

Mihai-Cosmin FANARU
Universitatea Transilvania from "Brasov"

QUANTITATIVE STUDY ON THE INVOLVEMENT OF BRICOLAGE COMPANIES IN SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY ACTIVITIES

Quantitative
study

Keywords

*Social responsibility,
Qualitative marketing research,
Bricolage market,
Impact,*

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Abstract

The main purpose of this paper is to analyze the influence of social responsibility actions of the main bricolage companies doing business in Romania on their value, and mutually the impact these activities have on various social sectors. CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) is a concept related to the contribution that companies need to have to the development of modern society. Over time, this contribution has been theorized by many different schools of thought. "Responsible" initiatives of companies have been named by a variety of terms: corporate citizenship, corporate philanthropy, corporate societal marketing, community affairs, community development etc. Consequently, currently, to demonstrate that it is "socially responsible", a company must understand the principles of CSR that are internationally promoted and regularly report about the integration of these principles in its activities.

Introduction

The European Commission defines corporate social responsibility as a contribution to the sustainable development of enterprises. According to the EC vision, the European strategy for encouraging and stimulating RSC is useful for European companies for all involved and interested in economic and social development and is beneficial for the sustainable development of the European Union. Indeed, the economic success of enterprises no longer depends solely on strategies that maximize short-term profits, but taking into account environmental and social objectives, including the benefit for consumers (<http://www.responsabilitatesociala.ro/> (consultat la 30/05/2015)).

Being a socially responsible company means not only to fulfill your legal obligations applicable in that field of activity, but also to go further, investing more in human capital, the environment and relations with stakeholders - suppliers, partners, customers (<http://www.csr-romania.ro>). The (Kotler/John Wiley & Sons/2005) experiences with investments made in environmentally responsible technologies, responsible management and business practices that went beyond mere compliance with laws showed that they lead to increased competitiveness and have a direct impact on the productivity of a company. However, corporate social responsibility should not be seen as a substitute to legislation and regulations on social rights or environmental standards, but should include the development of legislation that is adapted to this new concept. In countries where such laws and regulations do not exist, the efforts should focus on developing a legal and regulatory framework to define the bases and actors involved in promoting and applying the concept of CSR, in order for these practices to be able to develop (Tulder/Routledge/2006).

This field has shown an impetuous growth in the years preceding the financial and economic crisis started in 2007 and continues today with the emergence of many approaches and theories. The interest in CSR materialized in the emergence of new concepts, alternatives, such as corporate sustainability, compared with RSC by van Marrewijk (Marrewijk/Journal of Business Ethics /2003), or corporate citizenship introduced by Matten et al (Matten/ Business School Nottingham University/2003) and Wood and Lodgson (Business School Nottingham University/2003). Recent developments in the theory and especially in the CSR practice is reflected in the works of Romanian researchers. In this regard (Iamandi/Romanian Economic Journal/ (2012) reviews the communication of CSR in Romania, through transparency and participation through the 2011-

2014 EC revised Strategy for s Corporate Social Responsibilities drawn up by the European Commission in October 2011. These documents reflect the economic and social conditions emerging in the European Union in the period after the crisis. Among the major directions of action on communication are highlighted two: increasing the visibility of CSR and disseminating good practices, improving corporate disclosure of information related to the society and the environment. It examines the perception and realities of CSR in Romania through the multinationals which, after 2000, entering the local business environment, took over strategies and applied the principles of CSR from their countries of origin, leading to CSR practices that can guide other companies in our country.

The Romanian bricolage sector remains one extraordinarily competitive sector in which the Romanians are positioned well compared to the giants of the West: domestic companies occupy the top position among the largest retailers of bricolage and are disputing with eight multinationals the 2 billion euro, value at which the distribution market for building materials and bricolage is estimated. Dedeman and Ambient have managed to establish themselves ahead of foreign networks, such as Germany's Praktiker or the French at Bricostore (now Kingfisher), which until the beginning of the crisis dominated the market.

1. Evolution of social responsibility

The number of business responsible practices implementation in Romania has increased significantly after the European Union integration. The main actor were the multinational companies that transferred the organizational culture and practices from the headquarters to the local level, followed by the opportunity to have access to European funds.

As a result of the European integration, Romania has developed a number of "responsible industries", companies which had a responsible business objective. These kind of companies have developed a business objective based on the activities that benefit the environment and/or the communities. The responsibility of these companies is the indirect result of the products and services they supply (Stancu, Olteanu Marie Curie Conference CORE/2008).

Also, after Romania became part of the EU, a significant development of the renewable energy and waste management industries, rural tourism and eco-tourism as well as the commercialization of organic and ecologic products has been registered.

