# Corporate Social Responsibility to Reflect Organization's Corporate Identity: A Content Analysis

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*Abstract*—The authors propose corporate social responsibility (CSR) as a useful element in reflecting an organization's corporate identity (CI) to its target audiences. The inclusion of CSR highlights organization's role as a 'good' citizen in society and is the basis for any beneficial exchanges between the parties. Content analyses on CSR of 10 top ranked Malaysian companies supported this proposition.

*Index Terms*—Corporate social responsibility, corporate identity, content analysis.

## I. INTRODUCTION

The issue on how corporate identity (CI) is reflected on organization's stakeholders is acknowledged that since mid-twentieth century, attempts to it have emerged from three perspectives; visual image (VI), corporate personality (CP) and corporate communication (CC) perspectives [1] and [2]. Although definitions from CP and CC perspectives seem more acknowledged, Balmer [3] argues that greater reliability of CI definition is achieved only through the integration of existing definitions. In this study, the authors propose that CI can be reflected through CSR philosophies carried out by organizations.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### A. Corporate Social Responsibility

Extensive studies on CSR over the years resulted in increased recognition of its benefits in addition to stakeholders' demands for organizations to provide CSR reporting in their annual reports and on corporate websites. It has become a key in marketing strategies [4]-[5] due to its capacity in improving corporate image and brand [6]-[7]. Organizations often present themselves as social actors with primary mission to contribute to sustainable development of their environment through engagement with society in which they operate. Thus, they establish codes of conduct, report on social issues, stick to international declarations on CSR, try to be among the lists of socially responsible companies (Fortune 500) or to develop sustainability index in stock markets (Dow Jones Sustainability Index). Adapting Campbell's (2007) definition of CSR, we refer to it as organization's voluntarily effort in integrating their stakeholders' social and environmental expectations and/or concerns into their daily operations and their interaction with the stakeholders.

### B. Corporate Identity

Corporate identity (CI) has been used as the basis for other various corporate level concepts like image, reputation or corporate communications; and is even considered fundamental in corporate marketing field [1]-[2]. The traditional VI perspective sees CI being used at the early stage of organization's operation as it becomes the mean for CI transmission e.g. through logos, brand images and other visual manifestations representing them [3]. CI has evolved from this definition from focusing only on the minor elements of the organization to now emphasizing more on the core businesses, strategy, structure and culture [4], hence the popularity of CI definition usage from the CP and CC perspectives; as these perspectives believe that CI is made up of more than the name and corporate logo [5]. For instance, proponents of CP consider CI to derive from beliefs and shared values of the members of the organization, that it is defined as a means of expressing the personality of the company (the set of essential features that give individuality to differentiate an organization) or the CP [6]-[8]. CC proponents further suggest on the different ways of communication to help with the transmission of CI; i.e. through symbols, corporate behavioral communication (CB) or CC itself [9] when organization and stakeholders interact. Thus, the identity mix [5], [10]-[12] is essential in how CI is defined.

The discussion on the identity mix (CC, CB and symbol) led us to agree that they are crucial as tools in expressing organization's personality and characters that has also been described fundamental in building the CI through internal and external communications between the organization and its members and/or stakeholders. CI value lies mainly in the generation of clear and favorable business image, resulting in it being a valuable source of competitive advantage [5], [13] and marketing strategies [14]. For instance, CI helps to increase employee's motivation, inspire public confidence, align corporate strategy with the market, attract new investments and differentiate products and services [10], [15]. Since the issue on how organization target audiences relate to organization (in terms of credibility and legitimacy in the marketplace) is important, thus attempts to convey positive CI to them are necessary[13]. The 'identity mix' is done through a) corporate symbols (e.g. visual identity, logo, name, slogan, color), corporate aesthetics (architecture, design interior or furniture) and appearance of staff [5], [11], b) corporate behavior (CB) – i.e. all behaviors and initiatives

that support the organization [3] as well as non-verbal intangible communication [5] and c) corporate communication (CC) [10]. Following this approach, therefore, we defined corporate identity as "the central, distinctive and enduring characters of an organization, which expressed through symbols, behaviors and internal and external communications of the company and its members."

