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CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY AND UK RETAILERS

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Abstract

This paper offers a preliminary examination of the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) commitments and agendas being addressed and reported by the UK's leading retailers. The paper begins with a short discussion of the characteristics and origins of CSR and of the current structure of retailing in the UK. This is followed by an illustrative examination of the CSR issues publicly reported by the UK's top ten country of origin retailers and the paper draws its empirical material from the CSR reports posted on the World Wide Web by these retailers. The findings reveal that the UK's top ten retailers are addressing and reporting on four sets of CSR themes namely those relating to the environment; the marketplace; the workplace and the community. The paper concludes with a discussion of a number of general issues relating to these themes.

Introduction

In presenting its *2006 Global Powers of Retailing* report Deloitte (2006) suggests that *'heightened concern about the growing risks facing retailers is changing the management agenda from one of managing for profitable growth to one of managing and mitigating risk.'* The report argues that *'the uncertainties of the global economy, the complexities of a global supply chain, stakeholder demands for greater corporate social and environmental responsibility, technological innovation, the growth of proprietary brands, the increasing difficulties in finding and retaining talent, and the threat of terrorism have all combined to significantly change the landscape of risk management'.* In identifying *'non-financial risks'* as one of seven *'key risks'* the report argues that *'being a good corporate citizen is becoming increasingly important to the risk management agenda'* and that the goal is to *'bring together economic viability, environmental sustainability and social responsibility, integrating these concepts into the company's strategy, operations and culture.'* Retailers are very much at the leading edge of the service economy within the UK and this paper offers a preliminary examination of the extent to which the UK leading retailers are reporting Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) commitments and agendas on their company websites as part of *'their corporate efforts to build trust with shareholders, consumers and other stakeholders.'*

Corporate Social Responsibility

CSR is concerned with the integration of environmental, social, economic and ethical considerations into business strategies and practices. While Werner and Chandler (2005) have argued that *'consistent, definitions, labels and vocabulary have* *yet to be solidly established in the field of CSR'* numerous definitions have been framed. Wood (1991), for example suggests that *'the basic idea of CSR is that business and society are interwoven rather than distinct entities'* while for Brown and Dacin (1997) *'Corporate social responsibility associations reflect the organisation's status and activities with respect to its perceived societal obligations.'* Although CSR has gained increasing momentum and prominence across the business community during the past decade the underlying concept has a long history. Hopkins and Crowe (2003), for example, suggest that there has always been a tension between business goals and social goals and they cite the power of the craft guilds in the Middle Ages, the slave trade and the struggles to improve living and working conditions in Britain's rapidly growing towns and cities during the nineteenth century, as graphic evidence of such tensions. Sadler (2004) has argued that *'the definition of the functions of the corporation with relation to wider social and moral obligations began to take place in the centres of capitalist development in the 19th century.'* More generally Mbare (2006) has suggested that *'the concept of CSR is not new, as some would want us to believe'* and that *'the debate about business as a moral institution goes back to the days of philosophers like Plato, Aristotle, Kant, Marx.'*

Various factors are cited as being important in building the current momentum behind CSR, which is evidenced by the fact that the number of companies publishing CSR reports has increased almost tenfold in the period 1996–2006 (Saunders 1997). (Figure 1). Ernst and Young (2002) suggest that five key drivers have influenced the increasing business focus on CSR namely greater stakeholder awareness of corporate ethical, social and environmental behaviour; direct stakeholder pressures; investor pressure; peer pressure and an increased sense of social responsibility. Porter and Kramer (2006) argue that there are *'four prevailing justifications for CSR'* namely *'moral obligation, sustainability, license to operate and reputation.'* National and supranational governments have been active in promoting CSR. The European Union, for example, promoted CSR in all member states and the Commission for the European Communities (2002) argues that CSR has gained increasing recognition amongst companies as an important element in new and emerging forms of governance because it helps them to respond to fundamental changes in the overall business environment. These changes include globalisation and the responsibilities companies find the need to address as they increasingly source products and services from developing countries; the issues of image and reputation, which have become increasingly important elements in corporate success; and the need for companies to recruit and retain highly skilled personnel. Girod and Michael (2003) adopt a strategic marketing perspective arguing that CSR is *'a key tool to create, develop and sustain differentiated brand names'.*

{Figure 1 about here}

The three dominant theories that have been used to analyse and explain CSR have been succinctly summarised by Moir (2001). Stakeholder theory suggests that it makes sound business sense for companies to understand the needs and aspirations of all their stakeholders be they investors, governments, employees, communities, customers or suppliers and that these needs and aspirations should be reflected in corporate strategy. Social Contracts theory asserts that companies may pursue CSR not because it is in their commercial interests but because it is how society expects companies to operate. Legitimacy theory stresses that society grants power to businesses and it expects them to use that power in a responsible manner.

