

Supply Chain CSR Image Challenges – A Study on Bangladesh Clothing Industry

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Abstract- This paper provides a deep insight into the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) image scenario of the buying firms and Bangladesh suppliers as well as identifies the challenges for building a positive supply chain (SC) CSR image for the suppliers of Bangladesh clothing industry. The contribution of this paper is that it improves knowledge of SC CSR image from the supplier's as well as the buyer's perspective. This paper also makes suggestions regarding improvement of Suppliers' CSR image that can influence the SC CSR image.

Keywords- Corporate social responsibility (CSR), supply chain, image, corporate image, supply chain CSR image

1. Introduction

Previous research on Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in supply chain (SC) views the corporations as taking most CSR initiatives for improving corporate image by and having influence on stakeholders' perception [41],[9],[68]. It is well known that a responsible image allows the corporations to differentiate themselves from their competitors [50], which positively affect the purchasing decision of customers [15]. CSR activities are increasingly being relied upon to qualify corporate image achievements increasing their ability to enhance reputation enforced by image-shaping activities [6], [57].

Recently there is a growing demand for upholding human rights throughout the SC of firms [1]. The focus on sustainable development and CSR reveals the importance of mastering SC as well as CSR communications to get legitimacy on the market [35]. Issues like inspection of health and safety facilities or reduced use of child labour at suppliers' location are examples of image building activities growing in importance [52]. Commonly, however, the suppliers are the invisible part in the communication of SC image building strategy. They are commonly pushed by the corporations to initiate and organize CSR issues supporting their activities which also improve the good image of the corporation [1] as representing the chain [24], [68]. By following corporate code of conducts of the corporations or buyers, the suppliers can attract positive attitude of the buyers and get the business but may fail to develop their own CSR image.

From SC perspective this exclusive attention to the corporate image is problematic as this only reveals the CSR aspects of the buying firms [6] and makes supplying companies invisible in the chain. But viewed from SC perspective, the involved companies are seen as a coordinated network of organizations [11] in which internal and external stakeholder perception of CSR image [43] act reflexive [66] on all companies included in the chain. What is good (bad) image for one company also acts reflexive on the others which in particular contribute to SC image and reputation in relationship to the stakeholders. This spill-over effect is especially evident in situations of disasters in which single company's bad behavior acts reflexive on other firms in the chain. This paper argues that all involved companies need to work positively with their own CSR image as that can affect the SC as a whole to reflect a transparent image for critical stakeholders to build reputation for the SC.

Although plenty of research has discussed SC [1], CSR [36], [62], [63] and image [30] separately, few studies have concentrated on the role of suppliers as important parts of SC-CSR image. *To fill this gap, this study investigates CSR image in SC from the buyers' and suppliers' perspective.* The buyers contribute by providing their perception of suppliers' ability to build CSR's image while the suppliers contribute by visualizing the main challenges to build image in the context of CSR in SC. The following research questions have been addressed:

1. What CSR image do the buyers and suppliers create in the SC?
2. What are the main challenges for the suppliers to improve the visibility of their CSR image within the supply chain?

This research examines the clothing industry SC in Bangladesh where the suppliers have recently been criticized world-wide for not acting in line with CSR requirements. After the collapse of the supplier factory at Rana Plaza, in Savar near Dhaka, Bangladesh in 2013 the SC CSR image was seriously damaged as the accident took lives of over twelve hundred workers and injured around two thousand. By addressing the research questions, this study offers a deep insight into the CSR image scenario of the buying firms and the Bangladesh suppliers as well as identifies the challenges for building a positive supply chain CSR image for the suppliers of Bangladesh clothing industry. The contribution of this paper is to improve knowledge of SC CSR image from the supplier's as well as the buyer's perspective.

The paper is organized as follows: In the next section, we discuss the research traditions in literature of corporate image, CSR image and supply chain CSR image. In the following section a theoretical frame-work for understanding the traditional supply chain CSR image communication is shown. Thereafter, we present our research method. Finally, the empirical findings are analyzed in relation to the research questions, followed by conclusions drawn, limitations of the study, and suggestions for further research.

