

Introduction

The honor of an organization is seen in its ability to affect its stakeholders positively, ensuring that neither is harmed nor negatively affected by its operations. In view of this, organizations are to operate in a responsible, transparent and accountable manner particularly in the community which it operates. Unilever's commitment to CSR is quite noble as its approach to CSR is ethical, while its approach to stakeholder engagement is integrative. This is further solidified by its sustainability strategy which ensures the creation of shared value for its stakeholders.

OVERVIEW OF UNILEVER AND ITS CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY APPROACH

Organizations take on various theoretical approaches to CSR, depending on that which works for their Corporate Social Responsibility. Blowfield and Murray (2019) defines Corporate Social Responsibility as a concept that refers to a company's voluntary actions and initiatives to integrate social, environmental and ethical concerns in its business. Furthermore, Mattens et al (2014) defines CSR as a committed approach by organizations and businesses to take into consideration the expectations of stakeholders through activities and decision that are social and environmentally friendly. Fryer (2015) explains that organizations that understand the core of social responsibility bear in mind that the society is owed an ethical responsibility. Unilever (2020), establishes that Unilever a multinational organization, whose products ,on sale in over 150 countries, came together in 1930 through the merger of Magarine Unie and Lever.

Unilever takes on an ethical approach to CSR approach. Spence (2019), explains that ethics involves analyzing, understanding issues and placing them in the category of right and wrong,

good or bad amongst reasonable individuals. Singh and Singh (2019) explains that ethical approach embodies standards and norms that shows a concern for what the society regard as fair and the protection of human rights. According to Horodecka and Werzbeicka (2014) ethical approach to CSR involves businesses engaging in a manner that depicts fairness and rightness in their relationships with their stakeholders. Fisher et al (2013) notes that ethical approach hinges on organizations engaging in a manner that depicts honesty and fairness. Unilever's ethical approach to business is evident in its operations and interactions the organization has had with its stakeholders, such as ensuring that its raw materials for production are responsibly sourced thereby ensuring sustainability. Unilever (2007) explains that its ethical approach towards its engagements and interactions is showcased firmly in their Sustainable Living Plan aimed at improving sustainable growth and conducting business in a way that will advance the society and environment positively and socially while ensuring that its environmental impacts are less on the society. In view of this, going by Zadek's (2005) stages to CSR, it can be clearly stated that Unilever is in its strategic stage where societal concerns are prioritized in their business plans such as the need to improve the living conditions of its stakeholders. Going by this, Unilever has strategically improved greenhouse gases, water in water stressed communities and ensuring appropriate waste disposal.

UNILEVER'S DEFINITION OF ITS CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Organizations have distinct principles guiding its CSR philosophies. As regards Unilever, Garriga and Mele (2004), defines its CSR perspectives which is the integrative theory. According to Garriga and Mele (2004), integrative theories, entails businesses incorporating social demands in its operations. This is because, businesses are dependent on the society for survival, hence there is need to engage the society in its affairs. In the same vein, Jeet (2022), notes that the integrative theory analyzes the social responsiveness of firms as regards community challenges, the incorporation of the firm's goal in the needs of its stakeholders, and the firm's performance in the society. Raj (2023) notes that Unilever expresses integrative theories through ensuring sustainable living for its stakeholders by ensuring the impact of its operations are reduced in the environment. The integrative theoretical perspective, adopted by Unilever, puts it in a responsible light as an ethically conscious and responsible organization, concerned about the environmental, social and economic wellbeing of its stakeholders.

MOTIVATION, DRIVERS AND PRESSURES OF UNILEVER'S COMMITMENT TO CSR

An organization is committed to CSR by factors which can be external or internal. Nga (2017) notes that internal factors consists of factors include factors within the environment such as employees, shareholders, executive board etc. while the external factors include technological, socioeconomic, political, legal etc. Unilever commit to CSR due to its external and internal factors. The external factors rest on the environment as it strives to achieve sustainability in its Corporate Social Responsibility as well as ensuring to manage its diverse interactions everyday

