

**THE ROLE OF THE TURKISH PUBLIC RELATIONS/COMMUNICATION
PROFESSIONALS IN CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY:
A RESEARCH ON PRACTICES AND COMMUNICATIONS OF CSR PROGRAMS
IN TURKEY***

Burcu ÖKSÜZ

İzmir Kâtip Çelebi University

Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Department of Media and Communication

İzmir

Serra GÖRPE

Zayed University

College of Communication & Media Sciences

ABSTRACT

The study is an analysis and discussion on the role of the contributions of corporate communication managers to corporate social responsibility (CSR) strategy and practices in the Turkish context. In-depth interviews were conducted with the corporate managers of different sectors to explore the role and function of the corporate communication managers in CSR. Members of the Corporate Social Responsibility Association of Turkey were approached to explore their members' CSR understanding. The study also sought answers on how CSR has been communicated to different stakeholder groups and its challenges within a Turkish context. Corporate communication managers are knowledgeable about CSR, link it with business objectives, but have concerns and limitations on its communication. The study contributes to the understanding of CSR and gives additional perspectives on its communication.

Key Words: Corporate Social Responsibility, Corporate Social Responsibility Association of Turkey, Corporate Communication, CSR Communication

* This paper is presented at International Public Relations 2013 Conference, 2 -3 June 2013, Barcelona, Spain.

Halka İlişkiler ve İletişim Uzmanları ve Türkiye’de Kurumsal Sosyal Sorumluluk: Türkiye’deki Kurumsal İletişim Uzmanları Üzerine Bir Çalışma

ÖZET

Bu çalışmanın amacı, kurumsal iletişim yöneticilerinin Kurumsal Sosyal Sorumluluk (KSS) stratejisi ve uygulamalarına katkılarını Türkiye bağlamında tartışmak ve analiz etmektir. Kurumsal iletişim yöneticilerinin KSS’deki rolünü ve fonksiyonunu keşfetmek için Türkiye Kurumsal Sosyal Sorumluluk Derneği’ne üye olan farklı sektörlerden kurumların yöneticileriyle derinlemesine görüşmeler gerçekleştirilmiştir. Bu çalışma, aynı zamanda KSS sürecinde farklı paydaş gruplarıyla nasıl iletişim kurulduğu ve ne tür meydan okumaların olduğu sorularına yanıt aramaktadır. Araştırma sonuçlarına göre, kurumsal iletişim yöneticileri KSS hakkında oldukça bilgilidir ve KSS’yi işletme amaçlarıyla bağlantılandırmaktadır. Ancak yöneticilerin KSS iletişimi konusunda şüpheleri ve kısıtlamaları bulunmaktadır. Çalışmanın KSS anlayışına katkı sağlayacağı ve KSS iletişimine farklı bakış açıları kazandıracağı düşünülmektedir.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Kurumsal Sosyal Sorumluluk, Türkiye Kurumsal Sosyal Sorumluluk Derneği, Kurumsal İletişim, KSS İletişimi

Introduction

CSR is about the responsibilities of a company, which are not dictated by others. There are different reasons for conducting CSR programs. The sectors also dictate what type of CSR practices the companies should engage in. Another factor about CSR is that it is increasing in popularity in some parts of the world. It is also criticized on certain grounds such as whether it is genuine or not.

This study explores how CSR is perceived by Turkish companies who are members of the ‘Corporate Social Responsibility Association of Turkey’ (Türkiye Kurumsal Sosyal Sorumluluk Derneği). This association is an independent non-governmental organization formed by academics, businesses and other civil society organizations, aiming to promote the ideas of CSR in the business world and also to other stakeholder groups such as government and non-governmental organizations. It was founded in 2005. It has 17 corporate members (<http://www.csrturkey.org/>).

By conducting in-depth interviews with its members, the study aimed to understand the positioning of CSR function within the corporations, the motivations behind carrying out corporate responsibility programs, the opportunities and challenges in carrying out CSR programs, the communication of CSR programs internally and externally, and the communications budget allocation for CSR programs.

Literature Review

CSR is defined in many different ways which indicates what it is about, what it involves and why it is conducted. CSR is simply about treating the stakeholders ethically or in a responsible manner. Social includes economic and environmental responsibility. Stakeholders can be internal or external. The aim of social responsibility is to create a better living and at the same time keep the organization profitable (Hopkins, 2012, p. 32). “CSR is the voluntary actions that a corporation implements as it pursues its mission and fulfills its perceived obligations to stakeholders, including employees, communities, the environment, and society as a whole” (Coombs & Holladay, 2012, p. 8).

