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KAUNO TECHNOLOGIJOS UNIVERSITETAS  
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RIMA KONTAUTIENĖ

**ĮMONIŲ SOCIALINĖ ATSAKOMYBĖ KAIP  
KONKURENCINGUMO VEIKSNYS EKONOMIKOS  
NUOSMUKIO LAIKOTARPIU**

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Socialiniai mokslai, ekonomika (04S)

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**Mokslinis vadovas:**

Prof. dr. Valentinas NAVICKAS (Kauno technologijos universitetas, Socialiniai mokslai, Ekonomika, 04S).

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**Ekonomikos mokslo krypties disertacijos gynimo taryba:**

Prof. dr. Vytautas SNIEŠKA (Kauno technologijos universitetas, socialiniai mokslai, ekonomika, 04S) – **pirmininkas**;

Prof. habil. dr. Žaneta SIMANAVIČIENĖ (Kauno technologijos universitetas, socialiniai mokslai, ekonomika, 04S);

Prof. dr. Ilona SKAČKAUSKIENĖ (Vilniaus Gedimino technikos universitetas, socialiniai mokslai, vadyba, 03S);

Prof. dr. Asta VASILIAUSKAITĖ (Kauno technologijos universitetas, socialiniai mokslai, ekonomika, 04S);

Doc. dr. Sergej VOJTOVIČ (A. Dubčeko universitetas Trenčine, socialiniai mokslai, vadyba, 03S).

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Adresas: K. Donelaičio g. 73-402, 44249 Kaunas, Lietuva.

Tel. (370) 37 300 042; faks. (370) 37 324 144; el. paštas doktorantura@ktu.lt.

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RIMA KONTAUTIENĖ

**CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY AS  
COMPETITIVENESS FACTOR IN ECONOMIC DOWNTURN**

Summary of Doctoral Dissertation  
Social Sciences, Economics (04S)

2016, Kaunas

This doctoral dissertation was prepared in Kaunas University of Technology, School of Economics and Business, Department of Economics during the period of 2011-2016. The studies were supported by the Research Council of Lithuania.

**Scientific Supervisor:**

Prof. Dr. Valentinas NAVICKAS (Kaunas University of Technology, Social Sciences, Economics, 04S)

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Prof. Dr. Vytautas SNIEŠKA (Kaunas University of Technology, Social Sciences, Economics, 04S) – **chairman**;

Prof. Dr. habil. Žaneta SIMANAVIČIENĖ (Kaunas University of Technology, Social Sciences, Economics, 04S);

Prof. Dr. Ilona SKAČKAUSKIENĖ (Vilnius Gediminas Technical University, Social Sciences, Management, 03S);

Prof. Dr. Asta VASILIAUSKAITĖ (Kaunas University of Technology, Social Sciences, Economics, 04S);

Doc. Dr. Sergej VOJTOVIČ (A. Dubček University of Trenčín, Social Sciences, Management, 03S).

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Address: K. Donelaičio g. 73-402, 44249 Kaunas, Lithuania.

Tel. no. (+370) 37 300 042; fax. (+370) 37 324 144; e-mail doktorantura@ktu.lt.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

### **Relevance of the study**

The interest of science, politics, business and other areas representatives in corporate social responsibility (CSR) continues to grow and this goes on, in particular, for its impact on competitiveness and sustainable development. “A strategic approach to corporate social responsibility becomes increasingly important for enterprises on purpose to become more competitive” (European Commission, 2011). Corporate social responsibility has remained the subject of debate for decades. One of main issues of scientific literature is whether the implementation of CSR determines an increase of enterprises competitiveness (Carroll & Shabana, 2010). Many authors argue that competitiveness is one of the main reasons for CSR implementation, but the nature of CSR’s impact on competitiveness is still uncertain. CSR critics argue that it is costly to work responsibly and it may adversely affect the enterprise’s competitiveness. CSR supporters argue that the implementation of CSR can help the enterprise to create competitive advantages, to open opportunities for innovation, to reduce operating risks, to increase loyalty of consumers and workers, to improve relationships with stakeholders, to reduce operating costs and to improve company profitability. The debates on corporate social responsibility in terms of competitiveness particularly increased during the economic downturn, which occurred at the beginning of this century and is distinguished by a degraded business environment (Placier, 2011). The economic downturn of 2008-2010 presented new and unexpected challenges for enterprises seeking to remain in business. The economic recession adversely affected the financial situation of enterprises and productivity, employee motivation and loyalty. Not only the global economic and financial crisis, but also a crisis of business maturity decided an economic downturn. According to Hopkins (2008), the lack of responsibility led to financial turmoil and recession in most international markets. Business, like financial institutions, lost the confidence of the public. CSR development was affected by the loss of trust in business, financial institutions and Governments. The enterprise found itself at a crossroad of decisions, how to deal with the implementation of socially responsible initiatives: to reduce the budgets for CSR implementation or more actively integrate CSR into the main activity, to take on responsible business practices, and how it will affect the competitiveness of enterprises. Competitiveness of industry and the whole country depends on the competitiveness of enterprises. Competitiveness is the base of the European Union economy (European Commission, 2016). Fluctuations in economic activity forced business to change traditional methods of organization and management, and to search for new

tools, knowledge, resources and competences in order to strengthen its position and to ensure the competitiveness of the enterprises. This has particularly intensified debates on corporate social responsibility in aspects of competitiveness not only between business people, but also between representatives of Government and science. The ongoing global ecologic crisis quickened discussions. Is CSR a threat or an opportunity to improve competitiveness in the period of the economic downturn?

With reference to some theoretical and empirical studies already carried out by different countries researchers, corporate social responsibility has a positive impact on micro-level competitiveness. Most of the research was performed during the period of economic upturn. Evaluations of CSR on competitiveness were mainly carried out at an abstract theoretical level, sometimes based on empirical data. It is necessary to assess the impact of CSR on micro-level competitiveness during the economic downturn in accordance with scientific arguments based on empirical studies as opposed to subjective opinion. A conception of CSR as a factor of competitiveness, based on the empirical facts and on the grounds of their formulated conclusions, is necessary in order to assess the impact of CSR on micro-level competitiveness and to introduce strategic decisions for companies during a period of downturn. The economic crisis is over and economic recession has passed. But, according to Krugman (2009), even a strong economy can be overtaken by recession. Suddenly varied public expectations and loss of confidence may adversely affect even the healthiest system. The possibilities to maintain or improve competitiveness of businesses during an economic downturn increase in good economic times.

There are needful empirical solutions to assess the impact of CSR on micro-level competitiveness, no longer only theoretical arguments. The use of quantitative methods and empirical evidence would allow a more objective assessment of CSR as a factor of a competitiveness nature and its development opportunities. A variety of CSR definitions as a result of absence definite concept requires a theoretical integration and empirical examination. It is necessary to identify, investigate and evaluate new methods that reflect processes of CSR as a competitiveness factor that involve economic subjects, the results of which affect the achievement of its objectives and success of their life. Empirical arguments would allow the objective evaluation of the nature of corporate social responsibility and its impact on micro-level competitiveness. Quantitative indicators based on the correlation-relationship between CSR and competitiveness of enterprises would give solid evidence rather than simply theoretical considerations.

### **Scientific problem and the level of its investigation**

In order to objectively reveal the level of the analysed problem an investigation performed with a search of topical publications in nine scientific

databases: EBSCO Publishing, Cambridge Journals Online, Emerald Management e-Journals Collection, Oxford Journals, SAGE Journals Online, Science Direct Journals, Sciences Online, Taylor and Francis, and Wiley Online Library. The search was carried out on the name of the article, keyword and abstract level. The results of the search for selected analysed databases and publications were selected from the period of September 12, 2014 to December 31, 2015.

Lithuanian and foreign scientists analysed the links between corporate social responsibility and competitiveness. The impact of CSR on competitiveness of micro-macro levels was investigated by Boulouta & Pitelis (2014), Eisenegger & Schranz (2011), Flammer (2015), Herciu & Ogreaan (2008), Hopkins (2008), Li (2012), Marin et al. (2012), Martinuzzi (2011), Marquis & Zhang (2015), Ogreaan & Herciu (2015), Verbengen (2007). The impact of CSR on the competitiveness of enterprises in some aspects was analysed by Apospori et al. (2012), Battaglia et al. (2014), Bučiūnienė & Kazlauskaitė (2012), Calabrese et al. (2013), Juščius & Snieška (2008), Krambia-Kapardis (2012), Nwagbara & Reid (2013), Porter & Kramer (2006), Sanchez & Benito-Hernandez (2015), Stankevičė & Rukaitė (2013), Tyagi (2014), Turyakira et al. (2012, 2014), Vilanova et al. (2009), Weber (2008).

The impact CSR on particular factors of competitiveness was usually investigated in studies. The impact of CSR on the improvement of enterprise's strategy, management and business processes was emphasized by Asif et al. (2013), Bagdonienė et al. (2009), Bagdonienė & Paulavičienė (2010), Cantrel et al. (2015), Castka & Balzarova (2008), Dumas (2006), Hopkins et al. (2008), Ingenbleek et al. (2007), Lozano (2006), Maon et al. (2009), Mijatovic & Stokic (2010), Molina-Azorin et al. (2009, 2015), Mueller et al. (2009), Murillo & Lozano (2006), Pflugrath et al. (2011), Quelch & Jocz (2009), Souto (2009), Srchova & Dvorakova (2010), Urbonas & Maskvytienė (2009), Vaitkevičius & Stukaitė (2009), Woan et al. (2010). The influence of corporate social responsibility on the intensification of business-to-business relationship was explored by Danko et al. (2008), Du et al. (2010), Longo et al. (2005), Murphy et al. (2015), Rimmington et al. (2006), Rueda-Manzanares et al. (2008), Ruževičius (2014), Sarkis et al. (2010), Souto (2009), Šimanskienė & Pauzuolienė (2010), Škudienė & Auruškevičienė (2012), Štreimikienė & Vasiljevienė (2004), Varnas et al. (2009), Venter et al. (2014), Wilson (2007). The impact of CSR's individual elements on product/service demand was analysed by Arli & Lasmono (2010), Beckmann (2007), Chen (2008), Flammer (2015), Foster et al. (2009), Gallego Alvarez et al. (2011), Jaakson et al. (2012), Khamah et al. (2015), Lockett et al. (2006), Longo et al. (2005), Lorenzo et al. (2008), Luo & Bhattacharya (2006), Manasakis et al. (2014), Marin et al. (2009), Molina-Azorin et al. (2009, 2015), Porter & Kramer (2006), Škudienė &



Auruškevičienė (2012), Woan et al. (2010). The links between CSR and human capital resources were analysed by Albinger & Freeman (2000), Brammer & Millington (2008), Du et al. (2010), Egan (2000), Flammer (2015), Greening & Turban (2000), Griffin & Prakash (2013), Juščius (2008), Kapoor & Sandhu (2010), Kim & Park (2011), Longo et al. (2005), Pop et al. (2011), Ruževičius (2014), Sarkis et al. (2010), Sen et al. (2006), Stankevičienė et al. (2008), Venter et al. (2014), Woan et al. (2010). The value of enterprises' socially responsible initiatives for natural resources saving was assessed by Banytė et al. (2012), Brammer & Millington (2008), Chang (2011), Chen et al. (2006), Čiegis & Zeleniūtė (2008), Esau & Malone (2013), Heras-Saizarbitoria et al. (2015), Juščius & Maliauskaitė (2015). The theoretical aspects of evaluation dominated in scientific studies for the investigation of CSR's impact on competitiveness. Weber (2008), Marin et al. (2012), Turyakira (2012), Stankevičė & Rukaitė (2013) have formed conceptual models based on theory and empirically when investigating the impact of corporate social responsibility on competitiveness.

