A longitudinal study of corporate social reporting in Singapore
The case of the banking, food and beverages and hotel industries

Eric W. K. Tsang
Nanyang Business School, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore

Introduction

Corporate social reporting (CSR) is “the process of communicating the social and environmental effects of organizations’ economic actions to particular interest groups within society and to society at large” (Gray et al., 1987, p. ix). Although CSR has been the subject of substantial academic research for more than two decades, the CSR literature is dominated by empirical studies in the industrialized countries of Western Europe, the USA and Australia. Even international comparative studies of CSR have focused on analyses of the differences and similarities of CSR practices in these countries only (e.g. Ernst and Ernst, 1978; Guthrie and Parker, 1990). It is dangerous to generalize the results of these studies to less developed countries as the stage of economic development is likely to be an important factor affecting CSR practices. Moreover, cultural and national differences are likely to affect accounting practices in general and CSR practices in particular (Mathews, 1993; Perera and Mathews, 1990). Though some improvements have been made (e.g. Chow and Wong-Boren, 1987; Singh and A huja, 1983; Teoh and T hong, 1984), there is still a relative paucity of empirical studies on CSR practices in developing and newly industrialized countries. Another shortcoming of existing studies is that with few exceptions (e.g. Gray et al., 1995; Guthrie and Parker, 1989; Hogner, 1982), most of the studies are cross-sectional in nature. As such, it is not possible to trace the development of CSR practices, except by reviewing the literature over time. The purpose of this study is to address the above mentioned imbalances through an examination of corporate social disclosures by Singapore companies in three industries over a ten-year period from 1986 to 1995.

Under the strong leadership of the Government, Singapore embarked on an extensive industrialization programme and has attained the status of a newly industrialized country with one of the highest per capita gross national products in Asia. At the same time, CSR has assumed greater importance in the...
Corporate social reporting in Singapore since the early 1980s in line with the improvement in living standards. On the one hand, companies have become increasingly aware of their responsibility towards employees, customers, and society at large. On the other hand, legislation on pollution controls, industrial safety, employee welfare, and employee training has brought home to companies the importance of corporate social responsibility.

So far three major studies of CSR practices in Singapore have been conducted. They are Andrew et al. (1989); Foo and Tan (1988); Low et al. (1985). Low et al. (1985) analyzed the 1983 annual reports of 80 publicly-listed companies in Singapore. Of these companies, 20 had previously been commended for good financial reporting in the Annual Report Award competitions sponsored jointly by the Singapore Society of Accountants, the Singapore Institute of Management and the Stock Exchange of Singapore. The remaining 60 companies were randomly selected from six industrial sectors, namely, industrial and commercial, finance, hotel, property, plantation, and mining, with ten companies in each sector. There was no statistical evidence to indicate that the disclosure of social information was dependent on the industrial sector to which a company belonged. The authors concluded that social accounting in Singapore was in its infancy. Although the award-winning companies did disclose social information more readily than the other 60 companies, they did not have a proper framework for social reporting. The authors also tried to propose such a framework, which consists of a two-part disclosure – a descriptive statement and a quantitative report.

Foo and Tan’s (1988) study covered 299 of the 305 Malaysian and Singapore companies listed on the Stock Exchange of Singapore as at the end of 1985. The incidence of CSR in Singapore companies was higher than in Malaysian companies. Moreover, large Malaysian and Singapore companies were found to have a higher incidence of CSR than their smaller counterparts, regardless of whether company size was measured in terms of market capitalization, asset value, paid-up capital, profit before tax, or turnover. This finding of the relationship between firm size and CSR confirms that of Guthrie and Mathews (1985). As to the disclosure by industrial sectors in the case of Singapore companies, the finance sector had the highest incidence of CSR, while the hotel sector had the lowest.

