OPERATIONALIZATION OF CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY IN MULTI NATIONAL ENTERPRISES

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Dr. Ravi Kumar Goriparthi
Assistant Professor, Institute Of Public Management And Development Studies, Department Of Public Management , Ethiopian Civil Services University, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Mobile: Ethiopia

M.Ali Hussain
Associate Professor, Institute Of Public Management And Development Studies, Department Of Public Management , Ethiopian Civil Services University, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Abstract

To improve competitive advantages, reputation, customer relations and to improve financial and nonfinancial performance in the long term firms today engage Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) with a strategic intent. This paper is studied on multi-national enterprises (MNE's) in India and the focus of this paper is on the operationalization of firm specific external and internal strategic orientation, these orientations via the lens of the Market Orientation theory by using qualitative and quantitative research. It is found that Internal Orientation-the degree of strategic orientation, the timing and design of CSR communication, and Firm Performance displayed significant positive relationships with CSR. In summary, this paper aid practitioner to execute the CSR practices in order to gain from it; investors and market analysts' ability to assess firm level CSR efforts.

Keywords: CSR; External Orientation; Internal Orientation; Strategic Intent; Firm

1. Introduction to CSR

Organizations are pressed to take responsibility for the ways their operations impact societies and the natural environment and they are asked to apply sustainability principles that demonstrate the inclusion of social and environmental concerns in business operations and in interactions with stakeholders. To understand and enhance relationships that a company has with its employees, managing body and other key stakeholders—such as activists, and communities , customers, suppliers, investors, public and governmental officials,—is vital to make it successful, on the basis of its ability to respond to competitive conditions and corporate social responsibility (CSR).

2. Objectives of the study

In order to contribute to the CSR stream, this paper intends to examine

1. Examine firms' methods of choice regarding CSR communication
2. Focus on customers due to the focus on strategic management; and
3. Investigate external and internal strategic reasons (as opposed to ethical reasons) behind undertaking CSR; and
4. Attempt to predict CSR levels based on firm level characteristics (orientations).

3. Research Questions

For the above objectives, the main research questions (being both qualitative and quantitative in nature) are:

I.   Why do firms engage in CSR?

II. What are the outcomes (tangible and non-tangible firm performance effects) of CSR for those firms who engage in it?

III. How do firms structure their CSR activities (making them operative)?

IV. How are CSR activities and outcomes communicated?

4. Methodology of the study

A series of qualitative interviews were conducted on executive CSR-managers in industry leading multi-national Indian enterprises and the interviews were designed to be exploratory in nature to extract firm specific views of CSR. The questionnaire was designed around three key sections; the first section covered questions regarding the respondent's demographic data, the second section addressed specific questions regarding firms' external- and internal orientation and their characteristics the third part contained additional these questions were indirectly related questions to core CSR research finally control variable measures were considered like industry affiliation, firm size, customer categories and market intensity and for computation purposes they are labeled the variables CV1, CV2, CV3 and CV4 (Control Variable industry affiliation, firm size, customer categories and market intensity).

5. Limitations of the Research

As with this study there are some major limitations which are: Using only MNEs; this paper results might not be generalized into other CSR research contexts; this study covers only

one fiscal year and CSR measurement which is mainly concerned about maximizing research robustness (based on primary data via questionnaires and interviews).

6. CSR and External Orientation

The management of stakeholder relationships provides critical control factors such as failure correction , interaction structures, and conflict management and firms with strong and specific modes of customer interaction (for example frequent or scheduled meetings), or specific modes of customer to be more market oriented. The arguments regarding customer relationships leads to first set of hypotheses;

H1: There is a positive relationship between CSR and the degree of Customer Interaction.
H2: There is a positive relationship between CSR and the degree of Customer Orientation.
H3: There is a positive relationship between CSR and the degree of Market Orientation.

In summary it is concluded that the cumulative hypotheses for External Orientation (H1; H2 and H3) will also relate positively to CSR. In summation

Hi: There's a positive relationship between External Orientation and CSR.