With numerous quantities of scientific publications about the link between CSR and competitiveness, the corporate social responsibility impact on competitiveness of enterprises in an economic downturn is rarely examined. The importance of socially responsible initiatives implementation for enterprises' competitiveness in an economic downturn is highlighted by Bernatonytė et al. (2009), Charitoudi et al. (2011), Ducassy (2013), Eisenegger & Schranz (2011), Flammer (2015), Gallego Alvarez et al. (2013), Hansen et al. (2013), Heras-Saizarbitoria et al. (2016), Hopkins (2008), Juščius (2009), Kovaliov et al. (2009), Lauesen (2013), Li (2012), Manubens (2009), Miras et al. (2014), Navickas & Kontautienė (2013), Porter & Kramer (2006), Quelch & Jocz (2009), Souto (2009).

In summary it can be stated that the question of CSR as a factor of competitiveness in an economic downturn is important, relevant and new from the point of view of scientific investigations and practical applications. The impact of CSR on micro-level competitiveness in an economic downturn is not thoroughly analysed enough. No one methodology has been designed that would help to determine the importance of the implementation of elements of CSR for particular competitiveness factors in an economic downturn and the impact of CSR implementation in enterprises on the indicators of its competitiveness in the period of recession.

**The scientific problem** is how corporate social responsibility affects competitiveness in an economic downturn.

**The object of the scientific research** is corporate social responsibility in terms of micro-level competitiveness.

**The aim of the scientific research** is to assess the impact of CSR on competitiveness during an economic downturn, to develop the model of CSR as a competitiveness factor and to realize the evaluation on micro-level.

**The objectives of the scientific research:**

1. To examine the structure and consistent development patterns of the CSR concept.
2. To reveal evaluation assumptions of CSR as a competitiveness factor.
3. To analyse the practice of CSR as a competitiveness factor evaluation methods and the possibilities of its application on a micro-level.
4. To formulate methodological principles of CSR as a competitiveness factor for evaluation on a micro-level.
5. To develop CSR as a competitiveness factor model based on stated methodological principles.
6. To perform evaluation of CSR as competitiveness factor in different periods of the business cycle.

**The methods of the research include:**

- systematic and comparative analysis of scientific literature based on the methods of comparison, classification, systematization and generalization;
- synthesis of analysis results and logical generation of conclusions;
- expert evaluation, questionnaire survey;
- statistical analysis of secondary data;
- cluster analysis, independent samples test;
- mathematic and statistical analysis of research results conducted by employing the software of statistical data processing, *SPSS* (v21.0) and *Microsoft Excel* (2010).

**The novelty of the scientific research:**

1. *The concept of corporate social responsibility has been revised in terms of competitiveness.* In the existing definitions of corporate social responsibility, the most commonly encountered concepts are corporate commitment, responsibility for impact, strategy, behaviour, relationships, actions, programs, involvement in the solution of social, economic and environmental issues. There is no generally accepted definition of CSR. CSR is a public made concept, dynamic developing, connected with society norms and regulations change concept. In different societies it is perceived in many ways because of the conditions in which certain sections of the public operates. Generally, CSR is related to the increase of interactions between business and the public that stimulates companies to act in a way that the results of economic, social and environmental performance would be balanced. Competitiveness as an enterprise's ability has to be put into daily practice. In terms of competitiveness there are important

daily activities of an enterprise, the results of which lead to opportunities to participate in the competition as in the process and succeed in it. In the thesis *CSR is defined as the enterprise's daily activities based on the social, environmental and economic responsibilities, conditioned by the intense interaction with stakeholders, with a view to long-term economic development and the increase of community welfare.*

2. *An assumption of corporate social responsibility as an evaluation of the competitiveness factor was determined and the expression of CSR as a competitiveness factor in the economic downturn was revealed.* After sifting and systematizing the constituents of the CSR elements: environmental, social and economic responsibilities, and evaluating their impact on micro-level competitiveness factors in an economic downturn: improvement of a company's strategy and management processes, product/service demand, quality of human capital resources, effective use of natural resources and development of related and supporting sectors, were selected indicators of CSR determined competitiveness evaluation. The indicators of an enterprise's competitiveness in an economic downturn were analysed in each aspect of the competitiveness factor that was estimated in the thesis and were combined into one integrated set of indicators, which was used for the analysis of a socially responsible enterprise's competitiveness. The impact of CSR on competitiveness at a micro-level in an economic downturn comes into play through a combination of micro-economic business environment quality factors and the enterprise's abilities.
3. *There were highlighted methodological principles of evaluation of CSR as a factor of competitiveness.* It is essential that the systemic approach to integrity, functionality and application of investigation methods, inclusive theoretical and empirical research, are used to evaluate CSR as a factor of competitiveness in an economic downturn in order to get the most precise and objective research data as possible, and on this basis to draw conclusions on the result that is a positive or negative influence of CSR on an enterprises' competitiveness. The use of qualitative and quantitative research, complementary to one another in the individual stages of the investigation, is necessary for deep analysis of CSR's impact on competitiveness. The use of expert estimation is conditioned by the dependence of the expert knowledge, experience and intuition, because it requires a detailed description of the subject matter (object properties and sides). The use of quantitative research is postulated by

- the required statistical reasoning of CSR's impact on the competitiveness of enterprises.
4. *The model for the evaluation of corporate social responsibility as a factor of competitiveness has been developed.* The model integrates CSR elements: economics, environmental and social responsibilities, and their interaction with factors of micro-level competitiveness. The developed model can be used as a tool for the assessment of competitiveness, conditioned by corporate social responsibility, realizable by different country, sector or industry enterprises, for the calculation and assessment of competitiveness indicators alternating in terms of time and enterprise' competitors, and in terms of realizable socially responsible initiatives. CSR as a competitiveness factor model can be used as a strategic planning tool for making strategic business decisions to increase the competitiveness of the enterprise or individual business sector; as a measure of information and promotion about socially responsible enterprises' competitiveness, their realizable socially responsible initiatives, as CSR implementation stimulant about socially responsible activities' benefit and its nature.
  5. *The ability to plan and apply measures that would mitigate the negative impact of an economic downturn on the competitiveness of enterprises and would increase CSR benefits not only for the enterprise but also for the stakeholders* by determining the influence of CSR's individual elements on competitiveness factors have been justified.
  6. The evaluation of Lithuanian socially responsible enterprises competitiveness indicators during periods of economic downturn and economic upturn has been accomplished. The accomplished evaluation justified the ability of Lithuanian socially responsible enterprises to maintain market positions and to be productive in different periods of the economic (business) cycle compared to their major competitors in the business sector i.e. confirmed that CSR as corporate daily activities based on social, environmental and economic responsibilities, conditioned by intense interactions with stakeholders, positively affect their competitiveness. Competitiveness indicators of Lithuanian socially responsible enterprises, compared to their main competitors in the business sector, are similar or higher during the periods under consideration. Implementation of CSR is not loss-making but useful for enterprises' competitiveness in different periods of the economic (business) cycle.
  7. The comparable analysis of socially responsible Baltic States enterprises, and those with undeclared socially responsible activity,

competitiveness indicators during different economic (business) cycle periods has been accomplished. The analysis has shown that socially responsible enterprises were capable of maintaining their positions in the market and to be productive, i.e. to create value goods and services through the use of effective methods, during different periods of the economic (business) cycle compared to enterprises with undeclared socially responsible activity. Competitiveness indicators of socially responsible Baltic States enterprises were not statistically different from enterprises with undeclared socially responsible activity. Socially responsible activity of enterprises is not financially disadvantage. Socially responsible companies remained competitive during periods of economic downturn and economic upturn. The analysis is useful at an international level because it justified the development of socially responsible businesses in three Baltic countries, and has provided an opportunity to assess the tendencies of Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian companies, listed in the Nasdaq Baltic market, competitiveness indicators during different economic (business) cycle periods and the involvement of these countries enterprises into socially responsible activity development and its declaration.

### **The structure of the dissertation**

The research work consists of three parts. The evolution of CSR concept, CSR elements and levels, factors of competitiveness at micro-level during economic downturn, and interactions between CSR elements and factors of competitiveness at micro-level during an economic downturn, the models of CSR impact on competitiveness evaluation were discussed in the *first part* of the dissertation. *The second part* consists of methodology reasoning of CSR as a competitiveness factor in an economic downturn evaluation, developed a conceptual model of CSR as a factor of competitiveness and its verification. The prepared methodology employed for empirical research is *in the third part* of the dissertation work. The evaluation of Lithuanian socially responsible enterprises competitiveness indicators during periods of economic downturn and economic upturn, and the comparable analysis of Baltic countries enterprises, socially responsible and those with undeclared socially responsible activity, and competitiveness indicators during different economic (business) cycle periods have been accomplished.

### **Limitations of the research**

For the analysis of CSR as a competitiveness factor in an economic downturn, the impact of corporate social responsibility on micro-level competitiveness is examined only through micro-economic business environment quality determinants (Delgado et al., 2012; Porter et al., 2007; Reeves & Deimler, 2009). For the evaluation of competitiveness factors used

ceteris paribus (Latin) – with other factors remaining the same, meaning that other impacting competitiveness factors in an economic downturn are constant and changing only determinants of micro-economic business environment quality.

For empirical research CSR's impact on micro-level competitiveness has been examined in terms of a holistic approach, without going into the question of what the impact of each individual CSR element implementation makes on enterprises' competitiveness indicators.

