

INTERNET CSR PRESENTATION AND ITS IMPORTANCE FOR INCREASING CORPORATE REPUTATION IN THE AREA OF FERROUS METALLURGY

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Abstract

Within CSR (corporate social responsibility), one of the key areas is certainly its communication towards all the involved parties (stakeholders). CSR communication can then be used as an effective marketing tool increasing, in the eyes of the business partners, the company's prestige and contributes to its positive reputation. In spite of that, it is still possible to see on the market that a lot of companies underestimate the importance of presentation of CSR of their own company, and that they either do not pay sufficient attention to it, or that they, by contrast, exaggerate their activities within CSR. Although a legislative framework in the area of CSR reporting on the national level is not expected until 2017, companies should already be paying proper attention to presentation of their CSR now. And the internet is naturally becoming the basic platform for presentation of corporate activities in all areas, i.e. also in the area of CSR. The paper summarizes the outcomes of a primary survey conducted by University Pardubice, which evaluates the current internet presentation of CSR in the area of ferrous metallurgy and describes the importance of the given web presentation for increasing the corporate prestige in the eyes of the stakeholders, as perceived by companies. In conclusion, the paper summarizes the most frequent mistakes and presents ideas how to improve internet communication of CSR in the area of ferrous metallurgy.

Keywords: CSR, CSR communication, corporate reputation, ferrous metallurgy

INTRODUCTION

It is increasingly difficult to create a competitive advantage only on the basis of a unique product or technology in the current competitive environment. [1] Together with it, companies face to growing pressure on their socially responsible behaviour by all the stakeholders, including the entities in the entire value network [2]. The importance of corporate social responsibility is further strengthened by the influence of the media, manifestation of the public opinion, development of information and communication technologies. They allow sharing data, information, and knowledge across cultural-boundaries, time-boundaries, and space-boundaries [3].

The interest in the CSR concept is growing together with the need for informing about and reporting on the behaviour of companies from the point of view of their social responsibility. If a company behaves responsibly and, at the same time, it is able to inform the involved parties about it in a suitable way, it can increase its reputation, and thus also its competitiveness. This is particularly true in the case of industrial branches that are not traditionally perceived as socially responsible see more e.g. in Tetrejova and Svedik [4]. These include e.g. the metallurgical industry, but also the chemical industry. Our research was focussed on this area, and it made it possible for us to assess, at least in outline, the situation in the area of internet presentation of CSR activities of steel companies. Although CSR activities can certainly be presented in another way, we focussed on the internet, as it is where we see the broadest platform for communication of socially responsible activities towards all the stakeholders.

1. THEORETICAL FINDING

1.1. CSR specification and its importance

There are a lot of definitions of corporate social responsibility. International Organization for Standardisation

defines CSR as “responsibility of an organization for the impacts of its decisions and activities on the society and the environment through transparent and ethical behaviour” [5]. The corporate behaviour can only be considered as socially responsible if it is not only fully in compliance with the legislation, but if it also goes beyond its framework in the form of voluntary activities. However, a good will of an organization has to be perceived not only as its own awareness, but also as a respond to a certain pressure exerted by the stakeholders of the organization. [6] A successful approach to socially responsible behaviour in a company is a complex, comprehensive, and long-term task. Individual areas of CSR activities have to be integrated in the corporate vision and values, its culture, decision-making on all the management levels. [7] Therefore, the attention of socially responsible organizations is not focussed on short-term economic targets only, but also on long-term targets and long-term sustainability. Companies often perceive the benefits of the efforts they have put into socially responsible activities in a longer time horizon, e.g. in the form of a better image, long-term stability, or loyalty of their employees and customers [2], but also in improvement of relationship with local communities, surrounding inhabitants and society. [8] According to Zadrazilova [6], CSR represents competitiveness through the quality.

