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Social responsibility and competitiveness of soft drink manufacturers in Mogadishu, Somalia

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Abstract
The researcher aimed at examining the effect of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) on the competitiveness of soft drinks companies in the Somalia city of Mogadishu. Understanding that CSR has become the requisite instrument in enhancing brand equity and establishing customer loyalty, the research agenda was to determine the role played by the programs of social responsibility in relation to the performance of the soft drink production companies in a volatile environment. To facilitate a mixed design, they resolved to gather the quantitative information in form of surveys; in-depth interviews and focus group discussions would be used to elicit qualitative information. The study was done on the employees, managers, supervisors and other vital stakeholders of the identified soft drinks companies in Mogadishu such that the researcher knew about all aspects of the subject. The findings revealed that it has a high positive effect in the domain of improving the competitiveness of the soft drink companies considering its social responsibility programs. The companies, which were actively involved into the programs of community development, education and charity, saw brand loyalty as well as better positioning in the market. Qualitative results also indicated that CSR activities enhance the bond with local communities and thus a positive public image. The study resolved that the incorporation of social responsibility in business strategies is imperative to firms willing to attain a green competitive advantage in the soft drink industry of Mogadishu. Concluding based on these revelations, soft drink companies are suggested the following: a stronger focus on the community, a CSR inherent in the brand's company-wide operations, cooperation with local institutions, and the need to convey that they are indeed socially responsible to the customers. The firms to establish good relationships with the stakeholders, to differentiate their brands and succeed long term in their business, can use these actions.

Keywords: Social responsibility, Competitiveness

Introduction
The concept of Corporate Social Responsibility has been developing gradually over time particularly in Europe where it has led to the momentum towards the end of the 20th Century. The earlier CSR strategies mainly involved charity efforts and adhering to regulatory systems, but more so in recent times, there has been a change that involves the

inclusion of CSR as part of general business practices. Among the European countries, there is the United Kingdom and Germany that have contributed to developing strong CSR structure that focuses on being sustainable, ethical, and stakeholder-friendly (Frynas, 2020). This paradigm shift has highlighted the role of CSR as more than a compliance mechanism as a force leading to a competitive advantage.

The inclusion of CSR in corporate strategies has assumed different features in the African context. CSR has been getting attention in many African nations, such as South Africa and Nigeria, where the authorities have realized that this practice can solve many social issues yet help companies develop a good reputation and improve their competitiveness (Idemudia, 2020). The African Union has also pointed at the importance of CSR in reinforcing the sustainable development, which aligns with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the United Nations (African Union, 2019). Consequently, the CSR in Africa is gaining much prominence in meeting urgent societal challenges including poverty reduction and environmental conservation besides improving business performances.

To be specific, East Africa has seen a major transformation in the use of CSR among companies, especially in dealing with the socio-economic problems within a defined microenvironment. Companies such as Kenya and Tanzania have introduced CSR initiatives, which are aimed at enhancing the welfare of the communities and sustainability of the environment (Kibera & Nduati, 2021). In Somalia, though, uptake of CSR practices is inconsistent as the country is still suffering a political instability and economic challenges. However, the local firms are increasingly becoming aware of the fact that CSR is critical in terms of building goodwill, increasing brand loyalty and in the end, competition due to turbulence in the market.

Namely, the soft drinks market in Mogadishu is at the crossroads where the CSR programs may result in either a competitive advantage or a disadvantage. It has been found that consumers currently prefer those brands that are socially and environmentally responsible (Mishra & Sharma, 2021). This is quite common in Somalia altogether because the consumers would put more favour on the company that benefits their local groups or communities. Thus, the impact that CSR has on competitiveness in this industry is quite important in terms of theoretical insight and business practices. CSR (independent variable) and the competitiveness of the soft drink companies (dependent variable) have a complex kind of relationship in Mogadishu.

Positively, effective CSR efforts may bridge any distance between corporate goals and the needs of the local community, which will raise the prominence of the brand and consumer confidence (Okere & Okwu, 2022). On the other hand, a lapse in meaningful CSR may culminate in the tarnishing of a reputation and a sudden loss of market share. This paper therefore, seeks to address how exactly CSR influences the competitive ability of the soft drinks companies in Mogadishu, therefore adding to the discussion of corporate responsibility and firm performance in the scenario of the emerging economies.

Literature Review

Theoretical Perspective

This research used stakeholder theory and Resource-Based View to sponsor this research.

