

THE DRIVERS OF CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY (CSR): A THEMATIC REVIEW AND NEW RESEARCH AGENDA

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Abstract

The major focus of this paper is to examine the corporate social responsibility drivers and related thematic reviews in line with business operating environment conducive sustainability and new research agenda. The fundamental drivers are observed to be market-based, and usually begin when a firm perceives or anticipates or responds to a risk associated with the socio-economic or environmental impact of a specific business practice. Some fundamental corporate social responsibility drivers were also identified and they include, economic, social, political, environmental awareness and sustainability, cultural, traditional, ethics, stakeholders' activism, products, services, and consumer's imperatives perspectives. Some other drivers and new research agenda identified include community-company integration and sustainability, human and material resources safety and sustainability, education and skills acquisition, social and health infrastructure development, and economic empowerment and development. The study found and concludes that, the above mentioned corporate social responsibility drivers have contributed immensely in corporate social responsibility pursuit. Since corporate social responsibility activities are evolving phenomena, the study recommends that corporate organizations should sustain the drivers and identified new research agenda in order to enhance corporate image and conducive community-company integration sustainability.

Key words: Corporate Social Responsibility; Drivers; Thematic Review; New Research Agenda; Environmental Sustainability Stewardship.

Introduction

As an organizational phenomenon in corporate business and set-ups, either product or service-oriented, or consumer-oriented, the concept of CSR has increasingly become visible and gained recognition within organizations and their operational environments' host communities. In general understanding, the CSR domain exists within and outside the boundaries of business organizations as well as anywhere human ecology or organizations have interface with the stakeholders and issues driving their co-existential interactions. Numerous definitions of CSR abound in literature. A long debate on the concept and meaning of CSR has been taking place since the second half of 20th century, and Bowen (1953), in his seminal book: social responsibility of businessman helped to really articulate the principle and ideas that today form the foundation for corporate social responsibility and its drivers. Since then, there has been a paradigm shift in terminology

from the social responsibility of business to corporate social responsibility and the associated drivers. Bowen (1953) defines CSR as, the obligation of business to pursue those decisions or follow those lines of action which are desirable in terms of the objectives and values of society. This implies that, it is mandatory for organizations while performing their primary tasks, to get involved not only on activities that are directly useful to them, but to conform to the acceptable norms of the society and its sustainability. CSR is concerned with business activities of the utilitarian value of the common good for the common all (Green and Pelozu, 2011). Globally, there has been a significant growth of this CSR field and its drivers that ensure its sustainability. (Chikwe, n.d.) Today, CSR contains a great proliferation of theories, approaches and terminologies, society and business management, public policy and business, stakeholders' management, corporate accountability and transparency, and these are just some of the

terms used to describe the phenomena related to corporate responsibility in society. Similarly, the CSR drivers relate to community-company integration and mutual co-existence, products and associated services, consumer; ethics, internet, organizational politics and power game, legal, environment, investors, market driven issues, environmental sustainability, corporate leadership transparency and proper accountability, to mention but a few.

The General Purpose and Objectives of the Study

The major focus and specific objectives of this paper are to examine the perceived and fundamental drivers of CSR and their related thematic review, the CSR nature and functionalities in both developed and developing countries as well as effects of CSR on economic performance and environmental sustainability, and new research agenda.

Literature Review

The Drivers of Corporate Social Responsibility

Observations have been made on related studies encapsulated into major drivers of how CSR is conceived, incentivized and practiced as thematically perceived by Ghalib and Agupusi (2011) and relatedly Chikwe (2012). In today's emerging global economy, where the internet, the print and electronic news media and information revolution put business practices around the world under spot light, companies are more and more frequently judged on the basis of their socio-economic and environmental sustainability stewardship. In line with such assertion, partners in business and consumers would want to know the drivers of CSR relating to what goes inside a company, host community and society in general, and what sort of priorities the management has. In Ghalib and Agupusi (2011) view, this sort of

transparency of business practices implies that, for many companies, corporate social responsibility is no longer a choice, but a requirement for corporate existence and the needs for fundamental drivers cannot be overemphasized. These requirements as advanced have been expounded in a very comprehensive fashion by the Green paper published by the European Commission in 2001, and spells out what requirements needed in the emerging global economy that will drive corporations to be more responsible and as Mazurkiewicz (2004) specified hereunder:

- New concerns and expectations from citizens, consumers, public authorities and investors in the context of globalizations and large scale industrial change.
- Social criteria are increasingly influencing the investment decisions of individuals and institutions both consumer and as investors.
- Increased concern about the damage caused by economic activity to the environment.
- Transparency of business activities brought about by the media and modern information and communication technologies.

