

Corporate Social Responsibility and Management in a Glocal Context¹

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Abstract

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) has become a recurrent and global concept used by international and local corporations, with its supporters, skeptics, and critics. It is also a growing area of concern and practice for businesses for answering the challenges of the present century, such as fighting poverty or promoting sustainable development goals. There is need - almost consensual - for clarifying the impact

^{*1} Preprint version; to site use the following settings you consider best:

MLA

Silva, Maria Luísa, et al. "Corporate Social Responsibility and Management in a Glocal Context." *Encyclopedia of Organizational Knowledge, Administration, and Technology*, edited by Mehdi Khosrow-Pour D.B.A., IGI Global, 2021, pp. 847-859. <http://doi:10.4018/978-1-7998-3473-1.ch060>

APA

Silva, M. L., Jacquinet, M. M., & Nobre, Â. L. (2021). Corporate Social Responsibility and Management in a Glocal Context. In Khosrow-Pour D.B.A., M. (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of Organizational Knowledge, Administration, and Technology* (pp. 847-859). IGI Global. <http://doi:10.4018/978-1-7998-3473-1.ch060>

Chicago

Silva, Maria Luísa and Marc M. Jacquinet, and Ângela Lacerda Nobre. "Corporate Social Responsibility and Management in a Glocal Context." In *Encyclopedia of Organizational Knowledge, Administration, and Technology*. edited by Mehdi Khosrow-Pour D.B.A., 847-859. Hershey, PA: IGI Global, 2021. <http://doi:10.4018/978-1-7998-3473-1.ch060>

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and the policy setting related to complex areas, such as climate change, environmental issues, social responsibility and a whole array of ethical issues, at global and at the local level, i.e. through an unavoidable global perspective. The purpose of this chapter is, first, to review the literature and the main issues related to corporate social responsibility; second, to identify the current challenges this scientific area is facing; and, third, to pinpoint its relevance at the level of the digital economy setting, for the management of the emergent business models and of the information systems management of businesses.

Keywords: Corporate Social Responsibility, Ethics, Social Responsibility; Sustainability; Management; Decision Making

Introduction

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) – both as a concept and an adopted practice – is ubiquitous and in widespread use by international, national and local corporations, and supporters, skeptics, and critics alike. It is also a growing area of concern and practice for businesses, in particular in relation to challenges such as poverty, sustainable development goals, climate change, environmental issues, and a range of diverse ethical issues. More recently the issue of corporate social irresponsibility has emerged and will be tackled here briefly in the next section (Section 1) and in the section on solutions and recommendations (section 4).

This chapter reviews the literature and the main problems related to corporate social responsibility, to identify the most important current challenges and their relevance to management and business information systems. Sustainability and social responsibility tools - such as the Global Compact, Global Reporting Initiative (GRI), SA8000 standards and ISO 26000 standards - have drawn our attention.

In the first section, we review the literature on the CSR concept and its context. In the second section, the focus is on the discussion of CSR issues. In the third section, the discussion focuses on the problem of communication, internal management of knowledge, stakeholder participation and management of information and knowledge systems. Finally, the last section emphasizes the main challenge for the near future.

Background

1. The Concept of CSR

It is important to talk about Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), this is a fundamental concept for the most part of corporate decisions (Cochran, 2007), when we look at the relations between them and society. Its definition has been developing, with many proposals from academics, commentators, consultants, companies, civil society and governmental organizations.

When investigating different ways of defining CSR, Banerjee (2008) concludes that, in relation to companies, in all we find three aspects: they must generate wealth, attending to environmental and social issues; should behave ethically, revealing high integrity and transparency, and they must engage with the community in which they carry out their activities, improve their well-being and support them through philanthropy or other means at their disposal.

“Firms are stepping up their environmental and social performance because investors are asking for it” (Dyck, Lins, Roth, Wagner, 2019). Studies such as that of Hou (2019) conclude that “socially responsible firms can achieve financial results superior to those of firms which do not pursue CSR initiatives”. Other authors consider firms are “being socially responsible”, they will have a tendency to experience minimized shareholder wealth and lower profits, which restricts the socially responsible investments (Lin, Law, Ho, Sambasivan, 2019).

