

# **COMMUNICATION ON CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY AND MANAGEMENT OF RESPONSIBLE CORPORATE REPUTATION**

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## **Introduction**

Corporate Social Responsibility has an incredible impact on the overall performance of companies – assists their financial stability, promotes profits, empowers skilled employees, increases access to investment and capital. CSR is a multidimensional construct that requires organizational change – of strategies, processes, products, structure and last but not least – of the corporate culture of the organization that perceives this philosophy. The implementation of the CSR Concept requires companies to behave lawfully, reducing the risk of sanctions on the part of the institutions of the executive and judicial authorities, and helping to open and retain loyal customers.

One of the main engines of CSR is the "intangible values" (Димитрова, 2012; 2013) – corporate culture, corporate and organizational identities, images, brands, corporate reputation (Miles and Covin, 2000). Through the intangible values, the CSR Concept supports the maintenance of a positive relationship between the organization, and its stakeholders. External stakeholders take into account the company's reputation for making investment, purchase or use of services offered by the company as well as when applying for a job. Internal stakeholders – mostly employees – feel much more satisfied and convinced of the high morale of the organization they work for when it is committed to helping and solving issues of public concern. Thus, the company creates and maintains a positive image and a positive corporate reputation.

In its attempt to achieve and manage a positive reputation, the company requires a competent corporate communications policy. A serious aspect of corporate communication to maintain a positive reputation is communication about practices in line with the CSR concept implemented by the company. Through this communication, which aims to promote dialogues and debates with critical stakeholders, identity is being constructed and reconstructed. Generally speaking, CSR practices of the company need to be represented and sustained in

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the context of a continuous dialogue and interaction with stakeholders, because the constructive conversations are at the root of maintaining a good and fruitful relationship between the organization and its stakeholders. The result must be ethical organizational behavior and a positive reputation for a socially responsible company that promotes overall competitiveness (Brahim and Arab, 2011).

By analysing the theoretical and empirical studies related to the issues under consideration, this article proposes a model for managing the "intangible values" of the company through corporate CSR communication.

### **Goals and tasks of the current study**

The purpose of the study is to present the importance of corporate communication, designed to be familiarized, perceived and acted by the CSR philosophy of the company's stakeholders, as well as the basis for maintaining and managing the relationship with them. Corporate communication for CSR is addressed in the context of the management of "intangible values" – the identities (corporate and organizational) the image (internal and external) of the company and the corporate reputation of a socially responsible company – which exist within the framework of corporate culture.

The ultimate goal is to create a model based on the theoretical formulations.

The tasks resulting from this goal are:

- A brief presentation of the concept of CSR and its relationship with corporate culture and the theory of the stakeholders;
- Discovering the essence of corporate communications, their role, and importance in managing "intangible values" and relationships with stakeholders;
- Presenting the constructs of identities, images, corporate reputations about the issues under consideration;
- To formalize the importance of CSR communications to promote understanding and adoption of Concept strategies and practices by company stakeholders and to manage the company's identity, and reputation as socially responsible.

The above-mentioned is essential for the modern company management in the context of the implementation of good practices.

### **Methodology**

Based on the literature review, focusing on the relationship between corporate communications and management of the company's "intangible values" in the context of CSR concept, we can propose the Model for managing socially responsible corporate reputation.

## **Hypothesis**

Corporate communications (external, internal and management) help to manage relationships with stakeholders to understand, adopt and act by CSR principles. When the principles are harmonized with corporate culture postulates, the corporate communications for CSR manage identities and images, with the result being the achievement of a positive corporate reputation of legitimized, socially responsible company.

## **Literature Review**

### ***Corporate Social Responsibility***

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is a business management philosophy in a way that turns companies into active participants in overall social development. An essential element of the corporate strategies of socially responsible companies is to respect and act in line with the interests of their stakeholders – shareholders, employees, clients, suppliers, local community, governmental institutions, non-governmental organizations, etc.

Corporate Social Responsibility is a concept which enhanced the perception and action by the postulates of the People, Planet and Profit model. The CSR is an expression of respect for stakeholder interests, management of processes in the organization in the context of sustainable development, increase in profits in proportion to the social well-being, i.e., the company must exist and develop as a good corporate citizen. That said, the components of social responsibility must be transformed into values, norms and underlying assumptions of the corporate culture. One of the most cited definitions of CSR is that provided by Carroll (1991), which defines the corporate social responsibility of business as economic, legal, ethical and philanthropic responsibilities of the company.

The concept of CSR represents a strategic advantage for the organization it adopts and a significant source of competitive benefits as well as the conditions for their upgrading. Through its socially responsible activities, it maintains positive relationships with critical groups of stakeholders (Hess, Rogovsky, and Dunfee, 2002; Walsh, 1999).

