

AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT

MEDIA IN THE CONTEXT OF CORPORATE SOCIAL  
RESPONSIBILITIES: THE CASE OF LEBANON

by  
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A project  
submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of Master of Human Resources Management  
to the Suliman S. Olayan School of Business  
at the American University of Beirut

Beirut, Lebanon  
April 2017

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Date of project presentation: April 18<sup>th</sup>, 2017



## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my advisor Professor Dima Jamali for the continuous support of this thesis writing and related research, for her patience, motivation, and immense knowledge.

I would also like to acknowledge Dr. Leila Khauli Hanna as the second reader, and I am gratefully indebted to her for her very valuable comments.

Finally, I must express my very profound gratitude to my husband Fadi El Merhi, to whom I dedicate this achievement. Thank you for providing me with unfailing support and continuous encouragement and through the process of researching and writing this thesis. This accomplishment would not have been possible without you.

## AN ABSTRACT OF THE PROJECT OF

Rola Mahmoud Osman for Master of Human Resources Management  
Major: Human Resources Management

Title: Media in the Context of Corporate Social Responsibilities: The Case of Lebanon.

The concept of Corporate Social Responsibility goes back to the 1950's, acquiring throughout the years more importance in all businesses around the world. The media industry started to integrate CSR practices, yet due to the differentiations in defining CSR activities from sustainable activities to ethical responsibilities, it is complicated to define the CSR concept among the global media channels, and it is more complex to define it in the Lebanese context.

Although, many researchers have been studying the topic of CSR, very few studies have covered the status of CSR in the media. In Lebanon, the concept of CSR remains an unknown and unclear concept, therefore any research that aims to study the relevance of CSR in the country or in any Lebanese sector like the media will be difficult to obtain. In addition, the media sector is highly dependent on the governmental rules and regulations, that's why Lebanese media institutions do not find the urge or necessity to go beyond what is required or to offer services that surpass their own interests, not even for humanitarian reasons.

This study was designed to discover how Lebanese media institutions deal with CSR initiatives and the resemblance between such initiatives and the strategic philosophy of those media institutions. Additionally, the study questions whether the Lebanese media institutions have made CSR part of their strategic philosophy and how they are communicating CSR inside and outside their organizations. In order to complete the current study, the first step was to conduct an extensive literature review to summarize earlier studies and findings in the CSR context. The second step was to investigate the current situation of Lebanese media institutions in terms of CSR.

Thus, this research used qualitative semi-structured interviews as empirical method. The collected data was analyzed at a later stage. The findings in this thesis show that even though Corporate Social Responsibility is not a new topic, media companies in Lebanon, have not fully developed and elaborated a general valid understanding and concept of CSR even though a clear movement towards this direction can definitely be perceived.

*Keywords:* Corporate Social Responsibility, Sustainability, Lebanon, and Media Sector.

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*To My Husband*

*Fadi El Merhi*

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

Media plays a major role in the society, especially in countries that follow a democratic system. It is the center for communicating ideas, knowledge, and news. Having the advantage of direct communication with the audience means that media should function as role models in the society to educate and help build a better society. It should be committed to spreading awareness on the ecological and sustainable environment in society. In reality, the media practices are far from practicing this mission, where it looks inefficient and disabled in terms of governing social performance. As a response to the inefficient media behavior in terms of social responsibility, the Media CSR forum 2001 was established and was one of the first associations to emphasize the slow progress of CSR in the media industry.

The first chapter of this thesis presents the theoretical framework for this study. It introduces the research field of CSR and offers an overview of definitions, theories, as well as previous studies. Further, it emphasizes on the concept of Corporate Social Responsibility and ethics in media companies globally, and locally, in Lebanon.

The second Chapter will present the methodology used in the empirical part of the thesis. It will explain the strategy and the reason for adopting qualitative interviews as the method for this study.

After introducing the study participants and outlining the interview design, the empirical findings will be presented in the third chapter, one interview at a time. The analysis connects the empirical findings with the theoretical framework and verifies or

falsifies the research question, which is summarized in the conclusion at the end of this thesis.

## CHAPTER II

### THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

#### **Corporate Social Responsibility**

With the rise of globalization, there has been great pressure on businesses to be more responsible towards the society they are operating in, which led to the birth of a new competition to appear, focusing on the company's ability to meet and address its shareholders' needs through their business. Additionally, businesses began to understand that such activities could bring them economic benefits, through granting them a competitive advantage through the advancement of their public image. These efforts and initiatives are carried out by companies under the umbrella of Corporate Social Responsibility CSR.

The CSR concept is not new; in fact, it goes back to 1953, when Bowen first defined this concept. Since then, CSR became an important research topic in management science (Lee & Carroll, 2011; Acquier & Aggeri, 2008; Carroll, 1991; Davis, 1960, Manne & Wallich, 1972).). Today, CSR is recognized as a strategic factor to achieve economic purposes (Garriga & Melé, 2004), to raise commitment and customer's loyalty (Safi & Ramay, 2013) and influence the reputation of the organization (Carroll & McCombs, 2003; Fombrun & Shanley, 1990). The European Union (EU 2016) defines CSR as: "the responsibility of companies for their impact on society". Yet, although companies are encouraged to engage their resources in CSR activities, it is no longer just an opportunity given to companies. As a matter of fact, nowadays customers, employees, society and other stakeholders expect companies to act in a socially responsible manner (Mark-Herbert & von Schantz, 2007, 4).

CSR refers to the company's involvement and commitment to enhance the community it is operating in, by using its employees, money, or facilities for the service of the society (Mascarenhas, 2011). These activities include but are not limited to:

- Preserving the natural environment,
- Minimizing the wastage,
- Helping the underprivileged,
- Recycling,
- Developing awareness programs, etc...

In general, these activities should be integrated in the company's policies and procedures, and more importantly, must be accomplished through a voluntary commitment going beyond a company's legal or economic obligations in terms of CSR. In fact, CSR does not turn a company into a non-profit organization because it still seek the maximization of profit (De Salas Nestares, 2010), but it suggests a new way and vision for managing the business. Werther & Chandler (2006) noted that CSR has become one of the corporate strategy's dimensions because of four major concerns: increasing impact, substituting social expectations, coping with the globalization of information and working toward a better ecological sustainability.

It is quite important to note that doing only some CSR engagements is not enough; in fact what is required is to have a CSR strategy. A CSR strategy is when the organization is committed to the society's welfare and contributes to the sustainability development of its surroundings. Every organization is required to invest in gaining the trust of its citizens, and this only happens through investing in the people and the planet. Every organization is responsible to lead to a sustainable development and lend a hand in uplifting the society. Moreover, it is very crucial for a company to define its driving forces to practice CSR; these initiatives should be at the core of the company and must

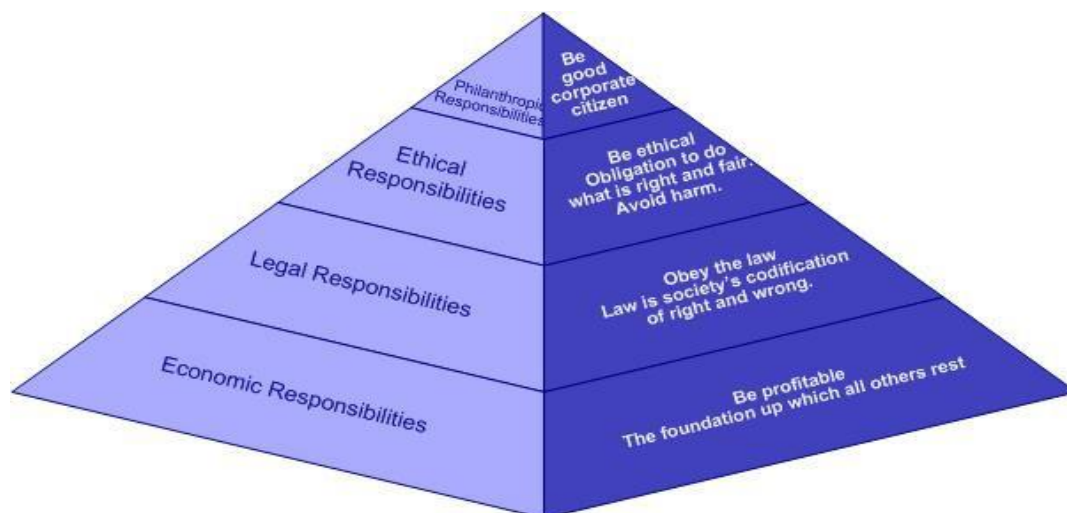
be embedded in its mission and values. Additionally, the way the company operates matters; every company should manage and investigate the impacts of its operations on people and the planet (Castelló & Ros, 2012).

As a matter of fact, implementing strategic CSR will reward the company with a better reputation, a better financial performance and profitability, and huge positive influences on the social development (e.g. customer satisfaction and improving the working environment) (Villafañe, 2009).

Carroll (1991) categorized the CSR strategies in what is known as the pyramid of CSR Figure 1.

Figure 1

*Carroll's CSR Pyramid*



*Source:* Carroll, A.B. (1991). "The pyramid of corporate social responsibility: Toward the moral management of organizational stakeholders". *Business Horizons*, 34(4), 39-48.

Over the past years, news about several companies, involved in social and environmental disasters erupted in media. These companies have committed

environmental and social crimes, for example: Nestlé's bottled water (Air and water pollution,), Walmart (Air pollutions), Nike (Child Labor)... As a result, the legitimacy of these firms started to become questionable (Palazzo & Scherer, 2006) and citizens began to mandate that corporations should validate and legitimate not only their economic actions, but their social and environmental actions as well. Thus, a new definition of the relationship between business and society has been raised.. Corporate legitimacy has been defined as "a generalized perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are appropriate, right, or suitable within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs, and definitions" (Suchman, 1995, p. 574). The creation of a "congruence between the social values associated with or implied by organizational activities and the norms of acceptable behavior in the larger social system" (Dowling & Pfeffer, 1975, p. 122) lies at the core of the legitimacy of business in society. Eventually, companies should gain legitimacy by aligning their business behavior with the people's expectations to guarantee their continued existence in the corporate world (Dawkins, 2004).

Following this argument, CSR activities include all of the various corporate social practices implemented in order to decrease the difference between corporate behavior and the social expectations of stakeholders. Next, several researchers have exposed the relationship between a firm's engagement with CSR and its economic performance.

Legitimacy is achieved successfully when "organizational actions are perceived as being consistent with stakeholders' expectations" (Massey, 2001, p. 156).

According to Suchman (1995), there are three types of legitimacy:

- Pragmatic legitimacy: when there is a direct exchange between the company and the audiences, in light of self-interest (Suchman, 1995).



- Cognitive legitimacy: when an entity becomes embedded in taken-for-granted assumptions (Zucker, 1987).
- Moral legitimacy: when the audience value the company not based on their benefits, but on whether it is doing the right thing (Suchman, 1995, p. 579).

The globalization process, along with the loss of national power, and the emergence of the risky economy (Beck, 2000; Castells, 1997) has increased the significance of accomplishing moral legitimacy (Herrmann, 2004).

On the other hand, corporations should serve the general wealth of the society, although they are progressively translating their corporate values into corporate social responsibility practices; a channel of communication and feedback should be initiated with the audience and society as a whole. This suggests that an organization should communicate its values internally and externally, and be willing to revise its conception based on the influence on its audiences (Morsing & Schultz, 2006).