For the outside observer, CSR is an opportunity for the company to self-regulate, to monitor its activities, and to respect the spirit of the law, ethical standards, and international norms, with positive impacts on the environment, consumers, and all other interested parties (Torrecchia, 2013).

Since the beginning of the first decade of the twenty-first century a growing number of companies have published SR reports or social responsibility reports. The writing and publication of CSR reports end up defining the company’s responsibility to the stakeholders, highlighting its values and building a relationship of trust.

Tanimoto (2015) reinforces accuracy, credibility and comparability of information as, if each company provides information according to its own criteria, it will not be possible to compare information between companies and justifies the role of the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) to ensure the validation and certification of SR reports and adds yet another challenge: national governments should control the existence of such reports, believing that they can increase value for business and confidence levels to stakeholders.

Miguel, Jorge, and Candas (2017), in favor of social responsibility, consider that companies with better CSR performance have fewer funding constraints and suggest that for those corporations CSR may be considered as a lever for their reputation in the market and for their differentiation from competition, which is favorable not just for attracting institutional investors but also for fostering existing relationships with the main credit institutions.

Large companies, under pressure from representative entities of society, join the social responsibility (SR) in various ways, responding to various social demands (Torres, 2005). Because of this, some take ownership of social discourse and are an influence for other organizations by adopting or reproducing the same discourses and practices that are being disclosed as good and positive practices in social and environmental areas.

The existence of several stock indexes, whose listed companies have to meet a series of demanding conditions in areas such as environment and social governance prove that financial markets value these matters. In the United States, the Dow Jones Sustainability Index emerged in 1999 and the FTSE4GOOD in the United Kingdom emerged in 2001.

In 1999, the UN Secretary-General launched an initiative, which, in terms of SR, sought to make a commitment among the entities of all countries, challenging companies to adhere to and implement within their action the principles and values of human rights, working conditions, the environment and anti-corruption actions. It is the Global Compact which aims at companies to consider in their strategies and operations 10 principles (Global Compact Network Portugal, 2011).

Among the existing codes, principles, and norms in the SR domain, we summarize some initiatives:

- SA8000 Standard: First specific standard related to SR, produced and promoted by Social Accountability, 1997 (SAI, 2017).

- The AAA000 series of AccountAbility standards introduced in 1999 by the Institute of Social and Ethical Accountability (ISEA, 2017)
- ISO 26000: International Standards for Business, Government and Society standard finalized in 2010 (ISO, 2017).

We can attribute one contribution that the private sector has made with the founding in 1992 of the World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD, 2017), the world's leading organization in the business approach to sustainable development.

Being the main driver of CSR in Europe and aiming to strengthen the European strategy for corporate responsibility, the European Commission launched in 2001 the Green Paper "Promoting a European Framework for Corporate Social Responsibility", presenting CSR as a concept in which integrate social and environmental concerns into their operations and their interaction with stakeholders voluntarily.

One question remains in CSR, when the adoption of a widely construed conception of responsibility, how can be conceptualized corporate social irresponsibility? Without entering too much debate, in the present chapter and approach, social irresponsibility for corporations can be defined as the increase of environmental costs, external costs for society, communities and stakeholders. It can include even shareholder as a subcategory of group who bear costs when the management of the organization is responsible for negligence or fraud or any behavior that can be considered non-righteous. The irresponsibility goes beyond mistakes, simple ones. It includes big mistakes and any behavior that is considered clearly as irresponsible by the main standards of ethics and business ethics.