### ***Driving forces of CSR. Corporate culture***

According to the CSR concept, companies are no longer just manufacturers of goods and services; they are active participants in the public regimes of communities and societies. Companies operate as networks – all of their key stakeholders are co-actors in the creation of values. They strive to generate the

trust that is at the core of social capital and leads to the reputation being positive, and hence to increasing overall competitive performance.

The primary drivers of the CSR concept can be defined as internal and external. Among the internal ones are the leadership, which is mostly understood as ethical (Kotter, 1996; DeSimone & Popoff, 2000), corporate culture and shared values, reputation, customer requirements and expectations, moral and ethical aspects of responsible organizational behavior.

Among the external ones can be distinguished – the macro, legal, political, economic regulations supporting the introduction and implementation by companies of policies and standards in the context of the CSR concept; access to resources, growing public expectations and requirements, environmental issues, opportunities for interaction between different social and organizational actors.

Adoption of the principles of CSR requires that the company inevitably changes its business ethics. That process depends on the individual values of the members of the organization and the corporate culture postures that senior management introduces, as well as the principles that are formalized and act in the organizational reality (Welford, 1995, p. 29). We can note that the changed business ethics also harmonizes with a change in corporate culture that is "in line with the concept of sustainable development" (Welford, 1995, p. 114). As the concept of CSR is multifaceted, the change of corporate culture should be carried out at all levels (Schein, 1992) to successfully adopt practices in line with CSR and adaptation of organizational behavior to them (Linnenluecke & Griffiths, 2010). Consequently, embracing the concept of CSR by companies requires the existence of a corporate culture that is characterized by opportunities to respond appropriately to the social needs and expectations of society, its ethos and its legal protection. These priorities should take into account both corporate and company development strategies, and they should be at the heart of the overall corporate policy.

Corporate culture is perceived as a "social or normative glue that holds an organization together" (Smircich, 1983, p. 344). It encompasses and transforms into a recognizable organizational reality. Corporate culture is seen as the set of values, norms, basic assumptions that are accepted and in unison with which the members of the organization carry out their daily activities (Schein, 1992, Miron et al., 2004). It is a "dynamic phenomenon and a coercive background structure that influences us in multiple ways" (Schein 2010, p. 3). The culture of an organization correlates with corporate strategy and its structure. Corporate culture is a construct that supports change and is an essential condition for achieving and enhancing competitive performance. Corporate culture and corporate communications are interrelated and mutually determined. Corporate culture is the framework in which the other "intangible values" of the organization exist – identities, images, reputation (Димитрова 2012; 2013). The contact between

the internal and external stakeholders of the organization is mediated by the corporate culture (Hatch, and Schultz, 1997) with the help of the organization's communications (Melewar, and Karaosmanoglu, 2005). Understanding corporate culture is essential for members of the organization as well as for other groups of stakeholders who are critical to it. According to Molnar & Mulvihill (2003), sustainability underpinned by CSR must necessarily correspond to the corporate culture, mission, and vision of the company. They also emphasize the need to harmonize values and underlying assumptions with the principles of sustainable development of the company. The concept of CSR requires a strong attachment to the company's social responsibilities and is to internalize its policies, which must be embedded in corporate culture to involve all members of the organization in its efforts to implement it. The idea is that the organization that wants to adopt the principles of the CSR concept, should create a sustainable corporate culture (Crane, 1995)

Collier & Esteban (2007) present three aspects of the concept of CSR: the creation of programs summarized in codes of ethical behavior based on the identity, vision, and values that unite the members of the company. In harmony with them, they regulate the relationship of the company with all key groups of stakeholders.

Many authors point out that corporate culture and the system of values shared by members of the organization primarily determine the acceptance of CSR principles. Those principles identified the actions of the members of the organization in concert with them (Collier & Esteban, 2007; Maignan, Ferrell & Hult, 1999; Smith & Yanowitz, 1999; Swanson, 1995; Van Marrewijk & Werre, 2003). The concept of CSR is a multidimensional construct and as such is directly related to various concepts and organizational theories, to the motivation of the members of the company as well as to the organizational commitment (Collier & Esteban, 2007; Graafland & Van de Ven, 2006). According to Hanas (2007), "the intangible values" found in employees' motivation and their satisfaction not only with their work but also with their belonging to the company, as well as loyalty to the brand, are associated with an increase in its competitive performance.

Strategic leadership theory is also applied to addressing the theoretical aspects of the CSR concept. The theory is understood as a framework that encompasses the shared value that influences the strategy and guides the decision makers by changing their thinking. The last is about the relation to the acquisition of new competencies and skills that are in the corporate culture domain and are a prerequisite to introduce innovations and to increase the competitive performance (Porter and Kramer, 2006; Porter and Kramer, 2011; Pant & Lachman, 1998). We must not miss the essential fact that leadership and corporate culture are interdependent. Organization communications, as well as management communications, are responsible not only for acquainting critical stakeholders

with the practices of the organization in the context of CSR but also for supporting their active inclusion in them as well as for internalizing the values of CSR by employees and embracing actions by them in their day-to-day activities.

