlation Analysis

As it is seen in Table 3, a positive correlation at the level of 1% (0.557) was found between the variables as a result of the correlation analysis. Therefore, it can be said that the H1 hypothesis is accepted since there is a positive relationship between the CSR for employees and e-WOM intention of employees.

Scale	Operation Time	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Source	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F	p
e-WOM	1-5	98	4.4571	.85723	Between Groups	5.593	4	1.398		
	6-10	43	4.2000	.56061						
	11-15	50	4.2080	.73508	Within Groups	132.210	241	.549	2.549	0.040
	16-19	44	4.0773	.65870						
	20 and over	11	4.4182	.50955	Total	137.804	245			
	Total	246	4.2919	.74998						
			Homogeneity of Variances = p: 0.135							

Table 4. Results of Anova Test

In Table 4, it is seen that the p value in the variance homogeneity test is 0.135 (p> 0.05). The p-value signifies whether there is a difference in the working hours of the participants and the e-WOM intention is significant, found to be 0.040 (p<0.05). Therefore, it can be said that there is an important distinction between the employment term of the employees participating in the study and the e-WOM intention. The Tukey test was conducted in order to indicate between which groups this significant difference was found, and the results presented in Table 5 were obtained.

Employment Term		Groups	Mean Difference	p	Difference Between Groups
1) 1-5	2	6-10	.25714	.321	
	3	11-15	.24914	.301	
	4	16-19	.37987(*)	**.040**	(1-4)
	5	20 and over	.03896	1.000	
4) 16-19	1	1-5	-.37987(*)	**.040**	
	2	6-10	-.12273	.938	
	3	11-15	-.13073	.913	(4-1)
	5	20 and over	-.34091	.650	

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

Table 5. Results of Tukey Test

In Table 5, the results of the Tukey test, in which significant difference between term of employment of the participants and the e-WOM intention, are found. According to the p value (p <0.05), which indicates whether the difference between the two working periods is significant or not, it can be said that there is a significant difference between 1-5 years and 16-19 years of employment term in the relevant organization. The average difference between 1-5 years and 16-19 years of employment term is 0.380.

5. DISCUSSION

This study extends the current research on employees' perceptions of the CSR in the maritime sector in two main ways. Firstly, the researchers sought to clarify the relationship between the CSR dimensions and employees' positive e-WOM. Secondly, the study investigated whether the duration of employment significantly

influences e-WOM intentions. The findings of the present study reveal a significant positive correlation between the CSR for employees and e-WOM intention, with the duration of employment causing a significant difference in e-WOM intention. These results align with previous research by Lee and Tao (2020), Zhang *et al.* (2021), Mohammed and Al-Swidi (2020), and Kim *et al*. (2017), in which the employees demonstrate a strong commitment to organizations when they perceive the CSR activities positively. Examples from other sectors are given in this research since the results seem to be parallel with ours. The results from Mohammed and Al-Swidi (2020) can be explained through the lens of social exchange theory, providing valuable insights into the connection between the dimensions of the CSR and affective commitment in relation to customers' positive e-WOM within the hotel industry. Hotel managers can gain valuable insights into how specific CSR initiatives contribute to strengthening customers' affective commitment, thereby fostering positive e-WOM. On the other hand, Theofilou and Watson (2014) indicated in their study that an individual's level of skepticism and engagement appears to influence the emergence of a positive impact on employees' WOM. Active participation in the investment sector might be a crucial factor influencing the establishment of relationships within the organization and the generation of positive word of mouth (WOM). Another study explores optimizing corporate social responsibility (CSR) communication on the social media by examining communication type, cause proximity, and the CSR motives. An online survey based on literature review and field research analyzed consumer attitudes and behaviors, such as campaign participation, e-WOM spread, and purchase intention. The findings indicate that cause proximity boosts campaign participation for both monologue and dialogue communication types. The CSR motives significantly influence the willingness to spread e-WOM in both communication formats. The highest attitudes and purchase intentions occur when value- and performance-driven motives are communicated via dialogue. Additionally, message credibility and perceived CSR motives credibility further impact consumer responses (Bialkova and Te Paske, 2021).

