

PRACE NAUKOWE

Uniwersytetu Ekonomicznego we Wrocławiu

RESEARCH PAPERS

of Wrocław University of Economics

Nr 387

Social Responsibility of Organizations Directions of Changes

edited by
Magdalena Rojek-Nowosielska



Publishing House of Wrocław University of Economics
Wrocław 2015

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Layout and proof-reading: Barbara Łopusiewicz

Typesetting: Małgorzata Czupryńska

Cover design: Beata Dębska

Information on submitting and reviewing papers is available
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Wrocław 2015

ISSN 1899-3192
e-ISSN 2392-0041

ISBN 978-83-7695-502-5

The original version: printed

Printing: EXPOL

Publications may be ordered in Publishing House
tel./fax 71 36-80-602; e-mail: econbook@ue.wroc.pl
www.ksiegarnia.ue.wroc.pl

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THE USE OF BUSINESS MODELS IN FORMING CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Summary: The social responsibility of a firm has a strategic dimension. From an analysis of the literature in this field, one may distinguish between classical and innovative approaches to corporate social responsibility (CSR). In the opinion of the authors, the classical approach places stress on practical actions leading to the implementation of the ISO 26000 norm. In contrast, this innovative approach, whose representatives are corporate shared value (CSV) and hybrid value chain (HVC), uses practical business models and value chains in order to create shared (economic and social) value. Several business models described in the literature (*separation, long tail, multifaceted platforms (free and freemium) and open*) are assessed based on eight criteria. This evaluation helped to define the relationship of complementary and compensatory business models to an innovative approach to CSR. Two of them (*separation and open*) show high similarity (complementary relationship) with the assumptions of this approach.

Keywords: corporate social responsibility, shared value, hybrid chain value, business models.

DOI: 10.15611/pn.2015.387.07

1. Introduction

The subject of the strategic approach to the social responsibility of a firm has been considered in many academic articles. The main research field of the authors of this article is investigating strategic approaches to corporate social responsibility (CSR) [Kroik, Skonieczny 2011, pp. 193–206; 2013, pp. 70–83; Malara, Kroik 2012, pp. 11–22]. Based on a study of the literature, two schools of strategic approaches to CSR may be distinguished. The first, the classical approach, assumes that the strategic value of CSR lies in the day to day practical activities of a firm, e.g. implementing the ISO 26000 norm, and, in the long run, the direct effects of these activities lead to financial benefits to a firm. Hence, one important task for socially responsible firms is supporting the new society of organizations [Drucker 2010, pp. 214–216] and measuring their social sensitivity [Wachowiak 2013, p. 117]. The second type of approach, called the innovative approach, is based on creating a business model

and/or a value chain in which economic and social values come together to create shared value. In their interpretation of corporate shared value (CSV), M. Porter and M. Kramer argue that firms should “(...) create positive feedback between the prosperity of the firm and the well-being of local society, which results in long-term profits,” as well as “(...) follow legal and ethical norms, and minimize the negative effects of the activities of the firm” [Porter, Kramer 2011, p. 53]. On the other hand, V. Budinich and S. Serneels define shared value as the construction of a hybrid value chain (HVC), which in their opinion symbolizes the combination of two forces – a business model and a social model [Budinich, Serneels 2012, p. 8].

Both of these approaches to creating values shared by both business and society require building *bridgeheads* of trust within local society, which according to the CSV approach take the form of clusters. In our opinion, both of these approaches (classical and innovative) give results in the upper part of an imaginary graph in which the axes correspond to economic benefits to a firm and value added to the well-being of society. Studies of Polish firms have shown various approaches to CSR. It has been noted that many firms take a reactive approach to this problem, that is deny the importance of CSR and only satisfy general and legal requirements or only use cosmetic solutions. However, many examples of proactive behaviour have also been observed, that is to say: strategies striving to achieve effective actions and implement sustainable development, or creating new business models based on the concepts of CSR [Makuch 2012, p. 14].

