WWW.IJRPR.COM

International Journal of Research Publication and Reviews

Journal homepage: www.ijrpr.com ISSN 2582-7421

Corporate Social Responsibility and Organisational Performance in the Manufacturing Industry: Evidence from Unilever Nigeria PLC

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ABSTRACT

The main objective of the study is to examine how corporate social responsibility influence organizational performance in Unilever Nigeria Plc in Agbara Industrial Estate in Ado-odo/Ota Local Government Area in Ogun State, Nigeria. The primary data were gathered through questionnaire. The sample size was 120 and 78 copies of questionnaire were returned. These were later analyzed using the regression statistical technique. The findings of the study showed that community performance have significant moderate relationship with corporate value perception ($R=0.340$, $p<0.05$) and that there is significant moderate relationship between environment and competitive edge of Unilever Nigeria Plc ($R= 0.313$, $p < 0.05$). The study recommends that organizations should develop creative and innovative corporate social responsibility techniques as a competitive strategy within the business environment and the local community.

Keywords: Community Performance, Environment, Corporate Value Perception, Competitive Edge

Introduction

The benefits of integrating CSR into organisations include improved brand value, better entree to finance, a healthier and safer workplace, stronger risk management and corporate governance, motivated employees and community members, customer loyalty, increased confidence and trust of stakeholders, an improved public image, and economic success (Alma'ani et al., 2019; Ali et al., 2017; Elsafty & Tahon, 2021; M. S. Kim & Thapa, 2018). This author agrees that any company that prioritises CSR does not, in fact, directly assist society in any manner; rather, it indirectly creates more opportunities for the company to grow, flourish, and generate more revenue. On the other hand, failing to include CSR could harm your reputation. When it comes to sustainability-related concerns, a company's performance may either enhance or detract from its reputation.

Managers of companies today understand that CSR forms an indestructible part of their reputations and brand identities. They know that a critical source of difference between firms is the resources and capabilities that they possess and contribute to their potential competitive advantage, but CSR represents a very valuable strategic asset. Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) involves companies voluntarily choosing to improve their social and environmental standards and so reduce their negative impacts on the environment.

They spend ever-increasing amounts of corporate resources on improving the social, human, and environmental conditions under which companies operate. Jose (2010) view corporate social responsibility as a form of management that is defined by the ethical relationship and transparency of the company with all the stakeholders with whom it has a relationship as well as with the establishment of corporate goals that are compatible with the sustainable development of society, preserving environmental and cultural resources for future generations, respecting diversity and promoting the reduction of social problems. CSR activities contribute to social progress and are intended to enhance corporate images.

Organisational Performance (OP) on the other hand, has been taught with many conflicting definitions and it is not a new phenomenon among the academics and the industrialists as well as public institutions. OP has been a source of influence to the actions taken by companies and the degree to which an organisation realises its goals as well as the stated objectives of the organisation through the strategies and policies of the organisation (Folan & Browne, 2005; Etzioni, 1964). The idea of OP is hanged on the position or premise that it is a combination of productive assets made up of human, physical, and capital resources, for the major reason of fulfilling a dream, vision or accomplishing a shared purpose (Barney, 2002; Carton & Hofer, 2006). OP is also viewed as the measure of how a manager utilises the resources of the organisation efficiently and effectively to accomplish the goals of the organisation as well as satisfying all the stakeholders (Jones & George, 2009).

In their own contribution, Richard et al. (2009) described OP as the real output measured against the intended or expected output. They viewed OP as a term that is made up of three major areas of firm outcomes and these three areas are:

i. Financial Performance that is made up of profits, return on assets (ROA), return on investment (ROI) etc.

ii. Product Market Performance such as sales, market share, etc.

iii. Shareholders return such as total shareholder return (TSR), economic value added (EVA).

Selden & Sowa (2004) looked at OP as what is designed to assume that organisations are to accomplish certain goals that are both specified intrinsically and implicitly. Perrow (1961) distinguishes between two kinds of organisational goals, official goals which are the general purposes of the organisation's founders and leaders, while the operative goals designates the end sought through the actual operating policies, the modifications and subversions of these ends by personnel in decision making positions and by the forces of pressure from the external environment. Kast & Rosenzwig (1985) argued that performance is a function of ability, effort and opportunity. Ability is dependent upon knowledge and skills and technological capabilities that provide an indication of range of possible performance. Effort is a function of needs, goal- expectation and rewards and it depends on the degree to which individuals and/or groups are motivated to aspirant effort. Opportunity must be provided by the managers for individual's ability and effort to be used in ways that will result in the achievement of goals. OP can be summarised to be an approach used in assessing the progress made toward goals, identifying and adjusting factors that has limit the progress of the organisation in a competitive environment.

Statement of the Research Problem

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) relates to ethical and sensitive behaviour by organizations towards social, cultural, economic and environmental issues-ISO (26 000-2010). Thus for efficiency in the practice of corporate social responsibility, the firms must assess the impact of their operations on the host community and must be willing to plan and execute actions that will ensure minimal negative impacts of their activities on the environment.

