



# Recent Advancements in Sustainable Entrepreneurship and Corporate Social Responsibility

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## **Chapter 1**

Corporate Social Responsibility and Its Application to Social and Business Systems ..... 1  
*Emad Rahim, Bellevue University, USA*

This chapter provides an overview of contemporary aspects of change management and social responsibility and social and business systems. The topic of sustainability describes the foundation of the subject, as well as theory, concepts, and principles. The author provides various case examples and perspectives on the triple bottom line, scale-free networks, social and business systems, and delivers to readers a blueprint for developing a change management strategy for fostering a socially responsible environment.

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Influence of CSR Activities on Stakeholders in Foreign Markets ..... 16  
*Andrija Barić, KONČAR – Power Plant and Electric Traction Engineering Inc., Croatia*  
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*Ana Aleksić, Faculty of Economics and Business, University of Zagreb, Croatia*  
*Mirjana Pejic-Bach, University of Zagreb, Croatia*



Corporate social responsibility (CSR) can be seen as an important differentiation strategy for organizations operating in foreign markets, as it helps organizations to gain legitimacy, transfer their positive reputation, gain visibility and easily adapt to a new environment. The implementation of CSR activities in foreign markets is often different from the local markets. Beside institutional and legal framework, shareholders' interests can also significantly vary. Therefore, in order to achieve competitive advantage in foreign markets by using CSR, it is necessary to identify the interests of key stakeholder groups and to identify the most efficient activities and communication channels towards them. This chapter provides insight into the importance of CSR activities and communication on stakeholders' management on foreign markets, based on the empirical research on a sample of medium and large export organizations in Croatia. Results of the research indicate the importance and positive influence of CSR activities and communication on stakeholders' management in foreign markets.

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Corporate Social Responsibility in the Agri-Food Sector .....37

*Gheorghe Zaman, Romanian Academy, Romania*

*Mirela Panait, Petroleum-Gas University of Ploiesti, Romania*

*Marian Catalin Voica, Petroleum-Gas University of Ploiesti, Romania*

*Corina Ene, Petroleum-Gas University of Ploiesti, Romania*

Sustainable development is desired not only for public institutions but also for private companies that have realized the importance of sustainable management of limited resources available to mankind. The activity of large transnational corporations is not guided only by the principle of profit maximization, but also by corporate social responsibility (CSR). This chapter focuses on CSR programs run by agri-food companies taking into account the particularities of their activity and the importance of the consumers' behavior to improve the activity of companies in the CSR area. On the one hand, making profits is a desideratum of any company, but on the other hand, companies in the agri-food sector must also ensure the observance of the food safety principles and consumer protection. This is also demonstrated by the major implications of the scandals generated by food contamination with various bacteria or chemicals. Consumer force shapes the activity of these companies, and intense competition leads the managers of these companies to run various CSR programs that eventually lead to increased visibility of the firm and to improving economic indicators. The objective of the chapter is to establish the specificities of the agri-food sector companies. These companies have a high responsibility taking into account the impact of food consumption on the health of the population in the short, medium, and long term and the consequences of this situation on the investments that had to be made in the health sector. The final consumer is a force that sanctions the inappropriate behavior of food producers, but he/she must have a good food education in order to be able to remodel the activity of agri-food companies.

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Marginalization of Women and Mass Markets .....69

*José G. Hernández R., Minimax Consultores C.A., Venezuela*

*María J. García G., Minimax Consultores C.A., Venezuela*

*Gilberto J. Hernández G., Minimax Consultores C.A., Venezuela*

This chapter relates to gender equality in the free market, particularly the mass market. The objective of this work is to review if the woman is marginalized in the mass market through a decision tree structure. To achieve this overall objective, the integrated-adaptable methodology for the development of decision support system (MIASAD) is used. There are not enough elements to make a generalization, but, from the results obtained with the decision tree structure used in this investigation, it can be seen that there is no marginalization of women in the mass products market. This implies that no additional effort is necessary to minimize the marginalization of women in the mass market. As a consequence, efforts can focus on better segmentation of the female market. Thus, products that are more suitable for each of the sectors found can be generated.

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*Lukman Raimi, American University of Nigeria, Nigeria*

*Abdussalam Aljadani, Taibah University, Saudi Arabia*

Embedding this discourse on rentier state theory (RST), this chapter discusses the quest for sustainability of the public finance system of Nigeria and Saudi Arabia. The inability of these rentier states to meet their economic, social, and political commitments led to the adoption of value-added tax (VAT) and economic diversification as sustainability strategies. The findings from the macroeconomic data indicated that Nigeria and Saudi Arabia have large markets that provide opportunities for the introduction of VAT. These two countries also have huge deposits of natural resources, including oil, which could be developed for accelerating economic diversification. This chapter validates the appropriateness of VAT and post-rentier economic diversification as sound policies for industrial, services, tax, and tourism development. The findings from this chapter need to be strengthened with a more rigorous empirical investigation. The chapter concludes with far-reaching policy suggestions.

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*Chijioke Dikeocha, Farreach Initiative for Development Communication  
in Africa, Nigeria*

This chapter seeks to find out whether energy corporations that operate in Nigeria provide adequate information about their corporate social responsibility, and whether

these programmes are available on their managed online media platforms. For this reason, the study investigates how two energy corporations have engaged the online newsletter platform to share information concerning their CSR performance. The research employs a content analysis method. The population of the study comprises all online newsletters published by these corporations from January 2013 to August 2014. There are recognized similarities and difference in their use of online newsletters to share information concerning their corporate social responsibility to their various stakeholders. The study recommended that ExxonMobil (Nigeria) and SPDC (Nigeria) should make an effort to be consistent in their online newsletter publication. SPDC (Nigeria) should de-emphasise the frightening account of oil theft and spillage and focus more on human capacity development of persons within their host communities.

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By the increasing awareness of managers about the vital role of brands, the intangible elements of brands such as image and value become primary issues of their strategic plans. The widened communication platforms forced the significant role of reputation to sustain corporation life cycle, and this challenge triggers the recent discussion of reputation management. From this aspect, it can be seen that, for any organization, building the stakeholder communications and interactions accurately and maintaining the strong cooperation and communication with them play positive roles in organizational reputation. As well as the components of a strong reputation, the essential point is to understand the eco-system of communication. For this purpose, the chapter explains the communication eco-system of a corporation in terms of stakeholders, and the role of stakeholders in ultimate reputation is grounded on the congruity theory. As an example of the stakeholder role on communication eco-system, a qualitative research is applied in the research part.

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## Foreword

Corporate organizations of the twenty-first century have a great responsibility to initiate and implement socially, environmentally, and economically sustainable programs for the welfare of the people and communities in their areas of influence. The book “Recent Advancements in Sustainable Entrepreneurship and Corporate Social Responsibility”, edited by Professor Amulya Gurtu, explains that organizations are in different stages of implementing such programs but are likely to enhance their efforts to meet the expected guidelines of corporate social responsibility (CSR) and to see that these are implemented in true spirit. The chapters of the book clarify the process of understanding from the points of view of the training of the people to implement the CSR programs effectively in the operational business areas as well as in other parts of society. There has been a good response from the beneficiaries in supporting such programs. It has been observed that some communities have gained in various areas such as education, health, environment, agriculture, horticulture, skill development, energy, sanitation among others due to such CSR activities of various organizations.

A similar approach is reflected in the various chapters of this book. This book is expected to communicate the benefits of sustainable entrepreneurship and corporate social responsibility obtained in one geography to larger academic and corporate communities. I compliment authors of the various chapters of this book for contributing to such important and pertinent issues of the present time. I am sure that readers will find this book widening their horizons and stimulating their thinking on issues related to corporate social responsibility.

Reading this book is highly recommend for the value-add to one’s knowledge of the current state of sustainable entrepreneurship and corporate social responsibility. This book is recommended for readers from industry, academia, and government organizations. The findings of chapters are based on the years of experience of the authors in the study and implementation of various sustainable entrepreneurship and corporate social responsibility programs. It is an experiential sharing. Some experts from the field have been roped in as coauthors of a few chapters to provide feedback from the industry and strengthen the findings with actual data. I like to

congratulate Prof. Amulya Gurtu for editing this book and including a few authors from industries.

The authors and co-authors have shown a great understanding of the topics, and skills in presenting the findings and ideas while writing the chapters. They presented chapters with a clear research approach, provided analysis techniques, and shared findings. The examples are of very high relevance. Prof Gurtu has shown a good understanding of the issues related to sustainable entrepreneurship and corporate social responsibility and in compiling these chapters.

The representation of the chapter has been appreciated. The author has been successful in highlighting the core issues pertaining to sustainability, entrepreneurship and corporate social responsibility. The book has bridged the gap in perception and practices with proper citation. The chapters in the book are explained in a simplistic manner. The book has incorporated some case studies of CSR. The author has shown deep involvement in publishing quality research in the book. Therefore, based on the quantum of the work coupled with the demonstration of the empirical ability of the authors as applied to CSR, I highly recommend reading this book for understanding and application of Sustainable Entrepreneurship and Corporate Social Responsibility.

*Santosh Rangnekar*

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India*

**Santosh Rangnekar** is a Professor in the Department of Management Studies, Indian Institute of Technology, Roorkee, India. He has a total of 34 years of experience, twenty-five years in higher education and prior nine years of experience in industries. He received his Ph.D., and M.B.A. (H.R.M.) from Devi Ahilya Viswavidyalay, Indore, India. His areas of research are Organizational Behavior, Human Resource Management, Knowledge Management (Intellectual Capital-Human Capital Creation), Technology Management, and Change Management. He has a total of 175 academic intellectual contributions which include 112 peer-reviewed journal papers, 30 case studies, and two books. His research has been published in the *Journal of Employment Counseling* (Wiley), *Global Business Review* (Sage), the *Journal of Workplace Behavioral Health*, the *Global Journal of Flexible Systems Management* (Springer), the *International Journal for Educational and Vocational Guidance*, *Career Development International* (Emerald), *European Applied Business Research Journal*, the *International Business and Economic Research Journal* among others. His papers were awarded the Best Conference Paper in 2004 European Applied Business Research Conference, Rothenberg, Germany, 2011 IT applications in Management, ABV- IITM, Gwalior, India, and 2011 Conference at London Management School, London, UK. Dr. Rangnekar has supervised 23 Ph.D. candidates and supervising many more Ph.D. candidates. The doctorates completed under his supervision have been given the Outstanding Doctoral Research Award, and Highly Commended Award by Emerald in 2013.

# Preface

This book is a collection of views from five continents making it a representative of a global perspective. The authors of the various chapters have provided views from North America, South America, Europe, Africa, and Asia (Middle-East) on the current state, issues, challenges, and a way forward on Sustainable Entrepreneurship and Corporate Social Responsibility.

The first acceptable and widely used definition of sustainability came from WCED (1987) which defined sustainability as “the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” The concept of the triple bottom line was given by Elkington (1997) which was further popularized by Carter and Rogers (2008). The idea of sustainable entrepreneurship was borrowed from the concept of taking care of the environment, society and economy or the triple bottom line. However, over time sustainable entrepreneurship evolved and is defined as “the examination of how opportunities will bring into existence future goods and services as discovered, created, and exploited, by whom, and with what economic, psychological, social, and environmental consequences” (Cohen & Winn, 2007, p. 58). A similar concept of taking care of environment and societies besides the economy by a corporate organization is referred to as Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). “Corporate Social Responsibility is a management concept whereby companies integrate social and environmental concerns in their business operations and interactions with their stakeholders. CSR is generally understood as being the way through which a company achieves a balance of economic, environmental and social imperatives (“Triple-Bottom-Line- Approach”), while at the same time addressing the expectations of shareholders and stakeholders” (UNIDO, 2020).

The focus on sustainable entrepreneurship and corporate social responsibility has been gaining importance among corporate leaders, educationists, legislators and consumers among others. Entrepreneurship is the cornerstone of innovation. Access to information combined with talent has led to many innovative entrepreneurial developments in the twenty-first century. The digitization of chapter, the speed of

the internet, and fading geographical boundaries have brought many new challenges to sustainable entrepreneurship and corporate social responsibility.

This book presents some recent development in the areas of sustainable entrepreneurship and corporate social responsibilities in different parts of the world. This book also talks about gender equality and the role of women empowerment in sustainable entrepreneurs. The book has a variety of chapters from different countries presenting different challenges and points of view. I hope that this book will stimulate the thinking of readers and keep their interested alive from one chapter to the next.

With the reduction of distances due to increases in speed and wading geographical boundaries, economic development and growth are relatively easy. However, this is presenting new challenges of accountability, environmental sustainability, and social equity. Social equity includes gender equality, equality in salary, working hours, working conditions/environment, workers' safety laws among others. Environmental sustainability has a different meaning for different people in different parts of the world due to a lack of standardization of environmental laws in different countries. There is a gap in environmental laws and workers' safety norms in developing countries which presents an opportunity to work in this area for the common good of the people of the world (Gurtu, Saxena, & Sah, 2019). This book addresses some of these challenges and presents some insights for dealing with them.

## **ORGANIZATION OF THE BOOK**

The book is organized into seven chapters. A brief description of each of the chapters follows:

Chapter 1, titled "Corporate Social Responsibility and Its Application to Social and Business Systems," provides various case examples and perspectives on the triple bottom line, scale-free networks, social and business systems, and provides a blueprint for developing a change management strategy for fostering a socially responsible environment.

Chapter 2, titled "Influence of CSR Activities on Stakeholders in Foreign Markets," says that the implementation of corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities in foreign markets is often different from that of the local markets. Besides the institutional and legal framework, shareholders' interest can also vary significantly. Therefore, to achieve a competitive advantage in foreign markets by using CSR, it is necessary to identify the interests of key stakeholder groups and to identify the most efficient activities and communication channels towards them. In this chapter, the authors intended to provide a deeper understanding of CSR activities, related communication and their influence on stakeholder management in foreign markets. The theoretical framework is supplemented with the results of

## **Preface**

empirical research on a sample of medium and large export organizations in Croatia. The results of the research indicate the importance and positive influence of CSR activities and communication on stakeholder management in foreign markets. More specifically, activities related to consumer issues and problems, contribution to the community and society, organization governance and environment have a statistically positive influence on stakeholders' management. As regard to CSR communication channels and principles in foreign markets, communication through the web page and advertising, as well as clarity in communication, have a statistically positive influence on stakeholders' management.

Chapter 3, titled "Corporate Social Responsibility in the Agri-Food Sector," highlights that sustainable development is not only a desiderate for public institutions, but also for private companies that have realized the importance of sustainable management of limited resources available to mankind. The activity of large transnational corporations is not guided only by the principle of profit maximization, but also by corporate social responsibility. This chapter aims to discuss the issue of shared social responsibility between governments and companies regarding the need to strengthen consumer education and promote sustainable food consumption. Having multiple implications in the field of food and health, consumer education should be an important issue within social responsibility policies oriented towards enhanced nutrition, higher food safety, reducing food waste and better health for all.

Chapter 4, titled "Marginalization of Women and Mass Markets," studied gender equality and the free market. It challenges the paradigm if women are being marginalized in the market of mass consumption products. The study involved analyzed equality of the women, and female participation from different points of view. The chapter reviews the presence of women in marketing, and evaluates if women are marginalized in mass markets. The authors used the Integrated-Adaptable Methodology for the development of Decision Support System (MIASAD) for this analysis.

Chapter 5, titled "Sustainability of Public Finance of Rentier States: Evidence From Nigeria and Saudi Arabia," shows that the inability of Nigeria and Saudi Arabia to meet their economic, social and political commitments led to the adoption of value-added tax (VAT) and economic diversification as sustainability strategies. On the strength of critically analyzed macroeconomic data, the chapter found that both rentier states have large markets, which provide an opportunity for the introduction of VAT. Both countries have huge deposits of natural resources including oil, which could be developed for accelerating economic diversification. This chapter validates the appropriateness of VAT and post-rentier economic diversification as sound policies for industrial, services, tax and tourism development. The chapter concludes with far-reaching policy suggestions.



Chapter 6, titled “Corporate Social Responsibility: Online Reporting,” investigated two energy corporations in Nigeria that have engaged in an online newsletter platform to share information regarding their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) performance. The chapter studied whether these energy corporations provided adequate information about their corporate social responsibility on their websites. The research method employed is content analysis. The population of the study comprised all online newsletters published by these corporations from January 2013 to August 2014. There are similarities and differences in their use of online newsletters regarding the sharing of information on their corporate social responsibility to their stakeholders. The study recommended that: ExxonMobil and SPDC should make efforts to be consistent in their online newsletter publication. SPDC should de-emphasize the frightening account of oil theft and spillage, and focus more on human resource development in the host communities.

Chapter 7, titled “Role of Communicational Collaboration With Governmental Organizations as Stakeholder Groups,” shows that changing communication eco-system puts the importance of stakeholders forward for organizations. New discussions have started about strategic communication implications. This chapter explains the role of stakeholders in building a powerful reputation within the scope of the communicational collaboration approach. The main idea of the chapter is grounded on the congruity model to manifest the role and effect of stakeholders in this new communication ecosystem, in addition to their effect on reputation. In the research part of the chapter, qualitative field research applied with the governmental stakeholders. As a result of the field research, it is shown that organizations need to develop collaborations more than relations with this group of stakeholders for sustaining successful reputation management.

I think this book will be a good addition to the present knowledge of sustainable entrepreneurship and corporate social responsibility. This is targeted toward graduate students, researchers, and corporate leaders who either appreciate these challenges want to learn more or who simply want to expand their horizon on environmental and social issues and on corporate social responsibility. I hope readers would benefit from the insights of authors from various geographies and continue to expand and share their knowledge in this area.

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# Chapter 1

# Corporate Social Responsibility and Its Application to Social and Business Systems

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## **ABSTRACT**

*This chapter provides an overview of contemporary aspects of change management and social responsibility and social and business systems. The topic of sustainability describes the foundation of the subject, as well as theory, concepts, and principles. The author provides various case examples and perspectives on the triple bottom line, scale-free networks, social and business systems, and delivers to readers a blueprint for developing a change management strategy for fostering a socially responsible environment.*

## **SUSTAINABILITY AND STAKEHOLDERS**

Once perceived as a matter of doing minimum harm, sustainability is now an issue of the greater good that affects individual stakeholders and Fortune 500 companies alike (Burke & Cooper, p.191). In the face of scarce resources, climate change, and population explosion, businesses, governments, and organizations are all realizing the interconnectedness of the various systems in which they operate and the impact those systems have on global, environmental sustainability. As a business professional, one makes decisions on behalf of his or her organization that will directly impact these critical issues.

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The discussion question (DQ) that follows centers around understanding an organization's sustainable options within the context of the ever-changing business or economic environment. As a result, sustainability offers a variety of strategies for transforming or improving an organization in order to cope with and potentially preemptively remedy the socio-economic and political challenges taking place in the ever-evolving business environment.

Globalization is key contributor to a rapidly changing world as a result of international economic interdependence. Such interdependence, to some extent, has resulted in for-better or for-worse situations in various regions of the world. In this context, environmental sustainability is imperative because, for example, global warming or environmental challenges are adversely affecting the ecosystems the world over; as well as resource availability and procurement for individuals of multiple socioeconomic statuses; and various tiers of businesses alike, from mega-corporations to independent small businesses.

A number of definitions and concepts are associated with sustainability. But the core concept of sustainability is that an organization will take actions that will enable its long-term survival socially, environmentally, and financially (Epstein, 2008). In addition, sustainability is also a key to making the environment a better place after pollution and other degradations have taken their toll on it. Further, King (2008) pointed out that the economics of sustainability must find a way to raise the standards of living of a large number while reducing the negative environmental consequences of economic activity, with priority for the future, so that "future generations have at least the same potential economic opportunities to achieve the welfare of the current generation" (pp. 28-29).

Sustainability has been defined as economic development that meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (Brundtland 1987). In the early stages, sustainability was thought to be an environmental discourse that sought to preserve as much biodiversity and unspoiled land as possible; however, as Quinn and Dalton (2009) noted, ". . . sustainability requires the full integration of social, economic, and environmental issues into the vision, values, and operation of the organization." From what was originally considered a one-dimensional construct (an environmental discourse), sustainability has become the centerpiece of organizational long-term strategy.

The organization at which I am currently employed has fully embraced sustainability as a means to more efficiently deploy its human and other resources, and, by engaging in and sponsoring certain civic/social activities, it is establishing itself as a caring, responsible corporate citizen within the communities that the organization has a presence. One of the more significant changes is evident in hiring practices: Today, prospective employees are often asked to give examples of their

involvement in civic /social activities as a means of attracting individuals who are open to making a positive contribution to society.

According to Epstein (2008), ethics, governance, transparency, business relationships, financial return, community involvement/economic development, value of products and services, employment practices, and protection of the environment are the nine principles of sustainability performance (p. 37). My organization has done a good job in terms of building positive business relationships and adding resources to help sustain performance and maintain viability. I do, however, feel that the level of social responsibility can be improved via more promotion of employment practices in the area of diversity. Employment practices are when “the company engages in human-resource management practices that promote personal and professional employee development, diversity, and empowerment” (Epstein, 2008, p. 37).

Sustainability is the ability of an organization to act as a system and align it with nature. This will allow it to flourish and successfully survive over time. At the same time, it should not compromise the needs of individuals in the future. Based on these principles, my organization’s rating would be fairly high. They consider all of their stakeholders’ needs, desires, goals, and missions preceding the launch of new products as well as when acquiring new organizations or potential corporate partnerships. An equal contribution is received from customers, employees, and the organization’s managers/leaders. They organize community events that give back, including tree-planting days and building houses for the less fortunate, among numerous other civic and social engagements.

Sustainability is an all-in-one concept that is limitless to all situations. Senge, Smith, Kruschwitz, Laur, and Schley (2008) described being sustainable as “to live in the present in ways that do not jeopardize the future,” stressing that a sustainable process is one that can be executed over and again without damaging effects on the environment. Therefore, Senge et al. added, “Businesses can no longer expect to compete in the future without taking into account the larger problems that stand between now and then” (p. 9).

As a volunteer of the Organization of Liberians in Minnesota (OLM), a not-for-profit membership and social services organization, I was fortunate to actively participate in Organization of Liberian in Minnesota (OLM) elections to usher in a new leadership team of honest, committed, dedicated Liberians to steer organizational affairs for two years, with OLM having existed for over three decades without any sustainability agenda. The organization has been stagnant since its inception due in part to perpetual conflict, lack of accountability, and greed. Its existence is imperative to ensure mutual benefit and symbiosis among other stakeholders, including state officials, in order to perpetuate and enrich the social and economic well-being of Liberians. To date, the OLM is a relatively stable organization because its stakeholders

are collaboratively managing the resources and envisaging a sustainable OLM that is socially, environmentally, and financially responsible.

Furthermore, Senge et al. (2008) pointed out that the focus on sustainability is the environment—not the business or the society—because the environment is the biggest circle that encompasses the economy, industries, and individual businesses; therefore, the environment needs a stable and vibrant social order that will eventually have a positive effect on the economy, industries, businesses, and societies (pp. 102-103). Senge et al. suggested a rethinking of strategy needed to address sustainability issues of renewable energy in the form of wind farms, biofuels, solar panels, and other eco-friendly technologies that affect the environment as a system, and there must be a balance between sustainability and economic development (pp. 104-108). In this context, it is evident that the OLM's growth potential is minimal due to inadequate financial resources and persistent negative conflict.

## **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

In this case, the assumption of society's potential inability to sustain itself in the future is to manage itself socially, economically, and naturally. This assumption is rooted in the belief that a sustainable and ecologically livable environment can be achieved, provided the social, economic, and natural resources are well managed to the benefit of future generations. In essence, environmental sustainability is about the future. And the present is where appropriate actions are taken to preserve the environment for future generations.

Consequently, the practical application is sustainable thinking: helping people consider and implement simple choices that can have positive environmental impact extending to all facets of life. Thus, sustainable behavior becomes a moral and ethical imperative for everybody, not only those concerned, to consciously think about sustainability or sustainable solutions. Moreover, a deep understanding of systems thinking by individuals, groups, or organizations can enhance their motivations to become proactive agents of positive social change for the greater good of society, the economy, and above all, the environment. In this direction, crisis management and total quality management are solution tools that can greatly assist in finding sustainable solutions that will positively affect the welfare of all.

In this situation, systems thinking, sustainable thinking, and social responsibility are interwoven concepts that are extremely relevant to the discussion of finding sustainable solutions to crises and destructive practices that have the potential to destroy humankind and the environment. To this end, the concept and implementation of corporate social responsibility (CSR) compel all stakeholders to dedicate portions of their resources to the protection of the environment. Firms operating

in communities oftentimes neglect the development of destructive practices and eventually those communities falter economically, socially, environmentally, and otherwise. Therefore, corporate social responsibility, sustainable thinking, and systems thinking are powerful management and leadership philosophies that can help guide decision-making, which results in positive and sustainable solutions that will have a greater impact on society, the economy, and the environment. Sustainability enables organizations to continue beyond the immediate borders of the present without depleting environmental, economic, and social resources in the present (Epstein, 2008).

Sustainability is a major objective of any business, regardless of the product or service that it provides. Even with this as a clear objective, the evolving landscape of business, coupled with technological advancements, makes operating a business sustainably quite challenging. The values of the culture and organization define the perception and practices used in measuring sustainability. Methods used for immediate gains may be the key ingredient for destruction in the future. The depletion of environmental resources has ecological consequences, just as disregard of individual values can weaken development. A successful business will have to reposition in order to maintain a viable business that continues to flourish (Senge et al., 2008).

The concept of sustainability applies not only to private industries that are profit-oriented, but also to government agencies. An example of this is seen in the collaboration between the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The HHS uses green standards established by the EPA in its procurement requirements for products and services. These requirements are commonly seen in requests for proposals for commercial products as a means of protecting our valuable resources and preventing situations such as the tragedy of commons. Although this may not be as prevalent in research and development, there are conditions of awards that govern the use rights of the individuals as well as the disposal of hazardous material. The limitation of these measures can be found in the ability to consistently provide appropriate oversight and monitoring. Regulating compliance can be costly. However, the expansion of our perception of sustainability beyond economic measures, to include factors such as human flourishing, should be the basis of a responsible culture (King, 2008). We are all stakeholders in this endeavor and directly benefit from embracing and perpetuating sustainability.

When business owners talked about sustainability, it used to mean a company was wondering if they would stay in business. Today, sustainability means economic development meeting the needs of the current generation without compromising future generations' economic development (Epstein, 2008). Sustainability is about the triple bottom line of the environment, economy, and society (Hubbard, 2009). With the world markets operating as a global marketplace, it is important that the



consumption of the world's natural resources be conserved. Senge (et al., 2008) calls this the greatest challenge of humankind. The world cannot continue to operate, as we know it, through the destruction and waste of natural resources. Mother Nature is already upset with the creation of the industrial revolution as humankind continues to destroy the ozone layer and consume natural resources beyond repair or replenishment.

Businesses need to realize that operations can have a huge impact on life as we know it if sustainability is part of the long-term process and strategy. Transforming business into a sustainable entity, Epstein (2008) identified nine principles of sustainability of corporate responsibility: (a) ethics, (b) governance, (c) transparency, (d) business relationships, (e) financial return, (f) community involvement (economic development), (g) value of products and services, (h) employment practices, and (i) protection of the environment.

According to Epstein (2008), "Sustainability has been defined as economic development that meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (p. 20). Sustainability is about creating an uncontested market space, but is even more about making the competition irrelevant (Kim & Mauborgne, 2005, p. 190). When companies pay greater attention to the consumer's desire for sustainable prices, the company can look forward to an improved brand image when it is all said and done (Senge et al., 2008, p. 123).

The City of New York's level of social responsibility is at an all-time high. The city is currently progressing through a four-year transformation from decentralization to centralization of all back-end operations. At the completion of this transformation leadership effort on behalf of Mayor Bloomberg, the city is hoping to have saved budgets more than 5.2 billion dollars (approx.). It is unfortunate, though, that several employees will have to lose their jobs in the process. The silver lining in this project is the integration of several innovations in IT infrastructure, the transformation to a green economy, and the city's innovative healthy eating programs. The socially responsible efforts will assist New York City residents in becoming healthier; create an heightened awareness of energy conservation through the PlaNYC Project with the use of green products and services throughout the city; and last but not least, reshape IT strategies in order to continue to efficiently serve NYC residents, businesses, employees, and visitors. In the scheme of all those concerned, innovations such as these will serve to transform the way the city practices business within NYC communities (Denning, 2004, p. 18).

Epstein's (2008) nine principles of sustainability, coupled with the formal and informal organization processes involved in most change management efforts such as that described above, can assist any organization in achieving that desired uncontested market space known as sustainability. Identification of key stakeholders

(internal and external) and improved corporate governance stimulates continuity in company performance as well as sustainability in competitive market space.

## **SCALE-FREE NETWORKS WITH ECOLOGICAL, SOCIAL, AND BUSINESS SYSTEMS**

A scale-free network in our environment can be viewed when resources are the nodes and the links are companies that produce products for consumption. A power-law distribution rises from the supply and demand on a certain resource. Producers attempt to estimate the need in advance, which creates an unnecessary strain on the resource. We see this when trees are cut down before usage demand exists. We can add further nodes to the equation by specifying a resource, the industry, and the people associated with bringing the finished product to market, resulting in the consumer as a link. A linear relationship is created between nature, business systems, and society. These networks are what place the very survival of our species in question, as nature has long learned to cleanse itself.

Scale-free networks are based on the assumption that there are a small number of hubs with a large number of connections between them. When organizations can become more knowledgeable about these connections, they can better ensure sustainability for the organization. Tow (2009) provided this example:

*“Economies and Markets- reducing the risk of global failure by ensuring economic networks are more robust; by closely monitoring market signals and adjusting the topology of nodes and links to reduce the risk of runaway feedback loops and conflicts between local interests and global efficiency” (p. 38).*

The concept of scale-free networks involves social, ecological, or business systems networks that fit the traditional network model involving a hub or a person with links to many others, a broker or gatekeeper who acts as the sole connection between cliques, and a bridge or pulse-taker who links several cliques together and can identify opportunities for exchange between them. Scale-free networks are quite common and follow the power-law distribution whereby a system exists in which a great majority of nodes have very few connections and a very few nodes have a great many connections. Examples of scale-free networks include the distribution of the number of actors who starred in the same movies, the World Wide Web, journal citations, electric power grids, and relationships between earthquakes and their Richter magnitudes.

Networks are composed of small hubs that are interconnected (Denning, 2004). The concept of networks can be applied to social and societal networks. Humans

have interconnectedness to each, as well as the environment (Senge, et al., 2008). These connections can be used to leverage sustainability in all settings. Scale-free networks reveal the essential characteristics of networks, which “can be used to describe many realistic networks” (Kaihua et al., 2010). Being on the human resources side, I am quite unfamiliar with this area. This unfamiliarity for myself and many counterparts can cause inefficiencies and incongruities regarding sustainability. Human resources has unfortunately been a department that has always had to fight for a proverbial seat at the table. This can create inefficiencies and incongruities for the business network that is expecting an output from us, in that we are not sure how to create within the network in which the company operates. For this to truly be a scale-free network, all areas have to be aware of the others and how they operate

One of the properties of scale-free networks relative to growth is that new nodes appear randomly and exhibit a tendency toward preferential attachment, meaning that the new nodes connect to an existing node with probability proportional to the number of connections already at that node; therefore, well-connected nodes attract more connections than poorly connected ones. Another characteristic of scale-free networks is that as they evolve, they self-organize as there are no outside influences forcing them to organize. The definition of a network is that it is composed of a series of nodes and links. The nodes represent entities such as people, machines, or businesses. The links represent a connection of relationships between the nodes, which can be one way or directed, or undirected or mutual. Network vulnerabilities can occur when there is a failure at a node caused by an unusable path or link. Such failures in a scale-free network could have a significant effect, causing a large number of connections to go down, causing fragmentation (Denning, 2004).

These concepts of scale-free networks can be applied to innovations, or transformations of practices in an environment, either business or social systems. These innovations can be propagated through social and business networks via collaboration links, which can spread rapidly if adopted and recommended along the network. Individuals who are more adept at promoting and moving innovations along a network attempt to locate the network hubs they are attempting to influence and get them on board as supporters of the innovation. Furthering development of a network can be bolstered via a consortium, or grouping of individuals, who act as bridges between network parts with the potential of building a new hub (Denning, 2004).