The research of CSR's impact on enterprises' competitiveness was limited by the accessibility of some business data. For the comparable analysis of socially responsible enterprises and those with undeclared socially responsible activity competitiveness indicators during different economic cycle periods only relative financial indicators were used. According to Lekavičienė & Juščius (2006), Laureti & Viviani (2011), Perles-Ribes et al. (2013), Sauka (2014), Shi et al. (2012), Stundžienė & Bliėkienė (2012), Voulgaris & Lemonakis (2014), the main attention in assessing the competitiveness of enterprises must be made for the analysis of financial indicators.

***The contents of the dissertation:*** The dissertation consists of 200 pages (182 pages aside from appendices), 28 figures, 31 tables, 7 appendices. 534 sources of scientific literature in Lithuanian and English were used as references.

***The publication of research results:*** Research results have been presented at scientific conferences in Lithuania and abroad and published in recognized Lithuanian and foreign scientific journals.

## **REVIEW OF THE DISSERTATION CONTENTS**

### **1. DEVELOPMENT OF CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY AS A COMPETITIVENESS FACTOR**

#### **1.1. Development of corporate social responsibility concept**

In this section, the development of the corporate social responsibility concept has been reviewed. The concept of corporate social responsibility has grown from the perception of CSR as a philanthropic action in order to meet the needs of public members to systematically pursued activity and intensive interaction with stakeholders based on social, economic and environmental interests with the aim of long-term sustainable economic development and raising of public welfare. There is still no generally accepted definition of corporate social responsibility. Corporate social responsibility remains an evolving and multifaceted, concept created by society. On the basis of the accomplished analysis of corporate social responsibility concept development, in the thesis CSR is defined as an enterprise's daily activity based on the social, environmental and economic responsibilities, conditioned by the intense

interaction with stakeholders, with a view to long-term economic development and to increase community welfare.

## **1.2. Elements and levels of corporate social responsibility**

In this section, elements of CSR as economic, environmental and social responsibilities, and levels of CSR implementation as internal and external have been analysed. CSR is a long-lasting process, the formation of which may take the enterprise's whole lifetime. Depending on the time and business environment alteration, the nature and the number of socially responsible initiatives are changing, but the needs and importance of CSR implementation remain. The implementation of corporate social responsibility should include the integration of all three CSR elements into the day-to-day activities of business and should be realized in both levels, and the results shall be evaluated in the context of their synergies.

## **1.3. Assumptions of corporate social responsibility as a competitiveness factor in an economic downturn evaluation**

In this sector, the determinants of the micro-economic business environment quality as competitiveness at micro-level factors and their interaction with elements of corporate social responsibility have been analysed. Delgado et al. (2012) and Porter et al. (2007) pointed out that competitiveness at a micro-level depends on the interaction of four major micro-economic business environment quality determinants groups, i.e. demand conditions, terms of factors, enterprise's strategy, structure and competitors, related and supporting sectors and its competitors. General development of these factors creates fundamentals for the development of micro-economic welfare, enabling national enterprises to gain and maintain competitive advantages, useful for the countries in which they operate. The implementation of CSR elements, i.e. environmental, economic and social responsibilities, has an impact on the development of business strategy and management processes, on the quality of human capital resources, on the increased demand of production, on the development of related and supporting sectors, and on the effectiveness of natural resources use. The positive impact on competitiveness factors determines the greater implementation of CSR elements.

## **2. METHODOLOGY OF CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY AS A COMPETITIVENESS FACTOR IN ECONOMIC DOWNTURN EVALUATION**

### **2.1. Models of corporate social responsibility impact on micro-level competitiveness evaluation**

In this section, models of corporate social responsibility impact on micro-level competitiveness, existent in scientific literature, i.e. models such as "CSR

impact model” (Weber, 2008), “The influence of CSR on competitiveness” (Marin et al., 2012), “Factors influencing the increased competitiveness of SMEs” (Turyakira, 2012) “Links between competitiveness and CSR” (Stankevičė & Rukaitė, 2013), have been analysed.

Accomplished analysis has allowed fundamental principles to separate which it is purposeful to entertain in evaluating CSR as a competitiveness factor (Table).

**Table.** CSR impact on competitiveness structural models principles applicable to the evaluation of corporate social responsibility as a competitiveness factor

Authors	Model	<b>Structural models principles applicable to the evaluation of corporate social responsibility as a competitiveness factor</b>
Weber (2008)	CSR impact model	Evaluation of CSR impact on competitiveness evaluation is systematic process. Identification of specific enterprise’s competitiveness indicators
Marin et al. (2012)	The influence of CSR on competitiveness	Methodological reasoning of CSR elements and its constituents grouping Identification of specific enterprise’s competitiveness factors
Turyakira (2012)	Factors influencing the increased competitiveness of SMEs	Methodological reasoning of CSR factors grouping Identification of specific enterprise’s competitiveness determinants
Stankevičė & Rukaitė (2013)	Links between competitiveness and CSR	Methodological reasoning of CSR elements grouping Identification of specific enterprise’s competitiveness factors and its indicators

Accomplished analysis of the models proved that evaluation of CSR as a competitiveness factor is a quite complex phenomenon. In the scientific literature proposed models have different methodologies of CSR elements and competitiveness factors selection and integration to a common evaluation system, but their analysis has allowed the following models peculiarities to be excluded, which would be applied to the evaluation of CSR as a competitiveness factor in an economic downturn:

- Realizable strategy, size of enterprise and industry in which it operates, influence on the choice of realizable CSR initiatives.
- CSR elements, i.e. environmental, social and economic responsibilities, are relative, but their constituents’ implementation differently affects the competitiveness of an enterprise.



- There is not enough to describe the influence of corporate social responsibility by evaluating the individual CSR elements impact on competitiveness, the impact of all elements are in need of analysis.

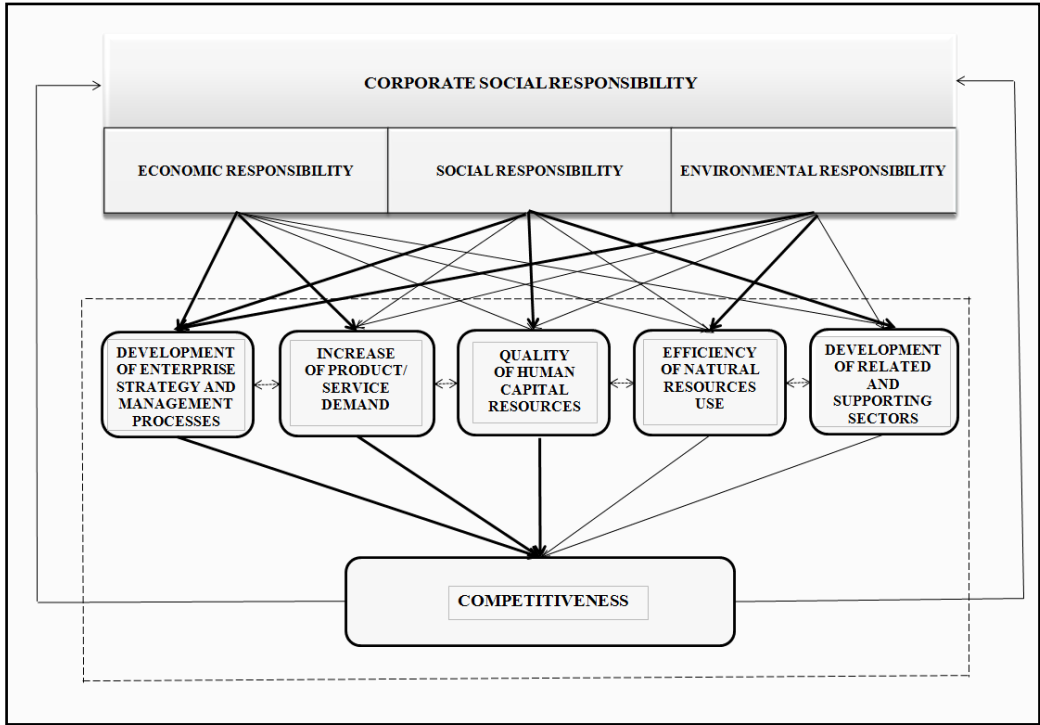
## **2.2. The model of corporate social responsibility as a competitiveness factor**

The model of CSR as a competitiveness factor, developed in this dissertation, is composed of two structural parts (Figure 1). The first component of the model is up for the characterization of the implemented corporate social responsibility, i.e. for evaluation of realizable CSR constitutions (socially responsible initiatives). Corporate social responsibility is defined as the unit of social, environmental and economic responsibilities. All three elements of CSR must be implemented together. The number of realizable CSR constituents (socially responsible initiatives) depends on the enterprise's strategy, the nature of economic activity and the industry in which the enterprise operates, and other factors, the implication is that is not necessarily to realize all the CSR constituents in one company. It is important to implement all three elements in enterprise activity, justifying realizable CSR. A socially responsible company is an enterprise, which daily activity based on social, environmental and economic responsibilities, and interactions with stakeholders.

The second component of the model is up for an assessment of the competitiveness of the enterprise that operates in a socially responsible way. The indicators of competitiveness assessment were separated depending on the transferable influence of each factor on enterprise competitiveness. Indicators of micro-level competitiveness factors were chosen in accordance with the following requirements:

- availability-it must reflect a factor of micro-level competitiveness;
- accessibility-it must be accessible in the point of analysed enterprises and analysed time-wise;
- reliability-it must be obtained from trusted and objective sources;
- timeliness-it must be obtained from sources that reflect the analysed period;
- comparability-it must be possible to compare between enterprises or analysed periods

On the basis of scientific literature analysis and research the use of financial indicators is the most reliable method to assess an enterprise's competitiveness compared to its main competitors and time-wise, but the use of non-financial indicators is also important for the evaluation competitiveness of a socially responsible company. The financial and non-financial indicators for assessment of enterprise competitiveness factors are described.



**Fig. 1.** Corporate social responsibility as a competitiveness factor conceptual model

### **2.3. Methodology and organization of corporate social responsibility elements as affecting competitiveness in economic downturn factors expert assessment**

In this section, the logical sequence of expert assessment “Elements of corporate social responsibility as affecting competitiveness in economic downturn factors” has been presented and the method employed for the research has been described. Expert assessment has been performed on purpose to verify CSR as a competitiveness factor model in “Elements of corporate social responsibility as affecting competitiveness in economic downturn factors”. The object of the research is the importance of CSR elements for micro-level competitiveness factors during an economic downturn. The individual survey method was chosen for assessment elements of corporate social responsibility as affecting competitiveness in economic downturn factors, and mathematical-statistical methods were used for received data analysis.

