The Role of Corporate Social Responsibility in Promoting Business Growth and Sustainability in the Hospitality Industry

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Author's contribution

The sole author designed, analyzed, interpreted and prepared the manuscript.

Original Research Article

ABSTRACT

Aims: The aim of the study was to assess the role of corporate social responsibility (CSR) in promoting growth and sustainability in the Kenyan hospitality industry.
Research Design: A quantitative descriptive research design was used. This was achieved by administering a fully structured survey questionnaire to 37 participants selected through a purposive convenient sampling method.
Place and Duration of Study: The study was carried out on the Kenyan hospitality industry within four months, from February to May 2021
Findings: The study findings show that the majority of the companies asserted that CSR activities are primarily important in enhancing the organization's brand image to the prospective and general public as a whole, improving risk management strategies and compliance with ethical business practices. However, other additional benefits of organizations' engagement in CSR include reduced employee turnover, improved organizational culture, improved financial performance, and better legal compliance.

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

In the business realm, there is a consensus that businesses play a vital role in society, and their corporate responsibility goes beyond the generation of revenues and profits. Modern business practices have embraced business-community relationships because the community is becoming a major player in the success of most businesses. After all, the evolution of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has forced companies to look after their investors, clients, employees, the larger society, and the sustainability of the environment in which it operates. Given its large footprint globally, the hospitality industry has employed more than 7 million workers in the U.S alone [1]. In 2021 alone, the market size of the hospitality industry and global travel market hit $3953 billion [2]. Also, the same year, the U.S was the world leader in global spending on the corporate bill of $ 323 billion [3]. Again, in 2021, there was an increase in global tourism, which hit 415 million tourists compared to 2020s 400 million and 1.4 million in 2019 [4]. These statistics indicate the need for the hospitality industry to embrace sustainable environmental and community development programs to keep up with the constant hospitality industry growth margins.

CSR refers to a management practice where businesses integrate environmental and social concerns into their goals and operations. CSR means giving back to society and ensuring that businesses protect and promote the people and the surrounding in which they operate [5]. CSR allows for business growth and business sustainability in that it allows companies to ensure a balance of social, environmental, and economic imperatives through a strategy known as the "triple-bottom-line approach" while at the same time addressing their revenue streams and the expectations of stakeholders and shareholders [6] . Business growth occurs when employees, business owners, and outside factors influence the success of the company while business sustainability occurs when business conduct their operations without negatively impacting society as a whole, the environment, and communities. Sustainability addresses the effects of businesses on the environment and society, and CSR is an important tool in ensuring this balance.

CSR aims to achieve sustainable profitability while significantly reducing the environmental footprint and other adverse effects on the societal wellbeing by a firm. Balancing CSR with corporate objectives entails the application of strategies and policies oriented towards sustainability and business involvement in socio-economic matters affecting both local and global sociocultural systems. Responsible business practices and sustainable development have become increasingly important in all business sectors. Business sustainability ought to be seen as a new dimension in quality management, a source of innovation, and a new paradigm for twenty-first-century business operations [7].

For a successful implementation of CSR, a firm should be able to integrate sustainability with other strategic parameters such as quality products, outstanding customer services, and a memorable consumer experience. This can be achieved by coming up with an operational framework that not only enhances the profitability of the firm but also mitigates the socio-economic and environmental adversities associated with its operations. From a policy perspective, knowing the link between corporate governance and corporate performance is crucial when designing a relevant industrial policy [8]. The policies put in place to improve corporate governance and promote healthy industry competition would be effective if they are directed towards competitive industries like the hospitality sector [9]. This is why Huang argues that there are a set of different cultural, market imperfections, and social preferences that motivate CSR practices which require a proper mix to ensure the performance and sustainability of a business [10].

Thomsen and Lauring define CSR simply as balancing organizational responsibilities to society, the environment, and the economy [11]. This is in line with Debeljak et al., who perceive CSR as a form of a corporate's self-regulation that is integrated into the business model and which ensures the firms' activities comply with the law, national and international norms, and ethical principles and standards [12]. In essence, a model encompassing both CSR and sustainability goes beyond compliance with codes developed by the legal bodies and promotes business engagement in activities aimed at fostering the local community's social wellbeing beyond the enterprise's interests. Therefore, sustainability and CSR remain pertinent concepts that should be implemented

by business organizations for long-term benefits to both organizations and society as a whole. Kazemian et al. argue that since hospitality is among the top globally spread industries, their engagement in the green economy can rapidly increase global awareness of the need to preserve the environment [13]. Even Su et al. report that by establishing pro-environmental behaviors, the hospitality industry not only improves its customer loyalty base but also promotes the protection of the ecosystem which they rely on for their products and services [14]. Similar findings are echoed by Li and Singal, who argue that given the close association between the hospitality industry and local communities, CSR can promote long-lasting socio-economic growth sector-wide [15].

For hotels to operate cost-efficiently and sustainably, contribute to societal welfare, and reduce their environmental footprint, business leaders need to understand the importance of enacting a sustainable business model that enlists CSR principles in a way that promotes organizational productivity and respects customers' preferences. Kazemian et al. argue that the hospitality industry is a multi-billion dollar industry that continues to grow [13]. These findings are supported by Li and Singal's findings which reveal that in Spain, the tourism industry contributes the largest share of the country's GDP [15]. Similarly, Yameen et al. reveal that on a global scale, especially in the European context, there is a rising need for companies and firms to remain responsible to the communities and the environment before they are allowed to operate [16]. This is why in the modern era, the protection of natural assets has become critical, owing to the drastic human activities that have resulted in detrimental social-economic and environmental effects.

