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**CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY PROGRAMS in TURKEY: A CONTENT  
ANALYSIS**

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### Abstract

According to the mission statements of most of the firms, the mutual development of the business and society is one of the most important aims. Because of the perception of businesses as the engine of the growth and the responsible party of the utilization of the societies' surplus value, society expects a return from these businesses. Mostly in developed economies corporate social responsibility (CSR) has an important role in growth and sustainability. In practice it is also becoming a popular concept, even in the emerging economies.

The aim of this research is to gain an understanding on the CSR programs for the last 3 years in Turkey. In order to distinguish the main characteristics of CSR projects a content analysis is applied to a Corporate Social Responsibility platform web site, which is open to all businesses, NGO's and institutions to announce and share their CSR projects for free since 2006. The content analysis covers different variables that can be grouped in four main dimensions. "Concept of the project" is the first dimension. In this dimension, the scope, aim and the expected value creation of the CSR projects are evaluated. "Administrative dimension", includes the business party perspective and management of the project. In the third dimension "Targeted groups" are evaluated by their demographic characteristics. "Communication" aspects of the CSR projects are also evaluated and awareness levels of CSR projects are measured by marketing communication efforts. Since the businesses perceive CSR projects not only as welfare return to the society but also as a marketing communication tool, communication aspect should also be included.

The sectors mostly interested in CRS projects, the changing trends in CSR and the action plans of CSR projects are seen as a whole picture and this study gives us an understanding of Turkish CSR implications. The results indicate the latest trends of CSR practices in Turkey.

Key words: Corporate Social Responsibility, Content Analysis, Turkey

## **CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY PROGRAMS in TURKEY: A CONTENT ANALYSIS**

Companies have taken on progressively increasing responsibilities that go beyond their own economic activities to enter the social realm (Carroll, 1999; Waddock, 2004). Corporate responsibility has constituted itself as one of the clearest manifestations of the assumption by companies of such social responsibilities. From a business perspective, corporate responsibility has acquired increasing importance, because it is considered to be an activity that legitimizes an organization in the eyes of society (Deegan, 2002).

From the perspective of the majority of citizens and consumers, social and environmental responsibilities are factors that govern the formation of opinions about a company's reputation (Brøn and Brøn, 2003). From nonprofit organizations, public sector agencies, special interest groups, suppliers, potential investors, stockholders, politicians, even colleagues and board members; for issues ranging from health to public safety to education to community development to protecting animal rights to sustaining the environment (Kotler and Lee, 2005). And the pressures to respond strategically seem to be building, with increased internal and external expectations to address economic responsibilities as well as social ones – to do good for the corporation as well as the cause (Kotler and Lee, 2005).

Various studies (MORI, 2004; IPSOS, 2004; PriceWaterhouseCoopers, 2005) reveal that responsible activities are increasingly valued and demanded by stakeholders (consumers, investors, employees, local communities, journalists, etc.), who see in such activities the civic behavior of business, which in turn influences their evaluation of the companies (Capriotti and Moreno, 2007).

For companies, communicating their responsible behavior to their stakeholders is of vital importance. The communication function, therefore, is a key element in the management of corporate responsibility. The internet has revealed itself to be a powerful communicating tool for the achievement of this function; even though companies have not been able to explore all of its possibilities. In this regard, Brøn (2004, p.107) points out that the internet is currently one of the principal media that companies have to communicate their activities at the international level, even though many of them have not taken adequate advantage of the full potential of it for communication with stakeholders.

The main objective of this paper is to analyze how company information about corporate responsibility is organized and presented on corporate web sites in Turkey. It takes as its point of departure two basic questions. Is there information regarding corporate responsibility on corporate web sites? And, if the answer is in the affirmative, how is that information organized and presented on the web sites?

### *Theoretical Framework*

Corporate social responsibility has irreversibly become part of the corporate fabric (Pearce and Doh, 2005). Many public companies have developed extensive corporate social responsibility (CSR) programs designed to generate stakeholder goodwill and boost market value. There is substantial agreement that CSR is concerned with societal obligations, although the nature and scope of these obligations remains uncertain (Craig Smith, 2003). Some authors (Craig Smith, 2003; Maignan and Ferrell, 2004) argue that companies should only be responsible to company stakeholders, while other authors argue that companies should be responsible to

society as a whole (Brown and Dacin, 1997, Kotler and Lee, 2005). Just to whom companies are beholden continues to be debated.