To achieve the objective of the research a two parts questionnaire based on the principles of the Likert scale (Boone & Boone, 2012; Fu & Deshpande, 2014; Murray, 2013) was carried out. The purpose of the first part was to assess the importance of the enterprise’s strategy and management processes development, product/service demand increase, quality of human capital resources, efficient use of natural resources and development of related and supporting sectors for competitiveness at a micro-level in an economic downturn. The purpose of the second part was to assess the importance of CSR elements constituents for micro-level competitiveness factors in an economic downturn. The survey was carried out from April until June in 2015. 17 experts participated, i.e. 5 representatives of social sciences (economics), 9 representatives of business and 3 non-profit institutions members. The experts were interviewed by an individual survey questionnaire sent via e-mail or during a visit to the expert. The data have been processed and analysed using SPSS 17.0 software and Microsoft MS Excel 2010.

### **2.4. Results of corporate social responsibility elements as affecting competitiveness in economic downturn factors expert assessment**

On the basis of the expert assessment “Elements of the corporate social responsibility as affecting competitiveness in economic downturn factors” confirmed the importance of an enterprise’s strategy and management processes development, product/service demand increase, quality of human capital resources, efficient use of natural resources and development of related and supporting sectors as competitiveness at micro-level factors in an economic downturn and the impact of elements of corporate social responsibility on competitiveness factors under consideration during an economic downturn. The results of the expert assessment made it possible to assess the impact strength of

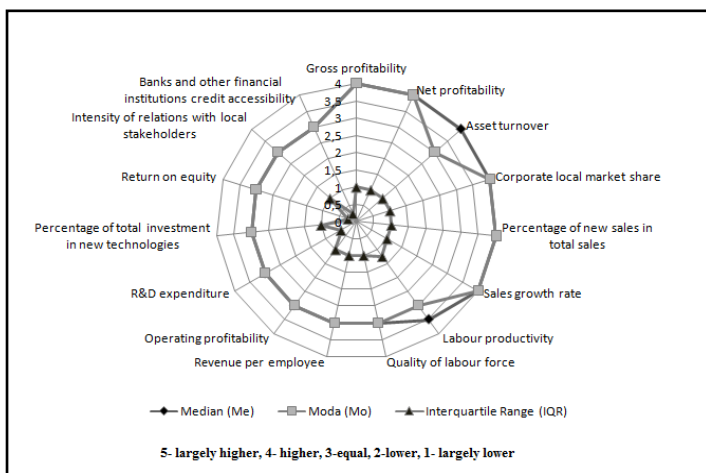
individual CSR elements constituents. On the basis of the assessment results the model of CSR as a competitiveness factor was revised with the emphasis of the individual CSR elements different impact on the enterprise's strategy and management processes development, product/service demand increase, quality of human capital resources, efficient use of natural resources and development of related and supporting sectors (Figure1). The specification of the model makes it possible to make a full- scale assessment of the CSR impact on micro-level competitiveness through implemented socially responsible initiatives, to identify the sources and the ways in which enterprises can reduce the uncertainty of the business environment and dynamic effects, and to exploit the possibilities to strengthen the ability to be productive and to maintain positions in the market, to increase the advantage to the competitors and to improve performance.

### **3. EMPIRICAL RESEARCH OF CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY AS COMPETITIVENESS AT MICRO-LEVEL FACTOR**

#### **3.1. The evaluation of enterprise socially responsible activity and its competitiveness indicators in different periods of the economic cycle**

In this section, the logical sequence of the expert evaluation of enterprise socially responsible activity and its competitiveness indicators in different periods of the economic cycle has been presented, the method employed for the research has been described and the results of the research have been presented. The individual survey method was selected for the evaluation of enterprise socially responsible activity and its competitiveness indicators in different periods of the economic cycle, and the statistical method was used for data analysis. The choice of the individual survey method was conditioned by the fact that socially responsible business activities and competitiveness indicators, compared to its main competitors, was not sufficiently describe in corporate documents. It is impossible to investigate individual business competitiveness indicators, compared to its major competitors' indicators, by reading the documents.

The general trend of expert assessment was that competitiveness indicators, i.e. gross profitability, net profitability, asset turnover, corporate local market share, percentage of new sales in total sales, sales growth rates in the local market, labour productivity, quality of the labour force, revenue per employee, operating profitability, R&D expenditure, percentage of total investment in new technologies, return on equity, intensity of relations with local stakeholders, banks and other financial institutions credit availability, of socially responsible enterprises, in comparison with the indicators of the main competitors, were equal or higher during an economic downturn (Figure 2).



**Fig. 1.** Statistical indicators of estimates of Lithuanian enterprises, implementing CSR initiatives, competitiveness indicators in comparison with its main competitors during an economic downturn

Similar trends of competitiveness indicators remained in the economic upturn. Based on the expert evaluation results, socially responsible enterprises were able to maintain their positions in the market and to be productive in different periods of the economic (business) cycle.

### 3.2. The evaluation of socially responsible and those with undeclared socially responsible activity enterprises competitiveness indicators in different periods of the economic cycle

In this section, the logical sequence of evaluation of socially responsible and those with undeclared socially responsible activity enterprises competitiveness indicators in different periods of the economic cycle have been presented, the method employed for the research has been described and the results of the research have been presented.

For the assessment of socially responsible and those with undeclared socially responsible activity enterprises competitiveness indicators in different periods of the economic cycle were selected companies, listed in the Nasdaq Baltic market. There were 59 Baltic companies involved in the research. Selected companies were listed in the Baltic Main List and Baltic Secondary List on April 1, 2016, namely 12 Estonian, 25 Latvian and 22 Lithuanian enterprises (Nasdaq, 2016). Thirteen companies, listed in the Nasdaq Baltic market (3 Estonian, 1 Latvian and 9 Lithuanian companies) were not included in the research for the lack of data for the analysed periods.

Independent sample tests were used for the evaluation of socially responsible and those with undeclared socially responsible activity, enterprises' competitiveness indicators in different periods of the economic (business) cycle.

Listing on the Nasdaq Baltic market enterprises, socially responsible and those with undeclared socially responsible activity, competitiveness indicators, i.e. gross profitability, net profitability, asset turnover, sales growth, return on equity and return on assets, did not statistically differ in different periods of the economic (business) cycle. The higher operating profitability of socially responsible companies have shown a better ability to control sales revenue, cost of sales and operating expenses compared to enterprises with undeclared socially responsible activity during an economic upturn. Statistical analysis of revenue per employee indicators showed that revenue per employee level in socially responsible and those with undeclared socially responsible activity enterprises had statistically significant differences during an economic downturn and economic upturn. An average value of revenue per employee in socially responsible enterprises was almost two times higher than in enterprises with undeclared socially responsible activity. This shows that labour productivity of socially responsible companies is higher than in enterprises with undeclared socially responsible activity. Tendencies of competitiveness (financial) indicators of socially responsible enterprises were similar to enterprises with undeclared socially responsible activity during an economic downturn and economic upturn, so it could be said that socially responsible companies were able to compete in the market, i.e. had maintained market positions, and were productive, i.e. created value goods and services through the use of effective methods, during different periods of economic (business) cycle.

### **3.3. Trends of corporate social responsibility as competitiveness factor development and possibilities of research application**

The conducted research of CSR as a competitiveness factor in an economic downturn confirmed the CSR influences on competitiveness through its determinants in an economic downturn. On the basis of complex empirical research results it can be said that CSR implementation ensures a "license to operate", i.e. to compete in the market, to compete with major competitors in the business sector, during different periods of the economic (business) cycle for socially responsible companies. With reference to the model of corporate social responsibility as a competitiveness factor, businesses can assess their realizable socially responsible initiatives and their influenced competitiveness indicators, compared to indicators of their competitors/business partners. Based on the model, competitiveness indicators of individual sectors, industries and even firms of different countries can be compared. Enterprises' competitiveness,

conditioned by their realizable socially responsible activities, and changes in its indicators time-wise could be assessed by stakeholders, and that should encourage companies to actively declare implemented CSR initiatives. That would encourage the development of CSR ideas and practice. Business and society are highly related. Socially responsible business has a positive impact on solving relevant public problems and the public interest for responsible business growth. The implementation of social and environmental responsibilities does not reduce the importance of main business responsibility, i.e. economic responsibility, or the significance of the main purpose of businesses, i.e. to aim for profit. A successful and responsible business guarantees the successful development of society. Essentially, CSR is a guarantee of competitive business, competitive society and a competitive State.

Severe competition in the market enforces companies to look for new sources of competitiveness. To society, as to companies, looking ahead, CSR initiatives will be more beneficial if the sources for competitiveness are increased. CSR promotes a responsible attitude in business, society and the environment that shows what we are today and what we want to be in the future. Sustainable enterprises mean a sustainable State.

## CONCLUSIONS

The analysed particularity of corporate social responsibility as a competitiveness factor in an economic downturn and the methodological aspects of its complex evaluation reflect the constantly growing interest of world academics, practitioners, politicians and strategists in following the topic and justifying the relevance, timeliness and novelty of the topic under investigation. The conducted investigation of corporate social responsibility as a competitiveness factor in an economic downturn permits the formulating of these research findings:

1. Completed theoretical analysis of the corporate social responsibility concept and structure development has revealed its uncertainty and multiplicity. By the analysis of the different theoretical approaches to the CSR concept, to its structure and to its formation process patterns it has been found that: a) *the concept of corporate social responsibility remains an evolving and multifaceted system, covering not only the behaviour of enterprises, relationships and actions but also society's values*; b) *to this day there is no generally accepted definition of corporate social responsibility*; c) *the concept of CSR has grown from its perception as a philanthropic action in order to meet the needs of members of the public to systematically undergo activity and intensive interactions with stakeholders, based on social, economic and environmental interests with the aim of long-term sustainable economic development and the raising of public welfare*,

*in the period of its existence; d) CSR is perceived as an enterprises decision of the implementation of their prime responsibility for the pursuit of profit to contribute to social and environmental objectives by integrating CSR as a strategic investment into basic strategies, management and operational processes; e) corporate social responsibility is a concept created by society, and therefore a change of public rules and attitudes, and conditions, in which certain members of the public exists, influencing its development; f) sustainable development has been recognized as the basis of corporate social responsibility. Though concepts of sustainable development and corporate social responsibility are often identified and confused as including common ideas and common goals, CSR is more focused on business models, while the concept of sustainable development to fundamental changes in a global environment, to general public (including corporate) welfare. The aim of corporate social responsibility is a decrease of disagreement and an increase of synergy in corporate interactions with social, economic and natural environments, which operate in the long term perspective; g) generally, corporate social responsibility is associated with the triple bottom line i.e. perceived as a combination of three elements: economic, social and environmental responsibilities, and its implementation goes in two levels: internal and external, because first of all it is the responsibility for stakeholders, in particular, internal stakeholders. With reference to the analysis of CSR concept development and structure, in the thesis, CSR is defined as the enterprise's daily activity based on social, environmental and economic responsibilities, conditioned by the intense interaction with stakeholders, with a view to long-term economic development and to increase community welfare.*

