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# **CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY POLICIES OF TOURISM INDUSTRY ON CLIMATE CHANGE**

## **ABSTRACT**

In this century earth's climate has changed quickly like no other time period it has been seen before and there has been a great role of human activities in this change which increase greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere. Today, humankind face the consequences of the climate change which will affect natural systems and human life across the globe such as melting of land and sea glaciers, rising of global average sea level, replacement of climate zones, increase of extreme weather events and their intensification, drought, desertification and decrease of drinking water. Furthermore, it has been predicted that climate change will also affect social and economical systems in various ways. Climate is a principal resource for tourism, it determines the suitability of any location for a wide range of tourist activities and it is a principal drive of tourism demand within the impact on the tourists' destination choice. Because of all these factors; tourism is identified as a climate-dependent industry and it is being considered that it will be affected by the climate change more than other economical sectors. In this paper it is aimed to find out how climate change will affect tourism industry. Also, corporate social responsibility policies of tourism industry against climate change will be examined.

***Keywords:** Tourism Industry, Corporate Social Responsibility, Climate Change*

## **INTRODUCTION**

Climate change is a scientifically proved fact and is accepted as one of the most important global environmental problems of this century. When we examine the consequences that climate change will create in the world, it is seen that, it has versatile and complex relation with tourism industry. Because climate change has both direct and indirect impact on tourism sector. Its direct impacts are increase in major storms, flood and fire and destruction of beaches etc, due to global warming that is increasing. Indirectly, impacts are seen that arise due to long term environmental changes in touristic regions like polluted water, decreasing wooden areas, water ebb and land iceberg.

It is anticipated that climate changes that directly or indirectly affect tourism activities in the whole world will cause tourism activities to shift direction as well. It is a common result of many scientific studies that tourism demand will be affected in parallel with the

environmental changes experienced at destinations where negative impact of climate change is seen. Based on this change in demand, future of especially hospitality industry is under threat at tourism destinations where negative impact of climate change is experienced a lot. Due to this climate change, tourists can change destinations that they will travel to and change their travel period however hospitality industry cannot change its location in the same way. In other words, tourism demand for destinations where negative impact of climate change is seen, will decrease, however tourism supply in these destinations, namely the hospitality sector will remain stable. Importance of this condition is emphasized in a report issued in 2008, prepared mutually by United Nations World Tourism Organization, United Nations Environment Program and World Meteorology Organization. In this report, climate change is indicated as the biggest danger before sustainability of tourism in the twenty first century.

Various efforts of tourism enterprises against climate change, which is a threat for tourism and travel industry in macro terms and for hospitality industry for micro terms, stand out. It is seen that, to many corporate social responsibility activities applied in terms of environmental sensitivity, activities that are done to fight this are added. When it is considered that all around the world, sensitivity for fighting with climate change has increased in all business lines, tourism industry, which is more affected from climate change compared to many other industries, must be a pioneer in this. Especially big tourism companies develop corporate social responsibility projects in various fields and publish various reports regarding this issue on web sites.

The main purpose of this study is to present impact of climate change on tourism industry, within the scope of sustainable tourism development. Accordingly evaluations are made based on up-to-date data using scientific reports and foresight predictions. In the second phase, corporate social responsibility activities of enterprises operating in tourism industry, mainly hotels and airlines are evaluated and recommendations for future are determined.

## **CLIMATE CHANGE WITHIN THE SCOPE OF SUSTAINABLE TOURISM AND IMPACTS ON TOURISM INDUSTRY**

Sustainability concept that came forward as a requirement of an ordinary life is about future of people and aims to protect the resources of the field that it is considered for (Beyhan and Ünügür, 2005). Sustainable tourism is a way of development where the environment that people interact with or not are protected without any deformation or change, where cultural integrity, ecological processes, biological variety and systems that preserve life are sustained and where all resources are managed in a way to meet economical, social and aesthetic needs

of tourist and the people in the region visited and in a way to allow future generations to meet same demands (Dinçer, 1996). This approach aims to protect tourism based resources and sustain desired features while fulfilling touristic requirements (Hunter, 1997). The basic approach in sustainable tourism is not to minimize the impact of human on natural environment, it is to maximize the impact of natural environment on people (Çakılcıoğlu, 2006). Recent trends in tourism sector shows that tourists are more conscious about the environment compared to the past and they prefer clean, well preserved tourism destinations (WTO, 1993-1994). For this reason in many countries whose economies depend on touristic activities, major importance is given to protect touristic regions in environmental terms (Garcia-Falcon and Medina-Munoz, 1999). For the tourism industry that built its existence totally on environment and human, sustainability finds meaning only with the strategy of existing for a long term (Özbey, 2002).

