

Article

A Corporate Case Study: The Application of Rokeach's Value System to Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)

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Abstract: Starting from the research assumption that corporate social responsibility (CSR) values cannot be communicated efficiently, if they do not belong naturally to a company's identity, this paper debates the prospect of applying Rokeach's Value System (1973) to Continental corporation's CSR values. Rokeach's Value System (1973) is used to compare Continental data provided online and establish whether the ideal corporate values presented by the company are similar to the real values, with respect to the CSR values. We base our assessment of the level of integration of CSR into corporate identity on Maon et al.'s integrated model of CSR development (2010). Our analysis reveals that although the Continental corporation works with the CSR concept in a strategic and systematic manner, the set CSR values do not correspond to the real corporate values.

Keywords: corporate social responsibility; Rokeach's Value System; corporate identity; corporate values

1. Introduction

Today, the concept of corporate social responsibility (hereinafter referred to as CSR), is so widespread, that anyone interested in addressing the topic cannot refrain from wondering about the actions and intentions of companies regarding environment and community protection. Starting with magazines, newspapers, specialty books, dictionaries, encyclopaedias, websites, scientific conference papers, and blogs, the concept is largely debated, but also applied differently from one geographical area to another or from one company to another.

The way in which CSR is applied by companies is of major importance for their financial future. Both performing on the basis of CSR and communicating it to a wider audience influence the community's perception about the company (the so-called social license, i.e., accepting or refusing a company by a certain community). There is also a general acceptance of the fact that disclosure of CSR-related information also brings important financial benefits [1].

In this context, our research strives to answer the following question: How does a company communicate its values in its social responsibility principles?

Thus, we debate the value system developed by Rokeach (1968 and 1973) [2,3] and see how it could be used to analyze the corporate values of a specific company (for a similar endeavour, see Aust [4]). Our case study is represented by Continental corporation.

The idea of prioritizing (or systematically ordering) a set of values is reflected in the concept of a value system, which, according to some researchers, comprises two sets of values. Whereas Rescher discussed one's fundamental ("intrinsic") values [5], Rokeach called these terminal ("ultimate, desired, end state of existence") values [3]. Rokeach called his second set of values instrumental ("modes of conduct") values [2], considering these as the mechanisms that individuals use in order to achieve

their long-term, terminal objectives (values). In this framework, terminal values refer to beliefs or conceptions about ultimate goals or desirable end states of existence that are worth striving for (such as “happiness” or “wisdom”), whereas instrumental values refer to beliefs or conceptions about desirable modes of behaviour that are instrumental to the attainment of desirable end states (such as “ambitious” or “responsible”). On the one hand, Rokeach [2] estimated, in his Value System (RVS), that individuals possess thirty-six values, whereas Schwartz [6], in his Value Survey (SVS) distinguishes fifty-seven values. On the other hand, remarkably, the number of estimated values in Confucianism was given as “approximately fifty” [7], although they were referred to as “virtuous items” (e.g., “benevolence”, “righteousness”, “respectfulness”, “wisdom”, “piety”, “moderation”, “empathy”, “humour”, and “justice”, etc.).

Consequently, Meglino and Ravlin [8] emphasized two major dissimilarities in the comprehension of how values are structured. Foremost, values are understood in relation to each other, they are hierarchically organized and possibly traded off against each other, and, subsequently, they exist independently and function as “equal in their intensity”, as Lusk and Olivier observed [9]. This discrepancy, in our opinion, signals the challenging nature of studying values, sometimes referred to as their incommensurability, since there is no common measure for a given value and they can be perceived as incomparable due to their circumstantial quality [10]. In this sense, the importance of context and perspective, whereby *prima facie* duties may be over-ridden by other ethical demands regarding sustainability, has been explained by Maclagan [11].

Nevertheless, the problem of equivalence or the potential for different understandings of a given value once again highpoints the inherent methodological difficulties regarding an empirical study of personal or corporate values. However, this ought not be an insurmountable issue, since “the psychological significance that a particular value has for a person is far more important than its semantic meaning” [2].

Therefore, whereas a nomothetic or quantitative study would be used so as to predict or control [12], the idiographic, qualitative case study, undertaken in order to describe and understand, was selected as the most appropriate choice of method for the exploratory study which formed the basis of this investigation on corporate social responsibility.

The paper is structured as follows: Section 1 addresses the theoretical background (comprising a literature review on concepts like corporate positive identity, corporate value, and CSR); Section 2 points out the methodology and data (presenting the materials and methods used in our qualitative research); Section 3 presents the findings; Section 4 discusses the findings; and finally, Section 5 provides conclusions.

2. Theoretical Background

The concept of value is the pivotal topic of this research, as values are understood to be constitutive of both corporate identity, defined by Cornelissen as “the profile and values communicated by an organization” [13], and CSR practices [4,14].

Therefore, from the perspective of a values’ system, this paper discusses the relationships between corporate identity and CSR, and introduces an analytical framework that takes its theoretical point of departure from Rokeach’s Value System (1973) [2].

Society, more and more, debates and criticize the companies’ traditional role, due to their profit-oriented focus. There have been studies which show that society expects a sustainable and ethical behaviour, as well as companies’ involvement in charity activities (Ihlen et al. [15]). This is linked as well to the companies’ values and to how these are incorporated in their identity (for the connection between corporate values and several factors see Frederick [16]). The latter concept has raised interest since 2000, when Balmer and Greyser [17] showed that “in short, corporate identity has emerged as a hot topic for senior company management and those who advise them as well as for academics studying the territory”. In time, this concept was valued through models like ACID Test (Balmer and Greyser, [17]) and the Integrated CSR Evaluation Model (Maon et al. [18]).

