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RESEARCH ARTICLE

THE RATIONALE OF INVESTING IN CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY INTERVENTIONS BY SUGAR COMPANIES IN WESTERN KENYA

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A B S T R A C T

This study on 'The rationale of investing in Corporate Social Responsibility Interventions (CSRI) by Sugar companies in Kenya was a survey of companies in Western Kenya. The study was guided by the following research question: - i) what is the rationale of investing in Corporate Social Responsibility Interventions (CSRI) by Sugar companies in Western Kenya? Cross sectional survey design was adopted to investigate a sample of 156 senior staff of Mumias, Chemelil and Sony Sugar companies. Data were collected using questionnaires and interview guide that were self administered. Non probability sampling was used while descriptive statistics applied in analyzing data. The study revealed that practicing of CSRI's of different kinds as education, health, environmental conservations and cultural programs by sugar companies in western Kenya serves as marketing strategies with positive statistical significance on their financial performance. This study recommended that the sugar companies needed to have sound CRSI policy framework to guide the administration of corporate social responsibility practices. It also recommended that sugar sub sector should have rational expenditure on CSRI to avoid over sacrificing profits and capital; as the use of CSRI should be complemented with other marketing strategies to impact meaningful improvements on profitability and financial performance. This study recommends further research on 'Corporate Social Responsibility Interventions (CSRI) and its influence on sustainability of Sugar Companies in Kenya'.

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INTRODUCTION

Corporate Social Responsibility Interventions (CSRI) is a concept whereby corporate sectors need not only consider their profitability and growth but also the interest of the society and its environment due to the impact of their activities on it Noyer, (2008, 27th Oct). The history of CSRI could be traced back in Egypt among the ancient Mesopotamia to about 1700 BC, during which time King Hammurabi introduced legal code which condemned entrepreneurs for negligence that caused death to people.

Visser, (2010) similarly traces modern CSRI from mid to late 1800's (ninetieth century) when industrialists like John Patterson registered seeding industrial welfare Movement and John D. Rockefeller initiated philanthropic initiatives that have been witnesses today over 100 years after being practices by personalities like Bill Gates Caroll,(2008).

In the aftermath of industrialization between late 18th century and early 20th century the impact of business on society and environment became enomous and assumed new dimensions as organizations began using their wealth to support philanthropic initiatives. This led to the birth of modern CSRI practices in 1920's with the advent of environmental movement following Rachel Carson's challenge of the Chemicals Industries in 'Silence Spring' Carson, (1962).

In Africa of late, the re-emergence of CSR culture could be tracked back to 1999-2000, linked to Koffi Anan's launch of the United Nation (UN) Global Compact Voluntary Initiative whose headquarter is in Pretoria.The practice re-emerged with a new dimension amongst African Multinational Companies between 2003-2004 when it was reported that reproductive health was forgotten by companies as CSRI yet the HIV/AIDS scourge was decimating the sub Saharan population.

In 2004 the CSRI was funded by Harvard University with the support of consortium of Multinational Companies comprising of Chevron Corporation, Chaveitstain, The Coca Cola Company and General Motors McPherson, (2005). The founders expressed that for African governments to continue with economic growth, through private and corporate sectors despite donor fatigue they have to partake of the CSRI for sustainability. CSRI at times may be very costly for a company and may not really pay its worth if it's not to some minimal extent. A case in point in 1980 of Ben and Jerry producers of super premium ice cream, exercised CSRI by charitable donation of 7.5% pre-tax profits to marginalised people, realized increased number of clients and turn over by 1993 which according to William, (2000) was exceptional.

In European sugar industry, CSRI practices were considered a vehicle of sharing experiences and also a source of inspiration for continued improvement and sustainability. In the nineteenth century after the industrial revolution, Businesses embraced CSRI by building factory towns to house workers and provided social amenities Smith, (2006). However, many other organizations such as sugar companies have resorted to the CSRI practices under different circumstances.

