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The Influence of Managers and Organisational Profiles in CSR Decision-Making. Ideas for Implementation in the Maritime Sector

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ABSTRACT

The principles that promote corporate social responsibility (CSR) and corporate philosophy should be translated into concrete action and promoted by decision-makers at corporations. After conducting a meta-analysis of research conducted on the performance of socially responsible businesses, Wood and Jones (1995) argued that people in leadership positions are the most important social agents in this area.

Therefore, this article focuses on several variables in the personal characteristics and the organisational contexts in the maritime sector that appear to determine the decision-making processes of managers who are responsible for CSR. We believe that a better understanding of the factors that influence the decision-making process of those who promote, articulate and/or implement CSR may illuminate ways to facilitate the conditions for socially responsible management in effective maritime organisations. The main objective of this paper is to understand how these personal and organisational variables affect decisions about socially responsible actions at the corporate level and to propose ways in which maritime companies can improve their CSR performance.

1. Introduction

Corporate social responsibility is becoming more important and creating competitive advantages for companies. The maritime sector is no exception, and it has displayed a growing interest in the field in recent years. In fact, recent decades have seen a major shift in production, distribution and consumption models in the maritime sector that are the result of a sense of responsibility. Factors such as a concern for natural resources, the growing impact of business activities or repeated scandals in environmental and financial companies have increased the importance of CSR. Furthermore, these factors have led companies in general, and the maritime sector in particular, to have more interest in creating a climate of trust with the public to improve the sector's image in society and among their workers and employees.

The study of the maritime sector is important, given that it is one of the most important economic activities in Spain, both economically (it contributes between 3% and 7% of GDP) and with respect to employment within the industry and in complementary industries (accounting for 2.3% of Spain's total employment) (Spanish Maritime Cluster, 2009a).

Concern about companies' social responsibility and sustainability has grown in the last decade. In October 2007, the Blue Book was published, containing a maritime policy aimed at sustainability with respect to the seas (a suitable human-habitat ecosystem, marine environmental protection and maritime safety and penalties for damage caused, among other central aspects). Two years later, in 2009, the status of the Spanish Maritime Cluster was approved. The objectives of the Strategic Plan of the Spanish Maritime Cluster include wealth creation, social welfare, business excellence, increasing the competitiveness of Spanish companies in the global market, improving the efficiency of companies' industrial and commercial management and boosting the professional development of workers involved in this activity. All of these objectives are related to the search for socially responsible behaviour at the corporate level (Spanish Maritime Cluster, 2009a).

The aim of this study is thus to contribute to this area of analysis by reflecting on companies' implementation of CSR practices. This study also seeks to identify new ways to incorporate these practices to help the maritime industry to im-

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prove its socially responsible activities and to gain influence and competitiveness.

2. The leadership role in CSR

The role of managers in the decision-making process has been extensively studied in the literature on strategic management and may be useful for implementing CSR activities in the maritime sector. As recognised by the members of the Spanish Maritime Cluster, the "implementation of social responsibility within any organisation depends on strong leadership from management. Knowledge and awareness of social responsibility and value are the starting point to get the highest address of the party as the strategic value" (Spanish Maritime Cluster, 2009b, p.32).

Several studies agree that there is much to be learned about this subject by analysing individual decision-makers to gain a better understanding of their motivations and their effects on a company's management strategy (McGuire et al., 2003; Swanson, 1999, Hitt and Tyler, 1991, Hambrick and Mason, 1984). In the middle of the last century, Davis (1960) predicted that during the second half of that century, managers would be able to decide how to act on their sense of social responsibility. In that context, Greening and Gray (1994) highlight the importance of the senior managements' commitment to address the political and social issues that affect the organisation and to integrate these issues into corporate strategic planning. As stated by Clarkson (1995), when key leaders in organisations incorporate accountability for their behaviour, they are in a better position to meet their goals of wealth creation, not only for themselves but also for their stakeholders.

Wood (1991) considers managers to be moral actors who must always choose among alternatives. This task has been explicitly included in the model of the social action officer at a company and is one of the fundamental principles of CSR: managers must exercise discretion in targeting socially responsible corporate action. However, certain obstacles that isolate the effects of individual decisions by leaders have been found. According to Agle et al. (1999), the results of corporate actions are influenced by several other factors, such as laws and regulations, environmental institutions and the culture of the organisation. However, other scholars, such as Jones and Wicks (1999) and Donaldson (2002), have argued that the social action officer in a company is subject to the direction of the company's leaders.

