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Strategy Leadership Project

Research Report

**Title: The Role of CSR in Creating Competitive
Advantage in the Private Sector: A Case Study of
IBV Company**

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DECLARATION OF THE STUDY

I, Xavier Ariel Ratheepaul (Student number: 65560485), declared that:

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ABSTRACT

The study examined the role of CSR in creating a competitive advantage for IBV company in the private sector. The IBV company has been facing significant competition from competitors in the business internationalization business environment. However, to survive in the industry, businesses always try to create a competitive advantage. Therefore, this study will fill this gap by focusing on the role of CSR in creating a competitive advantage in the private sector with inferences drawn from the IBV company in the Gauteng Province. The study adopted a qualitative research approach where data was collected using semi-structured interviews. The study employed interviews with 10 purposively selected participants to scrutinize the strategic alignment of CSR efforts and its multifaceted impact on IBV company's success.

Findings underscored the significance of strategic alignment as a guiding principle for CSR initiatives' triumph in IBV company's internationalization endeavours. The seamless integration of CSR into the broader business strategy emerged as a catalyst for achieving organisational goals and enhancing competitiveness in the private sector. The study highlighted the multifaceted impact of CSR on IBV company's competitive advantage in the dynamic business environment of the Gauteng Province. Tangible outcomes, including reputation enhancement and cost savings, were identified. The improvements in operational efficiency and resource management reinforced CSR as a strategic business approach, offering tangible benefits beyond philanthropy.

Also, recommendations focussed on two critical aspects for optimizing CSR success: active stakeholder engagement and the development of measurable impact metrics. The study advocated for the quantification of CSR outcomes, allowing IBV company to gauge effectiveness and transparently communicate success to stakeholders and the broader business environment.

Key Terms: Corporate Social Responsibility, Competitive Advantage, Internationalization, Strategic Alignment, Thematic Analysis, Stakeholder Engagement, Measurable Impact Metrics, Gauteng Province.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
CSV	Creating Shared Value
ESG	Environmental, Social, And Governance
GRI	Global Reporting Initiative
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisations
RBV	Resource-Based View
ROI	Return on Investment
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SMEs	Small and Medium-sized Enterprises

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1 Introduction

Although the idea of corporate social responsibility (CSR) is not new, it has gained considerable importance in the past few years. According to Lee, Ha, and Yoon (2022), businesses were obligated to contribute to social needs as part of voluntary corporate social responsibility (CSR) programs. Zajkowska (2017) believed that the primary goal of any company, regardless of size or industry, was to make a profit while having a significant positive impact on the economy and society. The concept of corporate social responsibility (CSR) had become increasingly popular. This was because people were starting to realize that businesses needed to do more than just make money to be successful in the long term. Businesses needed to also think about how they could help society and meet people's expectations. In the past, some businesses focused only on making profits and did not care about anything else. But now, this approach was no longer seen as a good way to do business.

Furthermore, the recent financial crisis and the collapse of state-owned enterprises and business giants such as South African Airways, South African Express, Denel and other organisations have heightened public demands for fundamental changes in the way business and society interact. For businesses to remain profitable and advance socially conscious efforts, they must accommodate a variety of interests and goals. Respecting regional identity, strengthening relations with regional organisations, assisting group entities in achieving diversity goals and general corporate social responsibility were just a few of the various interests and ambitions (Sharma, 2019).

However, scholarly investigation on the phenomenon of contextualized Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) was nascent, particularly in relation to its potential to generate a competitive advantage within industries such as business strategy and specialized legal services involved in business internationalization (Lee, Ha and Yoon, 2022). In the context of corporate internationalization, there were still few research papers and literature on this topic (Islam and Abd Wahab, 2021). The specific context should be considered, as corporate social responsibility (CSR) is fundamental to a company's interaction with the

communities in which it operated. Understanding a specific history can help avoid the good-versus-bad debate about corporate social responsibility (CSR), which focused on whether CSR is a waste of money or a means to achieve financial excellence. Most literature, regardless of context, advocated CSR as a catch-all solution for multinational corporations (Looser, 2020; Sharma, 2019; He and Harris, 2020). According to this view, corporate social responsibility (CSR) allowed multinational corporations to self-regulate to take responsibility for their actions and to use these actions to benefit the company's customers, employees, communities, and the environment. The opposite extreme view is that CSR is just a guise or a false virtue that no organisation should take seriously (He and Harris, 2020).

According to Re and Giachino (2018), an organisation's CSR policies may be greatly influenced by endogenous prosocial perspectives that lead to voluntary actions that benefit others and promote peaceful relationships. As a result, diverse companies tend to have stronger ties to their surrounding communities and employees. Dunne and McBrayer (2019) argued that branch managers in large companies have a different foundation in business ethics than branch managers in small businesses because they are also responsible for generating profits.

However, there are not many examples of multinational organisations implementing effective CSR programs in local businesses (Sharma, 2019). According to Nielsen Global CSR Research (2021), South African companies that excelled in CSR activities included Woolworths Holdings, Limited, ENGEN Oil and SABMiller. Corporate social responsibility programs helped companies improve risk management and marketing strategies (Gustafson, 2016).

Moreover, establishing a robust CSR image played a pivotal role in contributing to the sustained success of an organisation. Companies that are recognized for their commitment to good corporate citizenship can bolster their standing in terms of corporate social responsibility, particularly when their strategic philanthropic efforts were directed towards community stakeholders. This enhanced reputation became a significant asset, fortifying the company's competitive edge in the market and positively impacting its cash

flow and profitability. Despite the conventional emphasis on the relationship between CSR and financial performance, there were relatively limited focus on its role in generating a competitive advantage. Therefore, this study sought to address these gaps in the existing literature by examining the influence of CSR on creating a competitive advantage within the private sector, with insights drawn from the experience of the IBV Company in the Gauteng Province.

1.2 Research Problem

Sharma (2019) believed that the goal of corporate social responsibility was to promote economic growth by creating jobs and improving the socio-economic environment in South Africa. Although corporate social responsibility (CSR) was widely recognized as playing a key role in sustainable development and economic growth, its efficacy in providing firms with a competitive advantage when expanding internationally had not been theoretically evaluated (Bernak-Woźny, 2017: 18). The IBV Company is currently grappling with substantial competition within the business internationalization landscape. In the pursuit of industry survival, businesses invariably sought to establish a competitive advantage. Notably, the existing literature had primarily concentrated on the connection between CSR and financial performance (Global Survey of Corporate Social Responsibility, 2021) and the correlation between CSR programs and consumer behaviour (Dunne and McBrayer, 2019). Consequently, this study aimed to address this gap by specifically examining the impact of CSR on fostering a competitive advantage in the private sector, utilizing insights derived from the experiences of the IBV Company situated in the Gauteng Province.

1.3 Aim of the Study

This study aimed to examine the role of CSR in creating a competitive advantage for IBV Company in the private sector. The study explored the impact of CSR initiatives on the success of IBV Company's internationalization efforts and its competitiveness in the Gauteng Province.

1.4 Research Objectives

The following research objectives were addressed:

- To identify the key factors that contribute to the success of CSR initiatives in IBV Company's internationalization efforts.
- To analyse the role of CSR in creating a competitive advantage for the IBV Company in Gauteng Province.
- To provide recommendations for interventions that the IBV Company can implement to improve the success of CSR initiatives and enhance its competitiveness in the business environment.

1.5 Research Questions

The research objectives were transformed into the following research questions:

- What are the critical success factors for CSR initiatives in the IBV Company's internationalization efforts?
- How does CSR contribute to creating a competitive advantage for the IBV Company in Gauteng Province?
- What specific interventions can the IBV Company implement to improve the success of its CSR initiatives and enhance its competitiveness in the business environment?

1.6 Significance of the Study

The study's significance lay in its contribution to the understanding of the critical role of CSR in creating a competitive advantage for businesses in the private sector. The findings were beneficial to the IBV Company and other businesses seeking to improve their competitiveness through CSR initiatives. The study's recommendations helped the IBV Company to identify interventions that could enhance the success of its CSR initiatives, and lead to improved competitiveness in the business environment. The study also contributed to the body of literature on CSR.

1.7 Abbreviated Literature Review

The section provides an abbreviated literature review on the role of CSR in creating a competitive advantage for IBV Company in the private sector.

1.7.1 Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)

According to Fatima and Elbanna (2023), corporate social responsibility (CSR) referred to the voluntary efforts and initiatives businesses take to operate in a way that went above and beyond their legal responsibilities. CSR entailed acting morally, accepting accountability for a company's effects on people and the environment, and promoting sustainable growth (Dahlsrud, 2008). Philanthropy, environmental sustainability projects, moral labour standards, and community participation were examples of CSR efforts (Matten and Moon, 2008). In recent years, the idea of corporate social responsibility (CSR) had attracted a lot of attention, reflecting on the rising understanding of the contribution that business made to sustainable development.

1.7.2 Competitive Advantage

A competitive advantage is the capacity of an organisation to outperform its rivals through the provision of superior goods or services, increased efficiency, or the development of a distinctive value proposition (Agung and Darma (2019); Porter, 1985). A business that had a competitive edge may make more money, draw in and keep clients, and thrive over the long run (Barney, 1991). Different strategies, including cost leadership, differentiation, innovation, and operational excellence, are used to gain a competitive advantage (Hossain, Akter and Yanamandram, 2021). Examining how a company's CSR initiatives might enhance its competitive advantage was necessary to determine the function of CSR in generating competitive advantage in the private sector. Examining how CSR programs may improve a business's reputation, brand image, customer loyalty, employee engagement, and stakeholder relationships was part of this process.

1.7.3 The role of CSR in creating competitive advantage

Shah and Khan (2020) propounded that one of the key benefits of CSR activities was its potential to enhance a company's reputation. By undertaking initiatives that addressed societal issues or contributed to sustainable development, a company can cultivate a positive public perception. When consumers recognise a company's efforts to make a positive impact, they are more likely to hold a favourable view of the company, resulting in increased trust and loyalty. Additionally, CSR activities played a crucial role in shaping a company's brand image (Hang et al., 2022). A strong brand image was vital for establishing a unique identity and differentiating a company from competitors. By incorporating CSR into their business strategy, companies can align their brand values with social and environmental causes, creating a positive association in the minds of consumers. This association not only attracted socially conscious consumers but also fostered pride and loyalty among existing customers (Marakova et al., 2021).

1.7.4 Theoretical framework

The Resource-Based View (RBV) and Stakeholder Theory provided lenses as two prominent theoretical frameworks underpinning this study in the field of Corporate Social responsibility (CSR) literature. The resource-based view, a strategic management theory articulated by Barney (2021), posited that a company's competitive advantage was rooted in its distinctive and challenging-to-replicate resources and capabilities. Engaging in CSR initiatives, such as advocating for social responsibility or environmental sustainability, yielded several positive effects on a company's reputation. According to research by Gao et al. (2015), such initiatives enhanced a company's image as socially conscious, resulting in heightened consumer loyalty and positive word-of-mouth marketing.

In contrast, the stakeholder theory emphasised the importance of businesses considering the interests of all stakeholders, including employees, customers, suppliers, and the broader community. This theory asserted that businesses could cultivate a favourable reputation by aligning CSR activities with the interests of their stakeholders, as highlighted by Hörisch et al. (2020). Additionally, stakeholder theory emphasised the need for businesses to incorporate the interests of all relevant parties in their decision-making

processes, encompassing consumers, employees, suppliers, communities, and the environment (Hörisch et al., 2020).

1.8 Proposed Research Methodology

For the primary study, the research onion methodology was employed. The study used a population and sampling framework structure, data gathering methods, and data analysis techniques.

1.8.1 Qualitative Research Approach

To achieve the research objectives, a qualitative research approach was used (Bloomfield et al., 2019). The main objective of the study was to analyse the different drivers of employee participation in CSR programs and the impact of CSR on company reputation and brand image. In qualitative research, employees' perceptions of corporate social responsibility (CSR) and how it affected their behaviour and attitudes toward the company were collected through interviews (Flick, 2016). Employing qualitative research was crucial as it helped to better understand the many variables that influence workers' attitudes and behaviours towards CSR.

1.8.2 Population and sample framework

The employees of the private sector company IBV Company were the demographic of interest in this study, which aimed to determine how CSR contributed to the creation of a competitive advantage. There were 22 people in the population, which consisted of management and non-management staff. The sample was chosen for the study using a non-probability sampling technique. Using a subjective evaluation method as opposed to random selection, the researcher selects samples using this sampling approach (Maree, 2017). Purposive sampling was specifically employed in the study, in which samples were selected by researchers based on their qualifications and reliability (Maree, 2017).