The Corporate Social Responsibility Interventions (CSRI) has of late become a concern to various scholars with some of them as Garriga (2004) as cited by Smith (2006) referring to it in terms of economic perspective believing that it is a strategic organizational tool for achieving objectives of increased profit, wealth and maximizing shareholders value. Smith (2006) also cites Windsor (2006) as emphasizing on economic objective that 'no firm would undertake costly endeavour voluntarily void of economic baseline'. According to World Bank Institute (WBI) (2006) CSRI programs are best understood in light of competence enhancement and are not divorced from profit and wealth generation agenda.

While other scholars like Stoner (1992) argues that it undermines market efficiency and publicity, Windsor (2006) maintain reactions that Corporate Social Responsibility Interventions (CSRI) by companies have correlation with profitability. It leaves many people wondering why firms undertake investments on Social Responsibility practices but go into receivership and collapse due to low profits to sustain their operations. This study there fore assessed popular CSRI and the rationale of practicing them by sugar companies in western Kenya.

Background to the Problem

Corporate Social Responsibility Interventions (CSRI) is a concept that has made corporate sectors to not only consider their profitability and growth but also interest of the society and its environment due to the impact of their activities on all the stakeholders; hence must embrace responsibilities that go beyond a simple policy of paternalism, Noyer (2008, October 27th).

Sugar companies have invested heavily on Corporate Social Responsibility Interventions (CSRI) or practices with a view to improving their financial performances which nevertheless continued to deteriorate making some of them to go into receivership and others listed for privatization, Daily Nation Kenya, (2009, August, 22nd).

While Busia Sugar Company stalled in 1980 and was put under receivership after spending an estimated cost of over Kshs. 1.2m on CSR, Mumias, Chemelil, Sony and Muhoroni were approved by parliament for privatization due to poor performance that put them in high debts.With high expenditures on CSRI, it was envisaged that the companies would have a positive shift on their profit equilibrium and improve on their financial performance yet, that was not the case as they continue to suffer financial setbacks.

It was against these frameworks, that the study was premised to investigate the rationale of investing in CSRI's by sugar companies in Kenya through a survey study of selected sugar companies in Western Kenya.

Research Objectives

To examine the rationale of investing in CSRI's by Sugar companies in Kenya.

Research Questions

What is the rationale of investing in CSRI's by the Sugar companies in Kenya?

Literature Review

The Rationale of Investing in Corporate Social Responsibility interventions (CSRI's) by Sugar companies in Western Kenya.

The Corporate Social Responsibility Interventions (CSRI) or practices were founded in 2004 by Harvad University, John F. Kennedy school of Government and funded by group of Multinational Companies (MNC), McPherson, (2005). According to Chong (2005) during the same time in Sweden, Astra Zeneca and Nobel Biocare, pharmaceutical companies were accused of being too inclined to profit than caring for the people because their drugs were very expensive. Chong indicated that been involved in charitable practices that would be able to repair the dented public relations. The CSRI practices by companies therefore are considered a well calculated philanthropic initiative that aims at repairing corporate negative publicity.

The corporate sector must therefore be imbued to restore public confidence in their operations and performance. The CSRI practices are seen as being in response to two complex emotional drives of the business and financial moves; that of greed and fear. If firms stretch stakeholders by exuberant greed in pricing, CSRI would be the indirect way out of paying them a fine for offence of overpricing.

Coop Norden, a corporate company found in Sweden, Denmark, and Norway understood the CSRI on ethical and instrumental link perspectives. They theorized on ethical perspectives that, corporate sectors should undertake CSRI interventions as ethical obligations, the argument that is also supported by Gariga, (2004) as the only way of strengthening the relationship between the business and society.

On the instrumental perspective, they advanced the understanding that companies should accept CSRI as an economic measure to make profit. While Zedek (2001) believed that CSRI is a methodological approach, through which corporate sectors share present global challenges of poverty, unemployment, water pollution and infringement of human rights facing the world, Smith (2006) believes that it is one of the many ways the corporate sectors fulfil expectations for government, stakeholders and NGO's as voluntary organization to society.