According to Hitt and Tyler (1991), managers' involvement in the process of organisational decision-making has been analysed from deterministic approaches (where the environment or control of resources define the decision-making process) and from approaches that place a greater emphasis on the strategic choices made by leaders, which are influenced by their values, experiences, expectations and cognition. Geletkanycz and Hambrick (1997) add that leaders' strategic decisions are also affected by external ties, the influence of the social environment and the information they collect. According to Key (1997), several studies have addressed the discretion of management and its relationship to personal and organisational factors, such as the managers' age, education level, gender, role, the size of the organisation, the type of organisation and the industry in which the firm operates (Finkelstein and Hambrick, 1990; Haleblian and Finkelstein, 1993, Hambrick and Abrahamson, 1995).

3. Companies' areas of CSR activities

Possible areas of social action for the company are classified in various ways in the literature. According to the Commission of the European Communities, there is no single list; however, there is some consensus that these areas of corporate action can be defined according to the social and environmental concerns that arise from a company's business and commercial activity and their relationship with various stakeholders (IPES, 2002). Fernandez (2001) highlights the need for a classification method to analyse the performance of socially responsible activity from the perspective of company leaders.

In 2009, the Spanish Maritime Cluster published the Manual of Best Practices that identifies opportunities and benefits for companies in Spain that integrate CSR into their operations. In this manual, CSR practices for the maritime industry are identified as human capital (the work environment), collaboration with society in general (social responsibility), environmental sustainability (the environment), the respect of human rights (ethics), the relationship with customers (commercial) and the relationship with suppliers (managing the supply chain) (Spanish Maritime Cluster, 2009b). These general areas of socially responsible action coincide with those presented in the analytical model proposed in this study. It should be noted that the manual does not develop the issue of corporate governance relevant to all companies seeking to act responsibly in the market.

Considering the extent of the economic activities included in the framework of the Spanish maritime sector and to allow broader use of the instrument proposed in this study, the definitions of the various fields of socially responsible activity were established after a review of many directives, guidelines, diagnostic tools, and management evaluations and reports on CSR used internationally. Subsequently, within each of the fields, those actions were identified to be representative of the company.

The first area of corporate performance analysed was the workplace, which included actions that the company took for the welfare and professional and personal development of its staff and to improve the quality of life for their families. The second area, the social field, included what the company contributed to the welfare of society and the quality of life in the communities in which it operated. The third area, the environment, included the actions the company took to minimise the potential impact of its operations on the environment, to develop environmental awareness and to preserve natural resources. The fourth area of responsible action was referred to as transparency, values and corporate governance, which included actions related to how the company integrated a set of ethical principles and good governance goals in its strategic objectives while also considering the rights of various interest groups with whom it interacted. The fifth area, the scope of the supply of products and services to the market, encompassed the actions that the company developed in the design, distribution and supply of its products and/or services and in managing its relationships with consumers. Finally, the scope of the management of the supply chain was defined as the way in which the company interacted with its trading partners (suppliers, intermediaries, dealers and strategic partners). Table 1 details the topics for the analysis of a company's socially responsible activities.

4. Personal and organisational variables that influence a company's social action priorities

Waldam et al. (2006) have suggested that approaches that focus on maximising business benefits and socially responsible activity do not consider the attributes and qualities of leaders. These approaches assume that there is an overlap between the characteristics of managers and the organisation's strategic vision for CSR. However, according to Gardner (1998), individuals develop different senses of responsibility according to the various groups with whom they interact. It is therefore important to consider the various factors that may affect the individual's particular approach to CSR. Some scholars, such as Hambrick and Mason (1984), Hitt and Tyler (1991) and Wally and Baum (1994), have synthesised empirical studies on the importance of structural and personal factors in the decision-making process.

Source: Authors

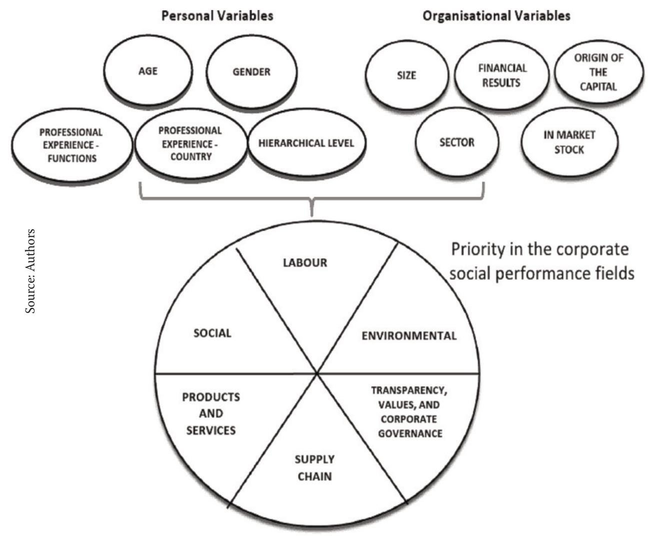

Figure 1: Personal and organizational variables.