One of the most important factors that will affect future of sustainable tourism activities is climate change and possible effects of this. Today, humankind face the consequences of the climate change which will affect natural systems and human life across the globe such as melting of land and sea glaciers, rising of global average sea level, replacement of climate zones, increase of extreme weather events and their intensification, drought, desertification and decrease of drinking water (Beritella, et. al., 2006: 922). Throughout the whole world, both scientists and international institutions and organizations connected with tourism, asks the question "how climate change will affect tourism industry" by evaluating all negative conditions created by climate change and by taking into consideration the strong bond between climate and tourism. The common answer of this question is climate change will affect many aspects of our lives, and holiday habits are among the ones most sensitive to variations in climate. This implies that a very important service sector, the tourism industry, will be directly affected, and this may have important economic consequences (Beritella, et. al., 2006: 922).

Especially United Nations World Tourism Organization has many studies that examine the relation between climate change and tourism. Organization arranges various seminars and conferences regarding the issue and in 2007 it published a report with the title "Development of Tourism and Climate Change", where it has stated that climate change will directly or indirectly affect all tourism activities in the world and will cause these activities to shift direction and explained various predictions in this regard. These are (Frangialli 2007);

- Currently Mediterranean countries that are popular in sea, sun and sand tourism will become unfavorable for tourism activities due to global warming and tourism will develop in countries or regions like Canada, Russia and Scandinavian countries, which are preferred less today due to their cold climate.
- Accordingly winter tourism will change due to global warming. Especially winter sports at Pyrenees and French, Switzerland and Austria Alpines will be in jeopardy.
- On the other hand, in many areas of the world ice and snow covered areas are getting smaller. As snow cover areas recedes, reflection of sun lights back to space decreases and as ice covered areas melt, sea levels rise. This rise will expose coastlines and small, developing islands in tropical regions, like Maldives to the danger of extinction.

This result is a major danger for tourism sector. Because today, tourism destinations like Mediterranean area and Caribbean where tourism sector is the most developed are among the areas that will be affected the most from climate change. For example, according to Perry (2006: 367) “projected greenhouse gas induced climate change may alter the frequency and intensity of events like heat waves, drought and fires which affect tourists in the Mediterranean”. Similarly, Beritella et. al. (2006: 922) stated that the Mediterranean, currently the world’s prime tourism destination, would become substantially less attractive to tourists. The “Rest of the World” region contains the Caribbean, the second most popular destination, which would also become too hot to be pleasant. The “Rest of the World” also comprises tropical countries, which are not so popular today and would become even less popular under global warming. Energy exporting countries lose out because energy demand falls. China and India are hardly affected. North America, Australasia, Japan, Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union are positively affected by climate change.

Climate change, alters the tourist perception for the climatic attractions at a destination and the image of that destination and activities that tourists may carry out at such destinations and this shapes the behaviors of a tourist. In addition to this, climate change alters order of seasonal appeals and impacts tourist flow. When relation between tourism system and climate change is evaluated in wide scale, it is concluded that tourists will not stop travelling, they will only change the time and location of travel (Hall and Higham 2005: 15).

The fact that climate change will not prevent tourists from travelling and that tourists will just stop travelling to tourism destinations that are the most affected from climate change, creates major concern regarding the future of the tourism enterprises at these destinations.

Situation may be more dangerous especially for hospitality enterprises. Because, tourists have the money, knowledge, and time to adapt their behavior and they can switch travel plans to alternative destinations or seasons, or simply stay at home. But enterprises with large investments in fixed assets such as hotels, resort complexes, and casinos don't have that same flexibility, and they have only a limited amount of influence on potential visitors (Kyriakidis and Felton, 2008: 74).