Utilizing a scale-free network can be very effective with ecological, social, and business systems by utilizing shared organizing principles within an organization. While each different system is complex, they share common properties and can work together (Laszlo-Barabasi & Bonabeau, 2003). Scale-free networks can be beneficial to higher education in that their business relies on computer networking in order to function at full capacity. Understanding the connectivity and how all of

the systems can tie together will provide a way for more efficient business practices. The theory of strategic choice identifies changes an organization implements over a specific period of time.

## **Examples of Scale**

Free networks include social networks, the Internet, and ecological networks (Buchanan, 2002). Ecologically it could be considered a predator–prey relationship and on the social and business systems end it could be the effects of corporate practices on the public. Removing any variable out of the equation will affect how the system operates. In order for my organization to sustain itself, we must always be aware of what implications our actions will have on society. Our relationship with criminals could have a tremendous effect on the community.

## **Putting It Together**

Scale-free networks references how the eco-system works. This can transcend to businesses by applying the same concepts. In the case of many nontraditional universities, technology plays an integral role in its online performance. If we take technology away, i.e., the Internet, how would Walden be able to deliver its classes? How would students be able to attend class? For these universities to continue offering online classes, it must be aware of technology such as the Internet and other options to continue offering online classes.

## **CHANGE MANAGEMENT**

### **Managing Change**

The concept of change management describes the processes for effecting change that moves organizations societies, teams, groups, or individuals from a current state of equilibrium to a different desired state (Kritsonis, 2004).

Creating a new unit culture for change management success requires that the parties involved in the process recognize the need for change often, through an educational approach that stimulates and ensures consistency in the application of new knowledge (Beeson & Davis, 2000). O’Donovan (2006) provides four widely accepted basic definitions of change management: (1) the task of managing change, (2) an area of professional practice, (3) a body of knowledge, and (4) a control mechanism. While all four definitions apply, this literature review primarily relates to the task of managing change within the higher education system.

## **System Change**

The concepts that apply to organizational change apply to systems, with the understanding that a system is often complex and complicated. Boston (2001) indicates that system reformation may include a broad overarching goal with a number of specific objectives that increase the complexity of the change. “With other things being equal, the greater the number of objectives, the greater the likelihood that some of them will conflict, the greater the difficulties of assessing their relative importance, the greater the potential disputes over what constitutes success” (Boston, 2001, p .110). A system’s contextual environment plays a significant role, and there is indication that as time progresses, environments are becoming increasingly complex and described as “ambiguous, uncertain, and shifting” (Mitki, Shani, & Stjernberg, 2008, p. 69). Systems comprise a range of interacting entities, including, but not limited to, organizations, groups, teams, and individuals. As such, change management theories and models related to these entities also apply to systemic change management (Boston, 2001).

## **Organizational Change**

The concept of organizational change management is broad and includes various internal and external change process factors that influence change within an organization. Ford and Greer (2006) identified four models of change (based on Burke & Litwin, 1992; Kotter, 1996; Nadler & Tushman, 1980; and Tichy, 1983) that “represent prominent contemporary frameworks that shape both theoretical and practical aspects of organizational change” (p. 428).

## **Individual Change**

Kurt Lewin (1951), one of the modern pioneers of social, organizational, and applied psychology, developed one of the earliest linear models of change in which individual change is viewed as a process that involves three steps: unfreezing, movement or change, and refreezing (Haggbloom et al., 2002).

## **Change Management Failure**

It is not an overstatement to report that organizations view change as a pervasive, persistent, and normal state (Carnall, 1999; Cummings & Worley, 2001; Diefenbach, 2007; Kanter, 1997; Kotter, 1996; Kritsonis, 2004; Peters, 1997). Some estimate that up to 70 percent of planned changes fail (Beer & Nohria, 2000; Hammer & Champy, 1993).

## **Conceptual Structure**

Within the literature, there is agreement that change comes in various fashions. Sometimes it is small and incremental, or it is discontinuous, reactive, and anticipatory (Nadler, Shaw, & Walton, 1995). At other times, it is large scale and dramatic in its impact. We see consistently revealed two types of organizational change; planned and emergent (Beeson & Davis, 2000; Denis et al., 2007; Houchin & MacLean, 2005; Hughes, 2004; Purser & Petranker, 2005).

## **Managing Change in Complex Systems**

Change management is a highly complex phenomenon or extensive system of phenomena. In other words, in some cases, change management can be an extensive system of events, activities, and interventions, and in other cases, it can be a highly complex group of related events, activities, and interventions. Change management is multidimensional, as shown by the many definitions of change management ranging from the task of managing change to an area of professional practice to a body of knowledge and finally to a control mechanism (O'Donovan, 2006).

## **Nonlinearity, Sensitive Dependence on Initial Conditions, and Self-Organization**

Nonlinearity retains the reductionist view that reality is reducible to variables and, as such, in nonlinear dynamical systems, the relationships between variables are actually *interrelationships* (Mendelhall et al., 2000). Systems that demonstrate nonlinearity are also highly responsive to small deviations at the starting point of the system, or at other intervals throughout the system's existence (Mendelhall et al., 2000). Extreme sensitivity to initial conditions is identified with the term *butterfly effect* (Lorenz, 1993). Such systems are sometimes referred to as *complex adaptive systems*, and are characterized as being able to “adapt, change, evolve, and reconstruct themselves in response to external and internal environmental inputs” (Mendenhall & Macomber, 1997, p. 48).

## **Best Practice**

Although literature reveals the use of the term *change management best practice*, there does not appear to be consistent criteria for defining when change management practices become best practices. A literature review provided eight criteria for change management best practices based on results, including: (1) return on investment, (2) money spent for planned change, (3) openness to learning and collaboration, (4)

humility, (5) creativity and innovation, (6) integrity, (7) high regard for people's needs and perspectives, and (8) passion for change (Carter, Ulrich, & Goldsmith, 2005).

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## Chapter 2

# Influence of CSR Activities on Stakeholders in Foreign Markets

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### ABSTRACT

*Corporate social responsibility (CSR) can be seen as an important differentiation strategy for organizations operating in foreign markets, as it helps organizations to gain legitimacy, transfer their positive reputation, gain visibility and easily adapt to a new environment. The implementation of CSR activities in foreign markets is often different from the local markets. Beside institutional and legal framework, shareholders' interests can also significantly vary. Therefore, in order to achieve competitive advantage in foreign markets by using CSR, it is necessary to identify*

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*the interests of key stakeholder groups and to identify the most efficient activities and communication channels towards them. This chapter provides insight into the importance of CSR activities and communication on stakeholders' management on foreign markets, based on the empirical research on a sample of medium and large export organizations in Croatia. Results of the research indicate the importance and positive influence of CSR activities and communication on stakeholders' management in foreign markets.*

## **INTRODUCTION**

The globalization of the business world over the last few decades forced a large number of organizations within the global economic network to look for business opportunities in various foreign markets (Aulakh, Rotate, & Teegen, 2000). During this globalization process, on the one hand, there is a reduction in transport costs and strong development of information technology, while on the other hand, exports, direct foreign investment and transfer of capital and knowledge are rapidly expanding (Lee, & Vivarelli, 2006). In general, globalization has created a new world of opportunities for organizations, but also higher levels of competition and uncertainty (Thoumrungrroje, & Tansuhaj, 2007). In their search for a new market, resources, and profit, many companies are increasingly engaging in export-related activities, setting their business activities in new foreign markets, and becoming significant players on an international level. Export activities are perceived today as an extremely important and globally accepted indicator of the business performance of companies of different sizes and activities, and export organizations have a significant role in the global economy.

Besides quality products and services, in their market positioning on the foreign market, export companies can achieve their competitive advantage also through differentiation based on a higher degree of social responsibility in business compared to other competitors (Cruz, & Boehe, 2008; Cruz, Boehe., & Ogasavara, 2015.). Due to various forms in which corporate social responsibility (hereafter CSR) can occur, it has been recognized as a potentially important factor for company differentiation (Bhattacharya, Sen, & Korschun, 2008). As stakeholders across the global community are increasingly aware of the growing number of social, economic, ecological, cultural, security and health challenges that can significantly affect the way of life we know today, corporate differentiation based on CSR is increasingly becoming a strategic model of business differentiation in the global economic network (Boehe, & Cruz, 2010). Following the expansion of business to new foreign markets, the concept of CSR presents a perfect tool for export companies to transfer their positive

reputations onto these new foreign markets. Moreover, as export organizations operate in a culturally different environment, CSR helps them to adapt to these new environments, earn legitimacy, and reinforce competitive advantage on the international stage (Godos-Díez et al., 2018). The fact that the concept of CSR has a global nature and that the concept of CSR continues to spread daily within the global economic network (Gjoberg, 2009) contributes to this process.

To achieve a competitive advantage in the export market by differentiation based on CSR activities, it is necessary to identify the interests of key stakeholder groups and to identify the most efficient activities and communication channels towards stakeholders from the global economic network (Scherer, & Palazzo, 2008). Better relations with primary and secondary stakeholders in export markets build a more positive reputation of the company, which directly influences the export activities and the overall business of the company (Scherer, & Palazzo, 2008).

Although there is a significant scientific and business literature dealing with the analysis of the CSR activities and communication (e.g. Nielsen, & Thomsen, 2009; Amalados, & Manohar, 2013; Markota Vukić, Omazić, & Aleksić, 2018) as well as impact of the concept of CSR on financial result and reputation on the domestic market (e.g. Minor, & Morgan, 2011; Hasan et al., 2018; Hou, 2019; Jeffrey, Rosenberg, & McCabe, 2019), so far, there is a very limited research that investigates CSR and export organizations and their results on the global market. Besides, there is a lack of research that looks at differentiation on foreign markets based on CSR. Likewise, there is a lack of research regarding key stakeholders in foreign markets and a comparison of the importance of groups of domestic and foreign external stakeholders for export business operations.

To provide more insights into CSR activities and CSR communication of export companies in foreign markets, and if and how this affects stakeholders' management in foreign markets, this chapter explores more deeply their interrelation and provides an empirical analysis of their connection. The main objective of this chapter, therefore, is to present an analysis of CSR activities and communication of export organizations and their effects on stakeholders' management of foreign markets. To provide additional insights regarding the influence of CSR activities and communication on stakeholders' management of foreign markets, we designed and conducted empirical research. Two research questions have been stated: *RQ1: What is the impact of CSR activities of medium and large-sized Croatian export companies on stakeholders' management in the foreign markets?; and RQ2: What is the impact of CSR communication through web pages and CSR reports of medium and large-sized Croatian export companies on stakeholders' management in the foreign markets?*

To test the influence of CSR activities and communication on stakeholders' management of foreign markets, empirical research was done. Primary data were

collected through the survey on a sample of 78 medium and large export companies in Croatia. CSR activities in foreign markets are analyzed through seven dimensions defined by ISO 26000: environment, human rights, labor practices, organization governance, fair operation practices, consumer issues problems and contribution to the community and society (ISO, 2010). CSR communication in foreign markets is measured by the intensity and level of development of communication channels (social responsibility reports, web pages, and social networks, and advertising) of the export company with the groups of stakeholders in foreign markets. As regards to the relationship with stakeholders and quality of relations, it was measured as respondent's assessment of quality with defined primary (consumers, suppliers and the local community) and secondary (regulatory and legislative bodies, civil institutions, non-governmental organizations, media, and competing organizations) stakeholders.

The main contribution of this chapter is in providing additional insights into CSR activities and the communication of export companies and their influence on stakeholders' management in foreign markets. Also, the chapter provides the results of empirical research on the relation of analyzed variables.

The chapter consists of the following sections. Following the introduction, the second section will present the background and rationale of CSR for export organizations. The next section outlines the concept of CSR activities, stakeholders' management, and communication channels. This is followed by the section where empirical research is presented, including the methodology used and the results of our analysis. The last section brings a summary of results and present future research directions and limitations of the chapter.

## **BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE OF CSR FOR EXPORT ORGANIZATIONS**

To improve their long-term competitiveness, organizations move beyond domestic markets and internationalize seeking for new markets, resources, or strategic assets (Agnihotri, & Bhattacharya, 2019). Export is one of the firm internationalization strategies (Godos-Díez, Cabeza-García, & Fernández-González, 2018) that enables organizations to expand beyond its domestic market and offer their products or services in other regions or countries. However, expansion beyond domestic market, as Iyer and Jarvis (2019, citing Mwaura et al., 1998) emphasize, seeks organization to give special attention to issues of compatibility of operations in local and foreign markets, to extent to which elements as organizational strategy, goals, policies, and operations need to be adjusted to the new environment, but also to a myriad of socio-cultural risks that can endanger their business in new foreign markets.

Gaining legitimacy in international markets becomes a special challenge, and it often becomes crucial for survival in these new markets (Park, 2018; Bai, Chang, & Li, 2019), especially for emerging markets multinationals. Research has shown that one of the important non-market strategies that can be seen as an important tool for legitimacy creation is CSR (Claasen, & Roloff 2012; Agnihotri, & Bhattacharya, 2019; Bai, Chang, & Li, 2019). Following the expansion of business to new export markets, the concept of social responsibility is a perfect tool for export companies to transfer positive reputations to foreign markets. Due to various forms in which CSR can occur, it can potentially be an important factor in company differentiation (Bhattacharya, Sen, & Korschun, 2008).

Market positioning in the export market enables the company to generate certain financial and non-financial benefits arising from a specific market position that is secured by having a sustainable competitive advantage. A competitive advantage in the export market can also be achieved by differentiation based on a higher level of corporate social responsibility in relation to competing companies in the industry (Cruz, & Boehe, 2008). As shareholders across the global community are increasingly aware of the existence of a growing number of social, economic, environmental, cultural, security and health challenges that can significantly affect the way of life we know today, the differentiation of companies based on social responsibility increasingly represents a strategic model of enterprise differentiation in the global economic network (Boehe, & Cruz, 2010).

The World Business Council for Sustainable Development defines CSR as the “continuing commitment by business to behave ethically and contribute to economic development while improving the quality of life of the workforce and their families as well as of the local community and society at large” (WBCSD, 2000). Social responsibility is no longer considered as a luxury, but an imperative that provides long-term and stable support, as well as a positive reputation of companies with internal and external stakeholders. Companies that ignore the social and environmental aspects of their own business within a global network can be successful in the short term, but in the long run, business and survival are at risk in global and national markets (Jamali, & Mirshak, 2007).

The current situation of global society and economics defines the key task of contemporary global companies - business under the legal regulations and expectations that internal and external stakeholders have towards the organization (Bartlett, & Devin, 2011). Following this thesis, Simmons (2004) defines socially responsible companies as organizations recognizing the need to connect with different groups of internal and external stakeholders and stresses that the key task of management is to create environmental and social sustainability through the development of organizational culture and an ethical management system that considers needs and interests a wide range of stakeholders in business processes.

Today, more than ever before, shareholders want a proactive and sincere approach by the management of powerful global companies to avoid social, economic, and environmental disasters (Jamali, & Keshishian, 2009). A similar conclusion is presented by Freeman and Velamuri (2006) who note that most stakeholders consider that in the global market the main responsibility to promote and implement socially responsible activities is in the hands of large multinational companies, and often neglected the role of small and medium-sized organizations. The authors conclude that the available resources and the size of the company are partially affecting the implementation and communication of CSR, but that small and medium-sized enterprises have certain obligations towards society in accordance with their capabilities. Globalization and the rapid development of information and communication technology-enabled small and medium-sized enterprises also to more favorably, more efficiently, and more easily implement and communicate socially responsible activities (Freeman, & Velamuri, 2006).

For organizations on new markets, not only that CSR helps positively contributes to internationalization processes by helping to adapt to a new environment and transferring good reputation, but as Godos-Díez, Cabeza-García and Fernández-González (2018) emphasize, organizations doing business in culturally different markets, seek to improve their social performance as it helps them to gain higher visibility, mitigate risk, have greater availability of funds, and to learning and maximize skills valuable for meeting the expectations of the stakeholders.

Still, as some authors (e.g., Campbell, 2007; Kuada, & Hinson, 2012; Orudzheva, & Gaffney, 2018; Iyer, & Jarvis, 2019,) emphasize implementing CSR strategy and activities in host market are often confronted with many issues and different perspectives between local and host country. For instance, different conceptualizations, institutional as well as legal frameworks in home and the host country can create misalignments and different perspectives and emphasis on CSR activities and obligations, especially concerning more developed and less developed countries. As Campell (2007, p. 946) states the level of CSR behavior will be strongly dependent on the institutional framework and the following conditions: public and private regulation, the presence of nongovernmental and other independent organizations that monitor corporate behavior, institutionalized norms regarding appropriate corporate behavior, associative behavior among corporations themselves, and organized dialogues among corporations and their stakeholders.



## **CSR ACTIVITIES, STAKEHOLDERS' MANAGEMENT, AND COMMUNICATION CHANNELS**

As the pressure of global stakeholders with its intensity and appearance differs from national and local pressure of stakeholders, global organizations need to review the processes of development, implementation, and communication of CSR in their business continuity. The concept of CSR is made up of various activities geared towards different types of stakeholders (McWilliams, Siegel, & Wright, 2006). Motives and stakeholder interests are continually changing and must be thoroughly analyzed, controlled and revised by management to avoid disparities in the conduct of CSR activities and actual stakeholder expectations (Morsing, & Schulz, 2006). Du, Bhattacharya, and Sen (2011) emphasize that during the strategic implementation of CSR it is necessary to have management focused on the interests of the target groups and to include them in the creation of CSR activities.

McWilliams and Siegel (2011) describe CSR activities as a specialized intangible asset of an enterprise that has the potential to increase the value of the entire enterprise or part of the manufacturing and service portfolio through a positive impact on reputation. The ISO 26000 standard represents a globally relevant social responsibility guide for private and public sector organizations that assists organizations in their efforts to operate ethically and socially responsible. They define CSR activities through the following seven dimensions: (1) environmental impact; (2), human rights protection; (3) labor practices (4) organization governance; (5) fair operation practices; (6) consumer issues and problems and (7) contribution to the community and society (ISO, 2010).

CSR activities enable organizations to improve the society as a whole, acting outside the legal framework and not just focusing on the interests of the organization itself, but also on the needs of internal and external stakeholders (Carroll, & Shabana, 2010). Part of organizations is implementing CSR activities from time to time, while on the other hand, an increasing number of global profit and non-profit organizations are oriented towards the continuous implementation, development, and communication of socially responsible activities towards a local, national or global community (Blomback, & Wigren, 2009).

Organizations need to be aware of their stakeholders, that is, all individuals or organizations that are influenced directly or indirectly by business processes and business activities that can help or harm the business of a company (Miller, & Lewis, 1991). For organizations, it is virtually impossible to ensure sustainability and business stability if they work in isolation from the community, as their business is directly dependent on engaging human and other resources from the environment to create products and services targeted at community and stakeholders (Matthews, 1993). Organizations survive within their community if they act on a “contract”

concluded with the community, and if their business activities coincide with the goals set by the community system (Deegan, 2009). Expectations of key stakeholder groups must be met for an organization to continue with business processes and thus ensure the survival and sustainability of the business, as the exclusive focus on shareholders' interests may be detrimental (An, Davey, & Eggleton, 2011). Relationship with stakeholders is defined as a relationship between an organization and an individual or a group of people who are influenced or can affect the organization's performance in executing set goals (Mitchell, Agle, & Wood, 1997). Wheeler and Sillanpaa (1997) distinct between primary and secondary stakeholders, with primary being: shareholders, managers, employees, consumers, suppliers, and the local community, while secondary are: regulatory and legislative bodies, civil institutions, non-governmental organizations, media and competing organizations (Wheeler, & Sillanpaa, 1997). Such a business model, which is fully aligned with the expectations of key stakeholder groups, is not simply achieved as expectations and social norms are continually changing. In this context, achieving the correspondence between organizational goals and stakeholder interests is a very demanding process that requires a strategic approach (Lanis, & Richardson, 2012).

Globalization and internationalization have expanded the range of stakeholders to whom firms are responsible (Newman et al., 2018). As the pressure of global stakeholders with intensity and appearance differs from the national and local pressures of stakeholders, global companies need to review their CSR activities continually and processes of development, implementation, and communication of CSR in their business. Also, as motives and stakeholder interests are continually changing, they must be thoroughly analyzed, controlled and revised by management to avoid disparities in the conduct of socially responsible activities and actual stakeholder expectations (Morsing, & Schulz, 2006). As regard to shareholders, establishing quality communication with them is also important. Communicating CSR is described as presenting the ethical and social ambitions of the organization to primary and secondary stakeholders to develop critical attention from stakeholders (Morsing, & Schultz, 2006). Although organizations did not pay too much attention to the importance of communicating CSR activities at the end of the last century, today communication of CSR plays an increasingly important role in the communication strategy of the organization. Establishing quality communication with stakeholders is becoming more important because socially responsible business is, with a variety of other factors, an important differentiator factor that allows the creation of competitive advantages and achievement of strategic goals (Peloza, & Shang, 2011). Communicating CSR activities does not only imply presenting CSR through standards and behavioral rules but also through long-term CSR projects whose ultimate impact on society and stakeholders cannot be predicted (Birth et al., 2008).

With regard to their international stakeholders, communication of CSR activities can help organizations to increase their credibility and legitimacy (Agnihotri, & Bhattacharya, 2019). Finding an efficient and adequate model of communicating CSR activities is not an easy task because different stakeholder groups have different interests and expectations from an organization (Simmons, & Becker-Olsen, 2006). Success in communicating social responsibility from management requires identifying targeted stakeholders, recognizing their motives and interests, and finding the most efficient communication channels (Ihator, 2001). Communicating CSR to stakeholders affects their perception of the identity of an organization that represents the central point of the communication process of CSR (Hooghiemstra, 2000).

CSR in the contemporary global environment lessens the use of solely traditional communications strategies and requires sophisticated and customizable digital communications strategies that complement traditional communication channels (Morsing, & Schultz, 2006). The importance of communication becomes even more pronounced by the development of new technologies that enable day-to-day and two-way communication between organizations and stakeholders (Isenmann, 2006). Birth et al. (2008) suggest three main channels of CSR communication: social responsibility reports, web pages, social networks, and advertising. In addition to digital communication through social networks and websites, CSR reports represent an important communication channel. It allows organizations to share information regarding the impact of their business practices on the environment, social, and governance issues (Sethi, Martell, & Demir, 2017). CSR reporting is continuously increasing as a larger part of the investors analyzes this type of report alongside the analysis of the company's financial statements of efficient decision-making on investment placements (Morsing, & Schultz, 2006).

## **EMPIRICAL RESEARCH**

### **Procedure and Measurement Items**

Our research was conducted during May 2017, on a sample of 78 medium and large export companies in Croatia by using a survey method. The sample was determined by the records of the Croatian Exporters Association, and a prerequisite for including an organization in the survey was that it had an income from export activities of goods and services at a minimum of 25% of total revenue.

CSR activities in foreign markets were analyzed following seven dimensions of CSR defined by ISO 26000: environment, human rights, labor practices, organization governance, fair operation practices, consumer issues problems and contribution to the community and society (ISO, 2010). We asked respondents to assess the level of

implementation of each CSR activity by using Likert type scale from 1 to 5 (1 –not being implemented at all, 5- continuously implemented).

Stakeholders' management was assessed through a relationship with stakeholders and the quality of this relationship. We asked each respondent to identify the most important stakeholder groups for their organization, and evaluate the quality of relationship with each group of stakeholders by using Likert type scale from 1 to 5 (1 – no quality at all, 5 – high quality). In defining stakeholder groups, we followed Wheeler and Sillanpaa (1997) distinction between primary external stakeholders (consumers, suppliers, and the local community) and secondary (regulatory and legislative bodies, civil institutions, non-governmental organizations, media, and competing organizations).

The three main channels of CSR communication analyzed were: social responsibility reports, web pages, and social networks, and advertising (Birth et al., 2008). Development of communication of CSR in foreign markets is defined through the implementation of the following principles: 1) balance; 2) comparability, 3) accuracy; 4) timeliness; 5) clarity and (6) reliability (GRI, 2002). We asked each respondent to evaluate the statements that referred to the principles and the level of development of each communication channel by using Likert type scale from 1 to 5 (1 – completely disagree, 5 – completely agree).

## **Sample Characteristics**

The sample consisted of the 78 medium and large export companies in Croatia. As mentioned, the sample was determined by the records of the Croatian Exporters Association, and a prerequisite for including an organization in the survey was that it had an income from export activities of goods and services at a minimum of 25% of total revenue.

As regards to their size, in our sample, approximately equally represented were large organizations with more than 250 employees (51.3%) and medium-sized ones with 50 to 250 employees (48.7%).

Most of the organizations were from the manufacturing industry (48.7%), followed by wholesale and retail trade as well as repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles (14.1%) and other service activities (10.3%). 25% of them are subsidiaries of a multinational company, while the rest of them are independent organizations, mostly with private ownership (59%).

Most of the sampled organizations as regards their business activities are oriented on business with other companies (B2B) (75.6%), while others do business to customers (B2C) (24.4%). For most of the organizations (32.1%), export has 81-100% share in total revenue. As regards to the market, they export to, most of them

(46.2%) export to the European Union market by directly placing their products or service on the market (91.03%).

## **Statistical Analysis**

To provide insight into two posed research questions, two multiple regression models have been developed and tested. The first model used the composite measure of stakeholders' management as a dependent variable, and various indicators of CSR activities as independent variables, and with this model, we provide the basis for answering the first research question about the impact of CSR activities of medium and large-sized Croatian export companies on stakeholders' management in the foreign markets. The second model used the composite measure of stakeholders' management as a dependent variable, and various indicators of CSR communication as independent variables, and with this model, we provide the basis for answering the second research question about the impact of CSR communication of medium and large-sized Croatian export companies on stakeholders' management in the foreign markets.

## **Research Results**

### **Descriptive Statistics**

Table 1 presents the information provided by the respondents regarding the frequency of CSR activities. Results reveal export organizations on foreign markets state to have implemented a rather high level of different CSR activities (overall average 4.26 for a sum of all CSR activities). As presented in Table 1, mostly implemented

*Table 1. CSR activities of export organizations in foreign markets (n=78; 1 - not being implemented at all, 5 - continuously implemented)*

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Average</b>	<b>St. Dev.</b>
Organization governance	3.95	1.068
Human right	4.54	0.733
Labor practices	4.60	0.631
Environment	4.51	0.698
Fair operation practices	4.22	0.832
Consumer issues and problems	4.28	0.788
Contribution to the community and society	3.92	0.894
Total	4.26	0.945

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are activities regarding labor practices (average 4.60), human right (average 4.54) and environment (average 4.51), while the lowest average grade is given to activities related to organization governance (average 3.95) and contribution to the community and society (average 3.92). Results are not surprising, as activities that had the highest average marks are in most countries legally defined and imposed by the institutional framework, thus organizations need to implement and secure them in to earn their legitimacy.

Table 2 presents average grades related to the quality of relationships with different groups of stakeholders, as stated by sampled organizations. Relation with primary stakeholders is considered to be the most quality one, with quality of relation towards consumers having the highest average grade (average 4.21) followed by relation towards suppliers (average 4.09). Engagement of primary stakeholders is considered vital for organizational continuance and success (Todd, Leask, & Ensor, 2017) thus it is not surprising that as in their home markets, export organizations on foreign markets engage in more quality relations with this group of stakeholders. Among secondary stakeholders, the most quality assessed is the relation with regulatory and legislative bodies that is also not surprising if we consider that this group of stakeholders is the one defining legal frameworks and guidance for behavior on foreign markets.

*Table 2. Quality of relationship with different groups of stakeholders (n=78; 1 - not being implemented at all, 5 - continuously implemented)*

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Average</b>	<b>St. Dev.</b>
Consumers as primary stakeholders	4.21	0.745
Suppliers as primary stakeholders	4.09	0.724
Local community as primary stakeholders	3.58	0.947
Regulatory and legislative bodies as secondary stakeholders	3.95	0.804
Civil institutions as secondary stakeholders	2.88	1.248
Media	3.19	1.217
Non-governmental organizations as secondary stakeholders	2.77	1.387
Competing organizations as secondary stakeholders	2.96	1.062
Total	4.21	0.956

Table 3 presents the CSR communication channels and principles of communication. As regard communication channels they use, CSR reports (average 3.81) together with web pages (average 3.68) as communication channels have received the highest average grades, or in other words, they are the most present

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*Table 3. CSR communication channels and principles of communication (n=78; 1 - not being implemented at all, 5 - continuously implemented)*

<b>Dimension</b>	<b>Variable</b>	<b>Average</b>	<b>St. Dev.</b>
Communication channels	CSR reports	3.81	1.228
	Web pages	3.68	1.274
	Social networks	3.23	1.395
	Advertising	2.69	1.332
Principles of communication	Balance	3.49	0.894
	Comparability	3.65	0.914
	Accuracy	3.86	0.785
	Timeliness	3.55	0.949
	Clarity	3.68	0.785
	Reliability	3.82	0.879

communication channels. The least present is advertising, receiving the lowest grade among communication channels analyzed (average 2.69). Development of communication principles defined by Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) guidelines show companies in their communication are guided by principles of balance, comparability, accuracy, timeliness; clarity and reliability, as average marks for all principles, are high (ranging from 3.49 to 3.86).

Table 4 presents descriptive statistics for sum values of construct CSR activities, CSR communication, and shareholders' management. The values of Cronbach's alpha are higher than 0.7, indicating that there is an internal consistency of items within the scales, which indicates their reliability.

*Table 4. Descriptive statistics for sum values of construct*

<b>Variable</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Min</b>	<b>Max</b>	<b>Average</b>	<b>St. Dev.</b>	<b>Cronbach's Alpha</b>
CSR activities	78	2.29	5.00	4.29	0.63	0.844
CSR communications	78	1.10	5.00	3.55	0.68	0.841
Shareholders' management	78	1.38	5.00	3.45	0.70	0.827

## Testing Research Questions

Our first research question (RQ1) analyzes if CSR activities of medium and large-sized Croatian export companies on foreign markets have a positive effect on stakeholders' management of foreign markets. To test this, we used a regression model, with stakeholders' management as a dependent variable.

Table 5 presents a model summary of a regression model with stakeholders' management as the dependent variable. The adjusted coefficient of determination indicates that the model explains a 47.6% variance in dependent variable stakeholder management. The Durbin-Watson coefficient is 2.100, which indicates that there is no problem with autocorrelation in the model.

*Table 5. Regression model summary (dependent variable: stakeholders' management; independent variable: CSR activities)*

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. the Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
0.724	0.524	0.476	0.508	2.100

As ANOVA test has been statistically significant at the probability level of 1%, ( $F(7,10) = 11.003$ ) leading to conclusion that at least one independent variable has a statistically significant impact on dependent variable stakeholders' management,

*Table 6. Coefficients of regression model (dependent: stakeholders' management; independent: CSR activities)*

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficient	t	Sig
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	1.166	0.492	0.230	2.367	0.021
Organization governance	0.151	0.086	0.138	1.752	0.084*
Human right	0.132	0.149	-0.141	0.888	0.378
Labor practices	-0.157	0.161	0.291	-0.975	0.333
Environment	0.293	0.129	0.104	2.268	0.026**
Fair operation practices	0.088	0.095	0.371	0.918	0.362
Consumer issues and problems	0.331	0.104	0.435	3.174	0.002***
Contribution to the community and society	0.342	0.088		3.862	0.000***

Note: \*\*\* statistically significant with 1% probability, \*\* statistically significant with 5% probability, \* statistically significant with 10% probability



we further on tested each particular CSR activity (as independent variable) and its effect on stakeholders' management (dependent variable). Table 6 presents the coefficients of this regression model.

Results indicate that CSR activities related to consumer issues and problems ( $p < 0.01$ ), contribution to the community and society ( $p < 0.01$ ), organization governance ( $p < 0.10$ ), and environment ( $p < 0.05$ ) have a statistically positive influence on stakeholders' management.

Our second research question (RQ2) analyzes if the communication of CSR activities of medium and large-sized Croatian export companies on foreign markets has a positive effect on stakeholders' management of foreign markets.

Table 7 shows the model summary of a regression model with stakeholders' management as the dependent variable. The adjusted coefficient of determination indicates that the model explains 67.6% variance in dependent variable stakeholder management. The Durbin-Watson coefficient is 1.893, which indicates that there is no problem for autocorrelation in the model

*Table 7. Regression model summary (Dependent variable: Stakeholders' management; Independent variable: CSR communication)*

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. the Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
0.850	0.723	0.676	0.406	1.893

ANOVA test has been statistically significant at the probability level of 1%, ( $F(10.59) = 15.395$ ) leading to the conclusion that at least one independent variable has a statistically significant impact on dependent variable stakeholders' management.