2. Literature Review

This section provides insights regarding relationship between CSR and image for examining the factors influencing the supply chain CSR image from supplier's as well as the buyer's perspective.

2.1 Image Defined

Image reflects the organization and its capabilities as Ref. [59] describes an image as a "mental construct developed by the consumer on the basis of a few selected impressions among the flood of total impressions; it comes into being through a creative process in which these selected impressions are elaborated, embellished and ordered." Image is commonly considered to be an immediate, more short-term, external stakeholder perception founded on impressions and attitudes toward the organization [30]. It has been recognized since the 1950s that brand images can be a source of revenue for the company [47] and today in the competitive world image is biggest asset for an organization. Image can change quickly and is often defined to provide a short-term reflection of a company's identity [66] and image always influence company competitiveness [26].

2.2 Corporate image

Corporate image is regarded as a reflection of consumers' perceptions of a brand, and can be gauged by the associations communicated to and held in the memory of an actor [14], [37]. Moreover, corporate image can be described as "the totality of a stakeholder's perceptions of the way an organization presents itself, either deliberately or accidentally [46]." When a company presents itself by communication, it also impacts the employees showing an image reflecting both inwards and outwards how a company perceives itself [66]. Corporate image is what comes to the audiences' minds when they see or hear about that corporation [26]. Researchers suggest that individuals will not have the same perception of a corporate brand [54], proving that a corporation does not have a single image, but rather multiple images [27]. Today, it is commonly agreed that a strong and distinctive corporate image is the key to sustainable competitive advantage [12] but managing a corporate image requires an understanding of how a corporate image is formed and how it is measured [3].

2.3 CSR image

Ref. [70] view CSR as an important antecedent of consumer trust [70]. CSR activities used to address consumers' social concerns, create a favorable corporate image, and develop a positive relationship with consumers and other stakeholders [74]. In a global context, stakeholders from different cultures and various geographical areas demand strategic consideration if in order to develop a socially responsible business orientation [10]. As a result, it is contended that the growing integration of CSR as part of image building strategy can transform from being a minimal commitment or something socially added-on to becoming a strategic necessity [71]. Branding research show potential benefits arising from CSR branding, primarily through the link to consumers' and other stakeholders' positive product evaluations or the brand evaluations, choices, and recommendations that derive from an association with specific CSR initiatives [39],[62],[63]. Furthermore, shareholders and investors are nowadays increasingly considering the social and environmental performance of companies alongside financial returns [49]. As a result, companies engaged in CSR are reporting benefits to their reputation and CSR is seen as a vital tool for promoting and improving the public image [48].

2.4 Corporate CSR Image Communication

Firms are increasingly turning to corporate image advertising campaigns based on CSR initiatives [6]. CSR image advertising is based around positive CSR-identity cues that claim that the firm has a commitment to contribute to sustainable economic development, working with employees, their families, the local community and society at large to improve their quality of life [72]. The benefits of establishing a perceived CSR-identity-based corporate image are argued to be many: enhanced brand differentiation [50]; brand equity [32]; competitive advantage [56]; and customer loyalty and other positive post-purchase outcomes [8], [45]. Consumers' perceptions of the corporate image relative to CSR may affect their corporate associations, which reflect what they know about the corporation [68].

Corporate image advertising is just one of a variety of communication tools that might be used to promote the desired corporate identity of the corporate brand or master brand rather than specific products or services [60]. From a company perspective the increased focus on sustainable development and CSR reveals the importance of mastering CSR as well as CSR image communications to manage organizational legitimacy [35]. In line with this development, firms are not only pursuing CSR strategies but also increasingly making an effort to compose convincing CSR communication [5], [40], [41]. Source credibility and reliability have been raised as key components of effective, trustworthy CSR communication, and this is most likely to occur when there is strong and visible commitment from senior management [34]. On this notion it is important that CSR is fully integrated in the business model [31], and that CSR initiatives and performance are consistently communicated across channels both internally and externally [9]. There is however not a clear direction on how to effectively communicate CSR and further research

has been called for to explore elements of a successful CSR communication strategy [18].