Andrew et al. (1989) studied 119 annual reports of publicly-listed companies in Malaysia and Singapore for the year ending December, 1983. The authors admitted that the reports were obtained on an ad hoc basis. Unlike Foo and Tan (1988), the analysis in this study did not distinguish between Malaysian and Singapore companies. The overall number of disclosing companies was only 31 (26 per cent). In terms of industrial sectors, the banking and finance industry had the highest proportion of CSR disclosing companies. Again, it was found that a higher proportion of large- and medium-sized companies disclosed social information compared with the small companies.

As for the type of social information disclosed, the categories used in classifying the information were not strictly comparable across the three
studies. The first study found that “social/economic problems and their impact” was the category with the largest number of disclosures, while “human resources” was the most frequently disclosed theme for the second and the third studies. The three studies were completed in the 1980s, using 1983 and 1985 annual reports. They were cross-sectional in nature and thus failed to show the trend of CSR practices over time. As discussed in the “Trend of disclosure” section below, the amount of social information disclosed by Singapore companies started to rise rapidly since the late 1980s. Therefore, the three studies are unlikely to present an accurate picture of the more current situation. Moreover, the first two studies only examined whether, but not how much of, a particular type of social information was disclosed by a company. As such, the extent of disclosure, which is an important variable, was not captured. To compensate for these shortcomings, this study provides an updated and a more detailed analysis.

This paper is organized as follows. The next section discusses the methodology used in this study. It is followed by a presentation of the trend of social information disclosure over the ten years. A test of legitimacy theory is then conducted. The paper ends with a few concluding remarks.

**Research methodology**

A ten-year period from 1986 to 1995 was chosen for this study. Limited resources meant that the study only covered three industries, namely banking, food and beverages, and hotel. There were altogether 33 locally incorporated companies in the three industries listed on the Stock Exchange of Singapore during the ten-year period. A total of 330 annual reports were examined. It was found that 16 of the 33 companies did not have any social responsibility disclosures throughout the whole period (Table I). The only difference between these 16 companies and the remaining 17 companies was that the former were, on average, smaller in size than the latter. Only the 17 companies were included for further analysis and their names are listed in the Appendix. A rather surprising result is that only three of the 16 companies in the hotel industry had disclosed any social information. The annual reports of the other 13 companies can be roughly divided into two groups. Each one of the first group, which consisted of about two-thirds of the annual reports, only included a simple chairman’s statement and financial statements; the second group of annual reports were treated by the hotels as promotional materials for marketing purposes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Industry</th>
<th>Total number of companies</th>
<th>Number of companies with disclosure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Banking</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food and beverages</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hotel</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>33</strong></td>
<td><strong>17</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
describing in detail their products and services, without any reference to social responsibility.

A preliminary analysis of ten annual reports from ten of the 17 companies revealed that social responsibility disclosures related to energy, products, fair business practices, and so on, and were minimal. Consequently, only three specific social responsibility areas were considered in this study. They were environment, human resources and community involvement. The rest were grouped under an “Others” category. Content analysis was conducted on the chairman’s statement and the description of operations of each annual report; that is, the whole report, except the financial statements, graphs, diagrams and photographs, was subject to coding. The unit of analysis was a sentence, which ended in a period or a question mark. This approach is different from the page measurement adopted in some of the previous studies (e.g. Bowman and Haire, 1976; Ernst and Ernst, 1978; Trotman and Bradley, 1981). One advantage of this method is that the number of sentences can be counted very precisely. The sentences were classified according to their manifest meanings (Janis, 1965). Some examples are listed below.

Environment

A PB launched a recycling bin project, “Recycle For the Future”. It was launched in June 1992 in conjunction with four town councils, Tanjong Pager, Toa Payoh, Brickworks and Aljunied, where residents were encouraged to dispose of paper and drink cans in the recycling bins provided (Asia Pacific Breweries, 1993).

Responsibility and care for the environment were highlighted through awareness programmes to recycle, reduce and reuse. Energy conservation schemes were also promoted in the factory. A Green Corner was designated on every notice board to create greater consciousness for environmental responsibility (British-American Tobacco (Singapore), (1992).