While sustainability and CSR are concepts that are widely used in business environments, there is a minimal conceptualization of their role and how they can be integrated into a firm's operations cost-efficiently. In this regard, if hotels continue making investments without understanding how they should react to societal, economic, cultural, and environmental issues, not only will they be poorly utilizing their scarce financial, material, and human resources, but also imperiling their overall corporate objectives.

According to Font and Lynes, the hospitality industry concerns itself with offering services and products related to promoting people's wellbeing

and recreational services [17]. The hospitality industry serves five major sectors, including recreation, travel and tourism, food and beverage, events, and lodging services. The hospitality industry serves millions of people, making it a multibillion-dollar industry and a significant contributor to the GDP of many countries. The hospitality industry accounts for more than 2% of global carbon emissions, and this is set to increase in the coming years [5]. Sustainable Hospitality Alliance's research shows that the hospitality industry must reduce carbon emissions by 66% per room by 2030 as well as 90% per room by 2050 to ensure a carbon-free economy [18]. Besides, Font and Lynes argue that the hotel industry has a direct negative impact on biodiversity because of irresponsible tourism, procurement of unsustainably farmed produce, and excessive use of environmental space [17]. Font and Lynes also report that in the hotel industry, food production is the economic sector that has the highest impact on biodiversity, producing between 60-70% of biodiversity loss in freshwater systems and terrestrial ecosystems [17]. Considering the characteristics of the hospitality industry, the study on the role of CRS in promoting business growth and sustainability is crucial for the good of the hospitality industry, societies, people, and the environment.

1.2 Aim of the Research

The hospitality industry is interconnected with the environment, owing to its critical role in the tours industry. The background reveals growing concern on possible disregard of CSR, including negligence and unethical practices in the hospitality industry at the expense; this, in the long-run, negatively affects the performance and sustainability of business operations. The main of this study is to explore the role of CSR in the hospitality industry and establish how businesses in this industry can utilize the latter to promote business growth, sustainability, and performance.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

According to the World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD), CSR entails the continued commitments by business enterprises to conducting their operations in an ethical manner, contributing to the economic development of the country, fostering the quality of life of its personnel, and promoting the wellbeing of the local community and entire

society at large [19]. The definition by BCSD is in line with the "triple bottom line" ideology discussed by Elkington, who contends that a business enterprise is deemed sustainable if it promotes environmental quality, economic prosperity, and social justice [20]. The European Commission supports this notion, by asserting that CSR is a concept that entails the integration of ethical, environmental, social, and human rights concerns by corporations in their core strategies and operational framework [21].

Kotler and Lee present a business-oriented approach to sustainability and CSR [22]. The authors denote that commitment to enhancing the wellbeing of the community via discretional organization practices and contribution of the organization's resources is vital [22]. Porter and Kramer support this view in their publication and asserts that CSR should entail integration of the business with the society as organizations need a healthy society with efficient utilization of resources, good governance, a productive workforce, and water and energy availability, among other resources [23].

There are many factors that push business enterprises to implement CSR. It is the responsibility of an enterprise to conduct its business dealings in accordance with the prescribed corporate objectives and make as much profit as possible [24]. Nevertheless, from a for-profit perspective, investment in business operations that benefit society too is crucial. Financial performance has been noted to be one of the key triggers of hotels adopting CSR practices. This has been proved by Lee and Park, who suggest that investment in CSR activities can aid an organization in fostering its short-term and long-term financial performance [25]. Hence, CSR and sustainable business activities can potentially increase the profitability of tourism and hotel-related corporations. In other studies, CSR and sustainable business operations are perceived to maximize the shareholder's wealth and propagate positive effects on business performance, such as customer and employee satisfaction [26,27], and foster brand reputation and marketing [28].

CSR promotes business growth and sustainability in the hospitality industry by positively influencing employees. Previous studies have revealed how CSR initiatives positively impact employees and managers in the hospitality industry. Mao et al.'s research on hotel employees found a positive correlation between CSR and positive psychological capital through employee satisfaction during the COVID-19 pandemic [29]. Similar studies by Gurlek and Tuna on the effect of CSR on work employees' work engagement found that positively perceived organizational prestige promoted the productivity of employees and their trust in the company. Again, Srivastava and Shree researched tourist hotels and found that involving employees in green economy practice positively influenced the perception of tourists about the company hence boosting the reputation and productivity of the firm [30]. Finally, Lin et al. also studied hotel managers and found out that the authenticity of CSR allows the collaboration of environmental management initiatives and ethical leadership, which are crucial for the growth of the hospitality industry [31]. Therefore, CSR is crucial to employee engagement and positive work culture, which is relevant to the growth of the hospitality industry.