In this sense, Browne (2003) suggests that demographic variables affect how managers perceive CSR because, according to cognitive theory, the environment determines how information is processed and how decisions are made. Thomas and Simerly (1995) had argued that because the commitment of the company is generated from the commitment of its members, the characteristics of leaders play an important role in understanding how a company demonstrates CSR. The personal characteristics of managers most often cited in the literature review were age, gender, the position of senior staff in the hierarchical structure of the company and the managers' experience. As shown in Figure 1, ten independent variables were used to examine how managers prioritise a company's CSR activities.

Table 1: Topics addressed by the field of corporate social perfonmance.

COMMON ISSUES	LABOUR FIELD	SOCIAL FIELD	ENVIRONMENTAL FIELD
• Issue goals included in the strategic plan of the firm. • Resource allocation for management. • Establishment of management standards or management quality systems	*Worker rights *Hiring modalities *Health, safety and worker's welfare *Worker's retention *Quality of life * Labour satisfaction *Training and development	*Citizens rights defence *Philanthropic actions * Social investment projects *Cooperation with social actors for development *Participation of commercial partners and customers in social action *Community impact assessment *Meeting state obligations	* Environmental impact assessment * Saving and use of resources * Environmental issue defence * Environmental criteria in the purchase conditions for the customer * Environmental criteria in the selection of commercial partners * Environmental competency training in commercial partners * Environmental management systems
• Training programmes for the different levels and units of the company	TRANSPARENCY, VALUES AND CORPORATE GOVERNANCE FIELD	SUPPLY OF PRODUCTS AND SERVICES TO THE MARKET FIELD	SUPPLY CHAIN MANAGEMENT FIELD
•Development of management assessment and control systems * Management accountability	* Dialogue channels * Stakeholders in the decision-making process *Board of directors' and managers' performance assessments * Policies and incentives for responsible behaviour * Information transparency and respect for the investor's rights * Business risk management * Ethical codes	* Customer safety and privacy policies * Guarantees and conditions * Improvement of industry/sector performance * Supply of products and services to minorities * Fair competition * Truth in promotion and advertising * Information systems for the product or service	* Improvement of the competencies of commercial partners * Fair treatment * Transparent information on contractual conditions * Meeting commitments * Selection under social support criteria * CSR implementation support for commercial partners * Feedback mechanisms on satisfaction

Source: Authors

5. Variables related to the profile of people in leadership positions

Leaders' ages have been analysed in previous studies. The literature regarding age includes these factors: the probability that individuals of the same age may have similar values and beliefs (Hitt and Tyler, 1991); the relationship between increasing age and factors such as a decreased ability to integrate information; less confidence in the decisions made by others; the amount of information required to make a decision; the amount of time required to make that decision; an increased capacity to assess information and risk and institute risk aversion (Hambrick and Mason, 1984); less flexibility in value judgments (Fikelstein and Hambrick, 1990); less confidence in their own assessments (Browne, 2003); and a preference for the status quo (Hambrick and Mason, 1984; Key, 1997; Browne, 2003). It should be noted that in the studies reviewed by these authors, the empirical evidence has shown mixed results (Quazi, 2003).

Regarding gender, Key (1997) states that previous studies have not shown consistent results with respect to the impact of gender on decisions about ethical issues (Galbraith and Stephenson, 1993; Khazanchi, 1995; Sikula and Costa, 1994; Tsalikis Buonafina and Ortiz, 1990). However, other studies and meta-analyses conducted on leadership and gender have shown that female leaders are more likely than male leaders to show an interest in the ethical consequences of their actions and in the individual needs of the different people and groups affected by the decisions (Eagly and Johnson, 1990; Eagly, Gartzia and Carli, 2012; Gartzia, 2010, 2011; Gartzia, Ryan, Balluerka and Aritzeta, 2012). Therefore, it is necessary to further investigate the variable of gender to draw conclusions regarding CSR in the maritime sector.