Stakeholder Theory

Stakeholder Theory was developed by Freeman (1984), and it suggests that in decision-making, an organization has to take into account the interests of any stakeholder (not only shareholders). This is a theory which focuses on the fact that when companies take care of the needs of different stakeholders, e.g. employees, customers, suppliers, society and so on, they can become more competitive and have an appreciable image. Recent studies have demonstrated that companies that practice the stakeholder-oriented concept have a higher performance on customer loyalty and brand equity (Wang & Sarkis, 2020). Besides the Stakeholder Theory, based on which one has to take into consideration the interests of every stakeholder when making a decision. The concept of Resource-Based View (RBV) could be used to establish the relationship between Competitiveness of a business and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR).

Resource-Based View (RBV)

This is based on the Resource-Based View, which Barney (1991) developed on the idea that the competitive advantage is based on the conditions and differentiating resources and capabilities of an organization. Under this theory, it is understood that a company should be able to achieve sustainable competitive advantages in the marketplace, provided it manages to utilise its resource base well, e.g. human capital, technological strength, and excellent brand name. In the case of CSR, the RBV implies that to become competitive, the companies that invest in responsible activities (including sustainable sourcing, environmental stewardship, and the involvement of communities) can form valuable resources.

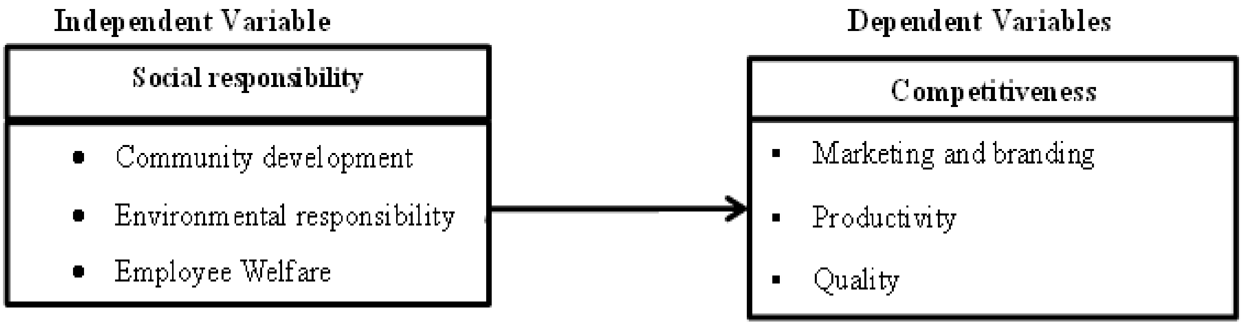
Conceptual Review

Social responsibility

Social responsibility refers to the ethical obligation of businesses to act in ways that benefit society. This encompasses a wide range of activities, including community engagement, philanthropy, and ethical labour practices. According to Carroll (2021), social responsibility can be defined as "the duty of a corporation to create wealth while improving the quality of life for its employees, the community, and society at large" (p. 42). This concept emphasizes that businesses should not only focus on profit maximization but also consider their impact on various stakeholders, including customers, employees, suppliers, and the broader community.

Competitiveness

Competitiveness is a multifaceted concept encompassing the ability of individuals, organizations, or nations to outperform rivals in a given market or environment. According to Michael Porter, a renowned strategist and economist, competitiveness refers to the "ability of firms in a nation to compete in international markets" (Porter, 2020). This definition underscores the importance of both firm-level capabilities and the broader economic context in which these firms operate.



Empirical Literature Review

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) is a topical issue in the world of business, especially as it relates to the effects that it produces in the term of competitiveness. The role of CSR practices is important to know in Somalia where the soft drink sector is presently growing within the country a research on the issue will help the manufacturers to work towards strengthening their status in the market. The discussed literature explains the relationship between CSR and competitiveness by reviewing pertinent studies on the subject in the recent past and considering the example of soft drink manufacturers in Mogadishu.

According to latest studies, CSR may result in competitive advantage of companies especially in the emerging markets. Kapoor and Sandhu (2020) mention that the differences in CSR strategies among firms enable them to stand out of the crowded industries, promoting brand loyalty and customer trust. Such distinction is very crucial in the case of Somalia where customer preferences are now leaning towards the social and environmental efforts of a firm. Therefore, soft drink companies, which focus on CSR, can develop a stronger competitiveness and operate to the temperate who are the socially ethical customers.