CSR promotes business growth and sustainability in the hospitality industry by attracting customer loyalty, confidence, and trust. The intuitive aspects and customer's internal factors represent the view in which CSR is perceived. Studies by Lin et al. reveal that internal factors such as customer confidence, emotions, identification behavior, and customer satisfaction are highly influenced by the CSR efforts put in by the company [31]. Ahn's study on U.S hotel customers revealed that CSR increased customer engagement and support while stimulating their connection and loyalty to the hotel brand [32]. Similar studies by Alvarado-Herrera et al. on the tourists visiting protected areas in Mexico and Quintana Roo observed that CSR increased customer's trust in the brand and services reputation because the visitors perceived the green technologies employed in these protected areas as having a positive influence on the sustainability of the environment and also a positive tourist experience [33]. Another study by Ettinger et al. confirms that CSR initiatives promote proper communication and collaboration between the clients and the firm, which helps to increase client awareness about social concerns and engender positive client attitudes towards the hospitality industry because the clients believe in the ethics of hotel and tourism as they remain determined to reduce green hushing [34]. Ettinger et al. also confirm that continuous CSR efforts motivate customers to willingly engage in pro-environmental practices, and one of the most important outcomes of such practices is an increase in

customer loyalty to the hotel brands and positive customer citizen behavior towards the entire hospitality industry [34]. Likewise, a study by Akbari et al. on the tourists in major Tehran tourist agencies indicated that the identification of customers with the tourist companies due to their CSR enhanced and improved brand positioning, loyalty, and trust [35]. CSR acts as a link between the company and customers because the loyalty, confidence, and emotional attachment of customers to a certain company are determined by how companies treat their client's needs, including preservation of the ecosystem and respect for the individual values of their clients. This explains why a meta-analysis conducted by Ettinger et al. reveals that the client's attitudes, personal values, environmental awareness, and perceived benefits of a certain firm have a strong impact on their behavior and loyalty towards green restaurants and green tourism systems [34]. It is through customer satisfaction that the hospitality industry, through proper CSR, can remain sustainable in the long run.

Lastly, a positive CSR promotes business growth and sustainability in the hospitality industry by raising the credibility, responsibility, and publicity of hospitality companies and agencies. Previous studies have explored the importance of CSR practices on the performance of the hospitality industry. Baniya et al. conducted some studies on Nepal's tour and travel operators and found that the efforts by hospitality firms to engage in productive CSR practices projected a positive image of such firms in the minds of tourists [36]. Related studies by Anser et al. on different tourism and hotel units established that the participation of hospitality firms in CSR indicated their commitment toward social and environmental empowerment, an initiative that attracted new and potential clients to visit hotel firms that have a strong commitment to the CSR culture [37]. These findings are also supported by Koseoglu et al. studies that utilized panel data to examine the link among external assurance, reporting, and performance index of CSR practices and established that the hospitality industry has a higher propensity for CSR practices, and as such, it is among the top performing sectors globally that yield more profits go towards the country's GDP [38]. Therefore, CSR leads to business growth and sustainability as it allows engagement and participation in the green policy and culturally-sensitive hospitality industry that is equal, respectful, and honest to everybody.

Promoting environmental sustainability, high labor standards, and supporting local communities are essential aspects of global hotels and other corporations [39]. A study by Holcomb et al. affirms that hotels are actively promoting CSR activities, just as in other business sectors [40]. In observation of this, many Kenyan hotels are in the process of integrating environmental and social objectives into their operations and using this as a base for developing unique competitiveness in the market. CSR in the hospitality industry has a significant impact on a community's socio-economic situation [39]. Engaging in CSR and sustainable activities such as working with the local communities, making donations to charity, and purchasing fair-trade goods can increase a brand's reputation in the market, thereby resulting in increased performance and productivity of the firm. Initiatives entailing personal involvement with hotel employees are highly likely to yield long-term benefits to an organization [41]. This clearly indicates that CSR and sustainability are all about the attitude and orientation that business enterprises take towards their shareholders, employees, customers, and the broader society.

In a different study conducted by Chung and Parker in the Singapore hospitality industry, the researchers found out that consuming less energy, employing people from the local community, and reducing pollution minimizes the negative impact of hotels on the local community and aids in enhancing the brand image, thereby increasing the market share and size [42]. This is likewise supported by a study conducted by Sheldon and Parker to identify the drives for CSR adoption by business enterprises [43]. The authors explored the U.S. hospitality industry and established that the conservation and preservation of the natural environment, as well as the promotion of sustainable business operations and ecotourism, play an essential role in promoting socially responsible business operations [43]. The researchers were interested in CSR activities, inhibitors, perceptions, and challenges that hotel organizations face. The study unveiled that conservation and preservation of the natural environment, as well as ecotourism, formed an integral part of the sustainability and CSR practices of organizations [43]. However, it was also unveiled that CSR and sustainability practices are yet to be widely adopted in the hotel industry [43]. This finding was attributed to the business leaders' inability to conceptualize and understand how to go about

the latter. On the same note, it was also unveiled that businesses in the hospitality industry expected the government to take the lead in the implementation of certifications and standardization networks to oversee the implementation of sustainable activities. There is hence a significant need for a business enterprise to maintain a good relationship with the government and local communities where a company operates.

Hsieh contends that approximately half of the top global hotels have reported corporate initiatives that are related to sustainable business practices and CSR [44]. In his study, the researcher explains that large hotels are more likely to realize increased competitive advantage as a result of their engagement in environmental protection initiatives [44]. On the other hand, the researcher also claims that only a few hotels across the entire globe have environmental policies reflecting an organizational commitment to sustainable practices. This is clearly depicted in the Kenyan context, whereby only the top hotels in the industry seem to be concerned with CSR practices while the rest have no serious engagement in environmental improvement programs.