CSR is positively related to organizational identification, most of the studies suggesting that CSR improves a company's reputation, which, in turn, leads to employees being gratified to work there. In addition, social identity theory would suggest that if treating others well is part of an employee's self-concept, then they would find greater identification with an organization that treats others well [19]. "Taking an economic but also social responsibility enables it not only to survive, but to improve day by day its systemic effectiveness and, thus, create increasing value levels" (as Fedele notes, [20]), because "a company can only survive by innovating continuously itself, in a manner consistent with the values deemed relevant by the community, because if it remained motionless in their structures and in their strategies, sooner or later perish for failure to meet the cost of long period. All that would be generated as a result of the loss of social consensus and vital contributors to the benefit of other organizations with which it is competing on the market. If the environment evolves, the company must evolve with it" [20].

Many terms have been used interchangeably with CSR such as corporate citizenship, corporate social performance, stakeholder theory, sustainability, and sustainable development, to name a few.

For purposes of this paper, we use the delineation of Glavas and Kelley [21] which builds on Waddock's [22] definition, "[CSR] is defined as caring for the well-being of others and the environment with the purpose of also creating value for the business. CSR is manifested in the strategies and operating practices that a company develops in operationalizing its relationships with and impacts on the well-being of all of its key stakeholders and the natural environment". The researchers employed a bi-factor model of CSR and found that both environmental and social dimensions had a common effect on work meaningfulness, with the social dimension having a greater effect above and beyond the common effect.

Kim et. al [23] posited that this was due to the interpersonal nature of CSR, in other words, humans find meaningfulness through helping and improving the well-being of others. CSR contributes to the development of a favourable company image, enabling the firm to secure critical resources, enhance product competitiveness, and boost employee productivity [24]. From this angle, emphasizing goodness and positive human potential, the recent emphasis is put on positive outcomes, processes and attributes within an organizational context, and, similarly, in the organizational identity literature, the new domain of positive identity has emerged. Focusing on the positive is suggested to cultivate collective identities that mobilize collective action and enable valuable organizational outcomes [19,25].

We draw attention to the fact that although positivity may be seen as a precondition for identity construction and maintenance, and, consequently, to corporate value, surprisingly few studies have addressed it. Corporate identity is essential, since it has a powerful effect on companies' image and reputation (Cornelissen, [13]). Furthermore, in our opinion, companies' identity, vision, mission, and values are protected under the brand umbrella.

2.1. Corporate Positive Identity

Nevertheless, in our analysis, we have to address first the topic of identity applicable to companies (hereinafter referred to as corporate identity).

Identity represents the keystone of one of the most significant areas of study in recent years, corporate marketing [26], this term also providing the foundation for numerous concepts, such as corporate brand identity [27]. The observation that organizations are invested with distinguishing and differentiating traits, sometimes called the corporate identity mix, is a key theme not only within the marketing [26,28–31], but also within strategy [32,33] and business concept literatures [34,35]. A basic premise of the traditional corporate identity literature is that every entity has innate clearly demarcated and, in many concerns, observable identity traits. Therefore, identity is believed to be inherent to the entity, the identity traits or facets distinguishing and differentiating one organization from another [26].

Important to the above, as noted by Balmer [26], is the juridical (legal) notion of identity, since time immemorial, in law, organizations being deemed to be “legal persons”, having the same rights and obligations as individuals. Therefore, it is obvious that a company’s corporate identity is shaped by an entity’s legal articles of association. Not only can these documents stipulate the scope of the business, ownership, governance, corporate name and even visual identity, but also demarcate whether an organization functions as a public limited company, a partnership, or as a publicly owned entity. Significantly, these legal instruments not only stipulate ownership but may also (sometimes implicitly) identify key stakeholder groups.

Regarding a company’s identity, we share Albert and Whetten’s behaviourist perspective, the Organizational Identity Theory, and therefore we agree to the fact that this concept depicts a more or less shared and collective sense of “who we are as a company” [36]. Specialty literature illustrates and acknowledges that the corporate identity construct refers to this perspective of an organization’s unique characteristics and is, actually, rooted in the behaviour of members of the entity [37]. However, whereas organizational identity addresses how internal members conceive the identity of their organizations, corporate identity reflects how identity in terms of “who we are as an organization” is developed and communicated [38] to gain positioning and differentiation in competitive markets [39]. Consequently, corporate identity, as opposed to organizational identity, rather reflects a marketing or, to some extent, a business perspective [26] and not (only) a behaviourist perspective. Moreover, as opposed to organizational identity that is supposed to be fixed (“enduring”) [36], corporate identity is characterized as being complex (“multifaceted and multidimensional in nature”), variable (“immutable, but evolutionary in character”), and heterogeneous (“informed by multidisciplinary perspectives in terms of comprehension and management”) [27].

The huge amount of literature dedicated to the designation of corporate identity, in spite of the eclectic definitions, seems to agree, at least on one topic, that corporate identity has lost its rigid, fixed, consistent description becoming a dynamic notion. “Corporate identities are never entirely ‘fixed’, they are in a constant state of flux”, as Balmer summaries [27].