with its stakeholders such as employers, local communities, suppliers' shareholders and the society at large. Raj (2023) notes that the company is committed towards ensuring high standards of corporate behavior which is integrated in its Code of Business Principles. One of such commitment towards sustainability is to ensure that the company's operations is in line with the principles of sustainable development, making sure to address the needs of today without engaging in actions that would harm future generations to come. Unilever's commitment to CSR having a major push from its environmental factors is relatable to Garriga and Mele (2004) definition of integrative theory as Unilever incorporates environmental factors into its concerns, particularly with relation to sustainability. This implies that Unilever sees its stakeholders as a core component in its operations. Mirvis (2011) hints that Unilever has ensured the engagement of economic value in the environment as it has ensured that the environmental safety tops its priority. Unilever's integrative approach to CSR is further relatable to this definition, as the integrative theory ensures balance on the organization's operations, showing concern for stakeholders who include the employees, suppliers, consumers, and the society at large. The integrative approach or theory further ensures that Unilever as an organization owes the environment a public responsibility, which includes: responsibility to environmental wellbeing, good environmental hygiene, safe sanitary water and proper disposal of waste and greenhouse emissions.

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT AND MANAGEMENT

Organizations do not exist in isolation, this is because they can affect and be affected by their stakeholders. Aspal and Singh (2018) Citing Freeman et al (2004) defines stakeholders as persons that have an integral importance in CSR and cannot be displaced as a result of the success of the company. Buchholts and Carroll (2018) defines stakeholder management as the systematic and strategic approach taken by organizations to identify, engage and address the interests and concerns of their stakeholders. Unilever takes on an instrumental stakeholder theoretical approach of CSR. Unilever particularly prioritizes its consumers and members of the environment amongst other stakeholders. Aspal and Singh (2018) notes that the instrumental theoretical approach analyses the relationship between stakeholders and the organizations goals and objectives. Aspal and Singh (2018) further explain that the instrumental stakeholder approach posits that organizations should weave the interests of their stakeholders in tandem with their organizational goals and objectives. Unilever particularly engages consumers and members of the community to provide sustainable living and ensure sustainability development. Emas (2015), citing the Brundtland Commission notes that sustainable development is the process of saving resources for generations to come. In Unilever, sustainability is an important factor that hinges on improving the environment through their activities by using environmental resources more efficiently. In line with its sustainability program. Therefore, Unilever's purpose for particularly incorporating the environmental welfare of its consumers and members of the society is hinged on sustainability with an instrumental stakeholder approach.

UNILEVER'S CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIVENESS

Kotob, (2011) citing Broadland World Commission 1987 Report, defines sustainability as improvement in the society and environment for a present generation that does not compromise the wellbeing of future generations to come. (Kuhlman and Farrington, 2010, P. 90), affirm the position Kotob (2011), agreeing that sustainability is focused on not compromising the wellbeing of future generations in a bid to affect the present positively. Unilever has identified water as a pressing sustainability issue. Unilever (2023) water is essential to lessen the effect of climate change and a means to growing crops that manufactures their products. Unilever (2023) Unilever identified water as a pressing sustainability issue in order to address water stress resulting from overly withdrawal of ground water, pollution caused by industrial waste, deforestation etc. As much as Unilever has made commitments towards addressing water issues in water stressed communities, Unilever is yet to address the potential impacts of water pollution which has significantly affected the eco-system. Unilever should ensure to consider measures to eliminating water pollution in order for its stakeholder to have an eco-friendly society.

UNILEVER'S SUSTAINABILITY AND BUSINESS STRATEGY

Unilever's business strategy and sustainability hinges on Potter and Kramer (2011) Creating Shared Value. According to Daood (2017) the Creation of Shared Value (CSV) is a means of businesses generating economic returns as well as creating value for the society in which they operate. Daood (2017), notes that CSV was propounded by Potter and Kramer in 2011 where organizations can remedy societal problems and still make profit from it. Unilever adopted the

CSV approach in order to salvage societal issues such as the provision of water in water stressed communities, responsible sourcing of its raw materials for production. The Creating Shared Value (CSV) approach provides a win-win situation for Unilever and increases patronage for the business as the public will see the organization as a responsible organization concerned about the welfare of its stakeholders. This strategy also works for Unilever as the organization is not cheated neither is it placed at a disadvantaged position

UNILEVER'S SUPPLY CHAIN

Unilever ensures that its suppliers are involved in responsible sourcing of its materials for production. According to Owie (2019) sustainable supply chain management incorporates sustainability guide in its considerations towards sourcing for its raw materials for production. In view of this, Unilever takes on an ethical approach to ensure that its suppliers adhere to the ethical and sustainable sourcing of raw materials as it recognizes that its suppliers play a vital role in enhancing its sustainability programs and their operations can positively or negatively the organization and the society at large. In order to yield adherence. To achieve this, Unilever (2020), notes that Unilever has integrated a detailed code of conduct for suppliers which are enshrined in the company's expectation of them.