Additionally, apart from environmental conservation and community support, hotels in Kenya should also consider their relationships with the stakeholders, such as the suppliers, customers, investors, and the organization's employees. According to a study by Holcomb et al., various hotels engage in CSR practices that are related to equitable benefits, workforce diversity, and career enhancement [40]. Such an aspect suggests that the employees usually perceive community-oriented activities as irrelevant [40]. This implies that the majority of the hotels may practice CSR for public relations but have a low sense of its importance to the organization.

Moreover, an ideal CSR and sustainability strategy should have both philosophical and ethical dimensions, especially when considering the fact that there exists a wide gap between the Kenyan populace in terms of standards, income, and socio-economic status [44]. Just as in the rest of the world, there has been a realization in the Kenyan industries that businesses cannot prosper in failing societies. On the same note, Bajpai explains that there is a significant need for hotels to not only fulfill the legal obligations but also invest more in human capital, environmental

aspects and enhance the relationship with the stakeholders [44].

Overly, there have been numerous studies on hotels' engagement in CSR and Sustainability. From the studies reviewed above, it is clear that CSR adoption in various countries is different, with some prioritizing communities, environmental protection, and/or stakeholders. In the Kenyan context, CSR and sustainable business practices are yet to see strict adoption, and there is a lack of accepted framework and strategies on how to go about it. From the past studies, it is clear that CSR and sustainability in business operations are diverse concepts with wide definitions, dimensions, and scope and are usually associated with a broad range of benefits to both the firm and society at large. In the hospitality industry, it is important for hotels to include CSR in their operations management, business strategies, and communications with the stakeholders.

3. METHODS

A quantitative descriptive approach was used in the study. This approach enabled the researcher to systematically study and describe the underlying aspects of the phenomena and their interactions as well. Purposive convenient sampling was used to select 60 hotels for the study. This sampling approach is a combination of two techniques. The convenience approach allowed the researcher to identify participants for the conveniently available or accessible individuals who are part of the research population. This implies recruiting individuals who are geographically close or accessible to the researcher or individuals who can be easily enlisted in the study online. The purposive approach ensures that the selected participants meet the characteristics needed for the research. As such, the participants should be selected "on purpose."

From the sampled 60 hotels, one representative who met the inclusion criteria was identified for recruitment to partake in the survey. The inclusion criteria entailed: currently being a mid-level (tactical) or top-level (strategic) manager, having held the position for at least one year, and being ready and willing to participate in the study. The participants were not limited by age or department. Out of the 60 sampled hotels, it was impossible to establish reliable potential participants from 16 of them, leaving a total of 44 hotels, hence 44 participants. However, out of

these, 7 of the participants were not willing and ready to partake in the study. Finally, only 37 participants (n=37) gave their consent and participated in the study.

A fully structured survey questionnaire was used. The survey was designed and administered online through Survey Monkey. The link to the survey was shared with the participants. Each participant was required to complete the survey only once. The researcher did not assist any of the respondents in answering the questions, nor did he physically interact with them. To ensure the validity and reliability of the data collection instrument, the researcher ensured that all relevant aspects of the research question were covered in the questionnaire. Moreover, the validity was also promoted by eliminating researcher interaction with the participants, which can result in participant bias. Reliability was ensured by having robust inclusion criteria, letting the participants take the questionnaire at their own pace and time, and having sufficient questions to address the research problem.

The participants were expected to respond to the closed-ended questions by selecting the most appropriate option from the list of answers given, whose weighting had been pre-determined by the researcher using ordinal scales. All the questions were formulated in English, as it is the official language in Kenya and is universally used by hotels. The questions were formulated in a manner that enlisted the participants' perceptions, beliefs, thoughts, and opinions regarding the importance of CSR and sustainability to their hotels.

All the questions in the survey were programmed to "require an answer," and, therefore, the participants could not skip some questions, an aspect that promoted the reliability and validity of the data collected. Additionally, clear instructions were given to each question, and therefore, there

was no rephrasing of the questions asked by the participants.

To uphold research ethics, the researcher ensured participant anonymity, confidentiality, voluntary participation, self-determination, and informed consent in participating in the survey. Permission from the relevant organizations and individuals was obtained before proceeding with the investigation. On the same note, the participants in the study were given an opportunity to voluntarily agree or decline to partake in the study or even withdraw their participation within the course of the survey without penalties.

4. RESULTS

The questionnaire was electronically administered to 37 participants who had given their consent to partake in the study (n=37). An ordinal scale was used to code the responses from the participants. A weighting of 1 to 5 was assigned to each answer option based on the negativity or positivity of the response (see Table 1).

4.1 Areas of Social Responsibility that are More Significant to the Hotels

Firstly all the participants in the study agreed to clearly understand the theme of CSR and apply them in their work environment. On the areas of social responsibility that are more significant to the hotels and their corresponding level of importance; the relationship with customers and the suppliers received the highest score of 100% with a 0.00 standard deviation and a mean average of 5.0, the highest on the ordinal scale, thereby indicating extreme importance of the latter; the relationship with the community and policy towards employees got 75.00% score, with a stands deviation of 0.87 and 0.43.