CSR is conducted for various reasons. One of them is related to the pressure that the companies are facing. Economic globalization and new societal expectations require a better image as a competitive advice (Rendtorff, 2011, p. 250). Freeman (2005) argues that there are at least several major reasons for growing convergence between corporate reputation and social responsibility. One of them is the power of NGOs. Secondly, the average citizens, not NGOs, think that businesses need to share responsibility on social and environmental issues and that it is not only the task of the government. Thirdly, corporate governance scandals have decreased trust in businesses and made the public focus on corporate conduct. Another one is that CSR is a protector: it is a social license to operate and manage stakeholder relations. It also prepares the ground for businesses to get support and open new business opportunities with the positive climate it creates. Fifth, corporate reputation and responsibility have been converging because of the momentum that the corporate responsibility agenda has achieved.

A CSR orientation argues that financial concerns should not be the only concern of corporations. Businesses need to take into consideration their effects on all of their stakeholder groups. Also they must consider their businesses effects on the environments. (Coombs & Holladay, 2012, p. 6). It has been stated that corporate responsibility attempts are more effective when they are integrated and understood by all levels of people in an organization (Ewing, 2004, p. 367).

CSR concept involves business ethics, corporate philanthropy, corporate citizenship, sustainability and environmental responsibility (Matten & Moon, 2005, p. 335). CSR areas that businesses focus on varies. It can be people or the natural environment. Also some companies concentrate on a single area such as environmental and ethical issues while others integrate CSR in all their operations. (Vaøland & Heide, 2005, p. 497).

Recently the concept of CSR is being replaced by the term sustainability (Aras & Crowther, 2009, p. 24). As CSR, sustainability is focused on the future and is about using the resources wisely so that the future is not constrained by the present actions of the businesses.

There are various tools that could be used to communicate CSR. These include all of the traditional communication channels, as well as new ones. Codes of conduct, monitoring and certification initiatives, training and education programs, and corporate responsibility reporting are among these (Ewing, 2004, p. 376). Public relations has a special role in the communication of CSR. Public relations has already an established role in managing communication and relationships. (Bartlett, 2011, p. 81). On the other hand, silence about CSR is also a form of communication. Communication in other words is inescapable (Ihlen et al., 2011, p. 11).

There are also concerns about communication of CSR. If the stakeholders see the CSR messages as overtly promotional, then the stakeholders do not feel good about it. They feel that it is not serving them, but to the interests of the company.

Ararat (2005, p. 247) argues that Turkey, with its drivers for CSR with its economic realities and with its culture, is exogenous and institutional rather than endogenous and cultural. CSR is not just giving back to the society, but many corporations, especially in the United States, interpret CSR mainly in philanthropic terms. There is now more awareness on how companies make their profit than what they do with their profit (Rowe, 2006, p. 444).

This study analyzes the practices and communication of CSR programs in companies who are members of the ‘Corporate Social Responsibility Association of Turkey’ and also discusses the role of public relations/communication professionals in CSR.

Methodology

The study is a qualitative study involving in-depth interviews with the members of the “Corporate Social Responsibility Association of Turkey.” The President of the Association was approached initially with an explanation of the research. The President and the Coordinator of the association communicated the research and the researchers followed it up with the members via email and phone. 6 in-depth interviews were conducted with 17 members of the Association. In Istanbul interviews were conducted face-to face, but interviews with 2 companies in Ankara were conducted on phone. One company gave its replies in written format. The interviews were recorded. Interviews lasted for 25 to 61 minutes. All the interviews were conducted over a one month period. The sectors of the organizations participating in the study are pharmaceutical, postal services (public sector),

service, one holding group of companies, two technology companies and one health technology.

Research Questions:

- How is the positioning of CSR function within the corporations?
- What are the motivations behind carrying out corporate responsibility programs?
- What are the opportunities and challenges in carrying out CSR programs?
- How CSR programs are communicated internally and externally?
- What is the communications budget allocation for CSR programs?

Results

Positioning of CSR

The CSR structure of organizations that took place in the study is as follows:

Table 1. The CSR structure of organizations

Name of the Unit	Reporting to
Marketing and Buying Department	Board of Directors
Corporate Communication Department Sustainability Board	CEO
NGOs and Responsibility Department Corporate Communication Directorate	General Manager
Head of Department of Health Social Works	General Manager Vice-General Manager
Corporate Communication Coordinatorship	CEO
Business Development Coordinatorship	General Manager

In three of the six organizations, CSR is managed by the corporate communication departments. In one organization, “Marketing and Buying Department,” and in the other one, the “Business Development Department” are in charge of CSR. One of the participants in the study was a public sector organization. There, CSR was coordinated by a department called Health Social Works Directorate.

