

# Corporate Social Responsibility and Application of its Principles in Chosen Transnational Corporations Based in Slovakia and its Impact on their International Marketing Management

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**Abstract** In order to evaluate the application of the principles of CSR (or Corporate Social Responsibility) in the international marketing management of foreign companies operating in Slovakia, a survey was conducted in the form of an interview in the form of a semi-structured interview with selected managers of foreign companies operating in Slovakia. The goal was to find out their opinions on applying the principles of social responsibility in their company's international marketing strategies and how they perceive the current Slovak business environment in the context of corporate social responsibility (CSR). This semi-structured interview was based on standardized framework questions, which were continuously supplemented with questions and information according to the situation. Quantifiable data were subjected to statistical analysis and the transcription of relevant parts of the interviews was evaluated qualitatively, using the method of content analysis.

**Key words** transnational corporation, corporate social responsibility, corporate personality, corporate identity, corporate image, hospitality marketing, international marketing

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The aim of the paper is to evaluate the results of an original survey from 2023 within the KEGA project Nr. 003EU-4/2022 conducted at the Department of International Trade of the Faculty of Commerce of the University of Economics in Bratislava (UEBA), Slovakia. The research team consisted of the following 4 researchers: Ing. Otília Zorkóciiová, PhD., RNDr. Janka Pásztorová, PhD., Ing. Daniel Krajčík, PhD. and Ing. Mgr. Sonia Krajčík Danišová, PhD. from the UEBA. It was aimed at applying the principles of social responsibility in the international marketing management of foreign companies operating in Slovakia. The aim of the research was to find out the managers' opinions on the application of the principles of social and societal responsibility (Corporate Social Responsibility – hereinafter only CSR) in the

international marketing strategies of 37 companies – 3 Slovak companies and 34 transnational corporations (TNCs) operating in the Slovak Republic – and to point out how managers perceive the current Slovak business environment in the context of CSR.

Within the framework of corporate identity, CSR is usually included under corporate image, or under corporate culture. It is a relatively new approach that arose in the middle of the last century. The method is based on the fact that the success of the company depends on ethical attitudes between employees and employers. One of the first definitions of the philosophy of corporate social responsibility reads as: "The commitment of entrepreneurs to pursue such strategies, make such decisions or carry out such activities that are desirable from the point of view of the goals and values of our society." The European Union, however, understands this term as: "Voluntary efforts by companies that go beyond the normal framework of legal compliance. It is the achievement of social and environmental goals within the day-to-day activities of the firm" (Bowen, 1953).

CSR activities help companies to have better relations with the surrounding community and public administration. In this regard, the company de facto replaces the public administration in solving social and environmental problems, which does not have sufficient financial resources for these activities. A positive corporate image represents a very valuable competitive advantage for the company, it increases trust in the eyes of its own and potential customers, strengthens the importance of the company in the market vis-à-vis key interest groups, improves the internal company environment, optimizes the structure of jobs and nowadays helps to overcome crisis situations (Zorkóciiová et al., 2007).

Since society has high expectations of socially ethical corporations, the performance of social and corporate responsibility (CSR) has been a prominent element that includes dialogue with all stakeholders. As an effective dialogue tool, social media provides more opportunities for corporations to communicate their good deeds externally to various stakeholders. However, complex social

connections call into question the dual approach to managing the relationship between the organization and the public. Stakeholders not only communicate with organizations, but also connect with other stakeholders and express conflicting expectations. Thus, the primary task of corporations was to learn to communicate with multiple stakeholders, as well as to simultaneously satisfy the various requirements of various stakeholders (Colleoni, 2013).

## 2. THEORETICAL BASES AND IMPORTANCE OF BUILDING CORPORATE IDENTITY (CI) FOR THE SUCCESSFUL POSITIONING OF THE COMPANY ON THE MARKET

The aim of this chapter is to identify and characterize the current development of the global business environment, summarize the theoretical knowledge of the concept of corporate identity – English Corporate Identity (CI) as a strategic tool used by companies in the market and point out the importance of this concept and its place in strategic management. Another goal of this chapter is to identify the individual dimensions of CI, the so-called CI mix (Corporate Culture – CC, Corporate Communication – CCom, Corporate Network – CN, Corporate Design – CD and Corporate Image – CIm). The term CI (as well as all its elements) is used in the Slovak scientific literature mostly in English, and its literal translation, which would be corporate identity, corporate identity or corporate identity, has not yet been unified. The article uses the term CI in English – in its abbreviated form CI, as well as terms related to the individual elements of CI – CC, CCom, CN, CD and CIm.

CI includes all tangible objects and manifestations of the company's behaviour, with which the company presents itself externally. According to Zorkóciová, CI is a manifestation of the company's personality, which is reflected not only in CC but also in CIm. However, theoretically defining the term CI is very complicated, because the professional public is not uniform in specifying this phenomenon. This is mainly due to the fact that CI is a multidimensional and interdisciplinary phenomenon and is subject to change not only in space but also in time. According to CI, the company can be clearly identified and clearly distinguished from other competitors in the market. CI should include not only the history, philosophy and vision of the company but also a comprehensive view of its employees and the ethical and moral values that the company professes (Zorkóciová, 2007).

Within CI, Pérez and Rodríguez del Bosque distinguish the following five dominant attributes: identity as a personality of society, identity as an image of society, identity as a visual image, identity as a set of ways of expression by CCom and identity as an integrative concept. CI is also perceived as a set of corporate resources that are characteristic of a given company (Pérez – Rodríguez del Bosque, 1985). Melevar summarizes them in a model that contains 21 internal factors grouped into seven categories (Melevar, 2003).