Table 1. The ordinal scale used

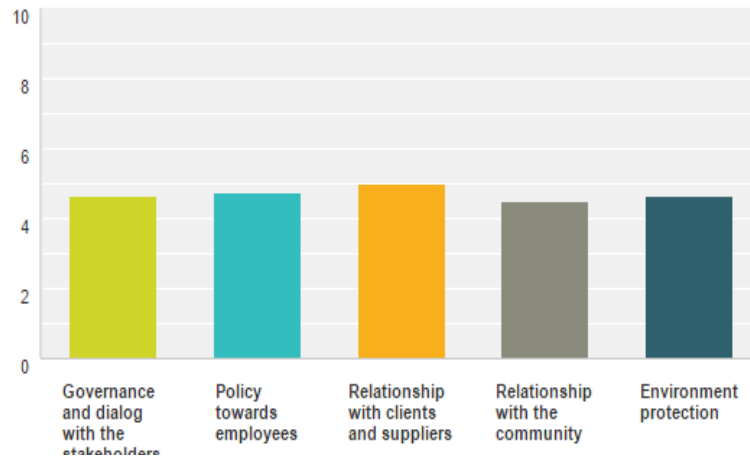| Option set 1	Option set 2	Option set 3	Weight
Not Important	Strongly Disagree	Not Concerned	1
Slightly Important	Disagree	Less Reactive	2
Moderate	Neither agrees nor Disagree	Reactive	3
Important	Agree	Flexible	4
Very Important	Strongly Agree	Aggressive	5

Fig. 1. The areas of social responsibility that are more significant to the hotels and their corresponding level of importance

The high standard deviation on the relationship with the community was because the respondents greatly differed on its importance, with 25% perceiving it as of moderate importance while 75% claiming it is crucial. Governance and dialog with the stakeholders received a 62.50%, as well as Environmental protection, both with a weighted average of 4.63. All the responses to these statements were towards the positive extreme, an aspect that suggests that they are all important CSR dimensions but with a relationship with clients and suppliers taking the lead (See Fig. 1).

4.2 Reasons that Encourage Hotel's Adoption / Continuing with CSR Practices

In this question, greater employee satisfaction and relationship with the customers and suppliers recorded the highest weighted average of 4.13, while the benefit from relationships with financial institutions and the community got the lowest weighted score of 3.75. On the same question, 25% of the respondents strongly agreed with commercial advantage to new markets and greater employee satisfaction. On a different note, 12.50% of the respondents disagreed that pressure from media and consumer associations was a reason for the option of CSR.

4.3 Increase in Financial Performance as a Result of Engagement in CSR

37.50% of the respondents claimed their organizations had received a pretty much increase in financial performance from CSR

engagement. Another 37.50% claimed that their hotels had received a moderate increase in their performance from CSR engagement. The remaining 25% of the respondents stated that their firms had only realized a slight increase in financial performance as a result of CSR engagement. On the same, no score was recorded for "No increase" and "extremely high" in the financial performance of the firm (See Fig. 2).

4.4 Major Areas of Focus by Hotels' CSR Activities

87.50% of the respondents reported partnership with the local communities where they operate; 62.50% on business transparency, relationships with the stakeholders, and responsible business practices; 50.00% reported on health and development of the employees, as well as engagement in socially responsible investing. The lowest score (12.50%) was recorded on business activities oriented towards climatic changes. The column chart below tracks the areas where the Kenyan hotels have seen increased CSR activity, based on their endorsement by the respondents.

4.5 Measures Taken by the Hotels to Reduce their Environmental Impact

This question was characterized by great uniformity in the reports from the questionnaire. The highest score was only 25.00%, recorded in 4 categories, including energy saving, sustainable packaging, development of environmentally friendly products, life cycle assessment processes, and use of renewable

resources. Mobility management through carpooling and use of renewable resources recorded a 12.50% score each. No scores were reported for waste recycling by the hotels as well as the management of the environmental systems. Finally, 25% of the respondents denied having any measures to reduce their environmental footprint.
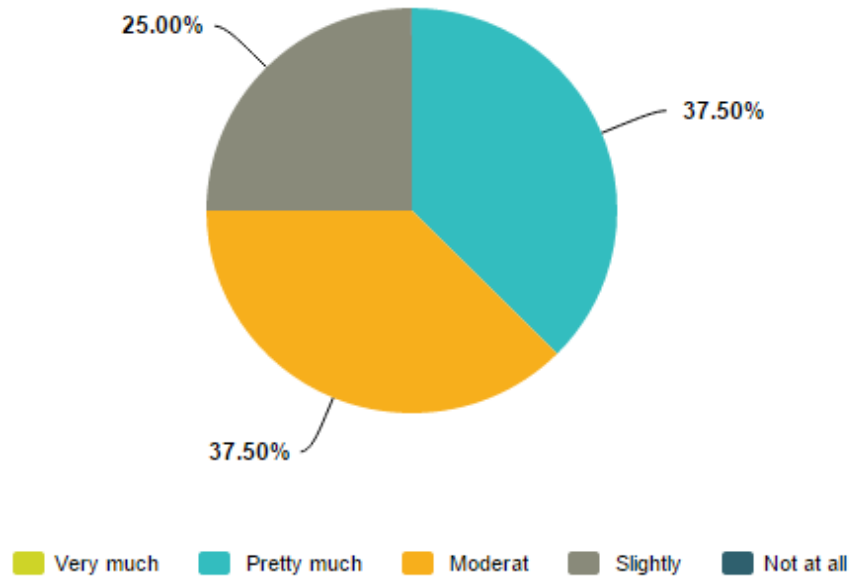