The fundamental drivers according to Mazurkiewicz (2004) are market-based, and usually begin when a firm anticipates or responds to a risk associated with the socio-economic labour or environmental impact of a specific business practice (Chikwe, 2012). The three fundamental types of drivers which Mazurkiewicz (2004) identified are accordingly: economic, social and political. Corporate organizations can assume a pyramidal structure model to describe how they tend to commence from one CSR driver to another, for instance, moving along with economic responsibility to legal, ethical to philanthropy and environment or ecosystem as relating opined by Denni (2014).

Table 1: The Drivers of Corporate Social Responsibility

Economic Drivers	Social Drivers	Political Drivers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Company image/reputation - Improved risk management - Competitive advantage - Pressure from business partners - Pressure from customers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Pressure from NGO/ CSOS - Licence to operate - Pressure from local communities - Research 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Improved standing with government - Legal and regulatory drivers - Political pressure - Licence to operate

- Pressure from investors		
- Competitiveness		

Source: Adapted from Mazurkiewicz, P. (2004), Corporate Environmental Responsibility: Is common CSR framework possible? In Ghali A.K and Agupusi P. (2011), working paper series 32, University of East Anglia, Northwich, UK.

In a related development, Dartey-Baah and Amponsah-Tawiah (2011), identified seven major drivers for or causes of CSR in developing countries with specific attention to Africa and these as Chikwe (2012) relatedly expressed are:

1. **Culture Tradition:** In this regard, they argued that while many believe that CSR is a western invention (as it is seen in modern form and practice), there is evidence to suggest that CSR in developing countries draws strongly on indigenous cultural traditions of philanthropy, business ethics, and community embeddedness. For instance, in an African context, Amaeshi, Adi, Ogbechie and Amao (2006) propose that CSR in Nigeria (as applicable also in Ghana) is framed by socio-cultural influences such as, communalism, ethnic religious beliefs, and charitable traditions. In recent times and with the shift of orientation by governments (capitalist inclined) as they noted, there has been a clarion call on organizations to undertake social programs as government alone cannot handle societal problems.
2. **Political Reform:** It is noted that CSR in developing countries cannot be divorced from socio-political reform process, which often drives business behaviour towards integrating social and ethnic issues. For instance, it is expressed that in South Africa, the political changes towards democracy and redressing the injustices of apartheid (as then) have been a significant driver for CSR, through the practice of improved corporate governance (Roussou, Van der Watt, and Malan, 2002); collective business action for upliftment (Fourie and Eloff, 2015); black economic empowerment and business ethics (Malan, 2005).
3. **Socio-Economic Priorities:** In this case, Dartey-Baah and Amponsah-Tawiah (2011), advanced that, there is a powerful argument that CSR in developing countries is most directly shaped by the socio-economic environment in which firms operate and the development priorities this creates. As reported, Amaeshi et al (2006) for instance, argued that, CSR in Nigeria is specifically aimed at addressing the socio-economic development challenges of the country, including poverty alleviation, health –care provision, infrastructure development, and education as relatedly expression in Chikwe’s (2012) study of corporate social responsibility and organizational effectiveness of oil companies in Nigeria. These as they argued stand in stark contrast to many western CSR priorities as consumer protection, fair trade, green marketing, climates change concerns, or socially responsible investments. It is also suggested that companies in developing countries should actively shape the socio-economic and political landscape in order to create an operating environment which is conducive for business (Middleton, 2015).
4. **Government Gaps:** CSR as argued by Dartey-Baah and Amponsah-Tawiah (2011), is often seen as a way to plug the governance gaps left by weak, corrupt, or under-resourced governments that fail to adequately provide various social services (housing, roads, electricity, health-care, education, etc).
5. **Market Access:** Sometimes, CSR is also used as a partnership approach to creating or developing new markets. For instance, it is noted that the AED/mark partnership with Exxon Mobil was created on the basis of developing a viable market for insecticide-treated mosquito nets in Africa, while improving pregnant women’s access to these

nets, through the delivery of targeted subsidies (Diara, Alilo, and Mc Guive, 2004).

