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## **Factors affecting the scope of data disclosed in corporate non-financial data reports**

Doctoral thesis in the field of management sciences, written under the supervision of prof. dr hab. Jolanta Mazur and assistant supervision of dr Piotr Zaborek

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### **SUMMARY**

The subject of disclosing non-financial data has been undertaken since the 1970s, when companies started to include social and environmental issues in their annual reports. However, the information disclosed was often only qualitative and was not directly related to the business activity of the company. The last twenty years have been a continuous increase in the number of companies publishing non-financial data reports, both in Poland and all over the world, with a simultaneous standardization of approach to this issue. This is related to the application of the CSR concept, which recommends a dialogue with stakeholders

Literature analysis suggests that more and more researchers see the role of non-financial data reporting in company management processes, but this topic is still far from being exhausted. There is a lack of studies in international literature regarding the role of a manager in the process of making decisions about issuing a non-financial data report, the main motivations or the expected benefits of such publication. There have also been no studies on the relationship between these factors and the scope of the disclosed data. This study fills that gap in the existing body of knowledge. The results of the study are significant from both a theoretical and practical perspective.

The aim of this study is to identify the direction and strength of dependence between selected factors characterizing initiating and deciding on issuing a report, and the range of data disclosed in GRI reports (determined by the number of indicators and their categories). According to the main dissertation thesis the scope of disclosed non-financial data (number and categories of indicators) depend on the manager's role in the decision-making process of publishing non-financial data, on the motivations for issuing the report, and the benefits from this. Particular supporting hypotheses refer to the relationship between the scope of disclosed data and three categories of factors: the manager's role, motivations for issuing a non-financial report as well as the expected and achieved benefits resulting from the issuance of such a report.

The dissertation contains an in-depth literature review of the subject. Based on it, research methods have been developed to achieve the formulated goal and disclose the relationship between the proposed variables. Empirical data was obtained in the form of a survey, conducted using the CAWI procedure. The questionnaire was addressed to those responsible for the preparation of the non-financial data report. The time of publication of the report was limited to the years 2009-2014, hence the total number of companies that issued at least one report was 49. Representatives of 42 companies replied. The additional material for the research was the result of author's own analysis of the GRI content index for each of the reports.

A complete set of data, combining the results of interviews and the content of reports, was analyzed using statistical tests including: t-test, U-Mann-Whitney test and Kendall's tau correlation coefficient. A binary logistic regression model was also developed. It indicates which factors have the greatest impact on the scope of disclosed non-financial data.

The results of the data analysis show that the involvement of the top manager in the decision making process of issuing a non-financial data report negatively affects the scope of disclosed data. The main motivation to publish a non-financial data report was to inform stakeholders about companies' actions. However, based on the analysis of the disclosed indicators, it was found that the data required by law under other regulations or data not related to business activity are disclosed first of all. Informing the stakeholders about social and environmental actions taken was, according to the declaration, also the key benefit that the reporting companies anticipated. The results of the study show the discrepancy between the declarations on the willingness to inform stakeholders about the company's activities and the scope of disclosed data. Companies that declare that they publish reports to facilitate the access of these data to stakeholders, do so to a limited extent.

**Key words:** CSR, sustainability, non-financial data reporting, GRI