Howard Bowen(Howard Bowen/New York, Harper/1953), known as the "father" of corporate social responsibility, defined CSR as: "the obligation of business man to follow those policies,

to take those decisions and follow those directions that are agreed in terms of valor and objectives by society”

The experts(Carroll/ Business Horizons/2005/) believe that the economic reasoning of CSR differs from one situation to another, according to various factors such as: the society and its dimension, the activities developed within the society, the supply of goods and services, geographical placement, reputation, top management, suppliers or the importance of the activity sector. There is a powerful link between the success of a company and social responsibility.(Heal/ Columbia Business School/2008).Statistics show that the companies that are not including in their activities social and ecologic aspects have a hard time remaining competitive; it is required a continuous adjustment of the strategic measures to the market and society demands, the new interests of humankind having to represent the key factors of success in a world of interdependencies and fight for supremacy.

Both corporations (Jenkins/ Technology, Business and Society Programme/2001) and mass media are accepting the fact that in the relationship between companies and the community, social responsibility is mutually beneficial. On the other hand, it generates profit for the companies, while according support to disadvantaged communities or groups thus taking act in the local development. Attention to social responsibility was until recently concentrated mainly on bricolage companies as how to ensure a link between business operations and the communities where the companies operate

2. Materials and methods

Marketing research is "the formal activity through which, by means of concepts, methods and techniques of scientific investigation, is systematically done the specification, measurement, collection, analysis and interpretation of objective marketing information designed for management in order to be able to understand the environment in which the company works, identifying opportunities, evaluation of marketing actions alternatives and their effects "

Qualitative research is performed in the initial phase of studying a problem, their main purpose being to clarify the nature of this problem and provide qualitative information. (Lumperdean, 2011)

The main objectives of these types of research are: outlining the main aspects of the problem to be researched and diagnosing the situation; identify the hypotheses for future descriptive or causal research; exploring the reasons, attitudes and values; testing product concepts; identification and analysis of alternatives; identifying new ideas for products or services or improve existing ones.

The quantitative information was supplemented by qualitative analysis that aims to emphasize the

understanding and meaning that participants allocate to certain factors and processes that influence their CSR / SR activity and connect these meanings to the environment in which it operates. The qualitative approach is all the more justified as the study seeks to explore "how" certain experiences or activities are conducted, how certain decisions are taken, how to record and how to learn from them.

The choice proves all the more appropriate because the CSR / SR is little explored in terms of research, especially in Romania. Thus, it was aimed at obtaining data, rich and comprehensive descriptions, offering the possibility of identifying potential dormant subjects, so far unidentified, subjects that were not evident in the beginning of the study.

3. Attitudes, opinions and behaviors of bricolage and construction companies on involvement in social responsibility

In Figure 1 you can see the options of the respondents about the definition of corporate social responsibility. The results show that most respondents believe that this can be defined as "corporate support for actions with a social character", 28.67% opting for this definition. Other definitions that the respondents consider the most accurate for social responsibility is "business ethics" 19.84%.

A different opinion is shared on the other hand by 17.69% and 15.48% of the respondents who believe that corporate social responsibility is of" those involved. The definition of CSR as a way of promoting the company's image was considered less a part of this area of social responsibility. In conclusion, we can say that the corporate sphere possesses the concept of corporate social responsibility and of what this domain implies in terms of social action.

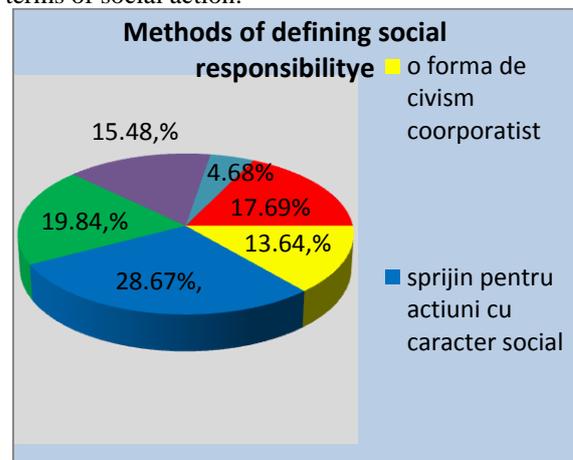


Figure.4.1.Methods of defining social responsibility

From Figure 2 it can be seen that 73.14% of the companies included in the survey have included in their development strategies actions with social character. 26.86% do not foresee such actions.

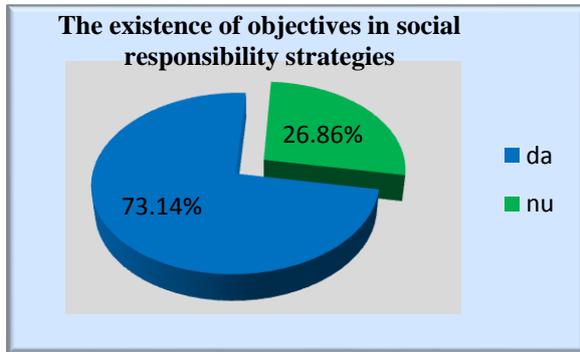


Figure.4.2. The existence of objectives in social responsibility

Respondents to the previous question (fig. 2) mentioned that they aim such a policy and have included this type of action in their strategy of developing, the next question (Figure 3) respondents had to state the sectors and areas in which they are involved through social responsible activities. This way it can be noted in the above figure that environmental protection activities prevail with a share of 36.07%, followed by supporting education (30.56%), health (12.5%), social environment (9.21) and sport. Less targeted are sectors such as employment, human rights and sports. Some respondents stated that their field of interest and intervention is supporting orphans and distressed.