Table 8 presents coefficients of the regression model where for each particular variable of CSR communication (independent variable), we tested their effect on stakeholders' management (dependent variable).

Results indicate that CSR communication through a web page ( $p < 0.05$ ) and advertising ( $p < 0.01$ ), as well as clarity in communication ( $p < 0.01$ ), have a statistically positive influence on stakeholders' management.

Based on the results, the following can be concluded:

- CSR activities in foreign markets, in most cases, are connected with stakeholders' management. Activities related to consumer issues and problems, contribution to the community and society, organization governance and environment have a statistically positive influence on stakeholders' management.

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*Table 8. Coefficients of regression model (dependent variable: stakeholders' management; independent variable: CSR communication)*

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficient	t	Sig
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	0.425	0.298		1.429	0.158
CSR reports	0.078	0.060	0.132	1.298	0.199
Web pages	0.128	0.057	0.227	2.242	0.029**
Social networks	0.085	0.055	0.159	1.560	0.124
Advertising	0.141	0.050	0.263	2.811	0.007***
Balance	0.097	0.069	0.124	1.404	0.165
Comparability	0.072	0.107	0.094	0.672	0.504
Accuracy	-0.079	0.117	-0.085	-0.676	0.501
Timeliness	0.005	0.088	0.007	0.063	0.950
Clarity	0.240	0.087	0.268	2.756	0.008***
Reliability	0.122	0.087	0.151	1.408	0.164

Note: \*\*\* statistically significant with 1% probability, \*\* statistically significant with 5% probability

- CSR communication channels and principles on foreign markets, in a smaller number of cases, are connected with stakeholders' management. CSR communication through the web page and advertising, as well as clarity in communication, have a statistically positive influence on stakeholders' management

## **DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

In a global environment, the link between the concept of CSR and export activity is becoming even more important, but also more complex. The increase in complexity is due to differences in the interests and needs of primary and secondary stakeholders in domestic and foreign markets, but also due to market diversity that seeks adequate communication models between companies and its key stakeholders. A high level of complexity and diversity in CSR activities requires that management of export companies approaches the concept of CSR strategically, and not observing CSR activities as philanthropic activities that cannot be directly linked to business processes.

The implementation of CSR activities in foreign markets is often different from the local markets. Besides the institutional and legal framework, shareholders' interest can also significantly vary. Therefore, to achieve a competitive advantage

in foreign markets by using CSR, it is necessary to identify the interests of key stakeholder groups and to identify the most efficient activities and communication channels towards them.

We intended to provide more understanding of CSR activities and communication and their influence on stakeholders' management in foreign markets. The theoretical framework is supplemented with results of empirical research on a sample of 78 medium and large export organizations in Croatia. The results of the research indicate the importance and positive influence of CSR activities and communication on stakeholders' management in foreign markets. More specifically, activities related to consumer issues and problems, contribution to the community and society, organization governance and environment have a statistically positive influence on stakeholders' management. As regard to CSR communication channels and principles in foreign markets, communication through the web page and advertising, as well as clarity in communication, have a statistically positive influence on stakeholders' management.

Still, several research limitations need to be acknowledged. Regarding our sample, we oriented specifically on medium and large-sized export organizations in Croatia. A deeper understanding of CSR in foreign markets would be achieved if we analyzed organizations who also internationalize by using other strategies of internationalization (e.g., joint ventures), and also small organizations as today by using modern organizational technology they can also communicate to all interested stakeholders about their CSR activities. Moreover, destination countries of exports matters (Newmann et al., 2018) therefore, besides including export organizations from other countries than Croatia, future analysis needs also to analyze the mediating role of specifics of the destination country of export.

Also, in this research, we oriented only on several stakeholder groups, so future research needs to encompass wider stakeholders' groups and compare the importance of each group in the domestic and export markets as the attitudes towards CSR may vary from market to market. On the state level, it would be interesting to analyze potential government and institutional measures that can hinder or encourage CSR activities that eventually can affect performance and export activities in foreign markets.

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## **KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS**

**Corporate Social Responsibility:** (Also known as corporate responsibility) is the integration of socially and environmentally beneficial programs and practices into a corporation's business model. It is a form of corporate social and environmental self-regulation integrated into its business model or how companies manage the business processes to produce an overall positive impact on society.

**Export:** A form of internalization strategy where an organization has produced in the domestic market but offers products or services on foreign markets.

**Internationalization:** The process of moving beyond the domestic market, where organizations in search for new markets or resources set their business operations and activities on foreign markets.

*Influence of CSR Activities on Stakeholders in Foreign Markets*

**Stakeholder:** All individuals or organizations that can have an effect on the organization, and are directly or indirectly influenced by business processes and activities of an organization.


# Chapter 3

## Corporate Social Responsibility in the Agri–Food Sector


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### ABSTRACT

*Sustainable development is desired not only for public institutions but also for private companies that have realized the importance of sustainable management of limited resources available to mankind. The activity of large transnational corporations is not guided only by the principle of profit maximization, but also by corporate social responsibility (CSR). This chapter focuses on CSR programs run by agri-food companies taking into account the particularities of their activity and the importance of the consumers' behavior to improve the activity of companies in the CSR area. On the one hand, making profits is a desideratum of any company, but on the other*

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*hand, companies in the agri-food sector must also ensure the observance of the food safety principles and consumer protection. This is also demonstrated by the major implications of the scandals generated by food contamination with various bacteria or chemicals. Consumer force shapes the activity of these companies, and intense competition leads the managers of these companies to run various CSR programs that eventually lead to increased visibility of the firm and to improving economic indicators. The objective of the chapter is to establish the specificities of the agri-food sector companies. These companies have a high responsibility taking into account the impact of food consumption on the health of the population in the short, medium, and long term and the consequences of this situation on the investments that had to be made in the health sector. The final consumer is a force that sanctions the inappropriate behavior of food producers, but he/she must have a good food education in order to be able to remodel the activity of agri-food companies.*

## **INTRODUCTION**

CSR is a concept that remodels the business, especially transnational companies that are the main promoters of CSR programs. The importance of CSR concerns is demonstrated and involved by other entities in different CSR programs, namely small and medium-sized enterprises, portfolio investors, universities or even banks and stock exchanges (Grigorescu & Saseanu, 2010;; Nica, 2013; Popescu & Huru, 2016, Siminica & Sichigea, 2018; Sima & Gheorghe, 2019; Siminica et al., 2019). Moreover, international institutions such as the United Nations or EU officials have been involved in promoting the concept by developing and promoting various principles that guide the work of companies or public institutions. Thus, based on Global Compact principles used internationally by corporations, Principles for Management Responsible Education, the Melbourne Principal for Sustainable Cities, the Global Compact Cities Program or the Responsible Investing Principles have been developed. Within the European Union, the concerns of the authorities regarding sustainable development and CSR are very much intensive, and specific strategies and normative norms are set up to encourage companies to run different CSR programs but also to publish non-financial information so that stakeholders can base their economic decisions on proper data. So, CSR is an instrument to build a socially and environmentally sustainable future (Sanova, 2013)

The authors' aim is to analyze the importance of CSR for agri-food companies as the current food system relies on non-energy resources, and companies in the field are in a dramatic battle for air, soil and water. The issues of agri-food sector sustainability and CSR activities are specific in the context of the challenges imposed by the transition to bio-economy. These companies, through their production

activity, have a major impact on natural capital and raw materials (Vilkè et al., 2015; Topp-Becker & Ellis, 2017). In addition, certain social and environmental conditions are needed throughout the entire production system to produce healthy and quality products.

The use of genetically modified organisms, the high level of pesticides or the welfare of animals are priority issues for both consumers and agri-food companies (Stancu, 2012; Mazur-Wierzbicka, 2015). In addition, food waste, overproduction of food, but also starvation that affects a large part of the planet's population are challenges for companies, consumers and public authorities (Ene, 2013; Bilska et al., 2015). Food waste has not only economic consequences but also social and environmental implications in the sense that it slows down social progress, requires and consumes non-renewable resources and causes unnecessary pollution of the environment through both production and storage subsequent deterioration of unconsumed products.

So, the companies from the agri-food sector must manifest social responsibility on two levels: the quantity and the quality of the produced goods. The quantity had to be dimensioned to meet the population's food needs, and to avoid the waste of food. The quality of the products must be in line with the standards imposed by the authorities in order to ensure the good health of the population in the short, medium and long term.

The novelty of our research lies in analyzing CSR for agri-food sector companies in the context of Sustainable Development Goals that increase the responsibility of these companies towards both consumers and society in general. Despite the efforts of international organizations and European authorities to harmonize the dissemination rules of non-financial information, data regarding the CSR activity of companies are presented in various forms, which creates difficulties for stakeholders in comparing information provided by different firms.

The article is structured in six sections. After the introduction, the article presents a review of the literature that focuses on the results of the main studies regarding the importance of CSR actions in the context of sustainable development and the transition to bio-economy. The next section focuses on the involvement of European and national authorities in order to create the legal framework for CSR programs and the dissemination of non-financial information to stakeholders. The power of consumers on remodeling corporate social behavior is discussed in the following section. In the last but one section, the authors made an analysis regarding the non-financial information published by the companies from agri-food sector. In the Conclusions section, the authors present the main outcomes and limitations of empirical research.

## **BACKGROUND**

Regardless of the field of activity, companies become aware of the importance of protecting the environment, engaging in the development of local communities or respecting human rights (Matei, 2013; Nica, 2013; Volosevici, 2013). The activity of the companies is shaped not only by the managers' desire of profit maximization and of the need to create and maintain a positive image of the company among stakeholders such as customers, local communities, or portfolio investors. The international financial crisis, scandals generated by employees or managers' frauds, disasters caused by accidental environmental pollution and global warming leads to an increase in the importance of corporate responsibility to society and the environment.

The behavior of consumers or portfolio investors has changed considerably over the past decades, and their decisions are based not only on traditional criteria, but they are also guided in their actions and by social or environmental considerations. The behavioral change observed in portfolio investors is supported by both international financial organizations and scholars that involved in promoting the CSR concept by launching sustainability indices, corporate governance principles, or best CSR practices (Matei, 2013), by imposing conditions on informing the public and investors about the sustainable practices promoted or by carrying out financial education programs.

On the impact of globalization and ethical progress, consumers have also become a force that drives companies to behave responsibly. Thus, through the emergence and development of ethical consumerism, we are witnessing a new phenomenon: more and more consumers make decisions to purchase economic goods according to certain ecological or social criteria that concern the activity of producing companies (Poetz et al., 2012; Matei, 2013; Topp-Becker & Ellis, 2017). Moreover, it is seen as the involvement of consumer organizations that promote the need for full and accurate information on the ethical, social and environmental conditions in which goods and services are produced and marketed. In this way, customers have additional information for a correct base for purchasing decisions of the economic goods. The vulnerability of companies in certain sectors such as agri-food businesses toward public opinion leads to the adoption of CSR policies and the implementation of specific measures in view of the willingness of consumers to pay for this intangible attribute of companies, namely their social involvement (Lombardi et al., 2015; Sima & Gheorghe, 2019).

Both public authorities and companies are involved in various programs of financial, food, sustainable development education in order to improve consumer knowledge in certain areas (Matei, 2013; Bilska et al., 2015; Bancercz, 2016; Ene & Panait, 2017).

### ***Corporate Social Responsibility in the Agri-Food Sector***

- To increase confidence in certain institutions (for example, commercial banks that have experienced a deterioration in the image as a result of the international financial crisis),
- To improve financial inclusion and financial market consumers to make the right decisions, also taking into account the risks involved in certain financial products,
- To improve the health of the population, food education programs being accompanied by appropriate labeling of food and non-food products;
- To reduce the waste of food, considering that one-third of the processed products are not consumed.

The CSR concept has spread on an international level, and more and more entities like transnational companies, SMEs, portfolio investors and universities are trying to behave responsibly using different tools. These CSR tools have diversified considerably, but their use is often voluntary. Converting these instruments into recognizable and replicable standards should ensure the measurement, comparison and improvement of the social performance of companies. In addition, using these standards ensures that a minimum level of performance and a certain quality of CSR activity is achieved by the company. CSR tools can be grouped into several categories (Matei, 2013):

- General principles to which a company or organization may voluntarily subscribe like the United Nations Global Compact Principles, the Sullivan Global Principles, the OECD Guidelines on Multinational Companies;
- Codes of conduct / codes of practice specific to some sectors of activity;
- Sustainability indices based on the selection of companies in the index basket that comply with certain CSR principles or criteria;
- Management systems and certification schemes regulated by an accredited body such as SA 8000, ISO 14000, ISO 26000, EMAS or EU Eco-label.

The CSR concept is promoted globally by international organizations such as the United Nations (which has developed the Global Compact Principles), OECD and national authorities, with European countries being noted. Efforts made by European authorities are remarkable, CSR is considered a priority and the subject of numerous legal regulations through attempt the promotion of the concept at the level of corporations, SMEs and public institutions. Starting from related areas such as social exclusion or sustainable development, starting in 2001 (Matei, 2013), CSR is becoming a stand-alone concern for European authorities, and the Green Paper of CSR “Promoting a European Framework for Corporate Social Responsibility “and EU Strategy (2011-2014) for Corporate Social Responsibility”. Given the

many EU communications on this topic, we can see that Europe has become a CSR excellence pole.

Starting from this general framework, Member State authorities have taken various initiatives such as (Matei, 2013):

- In France, large companies are required to publish a social and environmental report in which their concerns about the sustainable development of the national economy are presented;
- In Denmark, by introducing an amendment to the Danish Financial Statements Act, large companies are required to include information about CSR preoccupations in their annual report. The information presented should address the following aspects: CSR policies, how these policies have been transposed, the results obtained as a result of CSR promotion and expectations for the near future.
- An important tool for promoting social responsibility and recognizing the efforts made by French companies in this area is eco-responsibility labels or eco-labels.
- In the UK, the Ministry of Social Responsibility has been set up to launch the first National CSR Strategy at EU level;
- Belgian companies have two labels demonstrating their social involvement and environmental concerns. (Label Equality Diversity and Ecolabel Brussels)

## **IMPORTANCE OF INFORMATION'S DISSEMINATION REGARDING CSR ACTIVITY**

Taking into account the multitude of CSR instruments used and legal regulations regarding the possibilities of social involvement and of presentation of relevant information, the European Parliament has recognized the importance of company disclosure of sustainability information (social, personnel, environmental, respect for human rights and the fight against corruption) in order to may be detected the risks that affect sustainable development, to increase the confidence of consumers and investors. The presentation of non-financial information by the companies is a sensitive topic given the multidimensional nature of CSR and the diversity of CSR instruments. The modality of presenting such information must ensure their comparability so that stakeholders, and in particular consumers, can easily and fairly base their economic decisions. The lack of mandatory reporting standards for ESG issues generates various reporting forms. The reports published by the companies are different in form and in content in what it concerns the presented information, which is why internationally, both in practice and at the scientific level, there are

debates on the content and quality of the reporting of the sustainability standards that companies voluntarily fulfill (Matei, 2013; Szadziewska et al., 2018). The reporting of non-financial data by companies is influenced by many factors such as the size of the company, the home country, the field of activity (Matei, 2013; Sierra-Garcia et al., 2018; Szadziewska et al., 2018) and most companies do not provide negative information about their environmental impact even if their activity generates negative externalities.

By Directive 2014/95 / EU of the European Parliament and of the Council (amending Directive 2013/34 / EU), companies with more than 500 employees are required to present non-financial information and diversity information in a non-financial statement that is included in the annual management report of companies from 2018 onwards for 2017 financial year data. The stipulations of this Directive are in accordance with the UN's Sustainable Development Objectives and the Paris Climate Change Agreement but also with the recommendations of the Financial Stability Board regarding the voluntary publication of financial risks related to climate change. This trend is observed internationally by KPMG. CSR reporting includes increasingly complex data on climate-related financial risk, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and carbon reduction targets (KPMG, 2017).

Despite the efforts made by European authorities in about half of EU countries, national authorities have been late in transposing the directive into national law by the end of 2016 (KPMG, 2017). For this reason, the effects of this European regulation will be observed starting with the year 2019 or even 2020. The impact of this directive implementation will be significantly different across EU countries given the different starting points for EU members, as in countries such as the UK, Germany or Sweden where there are already stipulations regarding CSR reporting legislation.

Studies already carried out for certain European countries (Poland, Spain) have revealed a high degree of subjectivity from companies that have only published that information that help them to consolidate or to improve their reputation and image among stakeholders, which is why the comparability of published data is not ensured, and it is necessary to standardize non-financial reporting (Matuszak & Róžańska, 2017; Szadziewska et al, 2018;). Some studies have also revealed fewer encouraging conclusions on the effects of the European Directive on the dissemination of non-financial information. For example, Sierra-Garcia et al., (2018) conducted a study on the application of this normative act in Spain by analyzing the annual reports of listed companies on the Madrid stock exchange and included in the IBEX-35 official stock index. Before the transposition into Spanish law of the provisions of the Directive, 97.1% of companies in the IBEX-35 index basket published non-financial information in a separate report, so that after the occurrence of the specific normative act, the percentage decrease to 80%.

CSR activity is also impelled by the existence of codes of conduct or sectoral CSR standards for companies operating in certain areas of activity. These Codes set minimum standards that specify some CSR issues such as respect for human rights, employee training, health and safety, working conditions, and social impact investments. These standards also have the advantage that additional mechanisms for the dissemination of CSR experience and expertise are also created. Moreover, the possibilities of assimilation of information available by corporations from the respective field are improved. Companies in different business areas are interested in developing, adopting and promoting such codes, as they can exercise a certain control over the supply chain to manage the risks better that may affect the company's reputation.

For example, companies from the agri-food industry, that have a huge exposure to consumers, are interested in issues of quality and product safety, because there is a risk that some suppliers to use contaminated feedstock that endanger consumer health, thereby affecting safety (Genier et al., 2008; Ene, 2009; Drăgoi et al., 2018). The existence of lists of good practices is essential for quick and easy identification of the changes that companies have to take in order to adapt to the market. In addition, companies are better understood by business partners and end-users, those being able to make comparisons between firms that obey to the same rules and provide similar data on social involvement.

Considering the impact of agriculture and food production on the environment, the concerns about the social responsibility of these sectors are essential. The diversity of these areas, the existence of many categories of involved economic agents, the geographical spread of small agricultural producers that usually belong to developing countries have led to some inertia in applying the principles of sustainable development in this area. Moreover, the standards have been developed for some products, regions or production methods (Poetz et al., 2012), which determines the complexity of agri-food activities. As it is the case in all areas of activity, the transnational companies are the indisputable leaders that initiate and promote various CSR actions at the international and national level. One of the most representative actions of this kind is the establishment of the Sustainable Agriculture Initiative by three big companies in 2002 (Poetz et al., 2012). The existence of this platform is essential given the overall character of agricultural production and food commodities, the complexity of production chains and the changes that occur in the agricultural system as a result of the transition to the bio-economy. Promoting the new type of economy leads to major changes in several sectors of activity such as the emergence of non-food markets for the production of bioenergy, the intensification of links between the agricultural and energy sectors, the potential negative impact of the bio-economy on food production (Voica et al., 2016; Ene et al., 2017). This initiative is complementary to that launched by UNCTAD, FAO, IFAD and the World

Bank, namely the Principles for Responsible Agricultural Investment. International institutions have started from the importance of investing in the agricultural sector, both for increasing productivity and for eradicating poverty in rural areas and enhancing food security. But there are some voices who oppose the promotion of these principles because they believe that the ultimate goal is taking over land owned by farmers by large domestic or foreign corporations (land grabbing).

## **CSR AND CONSUMERS: PERCEPTIONS AND INVOLVEMENT**

CSR of agri-food sector companies should be preoccupied with their position within the production chain. On the one hand, many companies in the agri-food industry are providing intermediate products for major transnationals, and in this case, their social behavior is imposed by the position of these large corporations who want their business partners (suppliers or subcontractors) to comply with the Global Compact principles. On the other hand, if companies provide final goods, end-users are those who demand to sanction their behavior towards society and the environment.

In addition, agri-food companies are, to a large extent responsible for the health of the population, which is why consumers are a force that remodels the activity of these companies. For this reason, agri-food companies are concerned to make innovations in producing healthier foods and in using labels in order to help consumers increase their credibility among the population, taking into account the issue of food counterfeiting or accidental food contamination (Stancu, 2016; Blok et al., 2018).

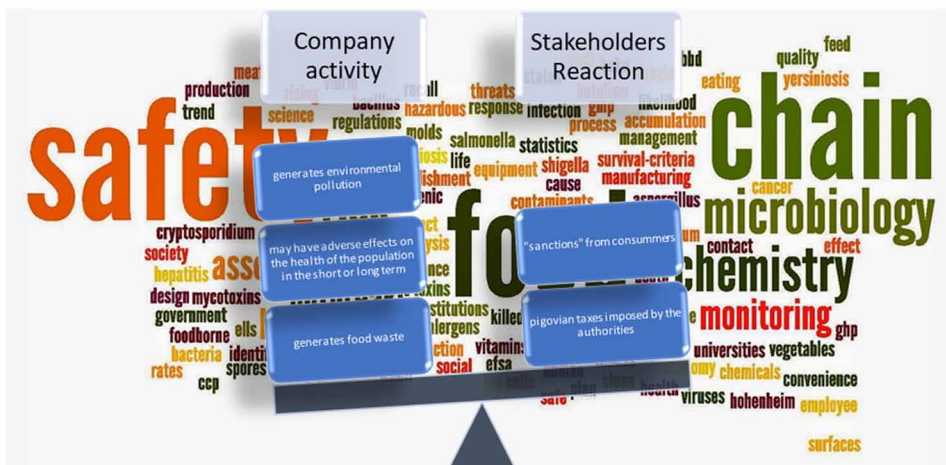
The health of the population is a sensitive subject with multiple implications at the micro and macroeconomic level, which is why public authorities, consumers and NGOs are concerned about the activity of agri-food companies. The social responsibility of these companies must manifest themselves from the development stage when deciding on the characteristics of the food. The CSR approach must also be made through the positive and negative externalities that can generate food consumption. The precarious health status of the population caused by insufficient food consumption or poor food consumption generates negative externalities and negative propagation effects across the national economy, generating such external marginal costs that should be internalized in the costs of agri-food companies. In addition, the activity of agri-food companies has implications for the environment, and it may generate negative externalities.

Generation of negative externalities and their impact on the national economy (figure 1) suppose the existence of public institutions to collect corrective duties, Pigouvian taxes. However, the problem of Pigouvian taxes is very complex given the difficulties of assessing the damage caused by negative externalities and the lack of legal regulations. In contrast, the manifestation of a CSR that generates positive



Figure 1. Negative externalities generated by agri-food companies

Source: made by authors



externalities should be rewarded by granting Pigouvian subsidies to agribusiness companies that have proper behavior.

The involvement of public authorities in agri-food must begin with transposing Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) into macroeconomic policies and specific legislation because these objectives set out in Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development are universal, and their individualization at national level is a manifestation of sovereignty and the needs of each country (Voica et al., 2015).

Some of the goals like SDG 2: Zero Hunger; SDG 3: Good Health and Well-Being for people; SDG 6: Clean Water and Sanitation; SDG 12: Responsible Consumption and Production, SDG 14: Life Below Water SDG 15: Life on Land (Figure 2) has direct impact on agri-food sector. So, sustainable food and agriculture are in the center of the Sustainable Development Goals. “Without proper nourishment, children cannot learn, people cannot lead healthy and productive lives, and societies cannot prosper. Without nurturing our land and adopting climate-resilient agriculture, future generations will struggle to feed a growing population” (FAO, 2017).

CSR of agri-food companies needs to be tinted, according to their position in the production chain. On the one hand, many of the companies in the industry are providing intermediate products for the major transnational corporation, and in this case, their corporate behavior is imposed by the position of these large corporations who want their business partners (suppliers or subcontractors) to follow Global Compact Principles. On the other hand, in cases when companies provide end products, the end-users are those that sanctioned the behavior of companies towards society and the environment.

## Corporate Social Responsibility in the Agri-Food Sector

Figure 2. SDGs with impact on companies from the agri-food sector

Source: made by authors



At present, consumers worldwide increasingly care about ethical aspects of business, are adopting sustainable behaviors' and seem to be willing to support in particular organizations dedicated to social and environmental change at large, developing a positive attitude towards companies that behave in responsible ways. Consumers are becoming more and more aware of the social and environmental impact of business initiatives. A study conducted by Nielsen revealed that 66% of consumers stated their willingness to pay (WTP) more for products that meet different sustainability criteria, such as: organic ingredients, environmental friendliness, display of positive social values (Nielsen, 2015). The same study showed that in 2014, the sales of consumer goods from brands committed to sustainability had grown more than 4% globally, whereas the other type grew less than 1%.

As consumers' preference for sustainable food products is increasing, food companies are mostly interested to know to what extent consumers are willing to pay for products' ethical attributes and to thoroughly analyze the factors influencing new market behaviors (Stancu, 2016). As organizations operating in the food supply chain are highly vulnerable towards public opinion (Lombardi et al, 2015), these firms are highly interested in including social, environmental and ethical measures in their business approaches.

While major evidence in specific literature show a positive link between involvement in social and environmental causes and consumer goodwill towards companies and brands, other research results point that the effects of corporate social reputation on consumer behavior remain inconclusive and require further investigations due to their complexity (Vázquez et al., 2012).

Trying to find out whether consumers reward companies CSR efforts with positive reactions, a study conducted in 2016 (Bello et al., 2016) reveals that in order to better understand the phenomenon regarding consumers' perceptions and responses further research is needed, both by theorists and practitioners. Positive responses may include elements such as: favorable corporate evaluation and trust, perceived service quality, customer satisfaction, purchase intention, increased share of wallet and loyalty (Bello et al., 2016). This research's findings show that the conclusions of different studies in this field are "mixed and inconclusive" (Bello et al., 2016) in relation to evaluating the consumers' willingness to reward companies', stating that further investigations should be conducted using, by case, context-specific or uniform approach.

Besides the generally accepted idea that CSR communication has a positive impact on the customer's perceived value, a study conducted in 2012 (Martinez-Thomas et al., 2012) showed that, regarding food products, positive consumer perception about CSR communication - reflected in three main responses: wellbeing, empathy and pride - can determine consumers purchasing decision, while purchasing power and skepticism remain as main obstacles.

A study considering responsibility criteria over the different stages of the consumer decision-making process in the agri-food sector (Vázquez et al., 2012) identified that perceived business responsibility has a moderate impact on the consumer decision-making process, with discrepancies due to age. The study outlines that there are different challenges the food sector should address in the years to come in terms of CSR, given that, at present, CSR effect on consumers behavior depends mainly on many tangible factors (price, quality and convenience) while social preoccupation tends to remain of secondary importance (Vázquez et al., 2012).

A study conducted in 2017 (Kim, 2017) show that passive CSR practices and offers for cheaper products generate the weakest support and purchase intentions from consumers, while proactive initiatives lead consumers to a positive attitude in terms of support and purchase intentions towards the company, especially in a context of cheaper prices (Agarwal, 2013). High prices tend to act as a significant barrier to purchasing ethical products (Agarwal, 2013). Other studies outline that decision-making in the CSR field should take into account market segmentation criteria and complex variables in order to correctly assess the impact of company's social engagements (Vázquez et al., 2012).

Consumers' perceptions can be influenced in different manners by food companies' CSR claims and mechanisms. In this respect, Wei et al. (2018) show that different types of on-package CSR claims (food manufacturing, employee welfare, and eco-friendly packaging) have a halo effect on consumers' perception and positively influence consumers' purchase intentions and WTP.

Entering into details regarding product description and presentation, another study (Loose and Remaud, 2013) analyzed the impact of different food claims on consumers' choice. The conclusion was that CSR claims relating to social and environmental dimensions showed a similar awareness, penetration and consumer trust but had a different impact in terms of consumers' choice, as environmental corporate responsibility claims benefit from a higher marginal willingness to pay study (Loose and Remaud, 2013). Also, the study findings revealed that consumer valuation of CSR claims is consistently lower than for organic claims and it significantly varies across international markets. Organic labels seem to be significantly preferable than fair-trade labels, according to Agarwal (2013).

In terms of social impact (regarded as responsible behavior of food & beverage industry companies), Deloitte identified several specific attributes which are relevant for consumers, including (in descending order): commitment to food safety, fair treatment of workers, local sourcing of products, overall mission and values, environmental responsibility, and role in the community (Deloitte, 2016). The study reveals that social impact attributes are relevant for customers in choosing their shopping destinations, while only 5% of them (especially Millennials and wealthier consumers – regarded as an influential and growing population) assert that they prioritize social impact in their purchase decisions.

Nevertheless, acquiring customers and building loyalty requires more than just using ethical attributes. According to Agarwal (2013), health attributes generate higher commitment among consumers, who are willing to pay a higher price for a particular ethical attribute in relation to different product characteristics.

Creating trust among the stakeholders may be regarded as the main result of CSR activities, as shown by Pivato, Misani & Tencati (2008) as a result of a survey conducted on consumers of organic products, highlighting that Corporate Social Performance influences consumer trust and consequently consumers' subsequent actions.

As regards controversial types of goods – if we consider the example of genetically modified (GM) foods, a study examining the CSR effect on consumer attitudes and intentions for this food category (Pino et al., 2016) showed that both perceived legal responsibility and perceived philanthropic responsibility positively affect the intention to buy GM foods.

Recent research aiming to measure consumers' attitudes towards the CSR commitment of agribusiness companies (Mueller & Theuvsen, 2014) has revealed that political support of CSR positively influences consumers regarding company's commitment, beside other factors such as: respondent's age, buying behavior with regard to organic products and CSR knowledge.

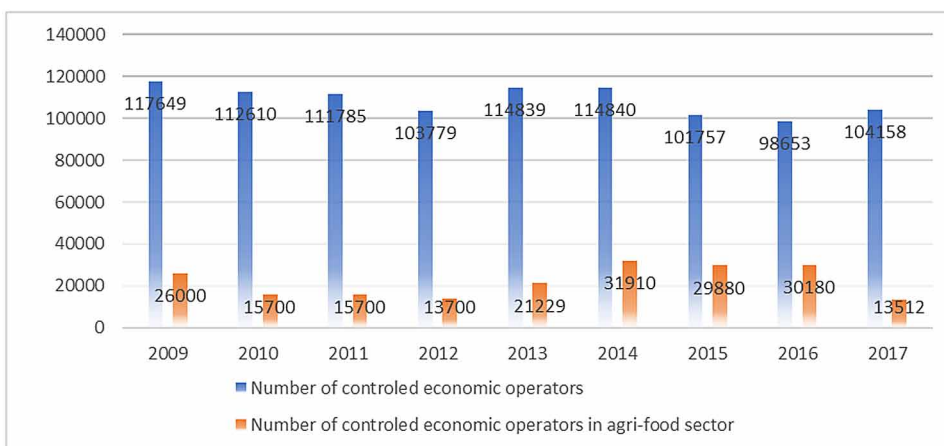
Aiming to identify the psychological mechanisms that are likely to influence consumer preferences and their WTP for CSR attributes, Lombardi et al. (2015)

concluded that profound CSR knowledge has a high influence on CSR attitudes. The same study reveals that few respondents (only 4.7%) had heard of the concept, which leads to the conclusion that agricultural companies should indeed receive more involvement and support from the government in terms of consultancy or CSR guidelines.

The need to maximize profits for shareholders often causes firms have inadequate economic and social behavior, which is why public authorities control business activity in various ways, helping consumers. For example, the National Authority for Consumer Protection (NACP) in Romania ensures the supervision of the products and services for end consumers by carrying out various controls, but also informing, advising and educating consumers. We have analyzed the activity of this institution in Romania, based on the annual activity reports available on the NACP website for the period 2009-2017.

The activity of agri-food companies is a concern for NACP in view of the importance of food to the health of the population. For the analyzed period, we observe a relative constant on the number of NACP controlled economic agents, but the decrease in the share of companies for the food sector (Fig. 3), as the increase in the concerns of this institution for other areas such as the financial sector that generating many problems in the national economy with major implications for long-term well-being of population.