2. The analysis of scientific literature has shown that *competitiveness at a micro-level is a multidimensional phenomenon, but in all cases refers to the ability to compete in a given market and the productivity of which depends on created economic value, level of the remuneration for work and investment payoff.* It is an enterprise's ability to consistently fight over the long period of competition. With reference to the analysis of scientific literature, *an economic downturn (a recession) is a significant decline in economic activity, which spreads across the economy and lasts more than a few months, and is normally shown in a decline of real GDP, real income, employment, industrial production, and wholesale-retail sales.* Economic downturn is a most inauspicious period for enterprises with an intense storm in



the markets, a decrease in production and sales, a decline in consumer demand, enforcement of financial institutions, bankruptcy of retailers and so on. After analysis of the theoretical aspects of corporate social responsibility as a competitiveness factor, the assumptions of CSR as a competitiveness factor evaluation have been laid down: 1) *the implementation of corporate social responsibility is not only a business opportunity to overcome the challenges of economic downturn but also to increase its competitiveness by reducing business costs, improving management, enhancing the potential of demand and securing better supply conditions*; 2) *economic responsibility is a means by which an enterprise intends to maintain and strengthen its competitive position in the market, to increase sales and to counter challenges encountered in synergy with customers, suppliers, shareholders*; 3) *the realization of environmental CSR elements require a modification of technologies, products, processes and business models in order to avoid a negative impact on the natural environment. Environmental responsibility is constant improvement of an enterprise's management and activity. It is the main thrust of the implementation of innovation in enterprises and of improvements in the efficient use of natural resources*; 4) *the implementation of corporate social responsibility is associated with mutual relationships between the enterprise and its stakeholders, with investments in improving the quality of human capital resources, with a positive impact on customer satisfaction, suggestions for increasing demands on production and for enlarging the enterprise's market share. Socially responsible enterprise is seen as a good business partner, and it increases the confidence of investors and business partners, and close cooperation between the enterprise and its stakeholders*; 5) *CSR is not only a business opportunity, but also a tool for increasing an enterprise's capacity to maintain its market share and to remain productive, i.e. to create valuable goods and services through the use of effective methods in an economic downturn, and for making certain of a higher position than its competitors in the period of an economic upturn.*

3. The analysis of theoretical models of CSR's impact on competitiveness in scientific literature showed that: a) *due to an absence of uniform definitions of corporate social responsibility and competitiveness, plenty of competitiveness factors and a diversity of CSR definitions there is no universal model for CSR as a competitiveness factor evaluation*; b) *current models are sufficiently summarized*; c) *corporate social responsibility is defined differently by individual authors, and its impact on competitiveness is assessed*

with different indicators; d) *the evaluation of CSR as a competitiveness factor is a quite complex phenomenon.* In scientific literature the proposed models characterize different methodologies of CSR elements and competitiveness factors selection and integration to a common evaluation system, but their analysis has allowed the characterization of features that would be applied to the evaluation of CSR as a competitiveness factor in an economic downturn:

- Realized strategy, size of the company and industry, in which the company operates, and influence the choice of company implemented CSR initiatives.
  - Elements of CSR: environmental, social and economic responsibilities are related, but implementation of their constituents influence the enterprise's competitiveness differently.
  - The evaluation of individual CSR elements influence on competitiveness is not enough to describe the impact of corporate social responsibility, it is essential the analysis of all CSR elements impact on competitiveness.
  - The identification of an enterprise' competitiveness factors and its indicators contribute to the enhancement of evaluation reliability.
  - The methodological justification of CSR elements and their constituents grouping ensures the evaluation' accuracy.
  - The perception of CSR as a competitiveness factor evaluation and as a systematic process ensures a greater accuracy in the interpretation of the results.
4. In the thesis it has been established and argued that, *for the evaluation of corporate social responsibility as a competitiveness factor in an economic downturn a systemic approach to the integrity, functionality and applicability of evaluation methods is essential.* Corporate social responsibility, like competitiveness at a micro-level, is a multifaceted phenomenon. The theoretical analysis of CSR concept development, CSR elements and levels, the interaction between CSR and competitiveness at a micro-level, and the structural models of CSR impact on competitiveness approved the importance of selection of CSR elements and competitiveness factors and their incorporation to common evaluation system methodology and the need for the complex assessment. *Taking into account the complexity of scientific research and analysed problem evaluation of CSR as a competitiveness factor should be carried out on two levels: theoretical*

*and empirical. On the basis of theoretical analysis, concepts of corporate social responsibility and micro-level competitiveness have been defined and their dimensions, and used in the evaluation have been analysed. The use of qualitative research is based on the fact that the object under consideration is not sufficiently analysed and to take the optimal decision it is necessary to rely on expert knowledge, experience and intuition in order to reduce the risk of incorrect decisions and to base it on the argument of practical recommendations. The use of quantitative research is based on the necessity of statistical reasoning of CSR's impact on competitiveness evaluation.*

5. Research has shown that the identification of CSR elements and their implementation criteria, the setup of evaluation of competitiveness in economic downturn criteria (factors of competitiveness and their indicators) and the connection to the common system describes the process of CSR impact on competitiveness in economic downturn evaluation. By following the methodological principles of CSR as a competitiveness factor, a competitiveness factor conceptual model has been formed, consisting of:

- *CSR elements: economic, environmental and social responsibilities - and criteria of their implementation assessment (socially responsible initiatives) for socially responsible enterprise activity substantiation.* Thirty-two constituents were characterized (18 - for social responsibility, 16 - for economic responsibility and 8 - for environmental responsibility). Corporate social responsibility was defined as a unit of social, environmental and economic responsibilities. All three CSR elements must be implemented together. A number of realizable constituents of the CSR elements (socially responsible initiatives) depends on the company's strategy, nature of economic activity and the industry in which the enterprises operates, and other factors, the implication is that not all the constituents need to be realized in one enterprise. It is important that the constituents of all three CSR elements should be realizable for justifying the socially responsible activity of the enterprise.
- *Assessment criteria of micro-level competitiveness in an economic downturn (factors of competitiveness and their indicators).* The indicators of micro-level competitiveness factors have been chosen in accordance with the following requirements: availability, reliability, suitability, timeliness and comparability. 15 indicators were determined for the description of an enterprise's competitiveness factors.

- *On the basis of the theoretical analysis of the interaction between elements of corporate social responsibility and competitiveness factors, a relationship has been established between corporate social responsibility and competitiveness at a micro-level. The model of CSR as a competitiveness factor is seen as a system of the processes, where the outcome of one process becomes a contributor of the next. The implementation of CSR influences factors of competitiveness at a micro-level and factors of competitiveness affect the enterprises' competitiveness.*
- *The defined reversible process - the enterprise's competitiveness influence on the implementation of corporate social responsibility.*

The sequence of relative actions arrives at the main outcome, i.e. to evaluate CSR as a factor of competitiveness.

The model reflects the influence of individual CSR elements and/or units on different factors of competitiveness at a micro-level. The model is easily modifiable depending on subject of the economy, business sector, industry or analysis period, and it ensures the model's functionality and adaptability.

6. On the basis of the completed empirical research it has been established that:

- *Lithuanian socially responsible enterprises actively implement CSR initiatives, as constituents of all three elements of CSR: economic, environmental and social responsibilities and justified businesses activity, in a socially responsible way. The number and type of CSR element constituents (socially responsible initiatives) depends on the enterprises' strategy, the nature of economic activity and the industry in which the enterprise operates.*
- *The development and declaration of CSR implementation of Lithuanian enterprises are insufficient. Only half of Lithuanian socially responsible enterprises participated in the research, and offered CSR reports.*
- *Competitiveness indicators of Lithuanian socially responsible enterprises, compared to indicators of their major competitors in the business sector, were the same or higher during the economic downturn. It shows that Lithuanian socially responsible enterprises as equivalent competitors were able to keep their market positions and to be productive during the economic downturn.*

- Lithuania's socially responsible enterprises' competitiveness indicators, compared to indicators of their major competitors in the business sector, were higher during the economic upturn. It shows that *Lithuanian socially responsible enterprises were able to maintain market positions and be productive in the period of economic upturn.*
- Competitiveness (financial) indicators of Baltic countries enterprises, listed in the Nasdaq Baltic market, socially responsible and those with undeclared socially responsible activity, with the exception of revenue per employee, statistically were the same during the period of economic downturn. The general trend was that competitiveness (financial) indicators of socially responsible enterprises remained slightly higher compared to analogous indicators of enterprises with undeclared socially responsible activity, so it could be stated that *socially responsible enterprises of Baltic countries were able to compete, i.e. to keep their market positions and to be productive in the economic downturn.*
- Statistical analysis of revenue per employee of the Baltic countries enterprises, listed in the Nasdaq Baltic market, showed that this indicator had statistically significant differences in socially responsible and those with undeclared socially responsible activity enterprises in the economic downturn. *Mean values of revenue per employee of Baltic socially responsible enterprises were two times higher during the period under consideration, so the implication is that the productivity of personnel in socially responsible enterprises was higher than in enterprises with undeclared socially responsible activity during the economic downturn.*
- Competitiveness (financial) indicators of Baltic countries enterprises, listed in the Nasdaq Baltic market, socially responsible and those with undeclared socially responsible activity, with the exception of the operating margin in 2011 and revenue per employee during all period under consideration, statistically were the same during the period of economic upturn.
- Statistical analysis of the operating margin of Baltic countries enterprises, listed in the Nasdaq Baltic market, showed that in 2011 this indicator had statistically significant differences in socially responsible and those with undeclared socially responsible activity enterprises. The operating margin of socially responsible enterprises was 8.38%, while operating margin of enterprises with undeclared socially responsible activity was -

2.52%. *The higher operating profitability of socially responsible companies in the Baltic countries have shown a better ability to monitor sales revenue, cost of sales and operating expenses compared to enterprises with undeclared socially responsible activity during the time under consideration.*