2. Approaches and management of CSR

At this point, we will address how companies organize and manage CSR. In summary, we highlight the following three approaches to social responsibility:

2.1. Carroll's pyramid, with enormous formative influence on CSR

Carroll (1979) argues that the SR fully addresses all the obligations a company has towards society and must incorporate the economic, legal, ethical and discretionary categories of business performance. These categories are not mutually exclusive, but ultimately suggest their role in the evolution of their importance. Carroll also identifies the social issues to which companies may have to respond, underlining the importance of managing their non-commercial agendas, anticipating here somehow the management of stakeholders, by highlighting the possibilities of being able to give a business answer to the questions of those agendas, expecting a strategic approach to CSR. Later, Schwartz and Carroll (2003) considered only the economic, ethical and legal domains in CSR, using the Venn model, abdicating the pyramid model with 4 categories.

2.2. The stakeholder theory, designed for the business strategy but adopted in CSR

Popularized by Freeman (1984), at the heart of the issue lies because corporate management should not be limited to the interests of shareholders/owners - but also to the

interests of other stakeholders. Although Freeman has already stated that stakeholder management is not unique to CSR, many companies have adopted this model as a way of thinking and managing their responsibilities, believing in involvement, collaboration and communication with the parties concerned.

2.3. The Triple Bottom Line (TBL) approach, which provides a way of integrating economic, social and environmental responsibility

The triple bottom line approach, also known by the three Ps - profit, people and planet -, is another way of approaching CSR. Developed by John Elkington (1997) from the UK consultancy firm SustainAbility, this model is perfect for understanding sustainability, since it contains the economic, environmental and social aspects that must holistically interact to be sustainable.

The shared value creation approach, which highlights the business case in CSR.

Porter and Kramer (2011) suggest the “shared value” in business, an approach some companies have adopted in relation to CSR. These authors recommend to companies the design of products and the choice of markets according to the needs of societies; the redefinition of productivity in the value chain, to reduce negative impacts and maximize positive ones.

In order to adopt CSR practices derived from sustainable development principles, it is necessary to take into account the different dimensions in which a company can act. Usually, we consider three dimensions: social, economic and environmental.

Following Santos et al. (2005, p. 31), the social dimension integrates the actions oriented to the management of the human element that composes its social matrix (internal component) and actions oriented to the surrounding community (external component). The economic dimension of companies relates to three types of partners: customers, suppliers and investors or shareholders. “Corporate environmental responsibility involves the integration of environmental issues into strategic management, giving them due importance, along with economic and social issues” (Santos et al., 2005).

We can broadly define CSR as responsible practices that are expected to create benefits for society as well as for its stakeholders (Lantos, 2001 and Porter and Kramer, 2006). Since short-term obligations prevent indiscriminate investments in this value creation, CSR is a long-term investment in the company’s future competitiveness (Porter and Kramer, 2006). Corporations can take advantage of their competitors (Orlitzky, Siegel and Waldman, 2011). If companies invest in CSR with the same structures that are at the basis of their most important choices, they will realize that SR can go beyond costs, obligations or charitable works - which may be opportunity, innovation and competitive advantage (Porter and Kramer, 2006). And while there is a growing appreciation of sustainable development, Porter and Kramer (2006: 154) argue that it is rare for companies to know how to do social action in an effective and sustainable way, noting that “by linking corporate philanthropy to their sector and its strategy, the company can, more than other donors, improve the performance of beneficiaries, further enhancing social value. “

In a complementary perspective, there are those who defend CSR, which is closely linked to risk management, which is already an integral part of the organizational strategies of

modern companies. It should be noted that corporate scandals or environmental accidents can cause considerable damage to a company that may have worked hard to build a good reputation. In order to mitigate and anticipate these types of incidents, SR can be integrated into the organizational culture (Meulbroek, 2002).

The CSR strategy emerged as a concept to incorporate goals into future planning that enables enterprise performance management to integrate CSR approaches (Werther and Chandler, 2006). However, these corporate strategies have been the subject of several criticisms, including their lack of ambition, their tendency to be in a market-related department, public relations and human resources, that they are generalist, may vary from region to region and negative consequences may be obtained, albeit unintentional (Werther and Chandler, 2006).