*Figure 3. Number of controlled economic operators - total and agri-food sector*  
 Source: made by authors based on the data of NACP

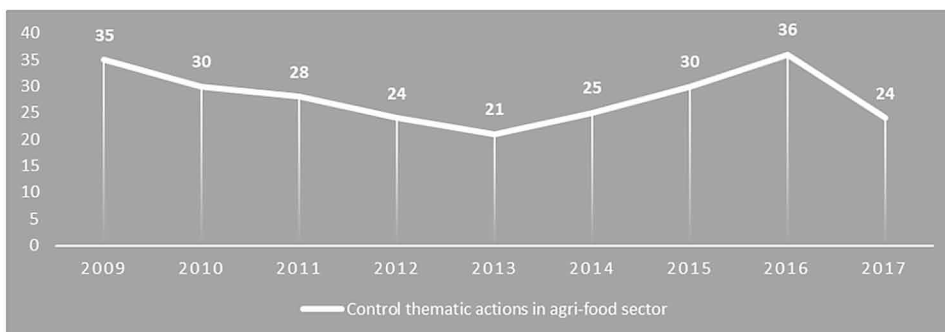


## Corporate Social Responsibility in the Agri-Food Sector

The number of thematic controls experienced a fluctuating evolution during the analyzed period (Fig. 4). These thematic controls concerned aspects such as compliance, marketing and labeling of food, but also the quality of public and collective food services.

*Figure 4. Number of thematic action controls in the agri-food sector*

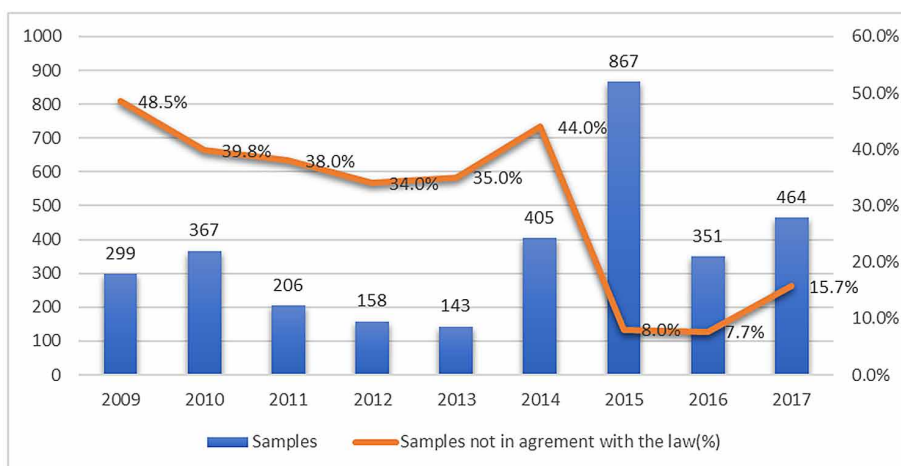
Source: made by authors based on the data of NACP



Within the framework of NACP's thematic controls, food samples were taken, mainly meat products, milk and dairy products, olive oil, fish cans. For the analyzed period there is a decrease in the percentage of non-legal products in use, which demonstrates the responsibility of the economic agents in this field (Fig. 5).

*Figure 5. Samples and the percentage of samples not in agreement with the law*

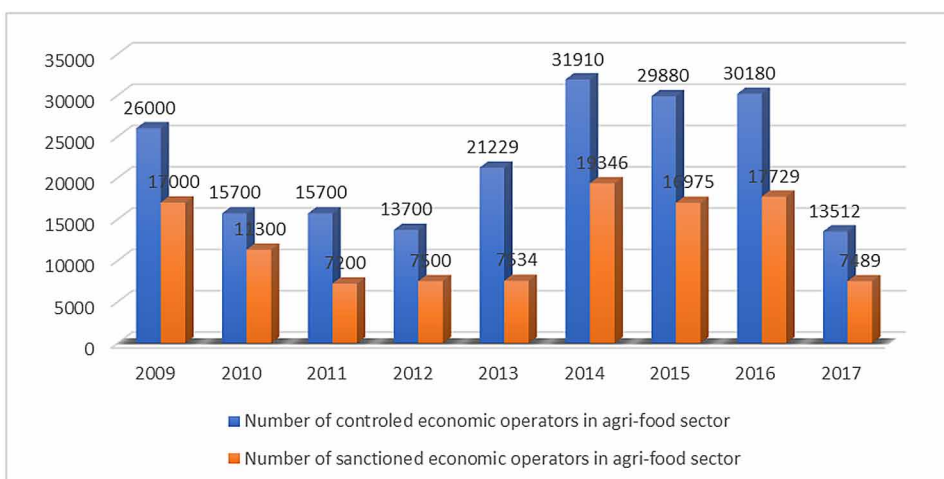
Source: made by authors based on the data of NACP



The number of agri-food companies that have been subject to NACP controls has a sinuous evolution, with a sharp decline after 2014 (Fig. 6). In the period 2009-2017, there was half of the number of controlled companies and a sharp drop in the number of companies that were sanctioned following the controls.

Figure 6. Number of controlled and sanctioned economic operators in the agri-food sector

Source: made by authors based on the data of NACP



The value of the sanctions applied by the institution is on a downward trend as the value of the non-compliant products temporarily or permanently suspended from trading (Fig. 7).

NACP has also been involved in advising economic entities on how to implement consumer protection legislation and in helping them to acknowledge their obligations towards consumers, focusing on food labelling issues (Fig. 8). Through all the actions carried out, NACP provides the basic legal and institutional framework necessary for the direct and indirect consumers' protection, contributing significantly alongside the initiatives of non-governmental organizations to ensuring a normal market context.

Initiatives to inform and educate market actors - both consumers and business operators - create the premises for them to take active roles within the market and to shape a consciousness oriented both towards safety and security, as well as towards sustainable consumption. On this basis, the Romanian consumer could become, in the European and global context, a socially responsible consumer, with a proper attitude towards CSR initiatives of the agri-food sector.



## Corporate Social Responsibility in the Agri-Food Sector

Figure 7. The value of sanctions and non-compliant products withdrawn from the sale in the agri-food sector

Source: made by authors based on the data of NACP

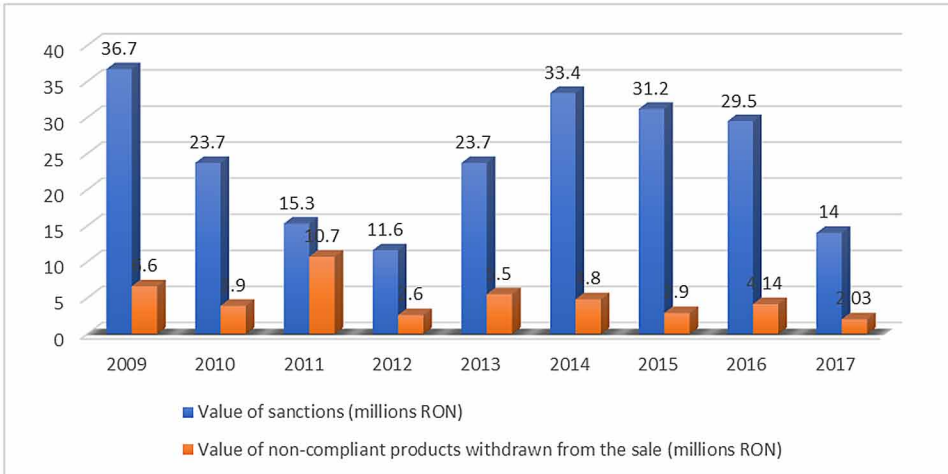
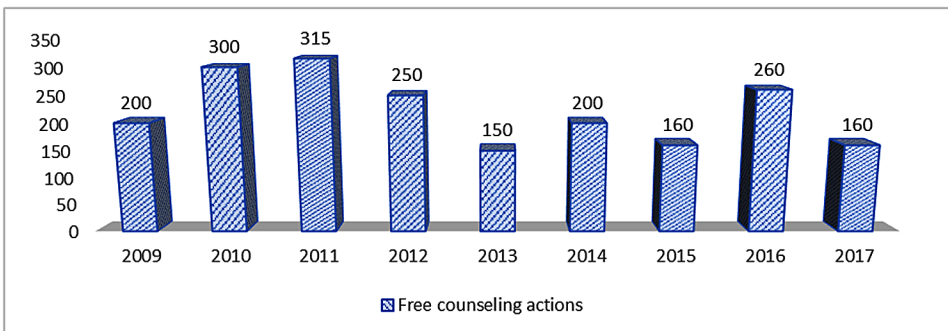


Figure 8. The number of free counselling actions in the agri-food sector

Source: made by authors based on the data of NACP



Consumers themselves are the exponent of a relatively new concept - consumer social responsibility (Manning, 2013) - which is interacting with CSR, showing that consumer engagement is crucial in order to ensure the CSR value for the organization. As in the food market purchasing decision is a product-centric one, improving market share and customer loyalty imply that CSR activities must be aligned with and refined based on consumer social responsibility (Manning, 2013).

Adding value to a company's business though embracing sustainability could also mean to find ways to engage consumers in CSR practices and to incorporate sustainability into their marketing strategies, as shown by a Deloitte study (Scott-



Thomas, 2015). The study listed four frameworks for including consumers in sustainability initiatives:

- Transparency engagement;
- Lifecycle engagement;
- Partnership engagement;
- Collaborative engagement.

Moreover, Deloitte identifies the consumers demand for deeper insight and greater involvement as a main trend shaping the future (Deloitte, 2014), stating that they need to be involved in order to bring their contribution to sustainable development in the context of higher transparency and openness (access to data) from the companies. This allows for the creating a common identity between organizations and customers while these interactions let the consumer play a major role in the value chain and increase customer loyalty within new business models. Deloitte sets out four steps necessary for companies in order to create transparency and increasing customer engagement (Deloitte, 2014):

- Understanding customers' needs, interests, expectations and drivers regarding sustainability.
- Building customer trust especially in the most important areas.
- Engaging customers giving them active roles within sustainability efforts.
- Designing new business models (based, for instance, on offering access to products rather than ownership).

Another Deloitte research focused on US market found out that a new set of factors are driving consumers in their food market behavior and the traditional drivers (taste, price, and convenience) are changing. This shift refers to the evolving value drivers: health & wellness, safety, social impact, experience, and transparency (Deloitte, 2016). Furthermore, CSR communication should render a company's commitment to consumers more transparent by focusing on what companies are doing for society in order to increase consumer trust (Lombardi et al., 2015).

## **CSR REPORTING ANALYSIS ON THE AGRI-FOOD COMPANIES**

In this part of the paper, data from the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) will be used to investigate the level of reporting in the agri-food field. This database has been chosen as it incorporates the largest amount of CSR reports at the international level. The information is standardized and verified by the GRI specialists and provides a

very good benchmark for different comparisons on the content of the reports. There have been a lot of discussions on the academic community regarding the influence of this organization with its good and bad aspects (Hedberg & Von Malmborg, 2003; Brown et al., 2009; Milne & Gray, 2013). This analyze has been included in the chapter to inform the readers of the latest evolution of the reporting activity in line with the article title and the book view.

GRI was founded in 1997 and since then it provided tools for sustainability reporting. GRI is an independent international organization. According to GRI 93% of the world's largest 250 companies report on their sustainability performance and GRI standards are the most used for sustainability reporting. GRI standards are available as a free public good and incorporate the best practices in the field of economic, environmental and social reporting. GRI has a strategic partnership with The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), United Nations Global Compact (UNGC), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), International Organization for Standardization (ISO) and CDP.

The data set is composed of the number of companies that reported to GRI between 2007 and 2017. The data was extracted from the Sustainability Disclosure Database (SDD) and from the Limited GRI reports list (n.d.). We used Limited GRI reports list for 2017 breakdowns and the SDD for the historical study. GRI reports classify each entity in one of its 38 sectors of activity. In order to analyze the agri-food sector, the "agriculture" and "food and beverage products" from SDD has to be explored, taking into consideration these sectors as being the most relevant for this study.

In the analyzed period, 2007-2017 there has been an increasing interest for companies to provide reports on non-financial aspects of their activity, mainly CSR aspects. In Fig.9, it can be seen the evolution of entities reporting to GRI based on the size of the company.

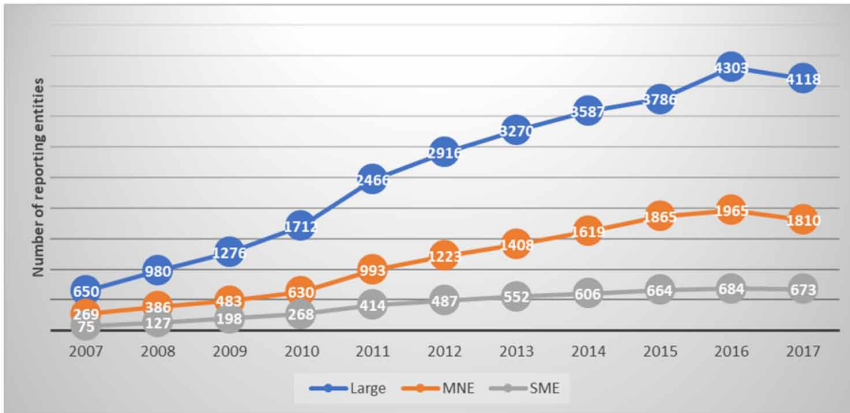
The total number of reporting entities that realize reports increased from 994 companies in 2007 to 6611 companies in 2017 with an average annual growth of 22%. The highest number of reports have been issued by large companies accounting for a share of 65% in 2007 and 62% in 2017 followed by multinational enterprises (MNE) with a share of 27% in 2007, share that was maintained until 2017 and the last group is represented by the small and medium enterprises (MNE) with a share of 8% in 2007 that rose to 10% in 2017. The SME have registered a higher annual growth rate more than the other two with 27%

In 2017, there were 6486 entities that sent reports to GRI, according to Limited GRI reports list (6611 according to SDD – as GRI stated on the Limited GRI reports list that they are still receiving reports from 2017).

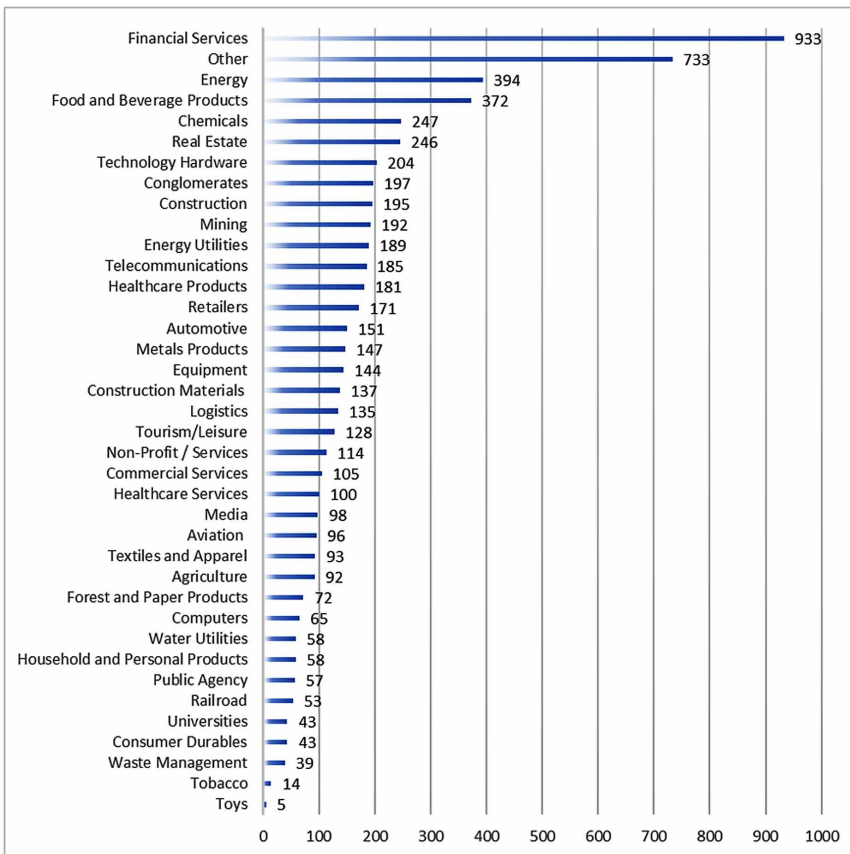
In Fig.10. It will be presented the number of reporting entities by sector for the year 2017. The Financial Services sector has the highest share of reporting

**Corporate Social Responsibility in the Agri-Food Sector**

*Figure 9. The evolution of reporting entities to GRI based on their size 2007-2017*  
 Source: made by authors based on the data from GRI (SDD)



*Figure 10. Number of entities that reported to GRI in 2017 by sector*  
 Source: made by authors based on the data from GRI (Limited report list)



## Corporate Social Responsibility in the Agri-Food Sector

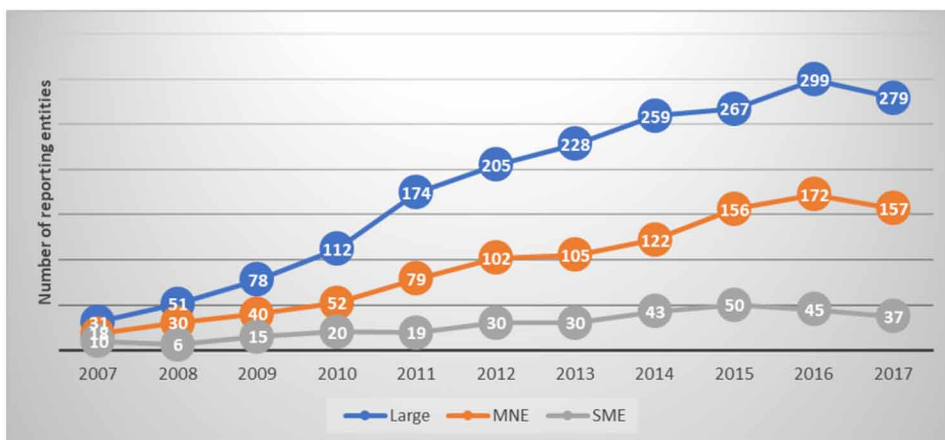
companies with 14.4% from total reports followed by other sectors with 11.3% and energy sector with 6.1%.

The food and beverage products sector ranks fourth place with 5.7% from the reports while the agriculture sector ranks on twenty-third place with a share of 1.4% from the reporting companies.

The agri-food sector has presented a similar evolution as the other sectors in the sense that the structure of the reporting entities, regarding their size, presents the same hierarchy. In Fig. 11, it can be observed that large entities hold the highest share of agri-food sector with a share of 53% in 2007 and 59% in 2017 followed by MNEs with a share of 31% in 2007 and 33% in 2017 and SMEs with a share of 17% in 2007 and 8% in 2017.

Figure 11. The evolution of reporting entities from the agri-food sector to GRI based on their size 2007-2017

Source: made by authors based on the data from GRI (SDD)



In comparison with the entities' evolution from the whole database, the progress of agri-food sector is slightly different as there has been a growth in the large companies share contrary with the trend of the entities share from the database and a drop of the SMEs share. The share of agri-food entities in total has raised from 5.9% in 2007 to 7.1% in 2017 as the agriculture sector has been growing from 0.7% in 2007 to 1.4% in 2017 and food and beverage (products) sector has been growing from 5.2% in 2007 to 5.7% in 2017.

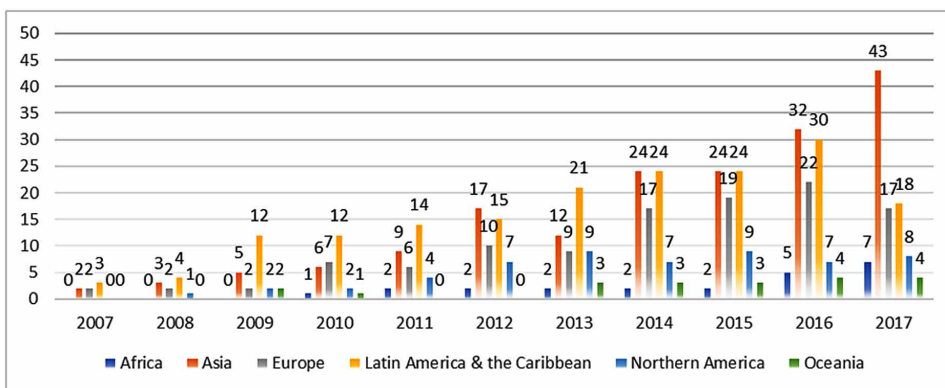
Further it will be discussed the regional spread of each of the two sectors that are considered to compose the agri-food field, agriculture and food and beverage products.

In Fig. 12, it will be presented the number of entities for each region of the planet from the agriculture sector that sent reports to GRI during the analyzed period. First, it can be observed that there has been a significant increase in the reporting entities' number from seven in 2007 to 96 in 2017, with a peak of 100 in 2016. This means that there has been an annual average increase of 23%. Second, it may be seen that in 2007 only companies from Asia, Europe and Latin America & the Caribbean submitted reports, during 2017, GRI received reports from all the regions.

Asia, Latin America & the Caribbean and Europe are the main regions that have been hosted the companies with the most reports submitted to GRI. Asia is the top reporting region in 2017 with 43 entities followed by Latin America & the Caribbean with 18 entities, Europe with 17 entities, North America with eight entities, Africa with seven entities and Oceania with four entities.

Figure 12. The evolution of reporting entities from the agriculture sector to GRI by region.

Source: made by authors based on the data from GRI (SDD)

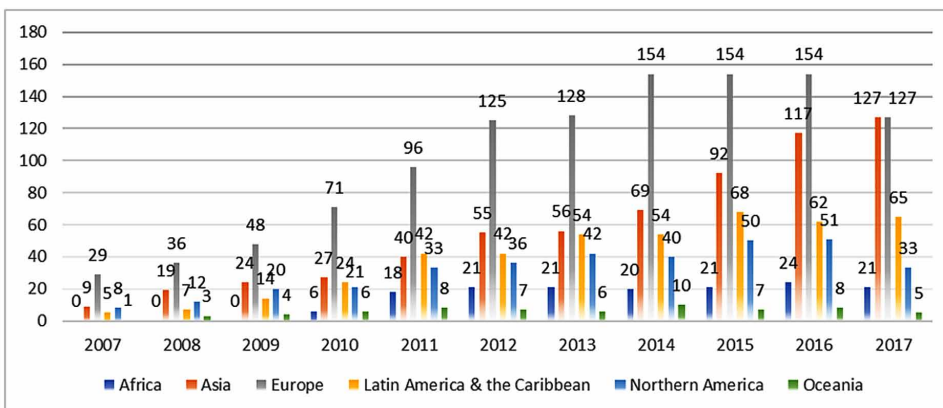


The share of each region reporting entities changed in the analyzed period. Africa from 0% in 2007 to 7.29% in 2017, Asia from 28.57% in 2007 to 44.79% in 2017, Europe from 28.57% in 2007 to 17.71% in 2017, Latin America & Caribbean from 42.86% in 2007 to 18.75% in 2017 North America from 0% in 2007 to 8.33% in 2017 and Oceania from 0% in 2007 to 4.17% in 2017. Latin America & the Caribbean and Europe lost much of their share, while Asia gained the most.

The food and beverage products sector is one of the top sectors regarding the number of reporting entities ranking fourth in 2017. As we can see in Fig.13., in the analyzed period we witness an important growth from 52 reporting entities in 2007 to 378 entities in 2017 with a peak of 416 in 2016, which means an average annual growth of 24% in the number of reporting entities.

*Figure 13. The evolution of food and beverage products sector reporting entities to GRI 2007-2017 by region*

Source: made by authors based on the data from GRI (SDD)



The top reporting region has been Europe throughout the analyzed period starting from 29 reporting entities in 2007 and reaching 127 in 2017 with a peak of 154 in 2014-2016. The next region is Asia that has registered a steady growth from 9 reporting entities in 2007 to 127 in 2017. Third is Latin America & the Caribbean starting with 5 reporting entities in 2007 and reaching 65 in 2017. Fourth is Northern America with 8 reporting entities in 2007 and 33 in 2017. The fifth is Africa with zero reports in 2007 and 21 in 2017 and the last is Oceania with 1 reporting entity in 2007 and 5 in 2017.

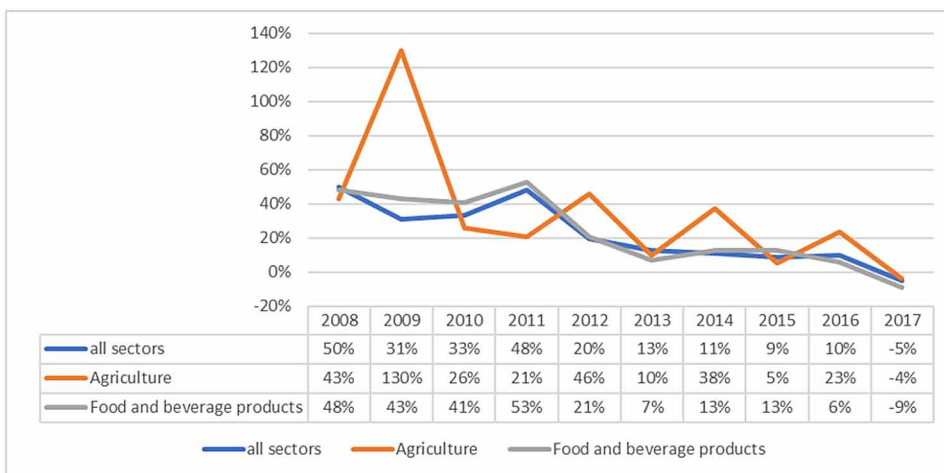
The share of each region in total reports from the food and beverage products sector has changed over time. Africa grew from 0% to 5.65, Asia grew from 17.3% to 33.6%, Europe lost a big part of its share as it shrank to 33.6%, Latin America & the Caribbean grew from 9.6% to 17.2%, Northern America decrease from 15.4% to 8.7% and Oceania decreased from 1.9% to 1.3%.

In Fig. 14, it is presented the annual growth of reporting entities of the agri-food sector composed of agriculture and food and beverage products sector in comparison with the entire database reports. The general trend of annual reporting growth is decreasing, each year the number of reports registering a slower growth rate. In 2017 it was observed a negative growth rate, but this may be influenced by the fact that GRI is still receiving reports from 2017. Even if it is excepted in 2017, it may be seen that the trend of growth is descending. The food and beverage products sector follow exactly the trend of all other sector while the agriculture sector has important variation compared with other reporting entities.

The case of Romania is not one of success in the reporting activity. Since the beginning of GRI, there have been only 37 organizations that have submitted a number

Figure 14. The annual growth of reporting entities to GRI, all sectors, agriculture sector and food and beverage products sectors

Source: made by authors based on the data from GRI (SDD)



of 92 reports. In the analyzed period the number of reporting entities is 29 with 82 reports. In what it concerns the agri-food sector there hasn't been any organization that has submitted reports to GRI in agriculture sector and two organizations that have submitted seven reports to GRI in the food and beverage products sector. Coca-Cola HBC Romania has submitted 3 reports for 2012, 2015 and 2016 while Ursus Breweries has submitted four reports in between 2013-2016

## CONCLUSION

CSR is an important instrument used by companies to have a contribution to socially and environmentally sustainable future besides public authorities and consumers. The social responsibility of companies from agri-food sector is in dramatic transformation process taking into account the launch of Sustainable Development Goals. Their activities have major implications on environment, population health, food security and safety.

Consumer education represent a vital issue within social responsibility policies oriented towards safe nutrition, better health and reducing food waste as general purposes. Strengthening consumer education and promoting sustainable food consumption means sharing social responsibility between governments, companies and consumers.

Besides the roles of other essential actors, consumers themselves should play a decisive role in ensuring their own awareness and protection in the context of “consumer social responsibility”, proceeding accordingly during both their market actions, consumption and post-consumer stages. Today, consumers are interested in purchasing socially desirable goods and focus mainly on food products sustainability, while such innovative products with less societal effects can improve business competency and maintain its competitive advantages.

It is very clear that, in the Digital Age, consumers have more access to information and communication, are more educated and more aware of products and business approaches. Their behavior is more and more influenced by sustainable products and initiatives and it is important for them that companies be socially responsible. The companies’ message related to corporate social responsibility (CSR) should be delivered very openly and clearly to consumers in a responsible and personalized manner, and CSR initiatives should not be a separate approach but an intrinsic part of the business strategy.

Food businesses should respect their sustainability commitments while better communicating with consumers through different reliable communication channels-including social media, email and blog posts to increase transparency regarding organization values. The contributions of food companies’ to the general wellbeing of the society by CSR business practices generate additional costs, but these investments allow for positive returns by enhancing stakeholders’ opinions and attitudes, while traditional drivers such as price, quality and convenience remain of major importance.

Governments and companies have shared social responsibility regarding the need to strengthen consumer education and promote sustainable food consumption. Having multiple implications in the field of food and health, consumer education should be an important issue within social responsibility policies oriented towards enhanced nutrition, higher food safety, reducing food waste and better health for all. In this context, even the consumer should play an important role in ensuring self-protection and education in terms of consumer social responsibility, engaging in responsible behaviors on the food markets (decisions, rationality, awareness, and information) both during purchasing, consumption and waste disposal. The consumers are a new driving force that shapes the companies’ behavior in the field of CSR. Our analysis demonstrates the importance of involvement of public authorities in shaping the social behavior of companies by elaborating specific regulations on the dissemination of non-financial information as well as by the activity of specialized bodies with supervisory and control duties on the agri-food market.

The research on the GRI database has revealed that the largest share of reporting entities is composed of large companies followed by MNEs and SMEs. The number of reporting entities to GRI has registered a steady upward trend in the analyzed period apart from year 2017, which can be influenced by the fact that GRI is still



receiving reports for 2017. The agri-food sector is represented mainly by the food and beverage products sector while the agriculture sector is not so well represented if it is analyzed the number of reporting companies. Regarding geography, it may be observed that the largest share of reporting entities comes from Europe and Asia in the case of beverage and food products sector and Asia and Latin America & the Caribbean in the case of agriculture sector.

As for the agri-food sector in Romania, there was no reporting organization to GRI in the agricultural sector and two organizations that have submitted seven reports to GRI in the food and beverage products sector. As a conclusion for the Romanian companies reporting on CSR and taking into account the sustainable development issues are not a priority. This can also be due to the degree of information and knowledge of a majority share of Romanian consumers who, due to their living conditions, place great emphasis on the price of a product and less on the way it is produced.

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## **KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS**

**CSR:** A set of activities initiated voluntarily by a company in promoting the principles of sustainable development by being involved in care actions aimed at protecting the environment, fighting against corruption, respecting human rights and the development of the local community.

**GRI (Global Reporting Initiative):** A platform that helps companies and other entities to present their impact on sustainability issues such as climate change, respecting human rights, governance, and social well-being.

# Chapter 4

## Marginalization of Women and Mass Markets

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### ABSTRACT

*This chapter relates to gender equality in the free market, particularly the mass market. The objective of this work is to review if the woman is marginalized in the mass market through a decision tree structure. To achieve this overall objective, the integrated-adaptable methodology for the development of decision support system (MIASAD) is used. There are not enough elements to make a generalization, but, from the results obtained with the decision tree structure used in this investigation, it can be seen that there is no marginalization of women in the mass products market. This implies that no additional effort is necessary to minimize the marginalization of women in the mass market. As a consequence, efforts can focus on better segmentation of the female market. Thus, products that are more suitable for each of the sectors found can be generated.*

### INTRODUCTION

The strong onslaught of groups that struggle to seek greater female participation; in society; has been increased in recent years. This has achieved, on the one hand, improvements in the participation sought and, on the other hand, that the issue of

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female participation be addressed from different points of view. This makes the subject of this research, keep a great relevance today.

Female participation is a topic that has been treated for a long time. Already in the decade of the eighties of the last century, Hoyman (1987) conducts a study on female participation in the informal economy and a little later, Psacharopoulos & Tzannatos (1989), based on works from several previous years, highlight some causes of inequality, which exists in the workplace, between men and women, especially in some countries.

In this same sense, to analyze the participation of women in the labor force, in later years are the works of Goldin (1994), who addresses other more specific aspects, Bover & Arellano (1995), who review the case of a particular country, Spain, of Mammen & Paxson (2000), who focus on economic development.

Also analyzing the participation of women, in the informal economy, are the works of Pick, Ross & Dada (2002), focused on South Africa and of Nimrichter (2007), linked to Brazil.

A little more recent Guadarrama (2008) studies the participation of women in a globalized world; while commenting on the existence of feminized professions and masculinized professions. This first issue, of globalization and the participation of women, is found in more recent works such as Akhter & Ward (2016), among others.

