Sustainability and Social Responsibility in Marketing

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1   Introduction

Social responsibility is a core principle in the marketing sector, for this reason firms and companies need to pay serious attention to the corporate responsibilities that may harm the society, economy, and environment equally or contribute in the development of society, economy, and environment in the long run. According to the idea of social responsibility, corporations should act like decent citizens by balancing their profit-making endeavors with endeavors that help society, whether on a local, national, or international level. The goal of social responsibility in marketing is to draw customers who desire to change the world with their purchases. Many businesses have included socially conscious components into their marketing strategy to benefit the community through useful services and goods (Investopedia 2022). Additionally, a Neilsen (2015) study that polled 30,000 customers in 60 countries revealed that 66% of respondents were willing to pay more for products from firms that showed social responsibility.

Literature concerning corporate social responsibility is rich, this topic is well-addressed, and the challenges and the advantages of CSR are discussed based on the

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circumstances in each case. At this context, CSR is addressed in regard of business as "the economic, legal, ethical and discretionary expectations that society has of organizations" (Archie Carroll 1979). While Moon (2014) concludes CSR as a set of societal expectations and a set of business practices, the practice of corporate organizations defines their CSR in their operations and business practices. In fact, in many communities around the world, people think of firms and companies to provide support align with their business policies and responsibilities.

Yet the legal and economic aspects of CSR are identified as the very basic needs for a business to grow. The three elements of CSR are aligned with the three main principles of sustainable development goals, as both focus on environment, economy, and society needs. Many corporates recently in cooperate CSR in their companies' agenda (Haynes et al. 2013). Moreover, the current prominent areas of focus for CSR are sustainability, sustainable development, environmental management, business ethics, human rights, etc.

While many corporate organizations and firms are late in considering CSR principles, thus their organizational performance is poor. However, the aim of the main dimensions of CSR is to promote long-term environmental viability, facilitate social well-being now and in the future, as well as maintain better living standards (Haynes et al. 2013). Depending on the idea of the role of CSR and full support for social, environmental, and economic concerns, it provides more credit to corporations, as corporations favor self-regulation over government regulations because cheaper, and corporations control the content and the enforcement of the rules. This situation may lead corporations to ignore rules and regulations in favor of operating in their own self-interest and produce negative consequences for society (Coombs and Holladay 2012). Perhaps,companies are the essence of many problems if their interests have conflicted with stakeholders' and society' interests (Bakan 2004; Porter and Kramer 2002). There are various motives and benefits for conducting CSR successfully, balancing the company's interest to those of society and stakeholders to be seen as a viable decision. Thus, the literature and previous studies and stories indicate that CSR is never been pure altruism, as in many businesses self-interest and profit have been the priority for many years. But, in any circumstance and condition, CSR influences a company's value (Polonsky and Jevons 2009). Considering the main communication means and social media for CSR, Morsing and Schultz (2006) indicated three CSR communication strategies that companies should consider: (1) the stakeholder information strategy, (2) the stakeholder response strategy, and (3) the stakeholder involvement strategy. In using social media, the information strategy is essential to direct the information on one-way communication (Goncalves 2013).

For an organization, social responsibility typically refers to making choices and conducting business in a way that benefits society as a whole or lessens its negative effects. Any sector that has an impact on or is important to society can be used to create a positive social impact or lessen a negative one. This may cover topics that have an impact on society, the environment, the economy, and psychology. One of the main responsibilities of business is marketing, which can be done ethically. That is, it can be done in a way that has an impact in any of the categories, either positively or negatively.

Socially responsible activities and corporate accountability go hand in hand. Administrators, executives, shareholders, and stakeholders, for instance, must act ethically and support community-wide campaigns to promote ethical marketing. Customers can tell that a firm is not devoted to social responsibility if it is just putting on an act or "greenwashing," the practice of advertising false ecologically favorable procedures or products. Instead, such actions may eventually be detrimental to the growth of the organization and its brand. Customers frequently could spot gimmicks, catchphrases, or insincere or unsuccessful efforts. In fact, 65% of those who participated in the Cone survey said they would look into a company's stance on a topic to see whether it was being sincere. The concept of social responsibility in marketing holds that corporations and small businesses should do more than just create money; they should also take initiatives or provide funding for initiatives that help society on a small or large scale. Most businesses use their advertising and branding tactics to promote the social initiatives they are participating in. Businesses frequently emphasize their philanthropic contributions and socially responsible initiatives on their websites, and you may learn more about them by reading their annual reports (Investopedia 2022). Social responsibility in marketing promotes an improved corporate image, which can considerably affect profitability and even productivity favorably, even though an initial investment may include allocating earnings to the needy or making charitable donations.