7. CSR and Internal Orientation

In today's global marketplace, firms' should integrate their CSR activities with their corporate culture and strategy, one of the intentions is to identify and research internal orientation to contribute to the CSR research field which leads to next hypotheses;

H4: There is a positive relationship between CSR and the degree of Strategic Orientation.
H5: There is a positive relationship between CSR and Strategic CSR Intent.
H6: There is a positive relationship between CSR and Operative CSR Management.
H7: There is a positive relationship between CSR and the presence of Industrial Standards (ISO9000, ISO14000 and ISO26000).

8. CSR and Market Communication

One of the important tasks for firms undertaking CSR is to communicate their efforts to the marketplace and signal what type of stakeholder relationship they strive for Hence, the relationships between CSR and market communication form the next hypotheses:

H8a: There is a positive relationship between CSR and CSR Communication (timing).
H8b: There is a positive relationship between CSR and CSR Communication (design).

It is therefore concluded that the expectations and hypothesize that the cumulative hypotheses for Internal Orientation (H4; H5; H6; H7; H8a and H8b) will relate positively to CSR for the research context;

Hii: There's a positive relationship between Internal Orientation and CSR.

9. CSR and External Orientation

9.1 Customer Interaction (VCI)

Table 1

Customer Interaction (VCI)

Corn Blanca's Alpha	.653
R	.305
R Squares	.093
Adjusted R square	.033
Std Error of the Estimate	3.82847
Durbin- Watson	1.513
F	1.559
Sig for ANOVA (P-value)	.182
Beta	.022
t	1.409
Sig for coefficients (P-value)	.163

The independent variable was Customer Interaction (VCI) with CSR as the dependent variable while controlling for industry affiliation, firm size, customer categories and market intensity (Table 1). The degree of Customer Interaction measurement was confirmed as valid by the reliability (consistency) test (Cronbach's Alpha .653). The OLS linear regression indicated that Customer Interaction were insignificant (P-value .182) with an F-value of 1.559, review of the coefficients suggests that the variable Customer Interaction was insignificant at p .163 with a standardized t-coefficient of 1.409 and Beta at .022. While the positive relationship between the Customer Interaction and the Index were in accordance to the expectations, it was insignificant. Hence, hypothesis H1 was not supported. Firms' that have written instructions or shared project organizations regarding customer interaction are not related to CSR.

9.2 Customer Orientation

Table 2

Customer Orientation (VCO)

Corn Blanca's Alpha	.854
R	.642
R Squares	.412
Adjusted R square	.374
Std Error of the Estimate	4.52149
Durbin- Watson	1.829
F	10.671
Sig for ANOVA (P-value)	.001
Beta	.121
t	6.688
Sig for coefficients (P-value)	.001

The independent variable was Customer Orientation (VCO) with CSR as the dependent variable while controlling for industry affiliation, firm size, customer categories and market intensity (Table 2). The degree of Customer Orientation measurement was confirmed as valid by the reliability (consistency) test (Cronbach's Alpha .854). The OLS linear regression indicated

that Customer Orientation were significant (P-value .001) with an F-value of 10.671. The R-square was .412 with an adjusted R-square of .374 with standard error at 4.52149, review of the coefficients suggests that the variable Customer Orientation is significant at p .001 with a standardized t-coefficient of 6.688 and Beta at .121. The positive relationship between the Customer Orientation and the Index were in accordance therefore H2 is supported and it is more customers oriented which signifies that these firms' align their daily activities towards customer satisfaction, customer preferences and customer problem solving.