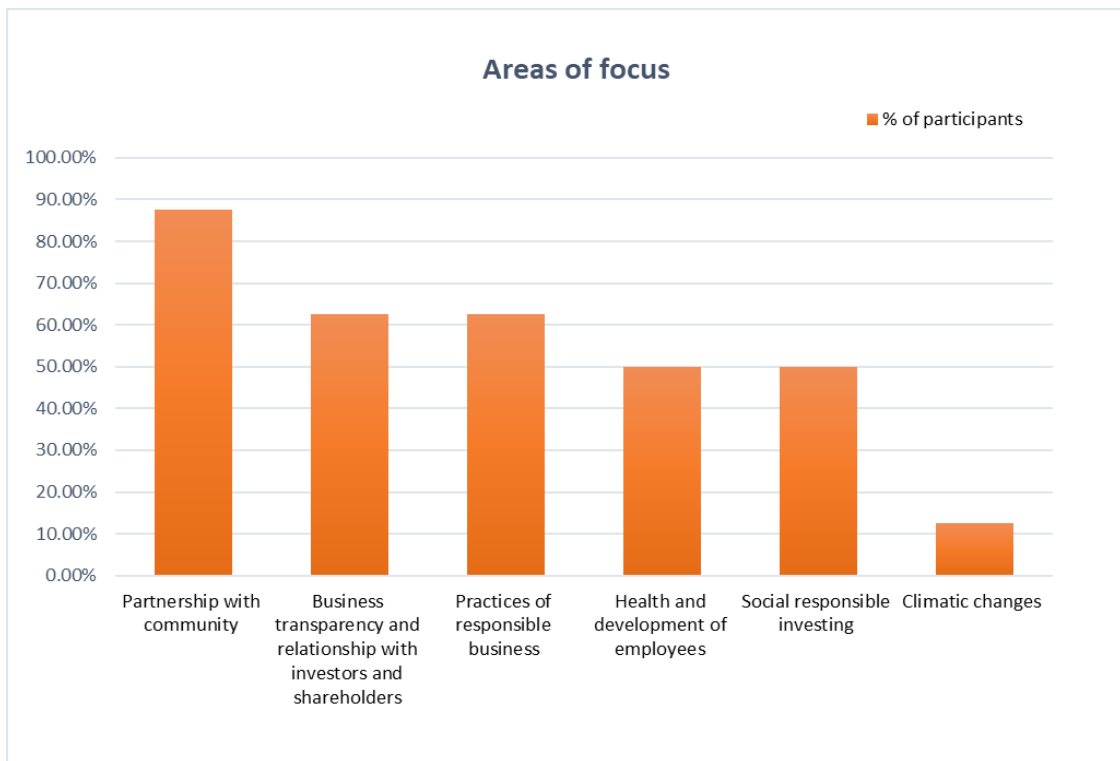**Fig. 2. A pie chart showing an increase in financial performance by the hotels**

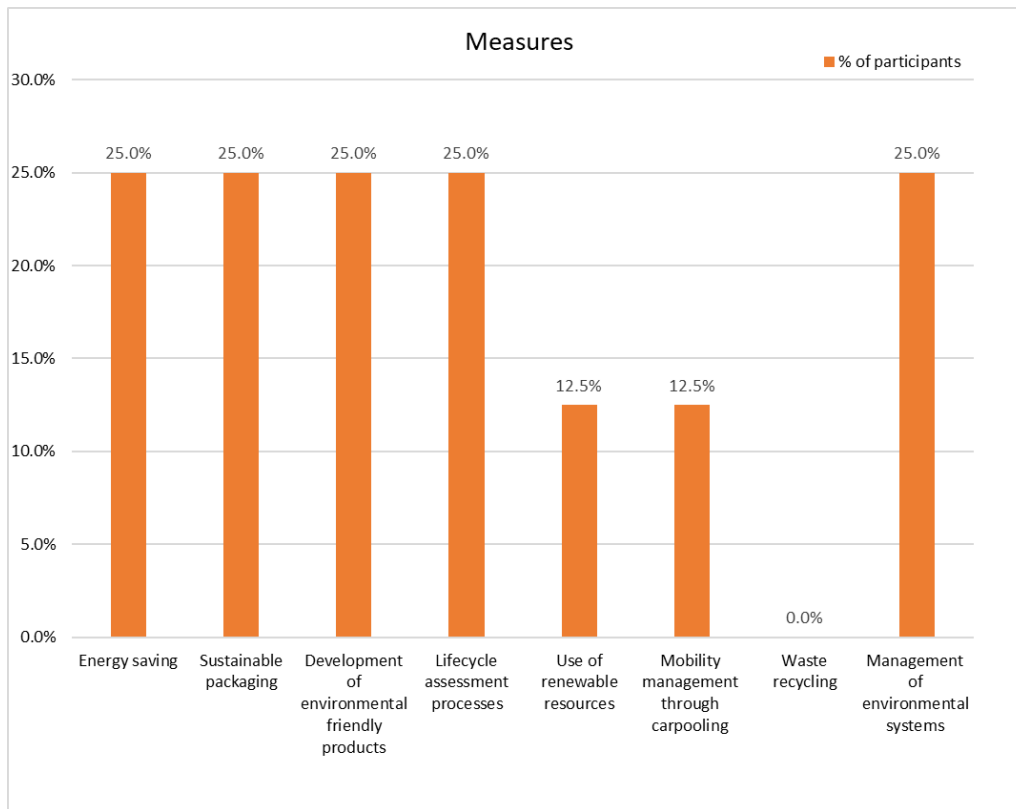**Fig. 3. Areas where the Kenyan hotels have seen increased CSR activity**