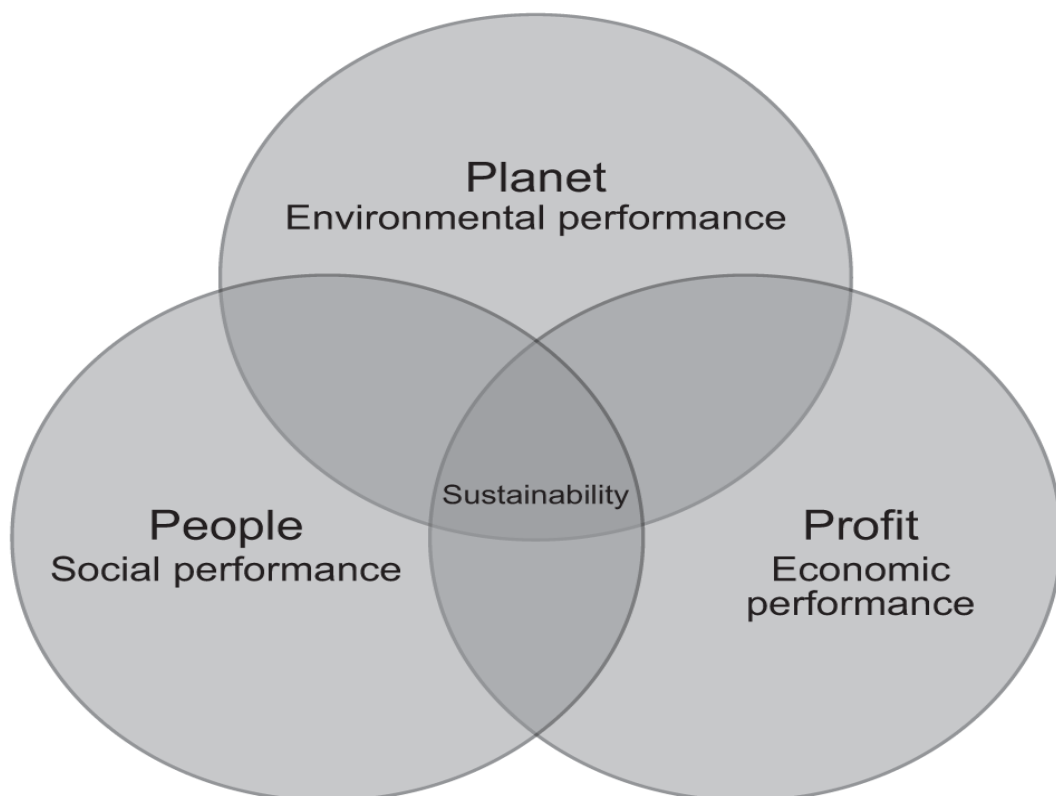
- *The Triple Bottom Line (TBL):*

In 1994, John Elkington created the theory of the Triple Bottom Line (TBL). He believed that operating companies should be preparing three different bottom lines. The first bottom line is the measure of corporate profit. The second bottom line is the people's account, it indicates how socially responsible the company is operating. The third bottom line is the planet's account, which indicates how environmentally responsible a business is acting. Therefore, the three bottom line theory (TBL) consists of the three Ps: Profit, People, and Planet; or sometimes the triple E's: Earning, Equity, and Ecology. In 1998 in his book "Cannibals with Forks", John Elkington added to the initial theory that all operating businesses should not only exist to gain profits, but they are accountable to contribute to the three interrelated goals of economic prosperity, the environmental protection, and the social equity. Additionally, all businesses should have

the TBL embedded in their corporate agendas. Moreover, Elkington advised that what a company measures is what it gets. Thus, in order to have socially and environmentally responsible institutions, it is very necessary to measure the social and the environmental impact of these companies. In fact, this concept indicates that the money is a mean to get to the end, not the end by itself. It is a new perspective for business to think twice why they exist in this world.

Figure 2

*The TBL Concept*



As a matter of fact, the TBL manifests one major problem, which is the inability to measure planet and people impacts in terms of cash, as the profit and loss

can be measured. Therefore, a new index took place, the Global Reporting Initiative GRI reporting. Many organizations now are part of the GRI reporting, to measure their sustainable reports. The GRI offers huge benefits for the organizations, as it provides them with the tools of accountability and transparency, and enables them to get the trust of the stakeholders. Currently, thousands of companies all around the world are using the GRI reporting and are part of the GRI network.

In (Jamali, 2008), two CSR perspectives are identified:

- *Classical Perspective*: considers CSR as a burden on competitiveness. This belief has a very narrow focus and no tolerance to the business role in societies. It suggests that the business firms have the role to only generate goods and services.
- *Modern Perspective*: suggests that every company has responsibilities towards the society. It should aim to advance the society's welfare instead of only aiming for profit.

In fact, CSR has recently attracted more attention and has become a topic of concern in corporate, governmental, and international business forums. The new shift and rising concern in CSR is due to many reasons: global warming pressures, vast division of wealth, customer preferences of ethical business practices etc. Also CSR has developed as an inevitable priority for business leaders and as a response to new conditions, new challenges, and new opportunities. It is certain, that very soon promoting CSR accomplishments will be an important component of any business campaigns.

According to a World Economic Forum survey of CEOs and leaders (Voice of the Leaders Survey, 2003), the reputation of any brand outperforms in value any financial performance in terms of success measurement. Therefore, CSR activities are no longer an enjoyable and optional activity that any company would do; it became a

commercial element linked to the company profits and value. Despite the different theories and opinions that were formulated about CSR, most theories agree that CSR efforts should be done voluntarily without thinking or aiming for any financial gains. (Davis, 1973). In fact, CSR practices should be done only to benefit the societies and make the world a better place to live in.

On the other hand, implementing CSR does not only mean that the firm is spending its resources for social services, but it also enhances the firm's reputations and public image. Where it increases its customer loyalty and helps the company attracting and retaining good talents (Fombrun *et al.*, 2000; Yan, 2011; Booth & Matic, 2011; Patino *et al.*, 2012).

After the speech of the UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan in 1999 at the World Economic Forum at Davos, the Global Compact agreement was born, where it was implemented in July 2000. By definition, the Global compact agreement consisted of nine principles of good corporate citizenship, including human rights, labor standards, and the environment. The agreement was then revised in 2004, adding to it the principle about bribery and corruption. In fact, the Global Compact urges all organizations to embrace its principles and act upon them, as these principles are divided into four areas: human rights, labor standards, the environment, and bribery and compensation. It incorporates altogether ten principles. In addition, the principles encompassed by the Compact are based on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), the ILO's Tripartite Declaration of Principles Concerning Multinational Enterprises and Social Policy (1977) and the Rio Declaration for Environment and Sustainable Development (1992).

As a matter of fact, concepts such as: Dialogue, learning, local networks and project partnerships between companies, civil society and governments, were created in

order to facilitate the organizational commitments and engagement with the UN Global Compact.

It is thought among firms that the Global Compact was a big milestone in the development of CSR, as it assists any company that wants to engage in CSR activities, through facilitating the direct work with the UN. All activities are done in partnership with ILO and NGOs, to identify and promote good corporate practices based on universal principles. As a global platform, the Global Compact aims to make the business sector a strategic partner for development as it appears to have brought together business, labor and civil society to search for solutions to contemporary challenges. Unfortunately, even though the Global Compact was a great step forward in the CSR context, it lacks the capability of enforcing and controlling the CSR activities to ensure compliance with its principles.

CSR involves a broad range of issues, such as the environment, product safety, human rights, human dignity, lessening global poverty, eliminating pandemic diseases, economic development, sustainability, and civic involvement (Rindova *et al.*, 2005; Pirsch *et al.*, 2007). Even during a recession, 75% of responding consumers believed CSR to be an important factor influencing their purchasing preference, and 55% explained that they would prefer to buy a product that supports a particular cause (Brandweek, 2010).

### **Sustainability**

The World Council of Churches used the term *Sustainability* for the first time in 1974, as a result of the increase level of suffering and poverty all around the world. It was declared by the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources in 1980. The topic of ‘Sustainable development’ was further discussed at the

United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 (Dresner, 2002). In this conference 179 world governments were assembled. They designed together the Agenda 21, in which they agreed to commit their tasks, in order to accomplish remarkable sustainable accomplishments, through national and international policies (Dresner, 2002). This partnership aims to engage all the participating countries in a constructive dialogue, in an attempt to solve the challenging issues of environment and social development in order to achieve a more equitable world economy. The level of awareness increased and the term 'Sustainability' became more popular, as it was shown in several governmental principles, contracts, and policies. In 1998, the goal of sustainable development was included in the preamble of the treaty of Amsterdam. In 2001, the European council decided the strategy of sustainable development, and several governments introduced councils and panels of sustainability as a new sanction.

The careful balance between environmental concern and the support of economic growth is the core aim of sustainability, as they are both interrelated and one cannot function without another. To understand sustainable development, it is necessary to agree on what 'development' means. The development of the earth has become an important issue over the last decades. Human impact and its effects have resulted into climate change, global warming, natural disasters and environmental pollution but also financial meltdowns, terror and poverty. Our globalized planet is now going through a “global crisis” (Lewis & Boyce, 2009, p. 5) At the same time, awareness has gained more attention, and terms such as “environmental friendly”, “biological”, or “renewable” have become common knowledge in society.

Behaving sustainably as an individual, means acting responsibly in dealing with our planet, using responsibly our natural resources, and leaving a good impact.

Everybody should think about the future generation and ensure that they will be able to grow up in a healthy and livable environment.

In fact, sustainable and biologically produced goods have their price, and so does changing one's living standards. Simple things like using public transport instead of the car, turning off the tap while brushing teeth or buying seasonal and regional groceries can be a hindrance but every little act counts and already makes a difference. (Lewis & Boyce, 2009)

## **CSR and Media**

### **Media Ethics and Social Responsibility**

The media mogul Joseph Pulitzer (Cited in McQuail, Golding & De Bens, 2005) said that "Always fight for progress and reform. Never tolerate injustice or corruption; never lack sympathy for the poor; always remain devoted to the public welfare; never be satisfied with merely printing the news; always be drastically independent; never be afraid to attack wrong." Referring to the strong aspect, which makes the big advantage of media institutions, is the direct communication of new information and ideas internally and externally (Schranz, 2007).

Additionally, media is expected to behave at a certain standard of ethical responsibility regarding the content and the quality of its delivered products (Schranz, 2007). In 1947, the Hutchins Commission created the Code of Ethics in Media; they advised that all types of media institutions had started to become more responsible and therefore should become more accountable of what they publish. The guidelines were set up around two important ideas. The first guideline is that journalists should be more responsible of how they use their freedom of speeches and their communication

(Straubhaar, LaRose & Davenport, p. 477). This guideline is very essential as it makes people in power, liable in case their actions were unprofessional, or in case they abuse this power for their personal benefits, due to the large number of people who could be affected by any journalist's poor behavior. The second guideline that was established is that journalists should always put first the society's welfare, which is higher and more important than individual careers (Straubhaar *et al.*, p. 477).

The Hutchins Commission added another five guidelines specifically for the press.