- *Statistical analysis of revenue per employee of Baltic countries enterprises, listed in the Nasdaq Baltic market, showed that this indicator had statistically significant differences in socially responsible and those with undeclared socially responsible activity enterprises during the economic upturn. Mean values of revenue per employee of Baltic socially responsible enterprises were two times higher during the period under consideration, so the implication is that productivity of personnel in socially responsible enterprises was higher than in enterprises with undeclared socially responsible activity during the economic upturn.*
- *Common tendencies of competitiveness (financial) indicators of Baltic countries enterprises, socially responsible and those with undeclared socially responsible activity, were similar during the periods under consideration. It indicates that socially responsible enterprises listed in the Nasdaq Baltic market as equivalent competitors operated in the market and were capable of keeping their market positions and to be productive in different periods of the economic (business) cycle.*
- *Based on the accomplished empirical research, enterprises of the three Baltic countries, by acting in a socially responsible way were able to compete in the market and to be productive in different periods of the economic (business) cycle. This indicates that CSR realization is useful for businesses irrespective of country, industry, or the business sector in which the enterprises operate, and is useful for the community, general public and member enterprises.*
- *The research has shown that development of socially responsible business is insufficient in the Baltic countries. Enterprises are fairly passively involved in CSR realization and declaration. Almost half of the analysed enterprises (26 of 59), listed in the Nasdaq Baltic market, do not publicly declare their socially responsible activities.*
- *With a view to a better and smoother development of CSR, it is important to increase business awareness and the competencies*

*that would motivate the realization of the socially responsible activities, would encourage the conveyance of members of the public as different stakeholders about corporate social responsibility issues, because from it largely depends the quickness and quality of CSR implementation. The major focus of Governments is needed for better CSR development. Media participation in the development of CSR is an important factor, not only for creating a socially responsible consumption, but also for the strengthening of socially responsible business practice.*

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2. Kontautienė, Rima; Jančiūtė, Vilija; Navickas, Valentinas. An interaction between socially responsible business and the society progress // Turizmo patrauklumo didinimo link Lietuvoje ir Lenkijoje = Zwiększenie atrakcyjności turystycznej Litwy i Polski = Towards improving tourism attractiveness in Lithuania and Poland : tarptautinės mokslinės konferencijos mokslo darbai / Kauno technologijos universitetas, Balstogės aukštesnioji vadybos mokykla. Kaunas: Technologija, 2011, ISBN 9789955259312. p. 321-328.

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2. Navickas, Valentinas; Kontautienė, Rima. Green packaging as business competitiveness-enhancing factor // *Bezpieczeństwo w administracji, gospodarce i biznesie*. Aksjologia zjawisk kryzysowych w gospodarce, biznesie i logistyce. Gdynia: Wyższa Szkoła Administracji i Biznesu, 2013, ISBN 9788360505174. p. 267-276.
3. Navickas, Valentinas; Kontautienė, Rima. The investments to corporate social responsibility in economic downturn // *International journal of business and management studies* [elektroninis išteklius]. [S.l.]: University Publications. ISSN 2158-1479. 2014, Vol. 3, No. 3, p. 213-223.
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**INFORMATION ABOUT THE AUTHOR OF THE DISSERTATION**

**Name:** Rima Kontautienė

**Contacts:** rima.kontautiene@ktu.edu; Kontautiene. Rima@gmail.com

**Academic background:**

- |           |                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|-----------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 2011-2016 | Doctoral studies at Kaunas University of Technology, School of Economics and Business                                                                                                                   |
| 2009-2011 | Master's studies at Kaunas University of Technology, Faculty of Economics and Management, Master degree in Management and business administration, specialization - International business management   |
| 2004-2009 | Bachelor studies at Kaunas University of Technology, Faculty of Economics and Management, Bachelor degree in Management and business administration, specialization - International business management |

**Fields of scientific interests:**

*Corporate social responsibility, competitiveness, microeconomics, macroeconomics, international trade*

## REZIUMĖ

### Temos aktualumas

Mokslo, politikos, verslo ir kitų sričių atstovų susidomėjimas įmonių socialine atsakomybe (ISA) auga ir tai vyksta, visų pirma, dėl jos poveikio konkurencingumui ir darniai plėtrai. „Įmonėms siekiant tapti konkurencingesnėmis vis svarbesnis yra strateginis požiūris į įmonių socialinę atsakomybę“ (*European Commission*, 2011). Įmonių socialinė atsakomybė išlieka diskusijų objektas jau keletą dešimtmečių. Vienas iš pagrindinių mokslinėje literatūroje diskutuojamų klausimų – ar ISA įgyvendinimas sąlygoja įmonių konkurencingumo didėjimą (Carroll ir Shabana, 2010). Daugelis autorių teigia, kad konkurencingumas – vienas iš pagrindinių ISA įgyvendinimą skatinančių motyvų, bet įmonių socialinės atsakomybės įtakos pobūdis konkurencingumui vis dar neaiškus. ISA kritikai teigia, kad dirbti atsakingai daug kainuoja, ir tai gali neigiamai paveikti įmonės konkurencingumo rodiklius. Įmonių socialinės atsakomybės šalininkai tvirtina, kad ISA įgyvendinimas gali padėti įmonei sukurti konkurencinių pranašumų, atverti inovacinių galimybių, sumažinti veiklos rizikas, padidinti vartotojų ir darbuotojų lojalumą, pagerinti santykius su suinteresuotosiomis šalimis, sumažinti veiklos kaštus, pagerinti įmonės pelningumo rodiklius. Diskusijos dėl įmonių socialinės atsakomybės konkurencingumo požiūriu ypač paaštrėjo šio šimtmečio pradžioje įvykusio ekonomikos nuosmukio laikotarpiu, pasižymėjusiu degraduojančia verslo aplinka (Placier, 2011). 2008–2010 metų ekonomikos nuosmukis pateikė naujus ir netikėtus iššūkius įmonėms, siekiančioms išlikti versle. Sunkmetis neigiamai paveikė įmonių finansinę padėtį ir produktyvumą, darbuotojų motyvaciją ir lojalumą. Ekonomikos nuosmukį lėmė ne tik pasaulinė ekonomikos ir finansų krizė, bet ir verslo brandos krizė. Anot Hopkins (2008), būtent atsakomybės trūkumas privedė prie finansinės suirutės ir nuosmukio daugumoje tarptautinių rinkų. Verslas, kaip ir finansinės institucijos, prarado visuomenės pasitikėjimą. Pasitikėjimo verslu, finansinėmis institucijomis ir vyriausybėmis praradimas paveikė ISA plėtrą. Įmonės atsidūrė sprendimų kryžkelėje, kaip elgtis įgyvendinamų socialiai atsakingų iniciatyvų požiūriu: mažinti ISA įgyvendinimui skirtus biudžetus ar dar aktyviau integruoti ISA į pagrindinę veiklą, imtis atsakingo verslo praktikos, ir kaip tai paveiks įmonių konkurencingumą. Pramonės ir visos šalies konkurencingumas priklauso nuo įmonių konkurencingumo. Konkurencingumas – Europos Sąjungos ekonomikos pagrindas (*European Commission*, 2016). Ekonomikos aktyvumo svyravimas privertė verslą keisti tradicinius organizavimo bei valdymo būdus bei ieškoti naujų priemonių, žinių, kompetencijų, išteklių, siekiant sustiprinti savo pozicijas bei užtikrinti įmonių konkurencingumą. Tai ypač suaktyvino diskusijas apie įmonių socialinę atsakomybę konkurencingumo aspektu ne tik tarp verslo, bet ir

tarp valdžios bei mokslo atstovų. Diskusijas aitrino ir besitiesianti pasaulinė ekologinė krizė. ĮSA – grėsmė ar galimybė padidinti konkurencingumą ekonominio sunkmečio laikotarpiu?

Remiantis įvairių šalių mokslininkų atliktais teoriniais ir kai kuriais empiriniais tyrimais, įmonių socialinė atsakomybė daro teigiamą įtaką konkurencingumui mikrolygiu. Dauguma šių tyrimų atlikta ekonomikos pakilimo laikotarpiu. ĮSA įtakos konkurencingumui vertinimai daugiausia atlikti abstrakčiame teoriniame lygmenyje, mažai pagrįsti empiriniais duomenimis. Būtina įvertinti įmonių socialinės atsakomybės poveikį konkurencingumui mikrolygiu ekonomikos nuosmukio laikotarpiu remiantis ne subjektyvia nuomone, bet empiriniais tyrimais pagrįstais moksliniais argumentais. Įmonių socialinės atsakomybės kaip konkurencingumo mikrolygiu veiksnio suvokimas, paremtas empiriniais faktais ir jų pagrindu suformuluotomis išvadomis, būtinas norint įvertinti ĮSA įtaką konkurencingumui mikrolygiu ir pasiūlyti strateginius sprendimus įmonėms sunkmečio laikotarpiu

Siekiant įvertinti ĮSA įtaką konkurencingumui mikrolygiu, nebeužtenka vien teorinių įrodymų, reikalingi empiriniai sprendimai. Pasitelkus kiekybinius metodus ir empirinius įrodymus atsirastų galimybė objektyviau įvertinti ĮSA kaip konkurencingumo mikrolygiu veiksnio esmę ir plėtros galimybes. ĮSA apibrėžimų įvairovei, sąlygojamai aiškios koncepcijos nebuvimo, reikalinga teorinė integracija ir empirinis patikrinimas. Būtina identifikuoti, iširti ir įvertinti naujus metodus, atspindinčius ĮSA kaip konkurencingumo mikrolygiu veiksnio procesus, kuriuose dalyvauja ūkio subjektai ir kurių rezultatai daro įtaką jų tikslų siekimui bei sėkmingam gyvavimui. Empiriniai įrodymai leistų objektyviau įvertinti įmonių socialinės atsakomybės esmę ir įtaką konkurencingumui mikrolygiu. Kiekybiniais rodikliais pagrįsti koreliaciniai ryšiai tarp ĮSA elementų ir įmonių konkurencingumo rodiklių būtų svaresni įrodymai nei vien teoriniai samprotavimai.

### **Mokslinė problema ir jos ištyrimo lygis**

Siekiant objektyviai atskleisti disertacijoje analizuojamos mokslinės problemos ištyrimo lygį, atlikta aktualių publikacijų paieška devyniose mokslinių leidinių duomenų bazėse: „EBSCO Publishing“, „Cambridge Journals Online“, „Emerald Management e-Journals Collection“, „Oxford Journals“, „SAGE Journals Online“, „ScienceDirect Journals“, „Sciences Onlines“, „Taylor & Francis“ ir „Wiley Online Library“. Paieška vykdyta straipsnio pavadinimo, raktinių žodžių ir santraukos lygmeniu. Pasirinktų duomenų bazių paieškos rezultatai išanalizuoti ir publikacijos atrinktos per 2014 m. rugsėjo 12 d. – 2015 m. gruodžio 31 d. laikotarpį.

