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Shared value as the determinant of tightening of cooperation between suppliers and retail chains as based on social values - the case of CSR implementation by global retailers

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Abstract

The aim of the paper is to analyse and identify CSR concept in strategies of cooperation between suppliers and retailers. The main problem results from strong bargaining power of retailers which makes these companies leaders of channels of distribution. CSR is a concept which helps build new basics of cooperation - social and finally economical values. The paper refers to transaction theory as a theoretical background but also to the model of added value developed by M. Porter and M. Kramer in theories of strategic management.

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Keywords: cooperation strategies, retail chains, CSR concept

Introduction

The policy of commercial chains towards suppliers is currently gaining particular importance as the source of permanent competitive advantage. According to the theory of transactional costs, retailers will look in this sphere for such solutions that should allow them to pursue flexible and competitive policy of sale. At the same time, they will aim at establishment of not only their competitive advantage, but the whole channel of supply because in this way market position of all its participants will be strengthened. The concept of corporate social responsibility is an idea that aims at integrating the retailer's goals with cooperating entity's goals and also creating economic and social value.

1. Strategies of cooperation and their determinants

One of the most popular definitions explains the strategy of cooperation as the relationship between the parties that is not definitely defined in the form of a detailed contract strictly determining all the rights and obligations of partners (Hyvonen , 1983). The strategy of cooperation determines long-term goals of an enterprise that correspond to general direction of activity, and also show allocation of resources that are necessary for accomplishment of assumed goals (Bensou, 1992). Growing demands of customers and intense competition on FMCG market become the reasons for introduction of changes in the approach to comprehensive strategy of retail chains (Gilbert, Sumner 2004). Customers and suppliers, and in particular the establishment of relationships with customers and suppliers that allow to achieve competitive advantage, are the key elements of this strategy (Wathne, Heide 2004; De Wulf, Odekeren-Schroeder, Iacobucci 2001). The approach to purchases, understood as an element of enterprise strategy, is associated with understanding by enterprises of the necessity to be orientated towards the processes of buying, relationships and activities related to them, and not only towards the products. The importance of buying function is growing in the period of crisis when enterprises search for the sources of cost reduction. It seems that in the case of global retail chains the stage of buying oriented only towards products is already beyond these organisations. These enterprises realise that activity consisting in making a purchase is associated both with functional spheres that form a chain of values as well as with external surroundings, i.e. suppliers that can contribute to establishment of permanent competitive advantage. This is why they are indicated as partners that in practice make it possible to form competitive market offer (Chen, Ching-Lian, 2009, T. Mentzner, Soonhong Ming, Zach G. Zacharia, 2000)

We can state that in the practice of activity of commercial chains, the factors that include both the chain interest and also the producer's interest determine the choice of suppliers [tab. 1].

Tab. 1. Factors determining conclusion of an agreement with commercial chains

FACTOR DETERMINING CONCLUSION OF THE AGREEMENT	EXPECTATIONS OF COMMERCIAL CHAINS	PRODUCER'S EXPECTATIONS OCZEKIWANIA PRODUCENTA
Prices	The price consistent with the image of the chain	The price consistent with the image of the producer
Conditions of buying	Extended payment term; large discounts	Timely payment, cost minimisation
Selling area	Display that ensures maximisation of sale	Obtaining the best display for their products
Exclusive rights	Reduction in the number of agents that manage the particular assortment	Reduction in the number of competitive products in agents' assortments
Supplies	Fast realisation of supplies	Obtaining orders in suitable advance
Promotional support	Providing themselves with promotional support of suppliers	Providing themselves with promotional support of agents
Margins	Obtaining margins that are possibly profitable for themselves	Obtaining margins that are possibly profitable for themselves
Order quantity	Order quantity favours minimisation of inventory	Maximum inventory quantity
Assortment	Ensuring full variety of assortment	Production standardisation
Brand	Sale of products of both the producer's brand as well as of own brand	Sale of products of producer's brand
Customer loyalty	Having customers that are loyal to the chain	Having customers that are loyal to the producer
Control over the channel	Having the key position in the channel	Having the key position in the channel

Source: own case study

Supplier's ability to follow the expansion of commercial chain and to ensure coverage for demand on growing orders from the chain are essential criteria of selection and quality of cooperation.

Analysing the table we can state that presented factors provide the chain with the „basis” for further selective procedures of suppliers. The CSR concept is not found among them, however, it is a determinant the importance of which is constantly growing in relationships between the supplier and retailer.