The business case for CSR is seen to focus on a wide range of potential benefits (Bevan et. al 2004). These include improved financial performance and profitability; reduced operating costs; long-term sustainability for companies and their employees; increased staff commitment and involvement; enhanced capacity to innovate; good relations with government and communities; better risk and crisis management; enhanced reputation and brand value; and the development of closer links with customers and greater awareness of their needs. However Porter and Kramer (2006) have argued that *'the prevailing approaches to CSR are so fragmented and so disconnected from business and strategy as to obscure many of the greatest opportunities for companies to benefit society.'* They propose a new framework to explore the interdependence between business and society and argue that *'when looked at strategically corporate social responsibility can become a source of tremendous social progress, as the business applies its considerable resources, expertise, and insights to activities that benefit society.'*

At the same time there are those who would champion the case against companies integrating CSR into their core business. Such arguments might follow Friedmann (1982) in affirming that *'there is one and only one social responsibility of business-to use its resources and engage in activities designed to increase its profits so long as it stays within the rules of the game, which is to say engages in open and free competition without deception or fraud.'* Henderson (2001) has argued that seemingly growing business commitment to CSR is *'deeply flawed'* in that *'it rests on a mistaken view of issues and events and its general adoption by business would reduce welfare and undermine the market economy.'* Corporate Watch (2006) takes a more overtly political position arguing that *'CSR enables businesses to promote ineffective voluntary, market based solutions to social and environmental crises under the guise of being responsible.'* More generally Kitchin (2003) argues that CSR is *'too narrow to engage management attention, too broad and unquantifiable to be taken seriously by the financial community and just woolly enough to be exploited by charlatans and opportunists.'*

UK Retailing

Retailing is a large, diverse and dynamic sector of the UK economy offering an ever-increasing range of goods and services to consumers. In 2004 there were some 305,000 retail outlets within the UK generating a total turnover of £250 billion (ABI 2005). The DTI's (2004) Retail Strategy Group Report *"Driving Change"* looked to capture what it described as *"The Value of Retail"* as follows. *"It is a strong user of technology and an innovator of new products. By matching consumer expectations and demands with technological developments the sector provides ever-increasing choice at a range of prices, which suits the needs of the community. Retail continues to invest in people and places. It creates new markets, provides a focus for the implementation of social policies and plays an important role in the well being of towns, cities and rural areas."*

Retail provision within the UK has become increasingly concentrated and the number of small independent retailers has continued to decline as the retail marketplace has become increasingly dominated by a relatively small number of large players. Dawson (2004) reports that the market share of the UK's ten largest retail firms increased from 13.0 % in 1971 to 38.1 % in 2000 and he notes that *"by the late 1990's all the major retail sectors had a small number of firms that in effect dominated their respective sectors".* In 2006 the top four food retailers viz. Tesco, J.Sainsbury, ASDA and the Wm. Morrison Group, for example, had a market share of 72% (Office of Fair Trading 2006). This concentration has increased the power of the large retailers in channel relationships (Dawson 2004) and it also brought large retailers into direct contact with a large number, and often a wide cross section, of customers. The large retailers are widely recognised to have the greatest impacts on the environment, on the economy and on society. While some authors depict retailers as the passive intermediaries between primary producers and manufacturers on the one hand and customers on the other, the majority view is that they have an active role in driving production and in stimulating and shaping customer demand. Thus, while Gilbert (1999), for example, describes retailers as *'occupying a middle position, receiving and passing on products … to customers',* Wrigley and Lowe (2002) argue that *'the geographies of production are being actively shaped by multi-national retail capital.'*