Another variable concerns the types of professional experience that can influence the decision-making processes of leaders. This relationship has been discussed in previous academic work from several perspectives: the type of professional experience and its relationship to one's ability to assimilate information (Marcel et al., 2005); the length of service as a factor related to the level of involvement in social issues addressed by a company (Quazi, 2003); the type of functional expertise and view of problems, objectives and tasks (Hambrick and Mason, 1984, Hitt and Tyler, 1991; Simerly, 2003; Browne, 2003); and sensitivity to issues stemming from business experience (Hambrick and Mason, 1984; Changati and Sambharya 1987, Thomas and Simerly, 1995, Brammer and Millington, 2004).

Simerly (2003) proposes the consideration of two types of functional expertise. The first type involves numerous interactions with the environment and therefore is more sensitive to social demands. In that group, the professional experience is focused on the generation of results (commercial and marketing, customer service, product development, image and public relations, general management) and the work community (areas of corporate social responsibility, institutional relations, community relations, corporate foundations). The second type is considered less sensitive to performance management, social responsibility, and other issues related to internal processes. This group includes liabilities assumed in operations, such as finance, legal, accounting, and human resources.

To complement the latter type, according to Egri et al. (2004), another relevant variable is the managers' work experience in multinational companies, where the organisational culture of the parent company can influence how decisions are made about CSR. The author suggests the importance of studying the influence of culture in countries with developed economies and in countries with emerging economies.

Finally, several studies have analysed the influence of the company's management hierarchy and its relationship to the process of strategic decision-making. Ireland et al. (1987) and Petrick et al. (1993) suggest that the hierarchical levels occupied by managers in the company affect their strategic decision-making because those in higher positions may have a greater proximity to and more interactions with various stakeholders. However, authors such as Ostlund (1977), Aupperle (1984), Barnett and Karson (1989), Hemingway and McLagan (2004) cite these studies' lack of evidence.

From the above analysis, we proposed five exploratory hypotheses for future studies in the field that focus on the analysis of the personal characteristics of managers or for further discussion of the literature. Such assumptions relate to the possible behaviours of subgroups of respondents compared with the overall prioritisation of socially responsible activity for the company. The hypotheses that directed this study were the following:

H1: Younger leaders assign greater importance to socially responsible action than older leaders.

H2: Women in leadership positions tend to place a higher priority on socially responsible action than men in leadership positions.

H3: There is a positive relationship between the number of years of professional experience a manager has in areas with extensive interaction with the environment and the priority s/he attaches to socially responsible actions.

H4: There is a positive relationship between the number of years of professional experience a manager has at a company headquartered in a developed economy and the priority s/he attaches to socially responsible action.

H5: There is no relationship between the hierarchical level of people in leadership positions and the importance they attach to socially responsible action.

6. Variables relating to company profile

Several authors have highlighted the influence of exogenous factors that may influence company managers' decision-making. Although the literature review revealed a wide range of factors identified through empirical research in recent years, not all cases found empirical evidence to support the influence of these factors in the decision-making process for CSR. The variables that are considered structural features of the company have more empirical support in the literature. These variables include the size of the company, its financial earnings, the origin of capital, the firm's economic activities and its presence or absence in the stock market.

According to McGuire et al. (1988) and Wally and Baum (1994), a significant number of studies related to the analysis of corporate social performance consider the size and financial performance of the company to be important variables in the decision-making process. In addition, the studies have found a relationship between the firm's size and the effectiveness of CSR (Waldam et al., 2006); between firm size and the criteria for the allocation of management resources to CSR (Brammer and Millington, 2004); and between the firm's size and the type of management tools used to manage CSR (Graafland and Van de

Ven, 2006). Haleblian and Finkelstein (1993) and Hambrick and Abrahamson (1995) argue that the size of the company, among other factors, predicts the range of discretion of employees in leadership positions. On this issue, Steiner (1974: 81; in Keim, 1978) suggests that "while the company gets bigger, [it] develops a potential influence on more people. The company then takes more interest in what [the manager] does and, in turn, the company plans more carefully about [the manager's] responsibilities. In this sense, [managers] tend to be more affected by the public interest." Indeed, Keim (1978) argues that the discretion of management and the effectiveness of corporate social action may be affected by the size of the organisation. Keim claims that larger firms expect that managers have a greater capacity to act beyond the logic of profit maximisation, which could improve the conditions that affect CSR decision-making.