Fredrick, (1994) as cited by Smith (2006) presents a contrasting view that businesses executes of corporate organizations' direct immeasurable efforts on SRI in order to build trust pyramids amongst stakeholders and win other social claims. On the other hand, Uniao da Industrial Canavieira (UNICA) and WBI partnership participating for mutual betterment (WBI, 2006).

According to Flatt (2010), companies are so emended in fabrics of society that they are expected to provide more than just a role in developing communities in which they operate by involvement in the Social Responsibility Interventions (SRI) while Curtis (2002) looked at CSRI as motivating simple practices of people of good citizenship, corporate sectors must consider seriously by initiating investments.

These views are diverse, as Mc Intosh *et al*., (2003) presenting his contrasting version indicated that from the 19th century, resulting from marketing and the need to establish knowledge economy, partnership between corporate sectors and civil societies impacted the launch of CSRI interventions to try to seek solutions to global and local problems. In the same line of thought, Tsouttsouura, (2004) stated that it is through the launch of CSRI that socially responsible companies have enhanced their image and reputation through which way they have attracted consumers to brand their companies.

But interestingly, according to Turban *et al*., (1997) as cited by Tsoutsoura (2004), companies with firm CSRI enjoy many privileges of reduced labor turnover, recruits and training costs. Therefore, according to Pherson (2005), the African governments should not wait for the donor agencies to inject funds in rekindling their corporate developments but should undertake to serious CSRI/ practices to improve their corporate images, their profits and be able to perform and meet their obligations to the society.

In support of this argument, Bhattachurya *et al*., (2004) as cited by Herman (2008), consider CSRI as a process through which companies achieve commercial success in ways that honor ethical values, respect society and natural environment. In which case, CSRI are therefore best seen as mechanisms of strengthening business and society. Businesses accept they owe the society ethical obligation of which fulfilling become a means of protecting them from eventual decay by improving its environmental health Bansal, (2005).

Theoretical background

This study was underpinned by Instrumental theory and Fiduciary Capitalism theory.

Instrumental theory

The theory was propounded by Friedman in 1970 and reviewed by Garriga and Melle (2004) and Smith and Nystand (2006). It argues that the only responsibility of business towards society is to maximize profit to shareholders as long as they are within legal framework and ethical customs of the country.

It looks at CSRI as social programs that institutions partake of to interact with society in wealth creation. Windsor (2006) sights Smith and Nystad (2006) argument that no costly social activities may be taken by a firm on society without any meaningful socio- economic benefits. In the context of this study therefore, this theory is relevant since it guides sugar companies in designing and investing in social responsibility interventions that are so relevant for attaining social economic objectives.

Fiduciary Capitalism theory

This theory was developed by Friedman in 1962. It attempts to justify corporate undertaking of CSRI as motivation to the society, a means of maximizing shareholders return through legal framework. Friedman (1962) as sighted by William (2001) argued that in a capitalist economy like ours, the only social responsibility of a business is to engage its resources on interventions (programs) that are geared towards organizational profitability so long as they stays within the rules of the game, in a free and open competition without deception or fraud. Ross (1973) also argued that such CSRI are means of motivating society and once the society is motivated, the company sales increases and hence financial performance.

Conceptual Framework

Figure 1 below is a conceptual framework which illustrates the effects of social responsibility intervention and also takes cognizance of intervening effects of politics, competition and price decontrol on financial performance of sugar companies in Kenya.