Frame of Reference and Method of Enquiry

In order to obtain a preliminary picture of the CSR agendas and achievements being reported by the UK's leading retailers within the public realm, the top ten UK based retailers, trading in October 2007, (Table 1), ranked by 2005 sales, from the Deloitte report *'2007 Global Powers of Retailing',* were selected for study. The majority of the selected retailers have a number of trading formats and /or trade under a number of banners while others have a single format. Thus while Tesco's trading formats include community and town centre convenience stores, superstores, hypermarkets and online services and while its principal operations are in the UK, it is also listed as having retail operations in 12 countries including China, Japan, Malaysia, Poland and Turkey. By way of contrast Wm. Morrison concentrates on its superstore format solely within the UK. While DSG International is a specialist consumer electronics retailer it trades as Currys, Dixons and PC World and is represented in 14 countries.
{Table 1 about here}

Bowen (2003) has suggested that the majority of large companies have realised the potential of the World Wide Web as a mechanism for reporting CSR activities and has argued that its interactivity, updatability and its ability to handle complexity adds value to the reporting process. With this in mind the authors undertook an Internet search using the key phrase Corporate Social Responsibility and each of the top ten retailers' names in October 2007 employing Google as the search engine. This search revealed some variation in the extent and the detail of CSR reporting on the World Wide Web. Thus while the majority of the selected retailers published relatively extensive CSR reports a minority undertook much more limited CSR reporting. Thus while J. Sainsbury, Kingfisher and Marks and Spencer, for example, produced 60, 46 and 40 page reports respectively, DSG posted a relatively extensive interactive report along with a 12 page Corporate Responsibility 'Highlights Leaflet', Kesa Electricals posted a limited interactive report and Somerfield produced a brief 6 page report.

CSR Overview

The majority of the top ten retailers claim to be integrating CSR into their business. Marks and Spencer (2007) for example, claims a strong tradition of CSR which it sees as being central to the way the company is managed. More specifically the company reports its launch of *'Plan A'*, a long term strategy for CSR, centred on climate change, waste, sustainable raw materials, health and being a fair trading partner, which the company claims will only succeed if it is *'fully integrated into the way we do business.'* In a similar vein Wm. Morrison (2007) claims that it views *'sustainable development as integral to the way we do business and as such, it is our licence to operate'* and Boots (2006) emphasises its understanding that its *'commercial success and our CSR performance are mutually dependent has begun to permeate every level of our business."*

Firstly while some of the top ten retailers look to measure and benchmark their CSR achievements this is not universal practice. Tesco and Kingfisher, for example, report using Key Performance Indicators and independent verification and assurance to help to measure their CSR performance; and J.Sainsbury report participating in the Business in the Community Corporate Responsibility Index. Some of the top ten retailers report on CSR in a more limited and selective manner and on a number of occasions case studies were used as a means of illustrating broader CSR commitments. Such an approach might be seen to be user friendly and to offer some simple examples to illustrate what might be perceived to be dry statements of commitments and achievements, but it does not provide a comprehensive review or any systematic measurement of these achievements.

The selected retailers report on CSR issues under a variety of headings. J.Sainsbury (2007), for example, employ the following five headings *'The best for food and health', 'Sourcing with integrity', 'Respect for our environment', 'Making a positive difference to our community',* and *'A great place to work.'* Wm. Morrison (2007) use *'Environment', 'Society '* and *'Business'* while Kesa Electricals (2007) list *'Supply Chain', 'Environment', 'People'* and *'Communities'*. This paper follows Whooley (2004) in using four principal headings namely Environment; Marketplace; Workplace; and Community in an attempt to capture and provide some illustrative examples of CSR agendas as reported by the UK's top ten retailers.

Environment

Environmental issues were the earliest and are now the most commonly reported set of issues amongst the top ten retailers, and a review of these companies' websites indicates that all highlight the environment as a key driver of their CSR agendas (Table 2). These environmental issues include climate change, energy consumption and emissions, raw material usage, water consumption, waste, the volume of packaging and recycling. Tesco (2007), for example, claims to be helping to *'deliver a revolution in green consumption'* to be putting *"the fight against climate change at the very heart,"* of this revolution and to be setting *"an example by reducing CO2 emissions in our businesses throughout the world.'"* To this end the company reports its commitment to *"changing our business model so that the reduction of our carbon footprint becomes an important business driver."* The company claims to be committed to reducing carbon dioxide emissions from all its stores and distribution centres by at least 50% by 2020 and here the emphasis will be on investing in energy efficient technologies including low energy fans, cold air retrieval systems and timers on lights.