Human resources

Continuing efforts are being made to upgrade the quality of manpower, with special focus on inculcating the attitude for providing value-added service and imparting skills for more effective marketing of products and services. Training and development programmes are geared to enable staff to reach their maximum potential (Overseas Union Bank, 1987).

Regular monthly Staff Tea Receptions were held, whereby management and employees have an opportunity to meet, exchange, and iron out work related matters. A part from being updated on matters relating to the operations of the Company, Guest Speakers were invited to speak on topics of interest to staff on career development (Apollo Enterprises, 1993).

Community involvement

To raise money for the Community Chest of Singapore, the Bank tapped the investment skills of the financial community through its sponsorship of a charity investment race. As in previous years, the Group’s Recreation Club also organised activities in support of charitable causes (Development Bank of Singapore, 1991).

On September 1, the Hotel closed all its food and beverage areas to the public and hosted 800 senior citizens and children from welfare homes for lunch. Jointly organised with the
Singapore Armed Forces NCO Club, the invitees were treated to the different cuisines offered by each restaurant (Goodwood Park Hotel, 1990).

Others

The high standard of hygiene ensures the wholesomeness of the noodles. The high level of automation also ensures that the noodles will be consistently good in quality and delicious (Fraser & Neave, 1989).

In keeping with the Group’s philosophy of being a good corporate citizen this company has upheld its responsibilities in providing modern freezing and chilling facilities for the benefit of the community at large. Such facilities ensure that food products stored in our premises are at all times maintained at the temperatures required to preserve freshness and quality (QAF, 1987).

The reports were coded by seven persons. The author coded the reports of one company and another person coded six companies. Each of the remaining five coders handled two companies. Several steps were taken to ensure inter-coder reliability. First, the coders read and discussed some of the existing studies in order to have a better understanding of the subject. Second, the author gave a detailed guideline to each coder. At the beginning, the author and the coders independently coded three complicated annual reports based on the guideline. The results were compared and analyzed. The guideline was then revised accordingly. Third, during the coding process, regular checks on one another’s work were made by the coders. Ambiguities, if any, were discussed with the author, who tried to ensure that all the coders used the same coding rules. Finally, the author re-coded one annual report randomly selected from the work of each coder. Out of the six reports analyzed, the average inter-coder reliability was 94.8 per cent, and the range was from 85.6 to 100 per cent. This was well above the 80 per cent benchmark adopted by some researchers (see Tan, 1985). The high inter-coder reliability was in fact expected because only the manifest content of the sentences was coded, which was less subject to misinterpretation (Babbie, 1992).

Trend of disclosure

Starting from the bottom of an economic cycle experienced in 1986, Singapore enjoyed a remarkable economic growth throughout the ten-year period from 1986 to 1995. This is the background against which the results of this study should be interpreted. The trend of disclosing social responsibility information in annual reports by the 17 companies, each of which had disclosures in at least one of the ten years, is shown in Table II. As indicated in the second column of the table, the number of companies which reported the information remained constant at 12 since 1991. The figures shown in the third to seventh columns are in percentage terms, and represent the mean disclosures of the 17 companies. For each of the ten years, annual reports of the 17 companies were coded and the percentage of statements disclosing each of the four categories of social responsibility was calculated. The mean percentage was then calculated for each category.
CSR is not mandatory under the law in Singapore; any social information is disclosed on a voluntary basis. The 17 companies mainly disclosed information on human resources and community involvement, and the amounts of information disclosed under the two categories did not differ much. This is in contrast to the more balanced disclosure by companies in Western countries, especially the USA (Ernst and Ernst, 1978; Guthrie and Parker, 1990). Nevertheless, the priority given to information types was similar to that found in Australia, the UK and USA by Guthrie and Parker (1990). That is, human resource information got the widest coverage, and was followed by community involvement and the environment. The nature of information disclosed by the companies was also influenced by the fact that they were in the service or light industries; issues such as environmental protection and energy saving were not their main concerns.