Dutton et al. synthesized literature on identity in organizations into a four-part typology that answers the question, “What makes a work-related identity positive?” [19]. We briefly summarize this typology below, as it provides an important review and synthesis of potential sources of positive identity, and therefore corporate value in work-related identities. The four-part categorization includes the virtue perspective, the evaluative perspective, the developmental perspective, and the structural perspective, each of which highlights a different source of positivity and corporate values. According to the virtue perspective, an identity is positive when it is infused with the qualities associated with people of good character, such as “master virtues” [40] like wisdom, integrity, courage, justice, transcendence, redemption, and resilience. The evaluative perspective regards individuals as holding their personal identity (i.e., as an individual), relational identity (i.e., as a member of a relationship), and social identities (i.e., as members of social groups). In this respect, an identity is positive when it is regarded favourably by the individual who holds it or by referent others who regard the identity favourably. The developmental perspective emphasizes on modifications in identity over time and assumes that identity is capable of progress and adaptation, avowing that an identity is positive when it progresses toward a higher-order stage of development (e.g., progress through distinct career stages) and when the individual defines him- or herself in a way that generates fit between the content of the identity and internal or external standards (e.g., adapting to new roles at work, or resisting stigmatization and oppression). The structural perspective stresses on the ways in which the self-concept is organized, an individual’s identity structure being more positive when the multiple facets of the identity are in balanced or complementary relationship with one another, rather than in tension or conflict with one another.

2.2. A System of Corporate Values

Continuing with our scientific approach, in corroboration with the topic related to corporate identity, in our analysis, we must also broach the subject of the values' system applicable to companies.

Metaphorically speaking, companies were often associated with human beings, being even endowed with qualities or emotions. They can manifest a good or bad behaviour, they can show concern, worries, hopes or certitude; they can have political opinions and they can also influence other people's opinions.

Including corporate values in an organization, not only generates a community of "long term" motivated employees for the company, but also circumstances for interaction between several stakeholders.

In this context, we believe that a company, endowed with a certain social status, can and must publicly express its values.

However, within an organization, not all employees behave in the same way, they do not think the same, they do not (re)act the same, hence it is difficult to say that a company behaves like a single person, who acts exclusively as per its conscience, values, and principles. Pruzan [41] states that it is acceptable for members of a company to have their own personal values, even not identical to those of the company, however, these should not conflict with the company's values [42]. Moreover, the researcher also asserts that by respecting established "criteria and standards", one develops a "shared value system". It represents "criteria accepted by the organization and stakeholders, in order to show its identity and possibly self-evaluate" [41].

Our research is based on Rokeach's Value System [2]. His study is often used in organizational processes, due to the clarity of the value system developed in his book, *The Nature of Human Values*, one of the most quoted books for the analysis of human values, but also corporate values (as Aust perceives [4]).

According to Rokeach, a value can be defined as "an enduring belief that a specific mode of conduct or end state of existence is personally or socially preferable to an opposite or converse mode of conduct or end state of existence" [2].

Beyer and Lutze [43] consider the contributions of Allport [44] and Rokeach [2,3] extremely important. Rokeach's Value System represents a central element within social sciences, as Aust [4] observes. His value theory is based on relationships between beliefs (what a person considers and relies on), values (major beliefs which generate a person's own value system), and attitudes (several values that lead a person's behaviour).

"Beliefs define an object or situation as good or bad or advocate a course of action as desirable or undesirable" [4].

Rokeach [2] asserts that people have 36 central dominant beliefs that can be classified in 18 instrumental values (day-by-day actions) and 18 terminal values (final objectives), as listed in Tables 1 and 2, below. Although, initially, he presented 12 terminal values and 12 instrumental values [3], he realized that he had missed too many important values, therefore, the number went up to 18 [2].

His value theory was based on the following five hypotheses:

- h1** People's values are relatively small in number;
- h2** People's values are the same, but with different intensities;
- h3** Values generate a system of values;
- h4** Values are based on culture, society, and personality;
- h5** Values are going to be asserted through messages.

Henceforth, values can be examined, proving that when a value is acknowledged, it becomes part of an organized system, called "value system".

Table 1. The 18 instrumental values (desirable modes of conduct) (Rokeach, 1973).

Type of Value	Value	Definition	Examples
Competence Values	<i>Ambitious</i>	hard-working	aspire
	<i>Capable</i>	competent	competence, competent, effective, able
	<i>Clean</i>	clean	clean
	<i>Imaginative</i>	daring	original
	<i>Intellectual</i>	intellectual	intelligence, informed, intelligent
Moral Values	<i>Logical</i>	rational	logic, consistent, rational, reasoned
	<i>Broadminded</i>	open-minded	flexible
	<i>Cheerful</i>	light-hearted and joyful	fun
	<i>Courageous</i>	standing up for one's beliefs	(en)courage, firm
	<i>Forgiving</i>	willingness to pardon others	forgive
	<i>Helpful</i>	working for the welfare of others	help, assist, serve, improve, better, support
	<i>Honest</i>	true	honesty, true, sincere, ethical
	<i>Independent</i>	self-reliant	independent, alone
	<i>Loving</i>	affectionate	love, gentle, charity, take care
	<i>Obedient</i>	obedient	obedience, observant
	<i>Polite</i>	courteous	polite(ness)
<i>Responsible</i>	accountable, answerable	dependable, reliable, responsibility	
<i>Self-controlled</i>	self-controlled	control	

Source: Own elaboration, after Rokeach (1973) [2].

Table 2. The 18 terminal values (ultimate, desired end state of existence) (Rokeach, 1973).