By the end of the first decade of the 21st century, there is work of Baba et al. (2010), who review the role of women in vegetable cultivation in India.

Finally, without any doubt, it can be assured that the study of the participation of women in the labor market is an issue that has attracted attention for a long time and from different approaches.

To start commenting on studies, about participation of the women in the labor force, in the second decade of the 21st century, it can mention: Alesina, Giuliano & Nunn (2011), who handle the hypothesis that the low participation of women in some work areas, has its origins in agriculture based on the plow; Amador, Bernal & Peña (2013), who study the increase in the participation of women in Colombia; Hayo & Caris (2013), who analyze in the region of Middle East and North Africa (MENA), some aspects, such as the possible loss of identification, which is given by tradition and religion; Thévenon (2013), who carries out his research from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OCDE).

For its part, Verick (2014), emphasizes in its study, that it is not only important to analyze the participation of women in the labor forces, but also the quality of the jobs that they perform must be taken into consideration. Likewise, Cipollone, Patacchini & Vallanti (2014), devote their extensive study to analyze the growth of female participation in 15 countries of the European Union. Somewhat in the same line of work of Hayo & Caris (2013), at least with respect to the region studied, is the work of Verme (2015).

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Some authors focus on Asia, Kinoshita & Guo (2015), specifically, in their study, they make comparisons of Japan and Korea, with Norway and Finland; Chatterjee, Murgai & Rama (2015), do it in India, specifically in rural areas and He & Zhu (2015), analyze the case of China and from the perspective of the restriction of generating a second child.

Another work of 2015 is that of Terjesen, Couto & Francisco (2015), who make a study of the influence of women in the top management and for that they analyze institutions from more than forty countries.

A similar line follows the work of Ben-Amar, Chang & McIlkenny (2015), who study the relationship between the participation of women in management positions and environmental aspects.

In 2016, among others, are the works, of Ford et al. (2016), that, although they do not directly analyze the participation of the women, in the labor forces, they present a very similar situation, which is related to the role of women in a very specific area of the management of new technologies; while the work of Koopmans (2016), comments on female participation, when studying discrimination against immigrants, when trying to integrate into the labor market and, on the other hand, the work of Senne (2016), it studies the participation of women in sports, but it does not only include athletes and competitions, but it also reviews the participation of women in sports management.

It is mentioned separately in the work of Berrebi & Ostwald (2016), that explores the influence of terrorism on the participation of women in the labor market.

In recent years, 2017-2018, there are works like the of Das & Žumbyté (2017), those who analyze the urban areas of India focus on an old problem, motherhood, and parenting.

Also found areas very different, like the one found in the work of Peña (2018); who analyzes the participation of women in the diverse labor markets of the northern border of Mexico.

Finally, it has the work of Ngai & Petrongolo (2017), who conclude that it is notorious the increase in female participation in the labor market, since the Second World War, expressing that, among other factors, it is due to accumulation of human capital, advances in medicine, changes in the perception (measurement) of sexism, cultural changes, and anti-discrimination interventions.

With the conclusions of this last work (Ngai & Petrongolo (2017), at the same time, it can be deduced that progress has been made in integrating women into the labor market. But reviewing many of the works previously cited, it can also be seen that this progress has not been similar in all countries or all social levels.

Another observation, which is necessary to do at this time, is that it can consider high the percentage, 27.58%, of the previous citations that correspond to working papers, thesis and work in congresses and not to publications in the first line, journals

or books. This suggests that the subject, although it is profusely treated, does not have the benefit of a very prestigious scientific support, which may be required. Not with this is meant, that there has been much speculation on the subject, but if it is affirmed, that the scientific level of the analysis of the participation of women in the labor market should be raised a little more.

To close this section, it is interesting to observe the participation of women as entrepreneurs. In this case, although in some of them, there are observations, which may be contradictory, it is recommended to review the work of Pejic (Pavic, Aleksic & Pejic-Bach, 2018; Pejic, Aleksic & Merkac-Skok, 2018; Pejic-Bach, Merkac & Suša, 2016).

Finally, the authors want to clarify that many approaches to female participation have been presented, from many different points of view. However, they have not wanted to make judgments about any of them, so as not to contaminate the investigation with their bias. When presenting all these approaches, what is sought, is that the reader has a clear vision of how broad this field of study can be.

Under this scenario, it wanted to contribute to deepening a little more, in the analysis of this, one can say, controversial issue. In particular, it wants to analyze how the market behaves, no longer the labor market, but the market for products and services, the mass markets.

Although it is not intended to perform a quantitative analysis, for a greater formality, if it wants to follow a structure of decision tree, which allows obtaining some results, easier to measure and to interpret.

## **Objectives**

From the foregoing, it can set a general objective for this work: To review, if the woman is marginalized in the mass market, through a decision tree structure.

From this general objective, the following specific objectives are generated:

Present a brief analysis of female participation in the labor market.

Illustrate some mechanisms of operation of the market of products and services.

Show, what are and how decision tree structures work.

Review the role of women in the mass market; through a decision tree structure.

## **Methodology**

To achieve the overall objective and specific objectives will be followed the Integrated-Adaptable Methodology for the development of Decision Support System (IAMDSS, in Spanish, Metodología Integradora-Adaptable para desarrollar Sistemas de Apoyo a las Decisiones [MIASAD]) (De Burgos et al., 2016; García et al., 2017;

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Hernández, García & Hernández, 2016; 2018; Schwarz et al., 2016), which, among its characteristics, it is important not to propose hypotheses, but to follow a series of methodological steps.

Because of its flexibility and facility to adapt to different types of research (Castaños, 2015; Da Silva & Raidi, 2016; García, Hernández & Hernández, 2014; Schwarz & Schwarz, 2015), it can use of its twenty basic steps, only those that are considered important, for each specific investigation, from there, similar to what has been done in other works (Da Silva & Raidi, 2016; De Burgos et al., 2016; García et al., 2017; Hernández, García & Hernández, 2018), only the following steps will be followed:

1. Define the problem. Which is, review, through a decision tree structure, if the woman is marginalized in the mass market;
2. Elaborate a first prototype. Which has among its main functions the provision of a complete vision of what the investigation will be, and for this, it is fundamental to recognize the users of the final product. That is, in this case, as it is a scientific article, the main readers of the article. In this case they will be all interested in the study of female participation in business life. To which the students of the market will be added. Particularly those that like to use tools that facilitate studies. Tools, such as the decision tree structure (DTS).

It is also pursued, with the first prototype, to establish the organization of the chapter, which, in addition to this introduction and the first part of the background, which already presented a brief vision of the study of the participation of women in the labor market, it will consist of two sections and a central subchapter, in the first section, some comments will be made on some visions that can be had when analyzing the markets, in the second section, DTS will be discussed very briefly and in the main chapter of the work, a review of the role of women in the mass markets will be made, through a decision tree structure;

1. Obtain data. In this case on DTS, on the marketing of products and services and on the participation of women in the economy in general and in particular in the labor market;
2. Define alternatives. Which consist of visualizing possible approaches that allow to review and present the participation or marginalization of women in the mass markets;
3. Evaluate alternatives. Among all the options that may be available, to recognize how the participation of the women in the mass market is treated;
4. Select the best alternative. According to the secondary objectives, tacit or explicit that have been contemplated;

5. Implement the best alternative. Although there is no real implementation, it wants to illustrate, preferably, through a hypothetical case, how the participation or marginalization of women in the marketing of products and services takes place;
6. Establish controls. Mechanisms, which allow to recognize if the solution obtained, remains valid in the course of time.

In any case, it is important to clarify that a decision tree structure will be used for this work, which will help determine possible paths to follow, should it be necessary to incorporate improvements.

Regarding limitations and scope, no field-work will be done, but it will be illustrated how the participation or marginalization of women in the mass markets is carried out, through a simple and hypothetical example, to guarantee a greater generality of the application of the obtained results.

## **BACKGROUND**

This work is based on several fields of human activity, highlighting female participation in the business world, marketing, and decision tree structures. For each of these three fields, they have their respective antecedents.

Although they are two very different fields of business activity, the antecedents of marketing and female participation can be seen, together, in two very specific works. In the first of these works (García, Hernández & Hernández, 2018a) equality of markets is discussed. In the second work (García, Hernández & Hernández, 2018b), greater emphasis is placed on female participation and its relation with other areas of business activity of great relevance, such as innovation.

To complete this background, as indicated in the methodology, a section will be dedicated to present a brief vision of the analysis of the markets, which will contemplate the presence of women in it.

The other field of knowledge, the structures of the decision trees, has its direct antecedents in the decision trees (Hernández & García, 2010), and although it is a little-studied subject, a section will also be dedicated to clarify it.

### **A Vision of Market Analysis**

Next, a series of approaches followed, commonly, in the market analysis are stated. It is not intended to make, major comments, or criticism of these works. What is desired is to present elements that will be used when constructing the decision tree

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structure (DTS). With this DTS, it is expected to reach a conclusion, about the marginalization or not, of women in the mass consumption markets.

Following Bowie & Buttle (2004), who in their book analyze hospitality marketing, can be deduced many factors that will be common with the marketing of other services and even with product marketing, understand physical, tangible products.

The first thing to highlight is the environment, where it can talk about a macro environment, in which the following aspects have a greater relevance: Political, Economic, Sociocultural, Technological and Environmental (PESTE) and also highlight Bowie & Buttle (2004), a micro-environment or what can be mentioned as the immediate environment, where they point to: competitors, employees, suppliers, customers, intermediaries and the public in general.

Continuing in the marketing of services and hospitality, this time directed directly to hotels, Ivanov (2014), highlights how important it is to find the right customer, the one that best suits your offer, and this can be said to be valid for both services and products.

Another aspect to take into account is the perception that these clients may have (Ivanova & Ivanov, 2015).

In their work on the implications of Facebook in the marketing of organizations, Ramsaran-Fowdar & Fowdar (2013), highlight that the tastes and preferences of consumers can be identified, which is essential to help create market segmentation and positioning and targeting strategies. Then they advance that this segmentation can include demographic aspects such as education, sex, and age. Another demographic aspect, commented by Kellegrew et al. (2018), is the area where it lives, whether urban, suburban or rural.

Following the aforementioned line, to analyze the influence on marketing, of social networks, Cui (2014), notes that these create opportunities for organizations to communicate directly, quickly, and often with clients individually, and thus disseminate information about their products and services.

On the other hand, Pilař, Balcarová & Rojík (2016) conclude that social networks contribute to better communication with the client at a more personal, individual level while making it possible to establish more specific objectives and achieve better communication with the desired client, both rationally and emotionally. To this last aspect, it can be added; that it is possible to communicate to the client what he wants to hear.

All of the above allows to coincide with what indirectly affirm Lamberton & Stephen (2016), which new technologies, especially because of the facilities and flexibilities they offer, have allowed a new market behavior to emerge, with new experiences and interactions. It can say greater and constant interactions.

Moreover, Katsikeas et al. (2016), let see other aspects that are of utmost relevance for marketing: word of mouth (WOM), generally mentioned as word of

mouth marketing and advertising; customer lifetime value (CLV); brand value; brand equity; perceived quality; acquisition; attitudinal loyalty; retention; sales units; revenue premium; market share; success of new products; sales revenue; revenue growth; costs; net benefits; profit margin; return on investment; equity risk; credit rating; cost of capital and finally profitability.

Before continuing, a couple of these terms are clarified: retention, which should be understood as those products or services that remain with the client, that is, they exercise for the client the function for which they were acquired and brand equity, what is perceived by the client, compared to what has actually been received. This brand equity is of the utmost importance; because it can be favorable, the client perceives more than what he receives, or unfavorable, the client does not value everything received.

With this last comment, it has a framework, through which it can discuss some aspects of marketing, which will be of interest in this work.

On the one hand, it can see that marketing is one more tool to achieve a desired profitability, which is why it is involved in many financial aspects such as sales units, costs, revenue growth, net benefits, profit margin, return on investment, just to mention a few.

On the other hand, marketing needs to reach the customer, with an attractive offer, so that these financial indicators are achieved favorably. Hence, marketing is interested in improving aspects such as: identify the tastes and preferences of consumers, achieve rapid and effective communication with current and potential consumers. This communication is intended to be as individual and personal as possible, and to act, both rationally and emotionally.

One way to achieve this increasingly individualized communication is through technology and using an appropriate segmentation. Here it is good to emphasize; that between one of the parameters that allow to make a demographic segmentation, is the sex.

Finally, all this communication process, with clear financial objectives, and supported by an adequate segmentation, is done within an environment, and there are equally relevant the macroenvironment, taking into account aspects covered by the PESTE, and what is related to the micro-environment, where consumers play a fundamental role and towards which many marketing efforts are directed.

With these last comments, this brief review of market analysis is completed and it can move on to offer a few comments to another aspect of importance for this work, the decision tree structures.

## **Comments on Decision Tree Structures**

Decision trees are used very often in decision making, especially under risk (Hernández & García, 2010). Its use is found in different fields of human activity, as is the case of analysis of the impact of floods (Rözer et al., 2016; Spekkers et al., 2014), in the study of the detection of multiple sclerosis (Zhang et al., 2016) or in business, in the construction industry (Renuka, Umarani & Kamal, 2014) or to analyze the risks in cloud computing (Albakri et al., 2014), or in a similar case, to facilitate communication with and between vehicles (Wang et al., 2016), just to mention a few cases. Although in many cases, rather than using the decision tree itself, its structure is mainly used.

These decision tree structures (DTS) have a great advantage, which facilitates the analysis of the problem by breaking it down into simpler parts.

As it can be seen in Hernández & García (2010), the DTS, are very easy to handle, since, like the decision trees, they only consist of a couple of basic elements: the nodes and the branches, which, when represented graphically, are shown with circles or parallelograms and with straight lines, respectively.

Normally when a node is represented by a circle, it is a probability node, if it is represented by a parallelogram, mostly a square, it represents a decision node. Sometimes smaller circles are used to indicate that it is a node or terminal point.

Each decision node represents a specific path to follow, while the probability nodes, evaluate the different probabilities related to each event, calculating the expected value of occurrence of the respective event (Hernández & García, 2010).

In the DTS, it may be the case that there are only decision nodes and through the structure, which is usually traversed from the end to the beginning, possible alternatives are incorporated or discarded.

With these very brief comments, it can have a clear idea that they are the DTS, in case it wants more information it can consult Hernández & García (2010).

Having commented on all the theoretical aspects, next, it will go to the central chapter of this work, to review the role of women in the mass markets, through a DTS.

## **REVIEW OF THE MARGINALIZATION OF THE WOMEN IN THE MASS MARKET**

All the elements are already available to be able to carry out a brief review of the participation or marginalization of women in the goods market, whether they are products or services.

With these brief comments on female participation, the market for mass consumption products and decision tree structures, it has a clear idea of the three



fields of knowledge involved in this work. With this knowledge, it will be very easy to see, then how they relate to each other. In particular, in table 1, which is the representation of a decision tree structure, this interrelation is seen. It is clear in it, how the market analysis allows to obtain a clear vision of the marginalization or not of the woman, in the market of massive products.

Although a decision tree structure (DTS) will be applied, given that its extension could be very long and impractical, the tree will not be drawn as such. Since this DTS will only contain decision nodes, it will be represented through a table, which will facilitate its visualization.

For the construction of this table, which represents the DTS (Table 1) it will depart that in the introduction and in the section dedicated to the analysis of the markets, mention was made of a series of aspects to consider, starting with education and ending in economic considerations, going through religious aspects, related to motherhood and many of those in the market that contribute to segmentation.

In table 1, in the first column, the aspect to be evaluated with the question about the participation of women in the mass market is placed. This question will only admit as possible answers No or Yes, which will be the second and third column and the fourth column is reserved for a few comments, which will serve to argue the answer.

The question, in itself, will be a constant, since the decision to be taken is if the aspect in discussion marginalizes women in the mass markets.

By way of illustration, question 01, which would evaluate the Education aspect, would be formulated: Does education marginalize women from the goods market?

If the answer is No, it will be passed to the next question and so on. If the answer is Yes, it ends.

In any case, in each row of table 1, where the question is asked, only the aspect under discussion will appear.

The tree, that is, table 1, in this case, will end when the first positive response is found.

In the tree, the DTS, which has just been presented, through table 1, of the 18 aspects mentioned is the only one that, if it acts as an element of rejection or marginalization, is the economic one.

This could suggest a rejection close to 6%, which would be very low, but a rejection at the end. However, it must be clarified that women are not marginalized, they are marginalized in the same way as men, if they do not meet the economic standards required. Therefore, there is no rejection of the mass markets towards women.

Another aspect, of those contemplated in Table 1, which deserves a separate comment is sexism. Its extremes are mentioned, machismo and feminism, which can be said to be two images of a single reality, since both despise humans and both see it as an object, only that machismo sees women as a valued object, which can

## Marginalization of Women and Mass Markets

Table 1. Aspect to consider, to measure if the woman is marginalized in the goods market

Aspect That Can Marginalize Women in the Goods Market	No	Yes	Commentary
01. Education (includes her culture)	X		This aspect marginalizes women socially but does not limit, at least directly, their participation in the mass markets. (1): Each woman, according to her <i>education</i> , will be interested in different sets of products and services.
02. Tradition	X		Tradition per se does not marginalize women from the goods market. (2): However, due to <i>tradition</i> , women can self-marginalize certain markets. (1).
03. Religion	X		The same comments can be made as for tradition, including the notes (1) and (2).
04. Motherhood	X		Maternity does not marginalize, on the contrary, it generates, for women, the need for other different goods.
05. The upbringing (of the children)	X		It can be seen as a situation very similar to motherhood.
06. Age	X		It does not act as an element of marginalization. (1) and to a lesser degree (2).
07. Media (consulted)	X		The more media a woman manages, she will have access to a greater number of markets. (1) and (2).
08. Word of mouth (WOM)	X		It is a means of communication more, which is why it complies with what has been said for the media in general. (1) and (2).
09. The perception (of the market itself)	X		As a customer, it can perceive unwanted characteristics of a brand, a product or a market and therefore reject it, but it rarely happens otherwise and, if so, it will be something punctual.
10. The residence (area in which it resides)	X		As a client, markets that are not easily accessible are usually discarded. (2). The market receives clients regardless of their residence.
11. Antidiscrimination	X		On the contrary, advancing anti-discriminatory measures improves the participation of women in the goods market.
12. The cultural (cultural changes)	X		The general changes in the environment and in particular cultural changes can act as tradition and religion. (2).
13. Sport (sport activity of the women)	X		If the woman does sports activities, she usually needs a series of specific products for her practices.
14. Quality (of the work performed by women)	X		Usually, have a behavior similar to education. (1).
15. Economic development (of her environment)	X		Two cases can be presented, that the woman is adapted to her environment in which case it is given (1) or that it is not adapted to her environment and in this case, it usually happens (2).
16. The region (in which she develops)	X		Each region usually offers a set of products, if a specific woman does not find what she wants, she will go to other markets.
17. Sexism (in its extremes: machismo and feminism)	X		Sexism per se does not usually marginalize women from the goods markets. Extreme postures can lead to (2).
18. The economic (economic level of a woman)		X	The markets want to increase their profitability, but, although in many markets there are products, of different prices, for the different economic levels, the situation is usually given, that many clients may be marginalized.

Notes: Where the note (1) appears, the education aspect, with which the note was generated, can be substituted by the respective aspect of that row. In the same way, it can be done with the note (2), in which case the aspect to be replaced is tradition.

Although ethical aspects were taken into account in the whole structure of the decision tree, these were not explicitly reflected.

be useful to satisfy many of their desires, while feminism sees man as an unusable object, which is useful for nothing. These extremes are obviously harmful to society and it should try to eradicate them.

When the market analysis was done, they were mentioned: customer lifetime value (CLV), brand value, brand equity, perceived quality, acquisition, attitudinal loyalty, retention, sales units, revenue premium, market share, success of new products, sales revenue, revenue growth, costs, net benefits, profit margin, return on investment, equity risk, credit rating, cost of capital and finally profitability.

Except for profitability, which is contained in the economic, none of the other terms was included explicitly in Table 1, given that they obey more to the objectives of each organization, than to what is pursued by a market in general.

They were also left out of table 1: Terrorism, migration, wars, because although they are aspects that affect and sometimes profoundly, the markets, it does not make much sense to associate it with female discrimination, since these factors affect all humans equally.

With these last comments, it can finish this study and present some ideas for future research and offer the conclusions.

## **FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS**

In this chapter, several aspects of business activities were presented, highlighting, among them, the participation of women in the modern business world. In this constant concern to achieve better incorporation of women into business life, many mistakes are often made, usually by precipitation and lack of deep reflection.

When the marginalization of women is usually quite evident in some strata and especially in some societies, it is not necessary to look for aspects of the marginalization of women when this marginalization does not really exist, as is the case here presented. Therefore, as a future line of research, it is recommended to conduct studies, preferably with some quantitative basis, that allow measuring, when in reality, women are marginalized and when they are not.

But these studies should not be limited to analyzing marginalization or not, but, in cases, where some real marginalization can be detected, it is proposed as a line of research, to look for mechanisms that can reduce the existing gaps.

On the other hand, as already indicated, it is recommended to make the greatest possible use of quantitative tools, rather than simply taking opinions in all these studies that have to do with female participation in the new business world.

## **CONCLUSION**

This work is introduced in a very current topic, although it has been studied for many years, and which can also be considered a controversial topic. It is about the participation of women in the mass markets.

To offer a first conceptual framework, some works on female participation in the labor market were reviewed. From this point of view, it can be concluded that, although the participation of women has improved in recent years, there is still much to be done. The need to continue working in this aspect is given because the greater participation of women, does not cover the whole society. There are countries and cultures, in which this marginalization of women is still much accentuated.

Then a brief analysis of aspects of the goods market was made. It was found that there are two fundamental aspects to consider, one is the segmentation of the markets. Perhaps it is more accurate to say, the need to segment the markets, in order to identify the clients of interest. The second aspect to be highlighted is that the market, for the organizations that participate, the most important thing is profitability and economic relations, because if a company is not profitable it is doomed to failure.

Another element mentioned was the decision trees, more precisely the decision tree structures (DTS), of which we can say that they are structures that simplify the analysis of the problems.

Finally, and to achieve the general objective of the work, a DTS was constructed, represented through a table, where possible aspects that could be-cause of marginalization of women in the markets were studied. From this DTS, reflected in the aforementioned table, it could be seen that there is no marginalization of women in the mass markets as such. The only aspect of the market, which can act as an element of marginalization, turned out to be the economy, since not everyone can participate in all markets, because they do not have the economic resources to sustain that participation, in some of them.

From all this, it can conclude that this apparently sensitive issue of the participation of the women, at least in relation to the goods market, is not so delicate, since no marginalization of women in the market is detected.

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## Chapter 5

# Sustainability of Public Finance of Rentier States

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Embedding this discourse on rentier state theory (RST), this chapter discusses the quest for sustainability of the public finance system of Nigeria and Saudi Arabia. The inability of these rentier states to meet their economic, social, and political commitments led to the adoption of value-added tax (VAT) and economic diversification as sustainability strategies. The findings from the macroeconomic data indicated that Nigeria and Saudi Arabia have large markets that provide opportunities for the introduction of VAT. These two countries also have huge deposits of natural resources, including oil, which could be developed for accelerating economic diversification. This chapter validates the appropriateness of VAT and post-rentier economic diversification as sound policies for industrial, services, tax, and tourism development. The findings from this chapter need to be strengthened with a more rigorous empirical investigation. The chapter concludes with far-reaching policy suggestions.*

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## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

In recent times, sustainability has emerged as an inevitable phenomenon because of the scarcity of economic resources at individual, organizational and national contexts. Consequently, Nigeria and Saudi Arabia, as two important oil-dependent developing countries have formulated sustainability policies to cope with difficult economic, social and political realities caused by dwindling oil revenues, rising populations and growing expectations of the citizens. Both countries are heavily dominated by the public sector in terms of production, distribution and income generation, while the contributions of the private sector marginally complement. Nations with the above socio-economic snapshots are described as rentier states. The rentier political economy that prevailed in the two countries engendered laziness, patronage and culture of entitlement, while the drive towards economic diversification, particularly industrialization and enterprise development is relatively weak and not really significant in spite of the endowed natural resources, rising population and large markets (Hertog, 2010; Aljadani and Raimi, 2018).

In the quest for sustainability, Nigeria introduced VAT in 1994, while Saudi Arabia adopted VAT in 2018 to strengthen their respective Gross National Incomes (GDPs). Furthermore, both countries (as leading oil-dependent developing nations) have consistently advocated the need for economic diversification to reposition their economies. The policymakers of both countries adopted VAT as a non-oil revenue option to augment their budgetary obligations in view of unprecedented growth in their recurrent and capital expenditures (Raimi & Aljadani, 2019). Let us do a brief review of the economic profiles of both countries to gain better insights on the imperative of sustainability strategies.

Nigeria is a populous black African nation with a population of over 180 million. It presently has 36 states and a Federal capital, but Lagos remains the commercial and industrial hub of Nigeria (See Figure 1). It has a nominal GDP of \$375.77 billion and per capita income of \$5680 (World Development Indicators database, 2018) and a large untapped domestic market for foreign investment (Alkali, 2008; Mahajan, 2009), as well as array of incentives and opportunities for prospective local and foreign investors (Nigerian Investment Promotion Commission, 2013). Economic data indicated that the average return on investment (ROI) in Nigeria stands at 20% per annum, and the micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) sub-sector constitutes over 95% of the nation's enterprises and proudly accounts for over 50% of formal employment (Alkali, 2008; Raimi, 2015). The country has a very low industrial growth rate because of poor access to finance, the rising cost of electricity/energy, transport, infrastructural neglect, multiple taxes, poor incentives, crime, insecurity, corruption and bad governance (Raimi, 2015; Oyelola et al., 2013).

Figure 1. Map of the Federal Republic of Nigeria

Source: European Commission (2010:6)



The Nigerian economy is largely dependent on the oil sector for its foreign exchange earnings – an indication that oil resource is the driver of the nation’s economy, while the non-oil sector only complements (Raimi, 2015). The oil revenue that accrued to the country led to appreciable growth in the gross domestic product (Oil GDP) at different periods, but there was no real economic development because of the rentier political economy that engendered dysfunctional economic structure. Adibe, Nwagwu, and Albert (2018) recounted that the phenomenon of rentierism and its attendant patronage and culture of entitlement have combined to mess up the Nigerian petroleum industry. The government in an attempt to appease the elites sponsoring militant activities in the oil-producing areas, awarded oil pipeline surveillance/protection contracts, with little consideration for merit, organizational capacity, and competencies of the contractors. Other militant groups that are discontented for not being appropriately rewarded with oil pipeline surveillance/protection contracts

intensified attacks on oil installations and infrastructures in the oil-producing communities in the Niger-Delta. The humongous oil wealth that accrued to the nation could not translate into economic development due to institutional corruption, oil theft, profligacy and bad governance leading to mismanagement of oil resources with impunity by the political elites (Watts, 2009; McLoughlin and Bouchat, 2013).

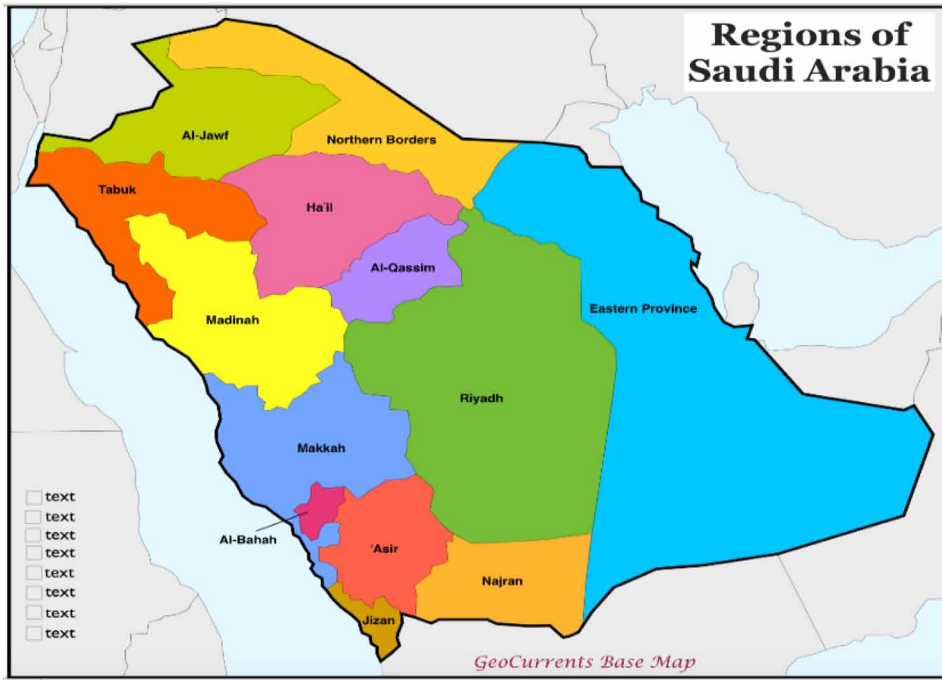
Moreover, Saudi Arabia is a leading Arab country with 13 provinces with rich natural and cultural endowments (GeoCurrents.info, 2016). Like other Gulf countries, the Kingdom of Arabia, with a population of 32.94 million, is largely driven by revenue from crude oil (Krane, 2012; World Development Indicators database, 2018). Official records indicate that Saudi Arabia is the largest producer and exporter of oil in the world (The Embassy of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, 2018).

The budget of the Kingdom is funded by oil revenue. But the fall in oil prices and rising recurrent and capital expenditures affected the capacities of the government to meet its financial commitments. The Kingdom, therefore, looked to non-oil revenues as a supplementary option for meeting its budgetary obligations growing at an unprecedented rate. At a time, the option of merging government institutions and ministries to reduce government expenditure had been considered, but the policymakers felt that that option was operationally difficult, as the government preferred to create new institutions rather than merging old ones. The rentier philosophy of Saudi government led to a fragmented institutional landscape with overlapping responsibilities and huge financial implications. In 2011 alone, the government spent \$136 billion oil revenue to meet the growing economic needs of the citizens especially to fund wages in the public sector, payment of unemployment benefits and housing subsidies for the working class and others (Ross, 2011).

The need to revisit, the rentier state phenomenon in Nigeria and Saudi Arabia becomes imperative because the changing world economy demands increased productive systems. The effortless oil revenues that often accrue to the rentier states are dwindling due to new competing centers of power and new rivalries that created a conflict of interests between rentier and non-rentier states (Luciani, 2015). Unlike the rentier economic system, the concept of economic diversification leverages an efficient production system with the capability to sustain the economy while competing with other nations in the international markets. Economic diversification requires a change in production and consumption behavior in society. The citizens must be re-orientated to pay taxes to enjoy basic services and for the critical infrastructure in society. For the state, there is a need for reform of the public management such that the government would only deploy public revenues to productive uses, not for funding private consumption or paying for costly weapons systems. In the same direction, the government requires coherent policy decisions on macro-economic variables such as subsidies, interest and exchange rates (Luciani, 2015).

Figure 2. Map of the kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Source: GeoCurrents.info (2016)



This chapter discusses the quest for sustainability in redressing Rentierism in the Public Finance System of Nigeria and Saudi Arabia with a particular focus on Value-Added Tax (VAT) and Economic Diversification. The unsustainability of rentier public finance system on account of the consistent drop in oil prices at the international market has affected adversely the budgets of both countries. The chapter is structured into six sections. The first section provides an introduction to the quest for sustainability in redressing the rentier public finance system in Nigeria and Saudi Arabia. The second section reviews the literature with a focus on conceptual issues such as rent, VAT and economic diversification. Thirds section underpins the chapter on the Rentier State Theory (RST). The fourth section focuses on the methodology/ approach adopted. The fifth section presents the results/findings. The sixth section concludes with policy implications and suggestions for further research.

## 1.1 Research Questions

This chapter intends to answer the following research questions for which appropriate policy suggestions will be provided:

**RQ1:** Do Nigeria and Saudi Arabia fit the description of rentier states on the basis of their macro-economic data?

**RQ2:** What are the efforts put in place to augment dwindling public revenues through VAT and economic diversification in both countries for future sustainability?

## **2.0 CONCEPTUAL ISSUES AND REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

The important concepts that underpin this chapter that needed to be critically reviewed are rent/rentier state, value-added tax, and economic diversification. The next three sub-sections provide succinct conceptualization on these three thematic concepts.