In response to such criticisms, there are already companies that seek greater involvement with their stakeholders, ie NGOs, employee representatives and stakeholders, and incorporate their CSR activities more broadly into business strategy (Galbreath, 2006). This presupposes that the company has clearly defined the direction of its CSR approaches and its links to its strategic objectives, which implies that the needs of the stakeholders are analyzed in the short and long term, sought to be evaluated and incorporated them in business objectives. Thus, the CSR strategy is expected to deliver beneficial outcomes for all parties, including the community, through positive economic, environmental and social impacts (Katamba et al 2012).

“Companies give priority to CSR activities that are directly related to maintaining business and achieving economic results. CSR disclosure practices of SMEs and large companies do not differ significantly. However, larger companies disclose more information on Environment and Society. Companies who are closer to consumers disclose more information on Customers, Community and Society. The act of assuring a CSR report drives system improvements and extended CSR disclosure” (Dias, Rodrigues, Craig, Neves, 2019).

3. Management of Stakeholders and Communication of SR

In 2007, Freeman, Harrison, and Wicks came to give importance to the management of stakeholders in order to create value, aiming at the sustainability of organizations. Through positive long-term relationships, it is possible to identify win-win opportunities for all parties serving the company, stakeholders and society (Goodstein and Wicks, 2007; Svendsen, 1998).

Due to the proximity to the core of the company, we can distinguish two large groups of stakeholders (García, 2012: 89): internal (eg shareholders, partners, managers, employees - directly linked to the company and its organization) and external (eg. (eg, customers, suppliers and subcontractors, authorities, pressure groups, local communities, regulators and employers' associations, trade unions, and professionals, NGOs, competitors, consumers - interest groups not directly linked to the organization). But this is just one of many classifications.

Lambin (2000: 336) defines competitive advantage as the set of characteristics or attributes of a company that put it in a position superior to its most immediate competitors. Today's companies seek competitive advantages and to build them can follow several paths: traditional vision, resource-based vision and vision based on superior stakeholder management (Rocha, 2010).

In the traditional view, five steps compose the strategic management process (Certo and Peter, 2005):

1. Analysis of the environment (internal and external);
2. Establishment of the guideline of the organization;
3. Strategy formulation;
4. Implementation of the strategy
5. Strategic control.

In the resource-based view, an organization is a set of resources that integrate themselves into categories (Goldschmidt, 2010):

1. Financial resources;
2. Physical resources (factory, equipment, facilities, and access to raw materials);
3. Human resources (encompass skills and training);
4. Knowledge and organizational learning;
5. Organizational resources (formal structure, systems, control, and coordination, culture and reputation).

In the vision based on superior stakeholder management, the road to building competitive advantage is built with an outward look, that is, for customers, competitors, partners, the press and society, looking for new ways of creating and delivering greater value than the competition (Rocha, 2010).

According to Goldschmidt (2010), the principles of sustainability in business, messages emitted by companies to their stakeholders can be related to any of the three items that make up the tripod of sustainability (environmental, economic and social performance). This implies ethical and transparent practices for all types of audiences with whom the company relates. Sustainability can thus present itself as a source of competitive advantage, contributing to this by how its different aspects are linked to the company's value generation model.

In order for the company to contribute to the promotion of sustainable development, it can invest in a stakeholder involvement process.

Calahorro (2008: 36) refers to the need to develop a Relationship Plan for supporting the CSR Strategic Plan, which summarizes six points:

1. Identify and catalog the different groups of stakeholders;
2. Analyze the expectations of each of them;
3. Establish priorities among the different actions that each group seeks;
4. Define programs;
5. Implement the timetable of the different programs;
6. Design a model of communication with different audiences.

After identifying the stakeholders and despite the complexity of the topic, each one should be analyzed individually, with their responsibilities and interests, taking into account the type of relationships they establish with the organization. Transparent corporate governance, transparency, and reporting to company partners and all stakeholders are increasingly important as a way to obtain social licenses for any company to operate, develop long-term activities with sustainability. This transparency implies a sincere, fast and spontaneous communication, close to the stakeholders. All of this is becoming increasingly important in an increasingly competitive world in which we have been overwhelmed by corporate scandals.