Another aspect of the multi-dimensioned relation between climate change and tourism sector is the applications implemented by the sector, which increase climate change. Carbon dioxide release by enterprises operating in tourism sector, which is the main cause of climate change, shows that sector has a specific carbon footprint. The carbon (or ecological) footprint is a useful generalised indicator for environmental impacts. Ecological footprint is defined as a measure that 'intends to provide an overview of the use of resources and the generation of waste that can be attributed to final consumption (either for a certain category or an economy as a whole) on the basis of available technology and processes' (Peeters and Schouten, 2006: 158). Ecological footprint analysis (EFA) has growing applications in number, diversity of use and scope of application EFA is currently the most popular method for assessing the environmental performance of tourism, representing a valuable attempt to measure its environmental impacts when very few alternative sustainability assessment approaches exist. The potential of EFA to address energy consumption with associated impacts on climate is recognized (Kyriakidis ve Felton, 2008: 71).

Negative impact of global climate change on lives of people is accepted by the global public opinion and in this regard, both public institutions and private institutions raise their voice in fighting with climate change. Many international organizations today carry out studies in this regard and are trying to determine how various activities of human beings contribute to the climate change. In 2007, United Nations World Tourism Organization issued a report together with United Nations Environment Program and World Meteorology Organization which covered carbon dioxide gas emission rates in 2005 arising from global tourism activities.

**Table 1. 2005 Emissions from Global Tourism in 2005 (including sameday visitors)**

Source of Emission	CO <sub>2</sub> (MT)	Share %
<b>Total Transport</b>	<b>985</b>	<b>75</b>
<b>Air Transport</b>	517	40
<b>Other Transport</b>	468	35
<b>Accommodation</b>	<b>274</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>Activities</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Total</b>	1,307	100
<b>Total World</b>	<b>26,400</b> ---	

**Source:** WMO, UNWTO, UNEP, 2007.

Table 1 shows the results of the emissions for world tourism in 2005. Table shows that in 2005 transport generated the largest proportion of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions (75%) from global tourism, with approximately 40% of the total being caused by air transport alone. For this reason, many airline companies started to implement practices to lower this release rate. Similarly, in some countries, airlines are subject to tax referred to as green tax due to their carbon dioxide release. Emissions from accommodation and activities were estimated to be substantially lower than transport emissions, but emissions from the accommodation subsector are also not negligible.

## **CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY POLICIES OF TOURISM ENTERPRISES REGARDING CLIMATE CHANGE**

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) can be broadly defined as ‘actions that appear to further some social good, beyond the interests of the firm and that which is required by law’ (McWilliams and Siegal, 2001: 117). There is a multi-dimension relation between tourism industry, climate change and corporate social responsibility. First of all, climate change has negative impact on tourism industry and similarly, sector makes contributions to this climate change. When we handle the issue based on this, it is expected that corporate social responsibility policies applied by tourism sector against climate change are realized within the frame of fighting with climate change. Many enterprises operating in tourism sector develops various “green” strategies to fight with climate change and it is stated that these strategies will shape the structure of the sector in the future (Kyriakidis and Felton, 2008: 71).

## ***Hotels***

Today, especially at international hotel chains and major hotels, importance of climate change issue is increasing more and more and it is seen that hotels are applying more "green" theme projects within the scope of their corporate social responsibility activities.

Marriott International, the world's biggest hotel chain, makes contracts with independent organizations within the scope of corporate social responsibility activities, in order to measure carbon footprint of their hotels and develops an environment strategy to fight with climate change. Within the scope of this strategy, water, waste and energy; supply chain; green buildings takes specific steps in five main areas that work by associating with the customer, and these steps are carried out to protect rain forests. Another example that can be given to green corporate social responsibility policies of hotels is the Radisson chain. Radisson is getting specialized in recycling area with its "green office" application implemented at its hotels (Vijayaraghavan, 2010).

French origin Concorde Hotels&Resorts group has published a press release stating that as of June 1, 2010, they have started a corporate social responsibility program. According to this press release, group gathers its corporate social responsibility projects under two main titles: environment and society. Concorde group's environment related social responsibility activities include; measuring carbon footprint of hotels under the group, training employees to raise environmental awareness of employees and raising awareness of their customers in this regard. In this respect, Hotel Concorde La Fayette Hotel at Paris, uses 100% organic and ecologically produced products for personal care materials placed in 950 rooms and suits of the hotel and it aims to raise awareness of its customers regarding sustainable development ([www.concorde-hotels.com](http://www.concorde-hotels.com)).

