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Presentation of social responsibility in exporters' missions

Key words: corporate social responsibility, enterprise's strategy

Summary: Social responsibility means that an enterprise voluntarily takes into account the ethical, social and ecological dimension in its economic operations and relations with all the interest groups. An important and pragmatic sign of social responsibility is recognising social commitment as a significant distinguisher of an enterprise's identity, an element of its mission, accepted values and principles. The article presents the results of a review and mission content evaluation of 100 biggest Polish exporters, uploaded to their www sites.

1. The nature and scope of corporate social responsibility

The evolution of the concept of CSR—Corporate Social Responsibility—leads from philanthropy to opposing companies' business objectives to social ones to the recognition of the social commitment as an integral and crucial part of an enterprise's overall strategy (Blowfield, Murray, 2008; Nakonieczna, 2008; Rybak, 2004). At present, several scientific dissertations, documents of the European Commission as well as those of international and national organisations which support the implementation of the CSR concept into practice, most often define social responsibility as enterprises' voluntary consideration of the social, ethical and ecological dimension in their economic operations and relations with all their partners. This perception of social responsibility means that enterprises recognise voluntarily their social commitments towards their different interest groups as a condition which limits the scope of their choices and obliges them to run business operations plus achieve profits while simultaneously shaping partnership and trust-based relations with all their

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interest groups, manufacturing and supplying products and services in an environment-friendly way, fulfilling their duties conscientiously, applying transparent business practices et cetera.

The theory of interest groups lies behind the concept of social responsibility comprehended in the above-mentioned way. According to the theory, formulated by R. Edward Freeman, an enterprise is a constellation of interest groups cooperating and competing with it (Freeman, 1984), including:

- first degree interest groups (also known as risk carriers, sub-deciding), connected with the enterprise by formal agreements, contracts, arrangements which determine the company's development; their most crucial groups are made up of shareholders, lawyers, clients, suppliers;
- second degree interest groups (context-based) that are influenced or exert an influence on the enterprise's functioning but do not run any transactions with it, these are entities of the opinion-forming environment, local communities, media, social organisations et cetera.

Interest groups are entities interested in formal or actual aspects of an enterprise's activities. The interest of the interest group is the company's joint value, which means that every interest group deserves attention. Satisfaction and willingness to cooperate on the part of different interest groups are a significant corporate asset (Rybak, 2004, pp. 50–52). They depend on the level of satisfying their expectations. Expectations of an interest group towards enterprises vary, their priorities and intensity change with the course of time; for example, shareholders (owners) expect that the company's and share value will grow and that they will be thoroughly and fully informed about the company's achievements and growth prospects, shaping the company's positive image.

Employees' expectations concern equal employment and promotion chances regardless of their gender, age, nationality, religion, working time and health-and-safety-at-work regulations observance, creating conditions for development and improving qualifications, efficient information system and others.

Current customers, increasingly aware of their rights and well-informed, expect not only valuable good-quality and safe products from suppliers but also those which take into account international standards of quality, products and environment-friendly packaging, interactive communication, diligent, honest and ethical advertising.

Suppliers and business partners expect firms to conduct ethical business operations being based on mutual trust, satisfy their commitments, abiding by payment dates, partnership cooperation.

The society (local community) expects enterprises to be responsible for preventing further degradation of the natural environment bearing in mind future generations, compensating damages, co-financing social campaigns, investing in new, environment-friendly technologies, sponsoring social goods and services, cultural, sports and educational events et cetera.

Every interest group assesses the enterprise and creates demand for given activities through its expectations, thus setting the area of the company's wanted social

commitment. These expectations vary considerably. Therefore managers are faced with the new task of maintaining balance between several, contradictory at times expectations of different interest groups as well as choosing those social issues which, when applied, might prove mutually beneficial.

Identifying individual interest groups and forms of their connections with the company plus selecting those groups without which companies are not able to survive or develop is becoming the point of departure in the CSR management. Once the most important interest groups for an enterprise have been identified it is essential to recognise their expectations, their potential influence and areas for cooperation.

According to Michael E. Porter and Mark R. Kramer any company is not able to satisfy all social expectations. As it follows, every company should divide its social matters into three categories (Porter, Kramer, 2007):

1. Social matters which the company's business operations do not influence or which do not determine the company's long-term competitiveness as such;
2. Social matters which the company's business operations forming a chain of values strongly influence;
3. Social matters present in the company's environment which influence significantly the level of its competitiveness.

This division and identification of social expectations of an enterprise's interest group in these three groups should form a crucial assumption in order to identify the degree of their convergence with the company's targets and identify the kind (economic, legal, ethical, philanthropic) and range of responsibility of the company towards the selected interest groups (Rybak, 2004, p. 90). Activities undertaken with this execution in mind and resources designated for this purpose may cover greatly diversified programmes and undertakings from philanthropy and charity activities to reactive undertakings which compensate the caused damages and prevent adverse social consequences of enterprises' business operations, to enriching the product range and value chain with the solutions beneficial to the interest group and the company's competitive position, to integrating business and social objectives in the corporate development strategy.