Last but not least, the adoption of the principles of CSR and the harmonization of the company's overall policy in line with them is a guarantee for increasing its competitive advantages.

Heynesgard and Wahlberg (Hjjensgerd and Wahlberg, 2002) point to four necessary parameters in adopting and applying the principles of CSR to the activities of a company:

1. Integration. Corporate leaders are responsible for integrating the company's business strategies with CSR principles by initiating their adoption and implementation by members of the entire organization.

2. Innovation. The corporate leadership understands the organization's practices in line with CSR principles as an opportunity to generate innovation and create business values.

3. Accountability. Corporate leaders recognize and assume responsibility for the established goals and police and ensure their continuity.

4. Engagement. The company's leadership is directly involved in communicating with key stakeholders and providing a continuous creative dialogue in which knowledge and information are shared.

The above parameters are in sync with each other and are implemented simultaneously.

### ***The Corporate Social Responsibility and Theory of Stakeholders***

In the light of this, it is necessary to emphasize that Stakeholder theory is one of the most critical topics in CSR research (Carroll, 1991, Clarkson, 1995, Friedman and Miles, 2006, Jones, Wicks & Freeman, 2002, Roberts, 1992; Wood, 1991). It sets a framework for assessing CSR through the social activities that the company implements. Stakeholder theory is central to the excellent management of corporate communications.

According to the Stanford Research Institute, Freeman (1984) suggests that the stakeholders are "those groups without whose support the organization would cease to exist". Stakeholders are seen as internal, the groups to which the management of the organization assumes responsibility – such are the employees. The other group is the external ones that influence the organization "from the outside" – such are the clients, the suppliers, the different institutions with which it has contacts, the media, the trade unions, competitors (Clarkson, 1996). The key to the existence and development of the organization are groups such as the media, non-governmental organizations and pressure groups, the members of the community on whose territory it is located. Mentioned above said that it is necessary



to manage the relations with the groups of stakeholders through communications through a sophisticated, delicate, consistent approach. The presumption is that stakeholders predetermine the existence of the organization, both as a business structure and as a corporate citizen, as a company that respects and implementing the principles of the Concept of Corporate Social Responsibility.

Thomas Donaldson and Lee Preston (1995) analyze groups of stakeholder and determine that all individuals or groups who are linked to the organization through their legitimate interests and derive some benefit from their relationship with it are essential for its operation. They define three main aspects of the theory of stakeholders: descriptive; instrumental, normative. The authors describe the organizational relationships – stakeholders as bilateral and equal in weight.

However, a problem arises from the fact that the interests of the stakeholders are different and this causes difficulties in the ability of managers to take into account the different interests of different groups. Jensen (2001) introduces the Enlightened Value Maximization definition, which recognizes that the communication and motivation of the organization's managers, employees, and organizational partners is an incredibly complex process. The maximization of value is set as a prerequisite, which, combined with the vision and strategy of the company, indicates the underlying value to which it aspires, and the ultimate result of this combination is the achievement of competitive advantage. Jensen unites the "Enlightened stakeholder maximization" with "Enlightened stakeholder theory". It results in the necessary conclusion that the organization should be in the closest relationship and take care of satisfaction to the needs of these stakeholders without which it could not exist as a business unit: the owners, the employees, the customers and the suppliers. To them, the organization has to provide "audibility" as well as to involve them in the decision-making processes concerning the policies it implements, the formulation of the goals, etc. (Cornelissen, 2008). Therefore, the organization's communications must be polyphonic and facilitate multi-faceted and multi-layered interactions between and with the stakeholders.

The organization's ability to create and maintain relationships with all its essential stakeholders in continuous interaction and long-term commitment guarantees not only its long-term existence but also the generation, management, and enhancement of its value-creation capacity (Post, Preston and Sachs 2002 Clarkson, 1995). Freeman, Harrison et al. (2010: p. 263) even propose replacing the term "corporate social responsibility" with their idea of "corporate stakeholder responsibility" which implies a new interpretation of the purpose of CSR practices. The idea is adequate to the core objective of CSR, which is to create value for key stakeholders to meet the company's responsibilities towards them. This idea addresses business and society in their interdependence and predetermines that when the relationship with the stakeholders is managed competently, it will lead to an increase in the competitive advantages of

the company. In this connection, it is necessary to be aware of precisely who the organization has defined responsibilities and what is their nature. The business value created by the organization must also be supported by CSR programs that emphasize the values shared by critical stakeholders (Maignan, Ferrell, & Ferrell, 2005; Polonsky, 1995).