Several illustrations of socially conscious marketing include:

• Safe product design and development—A business can lessen negative effects on health by using safe manufacturing techniques. Additionally, the company may limit its influence on the environment by using production techniques that generate less waste and sustainable resources.

• Treating clients and customers well—This has a beneficial societal effect on the populace. It encourages the characteristics of good mental health linked to joyfulness and positive attitudes.

• Spreading a positive message—Marketers inform the public about the company's operations. The significance of a company's socially responsible actions is reinforced by community awareness.

2 Literature Review

However, CSR is mainly concerned with economic, environmental, and social aspects of a business or cooperation. Thus, Haynes et al. (2013) highlighted that the public interest and the well-being of society within the context of CSR are aligned with the main theme of corporate responsibility theory, while Kotler and Lee (2005) defined CSR as "operating a business which possibly meets the ethical, legal, commercial, and public expectations that society has of a business." Likewise, Shamir (2005) defined CSR as a set of ethical principles of corporate conduct, and the main concept depends on how different corporations define ethical conduct.

Since cooperation has a dual role, while trying to accumulate revenues and high financial returns, at the same increases income inequality, resource depletion,environmental pollution, and human rights violation (Haynes et al. 2013). Moreover, cooperation globally contributes to various social and environmental problems including overfishing, water scarcity, corruption, and deforestations, which all negatively contribute to climate changes and are against the potential targets of SDGs, the Agenda 2030 (Rasche et al. 2017). It is to this aspect that there are global and regional initiatives that created cooperation between the SDGs and the companies to focus on sustainability as a business strategy, such as the case of the UN Global Compact of the United Nations. In this context, the business strategies and policies of the cooperation/companies are supposed to be aligned with the three principal components of sustainable development, for the sake of meeting public expectations for the positive contributions of companies to the society. Since most companies forget about their responsibility while conducting business in a community, considering this the impact of their business is more harmful than the potential impact. The important question is what the social, economic, and environmental responsibilities a business has, and which is the priority in a company's business policies? Another crucial concern is who monitors the conduct of business and who would evaluate if the public expectations were met? These question and concerns are among the few while many more regarding the CSR concerns.

Climate change and environmental pollution have been two most discussed topics in the literature regarding sustainability of business, because climate change affects each aspect of business cooperation in the future (Howard-Grenville et al. 2014). For highlighting this further governments deal with climate at the one hand and with business operations but there is a clear mismatch. The practice of cooperation in conducting business is varied based on the country and region, in which each cooperation has its own business strategy and policies to conduct and sustain its own business. For this, few companies provide a win–win situation since the notion of utilitarianism is not practiced by all companies equally and the welfare of the community is not seriously studied.

With increasing social, environmental, and economic crises, people encounter more challenges, as many people live in extreme poverty, unemployment is high, corruption alarms in some countries, and conflict pushed many countries to stay underdeveloped. Yet, 2030 Agenda focuses on the 169 targets in its 17 goals, while companies can highly contribute to supporting governments and their communities. There are basic elements in a state that influence the right conduct of a business including the legal system, administrative, institutional competitiveness, role of the stakeholders, and business readiness of that country, plus the social, economic, and political aspects.

Over time, CSR studies have changed. The phrase "corporate social responsibility' was first used in 1926 to describe businesses that were delighted to assist the community while reaping the rewards of their labor (Schmeltz 2012). Marketers view this subject as a key resource for implementing marketing strategies and enhancing businesses' performance holistically due to the importance of CSR actions and their consequences on stakeholders. Due to the potential these initiatives might have for

firms, CSR has received favorable evaluation and introduction in the management area. Organizations are progressively attempting to incorporate all practices and activities related to the SR topic, which is why CSR is currently gaining traction. Following the 2008 financial crisis, publicly traded corporations examined reflected on CSR actions and their beneficial impact on the organization (USA 2010). Companies' efforts are viewed as zealous deeds of compassion that are obvious to all persons involved, not only for the group intended to gain from such benefits (Blacconiere 1997).

3   Corporate Social Responsibility in Marketing

Corporate Social Responsibility initiatives are generally conceived strategically as conferring competitive advantage on the firm over industry rivals. In marketing theory, ethics of the firms in conducting business is associated with the reputation and market value, and ethical in investing and meeting the public expectations with ethical performance (Mackenzie and Lewis 1999; Schmidt Albinger and Freeman 2000). The existing literature shows that there are various drivers for CSR in companies, the motivation of the companies in investing in CSR activities.

