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Abstract

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) has long been discussed, and it has become part of some companies' operation. One field on CSR is socially responsible importing, which was the focus of this study. Socially responsible importing has, in recent years become increasingly important to companies, because of the ever increasing significance of imports, and the fact that stakeholders have begun to demand international companies to assure that also their suppliers operate ethically. The purpose of this research was to find out to what extent socially responsible Finnish companies assure social responsibility in their international supply chains. To meet this purpose of the study, the subject was divided into three sub-objectives:

- to explore what kinds of supply chains the companies have,
- to discover what actions the companies have taken to assume the responsibility for their suppliers,
- to determine how far in the supply chains the companies' responsibility reaches.

The study focused on examining responsible purchasing in the Finnish Social Responsibility in Importing network

The purpose of the study was approached through constructing of a theoretical framework that included views from theories related to responsible purchasing and CSR, and models of supply chain management and corporate interaction. The empirical data was gathered through an Internet survey sent to all of the eighteen member companies of the network, of which sixteen responded. In addition, semi-structured interviews were made in five of the companies that were selected based on the analysis of the survey responses.

The main findings of this research were that there seems to be variation in the typical lengths of supply chains between different industries, because of different ways of operating. In addition to this variation, also the importing modes used by accompany affect its opportunities to take social responsibility for its suppliers. Also supply chain management is vital for responsible importing. However, limitedness of resources makes taking the responsibility difficult, and therefore it is necessary for companies to cooperate. It must also be taken into account that there is more power in a group, and thus different networks and working groups can be very helpful for Finnish companies that want to progress in responsible importing, and be profiled socially responsible. Key issues in taking the responsibility seem to be giving suppliers education and monitoring their compliance. However, these seem to be also the most challenging actions, and therefore their importance need to be emphasised in socially responsible companies.

Key words	Corporate social responsibility, responsible purchasing, socially responsible importing, supply chain management
Further information	