### ***Communication for Corporate Social Responsibility***

Cornelissen (2011:5) postulated that the corporate communication is "a management function that offers a framework for the effective coordination of all internal and external communication with the overall purpose of establishing and maintaining favorable reputations with stakeholder groups upon which the organization is dependent". Therefore, corporate communication is a strategic tool that helps to achieve mutual understanding between the organization and its stakeholders, as well as managing and maintaining the company's reputation.

Cornelissen (2004) outlines (based on Freeman, 1984) three groups of company stakeholders. The first is equity, which represents the group of owners of the company, the so-called shareholders. The following – market stakeholders – also have financial relations with the company but are not its owners – these are employees and customers. The latter group, which also has no financial relationship with the company, consists of the so-called influencers – governmental and non-governmental organizations and pressure groups. The division of these groups is too abstract because they often transmute into a dynamic, volatile, challenging, undefined business environment. In fact, modern organizations are becoming communities of people who work successfully motivated by sharing common goals in the context of shared values (Гарванова, 2017). An essential condition for the existence of the company as an open, flexible system of interconnected stakeholder groups is the design of a competently planned and implemented communication policy. It is necessary for the dissemination of messages raising the awareness of the stakeholders about the CSR actions of the company. The purpose of communication of the activities that the company carries out in harmony with the principles of CSR is to present it as ethical, socially responsible and open.

Of particular importance for the success of the programs implemented by the organization in connection with the CSR concept, is the adoption, internalization, and implementation by the employees. For this purpose, the company must have a corporate culture that promotes the values that support the perception and application of CSR initiatives for the benefit of all its stakeholders and society as a whole. If organizational practices, including some of the programs developed by the organization in line with this concept, are perceived by members as necessary to improve the well-being of specific groups of stakeholders and society as a whole,



they will be identified very much stronger with the organization. Companies that are actively engaged in campaigns in line with the CSR concept are much more attractive as employers when recruiting new employees. Consequently, communication to promote perception and actions in line with the CSR postulates must be carefully and competently constructed and implemented.

The communication of the CSR initiatives of the company should also provide support for their implementation by external stakeholder (Scott and Lane, 2000). Mentioned add additional competitive advantages to its essence, positives of its image and reputation, as well as increasing the tendency to invest in it, the use of the products and services it provides. That said, it represents the ability of the external stakeholders of the organization to perceive it as responsive and sensitive to the actual public problems, for example through the corporate philanthropy that helps and enhances its positive reputation.

Increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of CSR communication should be imperative to measure and evaluate its impact. If this communication is based on the ongoing dialogue and discussions between the company and the stakeholders it interacts with, it will help legitimize the company as a socially responsible. Therefore, the "stakeholder dialogue" is an essential component of CSR and is perceived as significant for the success of the company. It minimizes the lack of understanding by the stakeholders about the meaning of practices, reduces skepticism regarding of their authenticity, which is expressed in the return of investments and increasing financial and non-financial performance of the company (Golob and Podnar, 2014, p. 248; Amaladoss and Manohar, 2013). As noted by Du et al. (2010), the transparency of information related to the company's CSR activities positively affects its identity.

Corporate communication, in the context of CSR, builds, manages, and maintains corporate images, identities, and reputation through the dissemination of information. This information not only attracts attention but also promotes proactive action by the stakeholders who help to harmonize different social values (Kuhn and Deetz 2008, p. 190) and assists in its functioning as a socially responsible actor. The media that is "responsible" for CSR communication is also vital to its successful realization. "We contend that firms use corporate communication media (annual report, disclosure, press releases) to manage perceived environmental legitimacy by signaling to relevant publics that their behavior is appropriate and desirable". Social accounting has been understood as a process of social justification and risk management (Bebbington et al., 2008; Crawford and Williams, 2011; Пейчева и др., 2017). CSR online communication ensures successful campaigns across corporate web pages (Capriotti, 2011), blogs (Fieseler et al., 2010) and supports online discourse-related practices (Unerman and Bennett, 2004).

From the above, we can say that the channels through which CSR communications are disseminated are varied – traditional communication channels are used, but social media and networks are increasingly preferred because they allow not only faster dissemination but also turn the company into more transparent for different groups of stakeholders.

According to Hooghiemstra (2000), CSR's web-based communication supports the legitimacy of these practices by the stakeholders, influencing their positive perceptions of them. The latter is also because that digital media empowers the stakeholders. While traditional media serves primarily to disseminate information, in the case of corporate CSR practices, new media and social networks enable real implementation of the symmetric communication model (Grunig and Hunt, 1984) and the so-called "dialogue strategy" (Cornnelisen, 2011). Last but not least, on the Internet, "the opportunities for creating a *presence effect* that increases the transparency of the information environment" (Борисов, 2018, p. 304). The goal of communication about the activities carried out by the companies in the light of the principles of CSR is to represent it as ethical, socially responsible and open. Those communications are necessary to ensure the support for their implementation by not only the internal but also of the external stakeholders (Scott and Lane, 2000). Information on planned and implemented CSR practices helps to legitimize the company as a socially responsible not only to its key stakeholders but also to society as a whole; generating trust in relationships with them (Coombs and Holladay, 2012).