2.5 Image Communication by Code of Conduct in SC

Codes of conduct, ethical codes, or guidelines for behavior appear to be a clearly visible sign that show that an organization is aware of the need for ethical behavior but requires a commitment to such behavior from its workforce and following the code of conduct ensures positive image for the company [28]. Diverse views exist, however, as to what exactly constitutes a code of ethics [19]. The work environment is one in which the establishment of an ethical code of conduct or ethical program is now considered an integral part of the success of business corporations [55]. A corporate code of conduct, ethics policy guideline, or handbook of business practice expands the company mission statement [25]. The ability to communicate CSR “well” appears to have become one part in avoiding so-called reputation risk [22], [16].

According to Ref. [33], the Global Compact (GC) asks companies to embrace universal principles and to partner with the United Nations. The UN GC is a voluntary initiative that relies on public accountability, transparency, and enlightened self-interest of companies. The basic idea is the voluntary involvement of companies within the areas of human rights, labor rights, environmental degradation, and anti-corruption [36]. GC is neither a binding set of regulations nor a code of conduct for companies but rather an image building tool as a basis for a dialog forum in which mutual learning among companies is to be promoted with examples of best practice [38]. For developing country companies, the GC is seen as seemed attractive from a networking and learning perspective, while the transnational corporations of the industrialized countries saw the Compact as a tool for CSR image building and reputation management [38].

Creating value through supply chain integration has become a potentially valuable way of securing competitive advantage and improving organizational performance, since competition is no longer between organizations, but among supply chains [44]. Ref. [29] found that unless sustainability is incorporated into the day to day practices of an organization through an ongoing dialogue, through both internal and external communication efforts, strategic initiatives are likely to fail. Accordingly, firms are becoming aware of the need to develop strategies that extend their traditional corporate governance processes beyond the firm boundary to their supply chain partners [42]. Large firms with highly visible brand names are expected to actively work to guard against unexpected criticism of social performance in their supply chain, which in turn can harm their CSR image.

3. Theoretical framework

The theoretical frame work applied in this paper is based on the operational model for managing corporate image and reputation developed by [26] and IIR model (Identity-

image-reputation model) developed by [66]. According to Ref. [26], in order to manage corporate image, company needs to communicate its image effectively within the SC. For image to effectively for the organization, there is a need for transparency in the communication of the organizational image [66].

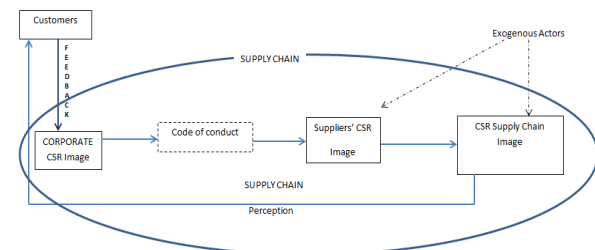


Figure 1: Theoretical Framework

The corporate CSR image can create competitive advantage for the organization. The organization can develop code of conduct to communicate its CSR image that should be followed by its suppliers to reflect its Corporate CSR image as the CSR image of the supply chain.

4. Method

To explore the complexity of SC CSR image, multi-method research strategy [7] is adopted in which the strength of case research and participation data collection techniques are used. A central argument when using multi-method approach is that various methods have strengths that compensate for single-methods faults and limitations. So qualitative and quantitative data collection method were used to validate the responses and strengthen the findings.