Obviously, a company can build a positive reputation in the eyes of all its stakeholders by adoption of CSR. A positive reputation then becomes a unique, a competitive advantage that is hard to copy, as it represents perception of the overall attractiveness of the company in comparison with the competitors [9]. Fombrun [10] develops his definition of corporate reputation as follows: “reputation of a company is how both its past activities and the future prospects are perceived, which demonstrates the overall attractiveness of the company in all its main segments as compared to the other leading competitors.” Corporate reputation is here understood both as perception of the past activities and the future prospects of the company, and also from the subjective point of view as the attractiveness of the company [11]. The sources of positive experience-based information for customers and all the other entities of the value network are customer references, referrals, word of mouth and reputation, all of which involve an external source that receives no monetary reward [12]. Such sources may offer expertise, knowledge and neutral judgment as critical inputs to complex decision-making of the business partners [13]. In view of the fact that it is very difficult to differ from the competitors in products or services on the current hypercompetitive markets, corporate activities within the framework of CSR seem to be a very interesting area, which can bring unique benefits to all the stakeholders, and thus strengthen and develop the positive reputation of the company. However, this will only work if the target group is aware of such activities. [14]

1.2. Interconnection of CSR communication with the corporate integrated marketing communication

As early as during creation of the basic CSR strategy, it is essential to deal with the future corporate CSR activity communication, which belongs, together with transparency, to the important CSR tools. Although the literature still contains only indications of mutual interconnection, it is definitely possible, in our opinion, to assign CSR activity communication to so-called corporate integrated marketing communication (IMC). For example, the American Marketing Association [15] or Pickton and Broderick [16] define it as a comprehensive corporate communication system towards customers. However, this concept can be considered as a narrowed view as it is not possible to perceive integrated marketing communication in the modern concept in relation to customers only. The thing is that it is comprehensive communication and creation of relations with all the company stakeholders who affect or might affect the business activities.

From this point of view, we can consider IMC specification according to Prikrylova and Jahodova [17] as the most suitable one: “It is modern corporate communication, which is not only a part of the marketing mix, but it is also interconnected with the personnel policy and other corporate functions, including the company’s attitude to the problems of public interest. It is interconnection of all communication activities, which leads to creation of communication tailored to individual target groups.” There are a lot of communication branches within IMC, and the literature is not unanimous as for its classification. Tools within IMC usually include: Classic Advertisement; Direct Marketing and Interactive Marketing (or On-Line Marketing); Public Relations (PR);

Sales Support; Word-of-Mouth Marketing; Communication within Personal Selling. PR means and tools are tools what are put into direct relation with corporate CSR communication. However, it is necessary to mention the fact that a number of authors (e.g. Kunz [2], Zadrazilova [6]) point out that CSR communication is often perceived as autotelic public relations, rather than a way of provision of information about the actual impacts of CSR programs. Both the public and the investors may then perceive such information as incomplete or distorted, and disbelieve the given statements. CSR communication should show the features of credibility, transparency, consistency, willingness to provide all the stakeholders with both positive and negative information continuously.

Public relations tools include a wide range of mutually combined activities. Some authors (e.g. Svoboda [18]) directly include CSR activities in them. But these directly combine with other PR tools, including:

- *events* in the form of work, information, and entertainment-oriented events;
- *sponsoring* of different cultural, political, sports, or social activities;
- *care for professional public* - cooperation with educational and branch institutions;
- *minority relations* - establishing a relationship and a dialogue with important public groups (e.g. environmental movements).

Particular CSR activities are then possible to present within PR as:

- *active publicity* - press releases and press conferences mentioning the company's CSR activities, annual reports or independent CSR reports, information about CSR activities within in-house magazines, bulletins, newsletters, etc.;
- *organization advertisements and its CSR activities* - it is connection of advertising and public relations for presentation of CSR activities of the company - e.g. web pages, quality, socially responsible or eco-labelling etc. Similar communications do not primarily aim to present a product, but to improve the product or corporate reputation or image in the eyes of the target interest groups.
- *communication with employees and investors* - towards the company employees e.g. information about CSR activities at working meetings, and events for the employees, corporate guidelines including CSR conduct, information about CSR over the internet, internal mail, in-house newspapers and magazines, notice-boards, in-house PA system, etc. towards the investors shareholders e.g., information about the corporate CSR activities within general meetings of the shareholders, communications concerning CSR to the shareholders, information about CSR in business reports, sector CSR reporting or market assessment the company's financial and non-financial performance, etc.

Obviously, there is a direct link between PR and communication of the corporate CSR activities. In spite of that, communication of CSR activities could be understood as an independent issue, called CSR reporting.