The achievement the objectives of CSR, communication about its practices should be professionally planned and implemented, as well as the most transparent for recipients of all target audiences.

The communication of CSR practices requires the implementation of the tendency of integration as well as the concept of autocommunication (Димитрова, 2013). It is necessary to build the identities and image of the company from its key stakeholders. It supports the successful management of the company's reputation, provided it reflects organizational reality and applied good practices.

We underline once again that Stakeholder Theory in the context of the CSR Concept focuses on the importance of stakeholder engagement with long-term value creation (Morsing and Schultz, 2006). The process focuses on building long-lasting, profitable collaboration between the organization and its stakeholders, thus ensuring financial sustainability. A positive relationship with the stakeholders is a guarantee to maintain the competitive advantage of an organization (Andriof & Waddock, 2002; Post et al., 2002; Johnson-Cramer et al., 2003). A significant milestone in the management of the relationship with the stakeholders is the communication strategies designed to involve them in work done by the organization in the context of the CSR Concept. They must be constructed in such a way as to ensure long-lasting and fruitful contacts with the different

stakeholders. Morsing and Schultz (2006) have set up a research framework to communicate with the stakeholders by contextual and dynamic characteristics of specific communication frameworks. They tie the communications to all of the company's stakeholders, focusing on the sensemaking and sensegiving processes (Gioia and Chittipeddi, 1991; Schultz and Ravasi, 2006), combined with the Grunig and Hunt models (1984).

The three communication strategies that Morsing and Schultz (2006) offer are: the stakeholder information strategy based on one-way communication that creates sensegiving. The second is the stakeholder response strategy based on the two-way asymmetric communication model and building sensegiving from sensemaking; the last one is the stakeholder involvement strategy based on the two-way symmetric communication model and continuous interaction between the sensemaking and sensegiving processes. The ideal communication option is precisely the continuity between the processes of sensemaking and sensegiving.

It is important to note that while the information strategy and the response strategy regard the stakeholders as passive recipients of organizational messages, the strategy of involvement actively engages them in the dialogue conducted with the company. The degree of the participation of the stakeholders in the organization is based on their relationship with it; for example, investors are interested in information that provides them with data about corporate strategies, customers are interested in the specifics of the goods and services offered, etc. (Cornelissen, 2008, p. 49). The employees' interest lies in their ability to motivate and achieve a sense of satisfaction with the company's work through a clear understanding of its objectives, the direction in which it develops, and the first accents of its activities (Melewar et al., 2003). By communicating identity messages, the different interests (often conflicting with each other) of the groups of stakeholders must be overcome polyphonic communication is needed (Christensen, Morsing, and Cheney, 2008). The latter requires that stakeholders should be involved in a polyphonic dialogue and discussions initiated by the organization's communication regarding its identity and the CSR practices it carries out.

### ***Communication on CSR, identity, image, and reputation***

The identity of the companies understood as corporate and organizational (Димитрова, 2013), is a construct directly related to the values of the company. It is managed through communications, associated with the company's image, brands, and reputation, which exist within the framework of corporate culture (Cornelissen, 2011; Димитрова, 2013). Identity is the reality and uniqueness of the organization, which is integrally linked to its internal and external image, as well as to the corporate reputation through corporate communications. Corporate

communications are the process by which the internal and external stakeholders of the organization understand that identity, image, and reputation have been created and shaped (Grey and Balmer, 1998).

Identity, in its manifestations of organizational structure, assists members of the organization to define for themselves the corporate nature and to understand who they are as part of this essence – through the processes of sensegiving and sensemaking. Stakeholders interpret identity in different contexts and different frames of perception. Corporate and organizational identities also help to distinguish the company from its competitors (Balmer & Greyser, 2002), as well as through continuous management of the relationship with the stakeholders. Identity must be one of the leading components of strategic planning and the implementation of different policies and practices in organizations. It must be based on the mission, on the postulates of corporate culture, on essential emotional elements.

Driving forces of identity are leadership – CEO and board-level, values, tradition and environment (Balmer, 2001, p. 280). The company's top management has an important role to play in communicating its values in the context of its identity, thus assisting the management of positive images.

Inadequate to the contemporary conditions of organizational development is the examination of the identity of the company as one-dimensional. The organization has a multi-layered complex of identities that must be in harmony with each other (Albert and Whetten, 1985; Pratt and Foreman, 2000). The mismatch between them may lead to problems between the organization and the different groups of stakeholders. The identities that a company owns are:

- Actual Identity represents the current situation in which the organization exists. It includes its ownership, management style, organizational structure, the markets in which it operates, the products and services it offers, its competitive advantages. Actual identity also covers the set of values shared by employees and the company's management.