1.8.3 Data collection method

Data collection is the act of obtaining and evaluating information on important variables within an existing framework to quantify results and provide insightful analysis (Maree, 2017). Semi-structured interviews were the primary method of data collection for this study (see Appendix A for the interview guide). During these face-to-face or online interviews, the researcher asked participants relevant questions about the study and listened to their opinions.

1.8.4 Data Analysis Techniques

The data collected were valuable only after it has been evaluated to uncover patterns and trends. Examining data and classifying it to reflect the scope and context of the problem was part of the analysis process. According to Kiger and Varpio (2020), this process required examining information and classifying it using codes to discover trends and themes. To find recurring themes and patterns in the data, thematic analysis was used as an analytical method (Braun and Clarke, 2019). This strategy gave the researcher a thorough grasp of how corporate social responsibility could provide IBV companies with a competitive advantage.

1.8.5 Limitations of the Study

The limitations of the study represent the constraints faced by the researcher that were beyond their control or were limited in scope. Firstly, the study was confined to the private sector and specifically focused on IBV, which may limit the generalisability of the findings to other industries or companies. While the research included perspectives from both management and non-management levels within the firm, it remained restricted to the context of IBV.

Another limitation was the scarcity of existing studies on the role of CSR in creating a competitive advantage in the private sector. This lack of an extensive literature may constrain a comprehensive understanding of the subject under study. Additionally, the study employed a single research approach, qualitative research, which had inherent limitations in terms of generalisability and may not capture the full spectrum of

perspectives. However, efforts were made to enhance trustworthiness by synthesising findings with inferences drawn from the literature review.

1.8.6 Delimitations

The study was limited to the private sector and focused only on IBV. The research concentrated on both the management and non-management levels, allowing for the collection of both unbiased opinions in the firm.

1.9 Thesis chapters outline

The thesis has the following chapters:

Chapter 1: Introduction

This chapter effectively sets the stage by introducing the topic, providing background information, stating the problem, and outlining the research questions, objectives, aim, and significance.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter was crucial for providing a theoretical foundation for the study. It comprehensively reviewed relevant literature related to CSR practices and their impact on creating a competitive advantage, especially focusing on the IBV company.

Chapter 3: Methodology

The chapter elaborated on the research approach (qualitative) and provided a detailed explanation of the chosen methodology within this approach. The chapter considered including information on data collection techniques, sample selection, and data analysis procedures.

Chapter 4: Analysis, Results, and Discussions of Findings

The chapter presented the findings of the study in this chapter. It included an analysis of the results to provide insights into the implications of the findings. The chapter demonstrated the addressing of the research objectives.

Chapter 5: Conclusions and Recommendations

The chapter summarised the key findings, drew conclusions based on the analysis, and linked these conclusions back to the research questions and objectives. The chapter provided recommendations for future research and practical applications of the findings.

1.10 Conclusion

This chapter provided background information on the research findings on the role of corporate social responsibility (CSR) in providing companies with a competitive advantage in the private sector, using the case of IBV companies. This chapter provided an overview of the study's history, research questions, aims, objectives, research questions, and significance, as well as a brief literature review and an explanation of the methodology employed in this study. A full literature review on corporate social responsibility and competitive advantage was the subject of the next chapter.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The brief literature review explored the existing research on the potential of CSR to provide businesses with a competitive advantage in the private sector. The focus was on investigating the various ways in which CSR contributed to a competitive edge and identified the factors that influenced its effectiveness. By thoroughly examining the extant literature on the topic this chapter aimed to provide a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between CSR and competitive advantage, offering valuable insights to organisations when making decisions regarding their CSR initiatives.

2.2 Definition of key terms

This section defined key terms that underpinned the study. Terms that were explained included corporate social responsibility.

2.2.1 Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)

According to Fatima and Elbanna (2023), corporate social responsibility (CSR) referred to the voluntary efforts and initiatives businesses took to operate in a way that went above and beyond their legal responsibilities. CSR entailed acting morally, accepting accountability for a company's effects on people and the environment, and promoting sustainable growth (Dahlsrud, 2008). Philanthropy, environmental sustainability projects, moral labour standards, and community participation were examples of CSR efforts (Matten and Moon, 2008). In recent years, the idea of corporate social responsibility (CSR) had attracted a lot of attention, reflecting the rising understanding of the contribution that business made to sustainable development.

Over the past few decades, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has drawn a lot of attention from academics, decision-makers, and company executives. The term "corporate social responsibility" (CSR) referred to the voluntary steps taken by businesses to guarantee that their activities do not negatively impact the environment or society and that they positively contributed to the communities in which they operated

(Velte, 2022). As CSR may help a company gain a competitive edge, it became more and more crucial for businesses to take it into account in recent years. The objective of this critical assessment of the literature was to determine the most effective theoretical framework for examining how CSR contributed to competitive advantage in the private sector (Avotra et al., 2021).

2.2.2 Competitive Advantage

A competitive advantage is the capacity of an organisation to outperform its rivals through the provision of superior goods or services, increased efficiency, or the development of a distinctive value proposition (Agung and Darma 2019; Porter, 1985). A business that had a competitive edge may make more money, draw in and keep clients, and thrive over the long run (Barney, 1991). Different strategies, including cost leadership, differentiation, innovation, and operational excellence, were used to gain a competitive advantage (Hossain, Akter and Yanamandram, 2021). Examining how a company's CSR initiatives might enhance its competitive advantage was necessary to determine the function of CSR in generating competitive advantage in the private sector. Examining how CSR programs improved a business's reputation, brand image, customer loyalty, employee engagement, and stakeholder relationships was part of this process.

Numerous studies have investigated the connection between CSR and competitive advantage, and the results point to several ways in which CSR enhanced a company's competitive advantage. For instance, CSR improved a business's brand image and reputation, which fostered more consumer loyalty and trust (Du et al., 2010; Lai et al., 2010). By fostering a supportive workplace culture and displaying a dedication to moral behaviour, CSR could help employers recruit and keep talent (Brammer et al., 2007). To foster more cooperation and support, CSR may also assist in forging stronger bonds with all relevant parties, including clients, partners, suppliers, and communities (Maignan and Ferrell, 2004).

The degree to which CSR may generate a competitive advantage, however, may rely on a variety of factors, including the industry, the size of the firm, and the nature of the CSR activities (Peng and Yuan, 2008). Additionally, how CSR generated a competitive

advantage may vary according to the situation and the results being assessed (Carroll and Shabana, 2010). CSR is a term that represented the rising understanding of the contribution that business make to sustainable development. CSR activities entailed acting morally, accepting accountability for the company's effects on society and the environment, and promoting sustainable growth.

2.3 Theoretical framework

The Resource-Based View (RBV) and Stakeholder Theory were the two most widely used theoretical frameworks in CSR literature.

2.3.1 Resource-Based View (RBV)

The Resource-Based View (RBV) posited that a company's competitive advantage stemmed from unique and challenging-to-replicate resources and capabilities (Barney, 2021). Valuable and rare resources enabled businesses to attain sustainable competitive advantages. Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), reflected a commitment to ethical and socially responsible practices, can be strategically integrated into operations to create distinctive assets and skills. This strategic incorporation differentiated goods and services, providing a competitive edge (Sharma et al., 2022).

Engaging in CSR initiatives, such as promoting social responsibility or environmental sustainability, yielded positive effects on a company's reputation. Gao et al. (2015) study indicated that these initiatives enhanced a company's image, fostering increased consumer loyalty and positive word-of-mouth marketing. A robust reputation for social responsibility contributed to long-term competitive advantage by leveraging assets that were difficult to imitate, such as a positive brand image associated with CSR efforts (Gao et al., 2015). This differentiation resulted in heightened customer preference, expanded market share, and sustained competitive advantage.

In summary, RBV underscored the importance of unique resources for competitive advantage, and by strategically implementing CSR, companies developed distinctive

assets leading to enhanced reputation and long-term competitive advantage (Sharma et al., 2022; Gao et al., 2015).

2.3.2 Stakeholder Theory

The stakeholder theory, on the other hand, asserted that businesses should consider the interests of all stakeholders, including staff members, clients, suppliers, and the larger community. It contended that businesses would build a favourable reputation for themselves by engaging in CSR activities that were in line with the interests of their stakeholders (Hörisch et al., 2020). This resulted in higher sales, consumer loyalty, and improved relationships with other stakeholders. Therefore, CSR assisted businesses in gaining a competitive edge by enhancing their stakeholder connections and reputation, which resulted in higher sales and profitability.

On the other hand, the stakeholder theory contended that businesses must consider the interests of all parties in their decision-making processes, including consumers, workers, suppliers, communities, and the environment (Hörisch et al., 2020). This point of view contended that businesses that gave CSR a high priority strengthened their bonds with constituents, built their reputations, and benefited everyone in the long run. For instance, businesses that spent time on staff training and development raised employee productivity and happiness, which in turn increased client loyalty and satisfaction (Sharma et al., 2022).

The data from empirical studies on the connection between CSR and competitive advantage was conflicting. CSR and financial performance were positively correlated, which suggested that businesses that participated in CSR initiatives had a competitive edge (Harrison et al., 2019). However, some studies had revealed no significant correlation, or even a negative correlation, between CSR and financial success, indicating that CSR may not always result in a competitive advantage (Freeman et al., 2021).

Despite these contradictory results, the RBV and stakeholder theory can shed light on how CSR contributed to competitive advantage. According to the RBV, businesses used CSR to create distinctive assets and skills like reputation and brand image that were

valuable and challenging to replicate. Stakeholder theory, on the other hand, contended that by placing a high priority on CSR, businesses enhanced their interactions with stakeholders and generated long-term value. These frameworks assisted managers in determining the kinds of CSR activities that were most likely to produce a competitive advantage and in figuring out how to match CSR initiatives with the company's strategic objectives and core capabilities (Goyal, 2022).

Overall, our assessment of the critical literature indicated that there was a complicated and context-dependent link between CSR and competitive advantage. The link between CSR and competitive advantage relied on several factors, including the type of CSR activity, the industry environment, and the firm's strategic goals. While there were some evidences that CSR produced a competitive advantage, it was not a guarantee. Therefore, future studies should continue to investigate how CSR generated a competitive advantage and the most effective ways in which businesses can use CSR to accomplish their strategic objectives.

2.4 Factors leading to successful CSR initiatives in business internationalization.

According to Sang et al. (2021), Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has evolved into a crucial component of company operations, especially for businesses that competed on a worldwide scale. It had been acknowledged that CSR gave businesses strategic advantages by boosting their brand, fostering better stakeholder connections, and lowering the risks connected to social and environmental challenges (Porter et al., 2016). However, not all CSR activities were effective, and many different, complicated aspects contributed to successful CSR initiatives in corporate internationalization.

The size of the firm had been determined to be one element that affected the performance of CSR programs. Compared to small and medium-sized firms (SMEs), large corporations often had more resources and a larger capability for undertaking CSR projects. Large businesses were better equipped to make the investments in infrastructure, technology, and human resources required to put CSR programs into action and monitor them (Goyal, 2022). Furthermore, the execution of CSR activities may be facilitated by the fact that large businesses frequently had stronger relationships with stakeholders. This was not to

be argued, nevertheless, that SMEs cannot participate in CSR. SMEs may take advantage of their adaptability and agility to put CSR projects that supported their beliefs and purpose into action (Harrison et al., 2022).

The sector that a firm operated in can also have an impact on the effectiveness of CSR projects as varied industries may have varied CSR goals because of their varying degrees of effect on the environment, society, and economy. Companies in the extractive sector, for instance, could prioritize environmental sustainability, whereas those in the service sector would prioritize employee wellbeing. The stakeholders that businesses interacted with, the anticipated reporting and disclosure standards, and the regulatory framework in which they operated in can all be impacted by the industry context (Harrison et al., 2022).

For CSR activities in corporate globalization to be successful, cultural values played a crucial role. Companies were more likely to be accepted and successful in their host nations if they matched their activities with local cultural norms. This was crucial for businesses operating in developing markets because local stakeholders and communities may have different standards and expectations regarding social and environmental concerns. Companies may increase their social license to operate by connecting with local cultural norms and earning the respect and trust of local stakeholders (Cho et al., 2021).

A variety of factors, including the company's size, industry, and cultural values, affected the effectiveness of CSR activities in corporate internationalization. Businesses that comprehended and addressed these issues were more likely to successfully adopt CSR that enhanced their reputation, improved stakeholder relations, and contributed to sustainable development.