Some studies on companies' investment in CSR have suggested that the financial performance of the organisation can be a factor. Due to the abundance of studies on financial performance, Margolis and Walsh (2003) and Orlitzky et al. (2003) have conducted "meta-studies" to understand this factor. Margolis and Walsh (2003) state that after 30 years of research, it cannot be said with certainty that there is a positive relationship between corporate social action and the company's financial performance. They also maintain that it is possible that investment in socially responsible actions destroys the value of the company or damages its ability to create wealth. However, some studies make specific contributions regarding the various factors mentioned above. Carrroll and Buchholtz (2000, in Coldwell, 2001) suggest a relationship between a company's socially responsible action, its financial performance and its corporate reputation. Meanwhile, Hay and Gray (1974) argue that the most profitable companies are better able to act socially than less profitable companies. Buchholtz et al. (1999) argue that while many researchers have focused on analysing a company's profit levels to understand its socially responsible corporate action, these studies have found inconsistent results. Bourgeois and Singh (1983) highlight several theories related to a lack of resources and leaders' political behaviour and decision-making. These authors claim that the availability of financial resources does not promote internal negotiations among company leaders in the short term because these resources usually have a predetermined use; unexpected surpluses generate unexpected internal discussions because there may be little consensus on their use in the long term. According to Hambrick and Snow (1977, in Bourgeois and Singh, 1983), a greater availability of resources gives a company greater flexibility to experiment with different competitive strategies. This assertion is consistent with the view of Cyert and March (1963, in Bourgeois and Singh, 1983), who argue that there is less internal conflict when there are enough resources to attempt new uses without controversy. In the same vein, Campbell (2007) suggests that when resources are scarce or the company experiences financial difficulty, the firm will perform only a minimally acceptable level of socially responsible activity.

Regarding the cultural variable's effect on CSR, Egri et al. (2004) postulate that the influence of foreign capital could impact a company's organisational culture. According to McWilliams et al. (2006), CSR in corporate strategy is affected by the cultural framework of each country and the institutions that regulate the market. However, in the case of multinational companies, SEKN Austin (2004) argues that while subsidiaries are influenced by the policies of the parent company, they try to adopt the activity patterns of the countries where they operate and seek to create alliances with others to strengthen their local acceptance.

Regarding the company's business, some authors argue that this variable may influence corporate strategies (Finkelstein and Hambrick, 1990, Hitt and Tyler, 1991; Haleblian and Finkelstein, 1993, Wood and Jones, 1995; Hambrick and Abrahamson, 1995 and Campbell, 2007). Factors that affect how decisions are made include the sector, consumer tastes, competitive behaviours, the role of technology, the supply chain configuration (Wally and Baum, 1994), the regulatory landscape (Campbell, 2007) and the level of stability or turbulence in the sector (Haleblian and Finkelstein, 1993). According to McWilliams et al. (2006), one expects higher levels of investment in CSR from more mature companies in a particular sector because these companies have a wider range of products on offer, and consumers consumers of their products are presumably more sophisticated in their tastes and more knowledgeable about the available supply.

A final important variable that affects a company's actions is whether it is listed on a stock market. Being listed on a stock market may invite influence from regulators and the market (Instituto Ethos, 2006, Goodwell, 1996, McWilliams et al., 2006, etc.).

Given moderating factors for which greater empirical evidence has been found, we proposed the five exploratory hypotheses presented below for exploration in the maritime sector. Such an analysis may promote public health interventions within that sector. This study's aim is to analyse the specific subgroups of people and the organisational characteristics that influence companies' decisions regarding CSR.

- H6: There is a positive relationship between the firm's size and the priority that senior staff give to the development of socially responsible activities within the company.
- H7: There is a positive relationship between a company's financial performance and the priority that senior staff give to the development of socially responsible activities within the company.
- H8: Leaders who work at companies with a predominance of foreign capital in their ownership structure place a higher priority on the development of socially responsible action than leaders who work at companies with no foreign capital in their ownership structure.
- H9: Leaders who work at commercial and service companies place a lower priority on the development of socially responsible action than leaders who work at companies that belong to all other sectors (industrial, extractive and construction).
- H10: Leaders who work at companies listed on the national or international stock exchange place a higher

priority on the development of socially responsible action than leaders who work at companies not listed on the stock market.

The lines of research listed above can guide the analysis of the decision-making process for CSR managers in the maritime sector. Senior managers become promoters and coordinators of initiatives in various areas of socially responsible activity for the company. Given the strong role of big business in the progress of emerging economies, one can conclude that the role of managers is key to establish a culture of social responsibility efforts at all levels (state, business, civil society and individuals).