- Communicated Identity is implemented through the company's controlled communications such as advertising, sponsorship, PR on the one hand, and on the other – the uncontrolled – grapevine, comments on information provided by the media

- Conceived Identity has a direct relationship with corporate image, corporate reputation, and corporate branding. The constructs represent the perceptions of the different groups of stakeholders about the company.

- Ideal Identity is the expression of the best positioning of the organization of the markets in which it operates within a specific timeframe. Ideal identity is usually based on strategic planning and organizational opportunities in the context of a highly competitive business environment.

- The Desired Identity is the vision of the organization's leaders for its future development. It is usually supported by research and analysis of the business environment in which the company is operating.

Ideally, the described aspects should be in a close and harmonious relationship with each other. For the successful management of the construct and its associated processes, it is necessary to take into account the fact that the different types of identity are influenced by the different groups of organizations.

The identity of the organization also corresponds to the idea of sustainability of the goals, processes, practices, and programs it implements. Kurucz, Colbert & Wheeler (2002) define the relationship between organizational identity and durability of the organization as a self-understanding of the company's essence within the environmental and social dimensions of its activities. In the pursuit of strengthening sustainability, the nature of different business practices is also redefined as being sustainable and legitimate.

The two main aspects of the relationship between the stakeholding prospect and the CSR Concept are precisely the legitimacy and responsibility of the company. The ultimate goal of communication regarding organizational nature and action should be to maintain the legitimacy of the company in the environment in which it operates.

Brickson (2007) defines three types of organizational identity (individualistic, relational, and collectivist). They reflect the direct relationship between the organization and its stakeholders (internal and external). The individualistic orientation of identity corresponds to the organizational interest in self-understanding. The relational and collectivist type is associated with providing wealth to both "others" and the wider public, while at the same time contributing to their motivation and to deepening their understanding of the business and the role of business organizations. Therefore, the business oriented towards external stakeholder should be directed to the same extent to the internal ones. The organizational goals govern the organization's attitudes both with its internal and external stakeholders and "insist" on the application of the same principles for the successful realization of this process.

The theoretical framework created by Brickson (2007) aims to show from the point of view of the Instrumental theory of the stakeholders, (Donaldson and Preston, 1995) that, regardless of their orientation, the business organization should contribute, depending on its capabilities, to the welfare of society. Regarding the Normative theory, Brickson's research framework can be used to present the skills of each organization to create the best possible social value. The practices inconsistency with the CSR concept that the organization implements must be in harmony with its orientation towards identity, objectives, and values set in the corporate mission. The adverse effects that the type of identity can have on socially responsible practices should be avoided. It is necessary to encourage

and diversify the business of the organizations to the growing requirements and needs of the stakeholders.

By embracing the CSR principles and their current actions in line with them, the company acquires an "ethical identity" (Balmer et al., 2007), the presentation of which is directly related to formal communication practices, both with the informal ones. Consequently, attention to maintaining "ethical identity" must be essential to ensure consistency between the communication of essence and reality. "Ethical Identity" implies not only emphasizing the economic performance of a company but also the moral aspects of its activity, which are the basis for creating social value and helping the future welfare of stakeholders. Companies are defined as having "ethical identity" through their "social connections, critical reflexivity, and responsiveness" (Balmer et al., 2007, p. 15). Constructed "ethical identity" suggests that, "communication, perception, brand positioning, and corporate reputation are in meaningful alignment" (Powell, 2011, p. 1369).

When communications of company identities are successful, they are reflected in a consistent and coherent corporate image that outlines organizational reality. The corporate image is the set of perceptions of the whole organization – its goals, the policies being implemented. The image covers the products the organization produces, the services it offers, its communications and its overall activity (Marken, 1998).

The corporate image is internal (reflecting the perceptions of the internal stakeholders) and external (reflecting the attitudes of the external stakeholders). The image owned by the organization's external stakeholder is a reflection of the image of the internal stakeholders. The organization loses control over transmitted communication when it leaves its borders. After that, it has no control over the image. Competent design and management of organizational and corporate identities and existing corporate culture enable key stakeholders to build a positive corporate image that (along with other constructs) is at the core of creating a positive corporate reputation.