In transmitting CI, CB component is usually related to ethical action, actions towards the environment and labor contract issues [11], and direct communication, including the behavior of employees and directors[5], [11]. CC, in turn, acts as the company's tactical tool that complements CB when individuals want to form an image of the organization [16], since the message sent out can be controlled by the company. CC is also used as a tool to generate stable relationships with all stakeholders (van Riel, 1995). However, uncontrolled communication like word of mouth or previous experiences with the product or company can also be essential for image generation.

In sum, CI's potential strategic value can be created from two dimensions, the experience of the organization and its social responsibility [17]-[18], similar to the concept of 'corporate partnerships' used in corporate image study [19]-[20]. Here, experience refers to company positioning (skills in product category/service) whereas social responsibility dimension highlights the role of the company as a citizen in society, with reference to their moral, ethical and social character which provides the basis for the beneficial exchanges between the organization and its various target audiences.

## III. METHODOLOGY

TABLE I: RANKING OF MALAYSIAN COMPANIES BASED ON FORBES GLOBAL 500 FOR YEAR 2012

| Rank | Company | Industry |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Maybank | Banking |
| 2 | CIMB Group Holdings | Banking |
| 3 | Sime Darby | Conglomerate |
| 4 | Public Bank | Banking |
| 5 | Genting | Casinos and Gamming |
| 6 | Axiata Group | Telecommunication |
| 7 | Tenaga Nasional | Electric Utilities |
| 8 | Petronas Chemicals | Chemicals |
| 9 | IOI Group | Food Processing |
| 10 | RHB Capital | Banking |

TABLE II: RANKING OF MALAYSIAN COMPANIES BASED ON FORBES GLOBAL 500 FOR YEAR 2012

| Company | Sales | Profits | Assets | Market Value |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | USD Billions | |
| Maybank | 7.2 | 1.6 | 141.9 | 22 |
| CIMB Group Holdings | 5.4 | 1.3 | 94.7 | 18.6 |
| Sime Darby | 13.9 | 1.2 | 14 | 19.2 |
| Public Bank | 3.7 | 1.1 | 78.7 | 15.6 |
| Genting | 6.1 | 0.9 | 17.1 | 12.9 |
| Axiata Group | 5.2 | 0.7 | 12.7 | 14.2 |
| Tenaga Nasional | 10.8 | 0.2 | 25 | 11.4 |
| Petronas Chemicals | 4.6 | 1 | 9.6 | 17.7 |
| IOI Group | 5.3 | 0.7 | 6.5 | 11 |
| RHB Capital | 2.2 | 0.5 | 48.1 | 5.7 |