2. Elements of social responsibility in the missions of experts

The content of missions (visions) and values being formulated can be regarded an important and pragmatic sign of social commitment and corporate responsibility for the fulfilment level of the interest group's expectations.

The mission of an enterprise is not explicitly defined in the subject literature. Some authors consider the notion of mission and vision to be identical, others believe that preparing the mission specifies the vision and should include the latter's execution process, again others, on the contrary, claim that the mission is a term broader than vision, the mission sets the general direction of an enterprise, while

the vision is its projection in a further time perspective (Nakonieczna, 2008, p. 90). Trying to avoid definition arguments over the mission subject, it was assumed for the purposes of this report that a ‘mission’ is the ‘value (something relatively rare and valuable) which an organisation should create for its environment (a broader community in which it operates and to which it sells, possibly gives its products, expecting resources for survival and development in return), members and founders’ (Kozmiński, Jemielniak, 2008, p. 15). “The declaration of the corporate mission should reflect joint divisible moral values. The mission defines a special, exceptional sense and *raison d’être* of an organisation—now and in the future. The mission is of normative character, gives the reason for starting a company and the general sense of its existence and sets the direction of its development. It outlines the fields which the company is able to be concerned with and which it wants to be concerned with. As it follows, it is the subject of corporate aspirations, long-lasting aims which set the range of the enterprise’s social responsibility, in other words—it serves the society” (Rybak, 2004, p. 132).

The mission, through its content, sets the direction, integrates and makes all business operations of an enterprise credible. Every important function of the mission informs internal and external interest groups of the enterprise about its economic and social objectives as well as the standards of their achievement. The mission is also a very crucial instrument of shaping the enterprise’s image in social awareness, because it determines the attitude of the environment towards the concept of running business operations, applied by the company.

The influence power of the mission is a function of its credibility in reflecting joint corporate values for an enterprise and its interest group plus an ability to communicate it (Davis, 2007, p. 62). In the present business environment, the most important and the fastest means of market communication of an enterprise is the Internet. Therefore, the undertaken research, the aim of which was, among other things, the assessment of the exporters’ mission content from the point of view of the range of taking into account companies’ social responsibility and commitment in it, analysed the main www sites of 100 biggest Polish exporters from the ranking list of *Polityka* in 2008.¹ The research included exporters with the assumptions that, breaking into developed foreign markets, they need to satisfy expectations of business partners and international organisations, formulated in the standards of conduct and accepted rules of running business operations, trade codes, norms (e.g. AA1000, SA 8000, ISO 14000) etc. It arises out of the research that the rules of ethics and social responsibility in companies operating on a world scale are definitely more often accepted (Rok, Stolorz, Stanny, 2003). Having the CSR strategy and good results within this area determine the corporate image, improve opportunities for establishing business contacts, facilitate access to the market, boost credibility and competitiveness of an enterprise.

¹ The research was conducted by Krystyna Flis MA. Its results are presented in the study (Czubała, 2010).

As it results from the review of information uploaded to the websites of the analysed companies, more than 1/3 of exporters do not present their mission (vision) of the business operations being conducted. The websites of these companies contain information about the enterprise, devoid of the declaration of objectives, directions of development, values (Table 1). In 21 cases out of the presented descriptions of the companies one can notice certain references to the social objectives being fulfilled, mainly environmental protection, sponsoring of cultural, sports and scientific events.

Table 1
Mission on www sites of Polish exporters

Specification	Number of enterprises
Lack of mission formulation	37
Exclusively product-business oriented mission	6
Mission containing only references to customer care	10
Mission stressing the significance of different areas of social and ecological responsibility	47

Source: author's own study based on a review of Internet sites.

Among exporters presenting their missions one can distinguish three groups: the first is made up of companies with a clear product-business orientation, the second—companies which mainly care about satisfying their customers' needs, the third—companies which declare activities in favour of different interest groups (Table 2).

Table 2
Examples of exporters' missions

Business and product-oriented missions	
Nitrogen Plant Kędzierzyn SA	<p>“ZAK vision</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – We will be a company which is going to dynamically boost its value over a longer period of time through development in every area of its business operations. – We will achieve a higher value added index than other companies in our sector, irrelevant of the economic situation. – We will become a leader in our field and we will be the first-choice company for our customers.”
Ciech SA	<p>“We create value in these chemical market segments where we possess competences and reach a strong and long-lasting competitive position.</p> <p>Aims</p> <p>Our aim is to create value for shareholders through building up the position of a leader of the chemical field in the region.”</p>