Morrison starts by defining the concept of “social responsibility”: “social responsibility refers to a group of related issues, including human rights, human development and environmental protection (green) issues”. This author goes from “social responsibility” to “corporate social responsibility” by stating that the social issues just mentioned, in the past, were “seen as public policy matters falling within the ambit of governments” and “so long as businesses adhered to existing legal obligations they were free to focus on the “bottom line”, that is, profits and shareholder value. However, this simplistic view separating business from social responsibility has become outdated by the general recognition that as an employer and producer a company has a determinant role to play in society (Morrison, 2002).

The business case for CSR is seen to focus on a wide range of potential benefits. These include improved financial performance, reduced operating costs, long-term sustainability for companies and their employees, increased staff commitment and involvement, long term return on investments, enhanced capacity to innovate, good relations with government and communities, better risk and crisis management, enhanced brand, brand value and reputation and the development of closer links with customers and greater awareness of their needs. Commercially and academically these last two claimed benefits are clearly rooted in marketing and there is a growing, but still relatively undeveloped literature on the links between marketing and CSR (Jones, Comfort and Hillier, 2005).

In reviewing the literature on CSR marketing, Klein and Dawar (2004) argue that it plays a role in consumers’ brand and product evaluations. Bronn and Vrioni (2001) have explored how companies use CSR in their marketing communication activities and they have argued that the

changing attitudes of customers have driven companies to find new ways of making marketing increasingly relevant to society. They cite survey work from the US, which shows that when price and quality are perceived as equal many customers tend to favor socially responsible companies and products. That said, Mohr, Webb and Harris (2001) concluded that consumers' beliefs about the virtues of CSR are often inconsistent with their buying behavior. In looking to provide a framework to integrate CSR and marketing Maignan and Ferrell (2004) summarized the work of marketing scholars in examining consumer responses to CSR initiatives, the perceived importance of ethics and social responsibility among marketing practitioners and the marketing benefits resulting from corporate actions with a social dimension. The authors also explored more specific dimensions of CSR such as the support of charitable causes or the protection of the environment. In an earlier work the same authors (Maignan and Ferrell, 2001) explored the role of what they then described as corporate citizenship as a marketing instrument. Here they suggest that companies will be likely to invest in CSR if its activities trigger the active support of consumers and they go in to review the evidence on consumers' support of corporate citizenship. While this review suggests that negative CSR associations can have a detrimental effect on overall product evaluations whereas positive associations can enhance product evaluations and customer loyalty. In their conclusion, the authors propose that corporate citizenship may help companies to market their products and they call for further research to ascertain the existence and the strength of the relationship between CSR and consumer behavior (Jones, Comfort and Hillier, 2005).

The public presentation of CSR, similarly choosing a more grounded approach and taking advantage of the world wide web (Esrock and Leichty, 1998; Esrock and Leichty, 2000; Maignan and Ralston, 2002; Snider *et al*, 2003). They focused on the number of CSR statements,

the stakeholder groups addressed, and the variations between companies or countries. Maignan and Ralston (2002), for instance, conceptualize CSR in terms of principles, processes and stakeholder issues. They report differences in the extent and choice of means in CSR reporting across four countries, as well as underlying motivations, which they categorize as performance-driven, stakeholder-driven and value-driven. Viewing CSR as a construct describing “the relationship between business and the larger society” Snider et al. (2003, p.175) found that similar CSR messages are sent to similar stakeholder groups, irrespective of the company’s nationality (Silberhorn and Warren, 2007).

### *Research Methodology*

In order to understand the general trends in Turkey about CSR between the years of 2006 and 2008, the web site of corporate social responsibility platform was examined. The content analysis of the web site was done between May-July 2008.

The content analyze was concentrated on four different dimensions of CSR projects; general characteristics of projects like the scope, aim and the expected value creation of the project; administrative perspective of the projects; targeted groups; and the communication perspective of the projects. To be able to understand the communication dimension, the web site of the responsible company, TV and press advertisements, press releases and campaign web site (if any) were also examined.

### *Findings*

Corporate social responsibility platform web site has got total of 220 different corporate social responsibility project news in details. This is also the first web site founded in Google search in corporate social responsibility key word. The web site (<http://www.kurumsalsosyal.com/>) organized the projects in seven different headlines; education,

health, environment, culture, sports, history and society. Although some projects are in more than one field, they still placed in only one of these headlines.