2. CSR concept as the basis for creation of values in chain of supplies

Cooperation between market partners is necessary in the process of establishment of competitive position of an enterprise on market. It is an important reason for which commercial chains more and more actively apply activities within CSR in their operational strategies. As studies show, 75% of European companies declare that they includes issues related to CSR and sustainable development in their purchase processes (Bruel, Olivier, Olivier Menuet, Pierre-Francois Thaler 2009). In fact, it is thought, that corporate social responsibility is a type of concept or philosophy that takes into consideration social, ethical and ecological aspects in business activity and in contacts with stakeholders. We can state that CSR is „some kind of contribution of business in implementation of the policy of sustainable development, and such a way of company management in which achievement of balance between its effectiveness as well as profitability and social interest is the priority goal”

(<http://www.responsibleme.eu/pl/baza-wiedzy-csr/co-to-jest-odpowiedzialny-biznes.html>). It is also worth emphasising that these are voluntary actions undertaken by an enterprise (B.

Rok, 2004). However, we can find examples from Denmark or Indonesia where some enterprises are legally obliged to report on their social involvement. These activities are intended to do a service to local communities and environment, as well as help the enterprise create a positive image in the view of the stakeholders. Activity of commercial chains within CSR is conditioned by various factors, including the will to create a valuable offer for target markets (Image of Commercial Chains. Report of Study of Opinions, 2010). Thanks to implementation of CSR into practices of management of the chain of supplies and cooperation with business partners, the company gains a lot of profits that are particularly associated with cost reduction (compare tab. 2).

Tab. 2. Benefits from implementation of CSR concept in the chain of supplies

Type of benefits from implementation of CSR concept in the chain of supplies	Type of costs
Optimisation of costs	optimisation of costs resulting from consumption of resources and obtaining savings in this sphere, reduction in charges for waste, i.e. dangerous waste
Reduction of risks	Reduction of legal risk through implementation of appropriate requirements in the sphere of work safety or environment protection and avoiding, in this way, the costs of lawsuits or penalties Reduction of operational risk for example through ensurance of continuity of supplies and suppliers' loyalty.
Better image	Management of reputation risk through creation of the system of criteria that eliminate suppliers who, for example violate human rights, benefit from forced labour or corrupt practices, Better image through conducting, together with suppliers, activities in aid of solving social and environmental problems related to activity of the company.
New products and services	Involvement of suppliers in the processes of product designing, Sharing innovations with suppliers, distributors and other partners in the sector, and comon work for their implementation

Source: Own case study on the grounds of:

http://www.csrinfo.org/images/stories/Publikacje2012/spcc_publicacja_csr_pl.pdf

CSR concept imposes a broader perspective on the strategy of retailers' buying while indicating not only direct chain suppliers but also their cooperating partners as their recipients. In this way social and economic values, indicated by Porter and Kramer (as the source of competitive advantage of the whole supply channel), are created from the beginning of product formation. This approach makes sense because, among others, the consumer that is placed at its end, receives a simple and not falsified message about social responsibility from the retailers. Then there are no doubts that a socially responsible company, and almost all global retailers nowadays take pride in being one, offers products that are equally socially responsible (which means that, among others, they are safe and the employees that produce their goods are decently paid, or children are not employed at their production and also that human and employees' rights are observed). And yet, there are numerous examples of international commercial chains that are socially responsible, but they use the sources of supply that are of uncertain social reputation (for example subcontracting sewing of clothes in the countries that are known for violating human rights, riths of children or employees, or they do not care enough about safety standards of employees in factories in these countries). Thus social value occurs only in one link and not in the whole supply chain. In this way, social responsibility is not fully applied as potential source of competitive advantage. Moreover, credibility of the concept is questioned in this way.

Including CSR in practices of supply chain management is a resultant of the systems implemented by the comany and supplier's activities. Basically, we can distinguish three

fundamental stages of formation of supply chain on the basis of CSR. The first is related to the choice of the supplier, subcontractor or business partner that is based on many criteria. They are most often defined in buying policies and procedures. Apart from essential conditions, prices, timeliness and quality, CSR introduces new criteria that allow for minimisation of risks, i.e. criterion of the country of origin in the context of observance of human rights or the criterion of the environment. On this stage of selection of business partners, commercial enterprises send a questionnaire to suppliers who are interested in cooperation and ask about specific environment or social policies, codes of conduct for suppliers, contractual clauses, ISO standards, SA8000 standard and other guidelines. Commercial chains pay attention to possession of European certificates by the supplier, that allow for sale of goods not only in the supplier's country but also in the whole European Union. Determination of requirements towards suppliers ought to be adequate to business activity of the company which means that conditions presented to suppliers ought to take in consideration social and environment risks related to company activity. In order to find suppliers that meet the required criteria, retailers organise meetings for potential suppliers in which they present general terms of cooperation (i.e. Tesco actively searches for suppliers while organising Open Days for potential suppliers in selected cities in Poland. They are meetings of informational character). More and more companies introduce questionnaires for suppliers and / or codes of conduct for suppliers that not only determine the criteria of selection, but also control the principles of cooperation. This is because appropriate procedure of suppliers' verification and commencement of cooperation with them stands behind the code.