Melevar and Karaosmanoglu also examined the interrelationships created by CI, and they concluded that CC, based on the company's history, founder, country of origin, subcultures and containing the company's mission, vision and values, influences corporate strategy as well as CB (i.e. behaviour company, management and employees). The corporate strategy follows the corporate structure for the brand structure and organizational structure, which directly influence the manifestations of the CD (slogan, architecture, office layout, website, location). Corporate strategy, CC and CB together create CCom (marketing, management, communication in the company) which together with CD create CI (Melevar – Karaosmanoglu, 2006). The contrast between CI and CC is analysed

by Ramanantsoa and Reitter, who pointed out that symbolic products (i.e. the visible part of society) have the function of communicating the so-called "Organizational imaginaire" (i.e. a hidden part of society). These two levels complement each other and allow you to understand the essence of society and its functioning (Ramanantsoa – Reitter, 1985).

According to Balmer, CI can also be understood as a coordinated and integrated activity (i.e. a strategy), within which CI should meet the criteria of multidimensionality, multispectral addressability and synergy. Just clearly defined corporate strategy can guarantee a functioning corporate communication, security and trust and overall uniformity in the company (Balmer – Greyser, 2002). According to the pair of American authors Kimberly and Bouchikhi, the company's CI should then be integrated into the company's product, pricing, marketing, communication and distribution strategies, so that all target groups can perceive the company equally. In addition to business entities, other market entities can also develop the CI concept. (e.g. states, world organizations, political parties or universities) that want to communicate clearly and distinctly with the external and internal environment and thus strategically build self-awareness (Bouchikhi – Kimberly, 2008).

The historical development of theoretical insights into the concept and formation of CI dates back to the 19th century when CI was understood as a manifestation of the character of the person of company's founder, who defined the company's strategy and the company's values. During this period, the visual side was not cared for at all, and this period lasted until the end of the First World War. The twenties and forties of the twentieth century were the so-called brand-technical, which means that the brand was important only from the technical and product sphere, and the products at that time were practically equivalent in quality and price. As mass media methods of communication were absent in the interwar period, CI could not yet be communicated to the public. In the 1960s and 1970s, CI began to gain importance. The most important element of CI was the CD, logos were developed and they distinguished companies from their competitors. The customer orientation was supplemented by the opposite view and companies began to follow the attitudes and feelings of customers towards the company. Management of employee behaviour and motivational strategies came to the fore. By the end of the eighties, the CI phenomenon began to be understood as a strategic management tool. With the advent of globalization in the 1990s, large American and European TNCs began to take shape, entering different markets and business areas. The CI phenomenon gained global dimensions during this period, and thanks to informatization and the development of the Internet, online CI strategies have also developed (Pelsmacker – Geuns – Bergh, 2010).

According to Marwick and Fill, CI tells us what a company is, how it works, what it does, how it conducts its business activities, and what strategies it adopts and then implements into other processes. A company's CI is something that sets one company apart from another (Marwick – Fill, 1997). Balmer and Gray pointed out the unique characteristics of the so-called Corporate Personality (CPe), which CI reflects and which are deeply rooted in the behaviour of company members who help employees fully identify with the company. That is why we distinguish between the understanding of "how we perceive ourselves", which is reflected in CI, and "how we would like to be perceived by others", which represents the so-called "Desired CI" (Balmer – Gray, 2000). Balmer and Greyser supplemented this theory with several other concepts, pointing to the need to distinguish between intentions, strategies, and various aspects of CI that create one's own identity (Balmer – Greyser, 2002).

According to Chun, we distinguish such an identity from the company's identity, which is based on the subjective perception of the company's identity by their own shareholders, and we call it a "perceived identity". On the contrary, "desired identity" includes not only how society wants to perceive and present itself (ideal / desired identity), but also how it wants to be perceived by others – i.e. "Desired image". We also distinguish between the identity of the company and CI, with the fact that the identity of the company is a term falling under the company's behaviour and CI is a term falling under the identity at the strategic level. These terms are visually interchangeable and therefore often incorrectly translated (Chun, 2005). Hatch and Schultz pointed out that a company's identity refers to what its own shareholders think of its company, while CI refers to how a company operates on the basis of shared beliefs and common goals (Hatch – Schultz, 2003).

Further understanding of CI is based on its dichotomous division into two different perspectives in defining its concept – Corporate Personality (CPe) and CI mix, where the most important element of the company's CI mix was to be its visual presentation. However, the dichotomous division resonated most with the professional literature at the turn of the seventies and eighties. Theoretical concepts of the term CI at the turn of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries were stable and included the phenomenon of CPe, CI mix, and the phenomenon of CED or CIm. The inability to establish a uniform definition of CI has led some authors to focus on understanding it instead of the exact concept, which later led to the creation of theses that analyse the concept of CI. Bouchikhi and Kimberly perceive CI as a set of business principles, company principles, measures, concepts, ideals and statutes, which both define the basic values and goals of the company and ensure their acceptance, but also determine strategies that guarantee the optimal path from the current state to the desired state and also allocate resources to the activities required by these strategies. Based on such a theoretical definition of CI, they derived the basic functions of CI. The first of these is the information and communication function, which aims to achieve a clear and positive (association-associated) knowledge of the company, as well as a transparent (employee-understood and followed) CI concept. The second function of CI is the function of creating an image, which aims to build sympathy for the company in the eyes of certain interest groups. The third function is the integration function, which aims to create synergistic effects across the company, and the last is the function of influencing relationships (Bouchikhi – Kimberly, 2003).