Packaging, waste management and recycling are important issues for all the top ten retailers. John Lewis (2007), for example, argues that packaging is essential for the integrity and safety of many of its products but recognises that over-packaging has environmental and financial costs. In 2006/2007 the company reports saving some 23,000 tonnes of waste going to landfill and where space permits it provides recycling points in store car parks for clothing, glass, paper and plastics. The company also reports its commitment to recycling 75% of its food business waste by 2012 and 50% of its non-food waste by 2010. Wm. Morrison seeks to prevent waste through a sustainable waste management strategy that focuses upon optimisation, reduction, re-use and recycling and reports recovering some 72% of all the waste generated in its stores for recycling.

Transport is a vital component of all large retail operations and the majority of the top ten retailers report their commitment to and/or their achievements in reducing vehicle emissions. J.Sainsbury, for example, transports all its products in cases and the company has set itself the target of reducing carbon emissions per case transported by 5% (against a 2005/2006 baseline) by 2009. At the same time the company also claims to be seeking to reduce the distance travelled by its own and its supplier transport fleets by 2010 and here the focus is to be on trying to ensure that vehicles never travel empty on return journeys. In March 2007 the company also announced plans to convert 20% of its online delivery fleet to green electric vehicles.

The Marketplace

The term marketplace is seen to embrace both the sourcing of goods and services and their sale to the customer and as such embraces a wide range of issues. Sourcing has become an increasingly topical and increasingly controversial issue for large retailers, and the majority of retailers highlight this as part of their CSR strategy (Table 2). Four sets of issues receive widespread, but not universal, attention namely ethical trading, sustainable sourcing, sourcing local and regional foodstuffs and animal welfare. Marks and Spencer emphasises its commitment to ensuring that raw materials are sourced in a way that allows them to be naturally replenished. The company reports working with the Scottish fishing industry, for example, to promote sustainability and extending its use of Forest Stewardship Council certified materials into food packaging, leaflets, and store décor.

{Table 2 about here}

Sourcing foodstuffs within the global marketplace now offers considerable variety and competitive supply prices but it has also led to growing pressure group and public concerns about working conditions, rates of remuneration, child labour and health and safety issues. At the same time the majority of the leading food retailers recognise that the issue of ethical trading is made complex by both the distances involved and by the existence of different political and regulatory regimes. More specifically a number of the top ten retailers report their commitment to ‘Fair Trade’ initiatives. J.Sainsbury, for example, claims that its share of the entire Fair Trade market is larger than that of any other major supermarket in the UK.

While global sourcing continues to grow, some of the leading food retailers have also been keen to affirm their commitment to working with local and regional suppliers and to working in partnership with suppliers. J.Sainsbury (2007), for example reports its commitment to supporting British farmers and more specifically to ensuring that *"customers have access to fresh, tasty and healthy food that is sourced in their local region."* The company also reports the establishment of its Supply Chain Finance scheme which is designed to help suppliers manage their financial flows more efficiently and which enables them to leverage J.Sainsbury's borrowing power if they opt for early payment.

A minority of the top ten retailers report on their commitment to animal welfare. Somerfield, part of Wm Morrison, for example, reports that it *"continues to promote animal welfare by supporting farm assurance schemes"* and to *"offer free range and organic meat products in those stores where there is sufficient demand."* (Somerfield, 2007)At the same time the company continues to ban the testing of own label lines on animals and to operate a fixed cut off from January 1st 2000 for the animal testing of ingredients used in these products. John Lewis argues that quality, traceability and animal welfare are intimately interlinked and it reports a strict no fur policy, a total ban on animal testing for own label cosmetics, toiletries, baby care and personal products and its support for the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species.

A strong commitment to customers is widely reported by the top ten retailers and this commitment generally includes listening to customers; services for disabled customers and promoting healthy living. J.Sainsbury (2007), for example, reports *"We work hard to make sure that we are meeting customer expectations and continually ask our customers what they think."* In looking to meet these expectations the company specifically emphasises that it offers its customers *"quality, healthy and affordable products and an informed choice so that they are able to eat as healthily as possible."* In a similar vein Tesco operates a series of Customer Question Time meetings in an attempt to identify and respond to changing customer needs. In 2006-2007, for example, the company held over 250 events involving some 6,000 customers. The issues raised inform an annual customer plan which targets improving performance in areas identified by customers and enhancing customer loyalty.