9.3 Market Orientation

Table 3

Market Orientation (VMO)

Corn Blanca's Alpha	.766
R	.499
R Squares	.249
Adjusted R square	.199
Std Error of the Estimate	4.57933
Durbin- Watson	2.036
F	5.033
Sig for ANOVA (P-value)	.001
Beta	.080
t	4.376
Sig for coefficients (P-value)	.001

The independent variable was Market Orientation (VMO) with CSR as the dependent variable while controlling for industry affiliation, firm size, customer categories and market intensity (Table 3). The degree of Market Orientation measurement was confirmed as valid by the reliability (consistency) test (Cronbach's Alpha .766). The OLS linear regression indicated that Market Orientation were significant (P-value .001) with an F-value of 5.033. The R-square

was .249 (sufficient in cross-sectional data) with an adjusted R-square of .199 with standard error at 4.57933. Review of the coefficients suggests that the variable Market Orientation is significant at p .001 with a standardized t-coefficient of 4.376 and Beta at .080. The positive relationship between the Market Orientation and the Index were in accordance so H3 is supported and it implies it is more market oriented which signifies that these firms' focus its operations towards customer perception of their value proposition, market knowledge management and competitive intelligence.

9.4 Cumulative Variable External Orientation (Hi)

Table 4

Variable External Orientation (VEO)

Corn Blanca's Alpha	.847
R	.650
R Squares	.422
Adjusted R square	.384
Std Error of the Estimate	2.16323
Durbin- Watson	1.926
F	11.101
Sig for ANOVA (P-value)	.001
Beta	.058
t	6.725
Sig for coefficients (P-value)	.001

The independent variable was External Orientation (VEO) with CSR as the dependent variable while controlling for industry affiliation, firm size, customer categories and market intensity (Table 4). The degree of External Orientation measurement was confirmed as valid by the reliability (consistency) test (Cronbach's Alpha .847). The OLS linear regression indicated that External Orientation were significant (P-value .001) with an F-value of 11.101. The R-square was .422 with an adjusted R-square of .384 with standard error at 2.16323, review of the coefficients suggests that the variable External Orientation was significant at p .001 with a

standardized t-coefficient of 6.725 and Beta at .058. The positive relationship between the External Orientation were in accordance therefore *Hi* is supported and it is more customers and markets which signifies that these firms' align their activities towards customer satisfaction, customer preferences and customer problem solving by focusing on their value proposition, market knowledge management and competitive intelligence.

10. CSR and Internal Orientation

10.1 Strategic Orientation

Table 5

Variable strategic Orientation (VSO)

Corn Blanca's Alpha	.695
R	.456
R Squares	.208
Adjusted R square	.155
Std Error of the Estimate	3.05853
Durbin- Watson	2.014
F	3.983
Sig for ANOVA (P-value)	.003
Beta	.047
t	3.842
Sig for coefficients (P-value)	.001

The independent variable was Strategic Orientation (VSO) with CSR as the dependent variable while controlling for industry affiliation, firm size, customer categories and market intensity (Table 5). The degree of Strategic Orientation measurement was confirmed as valid by the reliability (consistency) test (Cronbach's Alpha .695). The OLS linear regression indicated that Strategic Orientation were significant (P-value .003) with an F-value of 3.983. The R-square

was .208 (sufficient in cross-sectional data) with an adjusted R-square of .155 with standard error at 3.05853. Review of the coefficients suggests that the variable Strategic Orientation is significant at p .001 with a standardized t-coefficient of 3.842 and Beta at .047. The positive relationship between the Market Orientation and the Index were in accordance so H4 is supported and it implies it is more strategically oriented which signifies that these firms' adapt a more long-term perspective monitoring changes in customer demands, adjust their value proposition to exceed customer expectations and predict competitor behavior.