Another important characteristic of CI is its international dimensions, while we distinguish between monolithic CI (unified visual and communication presentation of the company, as e.g. McDonald's), delegated / managed CI (subsidiary companies here have their own style of identity vis-à-vis the parent company, which, however, always in the background, as e.g. Danone has) and brand CI (each division or product has its own identity, e.g. as a result of mergers of already existing companies, as is the case e.g. in Procter & Gamble). CI can further be understood on two levels – as external identity (products, services, environment in the company affecting employees and communication of the company with the environment) and internal identity (methods of company management, codes of conduct, ethical codes, company rituals). On the basis of this analysis, we can divide the entire CI complex into individual elements that create different links and interact with each other.

Despite the recent economic downturn and subsequent fluctuations in development activities in some markets, the general trend of economic growth around the world has been steadily increasing over the past three decades. Along with improving the quality of life, consumers are paying more attention to the ethical and philanthropic

activities of multinational enterprises (MNEs). As a result of this phenomenon, the importance of corporate social responsibility (CSR) research is growing. Scientific evidence increasingly confirms that CSR activities are beneficial to corporate success (e.g. Orlitzky et al., 2003; Waddock – Graves, 1997). We hypothesize that this is probably because consistent CSR activities induce an improvement in the company's image, which in turn leads to consumer confidence in its products (Turker, 2009). Overall, there is a general consensus that CSR is often considered a key factor significantly influencing a company's market image and success both domestically and internationally.

In accordance with the trend discussed above, scientists and practitioners perceive CSR as an integral part of marketing strategy. In addition to maximizing shareholder wealth by performing activities that increase business profit, various stakeholders must also be convinced that the company is a good corporate citizen (Freeman, 1984). Meanwhile, it should be noted that among all stakeholders, one important group that appears to be particularly influential for firms to initiate CSR activities is consumers (Du – Bhattacharya – Sen, 2010). Due to the globalization of markets, companies must create a positive image in all international markets. However, a thorough review of the literature shows that most studies investigating CSR only focus on domestic marketing, e.g. impact of CSR on consumer loyalty in local markets (Adams – Licht – Sagiv, 2011; Muller – Kräussl, 2011; Luo – Bhattacharya, 2006; Lai et al., 2010), which clearly indicates that CSR research tends to have an implicit domestic marketing preoccupation and very little research on CSR issues considers the international marketing implications of CSR.

CSR activities can also be used as a valuable international marketing strategy. For example, some studies in international marketing suggest that CSR by international marketers will significantly enhance their national and corporate brands in developing and emerging markets (Torres et al., 2012). Another example is the spread of good word of mouth about desirable business practices among international consumers, which is absolutely crucial for TNCs to achieve successful subsidiary operations in foreign markets (Bhattacharya – Luo, 2006). Despite such facts, it is difficult to find scholarly attention to the debates connecting international marketers, their CSR thinking and behaviour, and their impact on success or failure in foreign markets. Thus, many major questions remain unanswered regarding the nature and implications of CSR activities for multinational companies' marketing strategies.

Hospitality Marketing (HM) is focused on thinking about business in terms of customer needs and satisfaction. Hospitality marketing focuses on how various food and lodging service industries (e.g. lodging, gastronomy, and tourism) develop marketing strategies to promote their products or services, resulting in increased revenue. As the food and hospitality industry focuses primarily on creating and maintaining positive customer experiences and relationships, HM becomes an important part of ensuring the industry's success. If entrepreneurs want to attract more customers to their hotel or travel agency, they must advertise effectively on various digital channels and be where their specific target consumer is.

Keeping up with the latest trends in HM is vital, but it is equally important to understand the context of these trends as they are relevant to the hospitality industry as a whole, as well as the trends that have emerged in response to the pandemic. Other marketing trends in the catering and accommodation services industry that can be attributed to the COVID-19 pandemic, or they may be affected by related changes in customer behaviour. These trends apply to hotels, restaurants, bars, cafes and various other businesses.

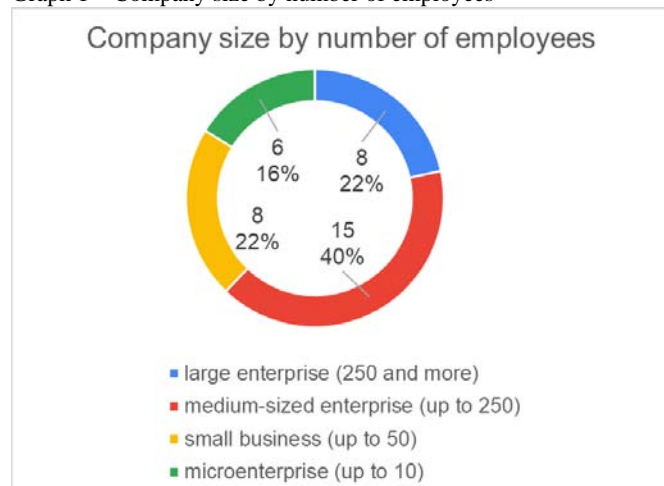
Fair Trade marketing gives consumers the opportunity to pay higher prices for imported goods so that producers from developing countries can achieve a decent standard of living. We perceive the Fair Trade concept within international marketing as a system of globalization and economic development, which differs from the system implemented by conventional marketing of TNCs. It also examines the philosophical principles of fair trade and compares them with the ideologies of anti-globalization, marketing management, ethical sourcing and also ethical consumerism. We also distinguish the institutional networks of fair trade marketing, as well as their numerous consequences of this system for producers, consumers and companies. For further research, we would select several global brands to analyse more closely.