Type of Value	Value	Definition	Examples
Social in Orientation	<i>A world of peace</i>	freedom	peace
	<i>A world of beauty</i>	beauty in nature and arts	beautiful
	<i>Equality</i>	equality	equal
	<i>Freedom</i>	freedom	freedom, free, choice, opportunity
	<i>Family security</i>	family security	family, stability, home, household
Personal in Orientation	<i>National security</i>	safety	protected
	<i>A comfortable life</i>	comfort	comfort, prosperity
	<i>An exciting life</i>	exciting life	exciting, active
	<i>A sense of accomplishment</i>	accomplishment	contribution, achieve, culminate, attainment
	<i>Happiness</i>	happiness	happy, content
	<i>Inner harmony</i>	inner harmony	balance(d)
	<i>Mature love</i>	social and spiritual intimacy	love
	<i>Pleasure</i>	enjoyable, leisurely life	enjoy, leisure, pleasure
	<i>Salvation</i>	eternal life	salvation
	<i>Self-respect</i>	self-esteem	worth
	<i>Social recognition</i>	respect from others	accepted, acceptable, appreciate, recognize
<i>True friendship</i>	close companionship	friend, friendship	
<i>Wisdom</i>	mature understanding	sense, insight, perspective	

Source: Own elaboration, after Rokeach (1973) [2].

There were critics that considered Rokeach's Value System as not appropriate for corporate values, however, in our opinion, there were sufficient (although not many) case studies, which proved the system's viability, within the analysis of corporate values [4,42].

2.3. Corporate Values' Communication and Assessment

Nurturing key stakeholder relationships and corporate communications' management are vital in order to create a unique corporate identity for the organization [27]. From this perspective, Fedele focused on the mechanisms that govern sustainability in a scenario in which the need to take decisions

and to adopt behaviours that take into due consideration the stakeholders' expectations emerges with vigour [45].

Given the background, we believe sustainability must be considered as a healthy dynamism and not as the spasmodic search for a single point of balance. To achieve high levels of sustainability, however, it is necessary for there to be a widespread sharing of values between those declared by the organization and those that guide the behaviours and attitudes of its employees, contributing to generating positive effects in the socio-economic environment.

On the subject of micro-level environmental behaviour within companies, past research has explored and measured employees' behaviour. In regard to the employee communication behaviours found in the specialty literature, we depict four types of employee compartments. The first to be observed, employee advocacy, refers to the fact that internal communication about CSR can have a great impact on employee activism of the company, also defined as "speaking highly of the company to outsiders" [46]. The second one views employees as CSR communicators, this perspective actually being an inside-out approach to CSR communication, meaning that employee commitment to CSR policies can (and will) contribute to the further definition, development, implementation, and support of all corporate CSR policies and activities [47]. A third approach regards the micro-level of sustainability and views employees as sustainable behaviour enactors, due to the fact that they not only support, but are also involved in sustainability efforts, looking at other trustworthy and informed employees as models for norms of how to behave in a given circumstance [48,49]. Alternatively, more recent approaches have focused on employee volunteering either in an organized manner (through or with their employer) or undertaken during work time (and encouraged by the employer) [50,51].

By communicating corporate values, companies might develop an advantage in regard to their competitors who do not build a strong relationship with stakeholders and, consequently, reach planned objectives faster. Communication of corporate values is difficult since it goes beyond the traditional corporate responsibility area. First, the company's management is in charge of communicating corporate values and corporate identity. The company's management is vital in this process, as they are responsible for the symbolic building of corporate identity and its translation into corporate mission and values, as Cornelissen detects [13].

To prove the connection between corporate identity and CSR values, there are different methods of generating operations within the organization's activity, which lead to the possibility of evaluating this connection. Interest in measuring the degree of CSR involvement already existed in the 20th century. Abbott and Mosen [52] used a method named "social involvement disclosure" to analyze the yearly reports of companies in Fortune 500. By counting the problems' frequency, the authors noticed the impact of social involvement directions, as well as the effects on profitability.

For CSR to be fully integrated in the company, the created values must be among the corporate values, thus, part of the corporate identity. This standpoint is backed up by several theses focused on CSR implementation and development [18,53,54].

One model agreeing with the significance of CSR communication throughout all aspects of the organization (cultural, organizational, strategic, and moral) finds its correspondent in Maon's integrated model of CSR development [18].

In this sense, Maon et al. [18] admits that there are several types of approaches for the CSR implementation process, drawing attention to the fact that these are mostly models which describe the companies' development, while applying CSR. Unfortunately, on the one hand, most of them use a single type of approach, such as either an organizational or a strategic approach. On the other hand, the integrated model of CSR development is a dynamic process.

Therefore, one of the most comprehensive stage models is proposed by Maon et al. (2010), this model of CSR development seeking to illustrate the development of CSR practices "into an embedded culture where organizational activities are directly influenced by CSR principles" [55]. The model highpoints the strategic nature of CSR, and therefore starts from the hypothesis that CSR

development is based on: cultural, moral, strategic, and organizational features, CSR progress meaning moving from cultural reluctance, to cultural grasp and, finally, reaching cultural embedment (Table 3).

Table 3. Phases of the process of CSR development process (Maon et al., 2010).

Level	Phases	
Cultural and moral	1.	Rejection of CSR culture (when CSR is ignored and only taken into further to pressure put on companies)
	2.	Understanding of CSR culture (during the period in which the company becomes familiar with the CSR principles)
	3.	Integration of CSR culture (when the companies' culture totally integrates principles based on CSR moral and influences companies' results)
CSR integration	A.	CSR Cultural Reluctance phase
		1. Dismissing stage
	B.	CSR Cultural Grasp phase
		2. Self-protecting stage
		3. Compliance-seeking stage
		4. Capability-seeking stage
	C.	CSR Cultural Embedment phase
	5. Caring stage	
	6. Strategizing stage	
	7. Transforming stage	

Source: Own elaboration, after Maon et al. (2010) [18].

In its original form, the model entails three cultural phases divided into seven development stages. The first two phases, the cultural reluctance phase and the cultural grasp phase, are not included in our research as they deal with the stages where a company first perceives CSR as a restraint and limitation, then later on, as a duty and a burden, and, eventually, as an obligation or requirement.