Access and services for disabled customers is reported by a number of the top ten retailers. Boots, for example reports working to ensure that all its stores comply with the 2004 Disability Discrimination Act thus offering disabled customers easy access and an enjoyable shopping experience. In addition all the company's store employees have undertaken disability awareness training designed to help them to learn how to modify their normal behaviour where necessary when dealing with disabled customers. The company also reports working with the Royal National Institute for the Blind to find ways of making its stores more welcoming and accessible to visually impaired customers.

Workplace

The majority of the top ten retailers report their commitment to their employees, arguing that caring for their staff is essential to their success, and they evidence this commitment in a variety of ways. Such evidence covers a range of themes including remuneration and benefits; training and development; equality and diversity; health and safety; recruitment; retirement; and work-life balance. All the large food retailers indicate a commitment to attracting and retaining a culturally and socially diverse workforce and here the emphasis is on recruiting and retaining the best people and meeting the needs of the communities in which they trade. These commitments are usually strengthened by the provision of a mix of flexible working arrangements and by respecting the balance between life and work. Tesco, for example, argues that the ability to attract and retain staff is the biggest challenge for any business and in order to achieve this goal they look to provide a variety of career paths and patterns of working, a good work life balance and comprehensive employee benefits. In a similar vein DSG International (2007) emphasises that *'the satisfaction and engagement of our people is critical to the success of our business'* and it claims to*' apply a cradle to grave approach to corporate responsibility best practice from recruitment to post retirement.'*

Training and development is also a major theme. Boots, for example, admits under-investing in training and development in the past but reports the establishment of 30 new 'Academy Stores' throughout the UK. These flagship stores are to serve as a beacon for other stores in their region and the focus will be on providing training for employees in all aspects of modern retailing. At the same time the company also reports working in partnership with the Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers trade union in running two lifelong learning centres one in the company's Headquarters in Nottingham and the other in its warehouse in Heywood, Lancashire, to help employees who need to develop their numeracy, language and literacy skills. Overall, however, the workplace is perhaps less evident in corporate websites and literature than the other factors considered in this account (Table 2).

Community

The top ten retailers all have a range of impacts on the communities within which they operate and, in at least some measure, they all report on these issues within their CSR reports, with a few companies positioning this higher on their CSR agendas (Table 2). Kingfisher (2007), for example, argues that its aim is to make each one of its stores *"a good neighbour in the community it serves."* In 2006-2007 the company reports making £476,000 in cash donations, £651,000 worth of gifts in kind and £168,000 of employee time as part of its community investment. Wm. Morrison reports that the development planning for many of its stores has included facilities for the benefit of the local community and that the company also often commissions public works of art that reflect local heritage.

A minority of the top ten retailers report on their role in urban regeneration. Tesco, for example, reports that in the period 1999-2007 it co-operated on 17 Regeneration Partnerships. These partnerships are based around the development of new stores designed to serve local communities and the focus is on working with public services, local employers and community groups to yield social, economic and environmental benefits in deprived urban areas and on recruiting a significant number of people who have been away from work for a long period of time. Boots reports supporting schemes designed to improve and regenerate town centres by addressing issues such as crime and environmental decline. In 2005-2006 the company invested £370,000, for example, in town centre management programmes.

Discussion

While the majority of the UK's top ten retailers have been keen to recognise, and report on, some of the impacts that their businesses have on the environment, the economy and society and are pursuing a range of CSR agendas, and three sets of issues merit discussion. Firstly retailers are aware that it is not always easy to reconcile their often wide-ranging CSR goals. In looking to assess whether the environmental costs of importing fresh flowers from Kenya are outweighed by the social benefits of trading with less developed economies, for example, retailers may have to make difficult trade offs between competing and often conflicting goals. That said they report little awareness of the problems emerging, for example, along the River Ngiro where the large scale extraction of water all year round by the companies producing flowers for export is causing the river to peter out in its lower reaches thereby dramatically reducing water supplies to subsistence farmers and threatening the livelihoods and lives of nomadic pastoralists.

Secondly there is a sense in which a number of the commitments and agendas contained in the retailers' CSR reports are aspirational and it is not always easy to achieve all aspirations in the fiercely competitive UK retail business environment. While all retailers are pursuing environmental goals and many emphasise their commitment to the local communities in which their stores are located, this is rarely at the expense of commercial priorities. In a similar vein when individual store managers are facing problems in staff scheduling, for example, they may pressure employees into working outside the hours that suit their work-life balance or refuse to release employees for training and management development. This emphasis is reflected in the indicators identified in a trawl of company websites and related publications (Table 2).