### 3. THE SURVEY EVALUATION OF THE FEEDBACK FROM 37 MANAGERS OF 3 SLOVAK COMPANIES AND 34 TNCs OPERATING IN SLOVAKIA

#### 3.1 Basic characteristics of the conducted survey

The classification question, which we used to determine the structure of the chosen companies for the research, was based on the size of the company according to the number of employees, which can be seen on Graph 1 below. The largest group (40%) consisted of medium-sized enterprises with the number of employees up to 250. The second largest group were two categories of enterprises, namely small enterprises with up to 50 employees and large enterprises with more than 250 employees (22% share of each group). The remaining 16% of the 37 companies fell into the group of micro-enterprises.

Graph 1 – Company size by number of employees



Source: Own creation based on the results of the conducted survey

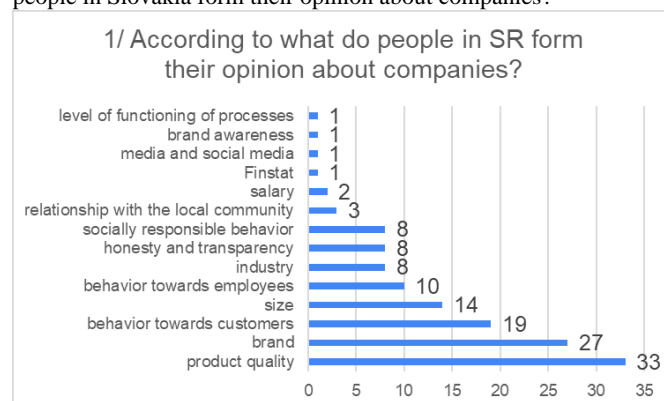
#### 3.2 Evaluation of individual questions in the structured questionnaire

In this part of the article, we evaluated some of the questions selected by us from a total of 16 questions of a semi-structured interview with selected managers of 37 Slovak (3) companies and foreign (34) TNCs operating in Slovakia.

- **Question no. 1:**  
*According to what do people in Slovakia form their opinion about companies?*

Question no. 1 offered the possibility to mark more of the offered options and justify your choice. Nowadays, there are many business entities that offer similar goods or services, so it is often not a matter of what they do, but how they do it, or what a unique story they have. Therefore, in the first question, the respondents were asked to choose what they form an opinion about the companies and then to justify their choice. In the first place in terms of number (33 respondents – 24%), they indicated *the quality of products* as an element according to which they perceive the organisation. The second most frequent answer of the respondents was *the brand*, which was indicated by 27 respondents. However, placing the brand at the top of the list is not at all surprising. In general, the brand represents a reference point on the market for customers, helps to recognize products and identify their characteristics. In general, the brand, as such, carries various symbols and messages, it can also contain information about the producer's responsibility, the quality of the product, the producer's opinion on environmental or social issues. Customer demands are constantly growing and a customer-oriented approach is really valued, which was confirmed by their choice (*behaviour towards customers*) of 19 respondents (14%). Employees are quite often considered the most valuable investment of any company, they are key ambassadors of the company's reputation, and those companies that properly support their people within the company culture can gain a competitive advantage. *Behaviour towards employees* is considered important in forming an opinion about the company by 10 respondents, which represents 10% of all answers. The other options (less represented – *size, industry, honesty and transparency, socially responsible behaviour, relation to the local community, salary, FinStat, media and social media, brand, level of functioning of processes*) are shown in Graph 2. According to these data, CSR was marked only eight times (6%). Based on interviews with some respondents, it can be concluded that respondents perceive CSR to a greater extent based on personal experience or information. One of the observations in the verbal comments was the opinion that "based on the study of our launched marketing campaigns and internal customer satisfaction questionnaires, we came to the conclusion that people most often form their opinion about companies thanks to feedback from acquaintances and friends, as well as marketing campaigns – most often on LinkedIn".

Graph 2 – Question no. 1: According to what, in your opinion, do people in Slovakia form their opinion about companies?



Source: Own creation based on the results of the conducted survey

- **Question no. 2:**  
*Should companies, in addition to generating profit, also behave in a socially responsible manner?*

Question no. 2 offered the possibility to mark one of the three offered options (*yes – no – I don't know*) and required to justify your choice. As shown in Graph 3, all respondents answered positively (*yes*), and therefore agree with the opinion that companies, in



addition to generating profit, should also behave socially responsible. One of the observations in the verbal comments was the opinion that *"the impact of unethical business in the case of a company is much more extensive than the impact of unethical behaviour of a natural person"*.

- **Question no. 3:**  
*Should socially responsible behaviour be the prerogative of solely large companies?*

Question no. 3 offered the possibility to mark one of the three offered options (*yes – no – I don't know*) and justify your choice. The majority of respondents (97%), as shown in Graph 4, expressed the opinion on this question that CSR should concern all companies. Some of the observations in the verbal comments included the following opinions:

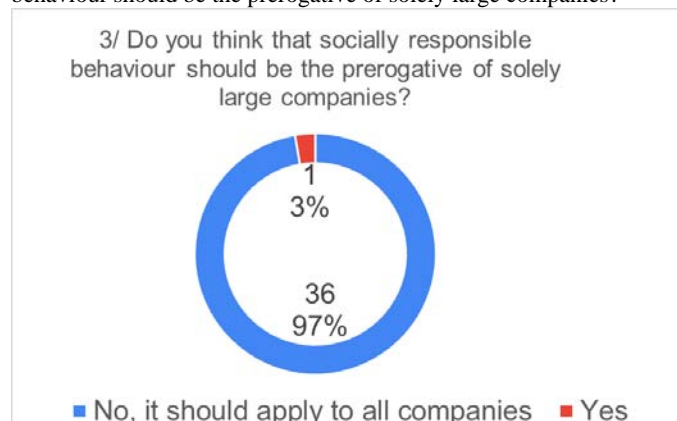
- *"No, because if a company wants to get the best orders and employees on the market today, it has to practice CSR both externally and internally."*
- *"We should all be responsible."*

Graph 3 – Question no. 2: Do you agree that, in addition to profit, companies should also behave in a socially responsible manner?