Described by McShane and Von Glinow (2003) as the process by which information is transmitted and understood between two or more parties, communication has gained increasing importance in companies, even considering itself strategic. Being essential for the durability of the company's relationship with stakeholders, communication enables the creation of positive associations and reinforcements (Kim and Rader, 2010).

If Corporate Social Responsibility reflects the company's attitude toward the environment and society, we affirm that corporate communication will ensure the company's dialogue with its stakeholders, effectively enabling that responsibility.

We can talk about sustainability communication, when the company uses different channels and languages, adapted to its most varied public, thus informing them of their practices of social responsibility. In this way, the company raises public awareness and stimulates the occurrence of this type of activity (Formentini, 2003: 4), making known what it has done, how and to whom it has done, thus expecting to add value. "When developed with ethics, transparency and a lot of competence, business communication is able to synthesize the company's commitment to society and all its stakeholders, allowing the aggregation of value to the business, which can contribute to a positive public image" (Araújo, 2009 and Bueno, 2003: 118-119), that is, a positive mental perception that the different publics have of an organization and that would have been constructed by the set of messages received by them in all their relations with it. We must not forget that a solid reputation of the company motivates employees, attracts investors, new customers, maintaining current ones, and can even reduce capital costs.

From another perspective, we can also talk about communication for sustainability, from a perspective where learning is shared, for example, promoting education for sustainability, thus broadening the interest and focus to new interests that go beyond the company.

When a company decides that SR incorporates the management of the company and is transversal to all of it, all its actions must be integrated in its policies, so the communication not only should not be left out and must be submitted to SR policies that are seen as authentic by society. And the success of a business communication strategy depends very much on the communication strategy to integrate into the company's overall strategy (Clutterbuck, 2001: 30).

The communication of corporate social responsibility can be defined as the "communication that is designed and distributed by the company itself, about its actions of social responsibility" (Morsing, 2006: 171). to provide true information about the company or brand, integrating business and social operations (Morsing and Schultz, 2006).

In CSR communication is very important, starting with its strategic design and implementation of programs and activities. Sustainability reports, codes of ethics, principles, standards, and content of messages in the most diverse marketing and publicity

materials can be considered tools of communication of the social responsibility of an organization.

As can be seen, CSR is communicated through the traditional model of message transmission that implies: who says what, through which channel, with what effect? Communication processes and actions cannot be separated from CSR programs and activities. Being an interactive process, communication implies the existence of dialogue, based on bidirectional and unidirectional communication strategies. There are certain organizational contexts in which information about CSR is only transmitted, and others where the idea is to discuss and negotiate CSR with certain stakeholders. Only with a strategically defined, organized and implemented communication policy, is it possible that the company's SR principles are understood and internalized by its stakeholders.

With respect to the two-way communication Hodggers and Grayson (2002: 260) state that for a stakeholder to be effectively involved, a socially responsible company should have as its principle transparency and the promotion of dialogue with and between stakeholders. a communication channel open in both directions, where all of them feel committed and have the possibility to participate actively in the most diverse policies, assessing the needs of the community, defining and understanding the participation of the company to respond to such needs.

CSR communication faces a particular challenge, which is that more and more companies feel pressured to inform their stakeholders about how they are contributing to society, but on the other hand, different stakeholders can interpret the company's SR communication, unique only as an act of self-promotion (Coombs and Holladay, 2011). And it is also for this reason that companies should seek to ensure that stakeholders' perceptions of SR actions they carry out are in line with their strategic objectives, while maintaining consistency with their image and identity (Formentini, 2003: 4).

4. Solutions and Recommendations

The issue of corporate social responsibility and irresponsibility is complex, as we have tried to highlight in the previous sections. Other authors share the same approach (Herzig and Moon 2013; Rriera and Iborra 2017)

The principles and objectives of CSR should be strategically aligned with other management objectives, being inseparable from it, under its relational culture. Thus, stakeholder management and SR communication will be more facilitated and more effective, and may have positive repercussions on business, the environment, and communities.