1. "Present meaningful news, accurate and separated from opinion.
2. Serve as a forum for the exchange of comment and criticism and to expand access to diverse points of view.
3. Project "a representative picture of the constituent groups in society" by avoiding stereotypes by including minority groups.
4. Clarify the goals and values of society; implicit was an appeal to avoid pandering to the lowest common denominator.
5. Give broad coverage of what was known about society" (Straubhaar *et al.*, p. 477).

All of these guidelines are important because the press is needed to maintain a neutral viewpoint, providing the basic facts and leaving the readers with freedom to form their own opinions. These guidelines were the base of the foundation of the Society of Professional Journalists, which is the current version of media ethics that were adopted in 1996. The Society of Professional Journalists created a code of ethics that are in effect today. The main mantra of the code is "Seek truth and Report it!" (Straubhaar *et al.*, p. 478), the code also states that: "Journalists should be honest, fair, and courageous in gathering, reporting, and interpreting information."



As a new form of media started to take place “the e-media”, new values, new challenges, and new window for communications were created. Where the new media enables anyone whether they are professional journalists or not to spread any news in just few seconds. Blogs and social media such as Facebook and Twitter offer a wider spread for media. They offer citizens the ability to access publishing technology as soon as they occur and enable them to be reporters themselves. In fact, anyone can spread any news, which can reach all people around the globe in just a few seconds. The dangerous fact from this fast coverage is who is reporting; as it opens the window for communication not only for professional journalists, but also to the amateurs, the fact that questions the degree of reliability and truth about this news (Ward, 2013).

The main duty of the media is to play an intermediary role between political, economic and the social entities. As it should be the eye watching over how information is communicated and to make sure that all information is transparent and accessible to anyone. It should connect government to people, defend people, and investigate any social injustice.

As a matter of fact, media companies have a dual role in the society: they report about organizations, which offer them the advantage of influencing people and how people behave. Additionally, Media enterprises are organizations themselves, they are obliged to orientate their political and journalistic actions towards social responsible principles and publish them in form of CSR-reports for example. These reports if applied will play an important role. Media’s public influence enables them to communicate social values and have an impact on markets and society. Further, they are capable of educating their audience, influence actions, as well as consumer behavior.

Figure 3

*Media's harm on the environment*

Pulping process
Bleaching of paper
Electricity consumption
Toxic emissions from the satellite
Killing birds by the connection towers

The media's impact is not only positive; as it affects the environment in a very harmful way. Since the pulping and bleaching process of papers requires a chemical process that brings many poisoning materials to the land and the water. Along with the water and electricity consumptions, which are very dangerous as well. Between 20 and 50 million tons of e-waste are generated by the global information and communication industry each year, estimated by Greenpeace (Lewis & Boyce, 2009). Moreover, satellites discharge toxic chemicals and nuclear waste, which lead to toxic emission that poison the wildlife. Media companies are among others a decisive factor of global sustainable development.

In that sense, next to media companies' wide spectrum of duties, their responsibility of communication has to be added. Media companies are however not as much a subject of the CSR-competition as commercial enterprises in other sectors are. This fact results in less commitment and a different view of CSR duties of media companies. They see themselves more as agents of change and development of CSR and sustainability rather than taking their own actions in this field. Their focus clearly lies on their journalistic responsibility. Nonetheless the pressure to get active in CSR issues rises with the demand of ensuring a sustainable existence of media in a political,

social, economic and technological environment.

Due to the complexity of the topic, it appears difficult to include CSR and sustainability in Media Company's policy, internal as well as external. The lack of news coverage might come from the social, journalistic, or technological development and changes mentioned above that complicates the provision of this service. Another reason could also be the topic itself and the decreasing interest of audience in CSR and sustainable issues. Nevertheless, CSR activities in media companies are being measured and examined increasingly, especially from rating agencies (Grayson, 2009).

### **CSR Studies and initiatives in Media**

*UN Global Compact.* The United Nations Global Compact is a UN initiative to encourage all businesses around the world to adopt a more sustainable and responsible policies and operations; it requires also all companies to report their implementations in this concern. The UN Global Compact was initially made of nine principles in the areas of Human rights, labor, and the environment. On June 24, 2004, during the first Global Compact Leaders' Summit, Kofi Annan announced the addition of the tenth principle against corruption in accordance with the United Nations Convention against Corruption adopted in 2003.

The 10 principles of the UN Global Compact are as the following:

- *Human Rights:* All businesses should

Principle 1: support and respect the protection of internationally proclaimed human rights

Principle 2: not be involved in any human rights abuse

- *Labor Standards:* All businesses should

Principle 3: encourage the freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining

Principle 4: eliminate all forms of forced and compulsory labor

Principle 5: eliminate and terminate all forms of child labor

Principle 6: eliminate all forms of employment and occupation discrimination

- *Environment*: All businesses should

Principle 7: support all research and actions to respond to the environmental challenges

Principle 8: undertake initiatives to promote environmental responsibility

Principle 9: encourage the development of environmentally friendly technologies

- *Anti-Corruption*

Principle 10: Businesses should work against corruption in all its forms, including extortion and bribery.

*Sustainability 2002, The Good News and Bad*. This study was based on the belief that the Media sector has the most powerful impact, yet the most untrusted sector in the society. The study was part of the Engaging Stakeholders program for the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP), and focused on three major issues:

- The role of the media in developing CSR agendas for business
- How media deals with CSR issues
- Media challenges such as transparency and accountability

In this study, 54 people who were very active in CSR and Media from different countries were interviewed. The aim was to provide a comprehensive overview of the qualitative and quantitative proliferation of social, economic, and ecological issues in the media over the time period of 10 years, from 1991 until 2001. To classify the report the *triple-bottom-line* was used, known as “the basic tool of integrated measurement and management systems focusing on economic, social and environmental value added.”

The study distinguished between CSR and Sustainability, it was mentioned that they are linked but do not necessarily mean the same thing.

The report recommends that Media needs to be independent; otherwise, the world would be less democratic.

The most relevant finding from this study was that media associations are so powerful. Unfortunately, this power is not directed to help and uplift the society, but is abused by these institutions to gain more profits. Media institutions have been always mentioning the environmental challenges in their coverage, but without any intervention. They watch and speak but do not act. Additionally, the report highlighted that media institutions do charities, but they offer the minimum. As a result, the report indicates that media companies are not fulfilling their original reason of existence; they become commercial institutions that care only for profit and loss. It was highly observed that ethical conduct and CSR are not a major concern for media institutions.

Sustainability and profound challenge for the media industry was also a focus in the report. It was regarded as one of the major problems that the world is facing next to population growth, poverty, disease, and competition for water as water. The findings generate that sustainability was not the main concern of media, and its transparency was to be questioned.

This study concluded with recommendations that enables the media to serve more its mission, and be more reliable, transparent and accountable. It introduced recommendations that can help the media progress in terms of Governance, Transparency, and Accountability.

In terms of governance, the study advised that media companies should communicate at the board level the necessity to balance between social interest and commercial needs, which are very crucial to draw the company's culture and

performance. Moreover, the company should always review its performance against the international governance codes, such as the UN Global Compact. Regarding the accountability, the report stated that it is essential that all seniors in the media institutions should always try to go beyond the compliance codes of what is ethical, and incorporate these codes of ethics into the company's values and principles. Not only this, but the company should also control and engage with key stakeholders, to ensure that these ethical codes are adopted across the business. For the transparency issue, the report identified that the main duty of the media institutions is to be the watchdog, to uncover all kinds of corruptions and hold government and businesses accountable in front of the citizens.

Table 1

*Sustainability 2002 report's findings*

<b>1. Determine if the balance between the social interest and the commercial priorities is being properly managed, and publicly revealed by the media institutions' board.</b>
<b>2. Evaluate their goals, targets, and performance against leading governance codes (including the UN Global Compact, the Global Sullivan Principles) and socially responsible investment (SRI) criteria.</b>
<b>3. Ensure compliance with laws, regulations and industry codes as the minimum requested for good governance - and commit to 'beyond compliance' standards wherever possible.</b>
<b>4. Adopt and publish ethical codes of conduct, corporate values and principles.</b>
<b>5. Engage regularly with key stakeholders.</b>
<b>6. Provide leadership in terms of triple bottom line accounting, auditing, and reporting.</b>
<b>7. Disclose all proprietorial cross-ownerships and influence.</b>
<b>8. Disclose all proprietorial cross-ownerships and influence.g, auditing, and reporting.or</b>
<b>9. Be open in relation to all sources of funds that could influence editorial and programming content - including their biggest advertisers, sponsors and production subsidies.</b>
<b>10. Regularly report direct and indirect lobbying activities, both undertaken and accepted.</b>

*UK Media CSR Forum.* Twenty influential media institutions created unanimously the Media CSR Forum in 2001; the participants included BBC, Sky, Pearson, Bertelsmann, and Reed Elsevier. The forum was established based on the belief that CSR activities in media companies are unique and present very special features that make them distinctive from all other business sectors.

Table 2

*Media CSR forum purpose*

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Developing an insight on CSR implications for media members</b></li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Setting priorities of CSR in Media</b></li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Sharing the successful initiatives</b></li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Engaging with stakeholders</b></li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Running collaborative projects</b></li> </ul>

This forum aimed to classify the media as the promoter agent of CSR activities, the facilitator of freedom of expression, and the catalyst of the community activities. It has delivered an analysis and consultation that aimed to help the media's organizations improve their thinking in terms of CSR. In February 2004, the Media CSR Forum published a document focusing on the key CSR issues the media industry faced. The group recognized this to be a starting point. As a consequence, in June 2004, 12 media organizations asked KPMG to carry out a stakeholder consultation and analysis. The objective was to help refine the media organizations' thinking about CSR and provide a platform for informed debate with some of their interested parties.

The KPMG consulted over 130 stakeholders, external to the 12 organizations funding the project. The stakeholders were opinion formers drawn from the media industry, the CSR community (e.g. non-governmental organizations (NGOs), academics), socially responsible investors, and the financial community (e.g. ratings agencies).