Source: Own creation based on the results of the conducted survey

Graph 4 – Question no. 3: Do you think that socially responsible behaviour should be the prerogative of solely large companies?



Source: Own creation based on the results of the conducted survey

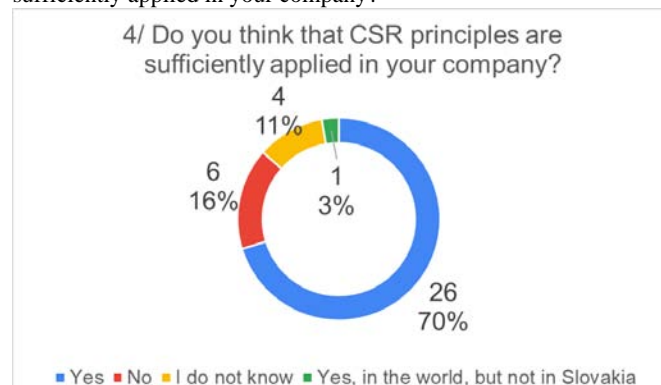
- **Question no. 4:**  
*Are CSR principles sufficiently applied in the company?*

Question no. 4 offered the possibility to mark one of the three offered options (*yes – no – I don't know*) and justify your choice. In this question, the respondents expressed their opinion on how they

perceive the application of CSR principles in the company where they work. The results are shown graphically in Graph 5. The majority of respondents (70%) think that CSR principles are applied sufficiently in their company, 16% do not consider the application of CSR to be sufficient, 11% of the respondents could not express themselves and one respondent stated that in Slovakia it is not CSR principles are applied, but in the parent company, they deal intensively with this issue and apply all the CSR principles consistently. Some of the observations in the verbal comments included the following opinions:

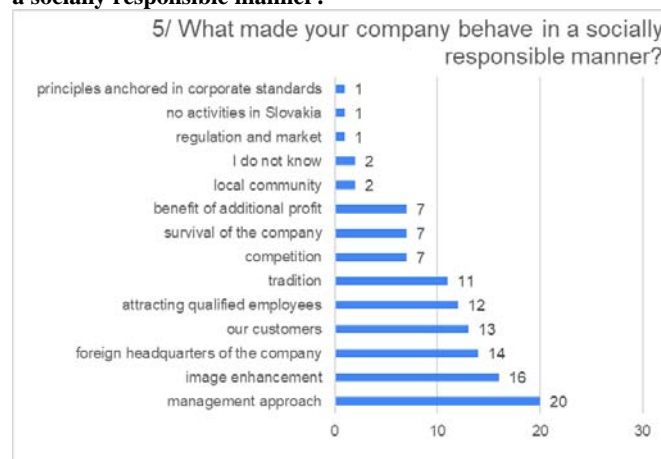
- *"We have reserved a job position in our company that focuses only on the development of CSR activities within the entire company, and by that I mean foreign branches as well, so, yes, we are trying."*
- *"We implement various activities, primarily environmental, we create favourable conditions for employees, diversity and inclusion policy."*
- *"Globally, the company applies CSR, in Slovakia, given the size of the company, it is not a necessary activity."*

Graph 5 – Question no. 4: Do you think that CSR principles are sufficiently applied in your company?



Source: Own creation based on the results of the conducted survey

Graph 6 – Question no. 5: What made your company behave in a socially responsible manner?



Source: Own creation based on the results of the conducted survey

- **Question no. 5:**  
*What made your company behave in a socially responsible manner?*

Question no. 5 offered the possibility to mark an unlimited number of the fourteen offered options and also the possibility to justify your choice. As CSR is the voluntary integration of social and

ecological aspects into the company's strategy, in addition to the primary orientation towards profit creation, the issue of motives for the application of CSR in the company was also included. In the first place in terms of number (20), the choice of management approach was marked. The second most numerous choice (with a number of 16) was image enhancement and the third choice (with a number of 14) was the company's foreign headquarters, which represents a 12% share of all responses. The remaining frequencies are shown in Graph 6. Based on the answers, the central office's suggestions and requests can be considered the most relevant stimulus for responsible behaviour. Some of the observations in the verbal comments included the following opinions:

- *"The first priority is for the employees to feel good at work and to create a pleasant working environment for them, which we also try to create with company events, name-day celebrations, birthdays, gifts and the like."*
- *"Nowadays, when there are few high-quality employees on the market who like to choose, it is therefore important to follow the trend. Thanks to high-quality employees, we offer quality services, thereby increasing our competitiveness on the market and the benefit of additional profit."*
- *"Behaving responsibly is normal these days."*

▪ **Question no. 6:**  
***Is CSR incorporated into the company's international marketing strategy?***

Question no. 6 offered the possibility to mark one of the four offered options and justify your choice, while the fourth option was added additionally based on the answer of one respondent from the survey. Most of the surveyed companies (68%) have incorporated CSR into their international marketing strategy, 11% of companies (number of 4) have not incorporated CSR into their marketing strategy, and 6 respondents could not answer the question. Two companies stated that they have integrated CSR into the international marketing strategy, but only at the level of the parent company and not in Slovakia, as shown in Graph 7. Some of the observations in the verbal comments included the following opinions:

- *"Yes, the head office (in Slovakia) only monitors growth."*
- *"Headquarters has marketing strategies elaborated in detail for all areas, and its translation is available on the website."*

Graph 7 – Question no. 6: Is CSR incorporated into the marketing strategy of your company?