2.4.1 Stakeholder Engagement

The active participation and cooperation with different people or groups that were impacted by or have a stake in a company's operations were known as stakeholder engagement (Pizzi et al., 2021). It was essential to carry out Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programs successfully. By engaging with stakeholders, including

staff members, clients, communities, and investors, businesses build trust, foster deep connections, and reap rewards from both sides. Employees were essential stakeholders within an organisation. Engaging them in CSR initiatives involved including them in decision-making, providing volunteering or participation opportunities in social and environmental initiatives, and ensuring their well-being and development aligned with the company's CSR objectives (López-Concepción et al., 2022). By actively engaging employees, organisations can enhance morale, increase job satisfaction, and improve employee retention.

Customers also held significant stakeholder roles as their purchasing decisions influenced company's success (Kucukusta, Perelygina and Lam, 2019). Engaging customers in CSR initiatives entailed transparently communicating the company's sustainability practices, offering eco-friendly products or services, and actively seeking their feedback and opinions. Through customer engagement, organisations can strengthen brand loyalty, enhance customer satisfaction, and attract new customers who share their values (López-Concepción et al., 2022). Communities represent another important group of stakeholders. Engaging communities in CSR initiatives involved collaborating with local organisations, addressing community needs and concerns, and supporting social and environmental causes that benefited the communities where the organisation operated. By engaging communities, organisations can build robust relationships, enhance their reputation, and contribute to the overall well-being of society (Troise and Camilleri, 2021).

Investors, encompassed shareholders and financial institutions, played a crucial role as stakeholders by providing capital to organisations (Aversano et al., 2020). Effectively engaging investors in Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) involved practices such as transparent reporting on sustainability performance, showcasing the enduring value of responsible business practices, and aligned financial objectives with environmental, social, and governance (ESG) factors. This engagement strategy offered several advantages, including attracting socially responsible investors, enhancing access to capital, and mitigating both reputational and financial risks.

Freeman's seminal research in 1984 highlighted the significance of acknowledging stakeholders' interests and expectations in CSR initiatives (Zaid et al., 2020). By considering the diverse perspectives and needs of stakeholders, organisations pinpointed areas where they can create shared value—generating both social and economic benefits. Engaging stakeholders in the CSR process enabled organisations to comprehend their concerns, incorporate their feedback, and formulate initiatives that not only positively impacted society but also contributed to the company's financial performance (López-Concepción et al., 2022). This collaborative approach aligned the goals of the organisation with the broader expectations of its stakeholders, fostering a more sustainable and mutually beneficial relationship.

In conclusion, stakeholder engagement was a crucial element of effective CSR initiatives. By involving employees, customers, communities, and investors in the decision-making process, organisations built strong relationships, enhanced their reputation, and created shared value that benefited both society and the company.

2.4.2 Strategic Alignment

Shen, Au, and Li (2020) believed that strategic alignment of corporate social responsibility (CSR) referred to ensuring that CSR programmes were consistent with the organisation's core values and business strategy. It recognised the importance of integrating CSR into an organisation's overall strategic plan. Michael Porter and Mark Kramer highlighted the concept of strategic alignment in corporate social responsibility (CSR) in their seminal 2006 paper, *Strategy and Society: The Link between Competitive Advantage and Corporate Social Responsibility*. Troise and Camilleri (2021) proposed the concept "Creating Shared Value" (CSV), which emphasised the ability of businesses to generate financial benefits while solving social problems.

By adopting the CSV approach, companies acknowledged that CSR initiatives should not be separate from their core business operations (Hristov, Appolloni, Cheng and Huisingsh, 2022.). Instead, they should be viewed as integral components that contributed to long-term business success. The objective is to align CSR efforts in a way that enhanced both social and economic value, benefiting the organisation, stakeholders, and the

communities in which it operated. Strategic alignment involved carefully considering a company's core values, which defined its purpose, mission, and guiding principles. CSR initiatives reflected these values and reinforced the company's commitment to responsible and ethical practices (Bowen, Appiah, and Okafor, 2020). When CSR aligned with core values, it became an authentic representation of the organisation's identity, fostering trust and credibility with stakeholders.

Furthermore, Sucozhañay et al. (2021) strategic alignment required integrating CSR initiatives with the company's broader business strategy. This entailed identifying areas where the organisation can leverage its unique capabilities and resources to address social or environmental challenges relevant to its industry or operating context. El Alfy et al. (2020) added that by aligning CSR with the business strategy, companies can establish a mutually beneficial relationship between social impact and competitive advantage. For example, a technology company may align its CSR initiatives with a business strategy focused on environmental sustainability. It may invest in research and development of eco-friendly products, implement energy-efficient practices in its operations, and support environmental conservation initiatives. Through these actions, the company not only contributed to solving environmental challenges but also sets itself apart in the market, attracted environmentally conscious customers, and enhanced its reputation as a responsible and forward-thinking organisation (Bowen, Appiah and Okafor, 2020).

In summary, strategic alignment in CSR emphasised integrating social and environmental considerations into an organisation's core values and business strategy. By aligning CSR initiatives with these key aspects, companies created shared value, driving both societal impact and economic success.

2.4.3 Leadership Commitment

Leadership commitment referred to the dedication and involvement of top-level executives and managers in driving and supporting corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives within an organisation (Nejati et al., 2021). It was a crucial factor that significantly influenced the success and effectiveness of CSR efforts. The research

conducted by Maignan and Ferrell (2004) emphasised the importance of strong leadership commitment in integrating CSR into the organisational culture. When leaders actively demonstrated their support for CSR, it sent a powerful message to employees and stakeholders that responsible business practices were not merely a superficial endeavour but an integral part of the company's values and mission.

Leadership commitment sets the tone for CSR implementation throughout the organisation (Saha et al., 2020). When leaders prioritise and champion CSR initiatives, they inspire and motivate employees at all levels to align their actions and decisions with social and environmental responsibilities. By making CSR a strategic priority, leaders ensured that it received adequate resources, attention, and integration into the overall business strategy (Nejati et al., 2021). Leadership commitment also fostered a sense of accountability and ethical behaviour within the organisation. When leaders actively engaged in CSR initiatives, they established clear expectations and standards for responsible conduct, encouraging employees to follow suit. This commitment served as a guiding principle, helping to shape an ethical corporate culture where sustainability and social impact were valued and ingrained into daily operations (Nejati et al., 2021).

Moreover, leadership commitment helped build trust and credibility with external stakeholders. When top management showed genuine dedication to CSR, it enhanced the organisation's reputation and strengthened its relationships with customers, investors, communities, and regulatory bodies (Westphal, 2023). This trust and credibility can result in increased customer loyalty, improved investor confidence, and a positive brand image, all of which contributed to long-term business success.

In summary, strong leadership commitment was a critical element in the achievement of CSR goals. It drove the integration of CSR into an organisation's culture, inspired employees, promoted ethical behaviour, and enhanced trust and credibility with stakeholders. By leading by example and actively supporting CSR initiatives, leaders paved the way for sustainable business practices and contributed to a more responsible and prosperous future (Saha et al., 2020).

2.4.4 Performance Measurement and Reporting

Saha et al. (2020) asserted the crucial role of performance measurement and reporting in assessing the effectiveness and impact of corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives. To evaluate CSR efforts, establishing relevant metrics and reporting systems that provided valuable insights was essential. Carroll and Shabana (2010) introduced a comprehensive CSR framework, encompassing economic, legal, ethical, and philanthropic dimensions.

The economic dimension involved evaluating the financial implications and benefits of CSR initiatives, assessing contributions to profitability, cost savings, revenue generation, and overall financial performance. Metrics such as return on investment (ROI), cost-effectiveness ratios, and market share growth can gauge the economic impact of CSR activities (Saha et al., 2020).

The legal dimension assessed the organisation's compliance with laws, regulations, and industry standards, examining adherence to legal boundaries and ethical business practices. Metrics such as the number of legal violations, penalties incurred, and regulatory compliance ratings measured the legal effectiveness of CSR initiatives (Deng et al., 2022).

The ethical dimension evaluated the company's commitment to ethical business practices, considering moral principles, fairness, transparency, and integrity. Metrics like employee satisfaction surveys, stakeholder perception surveys, and the frequency of ethical breaches measured the ethical impact of CSR efforts (Westphal, 2023).

The philanthropic dimension focused on the company's contributions to society, including charitable activities, community development, and environmental sustainability. Metrics such as the number of donations, volunteer hours, social impact assessments, and environmental performance indicators gauged the philanthropic impact of CSR initiatives (Saha et al., 2020).

Applying Carroll and Shabana's framework and utilising suitable metrics within each dimension allowed organisations to effectively measure and report on the outcomes of their CSR initiatives. This transparency enabled stakeholders—investors, employees, customers, and communities—to comprehend the company's social and environmental performance and commitment to responsible business practices. Such performance measurement and reporting mechanisms were crucial for fostering continuous improvement, accountability, and transparency in the CSR field (Westphal, 2023).

2.5 The role of CSR in creating competitive advantage.

The term "corporate social responsibility" (CSR) referred to a business's need to operate in a way that advanced societal well-being and safeguards the environment while still pursuing profits (Alam and Islam, 2021). Since consumers and other stakeholders had started to press businesses to act responsibly toward society, CSR had grown in significance (Porter and Kramer, 2016). Enhancing a company's brand reputation was one of the ways CSR gave businesses a competitive edge. Companies with a positive social reputation were more likely to be trusted by stakeholders and customers, which may boost sales and brand loyalty.

CSR programmes can also aid in luring and keeping personnel. Many workers, especially millennials and members of Generation Z, were searching for organisations that shared their values and were dedicated to having a beneficial influence on society. 38% of millennials claimed that a company's social and environmental goals affected their choice to accept a job offer, according to a Deloitte report from 2017. Employees who worked for organisations that were seen as socially responsible were more likely to be engaged and motivated, which increased output and improved performance (Alam and Islam, 2021). Additionally, CSR programs may boost brand recognition and generate favourable press, giving businesses a competitive edge in the market. For instance, a corporation may boost brand exposure and customer awareness by launching a sustainability effort or making a philanthropic donation. These actions can also generate media attention and social media buzz. As customers were more willing to support businesses that were

having a beneficial effect, this resulted in higher sales and customer loyalty (Kotler and Lee, 2015).

2.5.1 Reputation and Brand Image

The term “corporate social responsibility” (CSR) referred to the steps taken by companies to respect social obligations and improved the environment and society (Marakova et al., 2021). These actions had a significant impact on a company's image and reputation and helped it gain a competitive advantage in the market. Sen and Bhattacharya's 2001 study highlighted the importance of CSR initiatives in influencing customer attitudes. Their research showed that customers were more likely to support and trust businesses that had a strong commitment to social responsibility. A company that actively participated in CSR programs sent a message to stakeholders that it valued social responsibility and the environment more than profits (Hang et al., 2022).

Shah and Khan (2020) propounded that one of the key benefits of CSR activities was their potential to enhance a company's reputation. By undertaking initiatives that addressed societal issues or contributed to sustainable development, a company can cultivate a positive public perception. When consumers recognised a company's efforts to make a positive impact, they are more likely to hold a favourable view of the company, resulting in increased trust and loyalty. Additionally, CSR activities played a crucial role in shaping a company's brand image (Hang et al., 2022). A strong brand image was vital for establishing a unique identity and differentiating a company from competitors. By incorporating CSR into their business strategy, companies can align their brand values with social and environmental causes, creating a positive association in the minds of consumers. This association not only attracted socially conscious consumers but also fostered pride and loyalty among existing customers (Marakova et al., 2021).

Furthermore, a significant competitive advantage may be obtained from a favourable reputation and brand image that arose from CSR initiatives. Companies needed to differentiate themselves in today's fiercely competitive market, where clients had an abundance of alternatives, to draw in and keep business (Marakova et al., 2021). Customers were more inclined to select a company's goods or services over rivals when

they believed the latter to be reliable and socially conscious. According to Hang et al. (2022), this choice may result in a rise in market share, a rise in client loyalty, and eventually better financial performance.

In conclusion, engaging in CSR activities significantly contributed to a company's reputation and brand image. The research by Sen and Bhattacharya supported the notion that consumers tend to support and trust socially responsible companies. By actively participating in initiatives that benefited society and the environment, companies built a positive reputation, shaped a strong brand image, and ultimately gained a competitive advantage in the market.

2.5.2 Employee Engagement and Attraction

Hang et al. (2022) defined employee engagement as the degree of dedication, enthusiasm, and loyalty exhibited by employees toward their work and the organisation. Engaged employees were seen as critical contributors to a company's success, being more productive, innovative, and loyal. In the competitive job market, organisations faced challenges in attracting and retaining skilled employees who not only possess the necessary expertise but also sought a sense of purpose and shared values related to social responsibility (Marakova et al., 2021). Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives played a crucial role in addressing this need for meaningful work and attracting top talent.