6. **International Standardization:** CSR is often driven by standardization imposed by multinationals striving to achieve global consistency among its subsidiaries in developing countries. An example of the Asia study by Chapple and Moon (2005) was cited. The study found multinational companies are more likely to adopt CSR than those operating solely in their home Country, but that the profile of their CSR tends to reflect the profile of the country of operation, rather than the country of origin.
7. **Stakeholders Activism:** Dartey-Baah and Amponsah-Tawiah (2011), also noted that in developing countries, four stakeholders groups emerge as the most powerful activities for CSR, namely development agencies (Jenkins,2005), trade unions (Kaufman, Trantubtim, Pussayapibul, and Davids, 2004), international NGOs (Christian Aids, 2015), and Business Associations (WBCSD, 2000). Vivarta and Canela (2016) in the same vein, argued that the media is also emerging as a key driver and stakeholder for promoting CSR in developing countries

The Drivers of CSR in relation to the Nature of CSR in the West

Dartey-Baah and Amponsah-Tawiah (2011), argued that the economic contributions of companies in Europe take a more development-oriented approach to CSR that focuses on creating the enabling environment for responsible business. In their own contribution, Crane and Matten (2007) opined that, philanthropic responsibility in Europe tends more often to be more compulsory via the legal framework than discretionary acts of successful companies or rich capitalists as in the United States, while the ethical responsibilities enjoy a much higher priority in Europe than in the United States. In Liomi's (2003) view, and as noted by Dartey-Baah and Amponsah-Tawiah (2011), the key influencing drivers of CSR in the west can be divided between internal and external drivers. Liomi

as noted identified a number of external drivers or causes of CSR as:

- Globalization;
- Environmental problems facing the earth;
- The international initiatives taken by business community to address sustainability
- Political actions in governments which influence sustainability and government guidelines
- Pressure from the investment community
- Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the media (Darty-Baah and Amponsah-Tawiah, 2011).

In the same vein, as they furthered, include:

- Risk management and brand value
- Revenues and costs
- Pressure from employees and customers, and
- Competitive advantage.

It is important to remark that based on the analysis, employees have direct control over the internal drivers and can be proactive in that regard, whereas the contrary is the case in the external drivers, and such make them tend to be reactive in the functionality.

The drivers of CSR in Relation to the Nature of CSR in Africa and related Developing Countries

Dartey-Baah and Amponsah-Tawiah (2011) in their study, "exploring the limits of Western Corporate Social Responsibility Theories in Africa", came up with the report that, CSR in developing countries is different from its typical manifestation in the developed world. They also reported that in Visser's (2005) study of CSR in African countries, the following characteristics were noted:

- CSR tends to be less formalized or institutionalized in terms of the CSR benchmarks commonly used in developed countries. This implies that, there is rarely CSR codes, standards, management systems and reports.
- Where formed CSR is practiced, this is usually by large, high profit national and multinational companies (as seen in Nigeria), especially

- those with recognized international brands or those aspiring to global status
- Formal CSR codes, standards and guidelines that are most applicable to developing countries tend to be issue specific (for instance, fair trade, supply chain, HIV/AIDS) or sector-led (for instance, agriculture, textiles, mining, etc)
 - In developing countries, CSR is most commonly associated with philanthropy or charity, i.e. through corporate social investment in education, health, sports development, the environment and other community services.
 - Making an economic contribution is often seen as the most important and effective way for business to make a social impact, i.e. through investment, job creation, taxes, and technology transfer.
 - Business often finds itself engaged in the provision of social services that would be seen as government's responsibility in the developed countries, for instance, investment in infrastructure, schools, hospitals, housing, roads, electricity, and so on.