According to Ref. [17], qualitative research creates close contacts with the respondents and therefore is helpful to deal with contextual sensitivity issues and to provide perceptual insight. In this study, qualitative data were gathered through face to face interviews of buyers' as well as suppliers' representatives and stake holders, focus group discussion of industry experts and image observation through factory visits and printed materials. Qualitative data was collected through a questionnaire survey where questions related to supplier's CSR image where asked to the top management personals of the suppliers. As we developed case studies regarding the CSR image scenario of the buying firms and the supplying firms we have taken a small sample size as according to Ref. [73], case studies are performed on a small distinct and demarcated sample and the point is to accomplish a holistic perspective. The representatives were chosen following the judgmental method in order to justify that the information that will be received from the respondents will be reliable [21]. Ref. [21] further suggests that researchers can use different ways in order to increase the reliability of their collected data and interpretations. This could be done by matching the interview responses with factory visit observations and communication materials. According to Ref. [64], 'validity is another word for truth.' Ref. [64] also states that qualitative research demands theoretical

sophistication and the methodological rigor. Ref. [64] further mentions that there is a clear imperative for rigor to be pursued in qualitative research, so that findings carry conviction and strength. To meet the requirements of rigor in the case of validity, we have used coding for our research and also had detailed and accurate transcription of the interviews which was later been confirmed by the respondents.

By collecting data with the use of different methodologies we followed the principles of triangulation to investigate, discover and interpret the stakeholder’s insights regarding the SC CSR image issue. The collected data reflect how the suppliers communicate and "reflect image of themselves" in matters related to CSR.

To understand the image perception among the global buyers, two major European buyers that buy bulk volume of apparels from Bangladesh were selected. In order to understand the dissemination of image perception within the supply chain of the two selected major European buyers, two large suppliers who supply bulk volume to these buyers and two small & medium suppliers of these buyers were selected. The suppliers were distinguished in size on the basis of the number of employees. The suppliers who have more than five hundred employees are specified as large suppliers and the suppliers that have two hundred and less employees are specified as small and medium sized suppliers. The respondents were selected on the basis of having a central role as being part of the buying companies’ SC.

The research study was done in four phases over the period of 1 year. The phases are described below:

Phase 1 – initial image

The two European buyers were contacted to seek permission and support to conduct the research study on Supply chain CSR image. Upon receiving their positive response key personnel in their CSR compliance department were interviewed in their headquarters. This phase (table 1) provided initial information of CSR in SC image as well as deeper insight on their connection to Bangladeshi suppliers.

Table 1: Data collection synopsis of phase

Phase 2 – The corporates’ supplier image

Two local offices of the renowned brands were interviewed in Bangladesh to understand SC image and in

relation to Bangladesh suppliers. The one to one interviews provided insights regarding the steps taken by the buyers regarding CSR issues undertaken. The

Organization	Respondent	Location of Data Collection	Data Collection Period	Data Collection Method
European Buying Company 1	CSR Manager	Stockholm, Sweden	September, 2012	Face to face Interview
European Buying Company 2	Manager CSR & Quality	Göteborg, Sweden	September, 2012	Face to face Interview

discussions in this phase (Table 2) also allowed us to gain knowledge regarding the evaluation process developed by the buyers to ensure CSR implementation or compliance of the suppliers on a periodic basis to ensure corporate CSR image among the suppliers.

Table 2: Data collection synopsis of phase 2

Phase 3 – The suppliers’ supplier image

In this phase (Table 3) top management of two large suppliers and two small and medium suppliers, were interviewed. All these interviews were conducted in their factories where the researchers had the opportunity to

Organization	Respondent	Location of Data Collection	Data Collection Period	Data Collection Method
European Buying Company 1	Sustainability Manager	Dhaka, Bangladesh	October, 2012	Face to face Interview
European Buying Company 2	Global Social Compliance Manager	Dhaka, Bangladesh	October, 2012	Face to face Interview

observe their work with CSR and how it was communicated to the employees. Based on the information, it was possible to receive insight on the how the suppliers work with “supplier image” based on their own perception and factory operations. Later on a questionnaire survey was conducted to validate the information collected through face to face interview, factory observation and image reflection assumption based on printed materials for external and internal communication.