The meaning of CSR is becoming increasingly hazy. None of the explanations given for CSR—charitable giving, strategic philanthropy, community involvement, or cause-related marketing—does the idea justice. At Prophet, a management consulting firm that specializes in brand and business strategy, we define CSR as conducting business in a way that is ethical and beneficial to all the organization's stakeholders as well as the community in which it works. Environmental, community, employee welfare, financial performance, and corporate governance are the five key facets of CSR. It is important to be committed to protecting the environment when selling items. The marketing literature has expressed support for corporate social responsibility (CSR). Regarding the unit of analysis taken into consideration and the dimensions of corporate social responsibility explored, there is a significant amount of dispersion within the marketing literature. In the 1960s and 1970s, when marketing experts first voiced their concern about corporate social responsibility, they concentrated on the social responsibilities related to the marketing function rather than the firm's wider societal role (Kotler and Levy 1969).

Regardless of the many opinions and debates on CSR, yet there is still a serious issue, which is not settled yet, "addressing what is good for society is not necessarily good for business" (Rahbek and Pedersen 2015). As noted, CSR promotes global benefits for firms and builds company's credibility (Isaksson et al. 2014). The main focuses of CSR have been defined with regard to responsibilities of businesses for doing good for society in 1950s, and ethical obligation of 1960 shifted to mutual benefits for business and stakeholders in 1970, and in 1980s, the issue of institutional environmental concern has come to light (Turker 2018). Likewise, recently, the present focus of CSR is broader in considering social, economic, and environmental aspects into account while companies conduct a business. Furthermore, corporate

responsibilities have responsibilities including duties and obligations of cooperation as social institution.

As noted, CSR is for both the public and private sector institutions, which has been itemized in the United Nations Global Compact Network principal provisions.

Regardless of the above-mentioned points, at the present times, the focus is given to environmental pollutions and exhaustion of natural resources, especially in the developing world. Thus, CSR can be seen at the glance of application of ethical, sustainability, and responsibility principles in everyday activities of the organization (Žukauskas et al. 2018).

Companies use CSR practices as a strategy because they have a beneficial impact on consumers and provide a competitive advantage. For instance, by implementing SR practices, tourism destination brands like Sustainability 2022, 14, 1694 4 of 24 have improved their appeal and increased the likelihood that visitors will return (Rodrigues et al. 2020). According to some experts, CSR plays an important role in establishing a brand and has a significant impact on consumer interactions, brand loyalty, and perceived quality. Companies that consistently engage in socially responsible behavior must also convey these habits to the target market. As a result, there is less chance that these actions will go unnoticed and the organization will not reap the rewards as a result (Ramesh et al. 2019).

CSR is associated with branding and firm reputations; in certain cases, consumers show their dissatisfaction with corporate policy after receiving information on how goods are produced. This behavior hurts brand equity as well as induces a large cost in the form of penalties. Another serious concern is the firm's willingness and readiness in compensating for environmental damaged produced by the firms (McWilliams et al. 2019). In terms of CSR, a consumer's attitude is vital, as consumers express positive attitudes toward products that bring them pleasure and negative attitudes toward products that make them feel bad. Coupled with ethics and behavior, consumer awareness is crucial because nowadays consumers make their decisions of buying based on their satisfaction and the quality of services provided by the companies. However, to a great extent, this social awareness in the developing world is low, but there are civil society groups that focus on CSR and the challenging issues. Considering CSR as an instrument of social and economic development of any society, cooperation, and engagement is a fundamental issue for fully understanding the main proactive CSR practices. While the notion of CSR is just seen as benefit granted to the community by business, thus opponents believe that companies need to get involved in CSR when the company is well established, growing and profitable (Urip 2010).

The issue of ethical marketing and environmental issues in marketing were studied since 1970 and so far, in the context of the Bruntland Commission (1987), in defining sustainability stated: meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. At present, as serious attention is paid to climate change and using natural resources globally, here the ethic of marketing is crucial to meet the current needs without exhausting the resources. There is evidence on the complex social and economic relationships among things and each person depends on the impersonal forces of buying "demand" and selling "supply" for the satisfaction of their needs (Baker and Saren 2010). Many scholars

highlighted the importance of ethics in marketing and codes of ethics, in which codes of ethics are considered as the beginning of the evaluation of the company's values.