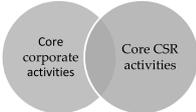
Due to the characteristics and developmental stage of the company that we analyzed in the case study, our research takes into consideration only the CSR cultural embedment phase, with its three stages, the caring stage, the strategizing stage, and, respectively, the transforming stage.

On the one hand, in the caring stage we find active management of CSR issues, coordinated at a cross-functional level going beyond compliance, the CSR being seen as beneficial. In the strategizing stage, on the other hand, CSR becomes the scope of all corporate activities and strategy. Finally, in the final stage of the model, the transforming stage, CSR is integrated into every aspect of the entity, while culture and strategy have changed completely with a proactive commitment to human well-being and ecological sustainability (Table 4).

Let us remark that this last transforming stage is about embracing new ethical values, closely connected to human being, as well as supporting sustainability and environment protection, CSR motivation being the basis of it. The organization adopts a position of total transparency and it is willing to pass away its acquired expertise about CSR. CSR is present in all activity branches, through associating with other companies, in the same activity field or not.

We believe that this is the most appropriate model for the evaluation of CSR values integration into corporate values, as it takes into consideration all four features of a company, moral, organizational, cultural, and strategic. Accordingly, we can notice the way in which companies adapt and align their corporate value system.

Table 4. CSR cultural embedment phase (Maon et al., 2010).

Caring Stage		Corporate values and CSR values are related and/or compatible, but are clearly conceived and represented separately, being compartmentalized distinctly.
Strategizing Stage		Corporate values and CSR values are integrated but can still be separately identified.
Transforming Stage		Corporate values and CSR values are similar/synonymous (if not identical), being impossible to separate one system from the other.

Source: Own elaboration, after Schmeltz (2014), Maon et al. (2010) and Morsing and Schultz (2006) [18,42,47].

3. Methodology and Data

On the basis of the findings in the literature, we formulated the following assumption: CSR cannot be efficiently communicated if it does not naturally belong to the company's identity.

In order to prove our hypothesis, we carried out a case study, since we considered it provides opportunities to apply general principles to a specific situation.

We chose the Continental corporation because the automotive industry is always under the scrutiny of stakeholders regarding social responsibility, as Cornier and Magnan [56] depicted. This attention is due to a high level of pollution in this industry. The Continental corporation operates mainly in developing countries in which there is a lack of legislation concerning CSR practices (e.g., Romania, Slovakia, Hungary, Thailand, Malaysia, and India, etc.). The Tires Division, alone, generated 59% of the sales, in 2018. Moreover, the Continental corporation presents a high level of integration of CSR. In Romania, for example, it is considered to be an example of good practice and behaviour regarding the use of CSR practices, as Iamandi illustrated [57].

As illustrated in the model by Maon et al. [18], a company communicates the same corporate values only if it synchronizes the different means of presenting them (symbols, communication, and behaviour). This kind of combination can be realized only if the company is already in the third phase of CSR integration, i.e., the CSR cultural embedment phase, where the corporate values are almost identical to the CSR values.

Thus, we analyzed the texts provided on the company's website regarding mission, vision, and corporate values. The analysis was carried out by using a qualitative approach to interpretive content analysis, then small paragraphs were evaluated and interpreted in the theoretical framework represented by Rokeach's Value System.

These generated the ideal corporate values which were compared with data on the CSR values obtained through a thorough examination of the principles of corporate social responsibility, and subsequently, both were compared with the real corporate values extracted from press articles and final reports (which includes the letter of the chairman of the executive board). These texts represent the direct manner of transmitting the perceived corporate identity to stakeholders, as they are well controlled and carefully prepared by the company. Here, the company can disseminate its values since "web communication is not filtered by gatekeepers before it reaches its audiences", as Schmeltz observed [42].

Obviously, not all terminal values in Rokeach's Value System could be applied directly to the corporate context, but nevertheless it can be done. These values represent the way in which a company justifies its attitudes and actions. For instance, the value of "friendship" can be considered a solid collaboration among companies. "Politeness" can be considered as taking into account the views of the

stakeholders, while “honesty” can be considered as making business in a transparent way. There are also values which are not part of a corporate context, such as “mature love” (intimate relationship, spiritually, and sexually), or “salvation” (spiritual salvation of the soul). Because these values are not significant for our study, we eliminated them, resulting in a system consisting of 34 values.

Rokeach’s Value System has the advantage of being able to compare three datasets for the Continental corporation and determining if ideal corporate values presented by the company are the same as its real values and, then, with the CSR values.

In order to obtain the three datasets (real corporate values, ideal corporate values, and CSR values), we used information publicly available on the company’s website (Table 5).

Table 5. Data.

Type of Value	Data Source
Ideal Corporate Values	Web texts with statements regarding vision, mission, and values of the corporation, https://www.continental-corporation.com/en/company/corporate-strategy/continental-the-future-in-motion-57126 last accessed on 25 February 2019 [58].
Real Corporate Values	916 press articles from November 2014 until February 2019, Annual Reports for the period 2014–2018, https://www.continental-corporation.com/en/company/ last accessed on 25 February 2019 [58].
CSR Values	The principles for corporate social responsibility presented in https://www.continental-corporation.com/resource/blob/63008/b2a149aaa1fa4378497bb23046b55b06/csr-principles-en-data.pdf last accessed on 25 February 2019 [58].

Source: Own elaboration.

Content analysis, in general, is a research tool used to determine the presence of certain words, themes, or concepts within some given qualitative data (i.e., text). Using content analysis, researchers can quantify and analyze the presence, meanings, and relationships of certain words, themes, or concepts, also making inferences about the messages within the texts, the writer(s), the audience, and even the culture and time of surrounding the text. In this context, our study examined all texts for the frequency of occurrence of identified terms (word counts).