Senbursa and Dunder (2024) highlight the critical role of seafarers' psychological well-being, organizational happiness, and perceptions of organizational trust in shaping their experiences during their tenure at sea. The empirical findings of this research reveal significant mediating roles: psychological well-being exhibits a complete mediation effect, organizational happiness demonstrates a full mediation effect, and organizational trust manifests a partial mediation effect. These outcomes underscore the intricate relationship between work-life balance and work effectiveness in the seafaring context. Furthermore, the findings from Kim *et al.* (2017) suggest that the philanthropic and economic aspects of the CSR have a positive impact on Quality of Work Life (QWL), while the legal and ethical CSR do not influence the QWL. Additionally, the study validates the need satisfaction theory, which posits that employees' QWL and job satisfaction contribute to their overall quality of life. Another study's results suggest that a firm's engagement in the CSR enhances both the quantity and positivity of online employee reviews. Conversely, the CSR irresponsibility accelerates the positive impact of the CSR on the volume of online employee reviews, as indicated by Jang, Kim and Lee (2022). Finally, another research investigates the role of corporate social responsibility (CSR), relationship quality (RQ), and perceived value (PV) in reviving Taiwan's cruise industry post-COVID-19. The study found that the CSR and RQ significantly impact electronic word of mouth (E-WOM), with PV and RQ acting as key mediators between the CSR and E-WOM. These findings provide insights into how cruise operators can use the CSR, relationship building, and PV to enhance E-WOM and drive industry recovery. Future research could investigate how these variables impact the CSR strategies, thereby expanding the empirical framework.

6. CONCLUSION

The findings derived from this study reveal a notable positive correlation among the CSR activities, targeting employees and the e-WOM intentions of said employees. Furthermore, an inference drawn from the study suggests that the duration of employment significantly influences employees' e-WOM intentions. The subsequent Tukey test conducted to ascertain specific differences among participant groups in terms of employment duration and its impact on e-WOM intention identified a significant distinction between individuals with 1-5 years and 16-19 years of work experience. The transmission of favorable perceptions regarding the

CSR by employees through e-WOM channels contributes to strengthening the corporate culture and image of businesses, while also impacting and enhancing employees' sense of organizational citizenship and belongingness. The results lend themselves to interpretation through the lens of social exchange theory, offering significant insights into the relationship between the CSR dimensions and their association with employees' positive e-WOM within the maritime industry. The literature has previously acknowledged the influence of satisfaction and commitment variables on WOM intentions. In the contemporary competitive landscape, the significance of the CSR activities for employees, representing a paramount resource for businesses and organizations, cannot be overstated. Such initiatives hold crucial importance for fostering ethical management practices and a nuanced trade understanding, especially in their association with e-WOM — a fundamental variable within the marketing discipline. In the light of technological advancements and the evolving dynamics of the modern world, the maritime sector has also embraced digital technology devices, leveraging them to sustain certain activities. The results of this study might be specific to the maritime sector in Turkey. Implementing the results in various sectors may necessitate adjustments or fine tuning. In the literature, various studies have been conducted investigating the relationship between internal customer satisfaction, external customer satisfaction, corporate image, satisfaction, loyalty, and electronic word of mouth in various sectors for both internal and external customers. Consequently, communication and interaction between managers and employees in the business realm increasingly occur within virtual and digital environments. There are a few noteworthy limitations to this study. This study has the potential to be extended and applied to different sample groups within the maritime sector. Additionally, further research can explore the mediating or moderating effects of electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) using a new model structure. The review of the literature has shown that numerous studies have focused on the CSR and its impact on an organization's customers. In this context, this study represents a pioneering investigation into employees. These findings will contribute to a better understanding of employees in practice and the business realm, facilitating a perspective from their standpoint and further fostering their alignment with the organization. The maritime sector shall benefit from understanding how specific CSR activities can enhance customers' word of mouth, leading to positive e-WOM. Although the relationship between Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) has been extensively studied across various sectors, limited research exists within the maritime industry. It is believed that the current study can serve as a guide for future research projects. Therefore, it is recommended that future studies in the maritime sector employ different analyses and methods for the relevant variables. In this context, the results of this research are posited to provide valuable insights for managers in the maritime sector and make a meaningful contribution to future studies.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

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