In one organization, there is a reputation management team. The corporate communication manager of this organization stated that under this team, sustainability included projections about brand management as well. In another organization, the Sustainability Board structure was different. This board was directed by the corporate communication manager. The structure of this board is explained in these words by the manager:

‘...in this board, ten of my colleagues at different locations and at different levels are working with me. This board gets together three times a month and works on the sustainability agenda of the organization. For example, about the suppliers: when we audit them, we look at whether they make children work or whether they do reporting or whether they are interested in the Global Compact, etc. We make sure that these types of questions are asked. The board evaluates everything that has been done every year. It evaluates the sustainability policy of the organization every year.’

One of the participants of the study indicated the negative aspects of CSR being in corporate communication department in these words:

‘...In the corporate communication coordinatorship, all executions are done, the strategies are developed and the executions are monitored. When we engage in all of these, we face some obstacles in the tasks of corporate communication. We think that some of this work needs to be outsourced (Corporation 6)

Most of the participants who participated in the study outlined the importance of the support given to CSR by the top management. For example, one participant indicated this by these words:

‘...Our CEO allocates 40% of his agenda to the topics related to sustainability. If this topic had not been on the agenda of the CEO, it would have disappeared only after a couple of public relations news appeared. If you want your organization to be sustainably socially responsible, then firstly your CEO needs to be devoted to this and has to be part of the things that are carried out.’ (Corporation 5)

Whether CSR is done within the corporate communication department or not, all the managers pointed out the importance of corporate communication manager and communication in CSR work.

One of the respondents stated that the driver in their CSR activities is corporate communication and that their corporate communication manager is the president of the Sustainability Board. CSR allocates 60 to 70% of the work done there.

Another participant explained why CSR activities should be managed by the corporate communication in these words:

‘...The department which manages corporate responsibility should be corporate communication because it has to be managed with reputation closely. It is important that the top management owns it. Two-way symmetric communication is important here. Behind this is the corporate communication department. It should not be on its own either. For example, regulations, law, product

development are important. There has to be an integrated approach and interactivity. It is very critical that the ownership is with the corporate communication. At the same time, the top management should own it.' (Corporation 1).

'...At every step of it, corporate communication should be present.' (Corporation 3).

'...CSR is a field which needs to be managed long-term and sustainably, therefore it has to be directed by professional communication. At this point, there is room for corporate communication and corporate communication manager.' (Corporation 4).

'...In CSR, since you are trying to execute projects which has a strategic value and which has a high impact, corporate communication should be positioned as an important discipline that shows you the way. Corporate communication person has an active role in the strategy development of CSR, developing projects according to this strategy and managing, identifying the communication methods with the stakeholders and doing reporting and event measurement. It has a pivotal role in creating a long-term social responsibility vision with a reputation component.' (Corporation 4).

'...The role of the communication person is not project. The corporate communication person should not be on the side where he/she manages CSR. There are examples of that type in Turkey: CSR project becomes a project managed by the corporate communication department. We do not think this is right. It has to be managed with different stakeholders. The structure should include universities, public institutions, and universities. We work in this way. We are on the side where we do the roof management. We draw its strategy thinking about the company and the business objectives. We manage the relations with all the stakeholders. We are the party which constructs the integration and the two-way symmetric communication.' (Corporation 1).

Motivations behind carrying CSR programs

The participants have different reasons why they conduct CSR: to support the society, to set an example to other corporations are some of the reasons mentioned, but in addition to these, the importance of corporate reputation is also emphasized.

A manager explained the objectives of carrying CSR in these words:

'...We are among the established corporations of Turkey. We want to do our service excellently. Moreover, we think that we owe to our country and to its people. Not only for profit. We think that we should be linked more closely to the societal issues. We think that with CSR projects, we can touch upon the sensitivities of our society' (Corporation 3).

To have a contribution to the future,' was a goal that was mentioned by most of the managers when talking about their CSR work. One of the managers said: '...We are looking for a sustainable future in our sector. Our goal is this.' (Corporation 2).

'...When we are fulfilling the needs of today, we are concentrating on social responsibility projects to provide the generation of today with a better future.' (Corporation 4).