The corporate reputation, about the stakeholders, is their assessment of the critical features of the overall performance of the company. Therefore, for the excellent management of corporate reputation, requires knowledge and understanding of stakeholder interests. The latter is also found in one of today's definitions of corporate reputation, which describes it as "a cognitive representation of a company's actions and results that crystallizes the firm's ability to deliver valued outcomes to its stakeholders" (Fombrun, Gardberg, & Barnett, 2000, p. 87). Reputation, as well as identities, image, corporate culture, is an intangible value to the company, which effectively assists the competitive performance through the real positive attitudes of the stakeholders towards the products and services it offers, the strategies and policies implemented, the confidence created. Different studies (Bae & Cameron, 2006; Coombs,

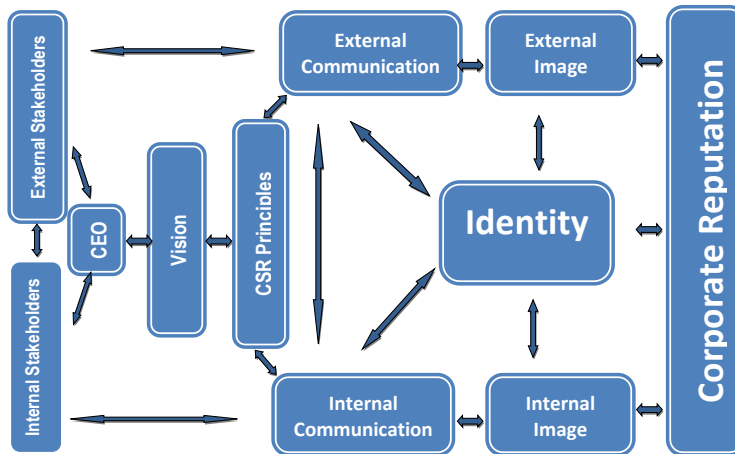


2007b; Yoon, Gürhan-Canli, & Schwarz, 2006) define reputation as an essential prerequisite for perceiving information on CSR practices offered by companies. For example, companies with poor reputation cannot get a positive assessment from the stakeholders regarding the presentation of their CSR programs (Yoon et al., 2006). Employees are more committed to achieving the company's goals and enhance their overall performance, as well as being more strongly identified with an organization that has a positive reputation (Peterson, 2004). Reputation also stems from the company's values in line with CSR, because companies' requirements for the performance of their actions and policies are being raised, which offer a response to increased social and ethical criteria. When the latter is realized then the company's reputation is positive, failure can become a source of reputational risk (Gardberg and Fombrun, 2006). An essential role in the success of these processes is the communication of CSR.

Kitchen & Laurence (2003) noted that stakeholders are becoming more and more interested in the CSR Concept. The researchers insist that practices be conducted by the companies in line with this concept, which requires that broad, transparent, channel-based communication should ensure an uninterrupted two-way flow between the organization and its stakeholders to help maintain its "reputation capital" and increase the trust in the company. The perception of CSR communications as authentic is also linked to factors such as the relevance of the company's CSR activities to its business as well as to the media through which it is disseminated. Therefore, reputation management through communications must be a high priority among the responsibilities of corporate executives and communications experts.

We can conclude that for the prosperous existence of the company as a socially responsible entity, it is necessary for communication to formulate the identity in every layer of CSR, which reflects a positive reputation, assisting the overall successful competitive performance.

## Model for managing socially responsible corporate reputation



**Fig.1.**

Corporate culture is the invisible infrastructure of the organization. The principles underpinned by the CSR Concept – human rights protection, nature conservation with the presumption of sustainability, the economic element must be laid at all cultural levels, with the values of the culture of the organization being harmonized with the principles of CSR.

Through internal, external and management communications, in the context of their integration, both relationships with and between the company's stakeholders and its "intangible values" are managed. Their role is to help transform the attitudes of significant stakeholder groups into understanding, internalizing and acting in line with the philosophy of the CSR concept. Communication should help formulate and strive to realize the vision of a socially responsible company by the leaders of the organization and convincing discussions about its perception and actions following it by other members of the organization. Communication should help to engage in activities through the co-participation of employees and other critical stakeholders in socially responsible practices. The clear communication of the values, mission, and vision of the organization and their harmonization with CSR, which consists of an initial explanation of the purpose and meaning of CSR, can be realized through different channels. Some

of these channels are face-to-face communication – meetings of the corporate management with the members of the company, seminars, web presentations. The presentation of CSR strategies and related projects developed by the company should be present on the corporate webpage, internet, social networks. The principles of CSR must also be embedded in the management of the mix of integrated marketing communications, in the company's philanthropic activity, in various initiatives of corporate PR, in monitoring, sensitivity and adequate feedback of different publications in social networks, new and traditional media.

The corporate communication policy for managing the image and reputation of a socially responsible company should be focused on the continuous improvement of CRM, based on ongoing tracking of interests, claims, and attitudes of critical groups of stakeholders, on shared understanding, generation and maintenance of trust, on open communication. The ultimate goal of the above is to manage authentic reputation through consistency between communications and company actions in the context of good practices.