### **2.1 Rent and Rentier State**

Conceptually, the term rent refers to the income derived from the ownership of land and other natural resources otherwise called gifts of nature. This definition extends to all income streams attributable to the resource-inputs in the production process because they are prices paid for the flow of services emanating from the stock of resources exploited by the government and its agents (Penrose, 1995; Lewin, & Phelan, 2002). Rent also refers to accrued income streams sourced by rentier states (governments) effortlessly through the sale of natural resources such as oil, gold, silver, and other natural resources through exports (Raimi and Aljadani, 2018). Rentier political economy is prevalent in developing countries. Countries with heavy dependence on rents are called rentier states because their fiscal revenues are primarily hinged on the sale of oil and other mineral resources (Zicchieri, 2016; Karl, 2007; Schwarz, 2012; Beblawi & Luciani, 2015). They therefore become “allocation” states, that merely distribute and appropriate the accrued rents without being concerned with the prospects of raising taxes on productive economic sectors nor are they bothered about the plausibility of attracting foreign direct investment (FDI) to develop their economies outside the oil sector (Hvidt, 2011; Raimi and Aljadani, 2018). Practically, rentier states run an ‘expenditure policy framework’ and ‘exclusively state-funded employment’ with little or no consideration for economic diversification and the need for a coherent economic development program with strong private sector participation (Gray, 2011; Toledo, 2013; Beblawi & Luciani, 2015).

The common metric to measure if an economy is a rentier state is to determine the percentage of total government revenue sourced from oil revenue against non-oil revenue. As a general rule, Luciani (2015) suggested that states whose dependence on oil and related natural resources constitutes at least 40 percent of their economic revenue are rentier states. From another perspective, several scholars suggested that an economy with a larger percentage of its budget funded by oil revenues without



complementing revenues from personal income and corporation taxes is a rentier state (Malik, 2017; Aljadani and Raimi, 2018; Kaya, 2019).

Furthermore, rentier states manifest three unique characteristics, namely: (a) Oil is the strategic product of rentier state, the accruing oil revenues are paid to the governments as rents without any link between production price and market price; (b) Oil revenues accruing to rentier states are externally generated through marketing of the oil resources in the global economy; and (c) The state allocates oil revenues that accrued to the rentier states.

In order to reduce the exclusive reliance on oil revenues in the rentier state, there is a need for diversification. A number of measures have been developed and used, which ranges from the 'Ogive Index' to the 'Herfindahl Index.' The Ogive Index measures the contribution of the industrial sector to the national economy; it focuses on the degree of industrialization as the major factor in diversification. However, the Herfindahl Index is used for comparing the degree of concentration of one sector to other sectors in an economy (Alhowais and Al-Shihri, 2010; Albassam, 2015).

## **2.2 Value-Added Tax**

In the fields of macroeconomics, public finance, and international business, VAT refers to a form of indirect tax imposed by a government on the consumption of most goods and services in the economy (Musgrave and Musgrave, 2004; Mankiw, 2010; PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2017). But, Mittal and Mahajan (2017) defined VAT as a broad-based tax computed, collected and remitted at multiple stages of production and distribution chains with taxes on purchases (inputs) credited against taxes on sales (output) without distorting production decisions. Furthermore, Omesi & Nzor (2015) explained that VAT is simply goods and services tax (GST) because it is levied exclusively on the value-added inputs that are resulting from exchange among buyers and sellers. It is a form of indirect tax because the incidence falls on the final consumers who bear the cost of the tax. From another perspective, VAT is simply a tax imposed on locally-produced goods and services as well as imported products at a specific rate for the purpose of raising steady revenue for the government and its incidence of this consumption tax is borne by the final consumer (Unegbu and Ireferin, 2011). Globally, VAT is levied and collected on both imported and locally manufactured goods and services with clearly stated exceptions (Unegbu and Ireferin, 2011; Soyode and Kajola, 2006; PriceWaterHouseCooper, 2017). The VAT was introduced in Nigeria in 1993 backed by VAT Act No. 102 of 1993 as a replacement for the sales tax (Omesi & Nzor, 2015). Whereas, VAT was introduced in Saudi Arabia as a new tax system in 2018 after the announcement of a unified Value-Added Tax (VAT) across the six GCC countries (Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman,

Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates) and the subsequent ratification of agreement for its introduction (Aljadani and Raimi, 2018).

With regard to the attributes of VAT, Soyode and Kajola (2006) identified three attributes of VAT. Firstly, VAT is strictly a consumption tax. Secondly, VAT is a multi-stage tax; that is, it is collected at different stages in the production and supply chains in the economy. Thirdly, VAT's incidence falls on the final consumers of the goods and services. A VAT is officially levied on VAT registered businesses, which engage in the supplies of goods and services in the economy. Functionally, the VAT registered businesses work with the Tax Authorities to ensure proper computation and collection at each stage in the production and supply chains on behalf of the Government, even for imported goods and services. Exempted goods and services under VAT learning include basic food items, essential medicines, healthcare, education, sale or lease of residential property and finance and insurance, as well as exports of goods and international services described as zero-rated supplies (PriceWaterHouseCooper, 2017; Raimi and Aljadani, 2019).

Further on the foregoing discussion, VAT was introduced as the best form of business tax with allocative efficiency for several reasons. It is argued that the government is a critical player in the production process and distribution chain. Therefore, imposing a levy in the form of VAT that is proportional to support services provided by the agencies of government is necessary and desirable to prevent distortion in the pattern of goods and services produced in the economy. In other words, VAT was conceptualized as the most accurate index of a business's use of government services in production (Oakland, 1967).

From a practitioner viewpoint, VAT registered businesses charge and add VAT as a statutory levy to the value of goods and services they supply. Operationally, the registered VAT business organizations within the tax framework are allowed to reclaim VAT incurred on goods and services acquired for business purposes (subject to some restrictions) such as the purchase of raw materials and other consumables used for the purposes of business. For imports, VAT is charged at the first point of entry, when customs duty may also apply (PricewaterhouseCooper, 2017).

VAT when effectively managed by the tax authorities will increase the tax base of Nigeria and Saudi Arabia and consequently boosts their GDPs. This is a fact widely discussed in Public Finance (Musgrave and Musgrave, 2004; Jhingan, 2004). However, the constraint of VAT in an emerging economy may not have the political will to enforce compliance and punish defaulters. The collection efficiency of VAT is dependent largely on the probability of audit and the degree of penalty on defaulters and implementation lags – all of which are structural issues under the government (Aizenman & Jinjara, 2008).

Similarly, Ross (2011) reported that historically, the government of Saudi Arabia buys off citizens/critics by providing economic benefits with no taxation. Therefore,

VAT introduction in Nigeria and Saudi Arabia for the purpose of raising revenue implies that the citizens will demand financial accountability and transparency. This is in line with the Benefit received theory, which asserts that there is an exchange relationship between tax-payers and the government that collects tax. The government provides public goods and services to the citizens, while the citizens pay taxes as contribute to the cost of the public goods proportionately to the benefits received (Bhartia, 2009; Ayuba, 2014). As the VAT is collected in stages, it will be impossible for individuals to evade all taxes in the production chain, there will, therefore, lead to a significant increase in revenue mobilization for Nigeria and Saudi Arabia. However, without strong political and institutional support there could also be a significant tax gap, especially in the service industries of the economy. Another economic benefit of VAT is its neutrality because it is designed as a consumption tax to be imposed on all types of businesses, except those under the exclusion list (Hodges, 2017). This peculiarity of VAT makes it attractive. The constraint to the neutrality clause in the VAT implementation is the possibility of abuse of the exemption provided by the Government. Similarly, VAT is also inflationary and may lead to a high cost of living with negative implications on welfare. It has been observed that some businessmen seize the opportunity of VAT to raise prices on commodities and services that are subjected to this tax. For a society where there are price controls and where the regulators are vigilant, this constraint may be averted (Haroun, 2011).

Another economic benefit of VAT as a consumption tax is the advantage of being extremely difficult to evade by taxpayers because compliance inspection of major organizations is easy. Unlike other indirect taxes especially the popular retail sales taxes with compliance problems, the VAT is collected along the chain of production and distribution. This is the reason why VAT has remained a robust source of revenue for the federal government of the United States for decades. Proceeds of VAT have enhanced the government's capacity to fund social safety net and welfare programs such as social security, Medicare and Medicaid and insurance subsidies (Mankiw, 2010). Additionally, VAT, unlike other business taxes, gives government revenue security in two respects. Firstly, tax losses due to undervaluation are limited to the value-added at the last stage. Secondly, if payment of VAT is evaded at one stage, it is operationally not lost, as the collection is effected at a later stage; and even if it is not collected subsequently, the government will at least have collected the VAT paid at earlier stages before evasion.

The major constraint to an efficient VAT system (with low evasion incidence) is understanding and cooperation by the key stakeholders – the final consumers (that make the payment) and the registered VAT businesses (that help in the collection in the production and distribution chains). Other constraining factors that affect compliance are urbanization, agriculture share, the openness of the economy

(Aizenman & Jinjark, 2008). Poor education and ineffective sensitization of these critical stakeholders would obviously affect the proceeds from VAT.

Economic growth is another benefit that VAT implementation may offer a nation. The relationship between VAT and economic growth has been mixed in the literature is the position held by (Jhingan, 2004; McCarten, 2005; Musgrave, & Musgrave, 2004). In contemporary times, Aamir et al. (2011)'s research found that raising public revenue through indirect taxes impacts economic growth in the long-term with specific reference to the experience of Pakistan. Bird (2003), like previous scholars, is of the view that VAT is an effective tax system for developing countries because it practically yields huge revenue in the least costly and disproportionate manner; it also has a wide tax base with manageable tax incidence. In the case of Ajakaiye (1999), VAT introduction in Nigeria was reported to have had a negative effect on the economy. The reason for this negative relationship was long explained by Oakland (1967) explained that VAT imposition on the final consumer is convenient and provides government with sustainable revenue to meet the welfare needs of the citizens. At the same time, the incidences of VAT reduce personal income of the final consumers as well as alter the rate of capital accumulation thereby changing the size of income available for distribution in future periods. Related to the above is the argument that VAT is regressive, that is, the burden of tax falls disproportionately on the poor because they spend more of their income on consumption than the rich (Haroun, 2011).

## **2.3 Economic Diversification**

Economic diversification is an important issue in economies such as Nigeria and Saudi Arabia with a high dependency on natural resources. Unfortunately, the natural resources-led economic development model has proved to be a failure in most developing countries because of its weak long-term sustainability. United Nations (2014) defines economic diversification as the process by which a country expands its growing range of economic outputs by increasing the markets for exports thereby broadening existing income sources. Natural resources-dependent countries require economic diversification because the lack of varied income sources characterizes their economies; and their economies relied heavily on the production of primary commodities that are predominantly vulnerable to climate variability and international price fluctuation. Scholars opined that economic diversification becomes imperative for developing and emerging economies to attain greater self-discovery, to earn premium returns from agro-allied companies and growing manufacturing enterprises thereby reducing reliance on low return from raw materials and other primary products (Uzonwanne, 2015; Raimi and Aljadani, 2018).

Practically, diversified economies do better in the long run than mono economies, as the former has an array of economic activities with different income sources without being locked into reliance on primary resources often exported to developed countries. Banafea & Ibnrubbian (2018) argued that countries that are heavily dependent on natural resources to the neglect of other non-oil sectors could achieve economic growth, but economic development would be elusive and far from being achieved – that is, mono-economies show the presence of economic growth with economic development.

Economic growth within the mainstream macro-economics is a growth in a country's gross domestic product (GDP), while economic development entails real development with real changes in the social structures, people's attitudes, national institutions, acceleration of economic growth, reduction of inequality, laws, good governance and other development indices in the economy (Todaro & Smith, 2012; McConnell, Brue & Flynn, 2009). It has been explained that argued a lack of structural changes in Nigeria and Saudi Arabia is responsible for lack of economic development in spite of the huge fortunes from oil revenues. Structural changes simply refer to changes in the contribution of different sectors to the GDP of a nation (Aljabori, 2015; Banafea & Ibnrubbian, 2018).

With specific reference to oil-dependent countries, the term economic diversification has been defined as a strategic process of reducing the degree of dependency on the oil sector as major export for revenue by deliberately boosting non-oil export and enhancing the share of non-oil revenues in the overall Gross National Product (ESCWA, 2001; Banafea & Ibnrubbian, 2018). Looking at the structural weaknesses of oil-dependent Saudi Arabia, economic diversification is imperative because natural resources are finite, exhaustible and the supply and demand for natural resources are unstable over time. The policymakers in Saudi Arabia had put in place nine successive development plans focused on economic diversification, and the critical underlining goal of these strategic plans was decreasing dependence on natural resources, augmenting the contributions of non-oil productive sectors to GDP and enhancing the continuous growth of private GDP in the long-run (World Bank Group, 2017; Banafea & Ibnrubbian, 2018).

Comparatively, Nigeria before its independence and several years after made fortunes from agriculture, mining and other real sectors of the economy. The discovery of oil resources and the resultant wealth accruing from sales of oil became a curse rather than a blessing. To date, the nation's economy still depends largely on proceeds from oil, at the expense of other productive sectors such as solid minerals, services, manufacturing, tourism and agriculture that have contributed significantly to the economy for years (Raimi, Patel, Yekini and Fadipe, 2014).

To redress heavy dependence on oil resources, strategic policies on economic diversification is required to avert the depletion of exhaustible resources and link

oil revenues with critical sectors such as manufacturing, construction, services, tourism, and ICT (Banafea & Ibnrubbian, 2018). Nigeria and Saudi Arabia as rentier states can strategically embrace economic diversification by reinvesting wealth accumulated from oil into critical sectors of the economy, attract FDI and encourage private sector participation in the non-oil sectors of the economy through massive investments in critical sectors of the economies of both countries.

The outcome of economic diversification has always proven to be positive and reassuring. Malaysia, Indonesia, and Chile (MIC nations) with strong mineral resource bases leveraged economic diversification with landmark achievements. Some of the positive outcomes of economic diversification in the MIC nations include: (a) prudent macroeconomic management, (b) competitiveness, (c) relatively open trade and open investment policies, (d) sustained human capital development and (a) establishment of a good business climate. Another example of a diversified economy is Dubai, which has consistently enjoyed agglomeration externalities, efficient bureaucracy, strong Information Technology, minimal taxation, open economy to investment/labor/skills, stable exchange rate and low cost of doing business (Gelb, 2011). Besides, Singapore is another developing country with an advanced diversified service economy after embracing economic diversification some years back. Its success in the areas of education, research, development, and innovation are commendable lessons for other developing countries (Cummings, 2018).

Embracing economic diversification by developing countries such as Nigeria and Saudi Arabia means creating new and more competitive income-generating streams for the nation's economic growth and sustainable development. It involves using the right strategy to boost revenue generated from other sectors of the economy such as integrated agriculture, construction, tourism, integrated transport system, manufacturing, services, telecommunications and other critical sectors of the economy (Raimi, 2016).

To determine the extent of economic diversification, some of the measures that have been used by researchers include: (a) determining the percentage contribution of the oil sector and the non-oil sector to the nation's GDP. This measure helps to determine the extent of structural change in society; (b) determining the percentage contribution of oil revenues in relation to total government revenues. This measures the degree of dependency on oil by the country; (c) determining the percentage contribution of non-oil export to the overall export earnings of the country. An increase in non-oil exports justifies economic diversification and vice versa; (d) determining the relative contributions of the public and private sectors to the gross domestic product (GDP); and (e) determining the instability of GDP in relations to the instability of the oil price (Hvidt, 2013; Albassam, 2015; Shayah, 2015; Banafea & Ibnrubbian, 2018). Four of the above measures were used to measure the extent of economic diversification in Saudi Arabia between 1970 and 2013. It was found

that the Saudi Government has achieved little success in economic diversification because oil revenue is still the mainstay of the economy for over 40 years, and the role of the private sector relative to the public sector is abysmally weak. The former depends heavily on government patronage. In this book chapter, the degree of economic diversification in Nigeria and Saudi Arabia were analyzed and compared.

### **3.0 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

For this qualitative study, the Rentier state theory (RST) provides a very strong explanation for the oil dependency and slow pace of economic diversification in Nigeria and Saudi Arabia. In retrospect, RST was built on the presumption that most oil-producing states in the developing countries did not make an effort to accumulate revenue through taxation of the local population, but rather rely exclusively on externally generated rents. RST seeks to understand the paradox behind the continuing socio-economic and political underdevelopment in the oil-exporting countries despite the huge oil revenue stream that accrued to them (Al-Tunisik, 2014).

From another diverse but similar perspectives, it is argued that RST posits that rentier states in the Gulf countries utilize the humongous revenues from abundant oil resources to buy off peace and engender political stability through citizens' patronage, high spending on the security apparatus, strategic protection by outsiders, large-scale distributive policies and effective repression of antagonists that could threaten the established rentier political economy (Basedau & Lay, 2009).

Rentierism is functionally measured using the percentage of total government revenue sourced from oil rent. Luciani (2015) posited that states that depend on oil for at least 40 percent of their economic revenue qualified to be called rentier states. The rentier states are those whose fiscal revenues depend primarily on external rents realized from the sale of oil and other mineral resources (Schwarz, 2012; Zicchieri, 2016). In the face of weak governance structure, the rentier economies become "allocation" states, focusing on distributing and appropriating the accrued rents, and they are not concerned with the need for taxation on productive economic sectors or attracting foreign direct investment outside the oil sector (Hvidt, 2011).

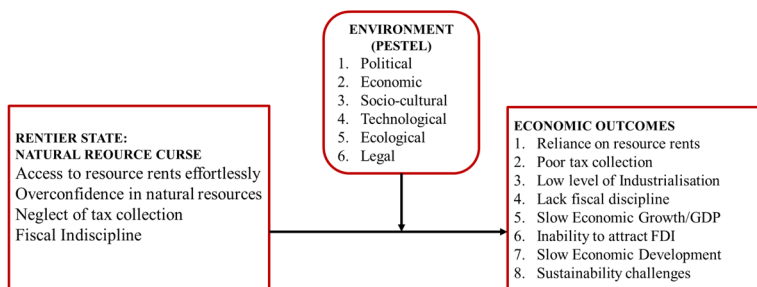
Rentier states also suffer from the natural resource curse, defined as a paradoxical situation, whereby resource-endowed countries show relatively lower economic growth and at times, worse economic development indicators than countries with fewer natural resources. Angola, Congo, Nigeria, Venezuela and notable oil-rich countries in the Middle East have been identified as examples of natural resource-based economies, which have consistently manifested low or negative GDP growth and attendant consequences of widespread poverty and destitution. Whereas, East Asian economies such as Japan, Korea, Taiwan, Singapore, and Hong Kong without

such humongous natural resources are comparatively better than the resource-endowed nations mentioned above (Badeeb, Lean, & Clark, 2017). Moreover, the “natural resource curse” manifests when the impact of resource abundance of resource-rich economics does not reflect economic performance (Aragón, Chuhan-Pole, & Land, 2015).

An earlier empirical study on the economic performance of resource-dependent countries in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) from 1960–2008 by of Arezki and Nabli (2012) provided empirical justification for the phenomenon of natural resources curse. Specifically, they found that many countries in MENA for over forty years manifested a high level of income per capita, while few other countries showed a poor level of income per capita when assessed using a broader range of outcome measures. Additionally, these countries in MENA experienced relatively low and non-inclusive economic growth combined with high macroeconomic volatility. The work of Kim and Lin (2015) on developing countries also found that resource-based economies develop more slowly than countries with scarce natural resources.

More importantly, environmental factors significantly help to entrench the natural resource curse in developing economies. One of the environmental factors that help perpetuates the natural resource curse is overconfidence in resource rents generated effortlessly by the governments of developing countries. The trait of overconfidence and reliance on rents remove pressures on governments regarding the need to explore tax collection and the imperative of fiscal discipline in the face of the expectations of the citizens and sustainability (Iimi, 2007). Another factor that has entrenched the paradox of natural resource curse with specific reference to the oil-rich Gulf countries is the political strategy of buying off peace and engender political stability through citizens’ patronage, high spending on the security apparatus, strategic protection by outsiders, large-scale distributive policies and effective repression of antagonists that could threaten the established rentier political economy in these countries (Basedau

*Figure 3. Theoretical framework of the relationship between Rentier State—National Resource Curse and economic outcomes and the mediating role of environment. The framework was developed by the authors based on insights from literature.*





& Lay, 2009). The implication of the theoretical framework on the relationships between Rentier State – Natural Resource Curse and economic outcomes and the mediating role of the environment is depicted in figure 3.

## **4.0 METHODOLOGY AND APPROACH**

For this study, the qualitative research method was found appropriate and relevant. The required information and macro-economic data on Nigeria and Saudi Arabia were sourced from journal articles, World Bank database, Nigerian Bureau of Statistics, working papers and online databases. The information generated from scholarly articles and working papers on rentier economic systems, VAT and economic diversification were discussed using critical literature review, while the macro-economic data from sundry sources were analyzed using descriptive statistics especially ratios and percentages. Considering the exploratory nature of this chapter, data on the macro-economic performance of Nigeria and Saudi Arabia for 1990, 2000, 2010 and 2017 were sourced, analyzed, presented and discussed. These approaches are in line with the research methodology for qualitative research (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2012). To determine if both countries are rentier states, the study examines the share of fuel exports to the total merchandise exports for many years and makes an informed conclusion. Leveraging the measures of rentier state and diversified state in the literature, the decision rule is: ‘If the % contribution of fuel exports is  $\geq 50\%$ , then, the country is a rentier state. Otherwise the country is a diversified state’.

## **5.0 RESULTS AND FINDINGS**

From the literature, it is well-established that the rentier state phenomenon is measured using several metrics. The economic snapshots of Nigeria and Saudi Arabia are as presented in Tables 1 and 2.

With regards to population, Saudi Arabia and Nigeria have a population of 32.94 million and 190.89 million people respectively as of 2017.

Both countries’ GDPs for 2017 are respectively \$683.83 billion and \$375.77 billion. Total foreign direct investments (FDI) for Saudi Arabia and Nigeria in 2017 are \$1,421 million and \$3,497 respectively. An indication that Nigeria attracted more FDI than Saudi Arabia because of the former’s more openness.

Industry’s contribution to GDP in Saudi Arabia was 3% for both 2010 and 2017, while the industry’s contributions to GDP in Nigeria for 2010 and 2017 were 25%

## Sustainability of Public Finance of Rentier States

Table 1. Nigeria's profile

Macro-Economic Country Data	1990	2000	2010	2017
Population, total (millions)	95.27	122.35	158.58	190.89
Population growth (annual %)	2.6	2.5	2.7	2.6
Surface area (sq. km) (thousands)	923.8	923.8	923.8	923.8
GNI per capita, PPP (current international \$)	1,780	1,960	4,780	5,680
GDP (current US\$) (billions)	30.76	46.39	369.06	375.77
GDP growth (annual %)	12.8	5.3	7.8	0.8
Inflation, GDP deflator (annual %)	9.3	35.2	103.8	11.1
Agriculture Sector (% of GDP)	30	25	24	21
Industry (plus construction) (% of GDP)	61	47	25	22
Exports of goods and services (% of GDP)	35	52	25	9
Imports of goods and services (% of GDP)	18	20	17	12
Gross capital formation (% of GDP)	14	7	17	15
Domestic credit of financial sector (% of GDP)	21.9	10	18.8	23.3
Tax revenue (% of GDP)	..	1.5	2.3	..
Military expenditure (% of GDP)	0.8	0.8	0.5	0.4
Merchandise trade (% of GDP)	62	64	35	24
FDI, net inflows (current US\$) (millions)	588	1,140	6,026	3,497

Source: World Development Indicators database (2018)

Table 2. Saudi Arabia's profile

Macro-Economic Country Data	1990	2000	2010	2017
Population, total (millions)	16.33	20.76	27.43	32.94
Population growth (annual %)	3.6	2.3	2.8	2
Surface area (sq. km) (thousands)	2,149.70	2,149.70	2,149.70	2,149.70
GNI, PPP (current international \$) (billions)	465.16	712.22	1,236.79	1,804.19
GDP (current US\$) (billions)	117.63	189.51	528.21	683.83
GDP growth (annual %)	15.2	5.6	5	-0.7
Inflation, GDP deflator (annual %)	7.1	10.9	17.2	6.8
Agriculture Sector (% of GDP)	6	5	3	3
Industry (plus construction) (% of GDP)	49	54	58	45
Exports of goods and services (% of GDP)	40	43	50	34
Imports of goods and services (% of GDP)	31	25	33	28
Gross capital formation (% of GDP)	16	19	31	28
Domestic credit of financial sector (% of GDP)	12.8	34.5	-0.1	39.1
Military expenditure (% of GDP)	14	10.6	8.6	10.3
Merchandise trade (% of GDP)	58	57	68	51
FDI, net inflows (current US\$) (millions)	1,861	-1,881	29,233	1,421
<b>Source:</b> World Development Indicators database (2018)				

and 22% respectively. This is another indication that Nigeria is doing better than Saudi Arabia.

However, with regards to the first research question: “Do Nigeria and Saudi Arabia fit the description of rentier states based on their macro-economic data?”

Tables 3 and 4 provide very clear findings.

*Table 3. Fuel exports as a share of merchandise exports (Nigeria)*

Date	Value	Change, %
2017	95.8	-0.48%
2016	96.3	6.00%
2014	90.9	3.69%
2013	87.6	4.26%
2012	84.0	-5.71%
2011	89.1	2.29%
2010	87.1	-3.57%
2009	90.4	-1.51%
2008	91.7	-2.05%
2007	93.7	-4.65%
2006	98.2	0.35%

**Source:** World Data Atlas (2018)

The literature stated that rentier states are those that fund their budgets primarily through external rents realized from the sale of oil resources (Schwarz, 2012; Zicchieri, 2016). Is this true in reality with respect to macro-economic data on Saudi Arabia and Nigeria? Let us examine the data descriptively and make the necessary inferences.

From Table 3, Nigeria’s fuel exports have continued to dominate the entire merchandise exports from 2006 - 2016. For instance, the contribution of fuel exports in 2006 was 98.2%. There was a drop in 2007 to 93.7%, and a further drop in 2008 to 91.7%.

For 2009, 2010, 2011 and 2012, the contributions of fuel exports to the overall merchandise exports were 90.4%, 87.1%, 89.1%, and 84.0% respectively. By 2016, fuel exports for Nigeria were 96.3%. As of 2017, fuel exports for Nigeria was 95.8%.

The facts emerging from the trends in fuel exports are an indication that Nigeria heavily depends on oil exports for its revenue. The trends above affirmed that Nigeria is a rentier state because the contributions of fuel exports to the overall merchandise exports from 2006 – 2016 exceed 80%.

### **Sustainability of Public Finance of Rentier States**

From Table 4, it is obvious that fuel exports have continued to dominate the entire merchandise exports of Saudi Arabia from 2006 - 2016. For instance, the contribution of fuel exports in 2006 was 91.1%. There was a drop in 2007 to 90.1%, a rise in 2008 to 91.4%. For 2009, 2010, 2011 and 2012, the contributions of fuel exports to the overall merchandise exports were 87.9%, 87.5%, 88.6% and 88.5% respectively. By 2016, fuel exports for Saudi Arabia were 79.1%. Although, the fuel exports fluctuated substantially over the years, an indication that the Kingdom has added other items to its exports to diversify the economy that is heavily dependent on oil exports for its revenue. The trends above affirmed that Saudi Arabia is a rentier state because the contributions of fuel exports to the overall merchandise exports from 2005 – 2016 exceed 80%. This is an indication that the fiscal revenue of Saudi Arabia is sourced from the sale of oil resources.

*Table 4. Fuel exports as a share of merchandise exports (Saudi Arabia)*

<b>Date</b>	<b>Value</b>	<b>Change, %</b>
2016	79.1	0.94%
2015	78.4	-7.70%
2014	84.9	-2.85%
2013	87.4	-1.22%
2012	88.5	-0.13%
2011	88.6	1.23%
2010	87.5	-0.39%
2009	87.9	-3.82%
2008	91.4	1.38%
2007	90.1	-1.11%
2006	91.1	0.08%

**Source:** World Data Atlas (2018)

In view of the trends in the macro-economic data of Nigeria and Saudi Arabia, it could be concluded that Nigeria and Saudi Arabia fit the description of rentier states on the basis of their macro-economic data.

On the second research question that “What are the efforts put in place to augment dwindling public revenues through VAT and economic diversification in both countries for future sustainability?”, the paper affirmed Nigeria and Saudi Arabia embraced VAT and economic diversification as important policies for augmenting dwindling public revenues. Both countries have large markets that provide an opportunity for the introduction of VAT as well as huge deposits of natural resources including oil,

which could be developed as springboards for accelerating economic diversification. VAT, therefore, emerged strategically as a front-burner fiscal policy in both countries to complement dwindling oil revenues in the face of rising public expenditures, growing populations and growing expectations of the citizens. Moreover, the inability of both countries to meet their economic, social and political commitments justified the need for economic diversification.

## **6.0 CONCLUSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

This chapter sets out to examine the future of Rentierism in the Public Finance of Nigeria and Saudi Arabia as two developing countries with similar political economy profiles. The study became imperative because the negative effects of Rentierism have been exacerbated by the consistent drop in oil prices at the international market with ripple reactions on the budgets of both countries. On the strength of the descriptive analysis above, it was found that Saudi Arabia and Nigeria are both rentier states. To reverse the unsustainable fiscal environment prevailing in both countries, there is a need to embrace economic diversification as a viable strategy. Economic diversification functionally allows for more private sector participation, the attraction of foreign direct investment (FDI), agricultural development, industrialization, tourism development, improvement in the role of taxation, improvement of the service sector, ICT, capital and money market development, and increased merchandise trade.

Flowing from the conclusions above, the following suggestions are proposed:

1. For the VAT system to increase the national wealth of both countries, there is a need for the government to develop strong political will required for full enforcement of the VAT laws especially on issue bothering on compliance and remittance of proceeds by registered VAT businesses without exception. This recommendation is premised on the earlier assertion that the collection efficiency of VAT is dependent large on an effective audit system, the degree of penalty imposed on defaulters and implementation lags.
2. The process of economic diversification in both countries is very slow. It is suggested that Nigeria Saudi Arabia should have clearly defined immediate, short and long-term economic diversification strategies that will help the governments diversify their economic resources.
3. The rent accrued-revenues should be effectively and efficiently used for the diversification process, especially for developing the agriculture, industrial, tourism, service, and construction sectors of both economies. Oil-driven

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economic diversification process is beneficial, as it would curb oil price instability that all rentier states are facing globally.

4. Economic diversification thrives on openness and competitiveness. It is, therefore, suggested that the business environment in both countries should be opened and enabling, and also made competitive for the local private sector partners foreign investors. This policy direction will boost the GDPs of both countries.
5. The government should ensure that the incomes from VAT are properly accounted for, and used for meeting the socio-economic and developmental needs of the society. Tax authorities in Nigeria and Saudi Arabia should, therefore, embrace the principles of financial accountability and transparency. Impunity, mismanagement and secrecy in the way a government is run should be discontinued, wherever such practices exist because taxpayers globally have become more assertive and proactive with regards to questioning policymakers on the collection and utilization of their taxes.
6. There is a need for objectivity and neutrality on goods and services to be exempted from VAT. The government should not abuse of the exemption provision of VAT. The goods and services to be exempted should be general wellbeing and wellness to society.
7. The government should balance the regressive nature of VAT with its mandate on poverty reduction and welfare improvement. Looking at Nigeria and Saudi Arabia, the policymakers in both countries should avoid a poverty cycle whereby they raise revenue from VAT at one point and create welfare challenges on which the revenues collected would be spent.
8. To deepen economic diversification, learning from the industrialization experiences of BRICS Nations, the industrial cluster strategy is suggested. Industrial clusters are recognized worldwide as a worthwhile industrial strategy with the inherent benefit of competitive advantages otherwise called agglomeration economies. This is particularly suggested because it would allow large companies and small ones to co-exist and collaborate within the industrial clusters set up in different parts of Nigeria and Saudi Arabia. Moreover, value-based production from the clusters will transfer both economies into private-led economies with minimal dependency on oil revenues.