10.2 Strategic CSR Intention

Table 6

Variable: Strategic CSR Intention (VCSRINT)

Corn Blanca's Alpha	.791
R	.627
R Squares	.394
Adjusted R square	.354
Std Error of the Estimate	3.39172
Durbin- Watson	1.877
F	9.870
Sig for ANOVA (P-value)	.001
Beta	.087
t	6.445
Sig for coefficients (P-value)	.001

The independent variable was Strategic CSR Intent (VCSRINT) with CSR as the dependent variable while controlling for industry affiliation, firm size, customer categories and market intensity (Table 6). The degree of Strategic CSR Intent measurement was confirmed as valid by the reliability (consistency) test (Cronbach's Alpha .791). The OLS linear regression indicated that Strategic CSR Intent were significant (P-value .001) with an F-value of 9.870. The R-square was .394 with an adjusted R-square of .354 with standard error at 3.39172. Review of the coefficients suggests that the variable Strategic CSR Intent is significant at p .001 with a

standardized t-coefficient of 6.445 and Beta at .087. It is concluded that H5 is supported and it implies it specific strategic CSR Intents which signifies that these firms' voluntarily engage in CSR to increase their reputation, to reduce their market risk or to gain competitive advantages.

10.3 Operative CSR Management

Table 7

Variable: Operative CSR Management (VCSROM)

Corn Blanca's Alpha	.844
R	.530
R Squares	.281
Adjusted R square	.234
Std Error of the Estimate	4.04568
Durbin- Watson	1.935
F	5.937
Sig for ANOVA (P-value)	.001
Beta	.080
t	4.940
Sig for coefficients (P-value)	.001

The independent variable was Operative CSR Management (VCSROM) with CSR as the dependent variable while controlling for industry affiliation, firm size, customer categories and market intensity (Table 7). The degree of Operative CSR Management measurement was confirmed as valid by the reliability (consistency) test (Cronbach's Alpha .844). The OLS linear regression indicated that the Operative CSR Management was significant (P-value .001) with an F-value of 5.937. The R-square was .281 (sufficient in cross-sectional data) with an adjusted R-square of .234 with standard error at 4.04568. Review of the coefficients suggests that the variable Operative CSR Management is significant at p .001 with a standardized t-coefficient of 4.946 and Beta at .080. The positive relationship between operative CSR Management and the Index were in accordance so H6 is supported and it implies CSR efforts is to a greater extent

managed higher up in their hierarchy which signifies that these firms' coordinate and address CSR at the upper management level (CSR-committee, TMT or Board of Directors) and that they prioritize regular assessment of their CSR efforts displayed by a fixed item on TMT meeting agendas.

10.4 Industrial Standards

Table 8

Variable: Industrial Standards (VISO)

Corn Blanca's Alpha	.738
R	.627
R Squares	.394
Adjusted R square	.354
Std Error of the Estimate	2.7575
Durbin- Watson	1.887
F	9.866
Sig for ANOVA (P-value)	.001
Beta	.071
t	6.435
Sig for coefficients (P-value)	.001

The independent variable was Industrial Standards (VISO) with CSR as the dependent variable while controlling for industry affiliation, firm size, customer categories and market intensity (Table 8). The degree of Industrial Standards measurement was confirmed as valid by the reliability (consistency) test (Cronbach's Alpha .738). The OLS linear regression indicated that Industrial Standards were significant (P-value .001) with an F-value of 9.866. The R-square was .394 with an adjusted R-square of .354 with standard error at 2.75752. Review of the coefficients suggests that the variable Industrial Standards is significant at p .001 with a standardized t-coefficient of 6.435 and Beta at .071. The positive relationship between the Industrial Standards and the Index were in accordance so H7 is supported and it implies Industrial Standards to a greater extent which signifies that these firms' also use Industrial

Standards for waste management (ISO14001), quality (ISO9001) or for CSR (ISO26000) to support their operations in that order.

11. CSR and Market Communication

11.1 CSR Communication Timing

Table 9

Variable: CSR Communication Timing (VCommTim)

Corn Blanca's Alpha	.542
R	.618
R Squares	.381
Adjusted R square	.341
Std Error of the Estimate	2.44351
Durbin- Watson	1.866
F	9.375
Sig for ANOVA (P-value)	.001
Beta	.061
t	6.271
Sig for coefficients (P-value)	.001