CSR involved a company's commitment to ethical, sustainable, and socially responsible operations, considering the impact of its activities on society and the environment. Turker's research in 2009 highlighted the positive effects of CSR in attracting and retaining talented employees, showcasing a company's dedication to making a positive impact beyond its core business activities. This resonated with employees seeking work aligned with their values and offering opportunities to contribute to society (Marakova et al., 2021).

Kotler and Lee (2015) added that incorporating CSR into organisational culture effectively engaged employees and enhanced job satisfaction. When employees work for an

organisation genuinely committed to social and environmental issues, they take pride and find purpose in their roles. This fostered a stronger emotional connection, commitment, and increased engagement and job satisfaction (Marakova et al., 2021). Moreover, CSR initiatives contributed to employee retention, as alignment with the organisation's values and the perception of making a positive impact on society encouraged employees to stay longer. The fulfilment derived from contributing to a socially responsible organisation cultivated loyalty and reduced turnover rates (Kotler and Lee, 2015).

In summary, integrating CSR initiatives into operations enabled companies to attract and retain talented employees seeking meaningful work and alignment with socially responsible organisations. Engaged and satisfied employees contributed to the overall success and reputation of the company, establishing a mutually beneficial relationship for both the organisation and its employees.

2.5.3 Risk Management

Zhao et al. (2019) forwarded that risk management involved systematically identifying, evaluating, and lessening potential risks that could affect an organisation's activities, reputation, and overall performance. By implementing comprehensive corporate social responsibility (CSR) measures, companies can effectively address and minimize both operational and reputational risks they may encounter. In 2006, Luo and Bhattacharya conducted a study that highlighted the positive relationship between strong CSR practices and risk reduction. The results indicated that companies prioritizing CSR experienced a decrease in negative outcomes or unfavourable events, reduced their vulnerability to risks. This reduced susceptibility arose from their proactive involvement in CSR activities, such as environmental sustainability initiatives, philanthropic endeavours, ethical business practices, and stakeholder engagement (Marakova et al., 2021).

Furthermore, the research suggested that organisations with robust CSR practices also demonstrated increased resilience when faced with external shocks like economic downturns, regulatory changes, natural disasters, or public relations crises. Through their CSR efforts, companies established goodwill and stronger relationships with stakeholders, including customers, employees, investors, and the broader community.

This reservoir of goodwill and trust acted as a protective buffer during turbulent times, enabling the organisation to navigate challenges more effectively and recover faster (Kotler and Lee, 2015). Integrating CSR practices into risk management strategies offered several advantages. Firstly, it reduced the likelihood of reputational risks, such as negative media coverage, consumer backlash, or public scrutiny. By proactively addressing social and environmental concerns, companies safeguarded their brand image, maintained a positive reputation, and preserved customer loyalty and trust. Secondly, CSR practices contributed to mitigating operational risks, such as supply chain disruptions, regulatory non-compliance, workplace accidents, or product recalls. By adhering to responsible and sustainable business practices, companies minimized the occurrence and impact of such risks on their operations, resulting in improved efficiency, cost savings, and a more stable business environment (Marakova et al., 2021).

In conclusion, integrating CSR practices into an organisation's risk management framework brought tangible benefits. By actively participating in CSR initiatives, companies reduced downside risks, enhanced resilience to external shocks, protected their reputation, and mitigated operational risks. This integrated approach not only ensured the long-term viability of the organisation but also promoted sustainable and responsible business practices that benefitted both the company and its stakeholders.

2.5.4 Innovation and Differentiation

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives can act as powerful drivers of innovation and offer valuable opportunities for companies to distinguish themselves in terms of their products and processes. According to renowned sustainability scholars Hart and Milstein (2003), CSR can catalyse innovation, providing companies with a significant competitive advantage. A keyway in which CSR initiatives foster innovation was by encouraging companies to think creatively about aligning their business objectives with social and environmental goals (Marakova et al., 2021). When organisations incorporated sustainability principles into their core strategies, they were motivated to develop new and innovative solutions that not only address societal challenges but also met customer demands for environmentally friendly and socially responsible products and services.

For instance, companies may invest in research and development to create eco-friendly packaging materials or develop energy-efficient technologies (Zhao et al., 2019). By emphasizing sustainability, businesses can introduce unique products that appeal to environmentally conscious consumers and differentiate themselves from competitors. Furthermore, CSR initiatives often necessitated evaluating existing processes to identify areas for improvement in terms of resource efficiency, waste reduction, and environmental impact. This evaluation and optimization process can lead to the development of novel and efficient processes, enhancing operational performance, reducing costs, and providing a competitive advantage (Kotler and Lee, 2015).

Through analysis of supply chains and production methods, companies may discover opportunities to streamline processes, minimize waste, and conserve resources. This would not only benefit the environment but also improve the company's financial performance by reducing costs and increasing operational efficiency (Zhao et al., 2019). Moreover, active engagement in CSR initiatives allowed companies to demonstrate their commitment to social and environmental stewardship. This commitment can attract socially conscious consumers who value products and brands aligned with their own values. By establishing themselves as responsible and sustainable organisations, companies can tap into a growing market segment and cultivate a loyal customer base appreciative of their efforts to make a positive societal impact. Given that consumers are increasingly mindful of the social and environmental consequences of their purchasing decisions, embracing CSR and effectively communicating sustainability efforts can build trust and foster brand loyalty among those seeking ethical and environmentally friendly options (Westphal, 2023).

Additionally, Westphal (2023) went on to say that CSR initiatives often involved collaborations with stakeholders such as NGOs, government agencies, and local communities. These partnerships facilitated knowledge sharing, co-creation of innovative solutions, and accessed new markets and resources. Engaging in such collaborative efforts enabled companies to expand their networks, leverage diverse expertise, and discover new business opportunities that may not have been apparent otherwise. For example, a company might collaborate with a nonprofit organisation to establish a

sustainable supply chain that benefited local communities and ensured fair treatment of workers. This collaboration not only enhanced the company's reputation but also generated positive social impact and opened doors to new markets or partnerships (Marakova et al., 2021).

In conclusion, CSR initiatives held immense potential for driving innovation by prompting companies to develop novel solutions for sustainability challenges. By integrating social and environmental goals into their strategies, companies differentiated themselves in the market, attracted socially conscious consumers, optimize their processes, and gained a competitive edge. Ultimately, embracing CSR can lead to long-term success and create a positive impact on society and the company's financial performance.

2.6 Interventions to improve the success of CSR initiatives.

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programs have gained significance as businesses recognised the need to balance financial gains with social and environmental considerations. However, the success of CSR initiatives was not guaranteed, and several factors influenced their effectiveness. To enhance the efficacy of their CSR programs, companies can implement the following actions (Kotler and Lee, 2015).

2.6.1 Develop a CSR Strategy

A well-defined CSR strategy aligned with the company's overall business goals was crucial for success. This involved setting measurable objectives and goals for CSR projects, identifying relevant stakeholders, and addressing pertinent issues. Frameworks such as the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) or the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the United Nations can be utilized to establish CSR strategies. Regular monitoring and evaluation of initiatives ensured they achieved their objectives and benefitted stakeholders and society (Kotler and Lee, 2015).

Developing a Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) strategy necessitated careful consideration of a company's core values and business objectives. A pivotal aspect of this process involved establishing measurable objectives and goals for CSR projects that

were in harmony with the overall business strategy, reflecting the company's commitment to social and environmental responsibility (Zhao et al., 2019). For instance, a company may set specific goals, such as reducing carbon emissions by a certain percentage over a defined period or enhancing diversity and inclusion within its workforce.

Beyond goal setting, it was imperative to identify relevant stakeholders and address the issues that mattered most to them. Stakeholders may include employees, customers, suppliers, local communities, and regulatory bodies. By actively engaging with stakeholders and understanding their concerns, companies can develop CSR initiatives that positively impacted the communities in which they operated, fostering stronger relationships. This, in turn, can lead to enhanced brand reputation, increased customer loyalty, and improved employee engagement.

Frameworks like the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) or the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) established by the United Nations offer valuable guidance for crafting a CSR strategy. These frameworks provided comprehensive guidelines and benchmarks for addressing key sustainability issues and reporting on the company's progress. Adopting such frameworks ensured that CSR initiatives aligned with globally recognized standards and best practices, thereby enhancing credibility and transparency (Kotler and Lee, 2015). This strategic alignment not only contributed to the company's overall sustainability efforts but also communicated a commitment to responsible business practices to stakeholders and the wider community.

2.6.2 Implement Stakeholder Engagement Processes

Engaging with stakeholders, including employees, clients, and local communities, was essential for effective CSR activities. Companies can employ various methods, such as surveys, focus groups, and community meetings, to interact with stakeholders and gather feedback and advice regarding their CSR projects. This interaction helps businesses better understand stakeholder needs and preferences, allowing them to incorporate them into their CSR programs and achieve more successful outcomes (Freeman et al., 2010). Implementing stakeholder engagement processes was a vital part of executing a successful CSR strategy.

Engaging with stakeholders allowed companies to gain insights, feedback, and advice that can inform their CSR programs and ensured they meet the needs and expectations of their stakeholders. Surveys, focus groups, and community meetings were effective methods for gathering input from stakeholders. These interactions created a platform to open dialogue and foster a sense of collaboration and shared responsibility (Kotler and Lee, 2015). Engaging with employees as stakeholders was particularly important as it played a crucial role in implementing CSR initiatives. Employees can contribute ideas, volunteer their time, and serve as ambassadors for the company's CSR efforts. By involving employees in the decision-making process and providing opportunities for them to participate in CSR activities, companies can enhance employee satisfaction, motivation, and retention.

Developing a CSR strategy and implementing stakeholder engagement processes were integral to the success of a company's CSR initiatives. By setting clear objectives, aligning with global frameworks, and actively involving stakeholders, businesses can create meaningful and impactful CSR programs that benefit both society and the company itself.

2.6.3 Invest in Employee Training and Development Programs

Investing in employee development and training programs played a crucial role in cultivating a culture of social responsibility and encouraging employees to take ownership of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives. This encompassed training on sustainability, ethical business practices, and community involvement, allowing employees to serve as ambassadors for CSR projects and enhancing their involvement and dedication, leading to more successful outcomes (Freeman et al., 2010).

Also, allocating resources towards enhancing employee training and development not only positively impacted individual employees but also significantly contributed to the overall prosperity and expansion of the organisation. Providing opportunities for skill improvement and professional growth empowered the workforce to acquire greater competence and knowledge in their roles, resulting in heightened productivity, superior customer service, and increased innovation within the company (Kotler and Lee, 2015).

Furthermore, employee training and development programs also played a vital role in attracting and retaining exceptional talent in today's competitive job market. Job seekers increasingly sought companies that provided avenues for advancement and continuous learning. Demonstrating commitment to employee growth distinguished organisations from competitors, making them more appealing to potential candidates (Freeman et al., 2010). Ongoing training fostered higher levels of employee satisfaction and engagement, reducing turnover rates and creating a positive work environment. These programmes effectively addressed skill gaps, equipping employees with the necessary knowledge and tools to adapt to evolving industry trends and technological advancements (Nejati et al., 2021).

In summary, investing in employee training and development programs was a strategic decision that aligned with social responsibility and brought numerous benefits to the organisation. Empowering employees, attracting top talent, fostering a culture of learning, and addressing skill gaps contributed to establishing a motivated and engaged workforce well-equipped to drive innovation and achieve long-term success.

2.6.4 Collaborate with Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and External Partners

Collaborating with NGOs and external partners can significantly amplify the impact of CSR initiatives (Freeman et al., 2010). NGOs possessed expertise in social and environmental issues and often had established networks and resources to address these challenges effectively. Partnering with NGOs allows companies to tap into their knowledge and experience, gain insights into the local context, and leverage their existing relationships with communities and other stakeholders. This collaboration can lead to the development of more targeted and sustainable CSR programs that addressed specific societal needs (Porter and Kramer, 2016). Moreover, partnering with external organisations, such as academic institutions or research centres, can bring additional expertise and innovative solutions to CSR initiatives. These organisations can contribute valuable insights, conduct research, and provide guidance on best practices. Collaborative efforts with external partners can foster creativity and generate novel

approaches to social and environmental issues, leading to more successful CSR outcomes (Kotler and Lee, 2015).