1.3. The influence of sector on CSR reporting focused on metallurgy companies

One of the ways of communication of the corporate CSR activities is publishing of regular annual reports on CSR, which may become a primary impulse for a dialogue and making contact with the involved parties. These reports provide overall information about the company's approach to responsibility for sustainable development, responsibility to the environment, or any information on social commitments. In the area of reporting in general, and so also within reporting of CSR activities, an important institution is GRI (Global Reporting Initiative) aiming to create a reliable and respected framework for so-called sustainability reporting for all types of organizations. [19] According to GRI "a sustainability report conveys disclosures on an organization's impacts - be they positive or negative - on the environment, society and the economy." [20] Important elements of CSR reports are their transparency, credibility, and better informativeness containing not only positive, but also negative impacts of their activity, potential risks, information of a non-financial area to all the involved groups or parties. The contemporary CSR reporting trends include, for example, an increase in the number of reports verified by a third independent entity. [7], [21] The other trends are financial

assessment of CSR benefits, focusing CSR reports on the future, and spread of the reporting across the supply chain.

According to Kunz [2], the Czech Republic still does not see a significant interest in issuance of such reports. They are mostly issued by large corporations. The same can be said about the businesses in metallurgical industry. According to Klupalova [22], the level of CSR communications of the Czech metallurgical enterprises is low. As her research showed, the main factor that causes differences in CSR reporting among metallurgical companies operating in the Czech Republic is not their size, but these differences can be seen more in the context of the country of owners - the subsidiaries of foreign (German) parent companies showed a better level of CSR reporting than others.

In the future, however, growth in demand for these reports also at other metallurgical enterprises could be expected. The fact that CSR reporting is not yet in focus of the companies in the Czech Republic, has an obvious connection with its voluntariness. However, on the basis of the social responsibility directive, imposing the obligation to issue CSR reports on so-called "large public-interest entities", approved by the European Parliament in 2014, it is possible to expect that it will be mandatory for certain companies in the Czech Republic from 2017 on. [23] The influence of the legislative framework is, in accordance with the outcomes of a KPMG report, based on analysis of worldwide CSR reporting, also a driving force for publishing non-financial information within CSR reporting. [21]

The importance of publishing CSR reports in metallurgy can be seen in the fact that the activities of metallurgical enterprises often have significant impact on various issues under Corporate Social Responsibility [22]. In the environmental area, these companies face to both a tightening of environmental legislation and the new requirements of customers, and local communities towards more environmentally friendly production processes and products. In the social sphere, metallurgical enterprises should not underestimate the role of human resource planning (in the area of education, career development or corporate care) so high levels of work labor turnover would be turned to the stabilization and development of key employees. In the case of Czech metallurgical enterprises, one can still meet with underestimation of corporate culture and CSR in corporate human resource plans. [24]

However, businesses cannot expect from the legislative framework clear guidance and instructions for CSR activities across all businesses. As shown by numerous international studies, differences in adopting different strategies or the use of various instruments of CSR is also associated with the industry. Based on extensive research of the Netherlands companies, Graafland et al. [25] pointed to the fact that manufacturing companies from metallurgical and construction branches use more actively the formal instruments of CSR (e.g. ISO certification, social reporting, codes of ethics) than non-manufacturing enterprises of the financial sector and retail companies.

Fernandez [26] also addressed the effect of industry on the corporate CSR activities and communications. Enterprises (issuing CSR reports registered in the GRI between 2008 and 2010) are divided into 4 groups from Novice (with low level reporting and credibility), through Chattering (with low credibility and high disclosure) and Cautious (with high credibility and low disclosure) groups to Leading (with high level reporting and credibility) companies. The author ranks metal products industry (together with, for example, automotive, construction materials etc.) among the Chattering group of companies. So the metal products industry should improve credibility of its reporting practice in order to build higher credibility. The same situation might be expected in the Czech companies.

2. THE ANALYSIS AND OUTCOMES OF THE RESEARCH EVALUATING WEB PRESENTATION OF CSR ACTIVITIES IN STEEL METALLURGY

Web pages of Czech metallurgical companies as a tool of corporate communication of the CSR activities have been analysed by the authors of this paper this year. The analysis looked into the web pages of 12 companies

associated in OSHZ (Steel Metallurgy Association). In this list, it is possible to identify 8 companies without property relations, 7 large corporations and 1 medium-sized company. It contains 7 manufacturing and 1 trading organization. The figures are summarized in the following **Table 1**.