The independent variable was CSR Communication Timing (VCommTim) with CSR as the dependent variable while controlling for industry affiliation, firm size, customer categories and market intensity (Table 9). The degree of CSR Communication Timing measurement was sufficiently valid according to the reliability (consistency) test (Cronbach's Alpha .542). The OLS linear regression indicated that CSR Communication Timing were significant (P-value .001) with an F-value of 9.375. The R-square was .381 with an adjusted R-square of .341 with standard error at 2.44351. Review of the coefficients suggests that the variable CSR Communication Timing is significant at p .001 with a standardized t-coefficient of 6.274 and

Beta at .061. The positive relationship between the CSR Communication Timing and the Index so H8a is supported and it implies pays greater attention to the timing of CSR Communication which signifies that these communicate their CSR efforts or programs as a reactive response to media attention in general, and occasionally in a proactive (preceding) way.

11.2 CSR Communication Design

Table 10

Variable: CSR Communication Design (VCommDes)

Corn Blanca's Alpha	.597
R	.621
R Squares	.386
Adjusted R square	.346
Std Error of the Estimate	2.53192
Durbin- Watson	1.874
F	9.558
Sig for ANOVA (P-value)	.001
Beta	.064
t	6.335
Sig for coefficients (P-value)	.001

The independent variable was CSR Communication Design (VCommDes) with CSR as the dependent variable while controlling for industry affiliation, firm size, customer categories and market intensity (Table 10). The degree of CSR Communication Design measurement was sufficiently valid according to the reliability (consistency) test (Cronbach's Alpha .597). The OLS linear regression indicated that CSR Communication Design were significant (P-value .001) with an F-value of 9.558. The R-square was .386 with an adjusted R-square of .346 with standard error at 2.53191. Review of the coefficients suggests that the variable CSR Communication Design is significant at p .001 with a standardized t-coefficient of 6.335 and Beta at .064. The positive relationship between the CSR Communication Design and the Index were in accordance so H8b is supported and it implies CSR Communication Design to a greater extent which

signifies that these communicate their CSR efforts or programs in a holistic fashion targeting their customers, products and employees in that order.

11.3 Cumulative Variable Internal Orientation (Hii)

Table 11

Variable Internal Orientation

Corn Blanca's Alpha	.912
R	.620
R Squares	.385
Adjusted R square	.344
Std Error of the Estimate	5.1558
Durbin- Watson	1.839
F	9.499
Sig for ANOVA (P-value)	.001
Beta	.130
t	6.315
Sig for coefficients (P-value)	.001

Hypothesis *Hii* explores the relationship between CSR and Internal Orientation (i.e. the cumulative results from the significant variables Strategic Orientation, Strategic CSR Intent, Operative CSR Management, Industrial Standards and the Timing and Design of CSR Communication). The independent variable was Internal Orientation (VIO) with CSR as the dependent variable while controlling for industry affiliation, firm size, customer categories and market intensity (Table 11). The degree of Internal Orientation measurement was confirmed as valid by the reliability (consistency) test (Cronbach's Alpha .912). The OLS linear regression indicated that Internal Orientation were significant (P-value .001) with an F value of 9.499. The R-square was .385 with an adjusted R-square of .344 with standard error at 5.15582, review of the coefficients suggests that the variable Internal Orientation was significant at p .001 with a

standardized t-coefficient of 6.315 and Beta at .130. The positive relationship between the Internal Orientation and the Index were in accordance therefore *Hii* was supported. The higher a firm rank on the CSR Index it is more internally oriented (in terms of strategic orientation, strategic CSR intention, operative CSR management, industrial standards and the timing and design of CSR communication) than firms ranking lower on the Index which signifies that these firms' engage in CSR to increase their reputation, to reduce their market risk or to gain competitive advantages by adapting a long-term perspective on changes in customer demands, adjust their value proposition to exceed customer expectations and predict competitive behavior. These activities are coordinated at an upper management level. They commonly use industrial standards to support their operations (ISO14001, ISO9001 or ISO26000) and actively plan how to communicate their CSR (reactively) in relation to media attention and design it in a holistic fashion to their customers, employees or in regards to their products.