2.6.5 Communicate and Promote CSR Initiatives

Effective communication played a crucial role in enhancing the success of CSR initiatives. Companies need to communicate their CSR efforts both internally and externally (Freeman et al., 2010). Internally, companies should ensure that employees are well-informed about ongoing CSR projects, their objectives, and the progress made. This helped foster a sense of pride and engagement among employees, motivating them to actively contribute and support the initiatives (Nejati et al., 2019). Externally, companies should communicate their CSR activities transparently and authentically to stakeholders, including customers, investors, and the wider public. Clear and compelling communication helps build trust, credibility, and a positive reputation, which can further enhance the impact of CSR programs (Freeman et al., 2010). In addition to communication, effective promotion of CSR initiatives can generate broader awareness and engagement. Companies can utilize various channels such as social media, websites, events, and partnerships to promote their CSR projects and share the positive social and environmental outcomes achieved. By highlighting the tangible benefits and impact of their initiatives, companies inspired other organisations, stakeholders, and individuals to join the cause and contributed to positive change (Porter and Kramer, 2016).

2.7 Conclusion

The chapter reviewed the prevailing bodies to bring out the role of CSR to create a competitive advantage in the private sector. The chapter commenced with deliberating on the major constructs underpinning the study. As deduced from reviewed literature, CSR created a competitive advantage for businesses by enhancing their brand reputation. Companies that are viewed as socially responsible were more likely to be trusted by stakeholders and customers, leading to increased sales and brand loyalty. Also, a positive reputation resulting from CSR initiatives provided a distinct competitive advantage in today's highly competitive market. Consumers were more likely to choose

products or services from companies they perceived as socially responsible and trustworthy, leading to increased market share and financial performance.

The study also discussed the theoretical frameworks and the factors leading to successful CSR, role of CSR in creating competitive advantage and the interventions to improve the success of CSR. The success of CSR initiatives relied on various interventions and strategies. However, the long-term impact and sustainability of CSR initiatives in generating a competitive advantage needed more empirical research. Understanding how CSR practices evolved over time and their continued influence on brand reputation and employee engagement was an area that warranted further investigation.

Also, the potential challenges and trade-offs associated with implementing CSR initiatives and their impact on a company's competitive advantage required deeper examination. Balancing social responsibility with financial performance and addressing potential conflicts of interest between stakeholders may present complexities that needed to be better understood. Nevertheless, the next chapter focused on the research design and methodology.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presented the research strategies and techniques used to achieve the research objectives. The entire research process, as well as an explanation and description of the research design, participants, data collection tools, techniques, and procedures, were included in this chapter. The chapter also discussed the value and efficacy of qualitative research in examining how CSR can help IBV companies gained a competitive advantage in the private sector.

3.2 Research Process

The research onion developed by Saunders et al., (2019) in Figure 1 guided the research methodology. The research onion lists the stages that a researcher must consider when constructing a research strategy.

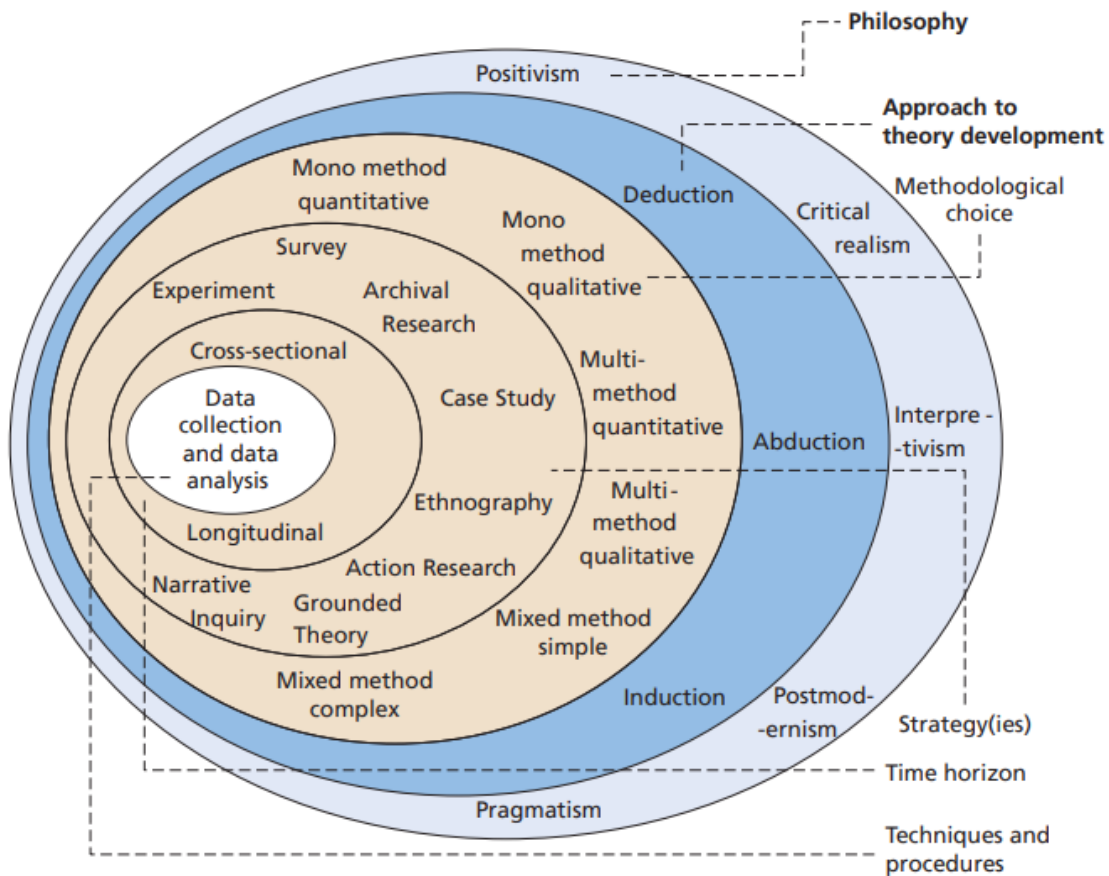


Figure 1. The 'research onion' Source: Saunders et al., (2019).

The research onion provided an overview of essential elements to focus on and consider. The layers of the onion provides a framework for considering a researcher's methods, data collection techniques, right research strategies, research timelines, and philosophical perspectives (Saunders et al., 2019). This study examined how corporate social responsibility can help gain competitive advantage in the private sector, using the IBV company as a case study.

3.3 Research Philosophy

The common view people have about social fields is called research philosophy (Saunders et al., 2019). According to this view, worldviews are the paradigm within which philosophy is studied (Creswell, 2018). Therefore, this research project was guided by a set of basic concepts or assumptions. According to Flick (2016), the initiation of the

research design process was related to the philosophical assumptions that the researcher had when choosing to conduct the study. The two main perspectives were interpretivism and positivism, since the research topic was inductive in nature, an interpretivist paradigm was adopted in the investigation. The sociology of regulation aimed to understand the world through a human lens, which included interpretive paradigms. It used subjective first-hand knowledge and was normative, counter-empirical, voluntary, and ideographic (Beck and Stoop, 2017). Within this paradigm, research attempted to track ongoing processes to gain a deeper understanding of the world and the nature of human behaviour. Based on their subjective experiences, the interpretivist paradigm was used to understand the status of how CSR gave IBV companies a competitive advantage in the private sector.

3.4 Research Approach

Research methodology was a process used to gather data and information to make informed decisions or develop theories. The two main categories of research techniques were qualitative analysis and quantitative analysis. The nature of the research question and research topic determined the research method (Creswell, 2018). In research, two types of research methods may be used: qualitative methods (inductive in nature) and quantitative methods (deductive) (Maree, 2017). The primary research was conducted using qualitative research techniques.

Qualitative research methods were employed to achieve the objectives of the study (Bloomfield et al., 2019). The study focused on analysing the various factors that motivated employees to engage in CSR activities and the impact of CSR on the company's reputation and brand image. Qualitative research methods included interviews to gather employees' perceptions of CSR and how it affected their behaviour and attitudes towards the company (Flick, 2016).

The use of qualitative research was crucial as it helped to gain a deeper understanding of the complex factors that influenced employees' behaviour and attitudes towards CSR. This approach enabled the researcher to explore the underlying motives behind employee

behaviour and identify the potential barriers that hindered the successful implementation of CSR initiatives.

3.5 Research Strategy

The way in which research and current ideas relate to each other theoretically decided the characteristics of the research strategy (Connelly, 2016). The ontological and epistemological stance of the research variables was the basis of the research method. However, the research methods adhered to perspectives such as positivism and interpretivism. Due to its inductive design and interpretivist perspective, the study used interview techniques.

The interpretivist research strategy employed normative and inductive methods to figure out the relationship between theory and research (Leedy and Ormrod, 2015). Interpretivist strategies were recognized in the research field for their ability to capture participants' views and perspectives. The interview research technique was chosen because it added an interpretive part based on theory that supported, explained, and challenged concepts and behaviours (Maree, 2018).

3.6 Choices

These choices were called research choices and were the fourth layer of the research onion. This layer helped figure out which method (quantitative or qualitative) should be used alone or in combination. According to Sanders et al., (2019), there were three options or approaches to onion research: single, mixed, and multi-method research options or approaches. Since the study was qualitative in nature, a mono-method or strategy was used in the study. The use of a single method contributed to the effective management of the study, thus improving the objectivity of the study.

3.7 Time Horizon

The observation period included the time limit (Creswell and Creswell, 2017). The time referred to the duration of data collection and processing. Researchers often conducted

studies over two time periods: cross-sectional and longitudinal. Longitudinal and cross-sectional studies were conducted simultaneously when data were collected multiple times (Creswell and Poth, 2016). The study used a cross-sectional design.

3.8 Techniques and Procedures

The methodology and techniques used in the study were consistent with the qualitative research approach. The methods considered data collection, data analysis, and the sampling framework.

3.8.1 Population and sample framework

In this study, the population of interest consisted of the personnel of IBV company, a private sector organisation, with a specific focus on understanding the role of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in creating a competitive advantage. The population included both management and non-management employees, totalling 22 individuals.

The study opted for a non-probability sampling approach to select the sample. This method involved the researcher choosing samples based on subjective assessment rather than random selection (Maree, 2017). Specifically, the study employed purposive sampling, where researchers selected samples based on their expertise and credibility (Maree, 2017).

The chosen sample size for this study was ten respondents, in line with Creswell's (2018) recommendation that a sample ranging from 8 to 12 respondents was sufficient for a qualitative study. Given the study's focus on understanding the role of CSR in creating a competitive advantage for IBV company, this sample size was deemed appropriate for conducting a detailed exploration of the topic.

3.8.2 Data collection method

The process of gathering and measuring data on key variables within a well-established framework, aimed to provide valuable insights and measure outcomes, is termed data collection (Maree, 2017). For this study, the primary data collection tool was semi-

structured interviews, with the interview guide provided in Appendix B. During these interviews, relevant questions related to the study were posed to respondents, either in person or online, to elicit their perspectives.

To ensure the feasibility and effectiveness of the data collection tool, a pilot study was conducted. This involved pre-testing the interview guide with two members of the IBV company staff. The pre-test assessed the language, logic, and sensitivity of the statements. Notably, the participants in the pilot study were not included in the final sample group. Based on the feedback received during pre-testing, the questions were refined before being administered to the actual sample group. The pre-testing phase was instrumental in determining the clarity and understandability of the interview guide, ensuring that the statements were presented in a logical sequence and that the language and vocabulary used were clear.

3.8.3 Data analysis methods, techniques, and Instruments

To comprehend the role of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in establishing a competitive advantage for the IBV company, it was crucial to collect and analyse data. According to Cera (2020), the collected data must be measured and evaluated to derive meaningful insights. The utility of collected data became apparent only after it underwent analysis to identify patterns and trends.

Also, analysing the gathered data involved the examination and coding to represent the problem context and breadth. Kiger and Varpio (2020) suggested that this process entailed scrutinizing the data and assigning codes to different categories, facilitating the identification of patterns and themes. Thematic analysis, as an analytical technique, was employed to identify recurring patterns and themes in the data (Braun and Clarke, 2019). This approach provided a detailed understanding of how CSR created a competitive advantage for IBV company.

3.8.4 Trustworthiness of the Study

The concepts of validity and reliability were replaced with the concepts of credibility, transferability, conformability, and dependability in the case of qualitative studies (Kiger and Varpio, 2020).

