

Chapter 7

Understanding Historical Background of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and Realizing Social Media as a New Horizon in CSR Communication

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ABSTRACT

With globalizing world, formal and the dimensional structure of market competition has been changing dramatically. In such a rapidly changing environment, companies should not just meet unlimited consumer needs, but also adopt a certain social responsibility philosophy towards the society. In that sense, corporate social responsibility is one of the important concepts that play a role in formation of positive perceptions of the target groups. The purpose of this chapter is to understand the changing nature of corporate social responsibility (CSR) over years, and also find the effect of social media on communicating corporate social responsibility. In that sense, firstly the need for CSR is to be discussed in different perspectives. Alternative definitions are provided over years to sense the evolving nature of the concept. Then in the last part, new media and social media's impact on CSR, as of benefits/challenges provided and alternative social media tools to be used in communication, are discussed.

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INTRODUCTION

Globalization and technological advancements have dramatically changed the formal and the dimensional structure of market competition. In such a rapidly changing environment, companies should not just meet unlimited consumer needs, but also consider their impact on the society during their operations. As economy's number one rule, resources are scarce, and to ensure the sustainability of the resources companies need to develop a sense of responsibility towards the nature and the society. In that sense, corporate social responsibility (CSR) is one of the important concepts that companies must consider strategically. With corporate social responsibility activities, companies support society's social, economic, environmental and cultural development, and hence, having that responsibility eventually creates positive associations among target markets and contribute their corporate image. In order to create long-term relationships with customers, companies need to start produce products and services according to social and other norms which result in increased profits.

In other words, while corporate social responsibility provides contribution for the society, it can also enhance the business operations. These investments have long term return, but in the end several positive consequences emerge. Having a clear sense of social responsibility not only affect the image of the institution, but also has a positive effect on company's financial performance. Today's stakeholders and customers, who are non-business stakeholders, are concerned with the social activities of businesses in their buying decisions. For companies, the key point is first of all having a sustainable and strong CSR attitude and then finding effective and efficient ways to communicate with the society.

The purpose of this chapter is to understand the changing nature of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) over years, and also quest the effect of social media on communicating Corporate Social Responsibility. In that sense, firstly CSR's evolutionary progress is to be presented. Subsequently communicating CSR philosophy and actions are detailed. Then in the last part, new media and social media's impact on CSR, as of benefits/challenges provided and alternative social media tools to be used in communication are discussed.

CONTEMPORARY CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY: HISTORICAL AND DEFINITIONAL EVOLUTION

For several decades, the concept of corporate social responsibility has been deeply discussed by academic and business professionals. However the history of the corporate social responsibility literally roots back to 1950's, it can be said that the appearance of corporate philanthropy or contributions in the late of Industrial Revolution were the first developments that supported emerge of the concept of corporate social responsibility (Carroll, 2008).

In Murphy's (1978) work, corporate social responsibility was classified in four periods. The first period is up to 1950's and was called "philanthropic" era which companies donation was just delimited to charities. Second period 1953-1967 was termed as "awareness" era, in which companies started to awaken of overall responsibilities of business and community affairs. The period of 1968-1973 was named as "issue" era; in these years companies began to center specific issues rather than general affairs. Finally the period 1974-1980 was named "responsiveness" in which companies started to take CSR issues in their management and organizational actions ((Carroll, 2008). Over the time with the social and

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