Fair cooperation and actually a rule in the chain of values based on CSR is the next step. Such tools as questionnaires, audits, meetings for suppliers, trainings, educational programs and materials are applied within CSR. The aforementioned code of conduct regulates the principles of supplier's cooperation with ordering party. Commercial chains apply two groups of activities that concern the principles of cooperation. The first is cooperation with suppliers and partners that aims at achievement of standards, by the suppliers, that are required by the chain. Making informational materials accessible, organising trainings and providing other forms of support for suppliers are activities undertaken for this purpose. The second activity concerns monitoring of suppliers' conduct and applying recrusterisation proceedings. Audits, that identify non-conformance and indicate the possibilities to improve activities are most frequently used here (i.e. Auchan applies: Międzynarodowa Karta Etyki dostawców Auchan [*International Card of Ethics of Auchan suppliers*] that regulates the principles of cooperation between Auchan and its partners on the Group level and Karta Etyki Zakupów Auchan Polska [*Card of Auchan Poland Purchase Ethics*] – signed by every supplier together with commercial contract since 1996 that encourages suppliers to acquaint themselves with Global Compact initiative, observance of its 10 principles and entering into the initiative. What is more, the suppliers can report violation of rights for example directly to the purchase manager, communication manager or to the general manager. In the chain of supplies on the level of Auchan International Purchase, audits of producers of Auchan own brand, or producers who make products within direct import directly for Auchan are performed).

The next step concerning formation of the chain of supplies as based on CSR is undertaking common projects. Joint R&D projects, common social projects, joint involvement in initiatives that exist on market are started by commercial chains and suppliers. More and more companies conduct common projects that go beyond the contract provisions. They may concern new initiatives in the sector, joint social activities or new solutions for products and services. Such a cooperation contributes to better perception of companies and creates new business possibilities for both parties. However, this stage is in its early phase and

it often does not occur in relationships between commercial chains and suppliers because of the lack of interest of parties in combining their own CSR programs.

The process of adaptation and diffusion of CSR concept in the chain of supplies is closely related to bargaining power of suppliers and retailers. In the case of global commercial chains and global brands, cooperation in the sphere of CSR is more probable because both parties are aware of the potential that lie behind CSR. What is more, their bargaining powers are at least theoretically balanced. However, there occurs disproportion of bargaining power in relationships between commercial chains and local suppliers. This results in remarkable demand on CSR existence, yet the suppliers often lack the will to tighten the relationships with retailers and the chains are focused on cost reduction. And here, the retailers must be the initiators of CSR activities. As it is observed in profound interviews performed in May and June 2013 among local suppliers acting in compliance with CSR, they do not expect from commercial chain the integration of CSR but they only focus on the sale function. Meanwhile, retailers implement the programs that encourage local suppliers to cooperate and provide them with preferential conditions, i.e. better display in the place of sale and they also offer assistance in development of sale market abroad.

Summing up, the development of CSR concept in relationships between commercial chains and suppliers requires redefining the character of relationship between the participants, and getting awareness of the potential that lies in the new areas of cooperation.

3. The role of CSR in creating value retail chains activities – case study

The purpose of this part is to identify selected practices associated with corporate social responsibility (CSR) applied in cooperation with suppliers by selected global retail trade chains. Information that comes from Internet pages of studied chains as well as data from reports and case studies concerning corporate social responsibility in Poland and all over the world as well as analyses of Polska Organizacja Handlu i Dystrybucji [*Polish Organisation of Trade and Distribution*] are mainly used here.

IKEA – case study

Stichting INGKA Foundation, that is registered in Holand, is the owner of IKEA Group. The Foundation is the owner of INGKA Holding B.V., the enterprise that is superior for all the entities found in IKEA Group. IKEA Group itself is engaged in designing (IKEA of Sweden), buying, distribution and sale of IKEA products. The Group composition also includes Swedwood Group, an industrial group producing wooden furniture and wooden elements in 35 industrial plants in nine countries including Poland.