Source: Own creation based on the results of the conducted survey

▪ **Question No. 7:**  
***In which aspects of the international marketing algorithm does the company apply CSR principles in Slovakia?***

Question no. 7 offered the possibility to mark several of the five offered options and comment on your choice. Question no. 7 (as we can see on Graph 8), investigated in which aspects of the international marketing algorithm the company applies CSR principles. The most numerous answer (36%) was in the conceptual phase (vision and goals), followed by the choice in the implementation phase (product, price, communication, distribution and personnel policy) in the number of 14 times (24%). Some of the observations in the verbal comments included the following opinions:

- *"The company has implemented CSR since its inception according to the methodology of the parent company, which has been dedicated to the topic of CSR for decades."*
- *"On a regular basis, we organize online courses for employees on various topics, whether environmental, focused on mental health, or focused on financial literacy. In addition, there are collections for people in need (employees bring us their old things, etc.), together in the winter we cook stew for homeless people or set aside a day when we go to clean, for example. forest, or we organize sports activities with the possibility of winning which goes to children in orphanages."*
- *"It is difficult to evaluate it this way – the company sells ecological products, but inside the Slovak company they do not solve it only through the product and the communication of the product."*

Graph 8 – Question no. 7: In which aspects of the international marketing algorithm does the company apply CSR principles in Slovakia?



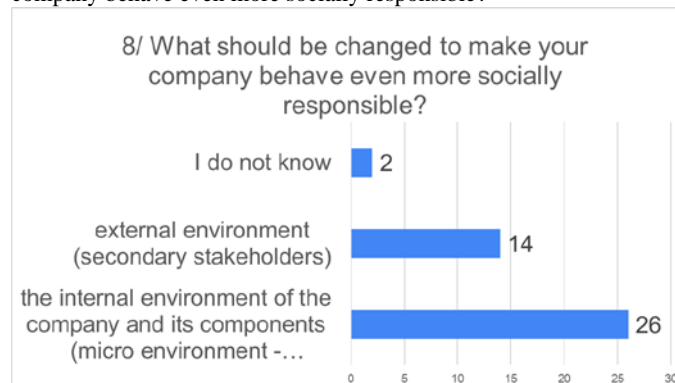
Source: Own creation based on the results of the conducted survey

▪ **Question no. 8:**  
***What should be changed to make the company behave even more socially responsible?***

Question no. 8 offered the possibility to mark one of the four offered options and justify your choice. Answers to question no. 8 were as follows: 62% of the answers were the internal environment of the company and its components (micro environment – employees, but also other closest components – primary stakeholders: cooperating objects, shareholders, suppliers, customers) and 33.3% of the answers were the external environment – secondary stakeholders: the public, institutions and two respondents could not comment on the question, as seen in Graph 9. Some of the observations in the verbal comments included the following opinions:

- "We think that we are among the leaders on the SK market as far as CSR is concerned, so there is not much to improve."
- "financial situation"
- "employee mindset (mainly management)"
- "When they make CSR mandatory, it will lose its effect."
- "think about internal processes"
- "It really depends on the size of the company. A company such as Kaufland – knows how to organize a fair with children's carousels when it opens a new branch in the city, but a company with 5 employees cannot afford such a socially beneficial free event."

Graph 9 – Question no. 8: What should be changed to make your company behave even more socially responsible?



Source: Own creation based on the results of the conducted survey

- **Question no. 9:**  
*In which areas of the marketing algorithm would you like to improve the application of principles in the company?*

Question no. 9 offered the possibility to mark an unlimited number of the six offered options and justify your choice. The answers to this question are shown in Graph 10, as follows:

- In the implementation phase – product, price, communication, distribution and personnel policy (16x)
- In the conceptual phase – the company's vision, goals, how CSR is applied (10x)
- In the analytical phase – market assessment and analysis, competition assessment, segmentation, targeting, positioning (7x)
- In the conceptual phase – visions and goals of the company (7x)
- I don't know (3x)
- There is no need to improve anything, we are the best on the market in CSR (2x).

One of the observations in the verbal comments was the following opinion:

- "More frequent feedback from employees would be useful to us."

Graph 10 – Question no. 9: In which areas of the marketing algorithm would you like to improve the application of CSR principles in your company and why?



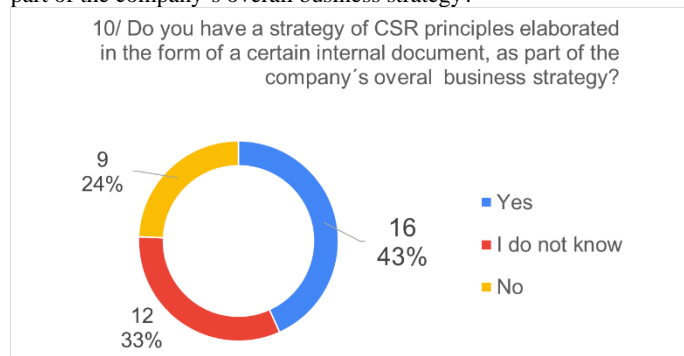
Source: Own creation based on the results of the conducted survey

- **Question no. 10:**  
*Do you have a strategy of CSR principles elaborated in the form of a certain internal company document, as part of the company's overall business strategy?*

Question no. 10 offered the possibility to mark one of three offered options and justify your choice. The answers to this question are shown in Graph 11. One observation in the verbal comments was the following opinion:

- "Yes, in the company Handbook."

Graph 11 – Question no. 10: Do you have a strategy of CSR principles elaborated in the form of a certain internal document, as part of the company's overall business strategy?