The application of a business model and/or value chain in the field of social responsibility requires an understanding of the complexity and variety of resources generated according to various systems and the potential of values created by different strategic instruments in practice. The road to understanding such complexity and variety can be expressed by a detailed assessment of the types of business models considered in the literature. In addition, it can be stated that in recent years thinking in terms of business models has become a sign of a new form of strategic thinking [Duczkowska-Piasecka (ed.), Poniatowska-Jaksch, Duczkowska-Małysz 2013; Duczkowska-Piasecka (ed.) 2012]. The range of business models proposed in the literature means that an assessment of their potential for creating economic and social value (and/or harmonizing these values within a chain) is a very difficult, if not almost impossible, exercise. To illustrate these difficulties, it should be noted that there are at least several dozen business models described in the literature and in practice it is very difficult to distinguish between some of these models. In such a situation, the problem of harmonizing social responsibility with the goals of a firm using a business model should be solved using a more general approach. One possible approach is to classify business models. A. Osterwalder and Y. Pigneur classify business models so that the models in a class share many common characteristics and tend to lead to similar types of behavior [Osterwalder, Pigneur 2012, p. 59]. Several dominant classes of business models can be distinguished from the literature. Five of these will be described in this article and analyzed from the point of view of the

strategic dimension of CSR. Hence, the goal of the article is to assess the potential of harmonizing economic and social values within these classes of business models. This analysis aims to conclude which of these classes are most favorable from the point of view of the innovative approach to CSR.

2. Assumptions, tasks and constraints in the innovative approach to CSR

In describing the tasks and constraints inherent in the innovative approach, we refer to the concepts of CSV and HVC, which are of a very similar nature and hence we do not make a strict distinction between them. Firstly, a fundamental goal in the activities of a firm is to continuously find innovations resulting from the ability to make profits which lead to an increase, rather than decrease, in social value. Secondly, closer inspection enables us to distinguish a range of traits and tasks, some of which are described in Table 1.

The tasks involved in the innovative approach to corporate social responsibility within the process of creating socio-economic value similarly correspond to the tasks involved in creating a business model, understood as a strategic tool aimed at realizing the vision, mission and values of a firm. In the opinion of the authors, when socio-economic values are the driving force behind business activities, then businesses become social organizations (institutions). Other authors have expressed a similar opinion that the distinction between commercial and non-commercial organizations is becoming blurred. For example, R.M. Kanter states on the basis of her research, lasting more than 20 years and covering four continents, that *the institutional approach* (as she calls it) is a characteristic of effective firms which are resistant to changes in fortune and also admired for practices through which they become *vehicles* for realizing social goals [Kanter 2012]. Such firms are by definition social institutions. It is clear that the strategic approach begins by a firm adopting a vision, mission and fundamental values. For a social institution, these concepts are a major determinant of long-term success, as well as defining standards and operational practices. In order for a strategy to be successful, employees should be allowed to work in a flexible environment, which gives them the freedom to build social networks that allows the exchange of ideas and resources. Giving a firm the status of a social institution may lead to reservations of a formal nature if the role of a firm in society is understood in a narrow way. However, when the social role of a firm is understood in a wider context, such a status is justified. R.M. Kanter suggests that in order to harmonize the production and sale of goods with activities resulting from the social responsibility of a firm, the activities of a firm must become embedded in local society. Hence, there is no doubt that in order to achieve the standards and operational practices resulting from the vision, mission and fundamental values of a firm, there must first be a clearly formulated strategy and business model.

Table 1. Tasks involved in the innovative approach to corporate social responsibility in the process of creating shared economic and social values

Type of task	Rationale	Constraints
Defining new contexts for a business strategy	The appearance of new demands, products, clients	Not possible in some fields
New ways of configuring the value chain	Achieving a competitive advantage that is longer lasting than the traditional approaches of lowering costs and improving quality	The need to answer questions of a very complex nature
Cooperation and coexistence with actors of various characters	The effects of formal and informal social contracts favoring the development of clusters	Inertia acting against the initiation of cooperative action, the requirement of many actors, and sometimes rivals, to cooperate
Social and institutional pressure	The ever deepening realization in society that resources are becoming more and more limited	The limited abilities of decision makers to harmonize economic and social goals
Transforming products and markets	The greater potential of commercial firms than of government and NGOs to attract clients to products which create social value	Unclear divide between commercial and non-commercial organizations
Widening the horizons of a conventional business model	Intensification of business activities requires harmonization of business and social goals	The need to change the way in which managers think and development of education programs in business
Adapting to legal regulations	Benefits of investments in socio-economic value together with the formulation of clear and measurable social goals, achievement of effectiveness targets, the measuring and reporting of results	The imposing of specific practices which hinder innovation and induce costs
Ending the thinking of zero sum options in decision making	The need to accept that markets are shaped through social needs and not via purely economic forces Social costs may be positively correlated with the level of production	Following the mind-set of improving one's reputation means that one sees action as a necessary evil that induces costs

Source: [Kroik, Skonieczny 2013, pp. 70–83].