For many corporates, the leadership practice in deploying the CSR principles accurately is vital for the public interest. In line with this, Rahbek and Pedersen (2015) considered the influence of leadership on the practicing CSR; many reasons are counted as wicked problems demand leadership such as issue of child labor and environmental degradation. Yet in the twenty-first century, we still live with these problems with huge uncertainties. Many scholars provide evidence on the obligation of firms in providing CSR, while obligations are economic, legal, ethical, and philanthropic activities (Idowu and Vertigans 2017). In spite of country peculiarities, three-dimensional value creations of profit, people, and planet have become the targets of business activities for many companies. At this context, creating profit is the perquisite for achieving people and planet (Urip 2010), drawing from the concept of creating profit and attaining corporate reputation. So far for many corporations the ethical responsibility is still undefined while legal and economic concerns are well-illustrated for many corporations (Banerjee 2007). Grayson and Hodges (2004) highlighted another crucial aspect of CSR in which many employees have further concerns, not only pay, conditions, level of interest in the work, and opportunities for advancement but also company reputation, how the company affects the environment and society, and the way the company helps or hinders employees in balancing life-work consideration.

Utilitarian theory and the laissez-faire philosophy both focus on "the greatest good of the greatest number." However, reaching to a satisfactory global or regional level of CSR and matching the expectations of the public in any country seem relatively not achieved yet, because there are many companies who oppose CSR or do not contribute. Veil of ignorance as a philosophical concept at this context is fundamental because an action is only considered right if its consequences for everyone affected by the action are greater than those who make it. The relation between business and society is defined by CSR measures; therefore, there are three main dimensions, which is called "Triple P bottom line" known as profit, "People and planet" where all the three dimensions need to meet with profit, social, and economic achievements of the business (Graafland et al. 2004). In line with this, the philanthropic responsibility of the CSR addresses the companies' desire to be seen as a "good citizen" within society (Demmerling 2015).

4 Corporation Efforts in Communicating Their Corporate Social Responsibility Initiatives

Finding the right policies, strategies, and paths to communicate the CSR initiatives is important for corporations to present themselves in their communities and build good ties with stakeholders and community. Concerning this topic, there are two main questions including first how the company communicates with all stakeholders and

the CSR initiatives? And to what extent the citizens are aware and involved in CSR initiatives? Exploring this issue requires knowing about the corporations, firms, and their economic, social, and environmental initiatives for practicing CSR. According to Tench et al. (2014), a main experienced problem is the companies initiate CSR programs and schemes or conduct CSR activities, but they fail to communicate with their stakeholders and to let the public know what they are doing. Therefore, when the CSR is not clearly communicated, then the companies' efforts are lost. Necessarily, in the communication process, the companies need to engage in the information exchange process and pay attention to the results of the CSR communication. For Sandoval (2014), social media system is socially responsible in the sense that media production, distribution, and consumption satisfy general social needs. The idea of serving the social issues is at the heart of profit making as social needs are the factors of investment for corporations, and business gain can be aligned with serving the social needs. Nevertheless, if "doing good" is not enough to create business and social values, then what a company can do for having a successful CSR? Recently, expectations toward corporate responsibility are heightened and consumer expectations are laid on issues like functional product performance or rational product benefits.

A good example of social influence can be taken here is the call for education and awareness regarding children dental health, which was initiated in America for addressing a "silent epidemic" of oral disease, which helped 50 million children and their families by 2010. The company partnered with the Boys and Girls Club of America and local dental schools across the country to provide education, tools, and access to dental services for children in economically disadvantaged locations in the USA. Through the initiative, the company has created a well-known non-profit that generated high awareness among the non-profit members, while the families and community knew the social value of the CSR initiative (Bhattacharya et al. 2011).

According to Adams (2015), a key challenge for communicating the CSR is communicating the initiatives appropriately to make the society that matters to the organization. For Adams, a good corporate social responsibility or sustainability communicator has few attributes including understanding the social and environmental issues that concern the stakeholders, analyzing the collected data regarding CSR concerns, and seeking to find solutions based on a common ground of participation of whole stakeholders.

For companies to communicate CSR effectively, it is important to clarify few aspects: first clarify to the public what CSR perspectives they have, like CSR values, beliefs, cultures, assumptions, perceptions, and conceptions. Then, companies need to inform the public about their CSR programs, initiatives, and other actions. As the motivation and purposes of those measures and justifying their actions are necessary, assuring implementation, assessment, and recordings is required. Finally, companies need to address the stakeholders and public concerns regarding organizational behavior, actions, or performance. And finding ways to tackle the challenges associated with CSR (Tench et al. 2014). With the unexpected developments in communication and technologies, in the recent digital era, companies have a focus on digital platforms for conveying their CSR quickly and easily. What is experienced today is engaging CSR through social media, while noting the growing prominence of

social media as main communication platform. In essence, social media and digital technologies are far more influential than the traditional communication means. In essence, corporate social responsibility communication is more effective when it is steadily available online. At the digital era and globalization, companies and firms are concerned with their reputations, because using social media to damage a corporate reputation is easy; despite the interactive capacity of social media, companies still mainly apply a broadcasting strategy for the corporate social responsibility communication (Lindgree et al. 2017).