Source: Own creation based on the results of the conducted survey

- **Question no. 11:**  
*Does the company have a code of ethics?*

Question no. 11 offered the possibility to mark one of the three offered options (yes – no – I don't know) and justify your choice. The answers to this question are shown in Graph 12. The "Code of Ethics" document is an integral part of the company's strategy and management with an emphasis on social and environmental aspects. It is issued and approved by the parent company and should be effective for all companies within the group, which is confirmed by our results. 81% of respondents confirmed yes that their Slovak companies also have a code of ethics, four indicated no and three did not know.

Graph 12 – Question no. 11: Does your company have Code of Ethics?



Source: Own creation based on the results of the conducted survey

- **Question no. 12:**  
*Do you have a specialized department (or designated employees) in your company focused on the application and management of CSR principles?*

Question no. 12 offered the possibility to mark one of the three offered options (*yes – no – I cannot justify my choice*). Addressing environmental, social and governance issues is becoming such a complex and large-scale problem that separate departments or the role of director of sustainability are emerging. It was for that reason that it was justified to ask the question about the creation of a specialized department. The option *yes* was chosen by 46%, *no* by 35% and *I don't know* by 19% of respondents, as can be seen on Graph 13. Some of the observations in the verbal comments included the following responses:

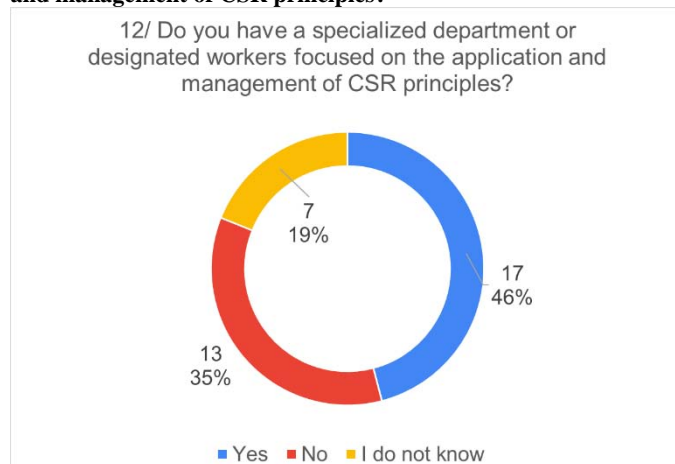
- *"We have a specific employee who is dedicated full-time to the CSR activities of the entire company."*
- *"We have reserved a specific job position, the purpose of which is to focus exclusively on the development of CSR activities within the entire company, and this also means foreign branches."*
- **Question no. 13:**  
*How do you inform your surroundings about your CSR activities?*

Question no. 13 offered the possibility to mark an unlimited number of the seven offered options and justify your choice. The answers to this question are indicated in Graph 14. Corporate communication about activities and decisions related to CSR and ESG initiatives improves perceived ESG performance and other related aspects. In our survey, out of 37 companies, up to 27 respondents indicated the possibility of informing through the internal environment of the company and its components (microenvironment – employees, but also other closest components, like primary stakeholders). Also, 12 respondents indicated the option of external environment – secondary stakeholders. Some of the observations in the verbal comments also included the following opinions:

- *"When it includes company events, sports tournaments and celebrations - to which we also invite our business partners. For a long time, our company has been financially supporting the Králičí hop – a sports discipline, and last year we e.g. they financially supported a football match with several young talents."*
- *"We have created a rule that each branch must post on social networks and the website at least twice a month about CSR and activities in the company."*

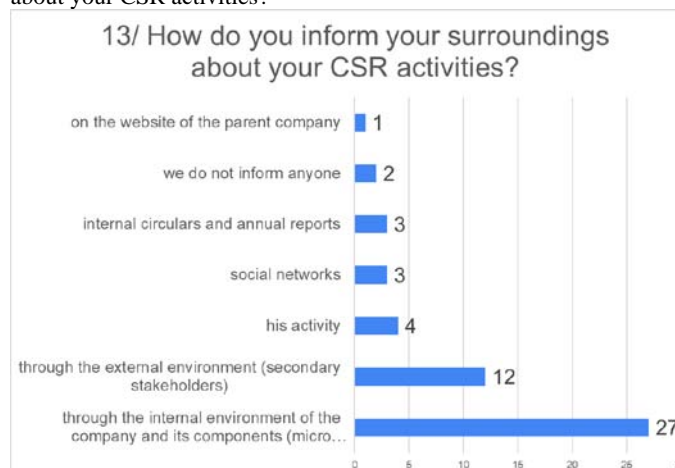
- *"Informs only through received foreign reports that are submitted in Slovakia."*

Graph 13 – Question no. 12: Do you have any kind of specialized department or designated workers focused on the application and management of CSR principles?



Source: Own creation based on the results of the conducted survey

Graph 14 – Question no. 13: How do you inform your surroundings about your CSR activities?



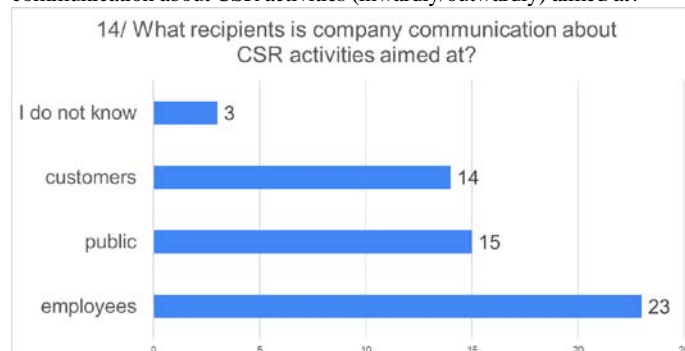
Source: Own creation based on the results of the conducted survey

- **Question no. 14:**  
*What recipients is company communication about CSR activities (both inwardly and outwardly) aimed at?*

Question no. 14 offered the possibility to mark an unlimited number of the four offered options and justify your choice. As for recipients, the most numerous answer was *employees* (23x), followed by *the public* (15x), *customers* (14x) and 3 respondents *could not comment* on question no. 14 at all. The answers to this question are indicated in Graph 15.