Credibility, in research, referred to the trustworthiness and accuracy of the data and its interpretation, aimed to ensure that research findings are reliable. Braun and Clarke (2019) suggested achieving credibility by providing a summary of study methods, protocols, and participant credentials, including demographic information. To enhance credibility, the researcher implemented membership checks, involving sharing data, interpretations, and conclusions with participants to confirm that their intentions were accurately presented.

Transferability is the concept that research results can be applied to different populations or situations. To address this, researchers offered sufficient descriptive information in their reports to enable users to determine the relevance of the data to their circumstances (Braun and Clarke, 2019). Thick description was used in this study to provide detailed information, allowing readers to assess the applicability of the results to their own situations.

Conformability aimed to ensure that data was fair, accurate, and represented participants' voices and study conditions rather than researchers' biases or opinions. In this research, efforts were made to ensure that the data used originated from participants and not the researcher, and any potential bias was transparently reported before the study.

Dependability meant that data was consistent and reliable over time and context. Braun and Clarke (2019) recommended providing logical, traceable, and documented information about the research method to ensure dependability. In this study, dependability was ensured through an inquiry audit, involving an external researcher examining the processes of data collection, data analysis, and the research results, thus validating the reliability and consistency of the study.

3.9 Elimination of Bias

Addressing research bias was crucial for maintaining the accuracy and validity of research findings (Kumar, 2018). In this study, several measures were employed to mitigate bias:

- Use of recognized research methods and data collection techniques in employing established research methods and recognized data collection techniques helped ensure the credibility and objectivity of the study. This included following rigorous protocols in the design and execution of the research.
- Alignment with research objectives served as the foundation for the development of interview questions and overall research parameters. This alignment helped maintain focus and relevance, reducing the risk of introducing bias into the study.
- Researcher's proficiency, interpretation and the researcher's expertise in the research question were acknowledged, and efforts were made to minimize personal biases during data interpretation. Findings were compared and synthesized with inferences drawn from the reviewed literature, enhancing the objectivity of the analysis.
- Gender neutrality in the study contributed to fairness and impartiality. The research was designed to treat all participants equitably, irrespective of gender, thereby minimizing potential biases associated with gender-specific perspectives.

3.10 Ethical Considerations

Ethics were rules that guided how we should behave towards others. In research, ethics are important to ensure that nobody gets hurt or suffers because of the study (Braun and Clarke, 2019). To follow ethical guidelines, researchers needed to plan carefully and be honest. They also considered the following ethical concerns:

3.10.1 Ethical Clearance Application

The data collection commenced after ethical clearance was obtained from UNISA SBL Ethical Committee. The ethical clearance process commenced and when obtained, research took off. Ethical clearance certificate is found in Appendix D.

3.10.2 No harm

Researchers needed to make sure that their study would not harm anyone. If there was a chance that the research could cause harm, the researchers needed to get written permission from the participants that they would still participate in the study.

3.10.3 Privacy

Researchers kept the participants' personal information secure and private. They got permission to conduct interviews, limit the time required for participation, and only observed public behaviour.

3.10.4 Confidentiality

Researchers kept the participants' information confidential. They did this by having the participants sign a non-disclosure agreement, limiting access to identifying information, and only shared data with written permission. The current research adhered to all these ethical considerations to ensure that the participants were safe, and their information was kept private.

3.10.5 Getting permission for conducting the study.

Permission referred to authorisation to conduct the study (Stokes, 2017). The researcher sought permission from the organisation's management to conduct research (Appendix A). Permission was also sought from the participants. An informed consent form (found in Appendix C) was provided to participants and participants signed it to indicate their

agreement to participate in this study. An information sheet provided participants with information about the study.

Another critical ethical matter is that of avoiding plagiarism. The researcher submitted the report to Turnitin software and the result is found in Appendix E. After viewing the similarity report he worked on lowering the similarity index. The corrections were approved by the study supervisor and her consent form to submit this report for examination is found in Appendix F.

3.11. Conclusion

This chapter introduced the research methodology and research design of this study. To ensure that the stated objective of the study was achieved, which was to figure out the importance of corporate social responsibility (CSR) in generating competitive advantage in the private sector, a specific correlational research design was established. This chapter also covered and illustrated the explanation and description of the research process, including paradigms, methods, strategies, design, data analysis, rigor or validation, ethics, ontology, and epistemology. The results of the study are presented and discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR ANALYSIS, INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

The initial chapter established the groundwork for the study by outlining research objectives and questions, setting the stage for the broader investigation. It served as a foundational precursor to the entire study. The second chapter delved into an extensive review of the primary literature relevant to the subject under investigation, providing a comprehensive understanding. The diverse perspectives gathered during this review were synthesized in the principal findings, enhancing their credibility.

The third chapter elucidated the research methods employed in the primary study, covering aspects such as data collection, analysis, and presentation. This chapter advocated for the utilisation of a qualitative research methodology with an inductive approach. The study utilised interviews for data collection, and an inductive thematic data analysis methodology was applied to scrutinize the collected data.

The overarching objective of the research was to examine the role of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in creating a competitive advantage for IBV company in the private sector. This objective was realised through addressing the following secondary objectives:

- To identify the key factors that contributed to the success of CSR initiatives in IBV company's internationalisation efforts.
- To analyse the role of CSR in creating a competitive advantage for the IBV company in the Gauteng Province.
- To provide recommendations for interventions that the IBV company can implement to improve the success of CSR initiatives and enhance its competitiveness in the business environment.

The results presented and discussed commenced by discussing the demographic details of the participants.

4.2 Demographic Details of the Participants

To enhance the applicability of the findings, Maree (2017) emphasised the importance of incorporating demographic information. The following demographic details were collected for this study:

- Age
- Gender
- Work Experience
- Designation of the Respondents

The results of this are discussed below after the interview rate is presented.

4.2.1 Interview Turnout Rate

The study centred around a group of 10 individuals who consented to participate in the interviews. The accepted interview was illustrated in Figure 2 below:

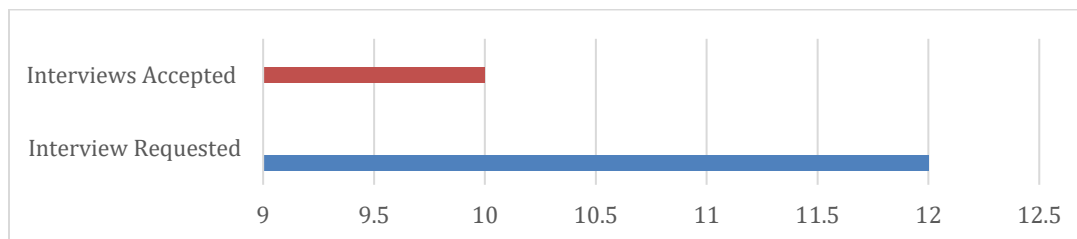


Figure 2. Interview Turnout Rate

Figure 2 showed that only 10 interviewees accepted the request to be interviewed from among the 12 requests. Hence 10 interviews were conducted. According to Walliman (2017), achieving a response rate exceeding 8 participants was deemed optimal in qualitative research, ensuring data saturation and thorough exploration of the study topic.

4.2.2 Gender of the Participants

Gender was commonly considered significant in research, as it was crucial for comprehending perspectives from both male and female standpoints (Maree, 2017). The distribution of participants' genders was illustrated in Figure 3 below:

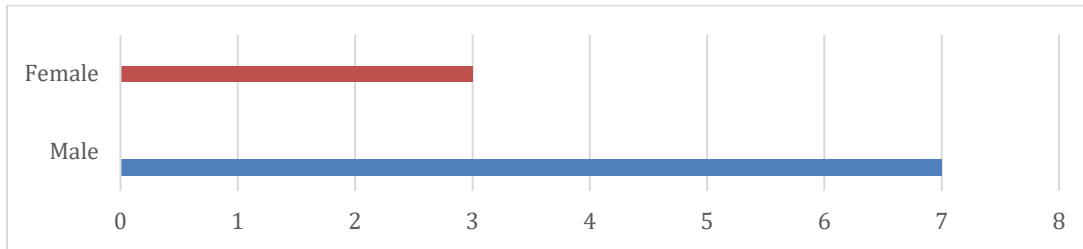


Figure 3. Gender of the Participants

Figure 3 revealed that among the ten (10) participants, only three (3) were female, while the remaining participants were male. In this context, Leedy and Ormrod (2018) contended that, regardless of representational diversity, enhancing credibility can be achieved by fostering a gender-balanced discourse. The prevalence of male participants in the findings suggested an employment imbalance within the organisation, possibly influenced by the nature of the business.

4.2.3 Age Group of the Participants

Creswell (2018) emphasised the significance of participants' age, as it shaped their comprehension, attitude, and perspectives on a particular issue. Figure 4 illustrated the categorisation of participants into various age groups:

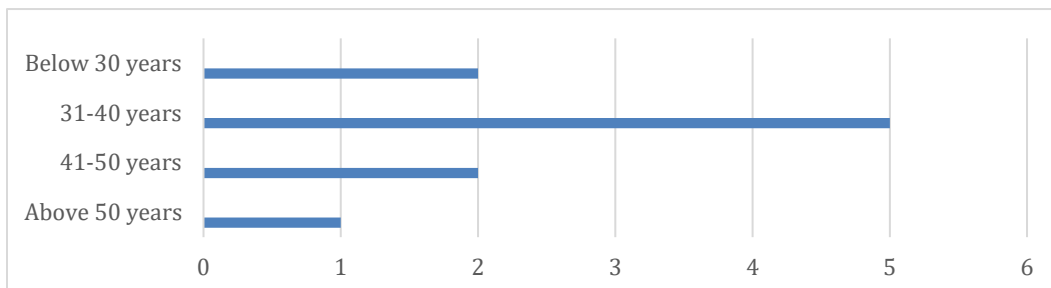


Figure 4. Age Group of the Participant

Figure 4 indicated that the predominant group among the participants, numbering five (5), fell within the age range of 31 to 40. Two (2) participants were below the age of 30, while an additional two (2) were between 41 and 50 years. The study derived advantages from this broad age spectrum as it enabled the capture of diverse perspectives, opinions, and attitudes among participants. The data also reflected that the research elicited an understanding of the research topic from mature participants.

4.2.4 Position in the Organisation

A person's proximity to a specific phenomenon under investigation was influenced by their organisational position, as outlined by Creswell (2018). The subsequent diagram depicted the positions of the participants within the organisation:

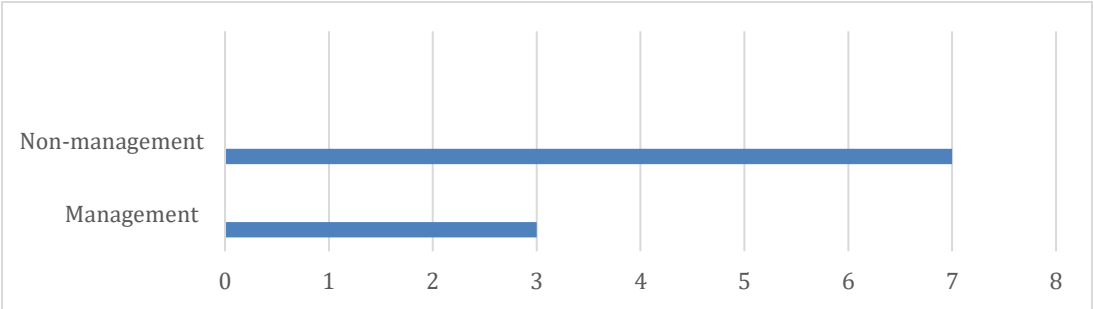


Figure 5. Position in the Organisation

As shown in the Figure 5, the majority consisted of seven (7) participants in non-management and three (3) in the management category. The position of participants signified their proximity to the research phenomena, with the management being particularly attuned to the CSR initiatives and non-management well-versed with its role in creating a competitive advantage given their direct involvement with CSR initiatives and programmes.