One way of further change - and research (see next section) - is to help tackle this issue of irresponsible behavior, misdeeds and opportunism is to deepen our understanding of: (1) what is corporate social irresponsibility; (2) what are its variegated features across cultures and societies; and (3) how social norms and legal rules can regulate or not those unwelcomed attitudes.

Beyond these partial solutions, it is relevant to integrate CSR in a reflection of corporate and management value, decisions and behaviors. This means that CSR has to be integrated in a broader debate and in broader policies that include the fight against corruption and irresponsible behavior.

Finally, it is time to move beyond self-control and to either (1) make it socially accountable or (2) turn it compulsory on some crucial dimensions. Self-regulation is not enough, other tools such as social, political and administrative regulation, including administrative authorities and agencies, have to be mobilized. This is clearly an issue of public debate and public policy.

5. Future Research

Although CSR has been the subject of many studies since the 1970s and there is a great deal of literature on the subject, there are still few works that link the sustainable development of the territories. It is desirable to develop studies on social investment policies linked to local business development programs, to what extent companies support the research and development of social investment initiatives, by sharing their knowledge and know-how in actions that promote not only business priorities, but also that maximize benefits for the sustainable development of communities.

Another research that should be associated with that study has to do with the interest and capacity that organizations have to organize themselves in a network and of this benefit to the business and society.

It is necessary to investigate how companies are using the information and communication technologies to communicate SR, and in particular how they use the internet and social networks to interact with stakeholders.

As important as the previous study is the development of impact analysis methodologies for the development of SR actions in the business and in the communities, to better clarify the benefits, obstacles, and motivations to the adoption of this type of practices.

Conclusion

CSR has become a strategic necessity for companies, although its executives do not always understand its role in brand building and the importance of associating it with positive social actions, which may prove more complex than operating responsibly, since this requires the understanding of the multiple dimensions of CSR (Steenkamp, 2017). There are different positions regarding the benefits of CSR, and there are still skeptical voices that even deny its existence. Zero is that in the last decades, there are companies that have also paid attention to the broader social, economic and environmental conditions, in which the business also allows their momentum.

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Key Terms and Definitions

COMMUNICATION OF SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY: Communication of practices of an organization that contributes to economic, social development and environmental protection.

COMMUNITY: Local grouping of people living in the same geographical area, united by common interests.

CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY: Corporate Social Responsibility or CSR can be considered in two ways: either as a theoretical or philosophical concept based on ethics and theories of right and wrong doing by corporations and corporation decision makers, incorporating more recently not just the production, but also the social and the environmental dimensions; or as a practice by corporations of integrating in their behaviors, decision processes, strategies and communication the responsibility towards all stakeholders and the environment.

CREATION OF SHARED VALUE: Policies and organizational practices that, besides contributing to the improvement of one's own, promote better social and economic conditions in the communities where they operate and market their products and/or services.

LOCAL DEVELOPMENT: It is the process of developing a territory, by actors who belong to it or whose activity in it has an impact, which implies the formulation of strategies, decision-making, and implementation of actions that allow civic participation, society.

STAKEHOLDERS MANAGEMENT: A process that comprises the identification, planning, involvement management, commitments, and control of stakeholders in any organization.

SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY: Contribution of any organization to sustainable development.

SOCIAL IRRESPONSIBILITY: Social irresponsibility for corporations can be defined as the increase of environmental costs, external costs for society, communities and stakeholders. It can include even shareholder as a subcategory of group who bear costs when the

management of the organization is responsible for negligence or fraud or any behavior that can be considered non-righteous.

STAKEHOLDER: Interested party of any organization (examples: owners, shareholders, investors, employees, suppliers, customers, unions, business and other associations, community where the company operates, competitors, press, municipalities, government, consumers).

TERRITORY: Space that in a certain time has its own limits and where social relations are established.