

Managerial Concepts Concerning Corporate Social Responsibility and Corporate Reputation: A Finnish Newspaper Perspective

This paper discusses corporate social responsibility (CSR) and reputation. The theoretical framework is based on ethics, morality, and conceptual research of reputation. Ethical behaviour and corporate social responsibility are important factors in competitive markets. Power and dominant position of large companies also set requirements; companies have to adopt social responsibility. (e.g. Takala 1993.) These issues also effect corporate reputation. (Weiser & Zadek 2001.) The researches shows, that reputation is a valuable asset for companies, though intangible.

There are several reasons why companies should understand the importance on their real reputation. Reputation can be one of the most important competitive advantage any business has. Reputation is also something that various stakeholders like customers, shareholders and manufacturers are shearing and telling forward. (E.g. Karvonen 1999; Fombrun; 1996.) The research method of the study was phenomenography. Eight managers from one of the largest Finnish newspaper were participating to this survey. In the Reputation survey 2001 launched by Finnish communication department, the company was chosen to be a company with the best CSR behaviour in Finland.

The focus of the paper is to clarify the concepts, which managers have concerning CSR and reputation. The wider background contains concepts of company values and ethical norms. In the managerial concepts, values create the basis for corporate ethical behaviour. According to managers, when companies' behaviour is based on ethical issues, it creates positive reputation among stakeholders. The extent of the reputation however, remains unclear. The result of the research suggests that there is a link between corporate social responsibility and reputation. Trust is a concept that is strongly linked to both areas. It is a valuable matter to gain and preserve. Managers also pointed out, that companies should not behave ethically because of a good reputation but for the reason that they generously want to benefit the surrounding area first. ■