Therefore, for the real corporate values, we basically used the software tool “Navigation” from Microsoft Word which counted the number of occurrences of a keyword. The keywords used were the names of values themselves and the examples for each value in Tables 1 and 2 (for example, “sincere” for value “honesty” in the whole article or report).

Finally, we coded all three datasets, based on Rokeach’s Value System, and afterwards categorized the results as:

- Primary (the most important values to be addressed, highest frequency of occurring);
- Secondary (still very important values, but with a lower frequency);
- Tertiary values (values of minor additional importance, not very frequent values).

4. Findings

During the analysis, we noticed huge differences regarding the counting of some values, mainly due to the size of the documents under examination (Table 6). The occurrences are first ordered by real values, from high to low frequency of occurrence, as real values are the reference for the other sets of values (ideal and CSR values) (Table 7).

Table 6. Total number of occurrences for terminal and instrumental values.

Value	Number of Occurrences—<i>Real Values</i>	Number of Occurrences—<i>Ideal Values</i>	Number of Occurrences—<i>CSR Values</i>
Terminal Values			
A sense of accomplishment	1440	5	1
A comfortable life	899	1	1
Social recognition	724	0	0
Freedom	578	8	5
An exciting life	546	0	0
Family security	353	2	0
Inner harmony	241	9	1
True friendship	236	0	0
Wisdom	184	0	0
Pleasure	99	0	0
Happiness	96	1	0
Equality	70	0	1
National Security	36	1	0
Self-respect	16	0	0
A world of beauty	2	0	0
A world of peace	0	0	0
Instrumental Values			
Helpfulness	2315	12	1
Self-control	1969	0	0
Intellectual	1873	5	0
Capable	726	3	0
Responsible	565	17	10
Imaginative	464	10	0
Independent	325	2	0
Clean	286	3	0
Broadminded	198	4	1
Logical	112	0	0
Honest	83	11	1
Courageous	71	0	0
Loving	22	1	1
Ambitious	14	9	0
Cheerful	13	0	0
Forgiving	1	0	0
Obedient	0	0	0
Polite	0	0	0

Source: Own elaboration.

Table 7. Corporate values and CSR values results.

Values Category	Real Corporate Values	CSR Values	Ideal Corporate Values
Primary	Helpfulness (IM) Self-control (IC)	Responsibility (IM) Freedom (TP) Broadminded (IM) & Comfortable life (TP) & Loving (IM) & Honesty (IM) &	Responsibility (IM) Helpfulness (IM)
	Intellectual (IC)	Inner harmony (IM) & Equality (TS) & Sense of accomplishment (TP) & Helpfulness (IM)	Honesty (IM)
	A sense of accomplishment (TP)		Imagination (IC)
Secondary	A comfortable life (TP) Capable (IC)		Inner harmony (IM) & Ambition (IC) Freedom (TP)
	Social recognition (TP)		Intellect (IC) & A sense of accomplishment (TP)
	Freedom (TP)		Broadminded (IM)
Tertiary	Responsible (IM) An exciting life (TP)		Clean (IC) & Capability (IC) Independence (IM) & Family Security (TP)
	Imaginative (IC)		Loving (IM) & Comfortable life (TP) & Happiness (TP) &
	Family security (TP)		National Security (TS)

Note: IC, instrumental (competence); IM, instrumental (moral); TP, terminal (personal); and TS, terminal (social).
Source: Own elaboration.

Subsequently, we discuss each of the three sets of values for the case of Continental corporation which include: values affirmed clearly by Continental as values which drive the organization (from now on called ideal values), corporate values which drive the company's day-by-day activity (from now on called real values), and values extracted from the company's principles of corporate social responsibility (CSR values). To facilitate the analysis, we propose that the real values are the benchmark for the other sets of values, as we are interested in the level of integration of ideal and CSR values into the real values.

4.1. Real Values

By using the tool "Navigation" from Microsoft Word on Continental press releases and annual reports, we identified the corporate values the company uses in its activity (real values), i.e., helpfulness, self-control, intellectual, and a sense of accomplishment, which comprise three instrumental values (two competency values and a moral one) and one terminal value (a personal one).

What is highlighted is the company's will to help (moral value). This value seems to be found in employees' behaviour (employees help each other and help stakeholders in meeting their requirements and needs), and in shareholders' behaviour (through the support offered to employees, a diversity of benefits). Even if it is not mandatory, Continental considers this moral value as the key to success. Helpfulness is the most frequently met value in press releases, among the terminal values.

The self-control value is a competency value characteristic to German origin companies. People do their best to control their own employees' activity. For doing that, the company needs to have a clear set of rules for each employee and stakeholder (e.g., Continental has the code of conduct for supplier) and no one should violate it.

For delivering innovative products, of the highest possible quality and creating added value, Continental employees need to cleverly balance life and work. The products created by Continental embed this characteristic, i.e., intelligence through multiple usefulness and quality (reflected in the intellectual value).

A sense of accomplishment is the final target of Continental's culture. Rooted in the willingness to deliver quality products and services, to be the leader in this activity field, professional accomplishment helps the employees to be more efficient and productive.

We also need to mention the following secondary values found in documents releases by the company: a comfortable life (899), capable (726), social recognition (724), and freedom (578). Even if freedom is the company's main directive in its ideal values, it is not met as often in press articles and reports as terminal values such as comfortable life and social recognition. To achieve these terminal values, Continental is aware of the capability it should have among its employees. All these four values support the main values stated above (helpfulness, self-control, intellectual, and a sense of accomplishment).