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## Chapter 6

# Corporate Social Responsibility: Online Reporting

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### **ABSTRACT**

*This chapter seeks to find out whether energy corporations that operate in Nigeria provide adequate information about their corporate social responsibility, and whether these programmes are available on their managed online media platforms. For this reason, the study investigates how two energy corporations have engaged the online newsletter platform to share information concerning their CSR performance. The research employs a content analysis method. The population of the study comprises all online newsletters published by these corporations from January 2013 to August 2014. There are recognized similarities and difference in their use of online newsletters to share information concerning their corporate social responsibility to their various stakeholders. The study recommended that ExxonMobil (Nigeria) and SPDC (Nigeria) should make an effort to be consistent in their online newsletter publication. SPDC (Nigeria) should de-emphasise the frightening account of oil theft and spillage and focus more on human capacity development of persons within their host communities.*

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## INTRODUCTION

Recently, wonderful innovations in digital communication particularly the various media platforms the internet provides have ignited the intellectual interest of many communication scholars and media practitioners and produced better channels for corporations to interact with their various stakeholder groups (Lister et al., 2009; Livingstone, 1999). Communication between organizations and their stakeholders have changed tremendously. Grudic Kvasic et al., (2016) noted that Corporate Social Responsibility reports are known under different names such as Environment Report, Triple Bottom Line Report, Sustainable Development Report, Corporate Social Responsibility Report and others. The change has provided organizations with several media channels they could communicate with their various stakeholder groups and obtain their comments easier and faster (Friedman & Friedman, 2008). It is important to note that Corporate Social Responsibility reporting is continuously increasing in terms of both quantity and quality (Grudic Kvasic et al., 2016; Baric, 2017). They maintained that the process of globalization coupled with advances in information technology led to corporate websites becoming the primary media for corporate social responsibility reporting, particularly in large enterprises and multinational corporations. The advantage of the Internet or corporate websites over traditional communication channels (annual reports, brochures, television) is reflected in interactive two-way communication, which is efficient and repaid transmission of information to different groups of stakeholders at the same time.

Prior to the discoveries of these great innovations in digital communication which many communication scholars and media practitioners have regarded as *New Media* (Logan, 2010; Lister et al., 2009; Livingstone, 1999; Friedman & Friedman, 2008), interaction between organizations and their diverse stakeholder groups was one-way patterned and often only electronic media and print media were used. Today, because of these great innovations in digital communication, most organizations can communicate better with various stakeholders on several media channels the internet platform provides (Atli et al., 2018; Baric, 2017). Among these media channels are a company blog, website, Facebook page, twitter handle and others.

However, the use of these channels particularly the website by organizations to inform their various stakeholders about their programs and contributions in the society seems not to be well acknowledged and effective or perhaps most stakeholders are not conscious of the information provided on these channels (Livingstone, 1999). Discussing the community perception and oil companies' corporate social responsibility initiative in the Niger Delta region in Nigeria, Ojo (2012) observed that in spite of some scholarly works in the area, little is known about oil companies CSR practices and how they fit into the overall sustainable development plan of the

region. He noted that most oil companies' officials and the host communities had been locked in claims and counterclaims over the practice of their CSR initiatives.

Because most stakeholder groups of these organizations are not aware of their corporate social responsibility programs, the contributions of some corporations in this regard have been questioned on several fora. Maguire (2011) observed that "in 2009, nearly 90 percent of the Fortune Global 100 released CSR reports, yet most stakeholders remain uninformed about the social and environmental performance of these (and many other) companies" (pp. 2). Also, some stakeholders appear to be biased in their appraisal of these corporations. Thus, their comments and actions lead to agitation, protest, corporate reputation and image deformation (Ojo, 2012; Okocha, 2015). However, Okocha (2015) pointed out that business performance is no longer measured only in terms of the balance sheet value but by the positive impact of business on the shareholders and other relevant publics. For this reason, one may like to know if these organizations make available adequate information about these programs on their managed media platforms. In view of this challenge in focus, this study seeks to investigate how two energy corporations have engaged the online newsletter medium to share information with their various stakeholder groups about their CSR programs and draw attention of most of the stakeholder groups to the contents of online newsletters of ExxonMobil (Nigeria) and SPDC (Nigeria) through a comparative study from January 2013 to August 2014.

## **ExxonMobil (Nigeria)**

ExxonMobil (Nigeria) is among the notable flourishing publicly-owned energy companies in Nigeria. ExxonMobil's commercial operation is organized through some individual operating companies. Among these companies are Mobil Oil Nigeria, Esso Exploration and Producing Nigeria Limited and Mobil Producing Nigeria Unlimited. Some of ExxonMobil's affiliate companies have been in business in Nigeria for more than 100 years. Considering its pedigree, ExxonMobil is among those multinational energy corporations in Nigeria that are likely to operate at the highest standards of business ethics, safety, and environmental advocacy, financial and technical excellence. Most ExxonMobil affiliate companies in Nigeria are engaged in the production and discovery of basic oil and normal gas. Their businesses also include serving retail, industrial and wholesale customers through their fuels and lubricant products.

In December 1999, Exxon and Mobil merged. The amalgamation between Exxon and Mobil brought as one three notable energy corporations in Nigeria: Mobil Oil Nigeria Plc (MON), Mobil Producing Nigeria Unlimited (MPN) and Esso Exploration and Production Nigeria Limited (EENL). These three companies have an outstanding history, confirmed experience and an exceptionally strong record of contributions to

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the development of the oil and gas sector in Nigeria. When combined together, these companies have more than 2,000 employees, with over 90 percent being Nigerians.

### **Shell Petroleum Development Corporation (Nigeria)**

SPDC, according to LAMP 2008, is the first energy corporation in Nigeria. Shell D'Arcy, the premier Shell Company in Nigeria, established the Royal Dutch/Shell Group in 1936. Shell D'Arcy was issued an exploration license by the Colonial government in November 1938 to look for mineral deposits throughout Nigeria. The energy company in January 1956 marked the first successful well drilled in Bayelsa State, Nigeria. In April 1956, Shell D'Arcy was changed to Shell-BP Petroleum Development Company of Nigeria Limited. The Company's name changed to Shell Petroleum Development Company of Nigeria (SPDC) in December 1979. The company for the first time exported oil from Nigeria in February 1958. Shell's Bonny Terminal was officially opened in April 1961 while in September 1971; Shell's Forcados Terminal was commissioned.

### **Research Questions**

This study seeks to provide answers to the following questions:

1. What is the prominent theme in ExxonMobil (Nigeria) online newsletter?
2. What is the prominent theme in SPDC (Nigeria) online newsletter?
3. How do they use the platform of an online newsletter to share information concerning their CSR activities with their stakeholders?
4. Were there similarities in the manner they engage online newsletter?
5. Were there differences in their use of online newsletters?

## **BACKGROUND**

### **Theoretical Framework**

Having carefully considered some theories, the following theoretical frameworks were considered appropriate to enhance the investigation in this study.

- Systems theory
- Stakeholder theory



## Systems Theory

Ludwig von Bertalanffy's (1901–1972) interwar researches was regarded as the source of General System Theory. The studies continued after World War II and discovered a friendly reception in the Anglo-American hemisphere, while there was also some debate on developments in management science, operations research, engineering science and cybernetics all of which had some connection with the United States think tanks like the *RAND Corporation* (Davidson, 1983; Hammond, 2003).

The significance of systems theory is its potential to proffer a trans-disciplinary guideline for a concurrently critical and normative examination of the mutual interaction between our perceptions and conceptions and the worlds they supposed to stand for. Systems theory offers such an approach and can be recognized as a branch of study rather than a group of specific disciplines (Laszlo & Krippner, 1998).

Thus, General systems theory is taken to be the suitable theoretical framework for this study because it makes available the background for in-depth examination in the operations of an organization as a system, its various departments as subsystems and their interaction with its stakeholders. Baskin and Aronoff (1992) note that Systems theory is the general theory that's most often applied to public relations; and public relations scholar John Pavlik asserts that Systems theory comes closest to being the dominant theory for public relations. In addition, Cornelissen (2004) identifies Systems theory as an important theoretical framework to discuss corporate communications. He said that Systems theory, for example, has postulated that for organizations to be useful they must engage themselves with the stakeholders in order to survive; and corporate communications is regarded as the significant subunit of the management job of organizations, which shoulders that task.

Systems theory considers an organization as a whole and provides its explanation from that viewpoint rather than from a departmental view. Daft (2008) notes that systems theory is a part of the humanistic perspective that views the organization as an open system, which comprises entropy, synergy and subsystem interdependence. He explains that open system establishments must engage with the stakeholder to survive. He asserts that systems viewpoint is very important since the interaction and connectivity of in-house resources, capabilities and systems very much describe the dynamism and adaptive nature of organization towards its stakeholders.

## Stakeholder Theory

In management literature, the term stakeholder can be traced back to 1963, when the phrase was initially used in a global memorandum at the Stanford Research Institute (Freeman, 1984). This idea centers on what should be considered as the major objective of a modern business enterprise. However, a lot of notable scholars

and communication management practitioners have presented an interesting body of theories and research findings to postulate that the major objective of business operation should be to create more wealth from the economic resources provided by the shareholders (Wojtkowiak, 2018). Contrary to that, a set of independent groups of business including customers, suppliers, institutional shareholders, environmental and social activists, academics, government regulators, non-governmental organizations and businesses themselves have suggested that business organizations should act responsibly toward the environment and their stakeholders (García et al., 2018).

Thus, in this study, two different and opposing theories of the objective of business organization are considered. These are the shareholder value theory and stakeholder value theory. Shareholder value theory posits that the major objective of a business enterprise is generating more financial returns for shareholders. It has emerged as the prominent theory supported, taught and used in business schools and the vast majority of corporations in capitalist economies. While shareholder theory is opposing stakeholder theory which is the prominent theory supported in the study and practice of corporate social responsibility. Stakeholder theory explains the idea that corporations are dependent upon stakeholders for progress, and stakeholders have some interest and financial involvement in the corporation. Stakeholder theory suggests the main objective of a corporation is to serve humanity and broader societal interests beyond creating more financial returns for shareholders alone.

However, this argument is often based on either/or terms. Either the main objective of a corporation is to generate more financial returns for shareholders or it is to provide more social services to society (Merton, 1976). Shareholder value theory is the prominent economic theory adopted by businesses. Creating more financial returns for shareholders as the main objectives of the business enterprise is enshrined in our laws, management practices, language and economic and financial theory. Nobel Laureate Milton Friedman (1970) was a great supporter of generating more financial returns for shareholders. His argument was centered on the statement that every business corporation has one and only one social responsibility; which is to use its resources and engage in activities programmed to generate more profits so long as it is guided by the regulations of the business, in other words, engages in open and free competition without deception or fraud.

Contrarily, the major objective of the stakeholder theory is to provide an alternative objective of the business corporation. Stakeholder theory, however, postulates the major objective of the business corporation is to serve the need of the majority of the public beyond generating more financial returns for shareholders alone. This is becoming the major focus of Business Corporation in society. The argument in R. Edward Freeman (1984) is considered as the origin of the idea of stakeholder theory. He argued that managers have a moral duty to accommodate and appropriately balance the interests of all stakeholders.

Stakeholder theory emphasizes the idea that business corporations depend on stakeholders for progress, and stakeholders have some shares in business corporations. Schneider (2002) said that stakeholder theory expands the idea of ownership of the business corporation beyond that of the shareholders who are considered as legal or economic owners of the business corporation, who become a stakeholder by investing money or other means that effect in equity ownership. Then, the question of who is a stakeholder becomes controversial. Questions emerge such as whether stakeholders represent those who are affected by or affect the business corporation or are they only those persons and groups of persons who contribute capital for the establishment of the business corporation (Post, Preston, & Sachs, 2002, p. 19). Thus, if stakeholder theory comprises only persons who influence the business organization and its financial returns, then one would say that it is a subordinate to shareholder value theory, not a substitute to stakeholder theory.

## **CONCEPTUAL REVIEW**

### **Corporate Communications**

For more than two decades now, the idea of corporate communications has attracted the intellectual attention of some scholars. Making his contribution, Cornelissen (2004) postulates that the duty of establishing, protecting and maintaining the organization's reputation is the main duty of corporate communications practitioners. However, notwithstanding the importance attributed to an organization's reputation, the role and contribution of corporate communications are, in many business corporations, still far from being fully understood. He argues that until the 1970s, communication practitioners had employed the concept 'public relations' to explain communication with stakeholders.

In his opinion, 'public relations' function was tactical in most business organizations, largely comprised of communication with the press media. When other stakeholders, within and outside the organization, started to demand to know more about what is happening in the organization, communication practitioners began to look at communication as being more than just 'public relations.' This was when the roots of the recently discovered corporate communications function began to take hold. This new concept came to incorporate a lot of specialized fields of study, which include advertising, corporate design, media relations, internal communication with employees, investor relations, issues and crisis communications, change advocacy and public affairs. The major feature of the recently discovered idea is that it centers on the business corporation as an entire entity and on the essential duty of how an organization projects itself to its various public, both within and outside.

Van Riel (1995) describes corporate communications as ‘a tool of management through which all deliberately and carefully engaged forms of internal and external communications are coordinated as effectively and efficiently as possible,’ with the main objective of creating ‘a harmonious basis for communication with groups upon which the company is dependent.’ Waldt (2004) sees corporate communications as a relatively new concept that embraces various sub-disciplines of communication within organizations, such as organizational communication, managerial communication, public relations and marketing communication.

Thus, ever since the early 1990s, the guiding idea has been that organizations should communicate with all stakeholder groups; beyond those groups that they depend upon in economic or market terms (Example: stakeholders, investors, employees, suppliers, customers). They should communicate with others that are of moral and social importance like government, communities, NGOs so that the corporation and its actions are considered ‘legitimate’ by society.

More importantly, Waldt (2004) explains that there are various definitions of the idea of corporate communications. Most of them emphasize the area of synergy, some centered on the enhancement of the corporate image and identity, while others stress the “wholeness” or totality of all communications in the business corporation. Furthermore, Kalla (2006) affirms that corporate interactions comprise of all forms of communication within and outside the organizational communication activities; and the duty of internal communication within that mix is just a part of the whole idea of public relations activities (Oliver, 1997).

Owakah and Aswani (2011) notice that corporate communications were seen by many scholars as an idea similar to public relations, where the latter is simply the “initiation and preservation of mutually helpful relationships (Jefkins, 1998).” They point out two kinds of theorists on the idea of corporate communications and public relations. They include the image and structural theorists. In their opinion, Image theorists postulate that at its beginning, the function of public relations was taken up by trained journalists who moved from their mainstream profession to occupy a position of public relations personnel at different business organizations. The reason for this action was ascribed to the fact that the field did not have adequate structures that could enable the training of personnel to handle functions reserved for public relations officers. In contrast, they observe that the Structure theory is perhaps best illustrated in the argument of Cornelissen (2000), who postulates that for years, the function of public relations was considered as a technical job rather than a managerial job. To support this argument, he observes that in major situations, public relations personnel report to the marketing department of the organization rather than to the Chief Executive Officer of the corporation. Most of the defenders of the structure theory argue that the idea of public relations and corporate communications belong

to two different schools of thought, and are thus functionally different, in other words, the engagement of one does not stand for the other.

Corporate communications offer the answer as it enhances a greater unification of communication disciplines (Argenti, 1996; Argenti, 2004; Argenti, 2005). Thus, rather than being spread among some departments in the corporation, or delegated to other functions such as Human Resources, Administration and Finance, communication disciplines have often continually been merged and organized into departments or as the sole duty of a sole communication manager (Argenti, 1996; Argenti, 2005). Besides this great achievement recorded in the unification of communications disciplines, though in separate corporate affairs or public relations and marketing departments, corporate communications emphasize the expanded scope and breadth of disciplines and expertise that is seen recently in the discipline (Argenti, 2005), but as well the more all-embracing method of communications which most corporations are now using.

## **Corporate Social Responsibility**

Corporate social responsibility has emerged as a prominent idea in reporting the activities of a business corporation (Atlı et al., 2018; Ukpabi et al., 2014). According to Sharif Mohd et al., (2019) “Corporate social responsibility is the way a corporation achieves a balance between economic, social, and environmental responsibilities in its operations so as to address shareholder and other stakeholder expectations” (pp.2). Most business corporations have a policy concerning their activities that center on corporate social responsibilities and they make it available in a report they produce annually; explaining its operations and achievements. The generally accepted definition of corporate social responsibilities should center on what is or should be the communication among multi-national business corporations, governments of countries and individual citizens.

More locally, the definition seeks to explain the relationship between a business corporation and the local society where it is located. In addition, it seeks to explain the interaction between a corporation and its stakeholders (Ath et al., 2018).

The most important principle of corporate social responsibilities, however, is the social contract between all the stakeholders of a business corporation and the society; which is a fundamental requirement of civil society. Pejic Bach et al., (2015) noted social responsibility principles demand transparency including communication of social responsibility covered in company communications with its stakeholders. However, it is paramount to acknowledge that the corporate social responsibilities should embrace beyond present members of society in their programs. In other words, it demands taking responsibility towards the future and future members of society. To sum it up in general terms, it is taking responsibility for the environment.

## **Corporate Social Responsibility**

It is important to note that there is yet to be an agreed definition of corporate social responsibility by scholars and this raised the question of what exactly should be corporate social responsibilities.

According to the European Union Commission (2002), “Corporate Social Responsibility is an idea whereby business corporations integrate social and environmental concerns in their business operations and their interaction with their stakeholders on a voluntary basis.”

Many writers have recognized the fact that the activities of any business corporation have a great influence on the external environment and they have suggested that one of the functions of accounting should be to report the contribution of any business corporation in this respect.

Contrarily, some writers have argued that a business corporation should not pay great attention to issues relating to corporate social responsibility and for this reason, one often comes across the statement made by Milton Friedman in 1970. He said that there is one and only one social responsibility of business, which is to use its resources and engage in activities designed to generate more profits so long as it abides by the rules of the business, which is to say, engages in open and free competition without deception or fraud.

## **Elements of Corporate Social Responsibility**

According to McWilliams *et al.*, (2006), some of the elements of corporate social responsibility are seen in activities that center on the following areas:

1. Health Initiative
2. Human Capacity Development Initiative
3. Education Initiative
4. Environmental Protection
5. Safety Initiative
6. Good Governance
7. Sanitation
8. Rule of Law

## **Empirical Review**

In 2009, Atul Bamrara, a Counsellor at Indira Gandhi National Open University, New Delhi conducted research on “A Study of Corporate Communications at Oil & Natural Gas Corporation” in India. The research focuses on the corporate communications process employed by ONGC Management to improve its business

corporation. It further draws attention to the areas where the business organization has to put more efforts to enhance their communication process.

The findings show that transparency, awareness concerning the process of communication is quite high, and communication networks are employed to enhance the interaction among the employees of the business corporation. It was noted that the business corporation while communicating either internally or externally uses few methods. More importantly, increasing profits are some of the gains of good public relations policy and attraction of ethical investment is the major benefit for the organization in the area of corporate social responsibility.

However, he noted that the business corporation should engage internal and external modes of communication by adopting recent innovations in communication. Training should be conducted for communication personnel, so that other techniques and skills of public relations tested and trusted to be beneficial for the business organization can be adopted and for the better communication between the departments, top management must establish and maintain corporate blogs.

Athi et al. (2018) conducted research on communicating corporate social responsibility on the web of the best multinational companies in the world. The focus of the study was to thoroughly examine the practice of virtual corporate social responsibility (CSR) communication of the best multinational companies in the world. By distinguishing the benchmarks for CSR communication, the study provided tools for easier analysis of the best practices and more widespread adoption of those best practices by other organizations (Ath et al., 2018).

Pejic Bach et al., (2015) conducted research on the social responsibility websites' communication of large European multinational banks in their parent and subsidiary countries. The findings from the research implicate that banks in subsidiary countries have a significantly lower level of social responsibility communication than the parent countries, and the difference tends to be higher in less developed countries. They noted that this practice endangers banks' systemic behavior and the international economy.

Another study that is closely related to this study is "Integrated Internal Communications in the Multinational Corporation" conducted by Hanna Kalla. This Doctoral essay conducted in 2006 at Helsinki School of Economics, Finland, centers on the desire to better comprehend the task of internal communication in a transnational corporation (MCN). The function of internal communication was x-rayed from a multidisciplinary and multilevel point of view, which was where the researcher, identified an existing research gap. The study was conducted in a foremost telecoms transnational conglomerate in Finland. The result shows that communication strength positively influences the synergy in internal communications as showcased in the transnational conglomerate. More essentially, the abstract and practical result of this study contributed to advance the understanding of the

universal trend of internal communication in the transnational context through internal communication synergy.

Another study that is interrelated to this study is “Corporate Social Responsibility Communication in the Pharmaceutical Industry.” This study conducted by Jose Javier Levrino in 2010 at Aarhus School of Business, Denmark is aimed to examine how business corporations within the pharmaceutical industry use their CSR approach and communication.

The result shows that commitment in CSR of companies developing its program and business within the pharmaceutical industry should act in response to the various challenges this industry faces. He noted that external stakeholders cautiously watch the activities of pharmaceuticals. As a reason, he suggested that the initiatives and interactions ought to be planned to meet the stakeholders’ desires and hopes. Ultimately, he observed that pharmaceutical wholesalers employ various CSR message strategies to achieve their objectives.

Moreover, organizations choose from various media platforms to communicate with various stakeholder groups. It is observed that a website is one of the various media platforms pharmaceuticals use when establishing a CSR communication policy. Nevertheless, it is vital to recognize the significance of the website as an enlightening tool for reaching the outside stakeholders (Ath et al., 2018).

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This study uses the content analysis process. Content Analysis is defined as the scientific investigation of the content of the communication. It is the study of the substance of communication with suggestions to the meanings, contexts and intentions contained in messages. In this view, the Colorado State University Writing Guide points out two general categories of content analysis: conceptual analysis and relational analysis. In their opinion, the conceptual analysis seeks to recognize the reality and occurrence of concepts most often represented by words or phrases in a text. While relational analysis goes one-step ahead by reviewing the relationship in the midst of concepts in a transcript. Therefore, this study employs the tool of conceptual content analysis technique.

In this study, the population is the whole online newsletters published by these organizations on their website from January 2013 to August 2014. The total quantity of publications of these organizations within this period is 37. The researcher employs a purposive sampling technique, which is considered as one of the non-probability sampling techniques. It is chosen with the perceptible that it is not representative of the general population. For better understanding, a purposive sample includes content category, unit of analysis which form the Dimensions of



Corporate Social Responsibility, topics of discussion, elements chosen for precise features or qualities and canceled those that fall short to meet these requirements. In other words, the model is intentionally chosen non-randomly. The sample size of this study is taken from the online newsletters that contain information about their corporate social responsibility within the period under examination. They are deliberately selected because they contain pieces of information or characteristics that will help the investigation in this study, which the researcher set out as criteria for their selection. The sample size is 20. 10 publications are drawn from each of the corporation's online newsletters.

The research instrument engaged in this study is content analysis. The coding sheet is used for data gathering. The coding sheet was planned to respond to the research questions raised in the study. Consequently, both the content category (corporate social responsibility) and the unit of analysis (various themes discussed in their publications that portrays their corporate social responsibilities) were carefully chosen to achieve this purpose.

Data was collected from different pages of the online newsletter publications through the instrument of the coding sheet, which would answer the research questions raised in the study, identifying and adding the frequency of definite categories of texts in the different publications of the online newsletters. The data were subjected to content analysis which is a quantitative technique used to recognize and add up the frequency of definite categories of texts in the different publications of the online newsletters.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

The data for this research is presented in tabular form for easy comprehension of the information. Four tables were used to present the data collected from the online newsletter publications of ExxonMobil (Nigeria) and SPDC (Nigeria).

The data in this table capture the distinctiveness of the source of the online newsletter: ExxonMobil (Nigeria) online newsletter and SPDC (Nigeria) online newsletter. It shows the month of publication of the online newsletter analyzed in the study. The data also show the occurrence of their publication. Every month they published an online newsletter is represented with a figure. The months without any figure on it indicate that the organization did not publish any newsletter or what they published were not taken for analysis.

The data on this table capture the various scopes of corporate social responsibilities conducted by these organizations. It comprises the unit of analysis in the study. Each of the dimensions is represented by a figure that shows the occurrence of

## Corporate Social Responsibility

Table 1. Identification of online newsletter and month of publication

Month	ExxonMobil	SPDC
January	2	1
February	1	0
March	0	1
April	2	1
May	0	1
June	1	1
July	1	1
August	1	0
September	0	1
October	0	2
November	2	1
December	0	0
	10	10

the initiative. The unit without any figure indicates that the organization does not execute any initiative in that direction.

The data in this table show that news report format dominated the style of writing of online newsletters of these organizations. It is engaged in all the publications analyzed in this study.

The data on this table capture the tone of discussion in the selected publications. For ExxonMobil (Nigeria), the tone of discussion in their publication is dominated with a friendly tone while the tone of discussion in SPDC (Nigeria)'s publication is mixed with a friendly tone and defensive tone. However, the dominant tone in their publication is defensive.

**Research Question One:** What is the prominent theme in ExxonMobil (Nigeria) online newsletter?

To answer this question, table 2 is suitable for use. Table 2 indicates that ExxonMobil (Nigeria) published ten online newsletters. In these publications, five themes were projected by the corporation. The table indicates that among the five themes projected; the theme of human capacity development initiative appeared four times, emerging the prominent theme of corporate social responsibilities of ExxonMobil (Nigeria) in its online newsletter publications from January 2013 to August 2014.

*Table 2. Identification of frequency of dimensions of corporate social responsibilities*

<b>Unit of Analysis</b>	<b>ExxonMobil</b>	<b>SPDC</b>
Health Initiative	1	0
Education Initiative	3	0
Environment Initiative	0	3
Safety Initiative	1	4
Human Development Capacity Initiative	4	2
Good Governance	0	0
Sanitation Initiative	0	0
Justice Initiative	0	1
Others	1	0
	10	10

**Research Question Two:** What is the prominent theme in SPDC (Nigeria) online newsletter?

To answer this question, table 2 is also appropriate to use. Table 2 shows that SPDC (Nigeria) published ten online newsletters. In these publications, four themes were projected by the organization. The table shows that among the four themes projected; the theme of safety initiative appeared four times, emerging the prominent theme of corporate social responsibilities of SPDC (Nigeria) in its online newsletter publications from January 2013 to August 2014.

**Research Question Three:** How do they use the platform of an online newsletter to communicate their corporate social responsibility with their stakeholders?

## Corporate Social Responsibility

To answer this question, tables 1, 2, 3 and 4 are appropriate to use. Besides table 1 that shows that these organizations project the subject of corporate social responsibilities in their online newsletter, though they were not consistent in the months of publications, table 2 shows the dimensions of corporate social responsibilities their project and the occurrence of the themes. In addition, it is imperative to note, according to the data on this table, that these organizations engaged in several kinds of corporate social responsibilities in order to make a positive effect in the life of the people where they operate. This table identifies 5 major dimensions of corporate social responsibilities these organizations engaged in. The prominent among them are the themes of human capacity development and safety initiatives.

Furthermore, table 3 shows that these organizations employ the format of the news report to communicate their corporate social responsibility activities to their stakeholder groups. It is as well essential to mention that they published these pieces of information on their websites, making it available and accessible to their different stakeholders to read unlike the print and electronic media, which they could not read or listen to after the pieces of information, have been published or aired.

*Table 3. Identification of style of writing*

Style of Writing	ExxonMobil	SPDC
News Report	10	10
Opinion / Feature Writing	0	0
	10	10

In addition, table 4 shows the tone of discussion of these scopes of corporate social responsibilities. Two major tones (friendly and defensive) are used by these organizations to communicate their corporate social responsibilities.

*Table 4. Identification of tone of discussion*

Tone of Discussion	ExxonMobil	SPDC
Friendly	10	2
Unfriendly	0	0
Defensive	0	8
	10	10

**Research Question Four:** Were there similarities in their use of an online newsletter?

To answer this question, tables 1, 2, 3 and 4 are appropriate to use. To point out their similarities, these tables explain that they discussed the topic of corporate social responsibilities in their online newsletter. In addition, the tables show that they published their online newsletters monthly; however, they were not consistent with it. They skipped some months.

These tables show that they engaged in some dimensions of corporate social responsibilities to make their impact on the society felt more deeply. In addition, they employed the format of the news report to communicate their corporate social responsibility. Furthermore, they engaged some tones in discussing the dimensions of corporate social responsibilities.

**Research Question Five:** Were there differences in their use of online newsletters?

Their differences are seen in Tables 2 and 4. Table 2 shows the prominent themes that they project in their corporate social responsibilities, which make the difference in their corporate social responsibility activities. The table indicates that ExxonMobil (Nigeria) engaged more in human capacity development initiative than SPDC (Nigeria). Contrarily, SPDC (Nigeria) showed more interest in safety initiatives than ExxonMobil (Nigeria).

In addition, table 4 indicates that there is a difference in the tone of their presentation of dimensions of corporate social responsibilities. ExxonMobil (Nigeria) employed a friendly tone in their discussion, while SPDC (Nigeria) employed a mixed tone in their presentation of corporate social responsibilities. Friendly and defensive tones were used. However, the defensive tone was prominent in their presentation.

## **CONCLUSION**

Based on the findings from this study, it is concluded that these organizations provide inadequate information about their corporate social responsibilities on their managed online media platform. The prominent theme of the online newsletters of ExxonMobil and SPDC are human capacity development and safety initiative respectively. They engaged various dimensions of corporate social responsibility to make their impact on the public felt more deeply. They also employed a news report format to communicate their corporate social responsibilities to their stakeholder groups.

## **Recommendations**

Considering the findings of the study, the researcher recommends:

1. ExxonMobil (Nigeria) and SPDC (Nigeria) should endeavor to maintain consistency in their online newsletter publications.
2. They should see the online newsletter platform as a unique channel to communicate with their various stakeholder groups and engage them in fruitful discussion.
3. SPDC (Nigeria) should de-emphasize their over alarming report of oil theft and spillage and concentrate more on human capacity development of people within their business environment because if the people are empowered with gainful and economic activities, they would not have time for crude oil theft and to vandalize of their facilities.
4. They should make their online platforms more interactive and lively by updating the information regularly with rich content.
5. ExxonMobil (Nigeria) should improve on their human capacity development initiative as it draws them closer to the people.

## **Suggestions for Further Studies**

It is not achievable for a researcher to investigate all issues or challenges associated with a phenomenon. Other vital or related problems not included in the limitation of the study are usually recommended for advanced studies. Because of this fact, the researcher makes the following suggestions:

1. A study of the readership of online newsletters and traffic on the corporate website of the organization.
2. A study of the interface of the corporate website of the organization.
3. The function of social media in corporate communications.

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# Chapter 7

## Role of Communicational Collaboration With Governmental Organizations as Stakeholder Groups

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### **ABSTRACT**

*By the increasing awareness of managers about the vital role of brands, the intangible elements of brands such as image and value become primary issues of their strategic plans. The widened communication platforms forced the significant role of reputation to sustain corporation life cycle, and this challenge triggers the recent discussion of reputation management. From this aspect, it can be seen that, for any organization, building the stakeholder communications and interactions accurately and maintaining the strong cooperation and communication with them play positive roles in organizational reputation. As well as the components of a strong reputation, the essential point is to understand the eco-system of communication. For this purpose, the chapter explains the communication eco-system of a corporation in terms of stakeholders, and the role of stakeholders in ultimate reputation is grounded on the congruity theory. As an example of the stakeholder role on communication eco-system, a qualitative research is applied in the research part.*

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## INTRODUCTION

The corporate world centralized the concept *reputation* as “a vital element of an organization’s credible source together with its tangible benefits in financial performance and social innovation” (Watson and Kitchen, 2008, p.2). An excellent reputation provides economic and social profits to a corporation by its proven associations like trustworthily, credibility or quality. Gotsi and Wilson(2001) states that *a positive corporate reputation: a) increases the financial value of the organization, b)affects consumers’ purchasing behavior, c) leads to the quality of products and services, d) leads to closer ties with employees and customers, and e) leads to leadership in the sector*(p.99). In the 80s, the image of a brand was realized by the brand managers due to its economic contribution to the company and remained the priority of the market with the rise of new communication platforms (Chernatony, 1999). The increasing role of the digitalization promptly extended to the road of digital communication between the corporation and its target audiences (Çakır, 2016). Previous research has shown that 74 percent of consumers rely on social media testimonials during the period of conveying a purchase decision (Masroor, 2015). Similarly, 78% of consumers are influenced by social media comments on generating a corporate image (Olenski, 2012). Therefore, in parallel with the components, the communication process started to be considered over as a significant factor in reputation management (Koçak, 2018).