Ernst and Ernst (1978, p. 31) argued that the “quantification of a disclosure improves its quality by specifying the amount of effort a company expends in a particular area of social responsibility”. The disclosures in this study were mostly qualitative, with the exception of those related to donation and sponsorship, where the amounts involved were usually stated. Moreover, the disclosures were PR-driven in the sense that their presence would enhance a company’s image. “Bad news” was never disclosed. Social information was usually scattered in the review of operations section of an annual report and presented in an unstructured manner. As to the reliability of social information disclosed, it is reasonable to believe that disclosures under “community involvement” should be more reliable than that under the other three categories. It is because community activities attract public attention and can be readily verified by outside parties.

Table II indicates that starting from a low level, there was a steady increase in the total amount of disclosures during the late 1980s. This was in line with the socio-economic issues present at that time. Since the mid-1980s, the Government has been putting more emphasis on training the workforce in

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>No. of companies</th>
<th>Environment</th>
<th>Human resources</th>
<th>Community involvement</th>
<th>Others</th>
<th>Total disclosure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>1.67</td>
<td>0.82</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>2.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1987</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>3.79</td>
<td>2.45</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>6.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>2.75</td>
<td>0.81</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>3.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>2.83</td>
<td>2.46</td>
<td>0.31</td>
<td>5.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>3.99</td>
<td>4.82</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>10.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0.23</td>
<td>5.33</td>
<td>5.06</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>10.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0.44</td>
<td>4.81</td>
<td>4.47</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>9.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0.64</td>
<td>5.05</td>
<td>5.77</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>11.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0.33</td>
<td>5.80</td>
<td>5.68</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>11.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>0.24</td>
<td>5.39</td>
<td>5.37</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>11.08</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table II. Type of social responsibility information disclosed (% of sentences)
order to raise productivity. Public organizations, such as the National Productivity Board and the Construction Industry Training Centre, were formed to help companies improve the quality of their staff. Since Singapore is a small city-state without any natural resources other than human resources, the Government has been regularly launching campaigns for conserving energy and water since the early 1980s. As industrialization progressed, issues of environmental pollution and industrial safety gradually became public concerns. Legislation, such as the Environmental Public Health Act, the Water Pollution Control and Drainage Act, the Clean Air Act and the Factories Act, was introduced to address these issues. To be commensurate with the higher standard of living, the Ministry of Culture was set up, to promote cultural activities in the country, and there was a need for corporate sponsorship of these activities. All the above factors have contributed to increasing the companies' awareness of their social responsibilities. Table II also shows that the amount of disclosures remained rather stable since 1993. One reason may be due to the voluntary nature of CSR. Once the companies attained a certain level of disclosure, they were not motivated to go further.

Table III presents the disclosure of social information by industry. Paired difference t tests were conducted to see whether there was any difference among the three industries. The banks disclosed significantly (at 0.01 level) less social information than the hotels. However, test results of the other two pairs of industries are not significant. As indicated in Table I, there were only six banks listed on the Stock Exchange of Singapore during the period 1986-1995. The banking industry thus had the highest proportion of companies disclosing social information throughout the ten-year period. The hotel industry had the lowest proportion of CSR companies. This finding with respect to the hotel industry corresponds to those of Low et al. (1985) and Foo and Tan (1988). Nonetheless, the three hotels which were included in the analysis had the highest mean disclosures starting from 1990. This distortion was largely the outcome of the very substantial disclosures made by one of the hotels, Apollo

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Banking (n = 5) Number</th>
<th>Disclosure</th>
<th>Food and beverages (n = 9) Number</th>
<th>Disclosure</th>
<th>Hotel (n = 3) Number</th>
<th>Disclosure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.25</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.61</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1987</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.99</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9.27</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.77</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4.16</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4.31</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8.19</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7.58</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7.21</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>16.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5.35</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8.27</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>26.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5.87</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8.41</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>20.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6.96</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12.69</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>15.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9.44</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10.51</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>20.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8.51</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11.00</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>15.59</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table III. Disclosure of social responsibility information by industry (% of sentences)
Enterprises, from 1991 onwards. The food and beverages industry was somewhat between the other two.