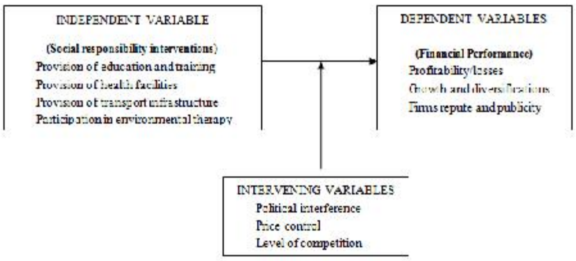

Figure1 Conceptual framework

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

According to Kathuri *et al*., (1993), a design is a method of conducting research to explore relationship between variable to form subjects, analyze data and apply findings to other groups in real similar situations. This study is both qualitative and quantitative in nature. It is qualitative since it uses descriptive analysis on surveyed opinions with cross sectional survey technique. The study is also quantitative because according to Enon, (2008) it restricted itself to given numerical data from the companies' documentary financial analysis, these were suitable for an extensive study of this kind, economical in terms of time required and cost implications. Besides, survey facilitates data gathering and presentation, (Orodho, 2005).

Target Population of the Study

This is the population that is targeted for the study which Mugenda and Mugenda (2009) defines as complete set of individuals, cases or objects with common observable characteristics. According to Sekaran (2003), it is the entire group of people, events and things of interest that the study wishes to investigate.

This study involved a population of 260 managerial staff from the sugar companies in western Kenya and from which a sample size of (s) =156 was calculated using Krejcie & Morgan's table (1993). Managerial staff of the sugar companies who participates in strategic policy making decisions and implantations.

A sample is a subset of the population that comprises some numbers selected from population for purposes of the study (Sekeran, 2003). The determination of this sample size of (s)= 156 using Krejcie and Morgans' table (1993) has been justified by Kathuri & Pal (1993) as appropriate as it translates to 58% of the population of study thus considered adequate for research. Mulusa (1990) also justifies the sample indicating that since it is a above 30 %, its' thus representative enough for research.

Data Collection

In this study data was collected using closed and open ended questionnaire. The questionnaire were formulated in a manner that conformed to the literacy level of the respondents, Orodho (2004) and their reliability and validity were ensured before they were committed to extensive data gathering. Reliability was determined by pilot testing of instruments which made possible the elimination of ambiguities and realignment of content to study objectives.

Validity was also determined by applying Content validity Index(CVI) formula whose results produced value of 0.082 which was above acceptable minimum limit of 0.07 (Best and Khan, 1993). The Questionnaires were used in the study because of their suitability in ensuring right kind of data was collected, aided data analysis and encouraged full clientele participation (Pettit and Frances, 2000).

The study collected secondary data (documentary analysis) data from 2006-2010 of financial documents and financial records. Other secondary data included published and unpublished academic theses on sugar industry Newspapers and journals. These made it possible the collection of numeric data which were relevant and transcribed in convenient and cost effective manner.

Primary data were also solicited using questionnaire and interviews guide were self administered. Simple random sampling technique was used in the study to ensure that the subgroups for the study were given equal representation. Non probability sampling technique was also used to allow the application of purposive techniques that focused the researcher' attention on the respondents and enabled him to appreciate economy of time, Onen and Oso (2005). This was used to solicit information from the top most executives.

The information was later used to validate the findings from qualitative study. While gathering data, the researcher adhered to the realm of ethical norms of maintaining confidentiality of information, hence assured respondents of the same, the purposes of research, and anonymity of identity.

Data Analysis

The collected data were coded and presented using cartographic techniques such as tables and bar graphs the use of which simplified data presentation.

The data were also analyzed using descriptive statistical techniques such mean and percentages. These helped in simplifying interpretation and making informed conclusion possible.

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The data justifying the rationale for practicing the CSRI's by sugar companies in Western Kenya are stipulated in table 1 below.

Rationale is basically the principal or reasons that explain particular course of action. The rationale of the sugar companies SRI practices were therefore examined from the backgrounds of their policy objectives.

The findings on the rationale of practicing CSRI's by sugar companies in table 1 above indicate that sugar companies had CSRI policies as supported by 89% (140) of respondents;

Table1 Rationale of practicing CSRI' by Sugar Companies in Western Kenya.

