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SUMMARY

CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP – AN EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS OF 500 FAMILY AND NON FAMILY BUSINESSES

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Principal Topic

This paper presents an empirical analysis of the attitude of 500 German SMEs towards corporate responsibility. The topic of corporate responsibility is mainly and most intensely discussed in terms of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and Corporate Citizenship (CC) of large companies (European Commission 2001; Herchen 2007; Examples in Gazdar, Habisch & Kirchhoff 2006). In contrast, research into the specific role of small and medium-sized companies (SMEs) is lagging behind. In Germany in particular, in the home country of the social market economy, there is a lack of adequate empirical studies in spite of the fact that most German companies are SMEs.

It can be assumed that the attitude towards entrepreneurial social responsibility especially depends on the type of business ownership (family business or non-family business). The combination of family and company ownership results in singular structure characteristics with a positive impact on a sustainable company leadership which takes into account economic as well as social and ecological aspects (Scherer, Blanc, Kormann, Groth & Wimmer 2005). For family businesses, taking over socio-economic responsibility is an integral part of good economic activity (Von Passavant 2009).

Method

Data for the present quantitative study was collected via telephone interviews according to a standardized questionnaire. In 2007, a total of 500 telephone interviews were conducted with managing directors and/or owners of SMEs. Noticeable differences between family businesses and non-family businesses were first checked with a chi-square test according to Pearson. In a second step, the z-test will be used to establish which rows and columns are responsible for the connections (share comparison).

Results and Implications

The results show that family businesses today exist in a form of social market economy which is not much affected by governmental system regulations. However, the type of business ownership (family business or non-family business) does only have a significant influence on single aspects of the attitude towards social responsibility, such as the motivation for societal activities, the evaluation of the different groups of stakeholders, the extent of formalized communication measures or the procedural basis.

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