The five banks in this study offer an opportunity for testing the relationship between the nature of ownership and CSR. Among the five Singapore banks under study, the government is the majority shareholder of the Development Bank of Singapore (DBS). This public status may lead people to expect that the management of DBS would tend to disclose more social information than other banks do. To test whether this expectation is correct, percentages of the total disclosure were used. The disclosures of DBS were compared with the mean disclosures of the other four banks by paired difference t-test. The result was somewhat surprising – the bank in fact disclosed less social information than its counterparts, although the difference was not statistically significant. A probable explanation is that, as a well-known national bank in Singapore, DBS did not have to manipulate its social disclosure for the purpose of legitimization, an issue to be elaborated in a later discussion. As a result, the bank paid less attention to CSR practices.

**Legitimacy theory**

Since an organization consumes society’s resources that can find alternative uses elsewhere, society evaluates the usefulness and legitimacy of the organization’s activities (Parsons, 1956). Obtaining legitimacy is thus important for the purpose of demonstrating social worthiness and mobilizing resources (Oliver, 1991). Legitimacy theory is:

- based upon the notion that business operates in society via a social contract where it agrees to perform various socially desired actions in return for approval of its objectives, other rewards and its ultimate survival (Guthrie and Parker, 1989, p. 344).

Studies on corporate legitimacy have gathered momentum over the past two decades. In his comprehensive review of the subject, Suchman (1995) defines legitimacy as:

- a generalized perception or assumption that the actions of any entity are desirable, proper, or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs, and definitions (p. 574).

In order that an organization is deemed legitimate, it has to establish congruence between the social values implied by its activities and the societal norms (Dowling and Pfeffer, 1975).

When legitimacy theory is applied to the domain of CSR, it is argued that corporate disclosure is made in response to environmental factors and that CSR legitimizes corporate actions (Preston and Post, 1975). Enough information needs to be disclosed for society to assess how far a company is a good corporate citizen. Empirical support for legitimacy theory, however, seems to be divided. Hogner (1982) studied the amount and type of social information disclosed in the annual reports of US Steel from 1901 to 1980. He argued that the disclosures, as revealed in the reports, are responses made by the company to societal forces experienced at different periods of time, and the results support legitimacy theory. In another
Besides reacting to environmental factors, companies may actively manage CSR in order to improve their corporate image and to justify their continued existence. The present study included two tobacco companies, British-American Tobacco (Singapore) and Rothmans Industries. Anti-smoking campaigns are increasingly popular around the world, particularly in developed countries. Tobacco companies in general face mounting social pressures and unfriendly public policies. It is fair to say that they are a sunset industry, which struggles to prolong its life. Since the mid-1980s, the Singapore Government has been stepping up its anti-smoking campaigns, in line with its promotion of a healthy lifestyle among Singaporeans. Restrictions on smoking in public areas were gradually widened, and duties on tobacco products were raised from time to time. These factors were frequently mentioned in the annual reports of the two tobacco companies as the main reasons for their less than satisfactory performance.

It is obvious that the business activities of the two tobacco companies have not been congruent with the healthy lifestyle that the Singapore Government is trying to promote; that is, their legitimacy is at risk (see Dowling and Pfeffer, 1975). As such, it is more important than ever for the tobacco companies to show to the public that they contribute to the well-being of society, just as other companies do. In fact, in its 1994 annual report, Rothmans Industries spelt out its commitment to the community:

As a well-established corporate citizen of Singapore, Rothmans has always believed in doing its duty to the community (p. 13).