12. Firm Performance

Table 12

Variable strategic Orientation

Corn Blanca's Alpha	.844
R	.624
R Squares	.389
Adjusted R square	.349
Std Error of the Estimate	3.0003
Durbin- Watson	1.883
F	9.691
Sig for ANOVA (P-value)	.001
Beta	.077
t	6.382
Sig for coefficients (P-value)	.001

The independent variable was Firm Performance (VFP) with CSR as the dependent variable while controlling for industry affiliation, firm size, customer categories and market intensity (Table 12). The degree of Firm Performance measurement was confirmed as valid by

the reliability (consistency) test (Cronbach's Alpha .844). The OLS linear regression indicated that Firm Performance were significant (P-value .001) with an F-value of 9.691. The R-square was .389 with an adjusted R-square of .349 with standard error at 3.00003, review of the coefficients suggests that the variable Firm Performance was significant at p .001 with a standardized t coefficient of 6.382 and Beta at .077. The positive relationship between the Firm Performance and the Index were in accordance so Hiii was supported which signifies that these firms' level of financial performance is improved by their CSR efforts in regards to the primary measures operating profit, sales growth and market share.

Since CSR has an impact on the strategic management field and is considered to be a core business function central to a firm's strategy it continues to be an important research field and it is further an increasingly applied practice for firms worldwide today and a long-term investment that can lead to competitive advantages. The intention of this study is to extend the understanding of CSR, this was achieved by researching CSR from a strategic management perspective with a market orientation and underlying strategic reasons and managerial practices regarding CSR enablement (operationalization), how CSR were aligned with firm objectives, and how CSR were communicated. For the above reasons this study investigated CSR; used preliminary data from surveys and interviews (in combination with secondary data); assessed a broad range of industries (instead of a specific industry); applied the Market Orientation theory perspective; Focused on customers due to the focus on strategic management; Examined firms' methods regarding CSR communication, investigated external and internal strategic reasons (as opposed to ethical reasons) behind undertaking CSR, and Predicted CSR levels based on firm level characteristics.

13. Managerial Implications

Since timing is only one part of CSR communication which is equally important, it would be of value for academics and practitioners to understand if firms adopt the recommended approaches to CSR communication, or if they routinely prefer to apply a traditional marketing approach (promotion based) to CSR. Since CSR communication is stated as something that

should be holistic we recommend practitioners to assess their marketing expenditure focus in this aspect, and academics to continue researching CSR communication. In this study it is found that the level of external orientation and internal orientation were positively related to the level of CSR, and that firm performance was positively affected by the level of CSR for the sample firms taken.

14. Future Research

One of the major issues repeated throughout CSR research (including this study) is the lack of distinct CSR measures two measures are needed that would be invaluable for future CSR research. The first needed measure target to assess the level of CSR among sample firms (external measure) and the other regards how to 'make the business case' for CSR with precision (internal measure). That is, to enable ROI measurement of a specific CSR initiative or a portfolio of CSR efforts at the firm level and it would potentially benefit from targeting firms that have been applying CSR for a number of years or in general be researched over a period of time using time series. In parallel it would also progress firm performance aspects of CSR if other financial performance indicators were addressed, assessed and validated.

15. Conclusion

Since Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has transformed from being a social concept (charitable cause) into a corporate behavior and management philosophy, it has also transformed into a corporate adage that firms should engage voluntarily in CSR with a strategic intent with the intention to gain from it. Thus, it has transformed from being perceived as a cost only into becoming an investment in intangible assets. In this study it is found the core strategic CSR intentions to evolve around: gaining a positive reputation; relationship improvements with customers, suppliers and employees; cost- or risk reduction objectives; or to achieve other competitive advantages. Hence, CSR is today indeed considered to be a long-term investment that leads to competitive advantages, improved reputation, improved customer relations and improved firm performance and overall the findings support the hypotheses that the level of External Orientation and Internal Orientation positively affect CSR and that CSR positively affect firm performance.

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