- *Key CSR issues for the media industry*

A version of the diagram (Figure 3) was first developed and published by the Media CSR Forum in association with KPMG in February 2004 and was an initial interpretation of the CSR issues facing media organizations. It recognizes the inter-relationship between the corporate and creative aspects of the media industry and identifies CSR issues for the media sector as a whole. It does not allude to how CSR should be managed and it recognizes that the issues are not all necessarily relevant to each company. Organizations may approach and interpret CSR in different ways reflecting their individual culture, brand positioning and the needs and expectations of their stakeholders. Media organizations' social responsibilities arise directly from the management of the business and its estate. As businesses, their responsibilities are broadly similar to organizations in other sectors, and are reflected in their corporate attitudes, policies, and governance – taking into account of any material social and environmental impacts in the context of employees, markets, and communities. These are reflected in those issues classified as 'CSR issues common to all sectors'. Creatively the implications are much more challenging. Media organizations can influence public opinion and taste, and have to respond to and reflect the dynamic and diverse society in which they operate. These are classified as 'common issues with distinct implications for the media'. Those CSR issues, which are unique to the media sector, arise from their output that includes news, information, entertainment, advertising, and opinion. These



are subject to varying levels of regulation and self-regulation. The aim was to identify the most significant issues, which stakeholders believed the media industry should address. For many, the diagram represented the first step the media industry has taken to articulate its core CSR issues – that is, those arising from their output (e.g. culturally diverse output; impartial and balanced output) rather than those, which focus on non-core, or operational activities such as environmental performance reporting. The stakeholders identified the following additional issues for inclusion:

- Classified as ‘common issues with distinct implications for the media’:
  - Content access
  - Labeling
  - Interaction
  - Accessibility
  - Responsible advertising

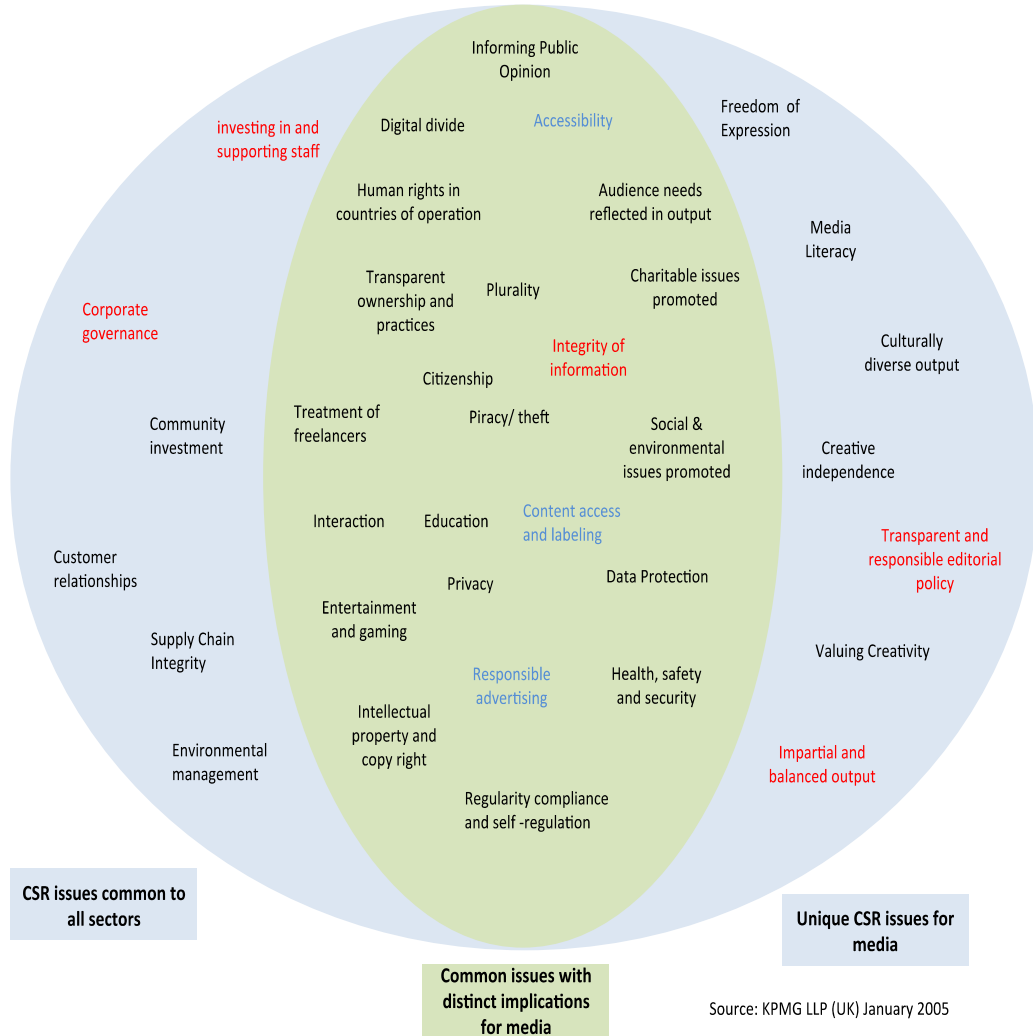
1, 3, and 4 are unique for the media sector, while 2 and 5 are common to all sectors. The results of the KPMG, Media CSR Forum are shown in Figure 4.

### **CSR in Lebanon**

Lebanon is a stereotype country that has been conflicted by religious and social cleavages. It is an unstable country with recurrent violence and a growing danger of institutional breakdown. The difficult conditions that this country has passed through forced the Lebanese people to focus only their economic and financial needs, while ignoring their environmental or ethical behaviors. Where the main goal for the institutions in Lebanon is to maximize the benefits, disregarding the interest of the employees and the community.

Figure 4

*Media CSR Forum results*



Source: KPMG (UK), 2005.

Over 90% of the small to medium enterprises operating in the country are family owned businesses, where the owner is the manager and the decision maker in everything. This, questions how reliable are the decisions and how ethical the company’s operations are.

Azer (2002) has suggested that the growing globalization of communications and economic activity could give CSR a chance to become influential in Lebanon. It

may offer citizens a chance to enhance their pride at work and their rights through building a social contract between the business and local community.

The concept of CSR has gained a lot of attention and popularity all around the world recently (Crook, 2005); where corporations started adopting responsibilities towards: People, Planet, and Profit. In 2011, the International Labor Organization (ILO) has reported that the level of unemployed youth in the Arab region is 26%, which is the highest rate worldwide, and more than twice of the international average. Such a rate requires approximately 60-80 million jobs in order to keep up with the population growth. Next, the Arab Spring has also affected all business firms operating in the region when it comes to the business behavior and culture. In addition, the rise of these social movements has affected the images of many companies and the purchasing priorities of the consumers. As a result, firms are starting to realize the importance of responsible behaviors as social responsibilities and social initiatives.

Today, several factors have urged all businesses operating in the country to reconsider their behaviors and their CSR implications. Such factors include high unemployment, economic social impact of the Syrian crisis, pollution crisis, and waste issues. It has been recorded by the World Bank that 200,000 Lebanese citizens have been pushed below the poverty line in 2016, and estimated an additional 250,000-300,000 Lebanese citizens will become unemployed in the coming years (The World Bank, October 1, 2016).

Public awareness concerning social, environmental, and humanitarian causes has been increasing in the past decade. In fact, customers are pressuring firms to act ethically in society and towards all their stakeholders. To comply with that request and in conjunction with their corporate social responsibility (hereafter CSR) programs, firms should maintain and grow communication with consumers and keep them informed of

the plans and the projects (Castelló & Ros, 2012). According to Brown & Deegan (1998), customers' loyalty and commitment will be stronger if organizations direct their acts while taking into consideration their environmental and social responsibilities (Safi & Ramay, 2013). Through the use of media, an organization can show their CSR actions to demonstrate its commitment and influence its e-reputation (Kioussis *et al.* 2007).

Even though, there is a significant fast growing interest in CSR all around the globe, CSR initiatives in Lebanon are minimal and there is a huge lack of awareness about it in the country. Therefore, CSR initiative in the country remains minimal.

According to Jamali (2008), CSR initiatives in Lebanon are divided as below:

- *20% Modern perspective*: considers CSR activities beneficial to business success.
- *50% Philanthropic*: believes that CSR activities are necessary, but these activities don't relate to the company competitive advantage in anyway.
- *18% Classical perspective*: believes that CSR is incompatible with the business and it weakens the business success.

### **Media in Lebanon**

According to worldometers.info (2017), Lebanon has a population of 6,026,111, where 54% are Muslims (Shia and Sunni, 27% each), 40.5% Christians (Maronite Catholic, Greek Orthodox, Melkite Catholic, Armenian Orthodox, Syrian Catholic, Armenian Catholic, Syrian Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Chaldean, Assyrian, Copt, Protestant), and 5.6% are Druze. The literacy rate in the country is 86.4%. The country hosted until now around 2.2 million Syrian refugees, of which only 1,048,275 are registered (UNHCR data, 2017). Lebanon's GDP per capita is 16,000\$ with a

20.89% unemployment rate.

The number of active print outlets, radio stations, and television stations is as per below:

<i>Print</i>	0 Public (0%)	16 Private (100%)
<i>Radio Stations</i>	1 Public (3.57%)	27 Private (96.43%)
<i>TVs</i>	1 Public (12.5%)	7 Private (87.5%)

*Print Media:*

- 11 in Arabic
- 3 in French
- 1 in English
- 1 in Armenian

The recorded annual advertising revenue in media sector: \$145 million (est., Deloitte & Touche) and the Internet usage was 2.15 million (2012 est., Internet World Stats)

With all of its historical difficulties, Lebanon has managed to produce a highly literate, educated, and critical populace. As reported by the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency in 2002 using a 1997 estimate, an average of 86.4 percent of the Lebanese population is considered literate (males, 90.8 percent; females, 82.2 percent).

Ipsos & Nielsen recently released their official results for Television Audience Measurement (TAM) for 2016 in Lebanon; the findings were as per below:

- TV coverage is at 92% in the country
- Peak time for watching TV is 9:30 p.m.
- 86% of Millennial watch TV
- The TV viewership rate in Lebanon has increased by 2.5% compared to

2015

The most important laws concerning press and media are the 1962 Press Law and the Audiovisual Media Law (Law 382/94) passed by the parliament in October 1994 and finally applied as of September 18, 1996. The 1962 Press Law, which has significant similarities with many other Arab states' press laws, forbids the publication of anything that jeopardizes the national security, national unity, or state frontiers, or that insults high-ranking Lebanese officials or a foreign head of state. Moreover, this law has a portion that is called Article Nine, which states that journalism in Lebanon is characterized by freedom of expression. Additionally, it defines a journalist as somebody whose main living and income is from journalistic activities and does not have any other profession. The 1962 law also set the standard for Lebanese journalists as being at least 21 years of age, having a baccalaureate degree, and having a minimum of four years practice in journalism. The 1962 Press Law also organized journalists into two syndicates: the Lebanese Press Syndicate (owners) and the Lebanese Press Writers (reporters) Syndicate. Furthermore, Higher Press Council was created, along with other committees, to consider other issues pertinent to journalists— including devising a retirement plan.

Having a diverse population helped the press to build a positive relation with the citizens. Each party wants to be heard and to be represented. This helped to create an open dialogue between the government and the society, so that one historian has designated Lebanon as the "true cradle of Arab journalism." With multiple opinions available to them, the Lebanese have become so knowledgeable and selective about what they want to read or watch, having the option of switching channels according to their personal preferences.

The strength and weakness of Lebanon stands in its diversity, Lebanese people

were never dominated by a single opinion and hence unfortunately were never united.

The open channels of communication between the people and the media have always characterized Lebanon, adding to that the intervention of the digital media that makes all information widely spread and available. Altogether, these factors offer a great potential for its citizens to seek opportunities and build a better society

Media should be the eye watching over the country and the Lebanese interests; it should be proactive in the Lebanese society and demonstrate ethical business practices. As a matter of fact, Media in Lebanon should be playing an intermediary role between the Political, the Economic, and the Social units. It should also make sure that the flow of information across the various sectors is transparent and measureable.

Robert Maynard Hutchins (1942) believed that all media organizations should follow certain codes of ethics and use their communication power to foster a better society. Thus, media should balance its expected ethical behavior and lead by example with the business needs, media needs to survive in the country.

## CHAPTER III

### EMPIRICAL FRAMEWORK

#### **Choice of Method and Research Approach**

This thesis will use a qualitative research methodology, because the main purpose of this study is to investigate and unveil the truth about the research topic from different perspectives. According to Murray Thomas (2003), a qualitative research can be divided into three types: the case study, the ethnography, and the narrative experience. Although the qualitative research takes more time than the quantitative approach, it allows the researcher to dig deeper into the research subject. The most important aspect of the qualitative method, which is relevant to the study in hand, is the narrative part that aims to know the personal opinions and experiences regarding a concept. The qualitative research enables to answer the three questions: “Why?” “How?” and “In what?” (Orb *et.al.*, 2001).

