


Chapter 1

Corporate Social Responsibility and Corporate Reputation in SMEs of the Construction Sector

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ABSTRACT

SMEs in the construction sector are immersed in an industry that can be volatile and controversial. Therefore, taking care of the perceptions and what is said about them in this sector is increasingly relevant. For this, it is necessary to implement Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) actions, which is essential. The objective of this research was to determine the CSR strategies that build corporate reputation for the SME's of the construction sector. Also, the case method with a qualitative approach, being the purposive sampling the one used for this research, that is, a non-probabilistic sampling was used and the data collection was given through written interviews to eight respondents belonging to different stakeholders, including managers, employees, suppliers and customers of two SMEs in the construction

DOI: 10.4018/979-8-3373-3805-7.ch001

sector, one of which is located in Mexico and the other in Bulgaria. This chapter determined seven integral CSR Strategies that impact on the Corporate Reputation,. Additionally, future research opportunities are discussed.

INTRODUCTION

The construction industry contributes to infrastructure development, as well as to housing access however, it has been characterized as an industry that faces challenges such as high levels of pollution and workplace safety (De la Peña et al., 2024; Karakosta & Papathanasiou, 2025; Soubra et al., 2025). For this reason, the replacement of conventional materials in the construction sector with those that register less energy consumption and have a lower carbon footprint is a reality (Tashkov et al., 2024), especially because the construction sector contributes significantly to the emission of greenhouse gases (Karakosta & Papathanasiou, 2025). For these authors, the use of renewable energies, the reduction of direct emissions, improved recycling, and the reuse of materials are key to reducing the generation of greenhouse gases. Models have also been proposed as strategies to improve sustainability in the construction industry (see, for example, De la Peña et al., 2024).

Additionally, another challenge in the global construction sector is associated with the risk of accidents, injuries, and basic knowledge of occupational safety, such as first aid (Soubra et al., 2025; Karadağ, 2023). Along these lines, occupational safety in the construction industry is experienced as a reactive rather than proactive occupational safety culture (Aidoo et al., 2025). Furthermore, companies belonging to the construction sector are, for the most part, small and local (ILO, 2025), so the implementation of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) practices requires technical knowledge and a financial budget, which can be limiting in the implementation of the described practices. In this sense, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) are changing their traditional performance approach to networking environments, access to global markets, and internationalization models (Daei et al., 2023); and companies in the construction sector are no exception. In addition, SME's are increasingly seeking to incorporate innovation into their business operations, where they experience related problems such as access to credit, protection of intellectual property, and resistance to change (Anchayhua et al., 2025).

From a global approach, innovation not only represents a task to be performed by SMEs, but also by SMEs in the construction sector, which must seek systematic and holistic innovations (Kahkonen, 2015). Likewise, innovation is not the only issue that SMEs must attend to, but also reputation management. In the same order of ideas, SMEs that implement superior Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)

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