Fig. 4. Areas prioritized by hotels in addressing their environmental footprint

Table 2. Participation of Kenyan hotels in CSR Activities

Answer Choices–	% of participants
Donations to organizations having social or environmental utility	100.00%
Corporate foundation	37.50%
Sponsorship of sports and cultural events	25.00%
Cause-related marketing campaign	25.00%
Partnership projects of social solidarity	12.50%
Corporate voluntary	12.50%
None	0.00%

4.6 Hotel's Community Participation Strategies

All the participants claimed that their hotels did donate to the organization's environmental or social utility. Moreover, 25.00% claimed to sponsor cultural events and sports. 25.00% of the respondents claimed that their hotels partake in related campaigns oriented towards improving the welfare of the people. 37.50% reported having a corporate foundation, which is a charitable organization made to enhance the wellbeing of the Kenyan communities. A 12.50% score was recorded in corporate volunteering activities as well as partnership projects aimed at bettering the welfare of Kenyan society. None of the respondents reported a lack of concrete action towards community participation.

4.7 Role of CSR

This question was focused on evaluating and understanding the specific roles played by CSR in the hospitality industry. The roles are basically benefits associated with CSR and underpin its importance. CSR engagement by the hotels in order of significance was found to be:

1. Enhancing corporate reputation,
2. Improving relationships with clients to promote referrals and high customer retention,

3. Increasing commercial advantages in new markets and existing markets,
4. Enhancing employee satisfaction,
5. Heightening public relations, which leads o to customer base expansion
6. Increased financial benefits financial institutions such as banks
7. Improving corporate image in the marketplace,
8. Improving relations with suppliers, institutions, donors, and community
9. Strengthening employees' morale,
10. Increased the efficiency in organizational operations,
11. Improving access to credit facilities,
12. Fostering identification of reputational risks

5. DISCUSSION

The study clearly indicates that it is essential for Kenyan hotels to engage in sustainability and corporate services that foster the wellbeing of society, as observed in the study by Lazarus and Richard [25,39,40] in the global hospitality and tourism industry. It can be ascertained that the hotels in Kenya are yet to observe strict measures with regard to CSR, as the majority do not have a clear operational strategy and policy framework on the same. Nevertheless, it was unveiled that the majority of the hotels are usually concerned about employee welfare and with lesser orientation on community welfare at large.

From the study, it is clear that hotels in Kenya have neglected the environmental function of CSR and are more concerned with those aspects that directly promote the productivity of the hotels. This implies that the involvement of hotels in protecting the environment should be highly encouraged, as they have significant environmental and social effects, including but not limited to; waste production and management, water management, purchasing and procurement, energy consumption, harmful emissions leading to atmospheric contamination and general societal sustainability. This is backed by a report by the United Nations Environmental Programme and the International Hotels Environmental Initiative, which stresses the need for business enterprises to address issues of social responsibility and environmental protection [45].

Despite the lack of formal reporting and documentation, the majority of the firms were found to engage in activities related to diversity, employment conditions, quality, and community welfare. However, the reporting on the contribution towards environmental protection was significantly low. This finding is in line with study findings by De-Grosbois that while a majority of business enterprises claim to be committed to socially responsible activities and sustainable business practices, only a few firms have comprehensive documentation on their engagements in such initiatives and the actual performance attained on such [46]. This emphasizes the assertion that the majority of business organizations are usually concerned with the employee working condition aspect and customers, with little orientation on the improvement in the quality of life of the general society.

It was established that CSR and sustainability practices in hotel boutiques increase the productivity of a firm and its performance. Various respondents claimed to have realized increased profitability of the organization through CSR activities. The participants ascribed such a trend to the public's perception and needed to be associated with a corporation that promotes societal welfare. In the long run, the respondents claimed that their business enterprises had seen a significant increase in customer base, and though it's not possible to give the percentage contribution of CSR to the increment, they believed that CSR activities had contributed a commendable percentage to the same.

Donations towards charity organizations and sponsorship of sports and cultural events were found to be some of the main avenues through which Kenyan hotels contribute to societal welfare. However, CSR entails more than local community involvement and employees welfare and encompasses a broad range of stakeholders and shareholders, such as public authorities, nongovernmental organizations in the local communities, the customers, and the surrounding environment as a well [47]. In this sense, the need for hotels engagement in sustainable business practices and CSR is embedded in various components of strategic planning and sustainable development. Hotels should aim at reducing their environmental damages, which are significantly growing as a result of industrial expansion, operate with integrity and transparency in civil society, come up with innovations that are aimed at reducing the environmental footprints of the firms, and work towards promoting the welfare of the general society by contributing towards a better

living standard of the low class in a manner that enhances wealth and income creation and distribution.