Schmidheiny (2006), noted that social issues are generally given more political, economic and media emphasis in developing countries than environmental, ethical, or stakeholder issues.

The Drivers of CSR in Relation to Social Responsibility and Economic Performance

In search to examine the drivers of CSR as well as the assessment of the influence of social responsibility on economic performance of corporate organizations, Robbins and Coulter (1999), came up to seek for the answer to a pertinent question, thus: Do socially responsible activities lower a company's economic performance? To proffer solution to the question, a number of related studies have been carried out as a guide, including Georgoff and Ross (1991), Turban and Greening (1997) and Chikwe (2012). On the whole, other studies recognized the methodological possibilities and limitations related to the measures of "social responsibility" and economic performance" (Wolfe and Aupperle, 1991, Wood and Jones, 1995). It is necessary to remark that most of

the studies determined a firm's social performance by analyzing the content of periodical or annual reports, citations of social actions in articles on the company, or public perception "reputation" indices. A related study found that firm's corporate social performance was positively associated with prior financial performance (Wood and Jones, 1995). Explicitly and more interesting, however, was the fact that this same study of Wood and Jones (1995) found that corporate social performance was positively associated with future financial performances, and that of organizational effectiveness by Chikwe (2012).

From the research studies analysis, the conclusion we can draw is that, there is substantive evidence to say that a company's social responsible actions does not significantly hurt its long-term economic performance and its CSR drivers. However, given the current political and social pressures on businesses to pursue socially-oriented objectives, this conclusion fundamentally may have great significance for managerial decisions making. This however, on the whole answers the question posed in the introductory part of this segment of our literature work—Do socially responsible activities lower a company's economic performance?, and the definite answer is No.

The drivers of CSR in relation to the principles of Social Responsibility in Business

In his own conceptualization, Jennings (2006) argues that, there are several of the more widely voluntary codes of social responsibility which will also serve as the drivers of CSR, where posture could be adopted on the issues of social responsibility. It is further noted that, to assist companies in positioning their role in society, organizations should develop standards and statement of principles which will serve as CSR drivers. The purpose of these standards and principles is to provide business with resolutions in advance of dilemmas.

The Clarkson centre for business ethics, in their Clarkson principles of stakeholder management, evolved seven Clarkson principles that managers can adopt as a guide and driver for effective ethical behavior and social responsiveness

in business, as Jennings (2006) respectively outlined:

- Managers should acknowledge and actively monitor the concerns of all legitimate stakeholders, and should take their interest appropriately into account in decision making and operations.
- Managers should adopt processes and models of behavior that are sensitive to concerns and capabilities of each stakeholder constituency.
- Managers should recognize the interdependency of efforts and rewards among stakeholders, and should attempt to achieve a fair distribution of the benefits and burdens of corporate activity among them, taking into accounts their respective risks and vulnerabilities.
- Managers should work cooperatively with other entities, both public and private, to ensure that risks and harms arising from corporate activities are minimized and, where they cannot be avoided, appropriately compensated.
- Managers should avoid altogether, activities that might jeopardize inalienable human rights (i.e. the right to life) or give rise to risks which, if clearly understood, would be patently unacceptable to relevant stakeholders.

Managers should acknowledge the potential conflicts between:

- Their own role as corporate stakeholders, and
- Their legal and moral responsibilities for the interest of stakeholders, and should address such conflicts through open communication, appropriate reporting and incentive systems, and where necessary, third party review.

Products and Consumers Perspectives and Drivers of CSR

Business organizations have responsibility to provide good quality and functional products to

consumers. This implies that corporate organizations are mandatorily bound to respect the right of the consumer in producing quality products as rightly enshrined in the consumer Bill of Right. For instances, the consumer should be made to be heard, choose healthy living environment, seek redress and be served properly. Inclusively are issues of product safety, fair distribution of products and pricing, effective handling of consumer complaints and satisfactory outcomes. Corporate organizations that are committed to positive and environmental impact on society significantly attract consumers that are willing to pay extra 66 percent for products rendered (Ferreira, Awila, and Faria, 2010; Nielson Research, 2019).