The soft drink industry has been on the frontline of CSR activities, whereby companies have been investing in sustainable activities and developments. As discussed in research by Vazquez et al. (2021), soft drink manufacturers worldwide have put up their hands to the use of CSR practices in order to combat environmental problems, including their water consumption and garbage disposal. Such initiatives not only enhance the perception of the population but also help to push efficiencies in operation that are beneficial to the competitiveness of the operation. The soft drinks manufacturers in Mogadishu would find that following the suggested practice will bring about better management of their resources and lower costs, which will translate to increased competitiveness in the end.

Although CSR seems to have several advantages to offer, the process of employing such practices is not easy among Somalia producers of soft drinks. According to Abdi and Ali

According to (2022), lack of financial resources, political uncertainties and insufficient infrastructures are some of the obstacles that affect the proper integration of CSR strategies. Such issues may lead to a situation where manufacturers fail to enjoy the maximum competitive advantage of CSR. It is necessary to remove these barriers to improve the overall competitiveness of soft drink industry within Mogadishu.

CSR strategies can only work with the help of technology. Nuri and Abdallah (2022) state that companies can more clearly report on their CSR because the power of digital platforms permits greater transparency and connectivity with those concerned. The element of using technology to report on sustainability practices and community projects can build positivity and transparency in proving credibility to consumers as long as soft drink producers in Mogadishu adopt it. Utilising social media and other online platforms, these firms can present themselves with an attractive image that can be converted to a competitive advantage.

Adoption of CSR would also help in making soft drink manufacturers in Mogadishu more resilient due to a long-term sustainability approach. The findings by Tiwari et al. (2022) point to the idea that the more sustainability is implemented into the core strategies of the companies, the easier it is to survive fluctuations on the market and address changes in the economy. To soft drink companies, it implies that they can become viable in the long term by investing in environmentally friendly manufacturing procedures and eco-friendly choices of their ingredients. By focusing on sustainability, these businesses will be able to improve their competitiveness in a competitive market and attract customers who care more and more about environmental issues.

Lastly, the international patterns of CSR should be localized in Somalia. According to Abdallah and Farah (2023), multinational corporations in Somalia tend to import well-established CSR models in their native countries, which is not always related to local values and expectations. The soft drink companies in Mogadishu ought to adjust their CSR programs to suit the local cultural and social conditions of the people. The effectiveness of CSR strategies can be improved by this way of local adaptation and align the strategies with the community needs and requirements, and therefore, increasing the competitiveness.

Methodology

Research approach

The quantitative research design is used in a study and therefore it involves both quantitative research and qualitative research methods.

Quantitative Approach:

The quantitative aspect of the research was the presentation and evaluation of numerical data to develop a correlation between Social responsibility activities and the competitiveness of the firms selling soft drinks.

Qualitative Approach:

There was the qualitative aspect of the study, which is in-depth interviews and focus group discussions so that more insight can be learned about the perceptions, experiences, and motivations under the CSR activities of the soft drink firms in Mogadishu. It will assist in putting the quantitative results into perspective and add a more holistic meaning to the connection between Social Responsibilities and competitiveness.

Research Design

The correlational design, which was used in the study through a cross-sectional survey, gave a clear explanation of the effects among the variables of the study as articulated in the research objectives. A cross-sectional research design was employed because the study aimed to conduct an intensive investigation of the variables under study in a specific setting, namely small enterprises in the Mogadishu district (Ilesanmi, 2018).

Study Population

In statistics, a study population is the total population about which information is required (Kumar, 2018). Study population is the population from which the sample is to be drawn. Commonly, the population is found to be very large and in any research study, studying all population is often impractical or impossible (Sekaran, 2016). Therefore, sample unit gives researchers a manageable study population and representative subset of population.

Table 1: Study population

Category	**Target population**
Soft drinks firms staffs	1933
Soft drinks firms managers	110
Soft drinks firms supervisors	157
Total	**2200**

Source: Mogadishu Central Division, Department of Trade, (2022)

In this case, the target study population of the study will be 2,200 from all the selected soft drinks firms in Mogadishu, Somalia (Archive of European Integration, Department of Trade, 2023)

Sample Size Determination

The study consisted a population of 2,200 respondents from Mogadishu, which the study targeted who were sampled using both purposive and random sampling methods. This is because the type of data to be produced will demand various methods in order to understand better the research problem under study. Besides this the approach is also commonly known for achieving higher degree of validity and reliability as well as elimination of biases (Saunders et al., 2019). This is in accordance with the rule of the Krejcie & Morgan (1970).