The research questions of this thesis requires a deeper understanding of the research’s subject, by asking “how” is something being done. For this research, it was necessary to give enough space and time to the interviewees in order to think more about the answers and offer a broader picture of the situation. Additionally, this method was a necessity as the topic was not investigated before in the Lebanese context and no comparable study has been performed before. Most of the collected data of qualitative research “involves the examination and interpretation of observations for the purpose of discovering underlying meanings and patterns of relationship” (Orb *et al.*, 2001, p. 94). Therefore, the qualitative research method was preferred over quantitative due to the fact that, the aim of this study is to get new insights as well as the personal experience



on the research subject.

In order to collect data for this study, semi structured interviews were conducted. The reason behind choosing this kind of interviews, is that semi structured interviews offer more flexibility in asking the questions. It enables the interviewer to dig for more information, and elaborates more when it is needed (Cohen & Cabtree, 2006).

### **Tool of Data Collection: Semi-structured Interviews**

An interview by definition is a verbal exchange of information made between two parties: the interviewer and the interviewee. The quality and efficiency of the interview relies more on the interviewer's communication and interpersonal skills, as well as the knowledge of the interviewee (Ritchie, Lewis, Nicholls & Ormston, 2013).

Semi-structured interviews should be used, when little is known about the subject of the study, and when specific details are being investigated. The interviewer can prepare the questions ahead of time, to give the interview an orientation and a focus. It also helps the interviewer to look more confident and knowledgeable about the subject. Usually the interviewer prepares several key questions that help to define the areas to be explored, and that serve as a general guideline. At any moment, the interviewer can change the order of the questions and so can the interviewee. This flexibility is an advantage for this type of interview compared to the structured or in-depth interview, because many unexpected information and feedback may arise at any moment during the interview.

The research participants were chosen using the non-probability sampling method, which does not involve random selection and does not represent the entire population (Ritchie *et al.* 2013). However, in this case non-probability was considered

the right sampling method because it is the practical, feasible and theoretically sensible alternative to probability sampling and it fulfills the purpose of this study. As time was limited and sampling for proportionality was not the primary concern, this method was selected to get knowledge and opinion from the selected test persons. The main focus of the interrogation was on the interviewees' personal opinion, attitude and mindset as well as personal experience and knowledge especially due to the sensitivity of the topic, which has not been yet explored in Lebanon. Time was another factor for convenience sampling, as it represents the most common and least time consuming of all techniques. With this type of sampling, the samples are selected simply because they are easy to recruit and accessible, another main reason for choosing the convenience sampling technique for this thesis.

### **Interview Design**

In order to perform this study several interviews were conducted, out of which six were face-to-face interviews. An introduction about the study topic took place on a primary phone call. For the face-to-face interviews, the interviewees, were very supportive and excited about the research topic, therefore the interviews took place on the same week after the introductory phone call. Concerning the phone interviews, a second phone call took place after one week to discuss the questions and the feedback. The purpose of the conducted interviews was to gather feedback, opinions, and experiences regarding the thesis topic. The questions were asked in English, but the interviewees had the choice to answer in either the English or the Arabic language. The disadvantages out of conducting only phone call interviews are the missed chance of meeting the interviewees in person, watching their behaviors, and building trust between the interviewer and the interviewees.

### **Selection of Respondents and Conduct of Interview**

The twelve participants in this thesis held senior positions in the most influential Lebanese media institutions, which are all privately owned companies.

For the phone interviewees: All participants showed some worries at the first attempt, they were afraid to have their names or their institutions name exposed.

Additionally, they showed doubts in relation of the nature of the investigation, as no previous research was done before in this regard. Therefore, the consent forms along with the recruitment material were sent by email to ensure the confidentiality and anonymity of the information to be discussed. At the first attempt, fifteen media senior executives were contacted; they have received messages through their LinkedIn account. Unfortunately, none of them replied, that is why a second attempt to contact them was via telephone calls; eight positive responses were the result.

For the face-to-face interviews: The participants were very welcoming, they were excited to be part of this study, and even said they want their names to be revealed. I called them on their company's number and they offered immediate meetings. Only one interviewee requested to have the interview questions prior to the meeting day. The questionnaire (Appendix I) was sent to the participant, along with the recruitment material and the consent. The interview date was set to be one week later, the meeting was held at the office of the participant. All participants in the face-to –face interviews showed great interest in the topic and lamented the challenging circumstances surrounding the study that is addressed for the first time in Lebanon.

## CHAPTER IV

### ANALYSIS OF THE EMPIRICAL DATA

In the following, the analysis focuses on the empirical findings, which are examined, compared, and discussed. Then, they were linked to the research question and the theories chosen by the author of this thesis, which were presented and explained in the theoretical framework. The aim was to underline and strengthen the theory and research questions by the empirical data that was collected throughout the interviews and later on to link, and connect the theoretical to the methodological approach using a qualitative analysis. The responses and outcomes of the twelve interviews can be seen as a complement to the theoretical part, furthermore the empirical data helps to answer the research questions.

#### **Findings**

This study highlighted two major significantly opposite findings. Each one is associated with the kind of interviews performed.

The six phone interviews were with the most influential newspapers in Lebanon, in addition to four major local TV stations. They all ended up with the same finding: The media in Lebanon is going through a huge crisis, and the financial situation of all media institutions in the country is very critical. The major concern of the media management is how to cut cost and reduce their expenditures in order to maintain a presence in the market. No CSR practices have been ever introduced; even there is no CSR department or representatives. The interviews were done with Human Resources directors, Managers, or Business managers. They all agree that CSR is still an unknown

topic for Lebanese media, and this constitutes a reflection of the CSR in Lebanon in general. All what is done in this regard is philanthropic and charity activities to serve the interest and the image of a certain political agenda. Furthermore, we can conclude that TV stations in Lebanon along with the newspapers remain at the bottom line of the TBL approach. Their existence has only a financial relevance in the Lebanese society, without any trial to address the Social and the Environmental Bottom lines. They do not follow any ethical conducts and do not apply any of the international codes of governance. An important finding came up while checking the digital page of one of the previously interviewed newspapers; although they admit to total ignorance of CSR adoptions, on their webpage they dedicated a huge support to the activities of a social movement known as “Beirut Madinati”. Beirut Madinati is a volunteer-led campaign that was formed on May 2016; the purpose of this entity was to elect a municipal council of qualified and politically unaffiliated. It addresses problems of affordability, mobility, waste management, air quality, public spaces, basic services, and municipal governance. As a result, we questioned whether this initiative follows a political agenda or is it a way to please the new generation. An additional question to think of; is the possibility that this newspaper wants to start adopting and supporting ethical actions and will this be exclusive to the webpage or will it be spread to the institution as a whole. Unfortunately, when the interviewee was contacted again to ask about this concern, no feedback was offered.

According to the interviewees, another reason that is making the situation even worse is digital media, which is becoming very popular, and unfortunately is replacing the traditional media. Thus, the Lebanese newspaper publishing market size is dropping by an average of 1% yearly.

It is important to note that the economic deficit of the country, as well as the

current political instability has weighed down on TV advertising. In fact, local television stations have complained of severe financial difficulties. Additionally, newspapers and television stations alike are reporting a severe decrease in advertising revenues as businesses and investors are hesitant to buy advertising space during the crisis.

Each of the phone interviewees expressed serious concern that the political crisis and instability is creating a major tension on the financial viability of their media outlets.

As for the face-to-face interviews, they were conducted with Lebanese magazines and one regional media institution. The participants were very knowledgeable about CSR. They all agreed that institutions in Lebanon could not operate anymore without being concerned about their social impacts. They all took personal initiatives to implement CSR internally and externally. In fact, they believe that a new wave of change is coming, where CSR should be at the core of each company. They all share the same belief that Lebanese organizations should start thinking twice about their contribution to the society; nothing can be hidden anymore, especially with the e-media where everything can be revealed.

The positivity and the determination to lead the change were very clear in the way these participants feel about their mission in Lebanon. They all believe there is a big chance for the media to be transparent and to be once again the voice of people. They all agreed that media should take back its power as the fourth authority in the Lebanese community.

### **Analysis of the Findings**

Four interviews were done with the most influential TV stations in Lebanon,

and two with local newspapers. They share all the same features:

The six companies are local institutions, have no CSR department, and even the interviewees in these organizations have not heard about the concept. The interviews were performed with HR managers or directors. The owners of these companies are all politicians or politically oriented people. Thus, these media institutions are no more representatives for the Lebanese community; they act as ambassadors and representatives of the politicians. This politicization has affected every aspect of their businesses, and made them drift from their initial mission. Therefore, these media institutions became a platform to market the political agenda and to gain more voting from the public for the particular politician or party. Because of the sectarian nature of the country and its media, when switching the TV to any of these stations, or when reading one of these newspapers, one can know in five minutes their political orientation. Additionally, nobody can deny the financial crisis the country is going through, which made it impossible for any media institution to survive by its own financial self-sufficiency. Therefore, they need the financial support of these people. Additionally, the lack of any laws that could govern media activities, as well as the lack of the rules and regulations that serve to protect the media practitioners' rights all made it very hard for any journalist to be as transparent as they should be. Additionally, the threats that all journalists are subject to made them avoid telling and revealing the truth or discussing corporate scandals or social matters, to avoid being accused of misplaced loyalty. Thus, they avoid shedding the light on critical matters, in order to keep their jobs and sometimes their livelihoods. The six media institutions interviewed gave the same insights: operating in Lebanon is very critical and being a journalist in this unstable environment is already a big stress factor. Media practitioners are suffering a lot from the economic instability, and what they need the most, in this critical period the

country is going through, is to maintain their employment status.

Interview number seven, was with the Executive editor-in chief of a local business magazine (named Company A in our study). He is also a corporate governance activist and publisher. The magazine had its first edition in 1999, it is not only covering the local businesses, but it has a regional vision and discusses economic issues facing other countries in the Middle East, including the Levant, Iraq, Jordan and Saudi Arabia. It is a monthly magazine that offers the readers in depth analysis of the Lebanese word commerce covering all sectors. Their main objectives are to be transparent, accurate, and to bring the real story without any commercial interest or orientation. Their core values can be summarized in three categories: Integrity though bringing the investigative journalism into Lebanese media, Transparency though being an independent magazine, and being at the core Human Centered.

The interviewee advised that one of the main objectives for company A is to raise the standard of journalism in Lebanon, and to lead by example. He believes that every business has an impact on the society where they operate, and every business should make sure that they bring a positive impact. For him, the Human Centered Approach should be the base of all corporate actions; any product should serve or improve humanity. From this context, he explained that his magazine always focuses on the humanitarian part. They are very concerned about how their readers perceive them. CSR practices of company A can be summarized by their internal policies and procedures, how they treat employees and how they use their resources. They are one of very few in Lebanon who use paper from sustainable forest in Canada and the USA. He said that even though, company A still have lots of things to do in terms of reducing their footprints and their negative environmental impacts, they believe as a company they are on the right track, and every year they will be closer to attain an



environmentally friendly status.