4.2.5 Experience of the Participants

The study encompassed the participants' experiences, and the outcomes was depicted as follows:

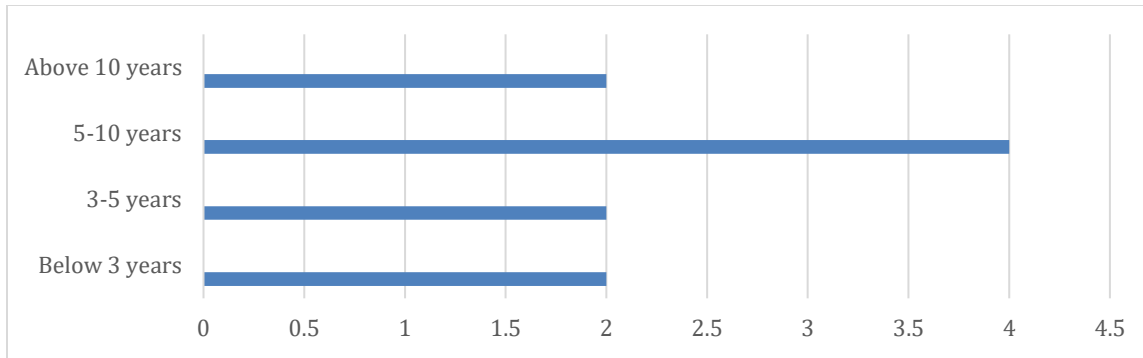


Figure 6. Experience of the Participants

Figure 6 illustrated that the majority (totalling four (4)), possessed 5 to 10 years of experience. Additionally, two (2) participants had below three years of experience, another two (2) had 3-5 years, and two (2) had above 10 years of experience. The insights and perspectives were garnered from individuals with significant experience and understanding of the role of CSR in creating a competitive advantage for IBV company in the private sector.

4.2.6 Highest Academic Qualifications of the Participants

The participants' highest academic qualifications were presented in Figure 7:

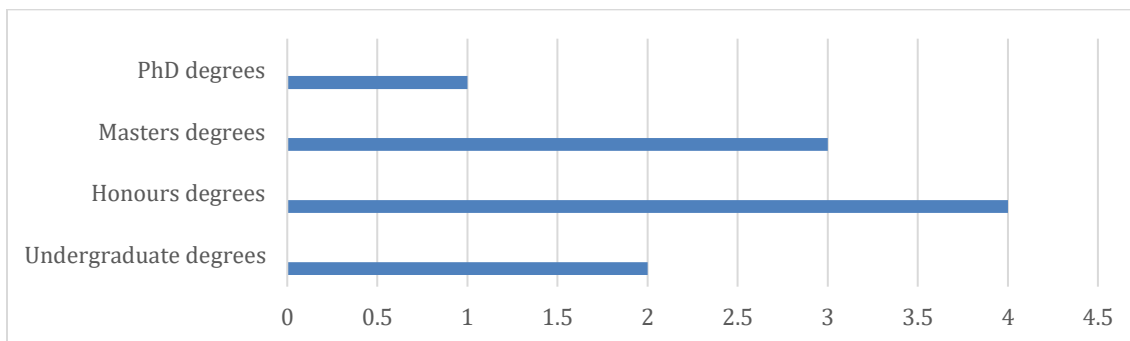


Figure 7. Highest Academic Qualifications of the Participant

In Figure 7, it was evident that four (4) participants held honours degrees, three (3) possessed undergraduate degrees, two (2) had attained master's degrees, and one participant held a PhD degree. The outcomes regarding academic qualifications indicated

that the participants possessed ample knowledge to grasp the research phenomena under examination.

4.3 Presentation of Results from the interviews

Saunders et al. (2019) emphasised the importance of a structured process involving direction, systematic categorisation, and assigning significance to acquired data in qualitative data analysis. The analysis of data was critical as it ensured the presentation of research information in a coherent manner, providing researchers with access to a well-organized analytical framework for study. Techniques for data analysis and interpretation encompassed thematic analysis. In this context, the construction of the interview guide was tailored to align with the study's themes. Consequently, the research's gathered and coded subtopics were incorporated into the thematic structure. The interviewees were identified ethically, referencing participants from the first to the tenth in the study.

4.3.1 Key Factors that Contribute to the Success of CSR Initiatives

- *Objective One: To identify the key factors that contribute to the success of CSR initiatives in IBV Company's internationalization efforts.*

There were various important aspects that affected the effectiveness of CSR projects. These elements influenced the efficacy and significance of corporate social responsibility initiatives. Using the opinions and perspectives of the participants, the study determined the critical elements that supported the CSR projects' success in the IBV company's internationalisation endeavours.

4.3.1.1 Alignment with Corporate Values and Mission

Many participants have suggested that one of the most important elements that helped CSR activities in IBV company's internationalisation efforts succeed was alignment with business values and mission. CSR activities that were in line with the organisation's mission and fundamental values were the ones that succeeded. CSR initiatives have a

higher chance of being sincere and favourably accepted by stakeholders when they aligned with the company's values. In this perspective, Participant 2 attested that:

"For me, CSR initiatives need to be in sync with what our company stands for. If it's not aligned with our core values and mission, it just feels forced and doesn't resonate well with anyone."

Also, Participant 4 opined that:

"The best CSR initiatives, in my opinion, are the ones that seamlessly connect with our company's identity. It's not just about ticking boxes; it's about living out our ethos in the community or through environmental efforts."

More so, Participant 7 argued that:

"Stakeholders can sense when something is off or doesn't really match our brand. When CSR initiatives reflect our core values, it creates a positive image, and people genuinely support them."

In addition, Participant 9 highlighted that:

"I've seen cases where CSR feels disjointed from what the company is known for. It's confusing. But when it aligns with our principles, it makes sense, and people can see the purpose behind it."

The participants uniformly stressed the critical importance of CSR initiatives aligning with the organisation's core values and mission. The recurring theme across their responses was the emphasis on authenticity. The use of terms like 'forced', 'seamlessly connect', and 'creates a positive image' collectively indicated a shared belief that genuine alignment significantly contributed to the success of CSR initiatives. Stakeholders, according to the participants, appreciate and support initiatives that mirrored the company's identity, and created a coherent and purposeful narrative. As Freeman et al., (2021) attested, stakeholder theory contended that by placing a high priority on CSR, businesses may enhance their interactions with stakeholders and generate long-term value. The same

was echoed by Sang et al. (2021), who attested that the alignment of CSR and company values fostered a positive perception among stakeholders, leading to increased trust in the organisation's commitment to responsible business practices. In essence, the consensus was that a strong alignment with corporate values and mission formed the bedrock for successful and well-received CSR endeavours.

4.3.1.2 Integration into Business Strategy

Many participants confirmed that one of the main elements supporting the success of CSR activities in IBV company's internationalisation efforts was the integration of CSR into business strategy. Rather than existing as stand-alone projects, CSR activities must be included into the broader company plan. Thus, when CSR was woven into the fabric of the organisation, it became a strategic driver for sustainable and responsible business practices. On the same point, Participant 1 stated that:

"I firmly believe that CSR can't be this separate thing; it has to be part of our bigger strategy. When it's integrated into our business plan, it's not just about doing good; it becomes a smart business move."

Also, Participant 5 indicated that:

"Integration is key. We shouldn't view CSR as a side project; it should flow through everything we do as a company. It becomes a way of doing business responsibly, not just a checkbox."

Participant 7 further propounded that.

"I've seen the difference between standalone CSR efforts and those that are seamlessly integrated. The latter, when part of our business strategy, feels more impactful, like we're truly committed to responsible practices."

In addition, Participant 10 established that;

"CSR shouldn't be an add-on; it should be part of our DNA. When it's integrated into our overall strategy, it guides our decisions, and it's not just a PR move. It's about aligning our business with responsible practices."

The participants consistently emphasised the necessity of integrating CSR initiatives into the broader business strategy. The recurring theme across their responses was the idea that CSR should not exist in isolation but should be intricately woven into the fabric of the organisation. The use of terms like 'smart business move', 'way of doing businesses, and 'part of our DNA collectively indicated a shared belief that strategic integration was not only responsible but also beneficial for the overall success of the business. Participants suggested that when CSR became a strategic driver, it went beyond philanthropy or compliance; it became an integral part of the company's identity and decision-making processes. This resonated with the views by Harrison et al., (2022) who stated that strategic CSR involved aligning social and environmental initiatives with core business strategies to achieve both societal and economic benefits. Therefore, the consensus was that CSR's effectiveness was maximized when seamlessly embedded into the core strategy, fostering a holistic approach to sustainable and responsible business practices.

4.3.1.3 Community Involvement and Localisation

The community involvement and localisation were established by the participants as one of the key factors that contributed to the success of CSR initiatives in IBV company's internationalisation efforts. In this regard, CSR initiatives were more effective when they directly addressed the needs of local communities. Thus, engaging with local stakeholders, understanding their concerns, and tailoring initiatives to meet specific community needs contributed to success. Participant 2 echoed the same perspective by stating that:

"Local communities have unique needs, and our CSR should reflect that. When we actively involve them, listen to their concerns, and tailor our initiatives accordingly, it's not just charity; it's making a real difference where it matters."

Participant 3 further highlighted that:

"I've seen the impact when we get involved at the grassroots level. It's not about imposing; it's about understanding. Tailoring our CSR to fit the specific needs of local communities is the only way it truly succeeds."

Participant 6 also enunciated that:

"Engagement is everything. When we engage with local stakeholders, it's not just about giving; it's about co-creating solutions. The success lies in how well our CSR aligns with what the community actually needs."

Participant 8 also pointed out that:

"CSR isn't a one-size-fits-all thing. We need to be deeply connected to the communities we serve. It's not just about doing something good; it's about doing the right thing for the right people. That's how you make a lasting impact."

The participants consistently highlighted the critical importance of community involvement and localisation in the success of CSR initiatives. The recurring theme across their responses was the emphasis on active engagement, understanding, and tailoring initiatives to meet the specific needs of local communities. The use of terms like 'real difference', 'co-creating solutions', and 'lasting impact' collectively indicated a shared belief that the effectiveness of CSR was maximized when it was rooted in a deep understanding of and collaboration with local communities. Participants suggested that meaningful engagement, rather than one-size-fits-all approaches, was key to ensuring that CSR initiatives not only addressed community needs but also contributed to sustainable and positive outcomes. According to Pizzi et al., (2021), the understanding of the unique challenges and concerns of each community was essential for creating initiatives that had a genuine and lasting positive effect. Therefore, the consensus was that CSR success was intricately tied to its ability to connect with and respond to the diverse and unique needs of the local communities it aimed to serve.

4.3.2 The Role of CSR in Creating a Competitive Advantage

- *Objective Two: To analyze the role of CSR in creating a competitive advantage for the IBV Company in Gauteng Province.*

In today's dynamic and socially sensitive business climate, corporate social responsibility, or CSR, was crucial to giving organisations a competitive edge. There were several benefits associated with incorporating socially responsible practices into business plans, all of which enhanced an organisation's overall performance and sustainability. Considering this, the IBV company in the Gauteng Province investigated the role of CSR in gaining a competitive edge. The following subthemes that surfaced were addressed:

4.3.2.1 Enhanced Reputation and Brand Image

Most participants acknowledged that the improvement in brand image and reputation was as a result of CSR's contribution in providing a competitive advantage to IBV companies in Gauteng. This showed that the company's reputation and brand image were enhanced through its CSR actions. In this area, consumer preference for companies committed to social and environmental responsibility grew, which strengthened brand loyalty and improved a company's reputation in the market. In support of the view, Participant 1 attested that:

"CSR isn't just about doing good; it's about how people see us. When we're out there making a positive impact, it adds a layer to our brand. Consumers today want to support companies that care, and that builds a reputation that lasts."

Participant 2 further noted that:

"Our CSR efforts are like an investment in our brand. It's not just about the products we sell; it's about what we stand for. Consumers are more discerning now, and they connect with brands that share their values."

Participant 3 also indicated that:

"Reputation is everything in business. CSR is our way of showing we're not just about profits; we care about the world we operate in. It's not just a feel-good move; it's a strategic decision to shape how people perceive us."

Participant 4 outlined that:

"I've seen the shift in consumer behavior. It's not just about the product; it's about the story behind it. When our CSR aligns with what matters to people, our brand becomes more than a name; it becomes a symbol of responsibility."

The participants collectively underscore the pivotal role of CSR in shaping a positive reputation and brand image. Their responses highlighted a shared understanding that CSR was not merely a philanthropic endeavour but a strategic investment in the company's identity. The use of terms like 'investment', 'values', 'strategic decision', and 'symbol of responsibility' collectively indicated that participants recognised CSR as a fundamental driver in building a brand that resonated with socially conscious consumers. The consensus among participants suggested that, in today's discerning market, consumers valued companies not just for their products or services but for the values they upheld and the positive impact they made (Alam and Islam, 2021). By and large, the participants emphasised that CSR, when thoughtfully executed, became a catalyst for establishing a lasting and positive reputation in the eyes of consumers.