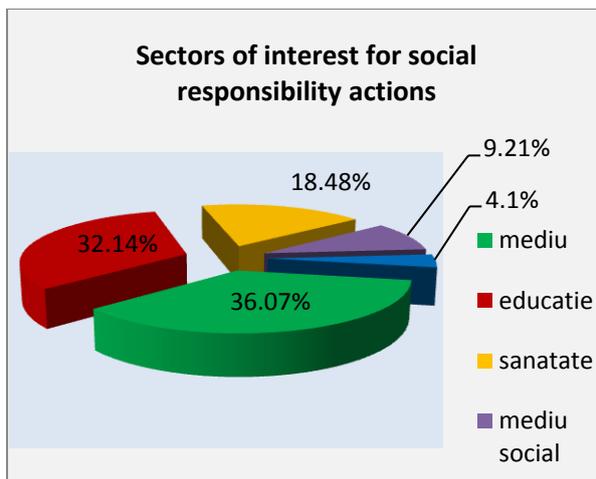


Figure.4.3.Sectors of interest for social responsibility actions

A representative question for this study is the analysis of the degree of involvement of corporations in corporate social responsibility projects. The data in the figure above shows that 67.29% of the companies included in this study,

don't run and have not developed such a project. 32.71% have developed such projects and they are in course of implementation

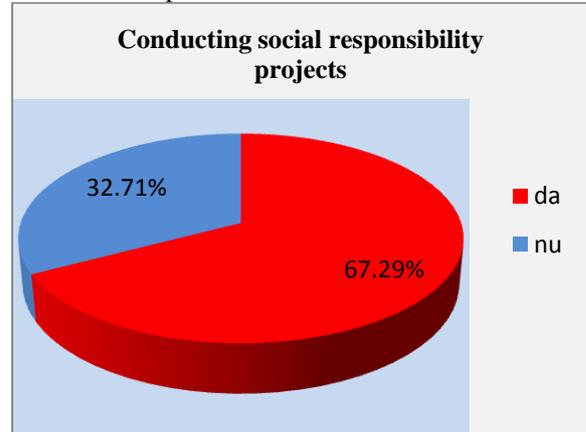
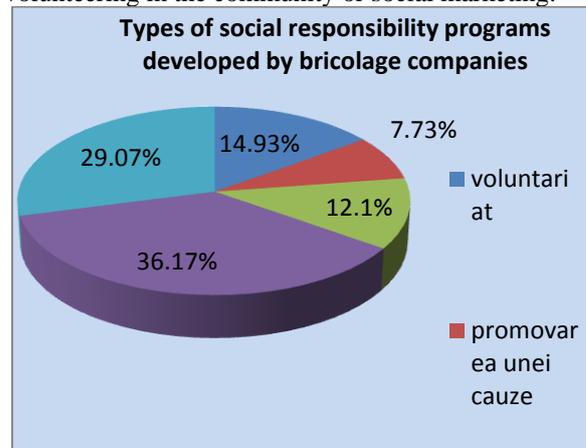


Figure.4.3.Conducting social responsibility projects

The figure above shows the types of social responsibility programs that companies choose to implement. Most respondents said they opt for programs targeting socially responsible business practices (36.17%), philanthropic actions (29.07%), social marketing programs. Less of the companies, opt for programs that aim the promotion of a cause, volunteering in the community or social marketing.



Conclusions

Companies that operate on the bricolage market should be aware of the problems existing in their "sphere of influence" and that affect their activity or are the result of their work. Companies have specific responsibilities to society. The activities have financial, environmental and social consequences and it is natural that they assume responsibilities accordingly. However the level of responsibility is not clearly defined. According to the Special Representative of the UN Secretary General on business and human rights, the starting point of corporate social responsibility must be the manifestation of "concern" for the effects of the company's own activity.

Being a socially responsible company means not only to fulfill your legal obligations applicable in that field of activity, but also to go further, investing more in human capital, the environment and relations with stakeholders - suppliers, partners, customers. The experiences with investments made in environmentally responsible technologies, responsible management and business practices that went beyond mere compliance with laws showed that they lead to increased competitiveness and have a direct impact on the productivity of a company

It is not up for debate the choice of a company between durable development and actions that establish social responsibility, but the company has to pursue the integration of both. In the future more and more companies are going to select their social responsibility projects based on elements that target durable development.

The strategic integration of CSR/SR in the basic activity makes a business responsible behavior less vulnerable to external factors (e.g. Budget cuts during periods of crisis), this way becoming part of the manner in which the activity of the company takes place.

The increase in the number of responsible business practices in Romania implies among other a common effort of all the stakeholders, good communication between all the parts involved and a better understanding of the private environment, of the impact of the companies, the causes of social problems and the role of each part in the reduction of the barriers, threats and meting opportunities and motivations in respect to the development of this domain.

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