Table 3: Data collection synopsis of phase 3

In order to present the CSR image of the buyers and the CSR image of the suppliers of Bangladesh

Firms	Respondents	Location of Data Collection	Data Collection Period	Data Collection Method
Supplier 1 (Large)	a) Director, Operations b) General Manager	Dhaka, Bangladesh	October, 2012	Face to face Interview, Factory visit, Internal and external Image observation based on Website and printed materials, Questionnaire Survey
Supplier 2 (Large)	a) Chief Operating Officer b) General Manager	Dhaka, Bangladesh	October, 2012	Face to face Interview, Factory visit, Internal and external Image observation based on Website and printed materials, Questionnaire Survey
Supplier 3 (Small & Medium)	a) Managing Director b) Production Manager	Dhaka, Bangladesh	November, 2012	Face to face Interview, Factory visit, Internal and external Image observation based on Website and printed materials, Questionnaire Survey
Supplier 4 (Small & Medium)	a) Managing Director b) General Manager	Dhaka, Bangladesh	November, 2012	Face to face Interview, Factory visit, Internal and external Image observation based on Website and printed materials, Questionnaire Survey

Phase 4 – The supporting organizations' supplier image

In this phase, a focus group discussion was arranged in Bangladesh on understanding the CSR image of Bangladeshi suppliers in the global supply chain. Industry experts were invited and they participated in the focus group discussion. Interviews were also held with other stake holders like suppliers of the selected four suppliers; President of Dhaka chamber of commerce and industry (DCCI); Managing Director of a local buying house representing relatively small and medium retail buyers of U S A and UK; and Managing Director of a logistics support company responsible for supporting the export activity of the selected four suppliers. The focus group discussion and the interviews conducted in phase four (Table 4) provided lots of insights related to the CSR Image of Suppliers and the interviews broadened the knowledge of how stakeholders think about the supply chain CSR image of the suppliers of Bangladesh.

Respondents	Location of Data Collection	Data Collection Period	Data Collection Method
Industry Experts	Dhaka, Bangladesh	April, 2013	Focus group discussion
Managing director of Supplying organization of Supplier 1	Dhaka, Bangladesh	April, 2013	Face to face Interview
Managing director of Supplying organization of Supplier 2	Dhaka, Bangladesh	April, 2013	Face to face Interview
Managing director of Supplying organization of Supplier 3	Dhaka, Bangladesh	April, 2013	Face to face Interview
General manager of Supplying organization of Supplier 4	Dhaka, Bangladesh	April, 2013	Face to face Interview
President Dhaka Chamber of Commerce & Industry (DCCI)	Dhaka, Bangladesh	April, 2013	Face to face Interview
Managing Director of Buying House representing International Buyers of U S A and UK	Dhaka, Bangladesh	April, 2013	Face to face Interview
Managing Director of Logistics Company supporting Suppliers with Export	Dhaka, Bangladesh	April, 2013	Face to face Interview

clothing industry, case studies were developed with CSR image graphs. The CSR image graphs were developed based on the United Nation Global Compact's ten principles in the areas of human rights, labour, the environment and anti-corruption. CSR image criteria mentioned in the CSR image graphs were between -1 and +2. Where positive +2 represents very good compliance of the principle, positive +1 represents compliance of the principle. On the other hand, negative -2 represents non-compliance of the principle, and negative -1 represents weak compliance of the principle.

The analysis of our findings was done by following the cognitive procedure as Mores (1994) specifies that cognitive procedure in qualitative analysis is the ability to describe and combine responses with the research questions and theoretical framework.

One important feature of the study is the use of multi-method approach, which requires careful attention to how data from the different methods is combined. These challenges were met by collecting data via interviews, observations, focus group discussions, questionnaire survey, secondary data collection through available printed and online material to complement each other and enable triangulation and the possibility of setting different opinions against one another.