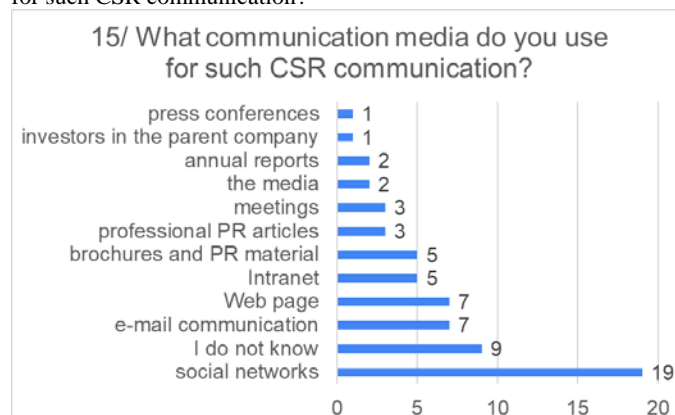


Graph 15 – Question no. 14: What recipients is company communication about CSR activities (inwardly/outwardly) aimed at?



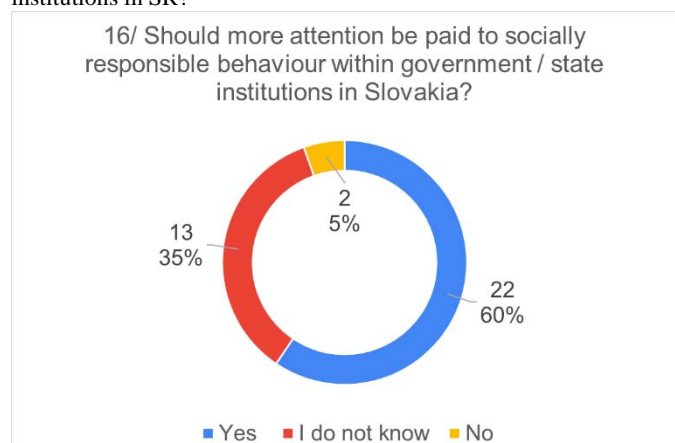
Source: Own creation based on the results of the conducted survey

Graph 16 – Question no. 15: What communication media do you use for such CSR communication?



Source: Own creation based on the results of the conducted survey

Graph 17 – Question no. 16: Should more attention be paid to socially responsible behaviour within government (or state) institutions in SR?



Source: Own creation based on the results of the conducted survey

- **Question no. 15:**  
*What communication media do you use for such CSR communication?*

Question no. 15 offered the possibility to mark an unlimited number of twelve options and justify your choice. The answers to this question are indicated in Graph 16. Communicating CSR activities and results to stakeholders is a fundamental pillar of CSR integration into all levels of management. Among the

communication channels, social networks were marked (19 times), e-mail was chosen 7 times and websites 7 times.

- **Question no. 16:**  
*Should more attention be paid to socially responsible behaviour within government / state institutions in SR?*

Question no. 16 offered the possibility to mark one of three offered options and justify your choice. The answers to this question are shown in Graph 17.

- **Question no. 17:**  
*What do you perceive as the biggest (generally and specifically) problems in CSR in the current business environment in Slovakia in relation to the company where you operate?*

The following opinions dominated the most:

- "enforceability of law, relations between the state and the private individual"
- "ESG and CSR is an unnecessary complication"
- "there is a lack of meaningful awareness and an understandable explanation of the concept of CSR - not just a beautiful general definition on 3 lines with non-specific content of the definition"
- "there is not enough support compared to other countries"
- "packaging economy - packaging standards set legislation causes high costs"
- "no / weak support from the state"
- "poor information of people"
- "bad setting of company values"
- "corruption"
- "bureaucracy"
- "unnecessary administrative, legislative and tax burden"
- "insufficient personnel capacities"
- "unsuitable legislative environment, frequent legislative changes, lack of expertise, too high ecological expectations / changes"
- "communication"
- "deteriorated atmosphere in society, decline in living standards"

#### 4. CONCLUSION

The goal of the organization is to build a positive corporate image, the basis of which is responsible business, which applies moral standards in business practice, while, however, it must take care of the needs and interests of various interest groups with which it comes into contact during its business activities and influences them. At the same time, these interest groups influence the company directly or indirectly. The concept of CSR is closely related to these activities. However, CSR does not only consist in supporting culture, sports, the family background of employees and stakeholders, improving the working environment in all departments of companies, but above all in observing sustainable consumption and environmental protection.

As research has confirmed, CSR activities are directly and indirectly monitored not only by employees, but also by existing or potential customers and consumers. Although CSR in foreign parent companies is at a much higher level and has a longer history and tradition, Slovak branches already have relatively developed activities and projects falling into the CSR category, but their presentation on websites is weak, almost zero. It is not something that they consciously present themselves with, or sometimes even

their own employees do not have an overview or any knowledge about their activities. It is clearly something that Slovak branches of foreign companies should work on, not to mention the need for state support. Forming a corporate image through CSR activities is an excellent marketing tool and an ideal springboard not only for increasing competitiveness in an international competitive environment.

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