Moreover, he explained that their ethical practices in how they collect their data, the maturity of this data, along with how they highlight the local and regional corporate activities, all of these actions made them CSR activists in the country. In addition to the previous actions, the interviewee indicates that the magazine embraced the mission of supporting young entrepreneurs, especially in the media sectors. He believed that only through the young entrepreneurs' who are not obviously politically or religiously affiliated, Lebanese media could strive again and regain the accountability and the trust of the Lebanese community. With this in mind, and to connect to the TBL approach, we can synthesize that this magazine has addressed the first Bottom Line "the Economic", pursued the social line with a minimal trials to reach the Environmental line, through their paper use.

When the interviewer asked him about the weaknesses of his magazine, he mentioned the corruption that is becoming widely spread in every sector in Lebanon, the economic situation that affects daily activities and future planning, the taxes. The threats for their existence as magazine as per the interviewee is mainly the increasing technology which is replacing the traditional media gradually along with the power of the corrupted influential people, who never stopped from annoying and threatening every journalist with conscience. The interviewee indicated proudly that they are the only Lebanese media institution that acquired the BPA audit to reveal accurate numbers about their publications, and that this initiative is an essential part of their ethical behavior.

Interview number eight was with the editor of a Lebanese magazine, (company B). The company adopted the motto and the purpose to promote Lebanon. It is published twice every year, with multi topics about heritage, fashion, culture,

entrepreneurship, beauty, food, family, the “giving back side of life” including volunteering opportunities and corporate social impact. This magazine has the purpose to encourage local talents, businesses It is locally made magazine designed for the Lebanese community, and the Lebanese diaspora who live abroad as well. Company B provides a platform for writers and non-writers alike, meaning each issue is filled with stories from the heart, stories about the old and the new. Their philosophy is “Featuring Stories that Inform, Inspire and Transform Lives!”

The interviewee believes in social change ability of companies, and all businesses should have their social role and responsibility at the core of their business. Other than the published magazine, the institution offers workshops in sustainability; and trainings for companies as well. Their latest workshop is the social return on investment (SROI) workshop. The relevance of this workshop is to enable the organizations to quantify their social initiatives and to see the financial value of these initiatives. In other terms, to quantify the returning monetary value of the CSR practices, in order to initiate the CSR reporting which is essential for companies.

Moreover, the interviewee admits that there is a fundamental element that is prerequisite before talking about any social impact, which is the company’s degree of maturity. The more mature the company is, the better and the more responsible it would be. The mission shared by the members of this magazine is to promote positive activities in the company, always aim to inspire the Lebanese community to give back. The magazine features Sustainability articles in the Inspirational section to discuss and highlight the social impact of banks and the operating companies that are aware of their social responsibility. These articles also shed the light on small personal initiatives made by individuals in Lebanon around the globe. Moreover, the magazine publishes and covers the NGO initiatives in Lebanon for free without any charges, and this what

the interviewee believes a commitment from the magazine towards the Lebanese society. Besides, the interviewees advised that the magazine is committed to recycling, offering continuous training, and full support to its employees. The company's shared values are accountability, shared responsibility towards its members, its publications, and its readers. As per the interviewee, company B succeeded until today and will always be independent with no political affiliations, and will continue to serve as the voice of the people. She believed also that Governmental rules are essential to enhance CSR practices, because only then the companies will feel the urge to be ethically responsible.

Interview number nine, was with a young entrepreneur who started up a local magazine, (company C). It was launched in September 2012, and is an attempt to capture the energies of a changing region and lay down possible futures. It aims to shift perspectives and inspire action. Company C is published from Lebanon, and distributed worldwide. Its mission is to encourage possibilities of positive change in Lebanon and the Arab region. The interviewee believes that the change begins in the imagination, thus the magazine's purpose is to plant the seeds of imagination in the people through their magazine. Their vision is to become catalysts of imagination across different disciplines: social, cultural, education and environmental. The interviewee admits the great social impact of the media in Lebanon. In fact, the magazine launched multiple social campaigns; one of them was to encourage young people to think about the barriers that stand between them and their future responsibility. Not only this, these campaigns inspire them and orientate them to take actions. The impact of their stories and existence started to be harvested through their readers who share their success stories with the magazine: one of their readers was inspired to donate his organs after the magazine discussed the organ donation benefits, another started his own painting

exhibition after having the support and the help of the magazine, others went on starting to volunteer at local NGOs to be efficient activists in their community. The interviewee believed that these previous actions are still minimal to the change they intended to do through the magazine. Company C has mobile operations, there are no offices, no schedules, and anyone can work from anywhere. Employees are either freelancer or volunteers; in summary as per the interviewee, company C is trying to challenge the system of employment and ownership

Furthermore, the interviewee indicates that what makes them special and unique is that they work passionately, and from their heart. Company C is at the end, a group of small initiatives that represent the youth dreams of a better Lebanon and a better media where corruption does not exist.

The interview number ten, was with the General Manager of a business firm that was founded in 1997, (company D). The company is specialized in generating and delivering business and economic information. It is the publisher of a monthly local business magazine in addition to a number of periodicals and websites. Company D is also very active in market research activities, with emphasis on quantitative surveys, polling, consumer research, real estate, and banking.

As per the interviewee, the company has earned a reputation for dependable information, ethical business practice, and of being a good corporate citizen. It has currently a group of around 60 full-time employees and a dozen part-time staff. It produces more than 25 products and services. Its sales have steadily grown each year. It has developed skills in advertising sales, subscription and book sales, content generation, digital products, and research to leading businesses in a variety of fields. When the interviewee was asked about the secret of the company's success, he admits that it is a combination of the know-how, the accountability, and the commitment to the

highest ethical behaviors. The interviewee acknowledged that company D gained its strengths from committing itself to its code of ethics, which is shared across the institution. The company is committed to being realistic and transparent, to serve its clients in the most accountable way and to contribute to the welfare of the Lebanese community. Additionally, company D provides support to all three stakeholders: its employees, its suppliers, and its customers.

As per the interviewee, the company is aware of the Lebanese community needs and of its social duties as well. Therefore, the company committed itself to be part of many humanitarian initiatives, entrepreneurship development, and community service.

The company is a supporter of Heartbeat, a volunteer-based organization of doctors, businesspeople, and other medical and non-medical professionals, aiming at saving disadvantaged infants with congenital heart disease. It performs more than 200 surgical interventions per year, free of charge. The company's contribution includes:

- Participation in the management of the organization
- Assistance in the organization of the concerts
- Facilitate advertising campaigns
- Publish advertisements in our magazines
- Brochure layout and printing
- Cash donations

Another initiative is the company's support of the Global Smile Foundation (GSF), a US-based NGO dedicated to alleviate the suffering of underserved patients born with facial congenital deformities. The organization works all over poor and developing countries including El Salvador, Ecuador, Guatemala, Peru, Senegal, Mali, Ivory Coast, and Nepal. It has recently extended its work to Lebanon and is planning to

participate in the establishment of a cleft-lip center in Beirut. This organization brings medical specialists from the United States, to perform local surgeries, and to train local doctors. The company's contribution includes the participation and the support in arranging the logistics, as well as cash donations. Moreover, the company supports many entrepreneurs, by helping them in getting the necessary loans and offering them guidance and advisory. The company also supports the UNGC (un global compact is the world's largest corporate sustainability initiative. it is a call to companies to align strategies and operations with universal principles on human rights, labor, environment and anti-corruption, and take actions that advance societal goals).

The interviewee admits that the company is committed to minimize the impact of its activities on the environment. In order to achieve that it has committed to:

- Minimize waste by evaluating operations and ensuring they are as efficient as possible
- Minimize toxic emissions through the selection and use of its fleet vehicles and the source of its power requirements.
- Accepts responsibility for the harmful effects its operations have on both the local and global environment and is committed to reducing them
- Measure its impact on the environment and set targets for ongoing improvement
- Raise awareness of its staff on environmental issues and enlist their support in improving the Company's performance
- Encourage the adoption of similar principles by its suppliers, clients, and community at large.

Consequently, we can conclude that among all companies in our sample, Company D was the only one successful in balancing and matching the components of

the TBL. It was achievable only because, these concepts and initiatives were continuously communicated from a managerial commitment to all stakeholders.

As a matter of fact, the interviewee advises that there is a corporate movement in the region, which indicates that companies can't operate anymore without thinking about their impacts on the environment. Thus, the company became part of the emerging corporate green family.

The Green Business Initiative is a public service project undertaken by the company, in alliance with green companies and trade representative organizations. It educates companies how to become environmentally friendly in an economically feasible manner. In addition, this association provides the companies with practical tools that would have a positive contribution to their profits when engaging in an environmentally sustainable conduct.

The interviewee believed that the most crucial weakness the media sector in Lebanon is facing is the small market; it is very hard to break even in the current financial situation. Adding to this, the low barrier of entry that exists in Lebanon, anyone can enter the media market and starts to publish with the absence of rigid laws that should govern this sector. The company deals with CSR and sustainability within the media house and tries to balance economical, legal, ethical and philanthropic responsibilities even though it is not always easy to harmonize those requirements.

All CSR activities and efforts are being communicated to the public online as well as in the printed edition of the magazine. Other than that, social media plays an important role in the communication process. To keep their readers informed about all kinds of happenings, news, projects or events the magazine posts several articles on their Facebook-page and Twitter to reach younger readers, a very important target group, as fast as possible. The magazine considers its responsibility of communication

as one of the main CSR tasks. Furthermore, internal sustainable activities are always being communicated to employees and recipients, primarily to keep the parties informed but also to open people's eyes on the great importance of sustainable behavior.

Interview number eleven was with a CSR media consultant. The interviewee was a private consultant for one of the most influential TV stations in Lebanon, which was part of the current study. The interviewee agrees that the majority of the media institutions in Lebanon are doing charity work and not CSR. Their intention behind all their initiatives is to serve the image of their supporting politicians. She explained that corruption is at its peak in the TV stations, while the printed media show less corruption and more corporate governance. For her, the solution remains in forcing governmental laws that mandate CSR budgeting and ethical behaviors for the media sector. Especially in a globalized and digitalized society, it is indispensable to raise public awareness about environmental, ecological, ethical, and social issues in order to make progress. CSR should be an integral part of a media company's business model and a pre requisite for public funding. Additionally, she mentioned that foreign investments or joint ventures between local firms and multinationals could bring a great positive impact on the Lebanese organizations in terms of CSR and ethical practices.

The twelfth interview was with a regional media institution, (Company E). The organization has a strong market in Lebanon and the Arab world as well. Being the first private and non-encrypted free-to-air Arabic satellite channel, the TV station was a pioneer in this domain, shouldering the responsibility of being creative and innovative with its content that is broadcasted to millions across the world. It is the largest and leading private media company in the Middle East & North Africa region that enriches people's lives through information, interaction, and entertainment. It was launched in 1991 in London, and as the first private free-to-air Arab satellite TV channel, the



company moved its headquarters to Dubai Media City, United Arab Emirates, where it remains, and it includes today 18 TV channels.

The organization's mission is to commit to being the leading multiplatform provider of innovative information and entertainment, produced by professionals performing in a culture of excellence. It joined the UN Global Compact organization. During the interview, the participant declares that CSR is in the core values of the company. The company knows and admits its duty towards empowering and developing the Arab youth. Additionally, the company is strongly committed to the environment, the community, the education, and the support of the entrepreneurs, which it has embedded in the vision to demonstrate sustainability throughout all the organization practices.