British-American Tobacco (Singapore) even prominently put such a sentence:

...To be a good corporate citizen is not an adjunct of your company’s business operation, it is an integral part thereof...

followed by the chairman’s signature at the centre of the front cover of its 1987 annual report. In short, we expected that the two tobacco companies would have well above average amounts of social disclosure. To test the above hypothesis, percentages of the total disclosure were used. The disclosures of each of the two companies were compared with the mean disclosures of two groups of companies – the other food and beverages companies as well as all the other 15 companies – by paired difference t test. British-American Tobacco (Singapore) disclosed significantly (at 0.001 level) more social information than the other food and beverages companies, as well as all the other companies; the test results, at 0.01 and 0.05 levels of significance respectively for the two groups of companies, are similar for Rothmans Industries. Our hypothesis is therefore strongly supported.
In addition to social disclosures, British-American Tobacco (Singapore) also tried to explicitly justify its (or, to be accurate, the industry’s) existence in the chairman’s review of its 1986 annual report when the pain of anti-smoking campaigns was first felt:

Shareholders will be aware of the campaign against smoking that has recently taken place. Your Company, together with the Tobacco Industry in Singapore, has viewed with concern this attack on the freedom of the smoker to enjoy a legal product. The decision on whether to smoke should surely be for the adult individual to decide. The smoking and health issue involves complex medical and scientific considerations and the Tobacco Industry has always taken it very seriously. However, after 30 years of research and investigation, science still does not know what role, if any, smoking plays in the cause of disease. It is clear that much more research is needed into the causes and development of these diseases and the Tobacco Industry has supported and continues to support research into this area (British American Tobacco, 1986, p. 7).

The above passage clearly reflects the effort made by the company to strive for legitimacy when the regulatory environment gradually reduced it. Similar arguments were put forward by the same company in its 1989 annual report when the Government banned tobacco advertisements and widened the restrictions on smoking in public areas.

Concluding remarks
As most of the existing CSR studies are cross-sectional and focus on developed countries, the present study serves to fill this gap in the literature. It covers comprehensively the banking, food and beverages, and hotel industries of Singapore and presents trends in social disclosures by 17 companies of these industries from 1986 to 1995. The time period chosen is appropriate – it captures the steady increase in disclosure during the late 1980s and the stable level of disclosure since 1993. Low et al. (1985) concluded that CSR in Singapore was in its infancy. This comment still holds after more than a decade. Gray et al. (1996) argued that the need for CSR in less developed countries and newly industrialized countries was particularly acute given the presence of large numbers of developed country multinationals operating in these countries. CSR is a means of ensuring that these multinationals are made responsible for their social and environmental impacts. To raise the standard of CSR practices in Singapore where there is a huge number of foreign multinationals, proper guidelines should be formulated within the accounting profession or by relevant public bodies. A major limitation of this study is that it covers three industries only and thus the results may not be representative of Singapore companies in general.

In reviewing the relationships among social performance, social disclosure, and economic performance, Ullmann (1985) called for more longitudinal studies as a methodological improvement on existing CSR literature. This paper has demonstrated that longitudinal studies of CSR are fruitful and deserve more attention from researchers. More such studies should be conducted, especially on developing countries where CSR is at an infant stage of development. On a macro level, in addition to tracing the trend of social disclosure, impacts of social and economic development on CSR practices can also be examined. This would give a
more comprehensive picture of CSR development in a country. On a micro level, longitudinal studies offer certain benefits that cannot be obtained in cross-sectional studies. For instance, the former could provide insights into the relationship between the strategic change of a company and its CSR practices. Another interesting research direction would be to have international comparative studies of CSR on a longitudinal basis. Major factors influencing CSR over time can be compared and contrasted among the sample countries. In short, it is hoped that this paper will stimulate more studies in that direction.

References
Ernst and Ernst (1978), Social Responsibility Disclosure: 1978 Survey, Ernst and Ernst, Cleveland, OH.


Appendix: sample companies

- Banking: Development Bank of Singapore; Overseas Chinese Banking Corporation; Overseas Union Bank; Tat Lee Bank; United Overseas Bank.
- Food & Beverages: Asia Pacific Breweries (previously called Malayan Breweries); British-American Tobacco (Singapore); Cerebos; Fraser & Neave; Inno-Pacific Holdings (previously called Kentucky Fried Chicken (Singapore)); Prima; QAF; Rothmans Industries; Yeo Hiap Seng.
- Hotels: Apollo Enterprises; Goodwood Park Hotel; Shangri-la Hotel.