UNILEVER SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Unilever has a commitment to ensure that its stakeholders enjoy sustainable living, therefore there it is imperative that the organization is identified with SDG's. Morton et al (2017) defines SDGs as global objectives and goals for equitable and sustained health. Unilever 2023) notes that Unilever has successfully contributed to SDG no. 6 which is 'clean water and sanitation'. Unilever has successfully developed operations that have ensured that communities have access to safe or sanitary drinking water particularly in communities that are water-stressed. Alharmoodi and Gulseven (2020) notes that water is an essential part of human existence and therefore there is need for organizations to ensure its availability, Unilever's commitment to ensuring access to sanitary water has birthed its decision to provide water-saving measures and the adoption of recycled water. To achieve its commitment to SDG 6, Unilever (2023) Unilever has liaised with UNICEF to ensure that portable drinking water is provided for localities in rural areas in order to ensure the improvement of water stewardship programs. As much as Unilever has made significant contributions towards improving SDG's Unilever is yet to address SDG 12: Responsible Consumption and Production. Unilever should ensure that its focus also lies on SDG 12 as the consumption of goods has a significant impact on the environment.

CONCLUSION

Unilever does not exist to generate profits alone but is conscious of ensuring sustainability through its programs for its stakeholders. This is seen in Unilever's integrative approach towards CSR, its ethical approach towards ensuring that its raw materials are sustainably sourced, its commitment to SDG, as well as its sustainability initiatives in rural communities. Unilever's commitment to sustainability is enshrined in Maon et al (2010) transforming stage to CSR. Maon et. al's (2010) transforming stage places Unilever in an ethical approach as its activities are geared towards adding value to humanity, prioritizing ecological sustainability, its environment and society at large. Unilever's sustainability strategy of Creating Shared Value (CSV) provides the organization a win-win approach towards CSR, as neither has to suffer a loss due to the company's business operations in the environment. Therefore, Unilever, can generate economic value as well ensure that the environment in which it operates is ecologically safe without environmental hazards or health hazards to its stakeholders. According to Maon et al (2010), the transforming stage to CSR ensures that company incorporates all aspects of CSR, anchoring its motivation on sustainability. Unilever is placed in the transforming stage due its sustainability initiatives, which includes the provision of water in water stressed communities, ensuring that the environment is not adversely affected through the sourcing of its raw materials which is responsible sustainably sourced. Conclusively, Unilever as an organization takes on an integrative and ethical approach towards CSR as well as ensuring that its sustainability strategy is hinged on creating shared value.

REFLECTIVE COMMENTARY

Learning is an unending phase, therefore there is need for one ensure that notable points are taken in the process of it. In the course of this module, I have learnt that businesses are guided by theories and these theories inform their decisions. With regards to Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), I have noted that going by Mele and Garriga (2004), there are four theories, perspectives or approaches to CSR, which are: the instrumental theory, the political theory, the integrative theory and the ethical theory. The ethical theory posits that businesses should conduct business operations in a fair and truthful manner, eschewing actions that may cause harm to stakeholders. The integrative theory on the other hand, posits that businesses should integrate societal demands in the course of operation, while the instrumental theory considers the interests of the stakeholders and not just the generation o profits, the political theory notes that companies have social power and should exercise the power rightly and responsibly. The aforementioned theories, are all enlisted in the core of CSR and companies intending to incorporate their stakeholders fairly and honorably can incorporate either of these. Further I have learnt that organizations can display different stages of CSR depending whichever stage is chosen. As regards Unilever, Going by Zadek (2004), the strategic stage is chosen where the organization incorporates issues bothering the society in its CSR concerns. Going further, I sincerely applaud the business sustainability strategy of Unilever, going by Potter and Kramer's Principle of Creating Shared Value (CSV). This strategy provides a win-win situation for both the organization and its stakeholders. Where the organization can gain economic value while ensuring that the society is safe in all wise with regards to its business operations. Conclusively,

Unilever's ethical approach to CSR and its integrative approach towards its stakeholders, is worthy of emulation and should be lauded.

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