Foreign and Local companies in Nigeria lack the necessary drive and impetus to effectively carryout CSR because they are not mandated by the laws of the Nigeria to do so, as a result, these companies see CSR as not a responsibilities or obligatory which they must implement, but do it out of their own volition. It is only when CSR is backed by the laws of Nigeria that companies that tap its resources will then see it as obligatory, or otherwise faces the consequences of the law.

The potential for individuals and organizations to behave unethically is limitless. Unfortunately, unethical organizational practices are embarrassingly very common today. It is easy to define such practices as environmental pollution, poor infrastructural facilities, poor or lack of employment opportunities, to mention but a few. Yet these and many other unethical practices go on almost routinely in many organizations. Despite the activities undertaken by volunteers in the local communities surrounding their operations, there seems to be little or no evidence of any Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) projects focused on generating jobs and income for community members. Such actions could improve the quality of life within the local community. No CSR projects appear to focus on enhancing the value chain or social actions that could improve corporate competitiveness.

Objective of the study

The main objective of the study is to examine the effect of Corporate Social Responsibility on the performance of manufacturing companies within Agbara Industrial Estate, Ado-Odo/Ota Local Government Area of Ogun State, Nigeria.

The specific objectives are as follows:

i. To examine how community performance affects corporate value perception of Unilever Nigeria Plc in Agbara Industrial Estate of Ogun State, Nigeria.

ii. To investigate how environment affects competitive edge of Unilever Nigeria Plc in Agbara Industrial Estate of Ogun State.

Research Questions

i. To what extent does community performance affect corporate value perception of Unilever Nigeria Plc in Agbara Industrial Estate of Ogun State, Nigeria?

ii. How does environment affect competitive edge of Unilever Nigeria Plc in Agbara Industrial Estate of Ogun State, Nigeria?

Research Hypotheses

$H_{01:}$ Community performance does not have significant relationship with corporate value perception of Unilever Nigeria Plc in Agbara Industrial Estate of Ogun State, Nigeria.

$H_{02:}$ There is no significant relationship between environment and competitive edge of Unilever Nigeria Plc in Agbara Industrial Estate of Ogun State, Nigeria.

Scope of the study

The study will be limited to Unilever Nigeria Plc and all the local residents within and around Agbara Industrial Estate, Ado-Odo/Ota Local Government Area of Ogun State, Nigeria.

Significance of the Study

The study is very significant because it helps to highlight and emphasise increased attention and awareness in corporate social responsibility initiatives as a weapon of competitive edge by designing policies that benefit all the stakeholders in the manufacturing business environments.

The study also provides insights for managerial attention into the importance of incorporating ethical conducts among business firms / organisations that enhance strategic decisions.

Again, the study assists researchers and management professionals to develop more accurate measures of Corporate Social Responsibility as important instruments for corporate integrity and positioning strategies in business environments.

Literature Review

CSR improves an organization's capacity to directly or indirectly attract, nurture, and retain exceptional talent. According to research on company ethics, loyal employees are those who feel their firm meets ethical standards. Employees who work for a company that practices corporate social responsibility are loyal and effective. Additionally, being diligent in addressing social and environmental issues can lead to less bureaucracy and a more cordial relationship with governmental agencies (Ksiak, 2017). A strong working relationship with the government may offer a business a competitive advantage by granting it a social license to operate from the community, especially in the resource sector where it can get access to limited reserves (Galbreath, 2008). Corporate social responsibility programs that are strategically implemented by businesses would i generally improve the company's success. Records demonstrate how advantages extend beyond performance and beyond long-term intangible success indicators to include direct money metrics (mostly in developing countries).

Okeudo (2012) found via his research that ignoring social obligations will bring more harm to a company than benefit. Even in a nation as poor as Nigeria, unethical business practices are no longer in style. Due to increasing media attention, responsive and investigative journalism, as well as expanded social media in Nigeria, this can only provide bad criticism to any institution (Adeyanju, 2012; Amaeshi et al., 2006). On the other hand, ethical obligations do draw and keep the top employees in a company (Akinleye & Adedayo, 2018). Additionally, studies have shown that customers like doing business with companies who actively engage in CSR activities (Akinleye & Adedayo, 2018; Yusuf, 2018). According to Ismail (2009), organizations that engage in CSR attract the best employees and get more clients, whereas those that don't typically fail sooner or later. Large firms seem to grasp this, and as a result, they have put procedures in place to reassure stakeholders that they are socially responsible. According to (Nasieku et al., 2014), businesses with CSR practices attract the best employees, shareholders, and consumers, as well as a happy community and society. The capital market and the economy both acknowledge that sustainable enterprises are the ones of the future (Petrovi-Ranelovi et al., 2015; Yusuf, 2018).