Considering in turn the concepts of A. Osterwalder and Y. Pigneur, who highlight nine elements (fields) of a business model, we note that a firm can express its role as a social institution in each of these fields. For example, in the field of *client groups*, in order to achieve its goals, an enterprise must take social dimensions into

account (as can be seen in the description of several tasks in Table 1). Another field, *expressed values*, provides a framework in which goods and services are presented to client groups. The field of *key partners* does not refer just to suppliers or economic partners, but also to cooperation with society and the expectations resulting from such cooperation. Two standard elements *key resources* and *activities* result from the hybrid value chain. Also, two classical elements used to classify the business models described in the literature which are elements in the set defined by A. Osterwalder and Y. Pigneur, *the means of generating revenue* and *cost structure*, can be reformulated to take the social context into account. This is reflected in the comments on social costs, the existence of synergy effects between clusters, or support via legal regulations in Table 1. The two final elements: *means of building relations with clients* and *channels* (e.g. information and distribution) are by definition of a social nature and from the point of view of consumers' demands and social groups are key areas in the creation of shared values. Several of the comments in Table 1 highlight this. These factors confirm that the classification of business models may be treated as a step towards the description of innovative approaches to CSR.

3. Classes of business models and innovative approaches to CSR

A. Osterwalder and Y. Pigneur distinguish between five classes of business models: *separation*, *long tail*, *multifaceted platforms* (*free* and *freemium*) and *open* [Osterwalder, Pigneur 2012, pp. 58–123]. In the light of the analysis carried out below, their role in the formation of the social responsibility of a firm varies.

3.1. The *separation* class

Such a model is followed when there exist differing economic, competitive and cultural realities in separate fields of an organization which are expressed in the business model. This variation leads to separating an organization into departments, which may result above all from the characteristics of maintaining relations with clients, the innovative nature of products and the specific conditions resulting from the principles behind business activities (model) aimed at its infrastructure (its maintenance and improvement). In practice, the activities of one department affect the activities of others, but by separating them, the level of conflict is lowered and there is no need to find difficult compromises within an organization.

The introduction of social values according to the CSV concept often results from product innovation and/or the need to manage relations with clients. A key question in the area of customer relations is how clients can become collaborators in the processes occurring in the value chain. In practice, the existence of multiple business models in firms adopting the CSV approach seems to be unavoidable. However, this does not stop a firm from carry out its own activities developing infrastructure. The fundamental business plan of financial institutions lies in carrying out varying

transactions, although they often stress their pro-social aspects. It has been noted in various reports of the Forum *Odpowiedalny Biznes* (15+15) (Responsible Business) that the social action of firms is very often separated from their core activities. Most commonly, social action is coordinated by a separate unit (a foundation or completely different renowned social organization). However, such firms do not tend to take an innovative approach to social responsibility, but rather a traditional approach (ignoring the question of whether such practices constitute a strategic approach to CSR). On the other hand, although direct social action is organized by a separate entity, this does not stop firms from using their own resources and internal processes in achieving social goals. It seems likely that even if they wish to switch from the traditional to the innovative approach to CSR, firms using a model based on *separation* will continue to do so.

3.2. The *long tail* class

This approach is characterized by offering a large range of low volume products. Such an approach is adopted by a firm active in a large number of niche markets. However, the overall profitability of such a firm may be greater than a firm following the concept of *separation*. Niche markets give firms the opportunity of obtaining larger profit margins, which translates into large total profits when a large assortment of products is produced. Analysis of the applicability of such business models leads us to the conclusion that they are well adapted to niche clusters of clients and maintaining good relations with them. For these reasons, the Internet plays a key role in the majority of firms adopting such a strategy. There are many examples of Internet sites dedicated to highly segmented markets, e.g. publishing and music, where authors and artists use self-service sites and tools to promote their work.

From the point of view of approaches to CSV, such business models seem to be very open to an innovative approach, due to the natural tendency of firms to be able to interact with clusters of clients. The value chain of such firms is very short, similarly to firms working in information technology. However, it seems that firms adopting the CSV approach will use the *long tail* model as a useful tool to strengthen strategic areas. The common reliance of such an approach on the Internet indicates that *long tail* models share common features with *multifaceted platform* models.