Table 1 Structure of information about CSR presented on web pages

Type of information	Absolute frequency	Relative frequency
Independent section: CSR	5	63%
Independent CSR or Sustainability Report	2	25%
Economic Area		
ČSN EN ISO 9001	8	100%
Ethics	4	50%
Anticorruption programs	2	25%
Environmental Area		
Independent section: environmental activities	6	75%
ČSN EN ISO 14001	6	75%
Social Area		
Independent section: activities in social area	6	75%
Safety and health system	6	75%
ČSN EN ISO 18 001	3	38%
Volunteering	1	13%
Sponsorship activities	5	63%
Employee benefits	5	63%
Employee social programs	4	50%

The analysis was first focused on the fact whether the companies' web pages included a separate section dedicated to the corporate social responsibility (or development sustainability) activities and whether the company presents a separate CSR or sustainability report on its web pages. A separate CSR section was identified in 5 out of 7 companies, i.e. 63% of the companies. On the other hand, a separate CSR activity report is only published on the web pages by two companies, which belong to a multinational holding. The research was then focused on presentation of social responsibility activities divided by area in accordance with the triple bottom line. In the economic area, the analysis dealt with the fact whether the corporate web pages confirm implementation of the quality management system under ČSN EN ISO 9001. Implementation of this standard is currently a matter of course, and so all the companies declare its certification. Next, ethical conduct present 50% of companies, and the fight against corruption is presented minimally, in 25% of the cases. As for the environmental area, 75% of the cases showed a separate section dedicated to activities in this area, and the same number of companies present certification under ČSN EN ISO 14001. Activities in the social area, or activities at least concerning employee care, are also presented as a separate section on the corporate web pages by 75% of the companies. The most frequently presented activities in this area include the interest in safety and health at work (75% of the companies), with certification under ČSN EN ISO 18 001 in 38% of the companies; the companies also frequently present employee benefits and sponsorship activities, in both cases presented by 63% of the companies. On the other hand, implementation of a particular kind of an employee social programme is presented by 50% of the companies only, and the least frequently presented activity, only in one case, is volunteering.

The outcomes of the above analysis were completed with a primary research, whose aim was to identify, on the basis of a questionnaire survey, the managers' opinions on the web presentations of their companies' CSR activities. The questionnaire was sent in the electronic form mainly to marketing and PR managers of the companies associated in the Steel Metallurgy Association (OSHZ). The questioning was anonymous and the data were obtained in total from 7 large steel companies, whose number of employees exceeds 250 and the annual sales exceed EUR50 million. 4 respondents can be considered as global companies, 2 companies operate within the EU, and only one has national scope.

All the responding companies assert that they present their CSR activities through their web pages. 3 respondents (43%) are sure that their web presentation of CSR activities is sufficient and does not need any intervention, 2 companies (28.5%) believe that although their web presentation of CSR activities is limited, it is sufficient, and the remaining 2 companies (28.5%) admit the need for updating their web pages with the given topic. According to the respondents, the area of business ethics was mostly suitable to extend or update information presented by the company on the web (marked by 3 respondents (43%)). 2 respondents (28.5%) would appreciate extension of the web presentation of their companies in the philanthropic area (the area of charitable activities). The other respondents consider the web presentation of their companies as up-to-date and sufficient, and they do not feel any need to update or complete anything.

The following **Table 2** summarizes the respondents' opinions on the fact which target groups of stakeholders the current web presentation of the corporate CSR activities is actually directed at, and which groups of stakeholders this presentation should be aimed at in the ideal case.