Table 2: Sample size determination

	Target Population	Sample Size	Sampling Technique
Mogadishu city officials	8	1	Purposive Sampling Technique
Somalia Revenue Authority officials	5	1	Purposive Sampling Technique
Officials of Ministry of Trade, Industry and co-operatives	15	2	Purposive Sampling Technique
Soft drinks firms’ staffs	1,900	271	Simple Random Sampling Technique
Soft drinks firms’ managers	110	15	Simple Random Sampling Technique
Soft drinks firms’ supervisors	162	37	Simple Random Sampling Technique
Total	2,200	327	-

Source: Krejcie & Morgan, (1970)

Data Collection Instruments

A data collection instrument refers to the device used to collect data (Bryman, 2022). The subject's characteristics, the topic in the research, the problem statement, objectives, and expected data determine the instrument that was adopted in data collection (Kothari, 2014). This research utilized questionnaire and interview guide

Data Analysis

Qualitative Data Analysis

This entailed the review and the coding of data according to constructs, themes and patterns whereby responses were stratified in accordance to their relevance. To tally the total number of responses, the number of times each answer was used was counted (Mugenda and Mugenda, 2023). Data were processed and the views of respondents were quoted and presented in the analysis in order to give a broad picture on the findings.

Quantitative Data Analysis

Inferential statistics was applied to test hypothesis and analyzing the quantitative data by the researcher. Correlation and multiple regression analysis were done using SPSS (Fox and Bayat, 2020). The study objectives were tested using correlation and multiple regression analysis in order to determine the significance of each independent variable.

Findings

Descriptive statistics

Table 3: Interpretation scale

Mean ranges	Response Mode	Interpretation
4.21-5.00	Strongly agree	Very high
3.41-4.20	Agree	High
2.61-3.40	Not sure	Moderate
1.81-2.60	Disagree	Low
1.00-1.80	Strongly disagree	Very low

Table 1: Showing the descriptive statistics for the effect of social responsibility, environmental responsibility, and economic responsibility on Competitiveness of Soft Drinks Firms

Statement	Mean	Std. Deviation	Interpretation
Our company actively engages in community development programs.	3.85	1.349	High
We provide educational support to local schools and institutions.	3.86	1.21	High
Our marketing strategies highlight our social responsibility initiatives.	3.85	1.049	High

Customer feedback influences our approach to social responsibility.	4.14	0.882	High
Participating in local charitable events enhances our brand loyalty.	4.15	0.939	High
Our employees are encouraged to volunteer in community service activities.	3.78	1.01	High
We communicate our social responsibility efforts to our customers effectively.	3.84	1.019	High
Average Mean	3.88	1.09	High

Source: Primary data, 2025

The average mean score of 3.88 indicates a high level of engagement in social responsibility initiatives among soft drink firms. Statements regarding customer feedback (mean = 4.14) and participation in charitable events (mean = 4.15) received particularly high scores, suggesting that firms recognize the importance of these factors in enhancing brand loyalty and community relations.

Table 5: Regression results on Social Responsibility

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.524[a]	.274	.272	.41854

a. Predictors: (Constant), Social responsibility

Analysis of Variance (ANOVA[a])

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	89.105	1	89.105	12.177	0.000[b]
Residual	519.552	319	7.318		
Total	608.658	320			

Dependent Variable: Competitiveness of soft drink firms

Predictors: (Constant), Social responsibility

Coefficients[a]

Model	**Unstandardized Coefficients**		**Standardized Coefficients**	**t**	**Sig.**
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	18.734	3.510		5.338	.000
Social responsibility	.625	.179	.383	3.490	.000