In general, organizations such as business and not-for profit have been using marketing communication functions, tools, and instruments which are led by advertising in the business-to-consumer (B2C) sector, to promote their offering and achieve brand financial and non-financial goals (Shimp 2008). In fact, the concept of business to consumer is aligned with the corporate legitimacy which means the actions of an entity are desirable, proper, or appropriate within some socially constructed systems of norms, values, beliefs, and definitions (Suchman 1995). In general, CSR has been considered as panacea for many social, economic, and environmental problems (Granum Carson et al. 2015). Perhaps there is severe disagreement on companies' intention for maximizing their profit and harming communities while increasing profits. As Friedman (1970) starts that the business responsibility is to increase its profits. While moral and ethical values and principles have been discussed as two features of business, thus companies also can be moral persons (French 1979). To achieve this end, there has been a recent call from politics, civil society, and business for companies to behave socially responsible. However, neo-classical economic literature highlighted the purpose of business as profit maximization. Regardless of the global call for CSR, the failure of CSR is seen in the absence of effective implementation mechanisms (Mühle 2010). The idea of creating good impressions and reputation for corporations has been widely discussed; many scholars have given highlights on the importance of using social media for communicating CSR. In brief, corporations need to know that social media can create awareness among consumers and stakeholders, while it develops a positive CSR perception. Very important aspect is transparency, openness to critics, and trustworthiness as social media is fast and accessible by many people. Regardless of the skeptics, concerns corporation self-interest and whether social media is effective in adding value to CSR (Foxall et al. 2002; Eberle et al. 2013). CSR can boost stakeholders' support for the business. Organizations have come under fire for adopting CSR solely as a marketing tactic to boost sales, build a solid image for themselves, and promote their brands. One can use the attitudes of cigarette corporations as an illustration of how businesses behave when they invest more money in corporate marketing initiatives than they do in charitable endeavors. Frankental clarifies that in a similar vein, CSR may wind up being utilized only as a marketing tactic for the promotion of a brand, with a speech carefully prepared to display to stakeholders (Frankental 2001).

5 Social Responsibility and Profitability

Market orientation has a favorable correlation with corporate profitability, according to research. Both commodity-based and non-commodity enterprises' profitability is significantly influenced by their market orientation. Those with a high market orientation typically have more profitability than businesses with a lower market orientation. Return on investment, a measure of firm profitability, links market orientation to profitability (ROI), discovered through a field interview that profitability is a byproduct of a market orientation rather than a component of it (Narver 1990). According to Vogel (2005), the new CSR landscape highlights the connection between CSR and company financial success. Such emphasis is supported by arguments that stress the relationship between responsibility and profitability and that CSR increases long-term shareholder value. Additionally, he states "70% of global chief executives believe that CSR is crucial to their companies' success, according to a 2002 survey by Price Waterhouse Coopers." This data demonstrates that CSR is becoming a core business activity that is essential to the company's success and central to its entire strategy. Profitability in this conceptualization refers to an improvement in several performance variables relative to competitors.

6 Conclusions and Recommendations

Based on the literature review and the study considered in this study, we recommend corporations to pay special attention to legitimacy of CSR communications, considering social media platforms and the strategies for communicating their initiatives with their stakeholders and community at large (Nielsen and Christa Thomsen 2018). Corporate social responsibility is essential because corporate entities owe a duty to care for society and the well-being of its citizens. Organizations must consider the interests of consumers and society at large in their overall business operations if they want to be seen as socially responsible in their activities and, by extension, in their marketing strategies. However, over time, there have been increasing calls for corporate entities to pay more attention to CSR due to some of their marketing practices that run counter to consumer interests and the general welfare of society. High costs for goods and services, deceptive advertising promotions, dubious quality in differentiated items, the formation of false demands, and materialism preoccupation are only a few examples of negative marketing tactics. This chapter concludes that it is even in business organizations' best interests to be careful with their marketing decisions, avoiding any hostile activities that would endanger their continued existence and their ability to operate profitably in society.

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