Virtuous CSR: an Islamic family business in Malaysia
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Abstract
Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to postulate, in addition to “moral” and “strategic” considerations, a third general standard for corporate social responsibility (CSR). That third approach is what moral philosophers call “virtue ethics.”
Design/methodology/approach – This paper uses a single organization case study of a Malaysian publisher to put forward the practice of virtuous CSR based on Islamic values and principles in a family business.
Findings – By focussing on creating or maintaining virtuous habits in the family and the firm, the family business has avoided the equally unrealistic notions that CSR must be entirely selfless or entirely strategic to be legitimate. Virtues that foster a successful strategy such as vision and competence can be enhanced rather than hindered by virtues such as integrity and generosity.
Research limitations/implications – This is a case study of a single family. Nevertheless, this paper has implications for strategy and CSR for non-family business as well because it brings into the discussion virtue ethics which is largely absent from popular ethical discourse in the West, including popular discourse about business ethics and CSR.
Practical implications – While moral and strategic interests merit consideration, virtue is often the most important concern of all. Virtuous CSR aims to improve or at least preserve the character and the soul of the family and its enterprise.
Originality/value – This paper shows that in family business moral freedom and CSR do not have to be purchased at the expense of an effective business strategy. Paradoxically, an effective business strategy may be partly non-strategic and partly non-business – i.e. partly focussed on virtue. Further research may show that family business can be a leader in CSR, teaching managerial techniques to non-family business.

Keywords Family business, Policy, Corporate social responsibility, Ethnicity and transnational cultures, Virtue ethics

Paper type Case study

Introduction
A recent survey of family business scholarship reports that the role of ethics and social responsibility in family firms has not been systematically studied (De Massis et al., 2012).

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