4.2. Ideal Corporate Values

Next, we analyse the four ideal values, then we compare them with the values present in the company's day-to-day activity.

The first ideal value found in web texts concerning the vision, mission, and values of the Continental corporation is responsibility. This term refers to productivity, efficiency, and effectiveness. Continental initiated actions for creating "the greatest possible productivity", the right amount of centralized and decentralized responsibility, for remaining competitive by combining effectiveness and efficiency, which form the engine behind their creation of value. In the real values classification, this value does not fall in the primary category, but only in the tertiary category. This represents the first difference between real values and ideal values.

The second ideal value in order of occurrences in press releases and annual reports, helpfulness, is the value fed by Continental's culture. The final declared scope of the Continental corporation's actions is safety, environment, information, and accessible cars. Unity, the will to obtain top value with this spirit, is one of Continental's objectives. The team sticks together and the diversity of people, their skills, their expertise and their experiences are a source of inspiration within Continental. The spirit of helpfulness (the value attributed to this ambition) is found in the real value of Continental's day-to-day activity. Therefore, this is the first similarity between the real values and the ideal values.

Trust is the first value presented by Continental, "we earn the trust we give". Tightly bound to responsibility, trust (seen as the consequence of honesty), serves as the help the company offers to employees, business partners, and other stakeholders. We can observe from the description of this value, that this one motivates the company to open towards other parties' needs, empathy, and orientation towards stakeholders, a help offered by removing the obstacles that they face ("we free their path of obstacles") and last, but not least, through integrity and safety that Continental offers to stakeholders. Thus, we observe a juxtaposition of the values honesty, broadmindedness, and helpfulness, and we choose Rokeach's value called "honesty" as the main value.

In this context, a first comparison between the two sets of values identifies a second major difference. Honesty, even if it is a desirable value in the Continental community, is far from being significant in the company's day-to-day activity. It appeared only 83 times in press articles and annual reports.

The value imaginative is found 10 times in web texts with the company's vision, mission, and values. In all references, it is linked to innovation ("combination of ideas and market success" and "the most important types of our profitable growth", etc.). Innovation is crucial for Continental because "innovations are the future of mobility (. . .) without movement, life stops". Imaginative value is found in the set of real values in the tertiary category, making this the third difference between real values and ideal values.

As we further analyse the secondary category of ideal values and compare them with the real values, we can observe another three differences and one similarity. These refer to the following: inner harmony (nine), ambition (nine), freedom (eight), intellect (five), a sense of accomplishment (five) and broadmindedness (four). The only similarity between real and ideal values is freedom. Freedom is about encouraging employees to organize and take responsibility for their work themselves. Therefore, it resulted to be part of Continental's culture.

For the rest of the other five values, three of them are insignificant real values in the day-to-day activity and two of them are from the primary category, therefore, very present in the day-to-day activity, and thus leading to the other five differences between real values and ideal values.

4.3. CSR Values

The primary category consists of four terminal values and six instrumental values.

The four terminal values—freedom (five), comfortable life (one), equality (one), sense of accomplishment (one)—referred to the following: (a) Freedom, linked to human rights, democracy, to the fact that Continental states that it respects freedom, and freedom of association, and collective bargaining; (b) comfortable life, linked to honouring the right to reasonable remuneration (Continental equals or exceeds the minimum level stipulated by applicable laws); (c) equality, states that Continental employees enjoy equal opportunity, regardless of age, gender, race, religion, nationality or sexual orientation; and (d) sense of accomplishment, linked to the fact that economic agents (as Continental) are required to observe the application of Human Rights.

Besides the terminal values, we have the following six instrumental values: Responsibility (10), broadmindedness (one), loving (one), honesty (one), inner harmony (one), and helpfulness (one). In the company's principles of CSR, these values can be described as follows: (a) Responsibility, the efficient and effective use of available resources, sustainability is achieved when there is a balance between economic requirements and expectations of all those who share their success. Continental respects the laws and culture of every country, it does not tolerate child labour or any form of forced labour, it complies with legal regulations regarding working time, and so on; (b) broadmindedness, Continental "conducts an open and constructive dialog with all relevant stakeholders"; (c) loving, Continental "takes suitable precautions to protect people in our company from accidents and work-related illnesses"; (d) inner harmony, Continental establishes an acceptable balance between corporation's economic requirements and the expectations of stakeholders; and (e) helpfulness, Continental's most important task is to provide people with goods, while maintaining its competitive capacity.

Regarding the comparison, neither of these 10 values are in the primary category of real values, except for helpfulness and a sense of accomplishment. We can understand that helpfulness (the most often met value in day-to-day activity) is crucial for the company and the finality of this value, besides the other two real values, making the value a sense of accomplishment to be the most desired terminal value in the company. Thus, we can observe another eight differences between real values and CSR values.

In conclusion, we notice a relatively high inconsistency between real corporate values, ideal corporate values, and CSR values. The analysis shows a fragmented and inconsistent articulation of values for corporation identity and CSR values.

Considering Maon et al.'s model of development and communication of CSR [18], Continental is situated in the fifth stage "caring stage", which reflects a larger orientation (towards society). The company is focused more on the external environment and on the long term. We could be inclined to include the development of CSR only in the second phase because of the high level of inconsistency between real, ideal, and CSR values, and because of the inexistence of values oriented towards the company's welfare (as stage five is defined). Because the fourth stage is about developing creative initiatives that reflect the core of its business activities regarding nature, society, and technology (which Continental already has through imaginative "ideal value" and intellectual "real value"), we could find that Continental initiates "communication about existing reporting efforts and ensures the results of its CSR-related programs and initiatives are made public" [18]. Moreover, Continental has elaborated principles of CSR, it has a webpage especially for CSR, therefore, we do not make a mistake when we consider the development of CSR in the third phase (fifth stage) of Maon et. al.'s model [18].