The managers see CSR as an important factor in increasing the reputation of the company. One of the managers talked about the communication component and its reputation value in these words:

'...It is critical for us to create a perception of a responsible corporation for reputation. Besides this, there are communication objectives. To have cooperation with critical and national and international stakeholders is important for us. CSR is important because of that. We see it as having a communication value. CSR has communication value and reputation.' (Corporation 1).

One of the managers said that by signing Global Compact and giving importance to CSR, they win their customers. Another manager explained the effect of CSR on customer satisfaction, employee satisfaction and reputation in these words:

'...Our reputation as a brand is increasing. This type of work helps our brand communication. Our figures increase in customer satisfaction surveys. The employee satisfaction increases. All of these increase our brand value.' (Corporation 5).

'...We see these projects as a proof to show that we are environmentally conscious...We want to give a message that we conduct these projects and attribute importance.' (Corporation 5).

One of the managers mentioned that in the long run, the CSR projects provide positive contribution to the company image and they execute them 'to set an example and to be a pioneer.' (Corporation 4).

Another manager talked about increasing the reputation of the sector and at the same time aiming to execute CSR projects which contribute to the reputation of the corporation. He explained the main goal of CSR activities in these words:

‘...Firstly, company benefit. The other is positioning it in such a way that it contributes to the society. Your brand is appreciated, gains reputation and is trusted. CSR activities have a positive input.’ (Corporation 6).

‘...Our CSR strategy is not philanthropy. It is related with our business strategy. We are managing it around corporate reputation.’ (Corporation 1).

‘...Our cooperation with different stakeholders create an atmosphere of mutual trust and helps us to develop communication. (Corporation 4).

‘...We have never thought of our CSR activities as a marketing tool. Our goal as a company- which is trying to internalize corporate social responsibility within the corporate culture- is to increase the reputation and the trust felt for us in the long run among our stakeholder groups.’ (Corporation 4).

‘...We are considering CSR as a part of reputation management. At the basic level, we have a reputation model. One of the important parts of this is ‘sustainability.’ (Corporation 5).

‘...In our approach, we have sectoral leadership. To manage a sector or business leadership is not related with doing things the first and making a lot of money. You can do this just for a certain amount of time. The sustainability of the leadership requires many components. If you do not have human capital, suppliers or other stakeholder groups in the society next to you, you cannot do leadership. If you want to do leadership, you need to manage the stakeholders who are following you. CSR is perhaps making a transformation in the society.’ (Corporation 6).

‘...One of our communication priorities when conducting projects for the society is creating awareness and for the success of these projects; our ultimate goal is sustainability. (Corporation 4).

The respondents when asked about the principles of CSR, they shared some themes such as ‘...serving the business objectives of the corporation’. (Corporation 1), ‘...acting according to ethical principles in our relationships both with our businesses and other stakeholders.’ (Corporation 4). ‘...conducting CSR activities with our employees based on the principles we set initially.’ (Corporation 4). Also CSR being integrated into the strategic plan and into the overall strategy of the corporation, and the vision for it coming from the values of the corporation are mentioned as the other principles of CSR. (Corporation 5). The importance of aligning the corporate culture and values with the needs of the country came up as another principle (Corporation 4).

Organizations participating in the study have realized many projects in different areas to fulfill the objectives of the CSR practices. The size of the organization and the sector are mentioned as some of the factors affecting the scope and area of the work in their CSR. The importance of stakeholders were mentioned in the corporations’ survival as well. Stakeholder

groups and their relationships with the company has a guiding role in the CSR practices of the company.

One manager has communicated the importance of stakeholder relations in these words:

‘...You cannot live in society alone. You cannot exist alone. Your stakeholders buy from you, respect you, attribute importance to you and recommend you. These feelings and ideas do not develop on its own, if you do not create a value for these stakeholders.’ (Corporation 6).

The corporations by cooperating with public sector institutions, with universities, with nongovernmental organizations realize CSR activities targeting different stakeholder groups.

One of the managers stated that they have divided their relationships with nongovernmental organizations into two groups and they are getting opinion from an activist nongovernmental organization.

A manager from one organization stated: ‘..... We carry out CSR programs on groups who may be affected by the outcome of our work and our area of specialization.’ (Corporation 2).