These ideas are reflected in the work of Del Castillo (2010), which analyses these relationships and concludes that in certain sectors of business activity in emerging economies, a performance-oriented corporate development of basic activities is still prevalent, and there is minimal activity in the field of CSR. In addition, there is limited interaction between the management of a company and other actors in the environment. Del Castillo's study finds that managers' previous exposure to and interaction with the corporate cultures of international companies in developed countries influences their greater concern with social ills. In particular, the size of the company, its financial health, the presence of majority foreign capital in the ownership structure and its presence on the stock market were mitigating elements in the prioritisation of CSR actions. In the same vein, the companies' industrial sector was a factor in the prioritisation of environmental actions and in the supply of products and services to market, two areas in which maritime companies have a significant presence.

Ultimately, therefore, the research highlights the need to reflect on the type of company profile that promotes and facilitates a company's practice of CSR principles. The research has contributed to a better understanding of the business factors that may favour or limit the integration and implementation of CSR throughout a company and among its stakeholders.

From this approach, the need to generate the necessary space in the company for staff to lead the work of promoting and managing CSR becomes evident, and managers require additional experience in achieving this goal. The research stresses the need for these leaders to have opportunities for career development with greater exposure to the various stakeholders, i.e., a strong interaction with the environment. It would also be beneficial for leaders to have opportunities to become familiar with current thinking and best practices from regions of greater economic and social development. Moreover, the study also highlights the influence of cultures and mature, socially responsible management, which can serve as an inspiration and a guide for companies that are in earlier stages of the adoption of CSR. In this context, larger companies' public exposure and the influence of promoters and regulatory mechanisms such as the stock market encourage the companies to take a proactive stance as corporate citizens.

7. Future research

Overall, the studies reviewed indicate that it is important to go beyond a utilitarian view of CSR. This approach would establish performance-oriented corporate actions in a more inclusive model. Thus, the importance of considering the characteristics of the decision-makers and the contexts in which they operate is clear. In addition, understanding leaders and their companies will help develop innovative approaches to CSR, which is still in its infancy. The creation of forums for sharing experiences and sensitising decision-makers is also important for advancing CSR.

The action model developed should not be restricted to the analysis of the personal and organisational factors that influence the prioritisation of courses of action. Rather, future research should include other variables related to the values and motives of decision-makers and the organisational environments in which they work. The phenomenon of CSR through the lenses of the specific areas of responsible corporate social performance should be studied, as well, without losing a holistic perspective of the concept. Deepening the understanding of each area of CSR and the various factors that influence CSR is a central goal.

The importance of this reference model for engaging in socially responsible action and innovative CSR is particularly important given the close relationship between the areas included in CSR and the actions of the maritime sector. For example, as shown in the manual regarding the seas, which is related to the campaign to promote maritime social responsibility in Spain and financed by the Ministry of Labour and Immigration, social responsibility should aim to increase the awareness of CSR. Socially responsible actors should also emphasise the need to improve the sustainability of the Spanish maritime sector's various economic activities and promote a healthy society, economy and environment. In this way, CSR can be integrated into any company related to shipping, shipbuilding, engineering and maritime auxiliary industries, extractive fishing, recreational boating, marinas and yacht clubs, marine facilities and renewable energy production.

A significant challenge is to find ways to improve the commitment of the organisations to the development of society and the preservation of the environment. The goal is not only to generate responsible behaviours toward people and groups who interact with these companies but also to create a working environment that is sustainable in the long term. Among the challenges in the maritime sector are actions related to managing people and diversity (such as the reconciliation of work and personal life, the enhancement of work environments, and improved working or training conditions), which may directly benefit the company through service improvements, customer satisfaction, customer loyalty and improvements in the company's reputation.

Other important areas to address relate to environmental sustainability. Actions such as complying with legislation regulating waste, managing the company's impact on the environment and the protection of oceans and biodiversity in the sea can help the company to both improve its image and reputation and to gain other company's recognition as a leader in CSR. Such actions can also prompt cooperation in implementing environmental conservation measures or even increase the possibility of receiving institutional and government aid for the preservation of the environment. Ultimately, it is necessary for leaders in the maritime sector to change their approach to CSR, viewing it as an opportunity rather than a threat, and to integrate CSR into the sector's development. In this way, it will be possible for companies to meet society's needs in the twenty-first century.

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