Similarly, the Aflac Corporate Social Responsibility Report (2017) indicate that a recent study reports that 92 percent of consumers attested to have a positive image of firms that carry out and support social or environmental issues. In a related vein, study by cone communications CSR (2017) indicated that 87 percent of consumers have the propensity to purchase a product when they observed that a company advocated and showed concern for an issue of interest they care about. Similarly, research has it that consumers show the intention to buy and have affinity and loyalty of a product, when they feel that they have a value congruence on CSR initiative (Albus and Ro, 2017).

Environmental Awareness and Sustainability as Drivers of CSR

Corporate organizations should as a matter of necessity assume and show zero waste tolerance, avoid producing and disposing products that are not environmentally friendly, and adopt being proactive in protecting the ecosystem. In addition, organizations and individuals involved in forest conservation and preservation, and cleaning of the environment should also be responsible and exhibit social responsibility behavior as relatedly opined by Kalu, Igwe and Ademe (2019).

Community-company Integration and Sustainability as CSR Drivers and New Research Agenda

The issue of community-company integration as a driver of CSR has been a critical

issue among companies operating in rural communities with undiluted identity (Chikwe, 2012). Such communities as opined by Chikwe, live mutually with a common cultural identity, expectation representation and destiny. It therefore appears that companies that operate in the rural cluster communities tend to bear the influence of such identical host. In discussing issues on strategic voluntarism, Kanter (1995) expressed that, community service by corporate execution was a matter of giving some money time to civic organizations, and going to luncheons and charity. However, he noted that such activities generated political connections, goodwill, and marketing benefits, He ended by saying that, community service helps us to cultivate good host community relationships. We will have no good community relationship unless the community affairs are vital (Kanter, 1995).

Community-Company integration and sustainability as Driver of CSR and new research agenda appear to arise from the meeting of mutual obligations and expectations. The community-company integration and sustainability as drivers of CSR from the company perspective are situations where there are environmental friendliness to the extent that the community feels that the company is a necessary institution to their existence (Chikwe, 2012). This as he argued implies that the company plays a significant role in the life of the community and therefore almost diffused or embedded in the social setting.

It is implicitly no longer on the give and take relationship, but about its coexistence which is rooted on its CSR positive influence on the community, to the extent that issues of concern are mutually decided or at least considered. To this end, the several agitations and complaints by the youths and people of the Niger Delta region of Nigeria over the wholesome neglect by the multinational oil and gas companies operating in their areas have come to bear (Chikwe, 2012). Be that as it may, however, recent developments have shown that some oil and gas companies have started heeding and imbibing the concept of corporate social responsibility in their areas of operations (Chikwe, 2012). They embark on community-company relations which is

unarguably one of the aspects of organization's deliberate CSR effort to establish and maintain a relationship that is mutually beneficial to it and its host community. Conduct and behaviour can also adjudge a company as a re possible organization.

Human and Material Resources Safety and Sustainability as CSR Drivers and New Research Agenda

The issue of human and material resources safety and sustainability as CSR drivers and new research agenda, are the concern of all stakeholders. The major challenge of corporate social responsibilities management in the achievement of human and material resources safety and sustainability through the provision of community needs. Odums (2006) contends that, we want to make sure that we empower the youths to be independent and self-reliant; that's our target. If they are able to fend for themselves, some of them would be able to come out from criminality and build up themselves and the society. An organization is described to be effective in relation to its expected CSR performance in operating environment, and is conducive when and where work is done without any feeling or expectation of any real or imaginary threat from vandals, attackers, militants, kidnapers, and so on. It is also argued that businesses are most likely to flourish in environment, particularly where there is human and material resources safety, because humans beings are more disposed to work freely and contribute their best and interesttheir productivity where there is no perceived threat to their lives and materials (Chikwe, 2012).