Table 4: Data collection synopsis of phase 4

5. Empirical findings

5.1 Corporate CSR Image of the buying firms

The two major buyers have emphasized that for them CSR image is very important and they want to portray a positive CSR image to their customers or end users. They confirmed that actions related to the implementation of CSR and upholding of their CSR image is a vital issue for them for choosing a supplier to be part of their global supply chain. The CSR image graph shown in figure 3 was developed based on the information and observation of the CSR image reflection of the two major European buyers in compliance to UN Global Compact's ten principles in the areas of human rights, labour, the environment and anti-corruption.

Factors	Image			
	Negative		Positive	
1. Support and respect the protection of internationally proclaimed human rights			++	
2. Human rights abuses are not allowed			++	
3. Effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining			++	
4. All forms of forced and compulsory labour is not allowed			++	
5. Effective abolition of child labour			++	
6. No discrimination in respect of employment and occupation			++	
7. Support a precautionary approach to environmental challenges			++	
8. Undertake initiatives to promote greater environmental responsibility			++	
9. Encourage the development and diffusion of environmentally friendly technologies			++	
10. Work against corruption in all its forms, including extortion and bribery			++	
	-2	-1	+1	+2

Figure 2: CSR Image graph of the buyers

From the above figure it can be seen that the two buyers focuses on reflecting a positive +2 CSR image by effectively complying to all the ten principles of the United Nation Global Compact ten in the areas of human rights, labour, the environment and anti-corruption.

The two European buyers provide a code of conduct for the global suppliers to follow in order to reflect the CSR image of the buyers within the SC. In case of the challenges faced by the Bangladeshi suppliers to improve their CSR image, the two major buyers have provided a general view that the code of conduct of the buyers are often termed by the Bangladeshi suppliers as compliance activity. Moreover, the Bangladeshi suppliers do not take initiative to build their own code of standard to build up their own CSR image.

5.2 CSR image of the large suppliers

The large suppliers often take CSR implementation issue very seriously and because of their size, and capacity they often can reflect buyer's CSR image. The CSR image graph shown in figure 5 was developed on the basis of the observed performance of the two large suppliers in compliance to U N Global Compact's ten principles in the

areas of human rights, labour, the environment and anti-corruption.

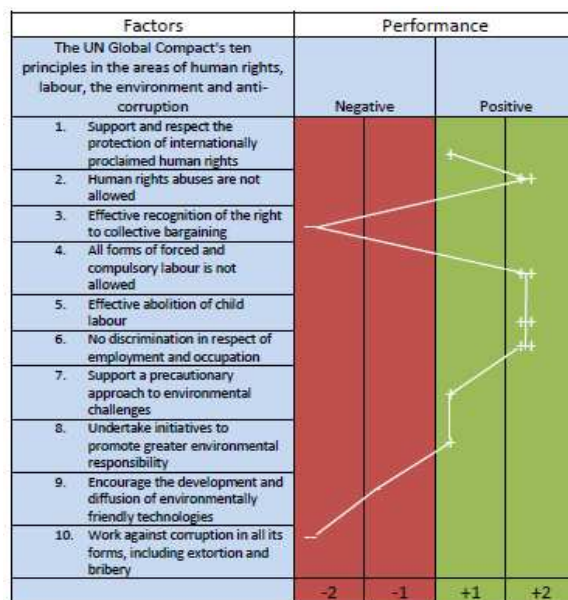


Figure 3: CSR Image graph of large suppliers

From the CSR image graph of large suppliers it can be noticed that the firms have taken very good initiatives so that human rights abuses are not allowed, all forms of forced and compulsory labor is not allowed, there is no discrimination in respect of employment and occupation, and child labor is abolished. The large suppliers also take some initiatives to support and respect the protection of internationally proclaimed human rights, to support precautionary approach to environmental challenges and to promote greater environmental responsibility. On the other hand, the large suppliers showcase the image of weak performance in case of encouraging the development and diffusion of environmentally friendly technologies. Moreover the large suppliers have still now taken no initiative regarding effective recognition of the right of the workers to collective bargaining, as well as working against corruption in all its forms, including extortion and bribery. The overall CSR image of the large suppliers is moderate in case of CSR implementation. The large suppliers are still attempting to reflect the CSR image of the buyers and still now not much effort are taken by the large suppliers to develop their own CSR image.