3.3. The *multifaceted* class, including the *free* and *freemium* subclasses

As the name of this class implies, this approach involves building contacts between two or more related groups of clients (by linking e.g. demands, interests or solutions). The value of such a platform results from an enterprise playing the role of an intermediary and enabling contact between groups. The larger the number of participants attracted to a platform, the greater the value of the platform (the so-called network effect). Platforms have been present on the market for a long time.

However, the development of the Internet has led to a rapid expansion of the use of this approach. An obvious example of such a platform is Google, which sends adverts to specifically targeted users based on their profile. The advertisers pay for such a service according to the value of the key words related to the contents of an advert (e.g. the AdWords service). At the same time, internet surfers and the creators of texts receive payments from a platform provider. Such an approach is common, e.g. the free newspaper "Metro." It should be noted that this class of business plans can take several different forms and when a client group can always make use of a service for free, then such an approach is termed "FREE." Other business models use the so-called *bait and hook* approach, where the initial payment is often symbolic, but following payments ensure a profit margin. The "FREEMIUM" approach should be mentioned here, where certain basic services are provided for free, but it is necessary to pay for more advanced services. Skype and the Flickr service (which enables the publication of photos on the Internet) are examples of such an approach. They use *open source* programs, together with more advanced versions, which must be paid for. Without going into details regarding variants of such schemes, payments are normally small, but enough to cover costs.

The characteristics of this class enable us to conclude that such business models can be useful sources for developing a concept of CSV. Social values may be harmonized with accessibility, as well as broadening the consciousness and abilities of clients. However, whether these are a derivative of the assumptions of CSV depend on the real life context. Such accessibility may promote CSV or be purely a marketing tool.

3.4. The class of *open* business models

This type of business models is based on searching for collaborators and partners in the surrounding environment (hence the term *open*). In general, two subclasses can be distinguished, *out to in* (OI) and *in to out* (IO). In the first case, a firm uses ideas from outside the organization and in the second case a firm transfers ideas that it does not use itself to other organizations. One characteristic of both of these options is their approach to innovation (closed and open innovation). Procter & Gamble and GlaxoSmithKline are clear examples of the IO approach. GlaxoSmithKline is described in a list of examples given by the *Odpowiedzialny Biznes* ("Responsible Business," 15 examples by Kuraszko, Augustyniak [2010, p. 88]), which describes their "flagship" program in Poland educating society on the threats of cancer. This is an example of a firm which possesses knowledge and intellectual property rights in a certain area and spreads this knowledge by enabling access to preventative and therapeutic treatment in a specific group of clients. The OI option is more commonly associated with the development of a form of platforms which enables groups of clients to cooperate with each other. The firm InnoCentiv, which acts as an intermediary between inventors/scientists and firms looking for innovative solutions,

is an example of such a business model. A feature that distinguishes such an approach from the *multifaceted platform* approach is the context of innovation and on the clear orientation towards cooperation. From the point of view of innovative approaches to CSR, *open* business models may be a natural way to create socio-economic value. In particular, the IO approach shows great potential to generate and maintain value chains. One certain constraint on business models of this type is the need to adopt a similar approach to the one described in the section on *multifaceted platforms*. However, these constraints become less binding when the vision and mission of a firm is based on cooperation with various partners and functioning in a social environment.

4. An assessment of the classes of business models – complementary and substitutional relations with the assumptions of the innovative approach to CSR

Innovative approaches to CSR are naturally associated with the possibilities given by the Internet. It should be stressed that modern packages for analyzing databases enable firms to closely follow the behavior of clients or use technology based on Heidegger's existential understanding of humanity [Drake 2014, p. 57] to support marketing strategies. This leads to new discoveries regarding preferences and dependencies, which are of great use for business purposes. Such an action, however, is not necessarily a complementary means of supporting social responsibility. Many of the areas highlighted in Table 1 may not be automatically associated with marketing technologies. It seems that such technologies also constitute a substantial threat, since they may take the place of the CSV concept and create values related purely to the image of a firm and not strategic values. If that were to occur, the classical approach based on the ISO 26000 standards would be a safer and longer lasting way of achieving CSR. An example of such a threat is given by the practices of different firms in the field of advertising. Competitive battles for the tastes of customers take place in other competitive areas than quality and the winner on the market is most commonly a firm which sells their products most effectively. The innovativeness of an enterprise, in this situation, is the result of pressure from two directions – the demands of customers and advertising within the market. This affects future margins, investments and workplaces, which means that advertising expenditure indirectly affects the unemployment rate [Salik 2014].