Įmonių socialinės atsakomybės ir konkurencingumo sąsajas nagrinėjo Lietuvos ir užsienio mokslininkai. ĮSA įtaką konkurencingumui mikro bei makro lygiuose tyrė Boulouta ir Pitelis (2014), Eisenegger ir Schranz (2011), Flammer (2015), Herciu ir Ogrea (2008), Hopkins (2008), Li (2012), Marin ir kt. (2012),

Martinuzzi (2011), Marquis ir Zhang (2015), Ogorean ir Herciu (2015), Verbengen (2007). ĮSA poveikį įmonių konkurencingumui atskirais aspektais analizavo Apospori ir kt. (2012), Battaglia ir kt. (2014), Bučiūnienė ir Kazlauskaitė (2012), Calabrese ir kt. (2013), Juščius ir Snieška (2008), Krambia-Kapardis (2012), Nwagbara ir Reid (2013), Porter ir Kramer (2006), Sanchez ir Benito-Hernandez (2015), Stankevičė ir Rukaitė (2013), Tyagi (2014), Turyakira ir kt. (2012, 2014), Vilanova ir kt. (2009), Weber (2008).

Dažniausiai moksliniuose darbuose nagrinėjama įmonių socialinės atsakomybės įtaka atskiriems konkurencingumą lemiantiems veiksniams. ĮSA poveikį įmonės strategijos, valdymo ir verslo procesų tobulinimui akcentavo Asif ir kt. (2013), Bagdonienė ir kt. (2009), Bagdonienė ir Paulavičienė (2010), Cantrel ir kt. (2015), Castka ir Balzarova (2008), Dumas (2006), Hopkins ir kt. (2008), Ingenbleek ir kt. (2007), Lozano (2006), Maon ir kt. (2009), Mijatovic ir Stokic (2010), Molina-Azorin ir kt. (2009, 2015), Mueller ir kt. (2009), Murillo ir Lozano (2006), Pflugrath ir kt. (2011), Quelch ir Jocz (2009), Souto (2009), Srchova ir Dvorakova (2010), Urbonas ir Maskvytienė (2009), Vaitkevičius ir Stukaitė (2009), Woan ir kt. (2010). Įmonių socialinės atsakomybės įtaką verslas – verslui sąryšio stiprinimui tyrė Danko ir kt. (2008), Du ir kt. (2010), Longo ir kt. (2005), Murphy ir kt. (2015), Rimmington ir kt. (2006), Rueda-Manzanares ir kt. (2008), Ruževičius (2014), Sarkis ir kt. (2010), Souto (2009), Šimanskienė ir Paužuolienė (2010), Škudienė ir Auruškevičienė (2012), Štreimikienė ir Vasiljevienė (2004), Varnas ir kt. (2009), Venter ir kt. (2014), Wilson (2007). Atskirų ĮSA elementų poveikį produkto/paslaugos paklausai nagrinėjo Arli ir Lasmono (2010), Beckmann (2007), Chen (2008), Flammer (2015), Foster ir kt. (2009), Gallego Alvarez ir kt. (2011), Jaakson ir kt. (2012), Khamah ir kt. (2015), Lockett ir kt. (2006), Longo ir kt. (2005), Lorenzo ir kt. (2008), Luo ir Bhattacharya (2006), Manasakis ir kt. (2014), Marin ir kt. (2009), Molina-Azorin ir kt. (2009, 2015), Porter ir Kramer (2006), Škudienė ir Auruškevičienė (2012), Woan ir kt. (2010). ĮSA ir žmogiškojo kapitalo išteklių sąsajas analizavo Albinger ir Freeman (2000), Brammer ir Millington (2008), Du ir kt. (2010), Egan (2000), Flammer (2015), Greening ir Turban (2000), Griffin ir Prakash (2013), Juščius (2008), Kapoor ir Sandhu (2010), Kim ir Park (2011), Longo ir kt. (2005), Pop ir kt. (2011), Ruževičius (2014), Sarkis ir kt. (2010), Sen ir kt. (2006), Stankevičienė ir kt. (2008), Venter ir kt. (2014), Woan ir kt. (2010). Socialiai atsakingų įmonių įgyvendinamų iniciatyvų reikšmę gamtinių išteklių tausojimui vertino Banytė ir kt. (2012), Brammer ir Millington (2008), Chang (2011), Chen ir kt. (2006), Čiegis ir Zeleniūtė (2008), Esau ir Malone (2013), Heras-Saizarbitoria ir kt. (2015), Juščius ir Maliauskaitė (2015).

Mokslo darbuose, kuriuose nagrinėjamas ĮSA poveikis konkurencingumui, dominuoja teoriniai vertinimo aspektai. Weber (2008), Marin ir kt. (2012), Turyakira (2012), Stankevičė ir Rukaitė (2013), nagrinėdami įmonių socialinės

atsakomybės įtaką konkurencingumui, formavo konceptualius modelius, kuriuos teoriškai ir empiriškai pagrindė.

Nepaisant gana gausaus mokslo publikacijų apie ĮSA ir konkurencingumo sąsajas skaičiaus, įmonių socialinės atsakomybės poveikis įmonių konkurencingumui ekonomikos nuosmukio laikotarpiu mažai nagrinėtas. Socialiai atsakingų iniciatyvų įgyvendinimo svarbą įmonių konkurencingumui ekonomikos nuosmukio laikotarpiu pabrėžė Bernatonytė ir kt. (2009), Charitoudi ir kt. (2011), Ducassy (2013), Eisenegger ir Schranz (2011), Flammer (2015), Gallego Alvarez ir kt. (2013), Hansen ir kt. (2011), Heras-Saizarbitoria ir kt. (2016), Hopkins (2008), Juščius (2009), Kovaliov ir kt. (2009), Lauesen (2013), Li (2012), Manubens (2009), Miras ir kt. (2014), Navickas ir Kontautienė (2013), Porter ir Kramer (2006), Quelch ir Jocz (2009), Souto (2009).

Apibendrinant galima teigti, kad ĮSA kaip konkurencingumo veiksnio ekonomikos nuosmukio laikotarpiu problema reikšminga, aktuali ir nauja tiek mokslinio ištyrimo, tiek praktinio pritaikymo atžvilgiais. Įmonių socialinės atsakomybės poveikis konkurencingumui mikrolygiu ekonomikos nuosmukio laikotarpiu nėra pakankamai išsamiai išanalizuotas. Nėra sukurtos vieningos metodologijos, kuri padėtų nustatyti, kokią reikšmę turi ĮSA elementų: aplinkosauginės, socialinės ir ekonominės atsakomybių – įgyvendinimas atskiriems konkurencingumo ekonomikos nuosmukio laikotarpiu veiksniams ir kokią įtaką ĮSA įgyvendinimas įmonėse daro konkurencingumo rodikliams sunkmečio laikotarpiu.

**Mokslinė problema** – kaip įmonių socialinė atsakomybė veikia konkurencingumą ekonomikos nuosmukio laikotarpiu.

**Mokslinio darbo objektas** – įmonių socialinė atsakomybė konkurencingumo mikrolygiu požiūriu.

**Mokslinio darbo tikslas** – įvertinti įmonių socialinės atsakomybės poveikį konkurencingumui ekonomikos nuosmukio laikotarpiu, suformuojant įmonių socialinės atsakomybės kaip konkurencingumo veiksnio modelį ir įgyvendinant vertinimą mikrolygiu.

Tikslui pasiekti suformuluoti šie **darbo uždaviniai**:

1. Ištirti įmonių socialinės atsakomybės sampratą ir struktūros raidos dėsninumus.
2. Atskleisti įmonių socialinės atsakomybės kaip konkurencingumo veiksnio vertinimo prielaidas.
3. Išanalizuoti įmonių socialinės atsakomybės kaip konkurencingumo veiksnio vertinimo metodų praktiką ir taikymo galimybes mikrolygiu.
4. Suformuluoti įmonių socialinės atsakomybės kaip konkurencingumo veiksnio vertinimo mikrolygiu metodologinius principus.
5. Pagrįsti suformuluotus metodologinius principus, suformuojant įmonių socialinės atsakomybės kaip konkurencingumo veiksnio vertinimo mikrolygyje modelį.

6. Atlikti įmonių socialinės atsakomybės kaip konkurencingumo veiksnio vertinimą skirtingais verslo ciklo laikotarpiais.

#### **Tyrimo metodai:**

- sisteminė ir lyginamoji mokslinės literatūros analizė, grindžiama lyginamuoju, klasifikavimo, sisteminimo ir apibendrinimo metodais;
- analizės rezultatų sintezė bei loginis išvadų generavimas;
- ekspertų vertinimas, anketinė apklausa;
- antrinių duomenų statistinė analizė;
- klasterinė analizė, testas nepriklausomoms imtims;
- tyrimo rezultatų matematinė-statistinė analizė, naudojant statistines duomenų apdorojimo programas: *SPSS* (v21.0) ir *Microsoft Excel* (2010).

#### **Mokslinis naujumas ir galimos taikymo sritys:**

1. *Patikslinta įmonių socialinės atsakomybės sąvoka konkurencingumo požiūriu.* Egzistuojančiuose įmonių socialinės atsakomybės apibrėžimuose dažniausiai sutinkamos tokios sąvokos kaip įmonių įsipareigojimas, atsakomybė už poveikį, strategija, elgsena, santykiai, veiksmai, programos, įsitraukimas į socialinių, ekonominių ir aplinkosauginių problemų sprendimą. Visuotinai pripažinto ĮSA apibrėžimo nėra. ĮSA – visuomenės kuriama koncepcija, dinamiškai plėtojama, susijusi su visuomenės normų ir nuostatų kaita. Skirtingose visuomenėse suvokiama įvairiai dėl sąlygų, kuriose veikia tam tikra visuomenė. Bendrai ĮSA siejama su sąveikos tarp verslo ir visuomenės didinimu, skatinančiu įmones veikti taip, kad būtų tolygiai siekiama ekonominės, socialinės ir aplinkosauginės veiklos rezultatų. Konkurencingumas kaip įmonės gebėjimas turi būti realizuojamas kasdieninėje veikloje. Konkurencingumo požiūriu svarbi kasdieninė įmonės veikla, kurios rezultatai sąlygoja galimybes dalyvauti konkurencinėje kovoje kaip procese ir sėkmę joje. Disertacijoje *ĮSA apibrėžta kaip įmonės kasdieninė veikla, grindžiama socialine, aplinkosaugine ir ekonomine atsakomybėmis, sąlygojama intensyvios sąveikos su suinteresuotomis šalimis, siekiant ilgalaikės ekonominės raidos ir bendruomenės gerovės didinimo.*
2. *Nustatytos įmonių socialinės atsakomybės kaip konkurencingumo veiksnio vertinimo prielaidos ir atskleista ĮSA kaip konkurencingumo veiksnio raiška ekonomikos nuosmukio laikotarpiu.* Išanalizavus ir susisteminus įmonių socialinės atsakomybės elementų: aplinkosauginės, ekonominės ir socialinės atsakomybių – dedamąsias, įvertinus jų poveikį konkurencingumą ekonomikos nuosmukio laikotarpiu didinantiems veiksniams: įmonės strategijos ir valdymo procesų tobulinimui, žmogiškojo kapitalo išteklių kokybei, produkto/ paslaugos paklausos didinimui, susijusių bei remiančių sektorių plėtrai ir gamtinių išteklių



naudojimo efektyvumui, atrinkti socialiai atsakingos veiklos sąlygojami įmonės konkurencingumo vertinimo rodikliai. Įmonės konkurencingumo ekonomikos nuosmukio laikotarpiu rodikliai išanalizuoti kiekvieno disertacijoje vertinamo konkurencingumo veiksnio aspektu ir apjungti į vieną kompleksinį rodiklių rinkinį, kuris naudojamas socialiai atsakingos įmonės konkurencingumo analizei. ĮSA poveikis konkurencingumui mikrolygiu ekonomikos nuosmukio laikotarpiu pasireiškia per mikroekonominės verslo aplinkos kokybę lemiančių veiksnių ir įmonės gebėjimų sąryšio derinius.