Another manager communicated that they are also engaged in CSR activities other than the organization’s sector:

‘...We are trying to support the society we live in with our projects, financial support and experience not only in our specialization areas, but also in health, culture, environment and sports which are the areas that our country needs.’ (Corporation 4)

‘..... We have areas of priority. We focus on human happiness, societal development and environmental protection and carry out projects in these areas. We want especially that our employees work happily and feel that their work environment is contributing to them.’ (Corporation 5)

It has been noticed that the organizations carry out their CSR activities with many different non-governmental organizations. Some of these are listed below:

CSR concentration areas:

- Mentally disabled children
- Blood donation
- Organ donation
- Culture and arts
- Environment

- Disabled people
- Founding schools
- Science and art centers
- Water and waste management
- Work force
- Human rights
- Health and sports
- Diabetes, Schizophrenia, Alzheimer, central nerve system
- University-industry cooperation
- Support to schools
- Competitions

Another thing that attracted attention during the interviews was the employees' volunteering for the CSR projects. This is not surprising because the respondents mentioned the importance of the employees as a stakeholder group as much as other external stakeholder groups. As an outcome of this importance most of the organizations involve their employees as volunteers. Some organizations even carry out education programs to spread volunteerism.

The employees are integrated to CSR with volunteerism programs and also a lot of activities take place to inform the employees about CSR.

Opinions of some managers on this are as follows:

‘...We want our employees to have sensitivity and awareness on social issues, not just the corporation.’ (Corporation 3)

‘...Firstly, the employees should internalize it. Our priority is employers and their families. We want our employees to internalize what we want to accomplish and our objectives. We gave trainings on sustainability. The corporation should first develop its own employees, should develop their career and provide them with protective systems.’(Corporation 5).

‘...I do not believe that any project that is targeted to external stakeholders reaches to a correct result without the support of internal stakeholders. The people who manage it in reality are internal stakeholders. We have a communication priority which starts from inside and projects to the society. We first start with the employees. We inform employees with memos, brochures, bulletin boards and after internal information, we then move to external stakeholders and the influencer stakeholder, the media.’(Corporation 6)

One of the managers separated what they do with the employees into two groups and explain their importance in this way:

‘...We need to interpret CSR concept in two ways. One of them is what we do with the nongovernmental organizations. From the beginning; we do brainstorming with them. Everybody speaks his/her mind in the corporation. What can be done in general, what are the objectives; how can we reach to these objectives? After discussing all of these, we reach to a point. We also take into consideration the Global Compact and each employee complies with it individually. ‘(Corporation 2).

A manager stated that a specialist who passes a work training with them needs to be involved in a project as a volunteer in order to promote to the manager position in the future. Another manager shared how they give importance to their employees’ point of view in CSR projects in these words:

‘...We asked our employees what should be our CSR areas and which areas should our brands invest. We also asked about what types of projects we realize and if they will want to work as active volunteers. At that time it was environment and education.’

All the reasons spelled out in carrying out CSR programs (compatible with business objectives, priority, importance of both internal and external stakeholder groups) indicate that companies are dealing with it strategically. It does not involve reactive CSR, but rather a carefully analyzed CSR policy which will have a positive return both to the company and to the stakeholder groups. Two-way- symmetric communication efforts are observed as well when they are seeking feedback from its employees on CSR.

Challenges in corporate social responsibility

Challenges brought out by the respondents in carrying out CSR programs are more than one. The points brought in the study are on differentiation, sincerity of CSR, budget and return-of-investment.

One manager indicated the need for differentiation in CSR projects in these words:

‘...It is important that we catch the differentiation...In this competitive environment, the products are similar to another and so are the CSR practices.’ (Corporation 6)

Another topic pointed out by the participants is the issue of sincerity in CSR practices.

A manager explains this in these words:

‘...One of the issues or the difficulties is the sincerity issue. In Turkey, CSR has become very popular. There is an understanding such as taking an experienced non-governmental organization and an international institution with you, see this as a communication material and move from there. That does not go hand in hand with strategy and business objectives and evaluating the contribution of CSR to reputation. In reality, they last for a year or less as projects and they move as philanthropy. The difficult thing is to make it turn into a concept which the organization values. It is very critical to turn it into a concept which initiates from the top management, then encompasses the corporate communication department and all the other departments at the end. It is critical to do it with strategy. Therefore, there is a need to develop a comprehensive CSR approach which is long term, takes into consideration the business objectives, the stakeholders and the relationships with them.’ (Corporation 1)

Another issue that came up is the budget:

‘...At the end, you use a budget. It is important that the budget allocated for CSR is perceived worthy of it. In the organization, if the top management and other departments value CSR, then its budget is easily rationalized. Otherwise, you ask why I am spending money on all these. It is indeed critically important to show the value of CSR. Internal stakeholders are also as important as the external stakeholders. It is important to send the messages to the groups in the organization. This is critical.’ (Corporation 1).