There are 59 international and 84 national companies supporting these programs. National companies are usually operating national wide. More than 63% of the projects are supported by NGO's or related government parties like ministries of education, environment etc. Some projects are supported by more than one non-profit group. These programs are usually continuous programs and increasing participants every year.

Companies do not publish information about their CSR budgets and their responsible department about CSR projects. Only 14% of companies include their personnel in the CSR projects. Companies usually donate money or product and organized the related event.

#### *Education*

In education division there are 104 different projects generally targeting children. Different education programs about cleaning, health, environment, sports, culture etc. are locally implemented by companies which are generally at their area of production. The 36% of the education programs are targeting elementary or kindergarten students. Three different fields of education programs are getting more importance. Fund raising or public awareness raising programs about gender discrimination against girls in education (12%) are getting more importance. The campaigns are continuous through these 3 years and highly advertised in TV and other channels.

Another important program group is vocational educations which are targeting adults without any ability or profession. The majority of these education programs are planned for and executed in less developed urban cites of cities and villages. The companies preferring these

kinds of programs are usually hiring the graduates and preferring related field of vocational educations of their field of action.

The third important group is education programs for handicaps. These programs are targeting handicap children and adults. Adult programs are usually vocational oriented (80%).

Most common projects are fund raising programs for building, expanding or upgrading schools in less developed parts of the country (22%). Fund raising for partial development of facilities or building a new one is usually a common project with education related NGO's (83%).

### *Health*

Compared to education projects health projects are very limited (19 projects). The general is supported by health associations (Turkish Hearth Health Association, Turkish Dental Association etc.). Some of these projects are supported by hospitals, pharmaceutical companies or chemical companies.

### *Environment*

Total of 22 programs are implemented about environment. 30% of the programs also include environmental education about energy consumption, recycling, climate change and global warming, water consumption, forestation and marine cleaning. Because of limited water resources especially in big cities, projects about water consumption are increased by %25 percent in 2008.

### *Culture, History and Sport*

There are even less projects about culture, history and sports. Cultural projects generally involve cultural or art contests for children. Drama is the most developed field of cultural CSR. Restoration projects are presented under history headline and very limited (only 8 projects).

Sport education and sponsorship for athletes and handicap athletes are presented under sports headline. Of course all sponsorships are not shown on the web site. There is a lack of information on culture, history and sport CSR projects.

### *Society*

Society headline includes other projects targeting an issue or a different group of society. 42 projects are listed in this headline (19%). The most important headline is women rights and development in the society. Vocational educations targeting women and entrepreneurship supports for women are examined in this group. Anti-discrimination and anti-violent programs are also supported by companies. These campaigns are highly advertised by related companies.

Some events and programs about animal rights, protection of elders, children and youth and charity for poor people in need are listed under this headline. This group of CSR programs takes the largest part of personnel supported event (18 projects).

### *Conclusions*

CSR programs examined in the Corporate Social Responsibility Platform web site focuses on education (47%). Health, environment, culture, sport, history and society are the other headlines listed on the web site. Most of the projects are supported by NGO's and related government parties. The projects usually aim to increase funds, awareness and education level of the society.

Administrative perspectives of the projects are not fully disclosed. None of the companies' web site gives any information about the responsible department of CSR projects or CSR budgets. Very limited information could be gathered about the out comes of the projects (size of the forestation area, education program results etc.).

Targeted groups differ in every project. Education programs usually target children and youth. Adults and handicaps are also included. Special society programs target women or aimed

to protect elders, children and poor. Health programs give more importance to infants and children.

Society oriented and education programs are more advertised than other. But in year 2008 water consumption and global warming awareness campaigns are also advertised through several of channels. Only 29% of the projects have their own web sites.

These results do not show all of the CSR projects in Turkey for the last three years. But since this is a good opportunity for companies to announce their CSR activities, this free web site could give us an idea of the general trends of CSR projects and their evolution through time.

For further research, it is recommended to implement a full web site content analyze. For further information in-depth interviews with some project managers could also show the motives under these activities. It is also possible to examine the corporate organizations of the companies participating in CSR events and learn more about the administrative perspective of the projects.

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