Maintaining good public relations was found to largely contribute to CSR practices by hotels. This was one of the main benefits of Kenyan hotels' engagement in CSR activities, as unveiled in the study. It was established that the majority of the hotels are wary of how their brand is perceived by the general public and the need to enhance their brand reputation and reception by enhancing their corporate image via redefinition of their public relations strategy. It was unveiled that CSR acts as an avenue for the hotels to impress the public by showing their support for societal activities by contributing to the welfare of the local communities. From a business perceive, good public relations by a business fosters the reception of its products and services by the potential and prospective customers and aids in creating conducive marketing environments for an organization's offerings. In this regard, it can be ascertained that by strongly partaking in sustainable and socially responsible business operations, the Kenyan hotels stands a better chance of gaining significant public recognition and gaining trust from the company stakeholder. This would, in turn, lead to increased productivity of the organizations.

It was additionally found that different organizations perceive the importance of CSR differently based on the benefits that the management thinks the organization and society would accrue from such practices. This is in line with the study by Schleg et al. [48,49], who posit that different organizations have different approaches toward CSR, and people from various states usually perceive an organization's participation in societal activities differently based on their sociocultural background and prevailing political regimes. The results of the study supported these findings, as the entire hotel seemed concerned about employee welfare, with the majority of them having various programs aimed at promoting the personal and career development of the employees [50].

A major aspect noted from the responses and which contributes to organizational motivation to achieve sustainability was the need for environmental protection. Despite the financial orientation in the boutique hotel's engagement in CSR activities, the respondents also claimed that it is pertinent for business enterprises to implement sustainable practices that have a minimum environmental footprint and which promote mutual coexistence and welfare of society. This is especially true when considering the fact that world resources are slowly getting depleted, and unsustainable business practices have had a detrimental effect on the ecosystem and hums existence. It has therefore become paramount for companies to ensure their activities have minimal effect on the environment and their operations safeguard natural resources.

From the study findings, it can be ascertained that engaging in CSR gives hotels a sustainable competitive advantage over their rivals, thereby promoting the continuation of their economic activities in a profitable manner in the long term. This finding is supported by a study by Lazarus and Richard [25], who empirically tested CSR, competitiveness, and increased productivity by a firm and found out that the variables were positively correlated. This clearly indicates that hotels with greater environmental protection orientation and which promote the welfare of the stakeholders and the society at large tend to have better financial results, with increasing profitability in the long run. This clearly implies that CSR activities and sustainable practices by hotel boutiques in Kenya have social, cultural, and economic benefits to the firms and all their stakeholders.

6. CONCLUSION

The aim of the study was to assess the importance of CSR in promoting the growth and sustainability of hotels in Kenya. The Kenyan hotel industry is a key player in both national and international economies, and the hotel's non-participation in CSR may be detrimental to local, domestic and global communities. As stipulated in the United Nations Global Compact and the International Standards Organization (1SO 2000) on CSR and the Global Reporting Initiative, CSR is made to enhance sustainable living and reduce adversaries associated with various business activities. Further, the latter is also aimed at promoting unity and improving the living standards of the people while still enhancing a firm's profitability. In essence, all the regulations pertaining to CSR are made to make the world a better place, as it would make no sense if organizations misused today's natural resources, leaving no hope, and economic continuity for the future generations.

The study findings show that the majority of the companies asserted that CSR activities are primarily important in enhancing the organization's brand image to the prospective and general public as a whole, improving risk management strategies and compliance with ethical business practices. However, other additional benefits of organizations' engagement in CSR include reduced employee turnover, improved organizational culture, and better legal compliance.

For hotels to operate in a cost-efficient and sustainable manner and contribute to societal welfare and reduce their environmental footprint, the business leaders need to understand the importance of enacting a sustainable business model that enlists CSR principles in a way that promotes organizational productivity and preference by customers. In any case, if hotels continue making investments without understanding how they should react to societal, economic, cultural, and environmental issues, not only would they be poorly utilizing their scarce finical, material, and human resources, but also imperiling their overall corporate objectives.

CSR engagement by the hotels, in order of significance, was found to play a major role in (1) Enhancing corporate reputation, (2) Improving relationships with clients resulting in referrals and high customer retention, (3) Increasing commercial advantages in new markets, and existing markets, (4) Enhancing employee satisfaction, (5) Heightening public relations leading to customer base expansion, (6) Increased financial benefits financial institution such as banks (7) Improving corporate image in the marketplace, (8) Improving relations with suppliers, institutions, donors and community, (9) Strengthening employees morale, (10) Increased the efficiency in organizational operations, (11) Improving access to credit facilities, (12) Fostering identification of reputational risks. These benefits indicate that there is a correlation between the social and environmental engagement of an enterprise and its performance. The study suggests that firms engaging in CSR activities have a greater potential of increasing their profits.

CONSENT

As per international standard or university standard, Participants' written consent has been collected and preserved by the author(s).

COMPETING INTERESTS

The author has declared that the author has no known competing financial interests or non-financial interests, or personal relationships that could has appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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