TABLE III: CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY PHILOSOPHY OF TOP 10 PUBLIC COMPANIES IN MALAYSIA

| Company | CSR Philosophy |
|---|---|
| Maybank (Malayan Banking Berhad) | "Conducting our business in a way that enhances our performance both today and over the long term, contributing to the socio economic development of the countries in which operates. We continue to conserve the environment, enrich the livelihood of the community, care for the development and wellbeing of our employees and contribute to good governance." |
| CIMB Group Holdings | "We believe in long-term sustainable growth and giving back to society. Our initiatives are aimed empowering communities in a transparent, measurable and accountable way to enable them to stand on their own". |
| Sime Darby Berhad | "Sime Darby Berhad is a socially responsible corporate citizen committed to delivering a sustainable future. Towards this goal, four pillars – Environment, Community, Education and Sports – have been identified to support its corporate social responsibility initiatives, all predicated on the principles of nation building." |
| Public Bank Berhad | "As a leading financial services group in the country, the Public Bank Group is fully committed to responsible corporate practices, which have a positive impact on the social and economic development of the countries that the Group operates in, by conducting its business activities in a sustainable manner". |
| Genting Berhad | "We are a global leader in the leisure and hospitality industry providing responsible world-class entertainment within a sustainable business environment towards our guest, our staff, our investors and our environment." |
| Axiata Group Berhad | "We are mindful of our responsibility towards our stakeholders, particularly shareholders, customers, communities and employee, and as such our Corporate Responsibility (CR) efforts integrate social, environmental, and economic concerns so as to ensure that we continue to deliver sustainable value for our long term growth and success." |
| Tenaga Nasional Berhad (TNB) | "As the country's largest electricity company, TNB has taken on the role of 'Powering the Nation', and this forms the core of the Company's CSR policy. The Company also contributes significantly to the socio-economic development of the nation by promoting education, providing aid to marginalised communities, promoting the growth of small and medium sized companies and by supporting sporting talent. TNB also offers one of the most extensive employee benefits packages in the country." |
| Petronas Chemicals Group Berhad (PCG) | "PETRONAS carrying out business in a socially responsible and holistic manner to ensure continued growth and success for the benefit of present and future generations wherever we operate. PETRONAS focus on: shareholder value, efficient use of energy and water, and supporting the use of renewable energy, limiting emissions of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere, Biodiversity, Health, Safety and Environment, product stewardship and safeguarding human rights within our sphere of influence, contributing to community needs, ensuring fair employment practices, developing talents and conducting our business in a transparent manner." |
| IOI Group | "IOI's approach on Corporate Responsibility is to strike a Sustainable Balance between the conflicting demands of internal and external stakeholders in our pursuit of profits and growth. Our operating principles on "sustainability" are reflected in our VISION statement and Code of Business Conduct since 1995 – way before "social-environment" and "global warming" concern took global centre stage. |
| RHB Capital | RHB CSR philosophies are: To embark on initiatives that cut across and impacts the community at large, transcending cultural and religious differences. Voluntary contribution that is expected to create and instil positive social values not only to the group's employees, but also to the society as a whole. |

This study applied content analysis technique of company web sites, annual reports and CSR reports available via downloadable in PDF format to identify their CSR philosophy that reflect their CI. This technique used to describe CSR patterns of selected organizations.

From the presence of certain words, concepts, themes, phrases, characters, or sentences within texts or sets of texts, it allows researcher to quantify their presence in an objective manner [22]. Samples used were top 10 Malaysian companies listed in Forbes Global 2000 (2012) (Table I)

Forbes Global magazine annually ranks top public companies worldwide based on four criteria namely sales, profit, assets and market value (Table II).

## IV. RESULTS AND CONCLUSION

CSR philosophy and statements represent part of the identity mix (CB, CC and symbol) used by organization to transmit CI as an image (positive or negative perception of company's reality) is captured in the minds of their internal and external stakeholders.

CSR as CI comprises the essential features of the organization that differentiate one organization from the other in term of their reality, the way they perceive themselves and their behavior. The "soul" of each company is presented through their CSR statements for examples some company include the statement about their CSR commitment in "about us" pages in their website. Not much difference in terms of CSR philosophy/statement by the 10 companies was found (Table II); CSR is described mostly as a set of company beliefs, value, culture and direction towards sustainability of their environment and community that give the companies their specific and unique personality which concurs with definition of CSR as the personality of the company [11], [23]. These descriptions also fit the CI definition as they group essential features of each organization although they serve different market segments. It is observed that each company listed at least one value of CSR elements that relate to ethical practices, economical, social, and environment commitments. We can observe that the values refer to the observance of laws and regulations, internal rules, honesty, transparency, integrity or diversity in promoting community relations and environmental protection.

As a conclusion, we can consider corporate identity as the collection of essential features that make an organization. Therefore, in order to understand the identity of company, we should know the role of CSR at the same time. CSR serve as identity and also strategic planning of the company by not fulfilling their economic profit but also contribute to the growth and the development of society and environment. Thus, stakeholders can use CSR as a way to understand the identity of a company; and that company can also use it as a tool to build their CI.

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