IKEA has very restrictive requirements as for its suppliers. First of all high quality of products, competitive prices and timeliness of supplies are fundamental. Ikea suppliers do not have a permanent contract with the chain but bidding system is applied towards all the suppliers. Every time production costs are calculated, and if you are more competitive with respect to quality and price, the particular bid is won. At the same time, the products that are made, have to be produced in a responsible way. The environment and working conditions of people are essential. In 2000 the code of conduct occurred. Products, materials or services offered by IKEA ought to be produced and conducted by a supplier involved in environment protection. Therefore IKEA expects, from its suppliers, adjustment to the code of conduct called IWAY.: “it includes requirements that we set to our suppliers and it determines what they can expect from IKEA in return. Additionally, suppliers are responsible for presenting the aforementioned procedures both to its employees and its subcontractors.” In case a particular supplier has problems with meeting fundamental requirements of Ikea Group, supplementary activities are undertaken for the purpose of development of common operational plan. If the supplier does not express the will to start such a cooperation, or if he cannot arrange it in this way, cooperation between Ikea and the supplier is terminated. In

2008 IWAY principles were updated. Currently they aim at motivating and supporting suppliers in taking more responsibility and leadership in their enterprises. IKEA wants to expand its activity starting from improvement of auditing processes but also suppliers's activity without introduction of external supervision. This aims at selection of suppliers that share the policy of IKEA values for the purpose of strengthening long-term relationships with them. Every three years, IKEA conducts research among its suppliers. The purpose of the survey is to collect information on the subject of cooperation with IKEA. Research is performed anonymously. Ikea has four groups of suppliers: **1. Suppliers of products for house furnishings, 2. Food suppliers, 3. Suppliers of catalogues, 4. Suppliers of transport services.** The purpose here is to make all suppliers the services of which are provided to Ikea observe IWAY principles in 100% . IKEA pursues anti-corruption policy in the form of code called the Principles of Corruption Prevention and investigation policy that stipulates how collaborators ought to behave if they reveal frauds, corruption, theft or other illegal behaviours. The company policy aims at reducing the risk related to corrupt behaviours inside and outside the organisation.(<http://www.ikea.com>)

Auchan –case study

Auchan Poland supply policy is based on centralisation and decentralisation of supply decisions that are made. Determining the policy of purchase, selection of suppliers and running negotiations take place on the central level which allows for achievement of advantageous conditions of cooperation. Together with centralisation of strategic supply decisions, Auchan commercial chain decentralises purchase functions on the level of its commercial outposts. This strategy allows Commercial Departments in Auchan hypermarkets to react fast to actual demand that occur in its region and to adjust freely the quantity of order to their actual needs. The list of direct suppliers of Auchan hypermarkets is determined on central level and constitutes a strategic decision in supply policy of the company. A particular enterprise is classified into the category of direct suppliers on the grounds of five major criteria: location of logistic center of the supplier in relation to location of recipient's center, rotation of product of a particular supplier in sale and the range of assortment, product quality, region of supplier's origin, pricing conditions included in the commercial contract between the producer and Auchan Poland. Suppliers constitute an important element of Auchan CSR policy. With reference to suppliers the following activities are conducted: current communication, e-mail communication, meetings, trainings, internet page, sustainable development report, contact box on WWW pages

(<http://www.auchan.pl/download/Gazetki/raport-zrownowazonego-rozwoju-auchan-2011.pdf>). Documents that operations in Auchan include:

1. Auchan Poland Code of Ethics of Cooperators – the result of two-year workshop of various working groups on various hierarchic levels developed at cooperation with Auchan Ethics Council.
2. International Card of Ethics of Auchan Suppliers – that regulates the principles of cooperation between Auchan and its partners on the Group level.
3. Auchan Poland Card of Purchase Ethics – that has been signed by every supplier together with commercial contract since 1996.

Commercial negotiations conducted by Auchan Poland Purchase Center with leading manufacturers of food and industrial products allow to conclude agreements concerning strategic cooperation between the entities. Key suppliers of Auchan Poland provide its hypermarkest with durable food products, fresh food products and industrial goods that are the best with respect to quality and price. Supply of ordered goods realised from producers to hypermarkets of Auchan commercial chain are of a dual quality. Products are delivered both through the chain warehouses as well as directly to hypermarkets. Distribution centers in

distribution channel that include Auchan Central Warehouse in Wolborz, Wola Bykowska and Cooling Platform in Grójec allow for appropriate distribution of supplies and forwarding them to appropriate Auchan commercial outposts. In the case of direct supplies, shipments sent to Auchan shops from producers contain a smaller number of goods that aim at current replenishment of the stock. Some goods, i.e. a part of industrial goods are supplied directly from producers to industrial goods receipt department by companies offering courier services (Presentation of Reception Department). The principles of cooperation with direct suppliers to Auchan hypermarkets are defined in 20 clauses that are key elements of supply management, the sphere of which is respected in compliance with concluded commercial agreement (Principles of cooperation of Auchan Poland with direct suppliers, Auchan Poland, a limited liability company, chain internal documents)