5.3 CSR image of the small and medium suppliers

The observation and information gathered during the study shows that CSR image of the small and medium suppliers shows that the firms are very good in only one principle and that is effective abolition of child labor.

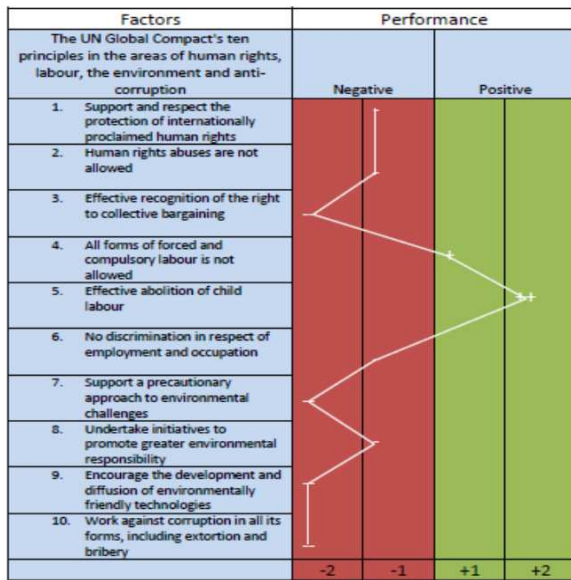


Figure 4: CSR Image of small and medium suppliers

The CSR image graph also shows that the small and medium suppliers have also taken initiatives not to allow any forms of forced and compulsory labor. But the small & medium suppliers have been observed to have weak performance in supporting and respecting the protection of internationally proclaimed human rights, not abusing human rights, not discriminating in respect of employment and occupation, and promoting greater environmental responsibility. Furthermore the small & medium suppliers have still now taken no initiative regarding effective recognition of the right of the workers to collective bargaining, supporting precautionary approach to environmental challenges, encouraging the development and diffusion of environmentally friendly technologies and working against corruption in all its forms, including extortion and bribery. The CSR image of the small & medium suppliers is not impressive at all and they have problems reflecting the CSR image of the buyers let alone developing their own CSR standards and CSR image.

6. Analysis

Firms are increasingly turning to corporate image advertising campaigns based on corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives [6] to meet consumer demand for information on business's concern for and impacts on society [13]. The members of the global clothing supply chain namely the two major European buyers and the Bangladeshi suppliers understand that CSR image is important for the sustainability of the supply chain. Negative information regarding CSR issues tends to weight heavier than positive when consumers make choices on what products to buy [2], [62] and that is why the buyers monitor and control CSR implementation of the Bangladeshi suppliers by CSR audits. The Bangladeshi suppliers are still happy following the code of conduct of the buyers rather than developing their own CSR image. Whereas, buyers think that it is time for the suppliers to develop their own CSR image rather than

acting as followers of code of conduct as the benefits of establishing a perceived CSR-identity-based corporate image are argued to be many: enhanced brand differentiation [51]; brand equity [32]; competitive advantage [56]; and customer loyalty and other positive post-purchase outcomes [8],[45].

Except for the large suppliers who have taken some initiatives to implement CSR, the small and medium suppliers have a weak CSR implementation. Therefore the large suppliers reflect a moderate CSR image but the small and medium suppliers reflect a poor CSR image and as majority of the suppliers of the SC are small and medium, the SC reflect a weak CSR image. However, most studies and literature on CSR focus on large firms and hence may not reflect the organizational realities in smaller firms very well [20], [58], [11], [65].

A forward looking suggestion is that CSR is no longer a choice but rather that companies in the future must integrate CSR into strategy to remain successful [71],[31]. Companies engaged in CSR are reporting benefits to their reputation as in big companies and corporations especially it is seen as a vital tool for promoting and improving the public image [48]. So if the buying firms can focus on building the responsiveness among the suppliers to develop the suppliers' CSR image, then there is no need to control the suppliers rather the suppliers' CSR image can influence the CSR image of the firms as well as the CSR image of the SC to create positive frame of mind among end users and influence sustainability. This idea is reflected in figure 6.