What has been said here will be relevant only if research and analysis of the business environment in which the company operates, as well as analyses of the organization itself and the generation of strategies – PESTEL, SWOT, SOAR, communication and social audits, have been carried out in advance. It is also essential to permanently prepare integrated reports that include financial, industrial, intellectual, human, social capital, providing information on strategy, governance, ideas for future development of the organization, in harmony with the business environment in which it operates. The purpose of this type of report is to generate prerequisites to increase the importance of the above in the processes of creation of value (Бакърджиева, 2014). It is also essential to have regular reports for investors, which are supported by adequate actions of the investment PR. The implementation of strategic media analyses and proactive anti-crisis communications are also part of the successful communication strategy of the socially responsible company.

The above must be supported by the supply of quality and safe products, the creation and realization of innovations, which includes the communication aspects of knowledge management. The free sharing of information and the exchange of ideas regarding transparency should become an imperative for the company. Implementation of good practices in the management and development of human capital enhance inclusion in public community regimes. The mentioned is possible through the application and communication of socially responsible actions, including the implementation of CSR standards, TQM, creation, and observance of ethical codes, implementation of strategies for fair competition, then the company will be seen as a good employer. Decision-making in the organization must be in line with the DARE principle – decisions evaluated

against reputation because modern companies are submerged in the so-called "economy of reputation" (Fombrun, 2012).

The organization's communications should promote the harmonious management of the communication CSR strategy and its associated tactics, as well as support the existence of a communication and information environment that facilitates interactions, dialogues, and debates between and with key stakeholder groups. In this way, values will be created and mutually negotiated; responsive solutions will be made to customer needs, co-creation of values and the co-building of identities, images (internal and external) as well as management of a reputation for the socially responsible company. In the context of what has been said, the processes of sensegiving and sensemaking that will be in interplay in the communication environment thus created will also be facilitated.

For the successful realization of all the processes described above, the organization's communication needs to recreate the organizational reality that is determined by a sustainable socially responsible corporate culture that supports ethical organizational behavior as well as socially responsible decisions by the managers.

There are some limitations of the study. The article is theoretical. Emphasis is placed on the role and importance of corporate communications in the context of CSR adoption and strategic integration processes for the reputation management of a socially responsible company. At a future stage, it is possible to carry out a more comprehensive study of "intangible values" and CSR supported by empirical research.

## **Conclusion**

The concept of Corporate Social Responsibility is a multidimensional construct, embracing the principles of which requires an organizational attempt to harmonize it with the overall strategy and the policies and actions of the organization.

Corporate communication for CSR is strategic, so it not only disseminates information about CSR, but also (when professionally and competently constructed and implemented accordingly) transforms the attitudes, engagement, and identification of key groups of stakeholders who are received as such and take action in accordance with it.

In this article, we reviewed the importance of corporate communication for presenting, adopting and promoting actions in line with the Corporate Social Responsibility's principles. Based on communication strategies and policies, both the relationship with key stakeholders and the "intangible values" of the company are managed, with the ultimate result being its legitimacy as a corporate citizen and the maintenance of its reputation as socially responsible. The presumption is

that CSR principles must be genuinely accepted at all levels of corporate culture and predict ethical organizational behavior.

After the analyses we made, the connection between previously mentioned constructs and CSR communication are showed and we confirmed the research hypothesis.

Based on the Model for managing socially responsible corporate reputation, we can conclude that corporate communications for CSR governs the constructs of the company's "intangible values" and maintains a positive corporate reputation for the company as a corporate citizen. The company has become a socially responsible subject to society and, on this basis, builds and maintains relationships with its stakeholder. Last but not least, the company that has the reputation of a socially responsible entity is much more competitive in the field in which it carries out its business activities.

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## COMMUNICATION ON CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY AND MANAGEMENT OF RESPONSIBLE CORPORATE REPUTATION

### Abstract

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is a multidimensional construct which requires transformation of whole organization visible and invisible structures. The corporate communication is a vital part of these processes and in the management of stakeholder relations and legitimate socially responsible reputation of the company.

**Goals:** The purpose of the research paper is to present the importance of corporate communication for CSR to maintain the relationships with company stakeholders and in the context of the management of "intangible values" to keep the corporate reputation of a socially responsible company. The ultimate goal is to create a model based on the theoretical formulations.

**Methodology:** The research paper is theoretical, which analyzes the issue in the context of the CSR concept.

**Key results:** The primary accent is on the importance of the relationship between CSR communication and stakeholders, whereby management of the reputation of a socially responsible company is formulated and presented as a model.

**Originality and practical implications:** The article present a model created by the author for managing socially accountable reputation through corporate communication for CSR that promotes positive competitive performance. The Model could be utilized as a tool for the development of communication strategies that help reputation management in harmony with the CSR philosophy and support the company's existence as a socially responsible subject.

**Key words:** Corporate Social Responsibility, Corporate Culture, Corporate Communication, Theory of Stakeholders. Corporate Image, Corporate Identity, Corporate Reputation, Performance, "Intangible Values", Legitimacy.

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