Corporate Philanthropy and Corporate Social Responsibility; trade off or line up?

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Corporate Social Responsibility (Corporate Social Performance) is an issue: CSR is and has been analysed by different academic disciplines. These may appear as stimulating. The multitude of theoretical approaches offers a broad spectrum of definitions, theoretical frameworks and research programs. However, the multi-disciplinary of the approaches may hamper the progress of empirical research. Actually, large scale empirical data on CSR are scarce. Much research only cover a small number of companies (Sriramesh, K., Ng, C. W., Ng, S. T., & Wanyin, L. 2007) or research is limited to one specific business line (Jenkins, 2004; Maloni & Brown, 2006) or focus on just large or just small companies (Fortanier & Kolk, 2007; Perrini, Russo, & Tencati, 2007). Perhaps the fuzziness of the concept may be a cause as well.

In this paper the results of a national survey, conducted in May 2008 among 1058 companies will be presented. The sample is a stratified one (trade, seize), representative for the business community in The Netherlands. In comparison with other surveys on this subject the sample is relatively large (Marx 1999). Respondents are randomly selected.

The respondents are all members of TNS NIPObase Business, a business database with over 18,000 people who are willing to participate in TNS NIPO surveys on a regular basis. TNS NIPO stratified the sample disproportionally to be able to also analyse the results by company size and line of business.

A large sample of companies has been surveyed on what they themselves see as their position with regard to a certain CSR主题. This CSR-study was part of the bi-annual research “Giving in the Netherlands”(GIN), in which corporate philanthropy (giving and sponsoring) has been studied since 1995. As a result, data on CSR as well as on corporate philanthropy became available.

Carroll (1991) elaborated on the ethical responsibility component. In his article “The pyramid of CSR” Carroll presents a ranking in social involvement of businesses; a kind of scale from “mere economic involvement” to “high social involvement”, called “corporate citizenship” (ibid 1991). “For CSR to be accepted by a conscienious business person, it should be framed in such a way that the entire range of business responsibilities are embraced. It is suggested here that four kinds of social responsibilities constitute total CSR: economic, legal, ethical. and philanthropic. Furthermore. these four categories or components of CSR might be depicted as a pyramid. To be sure, all of these kinds of responsibilities have always existed to some extent. but it has only been in recent years that ethical and philanthropic functions have taken a significant place”.

Scholars like Carroll place corporate philanthropy at the top of what they define to be a pyramid representing ‘mere economic involvement’ at the base, and ‘high social involvement’ at the top. This ‘pyramid – hypothesis’ will be tested. The central question to be answered: how are corporate philanthropy and corporate social responsibility related – if they are?
This paper commences to state some theoretical remarks. Then data on CSR and corporate philanthropy will be presented. Afterwards CSR and corporate philanthropy will be correlated.