Client-oriented missions	
Black Red White SA	<p>“Fifteen years ago, when we were starting our business operations, we decided to make furniture matching the needs of the majority of Poles: that of good quality, but at affordable prices.</p> <p>According to this principle we have been active until now. As a leader on the market, we offer more than 800 furniture models in our product range.</p> <p>However, we bear in mind the most important aspects—our client, their needs and resources in their portfolio.”</p>
Polar SA-Whirlpool	<p>“The vision of our company is as follows: in every home, everywhere, with pride, passion and the best results. Our mission is following: everyone builds customers’ loyalty with passion. The vision and mission reflect what is most important for us, they set the direction of our present and future activities.”</p>
Stalprodukt SA	<p>“The company’s mission is to satisfy the needs and expectations of its all customers: buyers of products manufactured in the processing of steel into cold and recipients of services provided by Stalprodukt.”</p>
Missions stressing the importance of CSR	
Arctic Paper Kos-trzyn SA	<p>“We are a paper producer that supplies the product consistent with the clients’ requirements. Our clients’ needs are the most important to us and therefore they determine directions of our development.</p> <p>We aim to achieve a stable position among European producers of paper by partnership relations with our clients and suppliers.</p> <p>Efficiency of the management system, diligence of our operations and capacity ensure our competitiveness on the market.</p> <p>We motivate employees by creating good and safe working conditions plus guaranteeing development opportunities.</p> <p>Caring for the natural environment we always choose long-lasting solutions. We consider ourselves to be part of the local community and we accept responsibility for supporting it. Ethical standards determine our actions.”</p>
Kronopol sp. z o.o.	<p>“The basis for the philosophy of Swiss Krono Group is the belief that only environment-friendly and environment-safe products are truly useful for human being. Since caring about the environment is one of the most important elements of the corporate policy, production investments are also accompanied by environmental protection ones.</p> <p>Special attention is paid to appropriate care for natural resources at the very beginning of the production line, avoiding harmful emissions and care for air, land and water.”</p>
PKN Orlen SA	<p>“Aiming to achieve the position of a regional leader, we want to ensure long-lasting growth in the company’s value for our shareholders by offering our clients products and services of the highest quality.</p> <p>As a transparent company, we conduct all operations observing the corporate order and business’s social responsibility, taking care of our employees’ development and caring about the natural environment.”</p>
Avon Operations Polska sp. z o.o.	<p>“The mission of Avon defines the long-term objectives towards those that we serve: our clients, our consultants, our employees and women around the world.</p> <p>Our mission is to be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – a leader among cosmetic companies all over the world; – a company chosen by women; – the best direct seller; – the best work place; – the biggest foundation in favour of women; – the most valued company.”

Arcelor-Mittal Warszawa sp. z o.o.	"The steel mill ArcelorMittal Warszawa conducts its business operations according to the Balanced Development Principles. It means that we undertake to manufacture products of the highest quality, in the best interest of our clients, but also with respect to all the entities and environments that our operations might influence: employees, local community, natural environment."
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S o u r c e: www sites of the analysed companies.

The first group of companies is small, accounting for 6% of the whole of the analysed body. It includes companies whose essential operations, aspirations and plans are:

- a dynamic increase in the company's value by development in every active area, an improvement of the competitive position, reaching the leader's position on the market;
- creating value for shareholders;
- innovation and safety of products.

The second group contains 10% of the analysed companies that recognise their clients as the most important interest group. The companies, being market-oriented, declare in their missions:

- aiming to meet their clients' needs and satisfaction;
- building clients' loyalty;
- taking into account the variety of clients' expectations in the product portfolio;
- ensuring innovative solutions for clients which can help them to achieve market successes, professional service, partnership in cost and benefit breakdown.

The most numerous group of exporters (47%) defines the scope of social responsibility in their missions, informs about its attitude towards different interest groups, the natural environment, moral values. Exporters most often stress their care for the natural environment in their missions, conduct of business operations according to the principles of balanced development, undertaking activities in favour of development and partnership relations with clients and employees. In many missions there are also references to actions performed for local communities and regional development where the company operates.

3. Conclusions of the research

Summarising, one can state that the exporters covered by the research do not use fully the opportunity of building their reputation and image by formulating the mission, taking into account pro-social commitment and responsibility for simultaneous fulfilment of economic and social aims in favour of their various interest groups and its communication on the Internet.

As it follows, a review of www sites of 100 biggest Polish exporters allows stating that 37 companies do not upload the mission (vision) to their website, and missions of

only 47 companies explicitly accentuate their pro-social attitude, actions in favour of environmental protection and those aimed at establishing partnership relations with different interest groups, clients, employees, trade partners, local communities.

On this basis one should not consider, however, that only these companies conduct socially responsible business operations and respond to serious social problems. As it follows, the research, whose results are presented more broadly in another study, allowed identification of various social undertakings and programmes, being performed by experts, including also those companies which did not upload the mission to their www sites (Czubała, 2010).

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Prezentacja społecznej odpowiedzialności w misjach eksporterów

Streszczenie: Społeczna odpowiedzialność polega na dobrowolnym uwzględnianiu przez przedsiębiorstwa wymiaru etycznego, społecznego i ekologicznego w ich ekonomicznych działaniach oraz w relacjach ze wszystkimi interesariuszami. Ważnym, pragmatycznym jej przeja-

wem jest uznanie społecznego zaangażowania za ważny wyróżnik tożsamości przedsiębiorstwa, element jego misji, uznawanych wartości i zasad. W artykule przedstawiono wyniki przeglądu i oceny treści misji 100 największych polskich eksporterów zamieszczonych na ich stronach www.

Słowa kluczowe: społeczna odpowiedzialność przedsiębiorstwa, strategia przedsiębiorstwa