***Hilton*** Worldwide is represented by 10 brands comprising more than 3600 hotels in 81 countries. The chain is committed to reducing resource use, while at the same time enhancing guest experience and gaining employee loyalty. In 2008, CEO Christopher Nassetta announced the chain's global goal of reducing waste to landfill, energy consumption and CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by 20% as well as water consumption by 10% by 2014 compared with 2008 as part of the Hilton Worldwide Global Sustainability Initiative. Earlier, Hilton hotels in Continental Europe had participated in the regional environmental programme (we care!) between 2006 and 2008 (Bohdanowicza, et. al., 2011: 804-805).

As part of the Hilton Family of Hotels, which recently announced short- and long-term sustainability commitments, ***Conrad Hotels & Resorts*** is committed to operating at the world's highest environmental standards, and two hotels in the group have to date been

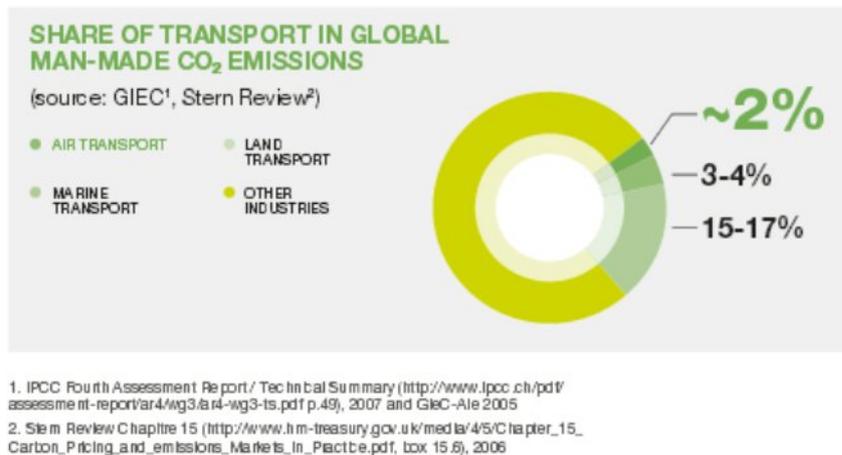
awarded the prestigious Green Globe certification to reflect their ecological endeavours. *The Conrad Bali* and the *Conrad Cairo* were independently audited against key environmental indicators including energy and water consumption, waste production and community commitment. Both hotels were certified by Green Globe in recognition of their commitment to the principles of environmental and social sustainability. *The Conrad Maldives Rangali Island*, *the Conrad Centennial Singapore* and *the Conrad Istanbul* have also pioneered their own hotel Green Team, bringing team members from across the resort together to increase recycling, reduce waste and educate colleagues about global environmental awareness ([www.conradhotels1.hilton.com](http://www.conradhotels1.hilton.com)).

### ***Airlines***

Air travel is forecast to grow globally at around 5% per annum over 30 years, in direct conflict with targets to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by between 60% and 80% by 2050. Many authors identify individual behavioral change, with consumers choosing fewer flights, as a contributor to reducing growth (Dickinson, et. al., 2013: 506). There are as yet few airlines that have taken a pro-active approach to climate change. Many low-cost airlines with a very young fleet of aircraft have achieved comparably low emissions per pkm, but this is rather a result of recent rapid growth in the sector than environmental concerns. Overall, there is thus a huge potential for airlines to reduce emissions, even though there are as yet few signs that airlines want to make use of this potential (Simpson, et. al., 2008: 71).

Combatting climate change is a global challenge, to which the air travel industry was the first to organize a joint response. Regulations at a global sectoral level can effectively control the industry's CO<sub>2</sub> emissions ([www.corporate.airfrance.com](http://www.corporate.airfrance.com)).

**Figure 1. Share of Transport in Global Man-Made CO<sub>2</sub> Emissions**



**Source:** [www.corporate.airfrance.com](http://www.corporate.airfrance.com)

*Delta Air Lines* is committed to minimizing its impact on the environment and conducting operations in an environmentally responsible manner. Delta's ongoing sustainability efforts include increasing transparency by tracking its greenhouse gas emissions and ensuring that the airline's emissions reduction target aligns with those set out by International Air Transport Association (IATA) and Airlines for America (A4A). Delta is implementing innovative strategies to reduce aircraft fuel burn and continues to monitor and explore opportunities in alternative fuels. In addition, Delta is reducing waste and encouraging employee and customer involvement through initiatives such as in-flight recycling, employee recycling centers, employee alternative commute options, e-ticketing and aircraft carpet recycling ([www.skyteam.com](http://www.skyteam.com)).