	Item statements	**1 SA**	**2 A**	**3 N**	**4 SD**	**5 D**
B1	This sugar company has corporate social responsibility (CRS)policy	140 (87%)	0 (0%)	16 (12.5%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
	Identifying the CRS policy objectives					
B2	Capturing a wide market & reparation of dented public image	105 (72%)	22 (14%)	13 (8.3%)	0 (0%)	15 (8.7%)
B3	Compensating the community for offence of overpricing product to then	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	08 (18%)	108 (65%)	20 (13%)
B4	Compensating community for offer of cheap land and labour resources	0 (0%)	08 (5%)	30 (19%)	101 (65%)	17 (11%)
B5	CSR interventions / practices are company's marketing strategy for improving sales	122 (78%)	22 (08%)	0 (0%)	03 (02%)	19 (12%)
B6	To company identify with the community in problem solving by providing the CSR interventions they consider appropriate and ethical	111 (71%)	31 (20%)	09 (06%)	0 (0%)	05 (3 %)
B7	The company's involvements in SR Practices has been of benefit and led to profit and sustainability.	0 (0%)	42 (27%)	0 (0%)	100 (64%)	1 (09%)

Source (primary data)

Which they partake of without committing the communities to cost share, as supported by the majority of the respondents. This finding concurs with European Commission sugar report (2010) which justified that responsibility of European sugar industry prompted their signing of a code of conduct to streaming line their interventions in creating social values to society. The key rationale of the sugar factory as implied was therefore the need to behave responsibly.

In table 1 (b2) in appendix 9,72% /(105) respondents pointed out that capturing a wider marker by repairing dented public image and 39 % (61) respondent agreed that the essence of CSRI practices was to strengthen business community relations. This concurred with Garriga (2004) argument that SR interventions are ways of strengthening the relationship of business and society for mutuality. On the same issue, majorities of the respondents (78%) (122) indicated that the fundamental CSRI policy objective amongst sugar companies in western Kenya was to use CSRI practices a marketing strategy to improve sales.

The findings therefore were in agreement with previous studies of Zedele (2001) and McMitosh *et al*., (2003) that it's through the CSRI that the business fraternity share and seek solution to participating and global challenges facing the world today. This argument also concurred with Bowie (1991) and freeman (1984) who preside in ethical theory that, justification of CSRI / practices was to create good society for now and future.

On the same basis, fewer respondents on independent opinions indicated that CSRI were the means to nature potential future and current active workforce, the finding that was consistent with the previous studies of Bansal (2005) who argued that CSRI were meant to fulfill and protect the society from decay by improving their environmental hygiene. Other respondents also viewed the CSRI / practices of sugar companies in western Kenya as identification with the community in problem solving especially in what they consider urgent, appropriate and ethical.

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Summary

Sugar companies involve themselves in CSRI practices because they serve as strategic marketing role and also that they are focused on repairing dented public image. From the study it can also be concluded that CSRI's are ways through which the companies try to sow responsibility to the society.

Conclusion

Practicing CSRI's by sugar companies have marketing appeals which motivates the society and it also strengthen the relationship of the companies and society hence have positive bearing on the companies' financial performance.

Managing CSRI's by sugar companies in Kenya require companies to formulate sound and feasible criterion for identifying the cluster of CSRI practices that have complementary strategic marketing effects and which brings together all stakeholders as shareholders, consumers and producers to proximity for mutual benefits.

Recommendation

The study hereby recommends the following interventions for application of CSRI practices in improving financial performance of sugar companies in Kenya.

- ❖ The sugar companies needs to formulate sound CSRI policies and manage them efficiently in order to achieve economic stability.
- ❖ The sugar companies needs to have CSRI policy framework to guide them in the administration.

The industry should encourage all the firms to embrace CSRI as part of their mission statement and service to the community for mutual gain.

This study recommended further research on:-

- ❖ 'Corporate Social Responsibility Interventions (CSRI) and its influence on Sustainability of Sugar companies in Western Kenya'.

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