A third set of issues revolves around the extent to which retailers are harnessing CSR to retain and enhance reputation, to differentiate and sustain their retail brands and to pursue competitive advantage within the retail marketplace. On the one hand a number of the top ten retailers are increasingly seeking to incorporate their CSR commitments and the values that lie behind these values into their retail brands. The past two years have seen the development and adoption of new concepts and a more central role for CSR within corporate culture. Reeves (2007) notes that 'CSR is being mainstreamed in some businesses; rather than being a bolt-on, it is now being embedded in the business model of some firms'. In the UK, Marks and Spencers, have been one of the leaders on this, implementing a 100 point 'Plan A' to make the company 'carbon neutral', move towards 'fairly traded' products, reduce waste going to landfill to zero, and use organic cotton in its clothing products. The focus on carbon neutrality reflects a renewed emphasis on environmental issues within the CSR corporate agenda, often led by the companies themselves, as much as by consumers (Table 2). Tesco, for example, are investing £600m in 'carbon labelling' its products and making its operations more sustainable (Reeves, 2007), and other retailers will undoubtedly undertake similar initiatives.

Tesco's commitment to a revolution in green consumption and to the fight against climate change and the launch of Plan A by Marks and Spencer are high profile examples of such a strategy. That said retailers may face challenges in trying to ensure that consumers include CSR considerations when evaluating the brand and they may increasingly be looking to test the strength of CSR brand associations at the point of sale within live retail contexts. On the other hand it is important to recognise that some of the CSR commitments reported by top ten retailers can clearly be interpreted as being driven by business imperatives. Thus while many of the environmental initiatives addressed in the CSR reports are designed to reduce energy and water consumption and waste emissions, for example, they also reduce costs. In a similar vein the retailers' CSR workplace commitments focusing, for example, upon good working conditions and remuneration, health and safety at work and training and management development all help to promote stability, security, loyalty and efficiency within the workforce

At the same time growing concerns have been expressed in the UK about the increasing concentration of retail power in the hands of a relatively small number of retailers and about the impact this concentration is said to be having on a wide range of businesses and on communities and the large retailers' claimed commitments to CSR are increasingly contested. As investors, trade unions and labour organisations, pressure groups, governments and non-governmental organisations become increasingly informed and demanding, so retailers may need to be able to demonstrate, and evidence, their CSR commitments and achievements to enhance and retain reputation. A number of pressure groups, for example, have been critical of large retailers arguing that their activities are having damaging effects on the environment, on communities and on the economy and disputing their credentials as good corporate citizens. Friends of the Earth, (2005) for example, have argued that one of the UK's largest retailers is abusing its power by forcing small traders out of business, destroying the vitality of the high street, bullying suppliers and damaging the environment. In a similar vein the *Tescopoly* website, launched early in 2006, is supported by a range of organisations concerned about what they perceive to be the market distorting powers of the major supermarkets and about the consequences that their trading practices are having for suppliers, farmers, overseas workers, local retailers and the environment. The large retailers vigorously refute the vast majority of the accusations made against them and they consistently argue that their continuing growth reflects their success in responding effectively and efficiently to customer needs. More specifically many of the top ten retailers are looking to frame their CSR reporting to communicate their environmental, social and economic policies, achievements and contributions and to emphasise the transparency and accountability of their activities.

Conclusion

All of the UK's top ten retailers publicly report on their commitment to CSR on the Internet though there are marked variations in the character, the content and the extent of that reporting. Impacts on the environment are again at the fore of the CSR agenda, followed by marketplace and community issues, with concerns about the workplace being mentioned by all, but lacking equal priority and focus. While some of these retailers provide relatively limited CSR information others offer comprehensive reports and make a case for locating CSR as an integral element of their core business. At a strategic level these retailers essentially argue that by integrating CSR into their businesses they will not only be better placed to provide long term growth and financial security for all stakeholders but also to maintain or enhance their market position and reputation, and Curran (2003), for example, has explored the link between corporate social responsibility and financial performance and competitiveness. Finally it should be stressed that in some ways CSR reports and information emphasise the retailers' aspirations which may not always be fully reflected in everyday operations within a fiercely competitive business environment. The tensions between the aspirations and the realities of CSR will provide fertile, though probably contested, ground for future enquiry and research.