H& M case – study

H&M is one of the largest clothes companies all over the world. The company has 2700 shops in 48 markets. H&M business strategy is to offer fashion that goes together with quality at best price. The chain motto is: We believe that we bear responsibility towards everybody who contributes to our success. This also concerns our suppliers and their employees (H&M Sustainability Report 2008). In contemporary globalised economy there are more and more companies like H&M, in which the business model is based on complex chains of supplies that are spread everywhere in the world. In the case of H&M, the chain of supplies is made of 800 suppliers of the first rank and subcontractors cooperating with them, and the production takes place in 2700 plants, mainly located in Asia and Europe. None of them is the company property. Therefore the success of H&M is in a large, if not in predominant degree, dependent on suppliers. The aforementioned business model was developed in the 80s of the previous century, and very fast it became the subject of criticism and the synonym for low social and ecological standards. Consortiums from highly-developed countries that, just like H&M achieve their market success on the grounds of cooperation with suppliers from the countries of cheap labour force, were held responsible for this situation. In the view of social pressure, the companies started to pay attention, in contacts with their suppliers, to social, ecological and economic issues more and more often. They quickly started to realise that this may also constitute the source of benefits for them. This is because establishment of relationships with suppliers on the basis of principles of corporate social responsibility may not only bring image benefits, but also generate remarkable savings, create new business opportunities, reduce operational risk or increase loyalty of customers, employees and the suppliers. Sustainable development constitutes the base of the quality concept of the company and is a part of company value. Production of clothes for H&M company takes place in one of 1650 plants that are the property of, or are leased by one of 750 suppliers of the company. Cooperation with suppliers provides the company with the opportunity to promote good practices among all the partners in its chain of supplies. Respect for people and for the environment that is the fundamental part of H&M values is implemented in the supply chains within everyday cooperation. While commencing cooperation with a new supplier, H&M requires signing the company Code of Conduct already before starting production. H&M checks if the Code is observed. The supplier can be the owner of several various companies, in some cases the supplier can also subcontract a part of production process to another factory. However, all the factories in which production for H&M takes place, regardless of whether they are a property of the company subcontractor or they are leased by company subcontractors, must observe H&M Code of Conduct (http://about.hm.com/content/dam/hm/about/documents/pl/CSR/codeofconduct/Code%20of%20Conduct_pl.pdf)

Apart from the Code of Conduct, H&M manages an audit program, the company suppliers are subject to. FAP is the major tool of suppliers' controlling and monitoring of compliance with

the Code of Conduct. FAP is composed of controls and audits that are regularly performed by 70 H&M auditors employed in production offices in Europe and Asia. During their visits to factories, auditors also talk to employees to be able to assess working conditions and observance of the Code of Conduct. The goal of the company is to make the suppliers take on themselves broader and broader responsibility for ensuring good working conditions and for environment protection. The company supports them in various ways for example through providing trainings. It also offers assistance in development and improvement of management systems that ensure compliance of business operations with H&M principles and allows to find mistakes immediately. The approach assumed by the company makes it possible to maintain long-term relationships with business partners and leads to better cooperation with subcontractors that are educated and take care of working conditions and the environment. In this way the company meets expectations of its customers who more and more often look for companies that operate in the ethical way.

4. Findings

Presented theoretical discussions and analyses of case studies that exemplify CSR concept implementation in supply chain indicate growing importance of CSR for establishment of relationships based on cooperation between commercial chains and suppliers. Growing power of retailers brings increase in demand on initiatives that reflect the needs of commercial enterprises and expectations of key stakeholders. There exists a remarkable demand on cognitive and applicational side, to recognise CSR role in formation of relationships between global retailers and suppliers. First of all identification of the type of CSR initiatives that are particularly appreciated by suppliers and barriers that limit their diffusion on partnership relationships between parties need to be developed.

5. Limitation and managerial implication

Poor willingness of suppliers and commercial chains to take part in research into the influence of CSR on relationships with stakeholders is an important limitation in the studies. Therefore it seems necessary to develop research tools that allow for identification of impact on CSR on the processes of supply sphere management in the future.

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