3. *Išskirti ĮSA kaip konkurencingumo veiksnio vertinimo metodologiniai principai.* Įmonių socialinės atsakomybės kaip konkurencingumo veiksnio ekonomikos nuosmukio laikotarpiu vertinimui būtinas sisteminis požiūris į tyrimo metodų integralumą, funkcionalumą ir pritaikomumą, apimantis teorinius ir empirinius tyrimus, siekiant gauti kiek įmanoma tikslesnius ir objektyvesnius tyrimų duomenis ir jų pagrindu daryti išvadas apie gautą rezultatą – ĮSA sąlygojamą teigiamą ar neigiamą įtaką įmonių konkurencingumui. Kokybinio ir kiekybinio tyrimų, papildančių vienas kitą atskiruose tyrimo etapuose, panaudojimas reikalingas norint atlikti išsamesnę ĮSA poveikio konkurencingumui analizę. Ekspertų vertinimo panaudojimas sąlygojamas būtinumo pasikliauti ekspertų žiniomis, patirtimi ir intuicija, nes reikalingas išsamus nagrinėjamo dalyko (nagrinėjamo objekto savybių ir pusių) suvokimas. Kiekybinio tyrimo panaudojimas saistomas sąlyga, kad būtinas statistinis ĮSA poveikio įmonių konkurencingumui pagrindimas.
4. *Pateiktas įmonių socialinės atsakomybės kaip konkurencingumo veiksnio vertinimo modelis, sujungiantis ĮSA elementus: aplinkosauginę, ekonominę bei socialinę atsakomybę, ir parodantis jų sąveiką su konkurencingumo veiksniais.* Suformuotas modelis gali būti taikomas kaip priemonė vertinant skirtingų šalių, pramonės šakų ar sektorių įmonių įgyvendinamos socialinės atsakomybės sąlygojamą konkurencingumą, apskaičiuojant ir vertinant konkurencingumo rodiklių kitimą laiko bei konkurentų atžvilgiu, įgyvendinamų socialiai atsakingų iniciatyvų požiūriu. ĮSA kaip konkurencingumo veiksnio modelis gali būti naudojamas kaip strateginio planavimo priemonė priimant strateginius verslo sprendimus įmonės ar atskiro verslo sektoriaus konkurencingumui didinti; kaip informavimo ir reklamos priemonė apie socialiai atsakingų įmonių konkurencingumą, jų vykdomas socialiai atsakingas iniciatyvas; kaip ĮSA įgyvendinimą skatinanti priemonė apie socialiai atsakingos veiklos naudą ir jos pobūdį.
5. Nustatčius atskirų ĮSA elementų dedamųjų įtaką įmonių konkurencingumo veiksniams ekonomikos nuosmukio laikotarpiu, *pagrindžiama galimybė numatyti ir taikyti priemones, kurios padėtų sušvelninti neigiamą*

*ekonomikos nuosmukio poveikį įmonių konkurencingumui, padidinti ĮSA teikiamą naudą ne tik pačiai įmonei, bet ir suinteresuotoms šalims.*

6. *Atliktas Lietuvos socialiai atsakingų įmonių konkurencingumo rodiklių ekonomikos nuosmukio ir ekonomikos pakilimo laikotarpiais vertinimas.* Atliktas vertinimas pagrindė Lietuvos socialiai atsakingų įmonių gebėjimą išlaikyti rinkos pozicijas ir būti produktyvioms skirtingais ekonominio (verslo) ciklo laikotarpiais lyginant su jų pagrindiniais konkurentais verslo sektoriuje, t. y. patvirtino, kad ĮSA kaip įmonių kasdieninė veikla, grindžiama socialine, aplinkosaugine ir ekonomine atsakomybe, sąlygojama intensyvios sąveikos su suinteresuotomis šalimis, teigiamai veikia jų konkurencingumą. Lietuvos socialiai atsakingų įmonių konkurencingumo rodikliai, lyginant su jų pagrindinių konkurentų verslo sektoriuje rodikliais, panašūs arba aukštesni analizuojamais laikotarpiais. Įmonių įgyvendinama ĮSA nėra nuostolinga, o naudinga jų konkurencingumui skirtingais ekonominio (verslo) ciklo laikotarpiais.
7. *Atlikta Baltijos šalių įmonių, socialiai atsakingų ir nedeklaruojančių socialiai atsakingos veiklos, konkurencingumo rodiklių skirtingais ekonominio (verslo) ciklo laikotarpiais lyginamoji analizė.* Atlikta analizė parodė, kad socialiai atsakingos įmonės geba išlaikyti pozicijas rinkoje ir būti produktyvios, t. y. kurti vertę turinčias prekes bei paslaugas panaudodamos efektyvius metodus, skirtingais ekonominio (verslo) ciklo laikotarpiais lyginant su įmonėmis, nedeklaruojančiomis socialiai atsakingos veiklos. Baltijos šalių socialiai atsakingų įmonių konkurencingumo rodikliai statistiškai nesiskiria nuo įmonių, nedeklaruojančių socialiai atsakingos veiklos. Socialiai atsakinga įmonių veikla nėra finansiškai nuostolinga. Socialiai atsakingos įmonės išlieka konkurencingos ekonomikos nuosmukio ir ekonomikos pakilimo laikotarpiais. Atlikta analizė naudinga tarptautiniu mastu, nes pagrindė socialiai atsakingo verslo plėtrą trijose Baltijos šalyse, suteikė galimybę įvertinti Estijos, Latvijos ir Lietuvos įmonių, listinguojamų „Nasdaq“ Baltijos rinkoje, konkurencingumo rodiklių tendencijas skirtingais ekonominio (verslo) ciklo laikotarpiais, šių šalių įmonių įsitraukimą į socialiai atsakingos veiklos įgyvendinimą ir jos deklaravimą.

**Disertacijos struktūra.** Disertaciją sudaro trys dalys. Pirmojoje dalyje analizuota įmonių socialinės atsakomybės sampratos raida, ĮSA elementai ir lygmenys, konkurencingumo mikrolygiu didinimo veiksniai ekonomikos nuosmukio laikotarpiu, ĮSA elementų ir konkurencingumo mikrolygiu veiksmų sąveika ekonomikos nuosmukio laikotarpiu, ĮSA įtakos konkurencingumui mikrolygiu vertinimo modeliai. Antroje dalyje pagrįsta ĮSA kaip konkurencingumo mikrolygiu veiksnio ekonomikos nuosmukio laikotarpiu

vertinimo metodologija, sudarytas konceptualus ĮSA kaip konkurencingumo mikrolygiu veiksnio modelis, atliktas modelio verifikavimas ir tikslinimas. Trečioje dalyje parengta metodika pritaikyta empiriškai. Atliktas įmonės socialiai atsakingos veiklos ir konkurencingumo rodiklių vertinimas bei „Nasdaq“ Baltijos rinkoje listinguojamų įmonių, socialiai atsakingų ir nedeclaruojančių socialiai atsakingos veiklos, konkurencingumo rodiklių analizė skirtingais ekonominio (verslo) ciklo laikotarpiais. Išvadose pateikiamas darbo rezultatų apibendrinimas ir tolesnių tyrimų plėtros galimybės.

**Tyrimo apribojimai.** Analizuojant ĮSA kaip konkurencingumo veiksnį ekonomikos nuosmukio laikotarpiu, nagrinėjamas įmonių socialinės atsakomybės poveikis konkurencingumui mikrolygiu tik per mikroekonominės verslo aplinkos kokybę lemiančius veiksnius (Delgado ir kt., 2012; Porter ir kt., 2007; Reeves ir Deimler, 2009). Konkurencingumo veiksnių vertinimui naudojama *ceteris paribus* (lot.) – kitiems veiksniams nekintant – sąlyga, reiškianti, kad kiti konkurencingumą ekonomikos nuosmukio laikotarpiu veikiantys veiksniai pastovūs, o kinta tik mikroekonominės verslo aplinkos kokybę lemiantys veiksniai.

Empiriniuose tyrimuose ĮSA poveikis konkurencingumui mikrolygiu nagrinėjamas holistiniu požiūriu, nesigilinant, kokį poveikį atskiro ĮSA elemento įgyvendinimas daro įmonių konkurencingumo rodikliams.

ĮSA įtakos įmonių konkurencingumui tyrimą riboja kai kurių įmonių duomenų prieinamumas. Socialiai atsakingų ir nedeclaruojančių socialiai atsakingos veiklos konkurencingumo rodiklių skirtingais ekonominio (verslo) ciklo laikotarpiais vertinimui naudoti tik santykiniai finansiniai rodikliai. Pasak Lekavičienės ir Juščiaus (2006), Laureti ir Viviani (2011), Perles-Ribes ir kt. (2013), Saukos (2014), Shi ir kt. (2012), Stundžienės ir Bliekienės (2012), Voulgaris ir Lemonakis (2014), pagrindinį dėmesį, vertinant įmonių konkurencingumą, reikia skirti finansinių rodiklių analizei.

**Disertacijos apimtis.** Disertaciją sudaro 200 puslapių (182 puslapiai be priedų), 31 lentelė, 28 paveikslai, 7 priedai. Panaudota 534 mokslinės literatūros šaltiniai.

**Disertacijos mokslinių rezultatų publikavimas.** Disertacijos tyrimų rezultatai pristatyti Lietuvos ir tarptautinėse mokslinėse konferencijose, paskelbti pripažintuose Lietuvos ir užsienio mokslo leidiniuose. Tyrimo rezultatai paskelbti 18 mokslinių publikacijų.

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