*Air France - KLM* is convinced that sustainable aviation is possible, which is why it has adopted a pioneering role in the airline industry aimed at pushing back climate change. KLM has an extensive range of measures (fleet renewal, fuel efficient flying, sustainable biofuels, winglets, smart aircraft deployment, aircraft of the future, better engine cleaning, energy consumption on the ground) and initiatives in place to achieve this. Important elements are adjustments to the fleet, fuel-efficient flight and compensation. KLM is committed to developing biofuels in the midterm. KLM also stimulates and supports scientific research into new technologies and the development of the aircraft of the future ([www.klm.com](http://www.klm.com)). Also, Air France-KLM has a longstanding commitment to deal with climate change by reducing its own carbon footprint. The Group realizes this reduction through improving its operational efficiency, active fleet renewal, offsetting and using sustainable alternative fuels ([corporate.airfrance.com](http://corporate.airfrance.com)).

By implementing a wide range of measures, *Lufthansa and its group companies* continuously work on increasing their ecological efficiency in flight operations over the long-term. Apart from billion-euro investments in a state-of-the-art low-emissions fleet, this also includes the implementation of the latest technologies in aircraft maintenance. In addition, all processes with an influence on weight are examined with the greatest care. The focus of the company's environmental strategy remains on long-term reductions in different areas: pollutant and noise emissions as well as energy consumption ([www.lufthansagroup.com](http://www.lufthansagroup.com)).

Similarly, environmental strategies are very important for *Turkish Airlines*. Turkish Airlines' Fuel Saving Program started in April 2008 with the collaboration of the IATA Green Team. As a result of the implementation of this fuel saving program which focuses on managing fuel consumption efficiently, there were 95,164 tons of fuel saved Between January and September 2009. A Fuel Steering Committee was formed (competent and dedicated people from key departments, i.e. Flight Ops, Dispatch, Ground Ops, IT, Maintenance and Engineering, Catering, Quality Assurance). A campaign, 'Save Fuel, Save the Green' has started within all operational departments. Turkish Airlines now fly 17% more fuel efficient than early 2008. Turkish Airlines expand without harming the environment ([www.turkishairlines.com](http://www.turkishairlines.com)).

### ***Social Organizations***

Along with examples of corporate social responsibility practices included in web sites of international hotel chains and corporate social responsibility reports published, there are various initiatives in recent years that gather hotels from different regions of the world for various corporate social responsibility objectives. "Green" Hotels Association under this initiative gathers together hotels that follow environmentally-friendly policies and that pay attention to this issue. Energy and water saving is made and solid waste level is reduced in hotels included under this union. Another similar practice is not changing the towels and sheets of guests every day ([www.greenhotels.com](http://www.greenhotels.com)).

Rise in sea level, which is one of the most important results of climate change, increases concerns of many touristic islands and sea-side hotels where tourism industry is highly developed. It is possible for beaches to submerge, for coast ecosystems to be destroyed and for extreme rain and flood to prevent tourism activities due to the rise in sea level. It is seen that studies in this regard are insufficient even though many hotel enterprises around the world is faced with this threat. Among researches examined in this regard, a case study stands out about Florida region, one of the most important and largest tourism destinations in USA.

Climate change is becoming a growing concern in Florida, U.S.A. where potential rising sea levels and atmospheric disturbances may have a profound effect. Many hotels within the state of Florida are also taking significant steps in renovating their current hotels to meet the criteria of **“Green Lodging” hotels**. The Florida Green Lodging Program (FDLP) was developed as a certification program by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) to encourage the lodging industry to conserve and protect Florida’s natural resources. Its key objectives are to acknowledge and promote lodging facilities that demonstrate water and energy conservation, waste minimization, recycling, indoor air quality, environmentally preferable purchasing, program sustainability, and pollution prevention. From a modest beginning the Florida Green Lodging certification program has grown from one resort in 2004, 21 resorts in 2007, to close to 170 resorts with at least first level certification in 2008 and now over 350 new applicants (Richins ve Scarinci, 2009: 112).