The other challenges in carrying out CSR are related to the media, establishing the CSR concept and its return-on- investment.

‘...On the media side, reporters and editors who report about CSR are not many. Consciousness about CSR does not exist. CSR communication does not have a return at a high rate. I say these words from the perspective of the editors and journalists, CSR is seen as occupying newspaper pages and consciousness about is low.’ (Corporation 6)

‘...There are many projects which are in competition with one another and there are other projects which have an important stake in the Turkish economy. As a result of this, CSR projects were given minimal visibility in these pages. I am not saying that this is not happening at all, but its coverage by no means is equal to the time spent for it on the board level and it does not create awareness on the societal level.’(Corporation 6)

The same participant lists the challenges one by one by saying: ‘.....To change one’s behavior takes a long time and a lot of energy. The difficulty lies in the persuasion process, getting coverage in the media and the dedication of the top

management to CSR in the organization. Sometimes CSR is poisoned in one department.’ (Corporation 6)

‘...When we carry out a project. it has its own expenses. You are a private company and you remind yourself that you need to concentrate on activities which have a strong profit margin. CSR projects in general. Initially, we ran into difficulties in establishing the concept, but now we do not have an issue with it. CSR is understood.’ (Corporation 2).

CSR communication

The respondents all agree that CSR communication is important in the CSR process. However, it has been mentioned by most of the participants that CSR communication should not be getting in the way of the real goal of CSR.

'...I think it has to have the right dosage. There is a feeling that some people do this for advertising and this is not good. If we communicate what we do on CSR, then other corporations feel ambitious about it. It sets an example. It is important to influence each other in this way.' (Corporation 3)
One of the managers' opened this issue in this way:

'...CSR should not be a communication tool. There are many examples of this kind. Completely seen as a communication tool. With no risk, and emphasizing the sweet part and seeing this as a promotion and communication tool. It should not be like this.' (Corporation 1)

'...There is a fine line. The ethical stance of the corporation will manifest itself with the sincere messages it creates by carrying out CSR.' (Corporation 6).

'...We do not announce our CSR projects a lot. We do not work hard on this.' (Corporation 2).

'...We are not working especially on communicating CSR projects because we are thinking that this is considered as "doing your own advertising" (Corporation 4).

'...In our culture, it is stated always that if you are helping someone with one hand, the other hand should not see that you are helping.' (Corporation 3).

The respondents believe in the value of communicating CSR, even though there have some reservations. They also shared their views on why and how CSR communication should be done:

'...Communication of CSR should be done. There are two reasons for it. One is related with the fact that it helps CSR to be internalized in the organization, including the top management and the employees. Communication has a value in the sense that if you are covered by the media and your project has visibility, then this helps the top management and the employees to own it. This brings motivation for executing new things. Therefore, communicating it is valuable. The critical part in that is that you need to reach to a point in CSR where there is a need to communicate it. If this is the case, whatever is done in other types of communication activities for the corporation, could be replicated for CSR as well.' (Corporation 1).

'...We want to make sure that our projects are heard and known by related parties. We need to reach the association members.' (Corporation 2).

Visibility on behalf of the organization and motivating the employees are the primary reasons for the CSR communication.

Advertising of CSR activities was a controversial topic that was discussed more than the other communication tools used to communicate CSR.

One of the managers indicated that they have not allocated advertising budget for CSR so far.

‘...We did not allocate advertising budget. It was limited to sending press releases and announcing it on our website.’ (Corporation 6).

Another manager stated that they have not done advertising yet, but plan to do it in these words:

‘...So far we have not used advertising in any of the CSR projects we conduct. That does not mean that we are against it and that we will never conduct advertising campaigns. If it comes to a point that it needs advertising, then we want to communicate with the advertising tool. Not at the onset, but when it has a value to do it.’ (Corporation 1).

From the below quotes of the respondents, we can conclude that any communication tool and tactic needed to reach to the internal and external stakeholder groups are used.

‘...If we summarize the communication tools that we use in our CSR projects frequently, they are media relations, press releases, event management, participation in events, sponsorship, corporate publications, corporate brochures, web site advertising and CRM program. (Corporation 4).

‘...We do media communication. For every project, we do media launch. We conduct press conferences. We do interviews one-to-one. I can say that media communication is more dominant these days. We also communicate it internally. We share the published CSR news internally. When we do media communication, we also share this internally. We have an internal communication department under the Human Resources department. The announcement of CSR is made directly by the internal communication department. We have an internal magazine which is published every three months.’ (Corporation 1).