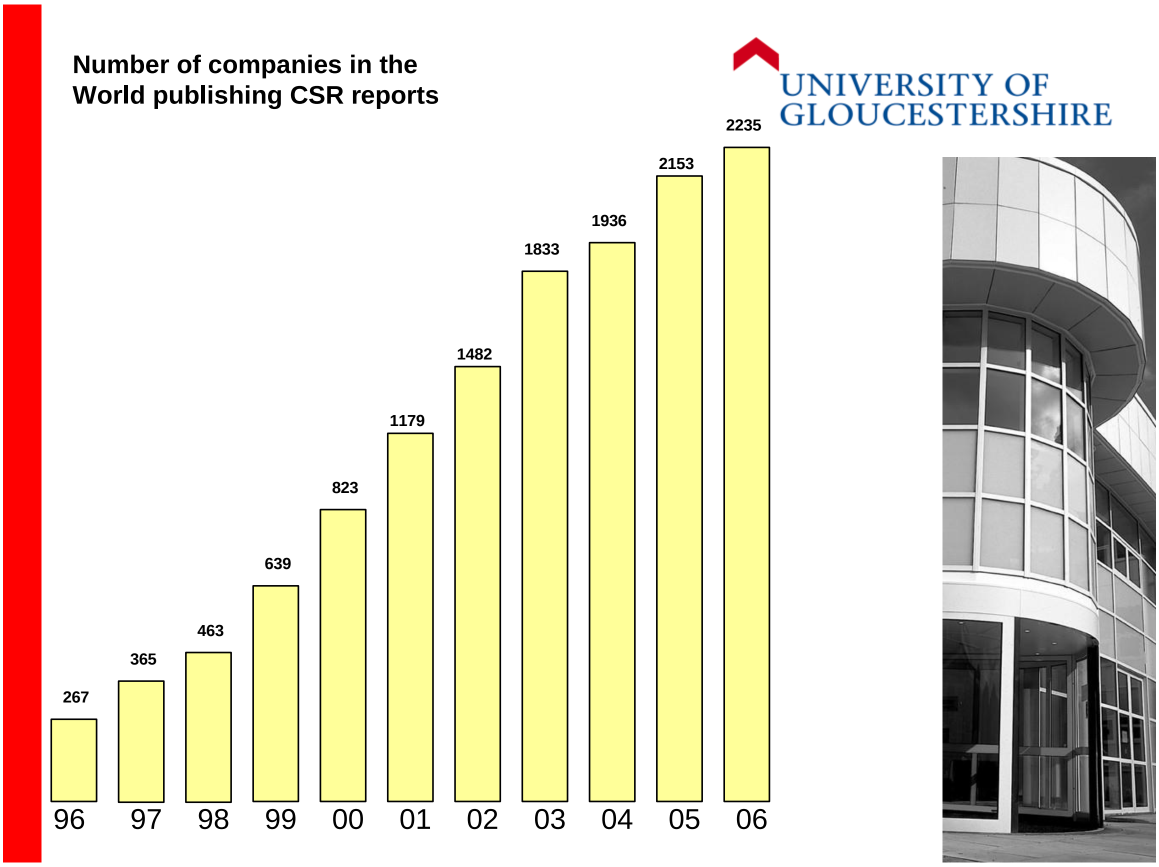

Figure 1. Number of companies in the World publishing CSR reports 1996-2006

{Source: Saunders (2007)}

Table 1: The UK's Top Ten Retailers 2005

Name	**Retail Sales 2005 (US$ Millions)**	**Number of Countries of Operation**
Tesco	68,868	13
J Sainsbury	28,100	1
Wm. Morrison	21,840	1
Kingfisher	14,503	11
Marks and Spencer	13,929	29
DSG International	11,721	14
John Lewis	9,323	1
Boots	8,553	3
Somerfield	8,355	1
Kesa Electricals	7,423	8

{Source: Deloitte (2007) '2007 Global Powers of Retailing'}

Table 2: Indicators of Commitment in CSR Agendas

Name	**Environment**	**Marketplace**	**Workplace**	**Community**
Tesco	√	√	√	√
J Sainsbury	√	√		√
Wm. Morrison/ Somerfield	√	√		√
Kingfisher	√			√
Marks and Spencer	√	√	√	√
DSG International	√		√	
John Lewis	√	√		
Boots	√	√	√	√
Kesa Electricals	√			

{Source: Author analysis of company websites and related publications}

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