Based on the arguments regarding the way in which the classes of business models discussed above promote or hinder in achieving the strategic goals of the innovative approach to CSR, one may talk about being complementary to (supportive of) CSR or substitutive (compensatory) to CSR. This is summarized in Table 2.

The description of the influence of the class of a business model on the implementation of the innovative approach to CSR presented in Table 2 is the subjective opinion of the authors. It should be interpreted as the degree to which

the class of a model can support (through complementarity) or hinder (through compensation) the implementation of CSR based on the hybrid value chain (HVC).

Table 2. The degree to which classes of business models are complementary and substitutive with respect to the innovative approach to CSR

Class of a business model	Degree of complementarity to the innovative approach to CSR	Degree of substitution with respect to the innovative approach to CSR
SEPARATION	High	Minimal
LONG TAIL	Low	Low
MULTIFACETED PLATFORM	Medium	Medium
OPEN	High for the IO subclass, medium for the OI subclass	Low, but could be higher depending on the characteristics of a platform

Source: author's own work.

Based on this analysis, it can be stated that the *separation* and *open* classes of business models can provide strong support to implementing the concept of CSR. Combining the nature of these two classes, which would lead to synergetic effects in the implementation of the innovative approach to CSR, is possible to some degree. By nature, the long tail class of models does not particularly promote (nor hinder) the implementation of the innovative approach to CSR. In the case of the *multifaceted platform* class, although the use of information technology supports the innovative approach, there exists a threat that the opportunities given by this technology lead to CSR becoming of secondary importance. Hence, the authors suggest that such a class of business models is as much a hindrance to the innovative approach to CSR as it is a support.

It may be possible that these classes of business models can be used to classify the level of social responsibility of firms. The actions of the firm Nestlé, which have introduced an initiative of an undoubtable socio-economic nature, are an example of this. Due to the high level of unemployment among young people, Nestlé have set the goal of employing ten thousand young workers in Europe over the next three years and help the same number in the form of work practice and professional training. This goal is the result of a vision to increase market share through innovation, which is an economic goal. On the other hand, new healthy food products and modern solutions regarding the preparation of meals, innovative coffee machines and products for animals, etc. may be defined as social goals. Moreover, Nestlé intends to influence partners (suppliers) in such a way as to promote the employment of young people. It plans to form an open alliance with 10 firms in each country where it has a production base and at the European level with its 15 largest suppliers. Poland will be a beneficiary of this program, called "The Youth Employment Initiative," in which it is stated that "sustainable development is not just ecology and socio-

-economic sustainability is based on employment, which is a key to solving other problems” [Nowy sojusz Nestlé... 2014]. The classes of business models supporting these socio-economic goals are *separation* and *open*, which supports the arguments given in Table 2.

5. Summary

The arguments presented in this paper serve to note the relation between different classes of business models and the requirements of social responsibility as understood by the concept of CSV. In the opinion of the authors, there is a clear relation between the class of business models used and the implementation of CSR. By analyzing these relations a deeper understanding of the practical value and implementation of the concept of CSV may be achieved.

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WYKORZYSTANIE MODELI BIZNESOWYCH W KSZTAŁTOWANIU SPOŁECZNEJ ODPOWIEDZIALNOŚCI PRZEDSIĘBIORSTWA

Streszczenie: Społeczna odpowiedzialność przedsiębiorstwa ma wymiar strategiczny. Analiza dostępnej literatury umożliwia wyróżnienie klasycznego i innowacyjnego podejścia do CSR. W ocenie autorów podejście klasyczne kładzie nacisk na działania polegające na wdrażaniu normy ISO 26000. W przeciwieństwie do tego podejście innowacyjne, których przedstawicielami są CSV i HVC, posługuje się praktycznymi modelami biznesowymi i łańcuchami wartości w celu tworzenia wspólnej (ekonomiczno-społecznej) wartości. W oparciu o osiem przesłanek oceniono schematy modeli biznesowych (*rozdzielanie, długi ogon, platformy wielostronne (free i freemium) i otwarte*) opisanych w literaturze przedmiotu. Ocena ta pozwoliła na zdefiniowanie relacji komplementarnych i kompensacyjnych schematów modeli biznesowych wobec podejścia innowacyjnego CSR. Dwa z nich (*rozdzielany i otwarty*) wykazują dużą zbieżność (relacja komplementarna) z założeniami tego podejścia.

Słowa kluczowe: społeczna odpowiedzialność przedsiębiorstwa, wartość ekonomiczno-społeczna, hybrydowy łańcuch wartości, modele biznesowe.