Internet, intranet, email, websites and social media tools are used heavily to communicate CSR with the internal and external stakeholder groups. In addition to these, posters, closed circuit TV and reports are used.

The respondents when discussing the communication tactics, they also mentioned the evaluation of CSR programs success.

‘...Media output is one of the things we use. Any event we do about CSR has media reports and we share them with the top management and with the stakeholders. In one project, we measured the social impact, the impact on the beneficiaries of our project. We are not just interested in the measurement of CSR communication, but also its impact. We will replicate the reputation study. We want to know the perception of the CSR activities of our corporation to our reputation. The last one was conducted in 2010.’ (Corporation 1).

‘...Its return to us is “thank you, that was a good work.” We want this to continue. Seldom, I have business increase after a CSR project. The people who know that we are doing projects see me positive than the others who do not conduct. They perceive me as a firm who is valuing the environment, and its stakeholders. The benefit of CSR at this point is this.’ (Corporation 2).

‘...If we conduct CSR with associations, this is what we do. We set a target. We say in 2013, with three associations, we will do these activities. At the end of the year, we ask if we have achieved our target. The second one is what we do related with Global Compact. (Corporation 2).

‘...We do monitoring and prepare evaluation reports. We do reporting to Global Compact and Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) every year. Reports are for us a tool, a communication tool.’ (Corporation 5).

‘...We conduct customer satisfaction surveys periodically either face-to-face, electronically or through our web sites. We measure if our customers are aware of the social responsibility campaigns we are engaged in.’ (Corporation 4).

As seen from the quotes of the respondents, evaluation is done in many different ways which range from media reports, to reporting to other bodies, customer satisfaction surveys, measuring stakeholder perceptions and input to the society. The impact of CSR was considered as more important than the outputs. This is not surprising because the companies in the study mentioned their strategic approach to CSR and evaluation is definitely a strategic consideration.

CSR budget

Regarding budget allocation for CSR, many participants stated that it is good and varies with the project. They also indicated that portion of the budget goes to communicating it.

'...CSR has an important budget. CSR project budget exists. Also we have communication budget of CSR. At a very good point.'(Corporation 1)

'...I can say 1 or 2%. We are not doing our own public relations. When we conduct a project, we do project public relations.' (Corporation 2).

'...The CSR projects differ every year and the budget varies according to the project, but its share in our corporate budget is on average 500,000 Euro.' (Corporation 4).

'...We do not do advertising, we do public relations. Media Relations. Advertorial.' (Corporation 5).

Conclusions

The results of the study have been shared under certain subtitles such as CSR principles, goals and outcomes of CSR, concentration areas, its communication and the tools used, stakeholders, challenges, the role of the corporate communication manager and the budget.

It is very clear that CSR is seen as a top management function. It is aligned with the business objectives. Values of the corporation, its desired responsible position, and corporate culture were mentioned several times by the participants of the study. The CSR has to be also simple and functional. It has to respect the ethical principles and also show that the corporation is a responsible corporate citizen. The difference between philanthropy and CSR was very clear by the participants.

Conducting CSR programs has multiple reasons. Some of them are for supporting the society or setting an example to other corporations or are related with business objectives. However, mainly the reputation reason came up. CSR has an important reputation dimension and also has a major role in the corporate reputation. It is also seen as creating a communication tool for the corporate communication. In addition to corporate reputation, sector reputation input of CSR was emphasized by the participants.

The outcome of CSR is measured in many ways as well. Media outputs, social impact analysis, providing reports and management by objectives (as it had been the case in working with the nongovernmental organizations) were mentioned. Also positive feelings (such as "a thank you") that the company gets from the stakeholder groups without specific outcomes were also enough for a few of the companies in the study.

CSR concentration in the companies were many and in different areas. The size and the sector of the company made a difference in this. Also for some companies, there were

priority areas and projects. Some companies mentioned that their CSR concentration was affected by the outcome their activities and also the needs of Turkey. Areas such as education, health, culture, sports were guiding the companies on what to focus. Almost all the companies mentioned partnering with nongovernmental organizations for the special CSR areas.