Another organization that examines corporate social responsibility activities of international hotels and airline enterprises from another perspective is a non-governmental organization called Climate Counts. This organization examines world’s biggest enterprises from various sectors within the scope of climate change issue. The objective here is to ensure that enterprises do not use toxins during their activities, to evaluate environmental impact of their activities and to guide them in making effort regarding climate change. Climate Counts use a 0-to-100 point scale and 22 criteria to determine if companies have ([www.climatecounts.org](http://www.climatecounts.org)):

- MEASURED their climate “footprint”
- REDUCED their impact on global warming
- SUPPORTED (or suggest intent to block) progressive climate legislation
- Publicly DISCLOSED their climate actions clearly and comprehensively

As the result of examinations carried out by Climate Counts, enterprises are scored over 100 and are classified in 4 categories according to their status. Category referred to as “Stuck” lists enterprises at worst condition and category “Starting” list enterprises that started applying these criteria recently, category “Striding” lists enterprises that perform sufficiently regarding climate change and top category called “Soaring” lists enterprises that carry out the activities at premium level.

The world’s largest hotel chains may be seeking practical ways to address a range of broad environmental impacts in their operations, from toxic chemical use to indoor air quality to water. However, few appear to be aligning such actions as part of a larger and more

comprehensive carbon management strategy. An average sector score of 19 out of a possible 100 suggests the sector has much work ahead.

**Figure 2. Climate Change Scores of International Hotel Chains**



Source: [www.climatecounts.org](http://www.climatecounts.org)

The airline industry runs on carbon-based fuels, plain and simple. But does that mean there aren't companies in the sector that aren't seriously focused on reducing their impact on climate change? Not necessarily. It's an industry that requires innovation to truly lead in the fight against global warming. A few big airlines may soon be flying higher.

**Figure 3. Climate Change Scores of Airlines**



Source: [www.climatecounts.org](http://www.climatecounts.org)

As can be seen from above, the most efficient corporate social responsibility activities regarding fighting with climate change, within the frame of standards determined by the organization are carried out by the hotel chain Saunders Hotel Group and by airline enterprise Lufthansa.

## CONCLUSION

Following industrial revolution high amount of carbon dioxide etc. gases are released to the atmosphere due to intense use of fossil fuels and this lead to increase in heat retaining capacity of the atmosphere. This brought with it an increase in sera effect, global warming and climate change. Climate change and global warming can affect human health directly (e.g., reduced cold stress in temperate countries but increased heat stress, loss of life in floods and storms) and indirectly through changes in the ranges of disease vectors (e.g., mosquitoes), water-borne pathogens, water quality, air quality, and food availability and quality (medium to high confidence) (IPCC, 2001: 9).

Main raw material of tourism is climate and environment so the problems which will arise shall impact all enterprises operating in tourism industry, primarily hotel enterprises. On the other hand tourism industry and tourism activities cause direct or indirect climate change. In this respect, to maintain sustainability, tourism enterprises need to carry out activities to reduce the impact of tourism on climate change and need to develop corporate social responsibility policies and also they need to support activities that prevent and delay climate change. Also tourism sectors need to pay more attention to corporate social responsibility activities compared to other economical units and need to apply these fully for the right purposes.

Tourism can play a significant role in addressing climate change. It must show leadership as an agent of change for both adaptation and mitigation – *the time for action is now*. All tourism businesses and destinations will need to adapt in order to minimize risks and capitalize on an new opportunities in an sustainable way. The tourism sector must rapidly respond to climate change for sustainable devolopment. This will require action to ([www.unwto.org](http://www.unwto.org)):

- Mitigate its greenhouse gas emissions, derived especially from transport and accomodation activities;
- Adapt tourism businesses and destinations to changing climate conditions;
- Apply existing and new technology to improve energy efficiency;
- Secure financial resources to help poor regions and countries.

Today, many international hotel chain and tourism enterprises understood the importance of corporate social responsibility fact and are carrying out various activities in this regard. Especially big hotel groups and airline enterprises develop corporate social responsibility projects in various fields and publish various reports regarding this issue on

web sites. All these reasons reveal the importance of having a single, independent institution that will assess the activities of tourism sector for fighting with climate change, in terms of corporate social responsibility performances.

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