The company undertakes many ongoing initiatives:

- The *'Doing Good' Campaign*: this campaign is specific for Arab youth participants with creative initiatives and visions, where they can compete by presenting proposals, theoretical analyses and feasibility studies to their conceived projects, in order to select the winners in each of the three categories: Humanitarian causes, Social entrepreneurship and startup companies, and finally Environment and energy.

- *'Expand Your Horizon'*: It aims to reduce youth unemployment in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), involving a contribution from different partners in the region to offer employment and internships opportunities. Moreover, it orientates the youth to make more valid decisions about what to study and about their future career paths.

- *Youth Leadership Program for sustainable development*: In partnership with the UNDP Regional Hub in Amman, the program aims to strengthen the capacity of young people and support the exchange of experiences and knowledge with each other,

in terms of the skills and methods of leadership in the field of sustainable development. It targets specifically forty young *men* and women who are qualified and interested in the development of their communities.

- *Shabab 2030*: This initiative believes in the creativity of the youth, especially when it comes to shaping the future and inspiring the change. Shabab 2030 wants to expand the impact of the youth-led social ventures across the middle east and around the globe to support the implementation and success of 17 sustainable development Goals SDGs
- *Stars on board*: in partnership with the UNHCR, this initiative aims to give hope to thousands of Syrian refugees through raising funds from individuals within the region to watch their stars and give towards the refugee cause.
- *SOS Children's Villages: to ensure No Child Grows Up Alone*. The statistics showed that one in ten children are growing up in this world without the loving care of a parent and the support they need, SOS Children's Villages has joined hands with the company to raise awareness across the Middle East and North Africa of the challenges facing vulnerable children today.
- *United for healthier kids*: the company had partnered with Nestlé Middle East, and the Arabian Radio Network to launch United for Healthier Kids (U4HK), with an invitation to everyone to join the movement and contribute towards healthier children. U4HK aims to help parents establish healthier eating, drinking and lifestyle habits for children aged 4-12, and offers game-changing education and fun ideas to inspire action and influence behavior
- *Voices of Hope*: It is a public talk show in partnership with "INJAZ Al-Arab", with the objective of finding sustainable employment opportunities for Arab Youth. The initiative started in Cairo and will further extend to KSA, Lebanon and the

UAE, among other Arab countries. Launched in Egypt at the “American University in Cairo”, ‘Voices of Hope’ actively engages young people in collaborative dialogue and public talks around employment opportunities and career choices in the region.

Additionally, the company does special Ramadan initiatives: Syrian without address, children of hope and tweets to donate. Adding to them many conferences and workshops. The interviewee advises that in order to commit to their CSR activities the company founded many strategic partnerships. The aim is to widen the scope of interest and to join hand in hand with other businesses, non-profit organizations, and educational institutes. In comparison with the previous participants companies, company E is obviously the most strategic in terms of CSR applications. Additionally, it is very close to reaching sustainability as its operations meet the three components of the TBL. However, more environmental activities are still required, especially in terms of its internal operations. The interviewee considers that there is no competition in the way they do business, the company believes in partnership with anybody in order to create a bigger and stronger social impact. The Website of the company has a link to the daughter company, which is specific for CSR. This website is an extra news platform for environmental, ecological and sustainable topics. Journalists report from sociological, economic, and scientific perspectives and try to cover every event, happening, or issue related to sustainability. The aim is to raise awareness and keep the society informed, and to raise donations and funds for their CSR activities. When talking about the company’s future, the interviewee expressed her intentions to make more initiatives and to seek more funds to cover the entire cruelty happening all over the world. She considers that CSR is not anymore doing a favor or doing well, it is a necessity that the corporate world is obliged to do. The critical success factors can be summarized in looking beyond the numbers and financial profits and believing in the

necessity to give back to society.

### **Discussion of Findings**

After analyzing the findings, we can observe a significant dichotomy in our participants' practices; they are operating in totally two opposite directions. The TV stations and the newspapers from one side clearly show that there is no special CSR section in the media house, even the whole concept is still an unknown topic for them, and their corporate policy remains far from embracing CSR. They are all politicized, and still carrying the civil war division and anger. The Pro-Syrians\ Anti-Syrian division (March 14/March 8) clearly and deeply shapes them and their cultures. They are the mouthpiece of political leaders and a powerful tool for sectarian incitement and polarization at the social, political, ideological, and socio-economic levels. The collapse of the Lebanese government, participated in the collapse of their systems, there is no single regulation on who and what should be put on the air. Only "wasta" and political affiliation play the big role in recruiting and retaining and even in promoting. They are not financially self-sufficient, thus they always seek for outside subsidies to ensure their continuous existence.

On the other side, the magazine lists showed a commitment towards social behaviors and ethics as part of their social responsibility. Spreading information and building bridges across nations can be seen as part of this magazine's educational and democratic responsibility, complemented by their duty to form opinion and carry information as McQuail *et al.* (2005) formulates it. At this point, it is clear that these magazines were aware of their journalistic responsibility, according to (Weder & Karmasin, 2017), one of media's main duties next to cultural responsibility because it sets them apart from other industries. The common characteristics of these companies

were that they are privately held, with no affiliation of any kind. They follow specific codes of conduct that are communicated and shared across the organization; they all have a vision of a better Arab World, where media plays the most important role in it. Inspired by their leaders who strongly believe in the importance of CSR, they are trying to build a sustainability culture within their daily operations.

In the interview, the media consultant argues that CSR should be an integral part of a media company's business model especially in quality media. Even though the interviewed magazines have already implemented CSR in their corporate philosophy, the media in Lebanon is still far from having satisfactory sustainability actions.

Now, that it is clear that CSR and sustainability have a shy existence in the Lebanese media industry, the next question is how media companies communicate issues connected to CSR and sustainability. Once again (McQuail *et al.*, 2005) theory advises, that media's direct ability to communicate, at the same time implies an educational and democratic responsibility towards society. Again, the answers of the interviewed media companies differ in this regard. The magazine's communication is more towards new means of communication like social media in order to reach younger people, as they are a very important target group. Next to the printed and online version of the magazine, they use Facebook, Twitter, and other similar channels to spread CSR activities, sustainable efforts, and news concerning this topic but also other happenings, projects or events. This approach is being supported by (Weder & Karmasin, 2017) who argues that social media turns the society itself into rapporteurs, a clear sign for the media to use their influence as much as possible in order to help contribute to a better future. He even takes the discussion to a higher level by calling Facebook and Twitter as well as personal blogs media companies who should be held accountable just as much as other media enterprises. All the magazines that participated in the study,

believe that their responsibility of communication in general is one of the main CSR tasks and that includes the communication of CSR and sustainability within and outside the company in terms of keeping recipients up-to-date. This approach can be related to Hutchins demand on the media to use their sociological power to enhance the diversity of communication (Hutchins, 1942). The first magazine we interviewed, believed that the communication of public values just as the spreading of trustworthy global news play an important role, more than communication of CSR as such. That again is attributable to the rules and requirements, a public law media has to follow, including the freedom of expression and quality of communication. In fact, the magazines admit the two main reasons why the communication within the company is important: first to always keep employees informed of every action taken but also at the same time to enhance the great importance of sustainability awareness and behavior in general.

The third research question asks how media companies combine business and ethics in a balanced way and at the same time fulfill economic, legal, ethical, and philanthropic responsibilities, which according to Carroll should be the summary of the total Corporate Social Responsibility of businesses (Carroll, 1979). The TV stations are to be excluded from this research question, as the topic is still irrelevant for them. All magazines interviewed were aware of the challenge of balancing those four responsibilities but still tried to deal with it in a profitable way, which was also emphasized by Freeman (2010). Nevertheless, the interviewees clearly stress the ethical approach, rather than the economical. But all companies follow values, which can closely be connected, to the 'new imperative for business' by Carroll & Buchholtz (2000). The magazines are tolerant towards ethnical and religious communities and stand for equality of all citizens. Further, the journalists follow the press code of honor, which means that they have ethical obligations to fulfill. Similarities can be found in

parts of the imperative such as “be ethical and to be a good citizen” (Carroll & Buchholtz, 2000). The theory of media being a platform or society to socialize and an economic subjects that carry responsibility in a democratic system (Schranz, 2007) applies for these magazines, where again the public values are essential for democratic, social and cultural solidarity of the society. For the company this means to try to maintain its position as a socially responsible and sustainable institution also in the future and to handle the changes of the media industry in the society. At the same time, to get the readers involved in sustainable activities, a goal that is also found again in the 'Corporate Citizenship Theory', emphasizing the importance of internal and external active engagement in corporate activities to contribute to a better environment (Crane, 2008). Although the media consultant describes the balance between economical and ethical responsibilities as a basic question in CSR and emphasizes again its importance, she knows, that this issue is very relevant and not easy to solve until CSR becomes a natural ingredient in all industries.

One example in each of the interviews with media companies demonstrates not only the practical implementation of CSR activities but can also be connected to the other two research questions. Magazine C launched the “The Green Business Initiative” as an online edition to the magazine to raise awareness and keep the society informed about environmental issues. Here again, media's direct ability to communicate underlines the educational and democratic responsibility towards society (McQuail *et al.*, 2005). The online articles and research is a way to communicate CSR and sustainability to citizens, so here the focus of communication is set outside the company. It is a perfect example for the delicate balance of business and ethical goals. Both company C and D call attention to the role of media companies themselves by producing new and different content as usual and at the same time they provide

recipients with valuable information about their environment, in other words fulfill their social responsibilities towards society. The two theories which explain media's aim to balance business and ethics, can be applied for the campaigns as well because in that sense the companies provide a platform for raising awareness on one hand, and behave like economic subjects that carry responsibility in a democratic system on the other hand (Schranz, 2007). Whereas company D and E showed a high commitment and fulfilling the four aspects of CSR that Carroll talked about, they adopted strategic CSR by putting it at the core of their existence, as mentioned by the interviewee: "CSR is our daily bread". Both companies placed themselves as a reference in terms of sustainability and in order to make a huge impact, they forged partnerships with many local, regional, and international organizations. Another interesting finding in our analysis, all interviewed magazines defined CSR and its scope in a relatively similar way. In fact, all their CSR activities combined the following subjects: Community, Environment, People, Education, and Health. In addition to employee trainings and workshops, promoting gender equality, sports activities, scholarships and educational events, establishing large networks of branches to reach maximum people, partnerships with NGOs to work on specific causes, donations, charity, sponsorships and Green initiatives (mainly recycling). Yet, some magazines took CSR a step further, going beyond philanthropy towards a more strategic CSR either by endorsing international CSR initiatives like the UN Global Compact (as company D and E), or by partnering with NGO, (company D and E). Other companies also took big initiatives in creating full programs aiming at educating the youth for example in order to build a stronger society (company E). Others also targeted strategic goals for CSR by developing products and services that are believed to be beneficial for the region (company E).

All magazines in our sample, believed that their main motive is to give back to



their community by doing good deeds, however only company B and D mentioned that they are also driven by economic objectives. As for the benefits of CSR, all interviewees agreed that CSR grants the firm a better reputation, an enhanced corporate image, and some sort of differentiation from competitors, supporting the findings of Barnea & Rubin (2010); Fisman *et al.* (2005; 2006) as well as Harjeto & Jo (2011) who argued about these important aspects of CSR investments. In addition, only two magazines firmly stated that CSR and enhanced financial performance are linked to each other, while the others believed that this relationship is only supported by a strategic CSR orientation.

## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The dangerous problem influencing the Lebanese media, as we can conclude from this study, is not the excessive governmental laws and control. In fact, these institutions have always succeeded in overcoming the system by turning around the rules. The most important problem the Lebanese media faces is their inability to serve the interest of their community. Their inability to be financially self-efficient and their political affiliations made it very complicated for the media institutions to be independent and transparent.

Additionally, the material they publish becomes more focused on commentary and opinion more than on news and facts. Thus, the Lebanese media institutions reflect the differences in the Lebanese society and act to widen the gaps between the different parties, and as a result do not gained the citizen voice or trust.

Additionally, the Lebanese press code of conduct that is supposed to govern the media practitioners, is very outdated going back to 1974 and was never reviewed or amended. This code of conducts should be reviewed and rewritten. The emerging humanitarian needs along with increases in the level of corruption in the Lebanese society, require the Lebanese media to be more involved and committed to the Lebanese society.

Given the lack of financial self-sufficiency and the low salaries of the average newspaper journalist, media professionals and institutions are forced to seek outside subsidies.

The journalists feel hopeless, very low paid, and always under threat. Since

2015, there was a rise in the physical attacks on journalists, specifically during the #YOUSTINK protests against corruption and political dysfunction. Journalists were assaulted, camera were smashed. As per our interviews, there is a significant decline the annual advertising revenue, all of the previous factors make it very hard for media institutions to act ethically and think about helping the society when they are in need of help. To compensate, companies rely on donations from politicians or sell shares to well-connected individuals, despite a provision in the law on audiovisual media that bans funding from sources external to advertising and production.

From the outside the view is very appealing, Lebanese journalists seem to be the most active in the Arab world; they are almost all very fluent at least in both English and French; they are usually very familiar with European and North-American media contexts, and enjoy a long tradition of access to foreign media. On the other hand, the absence of governmental laws that can protect journalists, make them helpless and vulnerable in facing the oligopoly of a few media tycoons.

The previous findings were not surprising to the researcher, in terms of marginal commitment to sustainability, as well as in terms of the dichotomy, all were expected as they mirror the division in the Lebanese society. The unexpected was the behaviors of the TVs and Newspapers, which were not even knowledgeable about the concept. Even for company E, which is a multinational company with high margins of profit, the company's internal environmental impact was not supported with relevant data.

The organizations that were part of the current study, showed a better social performance than environmental. This is very relevant when the study is performed in Lebanon, where philanthropic giving is entrenched and religious influences remain dominant.

### Recommendations

In order to reduce the negative impact of the media institutions in Lebanon, this study will recommend small initiatives that could enhance the impact at a low degree of expenditure and even with a bit of saving:

- Lebanese media institutions should invest in the creation of carbon free production technologies. Such long-term commitment will probably enhance the competitive advantage of the media, since it helps them regain the citizens trust
- Promote and strengthen systems of self-regulation inside media, including transparent systems of good governance
- Strengthen dialogues between traditional journalism and online media on the need for responsibility in the use of information and for ethical content across the public information space
- Offer continuous training and development for reporters and journalists in order to keep them aware of their social responsibility as voice of people
- Support programs to strengthen independent professional associations of editors, owners and journalists
- Consider how best to create independent, credible and effective national systems of self-regulation of journalism covering all platforms of media
- Initiate new sustainability projects among the youth to support the environmental development
- Build a learning community to raise environmental awareness among the citizens
- Organize regular joint workshops for officials, leaders of the media, NGOs to bring positive changes in the practices and behaviors of people towards sustainable environment

- Focus on good practices and examples
- Build Partnership between the Lebanese media institutions and regional or multinational media institutions, in order to spread their code of conducts and follow their example.
  - Ratify their CSR initiatives in their core values, and apply them throughout their daily business in a visible way, in order to make CSR more plausible and believable by everybody.
  - Media companies should apply their corporate values not only in their external relations but also internally, with their employees.
  - Social activism should play a more influential role, through highlighting the media actions in Lebanon.

## CHAPTER VI

### LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The results of this study give a slight understanding into the future development of CSR and sustainability in the Lebanese media. The first research question shows clear outcomes of how the media institutions in Lebanon are divided into two categories in terms of CSR practices: the first part is made up of the TVs and newspapers. They are still resistant to change, and think that CSR is something not related to their operations and none of their concern, even they don't think to include CSR in the near future. On the other hand, the other parts are made of the local magazine and the young entrepreneurs who believe in the wave of change towards a more ethical and sustainable society starting from the media sector. The latter started to implement CSR initiatives and have it in their philosophy. These companies record at least the base of including CSR and sustainability. The media consultant who was part of our study agrees that CSR will become more and more important in the Lebanese media industry, until it will become a very common topic. The second research question asks for the way the Lebanese media communicates CSR, within and outside the company. And again, the answers differ in some ways, but still draw a good picture of how media companies communicate internally as well as externally. The main difference between the magazines was how far every magazine went with its CSR implications, and whether it has a philanthropic or strategic CSR.

The third research question was probably the one with the widest range of answers. All media companies slightly struggle with balancing the economic, legal, ethical and philanthropic levels of CSR. They try hard to pay enough attention to all four

categories. Although all are very much aware of their responsibilities towards society and the demand for an equal understanding and implementing of economic efficiency, transparency and innovation as well as democratic, social and cultural sectors in the company's CSR vision. Media ethics as integral part of corporate social responsible practices are the first signs of a small progress in this study field, because as the empirical findings show, the investigated companies as well as the interviewed media expert consider media ethics as a pre requisite for CSR. Ethical responsibility refers to doing what is right, fair and does not do any harm. Media ethics have always been shaped by the social, technological and economic structure of news media therefor they build the basis for sociopolitical and economic questions and want to explore the impact of media and their ethical responsibility on society (Ward, 2013). The outcomes in the empirical part of the thesis clearly emphasize the ethical importance as part of CSR. The companies investigated in this study also are divided into two parts, only the magazine and the regional media institutions went beyond what is requested by law and implemented ethical behaviors out of their strong belief that the country need to be lead by example and someone should start this change. Media should be entertaining and integrating and most of all they should foster cultural diversity (Weder & Karmasin, 2017). The cultural dimension is another distinct emphasis, which can be found both in the theoretical as well as empirical findings. According to (Weder & Karmasin, 2017) the focus on the cultural impact and effects should be even stronger because it is the basis for all further happenings and consequences including globalization, climate change and several other environmental issues. However the most significant result of the interviews and main operational area of CSR clearly can be found in sustainable efforts and practices of the media companies. Even though (Weder & Karmasin, 2017) does not consider sustainability and ecology to be the initial topic of CSR, previous

studies show the opposite. Much more effort is being put into sustainability and environmental issues than focusing on the cultural perspective, as (Weder & Karmasin, 2017) enhances. Both interviewed media companies provide a comprehensive list of projects covering sustainability and environmental issues. Their CSR mainly happens on this level, besides, all those efforts and activities are being communicated to the public as examples of their social responsibilities. Acting sustainable for both media companies means acting social responsible towards their stakeholders, which in their case are their readers and towards society as a whole in order to provide public value and fulfill their duty as voice of the citizens. In both cases, the internal level namely employees was brought forward very weak in the interview and consequently needs to be further developed. Fact is, that Corporate Social Responsibility and sustainability are more important than ever. In According to (Weder & Karmasin, 2017), it is indispensable to raise public awareness about environmental, ecological, ethical, and social issues. Especially in times of social media it has become much easier to communicate this topic to the public and call people's attention. Previous studies consider the media as carrier and at the same time barrier of CSR and note that no other industry can influence how people and politicians think about Corporate Social Responsibility and sustainable development as powerfully as the media industry. (Sustainability, 2002) Despite several attempts to bring the theoretical considerations surrounding the concept of CSR in a terminological order, the general research is still far away from a universally legit definition. An extensive amount of literature treating this topic already exists, however, CSR in media companies stays to be a barely investigated field. Social responsibility in the media is indeed an existing phenomenon but the focus is still on media ethics, considering CSR as partial aspect of media governance and interface between media and business ethics (Schranz, 2007).



The analysis of the findings shows that all the research questions were answered throughout the empirical part. Though at this point there has to be said, that the picture would be more complete if connected to the actual practice of CSR by the media companies in society. That means to measure the effects it has the citizens to see if media companies really do have the power to raise peoples awareness in a way that a rethinking can be perceived and how people in general react to this topic, when informed by the media and to find out if the picture media companies have of their CSR practices, can be mirrored in society's actual picture of media's CSR practices. In the case of this thesis, the author wanted to stick to a clear line and do a research of the present state of affairs as a start, to see how far CSR in the Lebanese media landscape has already developed. Furthermore, the aim was to find out how media businesses in Lebanon think about CSR, about their attitude towards sustainable activities as well as approaches and motivation to engage in practices. Therefor the opinion of employees in a media company just as much as the media expert's knowledge was absolutely valuable and sufficient to fulfill the purpose of this thesis. As the study field obviously is in progress and has been emerging over the previous years, it would be interesting to do a similar research again in the coming years, this time combined with the analysis of actual practices of CSR as well as perceptions and reactions of the audience as mentioned before, in order to see how far and how successful CSR and sustainability in media companies have actually developed by then and to expand the current state of research in Lebanon's media landscape. Besides, the size and composition of the sample also present some limitations: only twelve media institutions were included in the study. Thus for future research it will be more significant to include all TVs, newspapers, magazines and advertising agencies operating in the country whether they are local or multinationals. The findings then will be more relevant and the research outcomes will

bring a good evaluation of how far media in Lebanon has embrace the topic of CSR and its implications on the Lebanese society.

Moreover, for future research, detailed questions may be asked regarding internal CSR applications, such as employee turnover, reward and punishment, training and development, value of budget allocated to CSR activities. Additionally, we cannot deny the digital information age, it is here to stay and has permanently changed the way people think, communicate, judge, and interact with information, and this include CSR. Digital media offers a priceless opportunity to talk and spread CSR. Therefore, it would be more relevant if future research will include how digital media interacts with CSR and sustainability in Lebanon. Moreover, studying the relation between Lebanese media with the civic society and the social movements will add more insights about how Lebanese society perceives the media and vice versa. Another element that would add lots of relevance to the study, if more numbers could be exploited, especially financial figures related to turnover, ROI and total annual revenues.

## APPENDIX I

### INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

- 1- What are the CSR initiatives currently implemented by the Lebanese media institutions?
- 2- What was the inspiration to start initiative at your company? (How & when did it start, who started it, where are you now in terms of CSR?)
- 3- What are the values behind this initiative? How have you implemented CSR initiatives in your corporate policy and philosophy?
- 4- What are your strategic goals behind this initiative? (Strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and threats)
- 5- How has your initiative been received by the general public including customers, competitors, and critics?
- 6- Where do the team members stand in terms of CSR? (How do you reinforce the idea of social responsibility with your people (hiring, training rewards)
- 7- Where do you stand with respect to your competitors in terms of CSR?
- 8- How you keep balance between business and ethics while maintaining your responsibilities towards the Lebanese society?
- 9- What is in the future for you? (Projects, expansion, commitment)
- 10- What are the critical success factors that you've acknowledged that can help other institutions track.

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