Table 2 Respondents' opinion on aiming of the current and ideal web presentation of the corporate CSR activities

Target group	Current aiming of the corporate web pages		Ideal aiming of the corporate web pages	
	Absol. frequency of answers	Relat. frequency of answers	Absol. frequency of answers	Relat. Frequency of answers
Customers	6	86%	7	100%
Media	4	57%	5	71%
Local communities	3	43%	3	43%
Government and state authorities	3	43%	3	43%
Revenue offices, banks	3	43%	3	43%
Civic and business associations	3	43%	4	57%
Suppliers	3	43%	4	57%
Other groups - environ., lobbyists	2	28.5%	2	28.5%
Competitors	2	28.5%	3	43%
Owners, shareholders	2	28.5%	4	57%
Potential employees	2	28.5%	7	100%
Current employees	2	28.5%	6	86%

The research shows that in accordance with the respondents' opinions the ideal web presentation of corporate CSR activities should be directed at some stakeholders much better than it is in the actual practice. A significant deficiency of the current web presentations of corporate CSR activities can particularly be, as perceived by the managers, seen in the area of information directed at the potential and current employees. In the respondents' opinion, there could also be a better direction at the customers, media, civic and business associations, suppliers, competitors, and the owners and shareholders.

Table 3 summarizes the managers' opinions concerning the fact to what extent the current web presentation of corporate CSR activities contributes to improvement of the corporate reputation in the eyes of the customers and in the eyes of the public, and to what extent, according to the respondents' opinion, the ideal web presentation of corporate CSR activities could do so.

Table 3 Respondents' opinion on the possibility of improving corporate reputation in the eyes of the customers and as perceived by the public through the current and ideal web presentation of the corporate CSR activities

Answer options	Improving reputation in the eyes of the customers				Improving reputation in the eyes of the public			
	Current web presentation		Ideal web presentation		Current web presentation		Ideal web presentation	
	Absol. frequency	Relat. frequency	Absol. frequency	Relat. frequency	Absol. Frequency	Relat. frequency	Absol. frequency	Relat. frequency
Not at all	0	0%	0	0%	1	14%	0	0%
Rather not	0	0%	0	0%	1	14%	0	0%
Neither, nor	2	28.5%	2	28.5%	2	28.5%	3	43%
Rather yes	4	57%	4	57%	2	28.5%	3	43%
Definitely yes	1	14.5%	1	14.5%	1	14%	1	14%

Table 3 shows that most of the addressed managers perceive the impact of the web presentation of corporate CSR activities on the growth of the corporate reputation mainly in the eyes of the customers, but in the ideal situation also in the eyes of the public. It is interesting that from the point of view of the respondents, it is probably not possible to improve the current web presentation of corporate CSR activities towards the customers to be even more contributory to the growth of the corporate reputation in their eyes. By contrast, the ideal web presentation of corporate CSR activities could be, from the point of view of addressed managers, much more contributory to good reputation of the company in the eyes of the public than it is nowadays.

CONCLUSIONS

On the current markets, corporate CSR activities now come to the fore among the managers as they can have a significant impact on perception of the company from the point of view of all the stakeholders. The actual socially responsible behaviour of a company, presented to the target stakeholders in a suitable way, then contributes to the growth of positive reputation of the company on the target markets and thus creates a unique competitive advantage. Obviously, most companies are already fully aware of these facts, and they more or less deal with presentation of their CSR activities. This is also valid for companies in the area of steel metallurgy, which our analyses and research outcomes have confirmed. Although CSR can be reported through more communication channels, we consider web presentation as a modern trend making it possible to hit a number of the company stakeholders effectively. On the basis of the analyses and the research outcomes, it is possible to recommend, from the point of view of web presentation of their CSR activities, that metallurgical companies do the following:

- Monitor the stakeholders' interest and requirements concerning web presentation of the corporate CSR activities - the research identified that the interest in individual CSR communications is not monitored by most of the addressed companies (72%).

- Direct web presentation of CSR activities better - it is necessary that companies make it clear for whom their communications are intended, and what the chosen groups of stakeholders are particularly interested in from the point of view of CSR activities. The web environment should then be user friendly in the fact that it should be easy for each of them to find just the right required information there.
- Direct their presentation of CSR activities better and to a larger extent at the employees, both the current and the potential ones - building a positive atmosphere in the company and, at the same time, attract new quality staff. Increase utilization of web presentation of CSR activities to improve the corporate reputation in the eyes of the public.

These main recommendations arising from the research are certainly not a complete list of possible improvements within web presentation of CSR activities of metallurgical companies. However, we believe that they provide the basic ideas suitable for future innovations of corporate CSR communications.

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