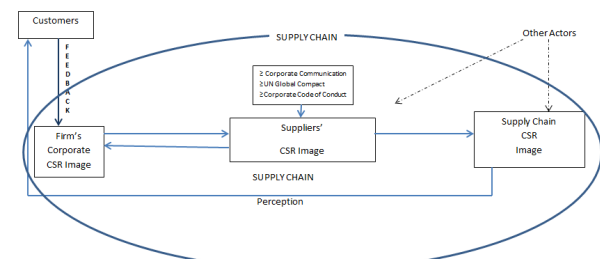


Figure 5: Effective SC CSR communications for sustainable CSR image

Without overall support from the buying firms it is not possible for the suppliers to be responsible and reflect their own CSR image. This paradigm shift among the suppliers of becoming responsible may not happen overnight but with proper guidance, co-operation and patience from the buying firms the suppliers are likely to have their own CSR image that can be reflected as the SC CSR image.

7. Conclusion

CSR is an umbrella term that encompasses various overlapping areas, such as corporate citizenship, stakeholder theory, business ethics, and corporate sustainability [23]. During the last decade, growing numbers of companies worldwide acknowledged the importance of CSR [48].

This research study in view of the first research questions, specifies the CSR image of the buyers as well as the CSR image graph and CSR image scenario of the

large and small & medium suppliers of Bangladesh within the global clothing SC. The overall CSR image of the large suppliers is moderate in case of CSR implementation. The CSR image of the small & medium suppliers is not impressive at all. The large suppliers attempt to reflect the CSR image of the buying firms and still there is not much initiative taken by them to develop their own CSR image. Whereas the small & medium suppliers cannot even fulfill the criteria of reflecting the CSR image of the buying firms.

Furthermore the study also answered the second research question by pointing that the Bangladesh clothing suppliers understands that CSR image is an indicator for their sustainability but there are some major challenges that are affecting their capacity to develop their own CSR image that can be reflected as the CSR supply chain image. The three major challenges that has been identified as hindrance to improvement of CSR image are: (1) only following corporate code of conduct instead of taking self-driving initiatives to create CSR image (2) the internal use of code of conduct is limited to “papers on the wall” instead of taking CSR implementation seriously and advocating it to employees (3) competence barriers of CSR implementation with weak internal/external communication.

Moreover based on the findings, it is further suggested that suppliers need to improve in the following areas for inducing changes in their own CSR image to influence the supply chain CSR image: (1) develop a corporate culture to prioritize building positive CSR image; (2) develop link with educational institutions for educating middle managers on CSR implementation and its effect on CSR image; (4) arrange short trainings for new workers to make them understand the concept of CSR and educate them on their own responsibilities as part of the organization to implement CSR (5) establish platforms for sharing knowledge between suppliers for transforming themselves into becoming sensible and responsible to ensure positive CSR image.

The main contribution of this study is that it focuses on the CSR image concept from both the buyers’ and suppliers’ point of view and specifies the challenges faced by suppliers to develop their own CSR image within the SC. The implication of this study is that this study points out the challenges faced by the suppliers to improve their own CSR image which can enhance the knowledge of the managers working in the buying and supplying organizations as well as researchers within the field of corporate image. Furthermore the study also makes suggestions regarding improvement of Suppliers’ CSR image as well as improvement of SC CSR image which can be suitable for the managers working in global SC and researchers working in the field of supply chain management.

Limiting the study to Bangladesh and also limiting the study to only two European fashion houses and only a few of their suppliers can be criticized for making it difficult to generalize and compile the findings into one coherent, generic picture. So in future research studies, more buying firms and more suppliers from different countries within the global SC should be included to compare and generalize the outcome regarding supply chain CSR image.

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