CSR communication by all the participants were seen as important, but they were sensitive that this should not cloud or prevent the real goal. The other thing was related to the sincerity of the communication. The participants criticized the CSR communication efforts which are viewed as promotional only. They stated that the corporate communication people should be communicating it timely. There were mixed feelings about the advertising of CSR, but as a part of the communication program, advertising was also used by some corporations. However, there was a strong concern about CSR communication and it should not be an advertising material. Also there was mention of not doing anything special about communicating CSR.

Media relations- and communicating it to the internal target audience came up in the interviews. In addition to traditional methods, other methods such as Internet, Intranet, email, websites and social media are mentioned. Reports to Global Compact and GRI are also considered as a communication tool. There was a strong emphasis on communicating it internally as well as externally.

CSR programs target different stakeholder groups. They cooperate with public institutions, universities and NGOs. NGO and government relations were mentioned in the interviews.

Media, especially as an influencer stakeholder group was brought up as well. However, from the interviews, it was concluded that the employees were the main stakeholder group. The participants explained why they were important for them. The employees were involved in CSR either as volunteers or at the onset of CSR programs as partners. They were also the group which the CSR communication was targeted.

Role of the corporate communication in CSR was very clear for the participants who carried different titles. The driver for CSR was corporate communication and the main reason for that was that corporate communication was related with reputation. It was mentioned that the top management needed to lead it and the corporation had to have integrated structure to handle CSR. The role of the corporate communication should not be a “project planner.”

As for the challenges of CSR: differentiation, (how to make it a unique project) sincerity about it and budget came up. Media was criticized for not being knowledgeable

about CSR and the CSR news also competed with other issues in the media. CSR therefore did not enjoy good coverage in the media. Budget allocation for CSR was not systematic.

CSR was positioned as a top-level management function with a strategic approach. The people involved with it tried to make sure that it is not program/project based. Internal stakeholder groups/volunteerism were very much emphasized in the interviews as an important stakeholder group. CSR was a reputation driver for institutions. The communication of it was necessary for different reasons, but all the participants agreed that the communication of CSR should not blur the real cause.

References

- Ararat, M. (2005). Social responsibility in a state-dependent business system. In A. Habisch, J. Jonker, M. Wegner, & R. Schmidpeter (Eds.), *Corporate social responsibility across Europe* (pp. 247–259). Berlin: Springer.
- Aras, G. & Crowther, D. (2009). Corporate governance and corporate social responsibility in context. In G. Aras & D. Crowther (Eds.), *Global perspectives on corporate governance and CSR* (pp. 1-41). Farnham, Surrey: Gower Publishing.
- Bartlett, J. L. (2011). Public relations and corporate social responsibility, In Ø. Ihlen, J. L. Bartlett, S. May (Eds.), *The handbook of communication and corporate social responsibility* (pp. 67 –86). West Sussex: John Wiley Sons, Inc.
- Coombs, W. T., & Holladay, S. J. (2012). *Managing corporate social responsibility A communication approach*. West Sussex: John Wiley & Sons Ltd.
- Ewing, A. P. (2004). Corporate responsibility. In J. Doorley & H. F. Garcia (Eds.), *Reputation management the key to successful public relations and corporate communication* (pp. 353-382). New York: Routledge.
- Freeman, B. (2005). Aligning corporate reputation and corporate responsibility. *In The Canadian Public Relations Society Conference Proceedings*, Calgary, Alberta June 16.
- Hopkins, M. (2012). Corporate social responsibility & International development: Is business the solution?. London: Earthscan.
- Ihlen, Ø., Bartlett, J. L., & May, S. (2011). Corporate social responsibility and communication, In Ø. Ihlen, J. L. Bartlett, & S. May (Eds.), *The handbook of communication and corporate social responsibility* (pp. 3-22), West Sussex: John Wiley Sons, Inc.
- Matten, D., & Moon, J. (2005). A conceptual framework for understanding CSR. In A. Habisch, J. Jonker, M. Wegner, & R. Schmidpeter (Eds.), *Corporate social responsibility across Europe* (pp. 335-356). Berlin: Springer.
- Rendtorff, J. D. (2011). Institutionalization of corporate ethics and corporate social responsibility programmes in firms. In K. Buhmann, L. Roseberry, & M. Morsing (Eds.), *corporate social and human rights responsibilities global legal and management perspectives* (pp. 244-265), London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Rowe, M. (2006). Reputation, relationships and risk: A CSR primer for ethics officers. *Business and Society Review*, 111 (4), 441–455.
- Vaøland, T., & Heide, M. (2005). Corporate social responsiveness: Exploring the dynamics of Bad Episodes. *European Management Journal*, 23(5), 495–506.

<http://www.csrturkey.org/>