Reputation is defined as the sum of the associations, images and symbols on target audiences’ minds about a corporation or a brand (Aaker, 2005). In other description, “corporate reputation is the contribution share of an institution’s trust in the total market” (Kadıbeşegil, 2006, p.55). Reputation refers to collective judgments based on individuals’ assessment of the financial, social and economic impacts of an institution over time (Barnet et al., 2006, p.34). Associations are the credible provider of images and contents and they are the keys make to trigger to target audiences’ minds for picturing the identity of a brand/corporation. Fombrun describes reputation as “the general estimation of the association by its audiences, which can be communicated by net emotional responses of customers, speculators, workforce, and furthermore the public at large” (1996, p.4). If the associations recall positive content on the target audience’s mind, the perception probably matches the stakeholders’ expectations about the corporation, and therefore positive stakeholders’ feedbacks diffuse a powerful image about a corporation around the communication eco-system (Baugh and Sullivan,2015; Dober and Riggins, 2018). Communication efforts are the main device to transmit the created associations about the corporation on the target audience’s mind. Corporations have applied many different types of communication strategies to establish, cultivate and sustain a strong reputation. As well as the tangible components of reputation such as financial performance or

compliance with laws; the communication and marketing components like corporate image, corporate social responsibility have started to be considered as among the significant factors in reputation management. Expressly, the key position of images makes professionals take into consideration for conducting deeper researches. There are gaps between projected and perceived image, and affects the ultimate components of reputation on publics' mind (Genel, 2017). Although the difficulties of measuring the reputation, it is obviously seen that there is interrelation between the reputation and the image (Fombrun, 1996). Hence, the stakeholders' perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs generate most part of the ultimate reputation. In spite of corporate communication managers scheduling approaches to position reputation, the researchers, who aim to identify elements of outstanding reputation, have finally revealed the stakeholders' perceptions and attitudes that create the most dominant associations with reputation (McGuire, Schneeweis & Branch, 1990; Szwajkowski & Figlewicz, 1999). Many researchers are attempting to classify the components of reputation; the consumer's experiences and perceptions are constantly evolving, based on technological and communication changes (Fombrun, 1996). In this aspect, many reputation measurements are based on stakeholders' perceptions and the components detected by stakeholders because managers have no certain insights about the ultimate reputation (Doorley and Garcia, 2007). As part of the impact of the stakeholders, the corporate managers required to evaluate the communication habitat with their stakeholders and to develop appropriate strategies.

In this parallel, the objective of this chapter is to discuss the roles of communicative action, communication ecosystem, and communicating actors in establishing a strong and sustainable reputation. In this study, the congruity theory of Charles Osgood and Percy Tannenbaum is taken as a basis in order to explain the roles of actors in the communication circle and communication. From this aspect, by analyzing how the stakeholders influence the reputation, it is aimed to reveal the role of communication in this construction process. Stakeholder perception and opinions are discussed in many studies on reputation management. However, the studies investigating the communication process by taking effect and feedback as a basis are limited. For this reason, the main objective of this chapter is to determine how the reputation is defined by the stakeholder, and how a role the communication plays in perception, interpretations, and attitudes towards an organization while making a decision about an organization regarding all these concepts. Another objective of this study is to discuss the position of governmental stakeholders, which have credibility among all the stakeholders in the ecosystem, and how these actors might have efficiency on the ultimate reputation of the corporation. In this aim, governmental stakeholders are chosen for the study sample to understand their perspective about the communication aspect and its importance on the concept of corporate reputation.

## **BACKGROUND**

Reputation is a lasting effect of each perceived image of a brand or an organization. This indicates that each image has separate effect on the ultimate reputation. It has a strong reliance on corporate image what is described as what target audiences say about a corporation. For Weiwei's (2007) definition "corporate image represents the total offering expresses and the sum of beliefs, ideas, and impressions of consumers that public has of an organization" (p.58). It is the overall estimation that the others share of a person, thing or action. Issues may have their own reputation, and also reputation may be produced or unfold by others. This reaction generates a positive or negative corporate picture on stakeholders' minds, which is a result of organizational behavior. The effect of an organization's behavior on stakeholders' perception enlarged the images of the organization that is described as a perceived image (MacMillan et al., 2005; Chun, 2005). The most salient characteristic of reputation is amount of thoughts and the sense of a wide set of audiences. In this regard, stakeholders of an organization undoubtedly have key importance on the organizations' ultimate reputation, which is the overall echo of the corporate impression on its publics. Publics are described as the groups that have common characteristics and have a dependence on the organization (Grunig, 1989).

Weigelt and Camerar (1988) classified reputation into three main groups. The first type is company reputation that includes financial performance, company assets and dynamics. The second type is the product reputation, which expresses the characteristics of the product such as quality, price and the last type is the cultural reputation what states internal and external impressions of a corporate reputation. Cultural reputation mostly the results of the corporate engagement with external stakeholders like governmental stakeholders group, communities and civil societies, unions, cooperatives, industry and trade associations, media, academic institutions and competitors (Partridge et al., 2005). In that respect, institutions, non-profit and civil organizations, which have a relationship with the corporation, are precise of key importance for the establishment of a corporation's cultural reputation. On the other hand, reputation is a communication process initiated by the organization, how the corporation is perceived on the opposing side and how it spreads among the target groups and exerts a dominant effect on the perception that occurs (Yüncü and Koparal, 2019).

Roper and Fill (2012) explained stakeholders as the groups that have an interest in the economic performance of an organization because of the benefits to be gained from this performance (cited in Manukian, 2015, p.8). Roper and Fill (2012) explained stakeholders as the groups that have an interest in the economic performance of an organization because of the benefits to be gained from this performance (cited in Manukian, 2015, p.8). This consists of employers, investors, shareholders, local

and national governments, target publics. Stakeholders are the group that influences the position of an organization as well as influenced by the organization's actions or behaviors. According to Grunig and Repper (2005) "each individual and group affected by the actions, decisions, policies, practices and objectives of the organization represents a shareholder" (p.104). It also represents a large number of diverse groups and individuals who have an interest or connection with an organization (Saydam, 2005, p.101). The stakeholders are basically grouped as internal stakeholders and external stakeholders (Fombrun, 1996; Chun, 2005; MacMillan et. al., 2005). The internal stakeholders represent a company's shareholders and employees while the externals represent customers, vendors, and regulators, educators, environmental and other advocacy organizations, industry associations, media, and community groups. (Fombrun, 1996; Chun, 2005; MacMillan et al., 2005). As described, the stakeholder groups consist of corporate communication environment by the interaction feature between each other. Beyond the interaction between the stakeholders and organization, the effects of stakeholders on the organization are dramatically dominant, because they represent a mass level of power (Freeman, 1994). Even if the stakeholders don't have direct effects on the efforts of organization, it is known that their indirect effects on corporate reputation are powerful (Matuleviciene and Stravinskiene, 2015). The indirect effect of stakeholders on corporate reputation plays an important role in reputational positioning.

In this context, it is envisaged that the correct establishment of interaction by the institution or organization and the cooperation with the stakeholders as an effective stakeholder communication strategy will perform a proactive role in sustaining the corporate reputation. As emphasized by Matuleviciene and Stravinskiene (2015), "the organization must try to maintain the relationships, to satisfy the stakeholder expectations, to coordinate the performance and to consider the stakeholder interests" (p.78). Similarly, Grunig (1989) argue that the most important aspect that makes target groups stakeholder for an organization is their active participation in the communication process. (2005). "Understanding stakeholders; their preconceptions, and the barriers that might prevent a stakeholder from accepting what a company is saying, is a key part of effective communication" (Garcia, 2012, p.4). Many of the fundamental components of good relationships such trust, mutual respect, and understanding are intangible and they develop and evolve over time; individuals and organizations should design their engagement strategies in line with the needs of their respective projects (Klijn, Esheus and Braun, 2012). The process requires strong leadership for conscious participation of all stakeholders and to achieve a consensus and continuity of participation. On the other side, the corporate identity, as the second essential component of corporate reputation, is what a corporation says about itself to its target audiences (Kadıbeşegil, 2006; Koçak, 2018). The harmony between corporate identity and the perceived image of the organization reveals the quality

of communication between two sides. The balance and symmetry, which comprise the fundamental elements that Grunig's Excellence Theory of Communication, are the cornerstones of a proactive communication process. At this point, in achieving the corporate reputation that the corporation aims to establish, the corporation as the part establishing the communication, the stakeholders as the target audience in the communication, and the message as the subject of communication must exhibit congruence. This communicative process is mainly established by the organization in parallel with the target audience researches, and the message is also constructed by adding the subjective perspective of the organization (Aksoy, 2017). However, these researches always cause interpretational and semantic gaps in communication and fall short in reaching the target audience.

Grunig (1989) stresses the vital importance of participation in making and implementing sound decisions. In order to ensure participation, the managers should understand and analyze the communication habitat, and successfully interpret the positions and roles of the stakeholders in this process (Chun, 2018; Koçak, 2018). For this purpose, in the following section of this study, the Congruity Communication Theory developed by Osgood and Tannenbaum and allowing understanding the communication both as a process and from the aspect of parties is taken as a basis for the study. The aim of taking the Congruity Theory a basis is to detail and map the stakeholder communication process, which is thought to contribute to the corporate communication managers.

## **CONGRUITY OF THE COMMUNICATION THEORY FOR COLLABORATION**

Developed by Fritz Heider, a famous social scientist, in order to analyze the communication habitat; the communicative balance approach reveals the main components of the communication, especially those established with masses and through a channel. The Balance Theory is a theoretical framework that explains how people perceive others around them or how they interpret, explain and predict others' behavior (Khanafiah & Situngkir, 2004). According to Heider, the establishment of two-part communication depends on the balance between all parts.

Heider claims the main factors determining the negativity and positivity of the attitudes developed in the communication: in which direction the interaction between the parties is, and in which direction the interaction with the subject of communication is. Accordingly, if the person starts the communication (P), subject of the communication (O), and the person that the party (X) starting the communication is in communication with has similar dispositions, then it can be stated that there is a balance in the communication (Cartwright & Harary, 1956). For



instance; assuming that a corporation (P) created a message on a subject (O) through an event, the balance in the communication can be achieved if the stakeholders (X) have similar knowledge and attitude on the subject. Otherwise, Heider claims that communication does not occur in the same direction for both parties. From another perspective, it can be said that, if X has a negative judgment towards O, then a new situation or meaning (PQX) emerges in the communication ecosystem. Heider emphasizes that the communication can be balanced only when two different perspectives reconcile, which means that P has a positive approach to Q and X has a positive approach to O; otherwise, the communication flow cannot occur because the balance cannot be established (Cartwright & Harary, 1956). Structural balance also is regarded as a fundamental social process. It has been used to explain how the feelings, attitudes, and beliefs that the social actors have towards each other, promote the formation of stable social groups (Hummon & Doreian, 2003, p.17). Structural balance theory gets the cognitive elements of communication process such as beliefs and feelings. It claims that the cognitive elements determine the parts' communicative action towards the subject. Similar to the Balance Theory, Osgood's theory gives importance to the attitudes and behavior of the sender and receiver. Osgood's and Tannenbaum's Congruity Communication Theory puts Heider's Balance Theory forward from the aspect of the roles of parts and cognitive elements of the communication process. Osgood focuses on the balance between the parts in terms of the communication effect and adds a new cognitive element to the communication process (Osgood & Tannenbaum, 1955). The most important contribution of the theory to the communication balance theory is the effect of how the receiver interprets the message. The congruity theory stresses that the cyclic habitat of the communication constantly changing and the noise created by this cycle constitutes the communication ecosystem effect. The theory claims that both parties are effective in the establishment of the communication process and the communication ecosystem cyclically plays an effective role in establishing the communication balance. Accordingly, every component constituting the ecosystem plays an effective role in the balance of communication. In this circle, both sender and receiver act as parties maintaining the communication (Osgood & Tannenbaum, 1955).

The circle is infinite between two parts and there are certain conditions for the negative or positive progression in this circle. The effect of apparent or congruent environmental elements in the establishment of receiver's own interpretation is undeniable (Osgood & Tannenbaum, 1955). Another important point in this theory is the mutual attitudes between an encoder (P) and a decoder (X) during the process. The attitude of X to P is effective in the interpretation of the communication message or subject (O) from X to P (Osgood, Suci & Tannenbaum, 1957).

From this aspect, the attitude of stakeholders (X) towards the organization (P) has a determinant effect on how the communication message (O) about the reputation will be interpreted. Another factor influencing the attitude of X towards Q and O is the other Xs in the ecosystem of X. On this point of view, the effect determines the attitude of stakeholders towards O, which refers to components constituting the corporate reputation, and P, which refers to approach to corporation, is the approach and attitude of the other stakeholder groups of the organization towards P and O. The examples for this effect can be found in the study of Jones et al. (2008) that about the effects of online comments on the communication balance. In that study, it was determined that the consumer groups are influenced by the online comments of the other consumer groups and interpret the message (O) from the corporation (P) in a similar way because of this effect. In this parallel, it is thought that the attitudes of governmental stakeholders towards the organization are effective on the interpretation of an organization's message and the attitudes of the other stakeholders towards the organization play an effective role in this interpretation. The most important point in the congruity theory of Osgood is that, given the fact that the communication is cyclic and infinite in its nature, the governmental stakeholders play a determinant role in the approaches of other stakeholders ( $X^1$ ,  $X^2$ ) to an organization in this process. Especially the credibility of the public institutions in the eyes of the target audience further strengthens the determinant role of governmental stakeholders in this communication circle.

### **The Role of Governmental Stakeholders in the Communication Process**

Considering the aspect of the congruity theory, the role of stakeholders in the communication circle seems very effective. All the stakeholders (X) act as a target audience in the communication strategies (O) planned and implemented by the corporation (P) in order to construct the reputation through the images. Hence, considering the communication circle, they become the actors of the same group.

Tajfel (1982) emphasized that the groups have common characteristics as one of the fundamental components of interaction in social habitat, influence each other, and their approach plays a dominant role in interpreting the communication message. From this aspect, the difference between the images arises as a result of the environmental interaction between the stakeholders during the interpretation stage, and the identity that the organization aims to construct determines the ultimate meaning of the corporate reputation. A similar example is a study carried out by Jimenez, Maya, and Lopez on the consistency of the effect of corporate social responsibility projects. The results of the study grounded on the congruity model of Osgood and Tannenbaum reveal the differences between the effect aimed

in the social responsibility campaign of the organization and the interpretation and effect based on the meaning emerging in the perception of the consumer groups (Jimenez, Maya, & Lopez, 2017). Some stakeholder groups that have a role in the organization may have a position that affects both the stakeholder and the operations of the enterprise (Donaldson & Preston, 1995).

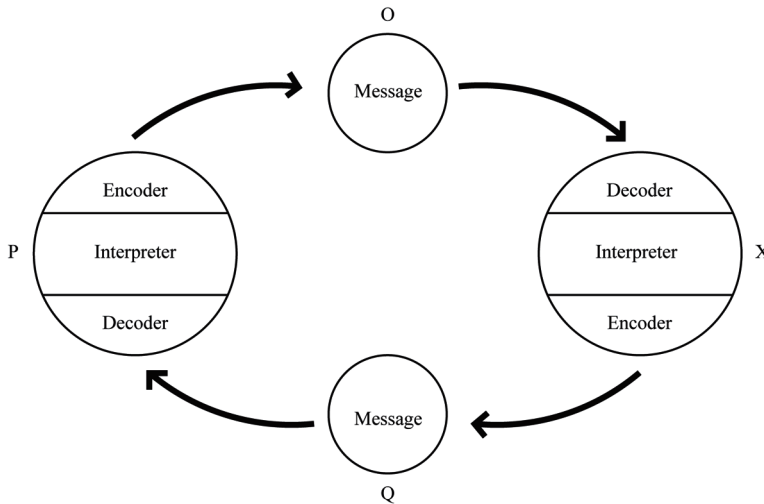
The communication ecosystem like a media network has an effective role in establishing the propagation power of the message of certain stakeholder groups over the other groups. The importance of stakeholders' perception has been revealed in many studies grounded on RQ measurement dimensions (Gardberg, 2006). As Fombrun and Van Riel stress (1997), a study conducted on the compelling factor of stakeholders' perception and actions on the company's reputation by Gardberg in 2006 in different countries such as Greece and Netherlands showed that stakeholders have a dominant role in the projected reputation and general perception. The RQ model has been adapted to Turkish national values by Kadıbeşgil (2015) to collect more detailed data about the stakeholders' consideration of corporations. Especially the communication with these groups named social stakeholders might play a determinant role in the establishment of the attitudes of other stakeholders towards the organization. Social stakeholders are identified as the stakeholder group that organization has an organic link or partnership with the stakeholders (Türker, 2008). For instance, the ministries, institutions, and some official commissions representing the public interest may be the stakeholders of the corporation in this respect, while they are the groups that should cooperate. In particular, these stakeholder groups are considered as having a significant impact on reputation than other stakeholder groups.

The governmental stakeholders are one of the most crucial groups among the stakeholders due to representing legitimate procedures. The most important reason is that the organizations, regarding which the governmental stakeholders have a positive perception, inspire more confidence to the mass stakeholders. Publics commonly have opinions if the corporation has a partnership with governmental institutions or if the corporations support the social projects of these institutions. So, the governmental stakeholders have high credibility in the eye of other stakeholder groups.

In contrast to their key role, the projects applied in collaboration with the governmental stakeholders are very limited. Alongside this, the characteristic of relationship with governmental stakeholders is a research area, on which there are few studies. Although the researchers have shown the governmental stakeholders' impact on the public, the perception and expectations of this group of stakeholders are not measured enough. Moreover, the habitat of communication with the stakeholders is rarely discussed in studies from the aspect of communicative action. In this study, the communication habitat is analyzed based on the congruity theory. The corporation (P) is the sender-encoder of the communication message, whereas it is also the decoder and interpreter of the feedback from the stakeholders and communication

ecosystem (Figure 1). In parallel with this model, the governmental stakeholders are considered as both receiver and message encoder in the communication. Moreover, in the communication circle or ecosystem, the stakeholders are also the parties re-creating and propagating the message with their own interpretations (Figure 1).

*Figure 1. The congruity model of communication (Osgood and Tannenbaum, 1955)*



Within this scope, the role and effect of governmental stakeholders on the reputation are discussed in this study. In parallel with this objective, it is aimed to reveal the perspectives of seven governmental stakeholders towards the cooperation in reputation positioning. The sample group representing the governmental stakeholders is examined under the lights of results obtained from in-depth interviews with the executives of different ministries.

## Research Method

In ample scope of the research objective, qualitative research methods are used to gain deep understandings of the key stakeholders' perspectives on reputation components. In this necessary direction, governmental stakeholders are chosen as a sample of stakeholders groups. The research is held as a case study to put out precisely the paramount importance of collaboration with stakeholders in order for efficiently creating a communication process in order for sustaining a powerful ultimate reputation.

As a qualitative research method, the in-depth interviewing technique is used to correctly understand the perception and expectations of the state stakeholders about a successful reputation.

In this research, qualitative research methods are being used to understand what are the selected participants' perspectives about how they typically perceive the essential elements of corporate reputation, what their suggestions are for effective ways to adequately establish an excellent corporate reputation.

Purposive sampling technique is used in selecting informants to organize a proper sample for meeting the research aims. "The purposive sampling technique, also called judgment sampling, is the deliberate choice of an informant due to the qualities the informant possesses" (Tongco, 2007, p.147). It provides to contribution for researchers on observing the units that are appropriate for research criteria. The sample group representing the governmental stakeholders is examined under the lights of results obtained from in-depth interviews with the executives of different ministries. The in-depth interview technique, which differs from the personal interview technique in aspects of the aims of discussion techniques and findings, is used to get the output of the institutional perception about the reputation. An in-depth interview is a semi-constructed and open-ended questioning technique, which is used to understand the participants' perception by utilizing the laddering tool to influence uncovered issues, attitudes of the collective-conscious mind to outside. (Berry, 1999). Accordingly, interviews are held with the ministry of customs and trade, ministry of development, ministry of health, ministry of family and social policies, ministry of food- agriculture and livestock, ministry of science and technology, ministry of labor and social security. In the analysis part of the research, the descriptive analysis is used in order for providing a descriptive perspective, and the collective expectations and experiences that emerged during the interviews are presented as the preliminary findings of the research. Open-ended questions are directed to the participants during the interviews and the research is limited by not given any quantitative findings.

## **Research Findings**

The study primarily aims to reveal how the stakeholders perceived the term corporate reputation and how the governmental stakeholders define the essential elements of improving an impressive reputation. The second aim of the study is to discover the habitat of the communication eco-system along with the role of corporate communication. Finally, the research findings contain informative approaches for collaborative communication in reputation management.

According to results, the main spontaneous associations with the term reputation are good communication skills with publics including sustainability, continuous

availability, credibility and high-level visibility along with long-term operation and reliable corporate image that passes down generation to generation. Many of the participants think that having an impressive reputation requires employee satisfaction, being innovative, monitoring strong leadership and communicating by adopting the precise language. It is widely observed, the prevailing beliefs and conscious thoughts about the corporate reputation components of some of the participants as ministry of science and technology, ministry of labor and social security, ministry of food agriculture and livestock are undoubtedly paved by the speeches and touches of humor of employees of the corporation; the external echo-chamber of reputation dominantly affects the beliefs of stakeholders.

Most of the participants describe good communication skills as adopting a straightforward and understandable language in mass communication that is able to touch the target audiences' fundamental needs and reasonable expectations. Some of the participants insert establishing successful employment management in addition to impressive mass communication skills when they are asked to describe the fundamental requirements of a successful reputation.

Reputation has an inter-relationship with a complex communication eco-system. As Kadıbeşegil (2005) put the importance of stakeholders on ultimate reputation, their perception of corporate reputation umbrella is a fundamentally important result of the corporate communication eco-system. From this aspect, accurate construction of stakeholder communication and interaction by the institution or organization, maintaining strong cooperation and communication with them are projected to play a positive role in corporate reputation.

Most of the participants described reputation as an abstract entity consisting of all of the impression and financial output that they sense from their social environment. Particularly, some of the participants such as the ministry of food, agriculture, and livestock, ministry of health and ministry of customs and trade highlighted the importance of developing corporative peace-building culture by engaging with the crucial needs of the society for strengthening corporate reputation. Accordingly, the healthy bond that the organization establishes with its environment and stakeholders is spreading through the movement effect and constitutes a communicative ecosystem; thus, it can be positively echoed to all stakeholders. As a result of the research the communication eco-system is very important in the generation of corporate images.

McLuhan (1964) describes the communication eco-system as an invisible space that transforms the individuals' perception, attitude, and behavior. In the light of McLuhan's unique approach, the corporate communication echo is powerful enough to alter the perception of the target audience about the corporation and, indeed, it may determine the proactive attitudes of the target audience towards the organization. Similarly, Fombrun (1996) also explains the potential role of the communication ecosystem on general audience perception.

Some of the participants echo this as a collaboration that an organization's reputation core value, which consists of the contribution of the stakeholders. The participants evaluate the organization mainly with the information they gathered from the media and from their business / social habitat. This feedback suggests that the impact of the content created by the stakeholders, which occurs outside the communication cycle managed by the organization, is at the forefront in the formation of ultimate reputation. As specified by Osgood and Tannenbaum (1997) in Congruity Theory, the stakeholders become a party of the communication at this point. From this point of view, the attitude of governmental stakeholders towards the organization plays an effective role in the establishment of the approach of governmental stakeholders to the reputation halo, whereas the echo created by the other stakeholders such as media in the communication ecosystem plays a determinant role in establishing this attitude. Similarly, when participants are asked to list the most important components of an organization's reputation for them, it is seen that most of them give priority to healthy and sustainable communication with the help of stakeholders' cooperation.

The healthy and balanced communication maintained between the stakeholders and organization might direct the reputation perception of almost all the participants about the organization. In other words, it is seen that, as the parties managing the corporate communication (P), if the perception (O) that the governmental stakeholders (X) aim to constitute through corporate reputation is the same as the one (Q) interpreted by the stakeholders depends on participative communication strategy implemented by the organization together with its stakeholders. Thus, when the participants are asked about what are the components of consistent and sustainable communication, many of the participants emphasize the one-to-one communication provided by the organization, which enables frequent interaction. The social responsibility campaigns carried out by the organization are another factor playing a role in constructing the approach regarding the reputation. Many of the governmental stakeholders stated that they interpret the social responsibility campaigns through what they heard from their communication ecosystem, whereas some others stated that the collaboration from the aspect of social responsibility is the components of communication required for constructing a strong reputation.

It can be seen that the participants consider the reputation of the organization, with which they are in collaboration, to be strong, whereas they consider the well-established and financially strong organizations to have a weak reputation because of the communicative gaps. Considering the aspect of stakeholders, it can be seen that the environment of the stakeholders and the organization's type and frequency of appearance on the media shape the attitudes towards the organization, with which the stakeholders are not in direct contact or collaboration. At this point, besides the mass communication practices of the organization, it is stated that the social responsibility

campaigns play a very important role in the establishment of reputation from the aspect of stakeholders (Atli, Vidavic, & Omazic, 2018). As stated by Jimenez, Maya, and Lopez (2017) in their study, the information created about these campaigns in the perception of the stakeholders determines the efficiency of the campaign. When the participants are asked about where they obtained the information about the social responsibility campaigns from, most of the participants state that they obtained information from their own ecosystems and the media. Jimenez, Maya, and Lopez (2017) emphasize that the scope and objective of the campaign have a determinant effect. If a social responsibility campaign seeks a solution to an active social problem, then it is considered to be more positively by the target audiences, whereas it might have a negative effect if the social responsibility campaign addresses the promotion of the organization. Similarly, most of the participants approach skeptically to the social benefit influenced by the social responsibility campaigns carried out by the organizations and, however, they have a more positive attitude because the participants have more information about the social responsibility campaigns carried out by the organizations having effective communication capacity in their own field. In the interviews performed, it is observed that the participants evaluate the organizations in parallel with the information they obtained about the organization from their ecosystems in terms of the other reputational components specified in RQ model of Fombrun and Van Riel such as leadership, financial performance, acting legally, and protecting the public health (1997). This suggests the role of implementing strong communication strategies in the establishment of the attitudes of stakeholders towards all these components. It can be seen that most of the participants assess these components related to the corporate reputation in parallel with the information they obtained from media or social media. Hence, as stated in the congruity theory, the difference between the message (O) that the organization (P) aims to propagate about these components and the interpretations (Q) of the stakeholders (X) shaped within the frame of information they obtained from their own ecosystems have primary effect on the ultimate reputation perception.

It is seen that the opinions of the participants about the organizations with strong leadership are shaped positively and they consider contributing to the sectorial development to be important for the reputation. When they were asked about what are their source of information about the organizations they positioned at the leader position in a specific field, it was observed that the participants obtained information from the news in media and the innovative and renovation projects they conduct in collaboration with the governmental stakeholders.

Similarly, it can be seen that the information they have about the employee profile and satisfaction is obtained from their own personal communication sources. Especially for employee satisfaction, it is attention-grabbing that the speculations that might cause a disadvantage for the organization in terms of employee satisfaction



cause the stakeholders to make a negative interpretation of the organization. According to the approach of Osgood and Tannenbaum (1955), it is projected that establishing close communication with the group addressed in the communication would alter the situation more positively in order to change a negative interpretation to a positive one. Similarly, it is thought that carrying out a participative communication with governmental stakeholders by the organizations, which have had legality and social benefit crises in their history, might change this interpretation in a positive direction

## **SOLUTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The results of the study shown that the corporations, which apply strong communication approaches or the corporations recurring their visits to governmental stakeholders frequently have a strong perception in terms of corporate reputation. Strong communication skills make the stakeholders think the corporation as a credible one and a potential actor in the sector. The corporations that have weak relationships with institutions perceived as less communication and identified as a corporation with a weak reputation. The main insight that is obtained by the interviews is having collaboration with governmental stakeholders in the projects that are designed for public profit such as healthy life campaigns or social responsibility campaigns that aims to increase public awareness. Despite the fact that the corporations apply lots of social responsibility campaigns, they are not volunteered to integrate their power into the campaigns that are organized by governmental institutions. The capability of governmental stakeholders' credibility can help to strengthen to position reputation on an emotional value such as social sensitivity.

Most of the participants mentioned that corporations are usually do not prefer to integrate their social responsibility resources into governmental projects or campaigns. This makes the institutions rethink these types of corporations' role in the domain and position the corporation as a distant one. Institutions expect the partnership of corporations to the social sensitivity projects and public awareness campaigns to make sense of collaboration on public's mind, which may help to solve the social issues more quickly and positively. When the corporate develops a positive and strong relationship with governmental stakeholders, it also provides to decrease the differences between projected and ultimate reputation. It is observed that the parallelism between the projected reputation and ultimate reputation, which is established as a result of communication experiences perceived by stakeholders, has an important effect on achieving these objectives.

The other important point of collaboration is being effective to engage stakeholders' to the strategic communications campaigns. The collaborative communications approached that is applied to invest a partnership on a social issue that defined as the

important leadership ability among the participants. The executives of institutions consider that these groups of corporations should be supported to increase to the masses' opinion about the corporate in order to sustain their contribution to the domain. This leads to gain governmental stakeholders' support for creating masses' opinion on the corporate reputation.

From this aspect, strong relationships and partnerships with governmental stakeholders consist of a considerable force for creating or sustaining a powerful reputation on publics' mind. At this point, the organizations carrying out joint projects with governmental stakeholders in parallel with sustainable communication approach come to the fore as the organizations having strong reputation, whereas the reputation of organizations, which fall behind in this regard or which cannot establish the efficiency from this aspect, is thought to be perceived as weak. Similarly, the social responsibility campaigns, in which the governmental stakeholders are involved and which play an efficient role in strengthening the reputation, are thought to draw more attention.

## **CONCLUSION**

Changing communication technologies shorten the distance between the masses and organization, and ease taking action in harmony with the same objective. The cooperation of the business world with its close stakeholders, and the cooperative operation in harmony with the objectives, to which they can commit, and even the increase in recognition in this regard can be possible only through the communication. It is considered that collaborative communication skills may effective on the reputation of organizations prioritizing the long-termed and consistent communication approach, the network relationships strengthen the organization's reputation, and the objectives of an organization become more prominent and understandable. As in any field, relationship communication also has an important role in reputation, and it affects all other activities.

In conclusion, it is clear that collaboration with stakeholders is the key driver of the public's motivation for the corporation. In other words, the projected reputation, in which the positive and/or negative reflections of corporate communication play an effective role, is measured through how the stakeholders perceptively position the organization. From this perspective, it is considered that the interaction and collaboration of corporate communication professionals with different stakeholder groups during the reputation positioning efforts play a significant role in achieving the targeted reputation or in sustainability positioned value.

The results of the study show that communication has an effective role in establishing a corporate reputation as well as other elements. Beyond the other

components of reputation, it is seen that the information obtained from the communication environment is dominant in the formation of stakeholder perception about the elements. Furthermore, it is recommended to measure the reputation perception of institutions that develop cooperation with other stakeholders and to determine the impact of the communication cycle on corporate reputation in terms of strategic communication management. The results of the study show that the eco-system of communication has an as effective role as other elements in the formation of corporate reputation.

The governmental stakeholders communicate with mass stakeholder groups frequently are within the most effective stakeholder groups of organizations. The most important reason for this is if the organizations, regarding which the governmental stakeholders have a positive perception, inspire more confidence to the mass stakeholders. At this point, the organizations carrying out joint projects with the governmental stakeholders in parallel with collaborative communication approaches come to the fore as the organizations having strong reputation, whereas the reputation of organizations, which is falling behind in this regard or which cannot establish the efficiency from this aspect, is thought to be perceived as weak. Similarly, the social responsibility campaigns, in which the governmental stakeholders are involved and which play an efficient role in strengthening reputation, are accepted to draw more attention.

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## **KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS**

**Balance in Communication:** Balance is an essential component of the communication that provides two-part communication.

**Collaboration:** Collaboration is a partnership with an organization or institution to improve the communication effect

**Congruity Theory:** The congruity theory of communication developed by Osgood and Tannenbaum to explain the roles of parts in communication.

**Reputation:** Reputation is the overall estimations of target audiences' perception towards a corporation.

**Reputation Management:** Reputation management is the strategy and efforts that a corporation applies to strengthen its leadership in the field.

**Ultimate Reputation:** Ultimate reputation is the result of the corporation's efforts and perception of audiences.

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