Safety of human and material resources according to Odums (2006), is either internal or external. He further argued that, a company may have internal safety, but with a serious threat to its existence from outside forces, or at peace with its host, but within its employees, or a section of it threatening. However, both situations are among the scenario that could largely degenerate to threat to safety of human and material resources at work, hence the need for human and material resources safety and sustainability as CSR drivers and new research agenda.

Education and Skill Acquisition as CRS Drivers and New Research Agenda

Education and skill acquisition as CSR drivers and new research agenda are areas where corporate social responsibility performance has been evaluated (Chikwe, 2012). Because of the educational needs and the necessity for skills acquisition among youths in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria, most companies have channeled the corporate social responsibility projects to providing education and economic skills to their host community youth. Concerning the education and skills acquisition projects of corporate organizations, UNDP in its joint effort with Civil Society Organizations and National Planning Commission, advised that the education and the provision of economic skills to youths of host communities should be seen as a necessity, particularly in the rural host communities of oil companies (Chikwe, 2012).

The specific aspects of educational and skills acquisition that are common among projects undertaken by corporate bodies are:

- Provision of scholarships;
- Building of schools and libraries;
- Organizing training programmes to provide skills such as computer operation and maintenance;
- Other technical apprenticeship programmes.

It is important to remark that, human and institutional resources target are the necessary vehicles for the delivery of proposed activities and their physical infrastructure, including capacity building for good governance and greater enterprise.

Social and Health Infrastructure Development as CSR Drivers and New Research Agenda

Social and health infrastructure development are also CSR drivers and areas where corporate social responsibility performance is evaluated. Social and health infrastructure development as opined by Chikwe (2012) include:

- Recreational facilities;
- Building of schools;

- Construction of roads
- Rural and urban electrification;
- Building of cottage hospitals; and
- Sponsoring of immunization programmes.

PSD (2006), argued that over the years social and health infrastructure development have attracted the concern of corporate bodies. The pressure on corporate bodies to provide for the health and social needs of host communities appear to have arisen from the neglect by government in the provision of these facilities.

Social and health infrastructure development are among the major foci of the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) Master Plan. It is expressed in the plan that, community needs target the welfare of individuals within the social and physical environment, while the natural environment targets the protection of bio-diversity and quality of air and water.

Economic Empowerment and development as CSR Drivers and New Research Agenda

Economic empowerment as CSR driver and new research agenda is receiving tremendous attention among government and corporate bodies (Chikwe, 2012). He went on to aver that, the focus on economic empowerment and development arises from the general policy focus to enhance the standard of living of people mostly in the rural areas. It is quite indicative that the issues of economic empowerment and development are crucial to Nigeria and particularly, the Niger Delta Region. From the oil Mineral Producing Areas Development Commission (OMPADEC) to Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) era, one of the challenges has been to economically empower and develop the deprived and disadvantages people, the rural dwellers of the region. The critical nature of this issue of empowerment and development appears to have gained serious prominence with the Niger Delta Regional Master Plan (Chikwe, 2012). It is argued in PSD (2006), that the master plan is unique in many respects. From the forgoing, it is indicative that economic empowerment and development are major foci of corporate social responsibility and a strategic driver to that effect.

Economic empowerment and development as CSR drivers and new research agenda, target to reduce poverty and support better living standards for a growing population, diffuse social tension and stimulate urban regeneration. Besides, the specific areas of CSR dimension and within economic empowerment development strategies which have attracted corporate social responsibility are, entrepreneurship training, and provision of loanable funds for easy take-off of micro businesses.

Conclusions

The general purpose of this study is to examine the CSR drivers and related thematic reviews and research agenda, in line with the business environment sustainability. The conclusions of the study were drawn from the thematic reviews of CSR drivers and functionalities. The study concludes that, the CSR drivers and identified new areas of research agenda enhanced the operational conducive environment, products acceptability, and corporate image maintenance and community-company integration sustainability.

Recommendations

As corporate social responsibility activities are evolving phenomena, it is the recommendations of this paper that, corporate organizations should imbibe the tenets of the CSR drivers and identified new research agenda, as well as embarking upon needs-oriented projects, enhancement of corporate image, community-company integration and conducive operational environment sustainability.

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