The Thesis examines the relationship between Confucianism and Corporate Social Responsibility in Japan and China whilst focusing on the ethical behavior in a business environment and also incorporating its history, its subsequent development and differences between those two countries. The thesis aimed at answering the following research questions:

1. Does Confucianism influence Japanese and Chinese Business Ethics and if yes, to what extent?
2. Is Harmony the underlying concept of both Japanese and Chinese Corporate Social Responsibility?
3. Is the concept of harmony found in today’s Chinese and Japanese companies?

It is first and foremost substantial to investigate Sustainability and Corporate Social Responsibility and work out their origins, evolution and modern applicability. For Sustainability I’m taking into account, amongst others, Hans Carl von Carlowitz, Thomas Malthus, John Stuart, Edward Mishan, the Club of Rome as well as the Environmental Strategies of the WCED and the UN. Some of these theories laid the groundwork for the 3BL (or Triple-Bottom-Line) model by John Elkington in 1994. For Corporate Social Responsibility I’m looking at the theories of Oliver Sheldon, Dow Tovat, Archie Carroll, Marco Werre, Marcel van Marrewijk, Prakash Sethi, Nada Kakabadse, Alexander Dahlsrud, Elisabet Garriga and Domènc Melé. I put special focus on the pyramid theory of Carroll, the core elements of CSR by Kakabadse, the comprehensive study of Dahlsrud and the 4-part approach of Garriga and Melé. Furthermore I’m implementing the most vital and impacting international approved measurements and indices for ethics and sustainability in a company; those include: Dow Jones Sustainability Index, Ethibel, FTSE4Good, Domini 400 Social Index, Vanguard Calvert Social Index Fund and Corporate Governance Quotient.

The umbrella term Business Ethics is still a developing concept in Japan and China and heavily influenced by Western Ethics as well as values adapted from Buddhism, Daoism and especially Confucianism. To get a clear and unadulterated picture the thesis examines companies, traditional values, private and business life, socially unique concepts and cultural traits. After establishing these theories and concepts for both Sustainability and Corporate Social Responsibility, we conclude that both terms do share similarities like, their common shared environmental and social involvement, but also differ, as in having different goals and ways to achieve these goals. To get an applicable approach, we also take a look at different methods of how to measure and standardize if a company is ethical or sustainable.

The methodology can be separated into four major pillars:

1. CSR in Japan – CSR in China – Confucianism and Business Ethics – Case Studies
2. The umbrella term Business Ethics is still a developing concept in Japan and China and heavily influenced by Western Ethics as well as values adapted from Buddhism, Daoism and especially Confucianism. To get a clear and unadulterated picture the thesis examines companies, traditional values, private and business life, socially unique concepts and cultural traits. After establishing these theories and concepts for both Sustainability and Corporate Social Responsibility, we conclude that both terms do share similarities like, their common shared environmental and social involvement, but also differ, as in having different goals and ways to achieve these goals. To get an applicable approach, we also take a look at different methods of how to measure and standardize if a company is ethical or sustainable.

The results of my case studies confirm that the concept of harmony can be found in today’s Japanese and Chinese companies, as Canon coined the term kyōsei and Sony strongly engaged in various campaigns, helping employees and society grow. On the Chinese side, Huawei is putting a lot of effort into education development and environmental protection, stressing the importance of a harmonious industry chain. China Telecom is still new on this field, but work towards utilizing their communication network to help creating jobs and income in different areas of the world.

All references can be found in the full version of the MA thesis available at http://othes.univie.ac.at/view/fakultaet/A45.html

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