Furthermore, from March 2006 to December 2017, a study was carried out by Lee (2020) utilizing panel data analysis to investigate the impact of CSR on the firm's market value of tour operators listed on the Chinese stock exchanges. The study's conclusions demonstrated that while CSR had a negative impact on the firm's market value during the immediate period, after a one-period lag, CSR activity had a positive impact on market value, which persisted even after a two-period lag. The data showed that the market capitalization of tour operators and other travel businesses listed on the Chinese stock exchanges took some time to fully reflect the economic impact of CSR operations on the firm's market value. The results also suggested that, despite the possibility of some short-term financial risk, tour operators would need to invest a large amount of time and money to make CSR successful.

Methodology

This study adopted a survey design to enhance a comprehensive review of the active variables of Corporate Social Responsibility (community performance, environment) and Organisational Performance (corporate value perception, competitive edge). The survey research design was adopted while the simple random sampling method was used to select 120 individuals within the immediate community to sample their opinions/observations on CSR performance of Unilever Nigeria Plc in Agbara Industrial Estate, Ado-Odo/ Ota Local Government Area of Ogun State, Nigeria. The main instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire in two parts A and B. Part A covered respondents demographic data while Part B contained instruments for the measurement of the independent variable (Corporate Social Responsibility), the dependent variable (Organisational Performance). The questionnaire items were measured on a 5-point Likert Scale of Strongly Disagree (SD) = 1; Disagree (D) = 2; Undecided (U) = 3; Agree (A) = 4; Strongly Agree (SA) = 5.

Results and Analysis

i. Hypothesis One

Ho: Community performance does not have significant relationship with corporate value perception of Unilever Nigeria Plc in Agbara Industrial Estate of Ogun State, Nigeria.

Table 1: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.340[a]	.116	.104	1.908

Looking at table 1, there is a weak positive relationship (R = 0.340) between corporate value perception and community performance. Also, about 11.6% variation in value perception is accounted for by corporate performance.

Table 2: ANOVA [a]

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	36.215	1	36.215	9.950	.002[b]
	Residual	276.618	76	3.640		
	Total	312.833	77			

From table 2, the F-value is 9.950 with the p-value being 0.002, it shows that the model is adequate in relating corporate value perception and community performance. Hence, the test is significant. We can then accept the alternative hypothesis that "community performance has significant relationship with corporate value perception of Unilever Nigeria Plc in Agbara Industrial Estate of Ogun State, Nigeria".

Moreover, from table, the model for the relationship is:

VPERC = 20.441 + 0.171CPER

Where:

VPERC represents corporate value perception

CPER represents Community performance

From table 26, a unit increase in community performance will cause about 17.1% increase in corporate value perception of Unilever Nigeria Plc in Agbara Industrial Estate of Ogun State.

Table 3: Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	20.441	1.097		18.633	.000
	CPER	.171	.054	.340	3.154	.002

a. Dependent Variable: VPERC

ii. Hypothesis Two:

Ho: There is no significant relationship between environment and competitive edge of Unilever Nigeria Plc in Agbara Industrial Estate of Ogun State, Nigeria.

Table 4: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.313[a]	.098	.086	2.770

From table 4, there is a weak positive relationship (R = 0.313) between competitive edge and environment. About 9.8% variation in competitive edge is accounted for by environment.

Table 5: ANOVA [a]

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	61.697	1	61.697	8.043	.006[b]
	Residual	567.626	74	7.671		
	Total	629.323	75			

From table 5, the F-value is 8.043 with the p-value being 0.006, it shows that the model is adequate in relating environment and competitive edge of Unilever Nigeria Plc in Agbara Industrial Estate of Ogun State. Nigeria. The test is significant, we can then accept the alternative hypothesis that "there is significant relationship between environment and competitive edge of Unilver Nigeria Plc in Agbara Industrial Estate of Ogun State, Nigeria".

From table, the model for the relationship is:

COMPEDG = 15.508 + 0.349ENV

Where:

COMPEDG represents Competitive edge

ENV represents Environment

Table 6: Coefficients [a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	15.508	3.111		4.985	.000
	ENV	.349	.123	.313	2.836	.006

Table 6, a unit increase in environment will cause about 34.9% increase in Competitive Edge of Unilver Nigeria Plc in Agbara Industrial Estate of Ogun State.

Conclusion

The general findings of the study show that corporate social responsibility significantly affects firm performance in manufacturing companies especially Unilever Nigeria Plc. This implies that community performance has significant relationship with corporate value perception and that there is significant relationship between environment and competitive edge of Unilver Nigeria Plc in Agbara Industrial Estate of Ogun State, Nigeria.

Therefore, management executives of manufacturing companies must realise that a synergy of the various corporate social responsibility strategies and techniques is desirable to boost corporate value perception and competitive edge of their organisations to enhance survival.

Recommendations

Management Executives should recognise that corporate social responsibility is an important driving force towards improved organisational performance. They should be able to design appropriate corporate social responsibility strategies to win the heart of their community and other stakeholders of the organisation. Therefore, the study strongly recommends to the management of Unilever Nigeria Plc and indeed other manufacturing companies, to develop creative and innovative corporate social responsibility techniques as a competitive strategy within the business environment and community.

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