Dependent Variable: Competitiveness of soft drink firms

Table 5 is a regression analysis of the impact that social responsibility has on competitiveness of soft drinks firms. The Pearson correlation coefficient of 0.524 shows that there is a positive relationship between social responsibility and competitiveness of the soft drinks firms. This indicates that the more socially responsible the company is; the more it becomes competitive. The level of significance (p = 0.000) proves that this is a statistically significant correlation in the level of 0.05. The summary of model shows some positive effect that social responsibility does influence competitiveness dissimilarly that the R square value of 0.274 implies that about 27.4 percent of the variation in the competitiveness of soft drinks companies can be attributed to the social responsibility initiatives by the firms. Adjacent R Square value of 0.272 gives a slightly adjusted measure, which indicates the number of predictors in the model and the level of the standard error of an estimate of 0.41854. The output of ANOVA also justifies the importance of the regression model. The regression total squares = 89.105, the mean square = 89.105, and the F statistic = 12.177, which gives the significance value = 0.001. This small p-value implies that the model is significant statistically, which implies that social responsibility is a significant predictor of competitiveness in the soft drinks industry. The unstandardized coefficient of social responsibility is 0.625 (SD = 0.179) in the coefficients section of the regression output, thereby showing that the un-competitiveness will increase by 0.625 units with a one-unit increase in social responsibility. The standardized coefficient (Beta) is 0.383 that depicts that there is a positive correlation between competitiveness and social responsibility. The t-value for social responsibility is 3.490, and the significance value is 0.001, confirming that the effect of social responsibility on competitiveness is statistically significant. The constant value is 18.734 (SD = 3.510), providing a baseline competitiveness score when social responsibility is zero.

Qualitative responses;

"Our company actively engages with the local community through regular outreach programs, including educational workshops and health awareness campaigns. We prioritize building relationships with community leaders to ensure our initiatives are relevant and impactful.

Some of our activities include; ringing drinking water to less served communities and funding local sporting activities. Such programs will not only help improve the welfare of the communities but also increase our brand exposure and image".

Discussion of Findings

The results imply the positive impact of social responsibility and competitiveness of soft drinks manufacturing company in Mogadishu. This implies that when organizations improve their efforts on social responsibility, the more their perceived competitiveness in the market. This claim can be substantiated by the regression analysis: significant part of variations in competitiveness could be explained by the efforts to be socially responsible. This goes to show a need of social initiatives in the creation of competitive advantage of soft drink industry.

Some researchers endorse the positive impact of the social responsibility on competitiveness. As an example, Porter and Kramer (2019) state that socially responsible behaviors have the potential to build the reputation of a company and the loyalty of customers, which will eventually increase its competitiveness. In the same manner, McWilliams and Siegel (2020) support that the investments made into social responsibility may bring immense returns in form of market share and profitability. In addition, Turban and Greening (2020) discovered that companies that embrace good social responsibility practices have a better perception under the eyes of the people, which augers as competitive advantages.

On the other hand, other researchers are not certain of the degree of such an effect. Friedman (2022) claims that making maximum profits to shareholders is the main duty of businesses, implying that the business should not engage in social activities that may interfere with maximization of profits to shareholders. Further, Jensen (2021) argues that the emphasis on social responsibility may create inefficiency as they may take funds away to perform the underlining business rather than focus on the social enterprise and therefore create less competitiveness. These opposing views bring into perspective the controversy that has enveloped the level at which a company balances between their social responsibility as well as business performance.

Conclusion

The result indicated that the social responsibility had a positive impact of great significance competitiveness of soft drinks manufactures in Mogadishu. The results imply that those companies that consider social activities highly could improve their competition in the market. The implication is that the integration of social responsibility in business strategies is much needed so as to attract better brand reputation and customer loyalty. As companies spend on social programs, they do not only create a positive impact in their societies but also develop a competition factor that could be a distinguishing factor in a busy market. Besides, the regression analysis demonstrates that the competitiveness is significantly contributed by the social responsibility activities. This highlights the importance of social responsibility as the main priority of the soft drink company within its operation strategies. Through establishing social engagement as the culture, such firms will be able to establish better relations with their stakeholders and improve their image in the eyes of the general population and, therefore, their financial performance. Therefore, the research results support a strategic intent of paying attention to social responsibility as one of the means of becoming more competitive in the soft drink industry.

Recommendations

As part of the recommendations in the study, the study advises the soft drink manufacturer in the city of Mogadishu to thoroughly participate in the development of their cities in order to build a positive brand image and to ensure that the customers are loyal to their brands, which would in turn enhance their competitiveness in the market.

The study advises the management teams to ensure that they incorporate the concept of social responsibility into their business practices to build a culture of social responsibility that is appealing to the consumer mindset and help distinguish their brand in a competitive market.

The research suggests that the companies should build networks with the surrounding entities and stakeholders to collectively overcome the social problems and as a result, more people recognize them and trust their products.

The research suggests that marketing divisions should use social responsibility strategies in their advertising programs to illustrate their adherence to social responsibilities so that they can appeal to the attention of more customers who care about ethical issues.

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