5. Discussion

Our paper focused on the mechanisms that govern sustainability (in general) and CSR practices (in particular) in a scenario in which emerges the necessity of taking decisions and adopting behaviours that take into account society's expectations (in general), stakeholders' expectations (in particular). We try to look at the core, at the heart of a business, viewing a company as a human being; therefore, we founded our research on the constructivist perspective of firm regarded as a vital system, in which sustainability should be considered as a healthy dynamism, and not as the anxious hunt for attaining equilibrium.

The analysis of the data has produced the following two main outcomes: (a) inconsistencies between corporate and CSR values and (b) a lack of integration of CSR into corporate identity.

Regarding the first issue, in the description of the CSR values throughout the principles of CSR described online, a series of inconsistencies can be observed. On one hand, the message of the day-to-day activity transmits the willingness to contribute to the development of the society, through its products, and, on the other hand, CSR principles highlight the terminal social values more than instrumental values (through statements like human rights, democracy, and equality etc.).

Last, but not least, a contradiction appears as Continental seems to implicate itself in CSR practices as a consequence of a "legitimate pressure" and not for its own desire of integrating corporate values into CSR. It is not enough, but Continental reports its behaviour only in front of those who share its success "We achieve sustainability when we establish an acceptable balance between the economic requirements of our corporation and the valid expectations of all those who share our success (the stakeholders)".

Secondly, CSR is a relatively new concept and companies may feel obliged to adopt CSR practices (by choice or because of legal pressure). In this situation, their pre-CSR identity is still deeply rooted, so they continue to communicate this identity, instead of one which integrates CSR. The current result suggests that the CSR value system may be compatible with corporate identity, but not identical to it.

The lack of integration of CSR into corporate identity could be due to difficulty in adapting to a new societal role, often referred to as "corporate citizenship" [16,59,60]. Maybe this role can be perceived like a supplementary element to the company, and not as part of corporate identity. If so, then this can be explained by Rokeach's definition, in which he states that our values are predominantly stable over time, and as a result, companies are feeling challenged in aligning new values to the old ones [2].

Finally, the lack of integration between the two concepts suggests that CSR has not become fully institutionalized [42]. CSR is perceived like a means to obtain something, to meet scopes and objectives, and it is not perceived like an objective itself.

In order to achieve the highest level of integration of CSR into corporate identity, and therefore high levels of sustainability, it is necessary to have a large distribution of values between those declared by the organization and those that guide employees' behaviours and attitudes of its employees, contributing to the generation of positive effects on the socio-environmental context.

6. Conclusions

The aim of this paper is to discuss the prospect of applying Rokeach's Value System [2] to the corporate social responsibility (CSR) of a corporation, namely Continental, starting from the research assumption, CSR cannot be efficiently communicated if it does not naturally belong to the company's identity. Rokeach's Value System is used to compare three datasets and establish if ideal corporate values presented by the company are similar to the real and CSR values. We base our assessment of the level of integration of CSR into the corporate identity on Maon et al.'s integrated model of CSR development [18].

We wanted to observe Continental's level of integration (which is considered a socially responsible company) of the communicated corporate values (the real and ideal ones) to the CSR values. The content analysis, which was done on press releases and web texts (including those regarding the vision, mission, and values of Continental) revealed that even though Continental corporation works with CSR concepts

in a strategic and systematic manner, the CSR set values do not have a correspondence with the real corporate values.

The causes of these discrepancies are due to the complex role played by companies nowadays, resulting into a lack of implementation and integration of CSR values into corporate identity and into inconsistencies between corporate and CSR values. Reducing the gap between a company's identity values (real values) and CSR values will contribute, in our opinion, to an enhancement of CSR issues' disclosure.

Finally, our study allowed us to assess the research question we asked ourselves. The social responsibility of any entity is, unquestionably, a managerial concern. We tried to observe the company's sensitivity related to the social, moral, and ethical aspects of its activities; our study also revealed that, even if pointed out under different forms (ethics, morality, responsibility, and values), CSR seems inseparable from corporate identity and corporate values.

In conclusion, we sought to bring our contribution in the field by integrating value theory into the business area and also by taking a mixed approach to research methods. The findings of this study provide several academic and practical implications. From a practical approach, consulting our proposed framework could help top managers and raise their awareness regarding the relevance of their own personal traits, skills, and characteristics in achieving and continuously developing CSR (through working towards achieving shared CSR values).

Although this research does not outline real practices of CSR, we have conceived what the classic strategy literature offers for understanding CSR. A substantial contribution of this paper consists in the implicit suggestion of a context of assessing a package of values that are related to stakeholders. Thus, practitioners (and especially managers), but also researchers, can benefit from this research, since it may represent a guideline comprising recommendations and good practices regarding a better integration of CSR in a company's identity, respectively, in its core values' system.

We are aware of the inherent limitations of our research. This is a case study on a specific corporation; the results cannot under any circumstances be generalized to other companies, the more we talk about to other industries. In addition, the comparison between real values and CSR values could be performed using other methods such as interviews of the management board, surveys on the employees, or studies regarding the effects of CSR programs and strategies on the community. Moreover, other CSR communication models or other units of analysis could be employed.

Despite such limitations, the observed configuration of corporate values may be useful when discussing comparable companies in similar contexts. In addition, it can represent the foundation of further research concerning the dynamics and the interplay between real corporate values and CSR values [42].

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