4.3.2.2 Operational Efficiency and Cost Savings

The CSR was propounded as playing a role of creating a competitive advantage for the IBV company in the Gauteng Province by ensuring operational efficiency and cost savings. CSR initiatives were affirmed as often leading to improvements in operational efficiency and resource management. Thus, sustainable practices, energy efficiency, and waste reduction not only benefited the environment but also resulted in cost savings for the company. In the same perspective, Participant 1 pointed out that:

"Our CSR push for sustainability wasn't just about being green; it turned out to be a game-changer for our operations. Energy-efficient equipment and waste

reduction measures not only helped the environment but also slashed our operational costs. It's a win-win."

Participant 4 also pointed out that:

"It surprised me how much cost savings we achieved through our CSR initiatives. Going green wasn't just a buzzword; it was a strategy that streamlined our processes. Energy efficiency and waste reduction efforts translated into direct savings, proving that responsible practices make good business sense."

Participant 5 also established that:

"CSR isn't just about goodwill; it's about smart business decisions. Our focus on sustainable practices and resource optimization wasn't just beneficial for the planet; it significantly cut down our costs. It's proof that doing right by the environment aligns with doing right by our bottom line."

Participant 9 also noted that:

"We initially embraced CSR for its environmental benefits, but the operational efficiency gains were unexpected yet welcomed. Sustainable practices, energy efficiency, and waste reduction not only reduced our ecological footprint but also streamlined our operations, leading to substantial cost savings. It's an investment that pays off."

On this code, the participants uniformly highlighted the dual impact of CSR initiatives on both environmental sustainability and operational efficiency with cost savings. They emphasised the surprise and realisation that responsible practices were not just ethically sound but strategically advantageous for the bottom line. The consistent use of terms like 'game-changer', 'smart business decisions', and 'investment that pays off' collectively indicated a shared understanding that CSR, when integrated into business operations, yielded tangible benefits beyond environmental conservation. Therefore, the consensus among participants suggested that the symbiotic relationship between CSR and

operational efficiency created a positive feedback loop where environmentally conscious practices resulted in significant cost savings, reinforcing the notion that being socially responsible aligned with sound business strategies (Marakova *et al.*, 2021). Also, this evaluation and optimization process can lead to the development of novel and efficient processes, enhancing operational performance, reducing costs, and providing a competitive advantage (Kotler and Lee, 2015).

4.3.2.3 Customer Differentiation and Market Access

The participants affirmed that customer differentiation and market access was the role played by CSR in enhancing competitive advantage at IBV company in the Gauteng Province. The CSR initiatives differentiated a company's products or services in the market, providing a competitive edge. This increasingly, consumers were making purchasing decisions based on the social and environmental impact of the products they buy. Participant 1 also pointed out:

"CSR isn't just about being socially responsible; it's become a differentiator in the market. Customers are more conscious now, and they appreciate companies that go beyond profit. Our CSR initiatives give us a unique position and a connection with customers who share our values."

Participant 4 also noted that:

"Our CSR efforts are more than just checkboxes; they're part of our brand identity. In a crowded market, consumers notice when a company stands for something. It's not just about the product; it's about what the company represents. That's where CSR sets us apart."

Participant 6 argued that:

"Customers are discerning; they look beyond the product. Our CSR initiatives aren't just a side project; they're woven into our brand story. It's a differentiator that

resonates with consumers who want to support businesses making a positive impact. It's a win-win for us and our customers."

Participant 9 also attested that:

"Being socially responsible isn't a trend; it's a business strategy. Consumers are choosing products not just based on features but on the values a company upholds. Our CSR initiatives give us a competitive edge by aligning with what matters to our customers. It's a strategic move in today's market."

The participants expressed a shared understanding that CSR served as a powerful tool for customer differentiation and market positioning. Their opinions underscore the notion that CSR was not merely a checkbox but an integral part of brand identity and business strategy. The use of terms like 'differentiator', 'brand identity', and 'woven into our brand story' collectively indicated that participants recognised the strategic role of CSR in setting their companies apart in a competitive market. As noted among the participants, the views suggested that consumers, increasingly conscientious, are making purchasing decisions that aligned with their values, and companies with robust CSR initiatives gained a competitive edge by resonating with these consumer preferences (Hang et al., 2022). Therefore, the verbatims highlighted that CSR, when authentically integrated into a company's identity, not only differentiated it in the market but also created a meaningful connection with socially conscious consumers.

4.3.3 Improving the Success of CSR Initiatives and Enhance its Competitiveness in the Business Environment

- *Objective Three: To provide recommendations for interventions that the IBV Company can implement to improve the success of CSR initiatives and enhance its competitiveness in the business environment.*

A plethora of studies held that improving the success of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives was essential for enhancing a company's competitiveness in the business environment (Kotler and Lee, 2015; Zhao et al., 2019; Nejati et al., 2021). In this

regard, the study provided recommendations for interventions that the IBV company can implement to improve the success of CSR initiatives and enhanced its competitiveness in the business environment. The elicited views were then thematically analysed and deliberated as per below:

4.3.3.1 Strategic Alignment

To optimise the success of CSR initiatives and enhance its competitiveness in the business environment, most of the participants attested that IBV company must ensure strategic alignment of CSR and business goals. This depicted that CSR must not be a standalone effort; but it should integrate seamlessly with the overall strategy. Thus, strategic alignment ensured that CSR initiatives complemented and enhanced the company's core business objectives, maximizing their impact and relevance. In the same reasoning, Participant 1 asserted that:

"We need to ensure that CSR isn't just a checkbox; it should align closely with what we're trying to achieve as a business."

Also, Participant 4 attested that:

"Integration is key; CSR should seamlessly fit into our broader strategy, amplifying our impact on both social responsibility and business success."

More so, Participant 5 further pointed out that:

"Strategic alignment ensures that CSR is not a side project but an integral part of our company's DNA, strengthening our core business objectives."

Participant 8 also highlighted that:

"Our CSR initiatives should be more than standalone projects; they should actively contribute to the overall success of the company, creating a win-win scenario."

The participants consistently underscored the critical importance of aligning Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) with the organisation's business goals. The shared perspectives emphasised a common vision that CSR should not operate in isolation but rather be seamlessly integrated into the overarching business strategy. Participants highlighted the significance of strategic alignment, asserting that CSR initiatives should not only complement but actively enhance the company's core business objectives. This collective viewpoint positions strategic alignment as a fundamental principle, ensuring that CSR was not solely a philanthropic endeavour but a strategic imperative that maximised impact and relevance. In doing so, it fostered a symbiotic relationship between social responsibility and business success, as emphasised in the study by Hang et al. (2022).

4.3.3.2 Measurable Impact Metrics

Most of the participants affirmed that the development measurable impact metrics of CSR sufficed as an intervention that the IBV company can implement to improve the success of CSR initiatives and enhance its competitiveness in the business environment. This depicted the establishment of clear metrics to measure the impact. Thus, the tangible results helped showcase the effectiveness of CSR initiatives and implementing measurable metrics allowed for tracking and demonstrating the concrete positive effects of CSR efforts, reinforcing accountability and transparency. Participant 1 further stated that:

"We need specific metrics to gauge our CSR impact. Numbers and tangible outcomes will speak louder than words in demonstrating our commitment to social responsibility."

Also, Participant 5 indicated that:

"Measurable impact is crucial. Let's define key metrics to track and showcase the real difference our CSR initiatives are making in the community and beyond."

Participant 3 also argued that:

"Concrete results give credibility to our CSR efforts. Let's establish metrics that not only measure impact but also help in refining and optimizing our strategies for maximum positive influence."

Participant 4 further stated that:

"Metrics provide a roadmap for success. By implementing measurable standards, we not only prove our dedication to social impact but also ensure that our CSR initiatives are aligned with our broader organisational goals."

The participants unanimously stressed the necessity of establishing clear and measurable impact metrics for CSR initiatives. There was a shared understanding that tangible results were vital in showcasing the effectiveness of these initiatives. The call for specific metrics resonated with a collective desire to move beyond abstract claimed and demonstrated, through quantifiable outcomes, the actual positive effects of CSR efforts (Marakova *et al.*, 2021). Therefore, this commitment to accountability and transparency, as expressed by the participants, underlined the importance of metrics not only as evaluative tools but as strategic guides for optimising the impact of CSR initiatives.

4.3.3.3 Stakeholder Engagement

The stakeholder engagement was noted by the participants as one of the recommendations for interventions that the IBV company can implement to improve the success of CSR initiatives and enhance its competitiveness in the business environment. The engagement of stakeholders actively led to understand of their expectations and involved them in the CSR process. Thus, actively involving stakeholders, including customers, employees, and communities, fostered a sense of shared responsibility and ensured that CSR efforts addressed genuine needs. In this reasoning, Participant 1 further asserted that:

"Stakeholder engagement is not just a checkbox; it's about genuinely understanding their expectations. Let's make sure we actively involve all stakeholders to ensure our CSR initiatives resonate with their needs."

Also, Participant 4 highlighted that:

"Customers and employees play a vital role. Actively engaging them in the CSR process ensures our initiatives are not only impactful but also align with the values and expectations of those we serve and work with."

Participant 3 also asserted that:

"It's a two-way street. By involving communities in the CSR conversation, we not only address their needs but also build a foundation of trust and shared responsibility. It's about co-creating value."

Participant 4 further propounded that:

"Stakeholders are our partners in CSR. Their insights are invaluable, and by actively involving them, we not only meet expectations but often exceed them. It's about building relationships that extend beyond business transactions."

The participants expressed a collective understanding of the significance of stakeholder engagement in CSR initiatives. They emphasised the need for active involvement and genuine understanding of stakeholder expectations. The recurring theme was a commitment to building relationships and shared responsibility with customers, employees, and communities. The idea of stakeholder engagement was a two-way street, where insights were valued and relationships extended beyond transactions, reflected a holistic approach to CSR (Marakova *et al.*, 2021). This approach, as articulated by the participants, went beyond meeting expectations; it strived to create value collaboratively, ensuring that CSR efforts resonated authentically with the diverse needs of stakeholders.

4.4 Conclusion

The chapter was a deliberation of findings, analysis, and interpretation to explore the role of CSR in creating a competitive advantage for IBV company in the private sector. The discussion was premised on the elicited inferences from a sample of 10 participants using semi-structured interviews. The chapter ascertained the key factors that contributed to

the success of CSR initiatives in IBV company's internationalisation efforts. Also, the recommendations for interventions that the IBV company can implement to improve the success of CSR initiatives and enhanced its competitiveness in the business environment were unearthed. The following chapter focused on the conclusions and recommendations of the study.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

The findings obtained through interviews were reviewed, examined, and evaluated in the previous chapter. Research objectives were achieved by examining the data using sub-themes coded in conjunction with thematic analysis. The primary goal of the study was to examine the role of CSR in creating a competitive advantage for IBV company in the private sector. The main conclusions of the study, recommendations and suggested further research were the subject of this chapter. The chapter began with a summary of the main conclusions of the study.

5.2 Conclusions drawn from the results.

The primary goal of the study was to examine the role of CSR in creating a competitive advantage for IBV company in the private sector. The study explored the impact of CSR initiatives on the success of IBV company's internationalisation efforts and its competitiveness in the Gauteng Province.

The literature review conceptualised corporate social responsibility (CSR) as the voluntary efforts and initiatives businesses take to operate in a way that went above and beyond their legal responsibilities. CSR entails acting morally, accepting accountability for a company's effects on people and the environment, and promoting sustainable growth (Dahlsrud, 2008). Also, competitive advantage was posited as the capacity of an organisation to outperform its rivals through the provision of superior goods or services, increased efficiency, or the development of a distinctive value proposition (Agung and Darma, 2019).

5.2.1 Conclusions: Research Objective One

The primary study addressed the first research objective regarding the key factors that contributed to the success of CSR initiatives in IBV company's internationalisation efforts. The alignment with corporate values and mission had been posited by many participants as among the key factors that contributed to the success of CSR initiatives in IBV

company's internationalisation efforts. Most participants affirmed that the integration of CSR in business strategy was one of the key factors that contributed to the success of CSR initiatives in IBV company's internationalisation efforts. Community involvement and localisation was established by the participants as one of the key factors that contributed to the success of CSR initiatives in IBV company's internationalisation efforts.

The study concluded that it was significant to align CSR initiatives with the company's core values and mission. Additionally, the integration of CSR into the overall business strategy emerged as a crucial factor contributing to positive outcomes. The importance of community involvement and localization was also underscored in the success of CSR initiatives within IBV company's internationalization endeavours. This echoed the views by Sang et al. (2021) and Freeman et al., (2021) who attested to the importance of stakeholder engagement, community involvement, integration of CSR in overall business strategy, strategic alignment in CSR, leadership commitment, and performance measurement as essential components for effective CSR implementation. Together these findings provided a comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted nature of successful CSR initiatives in IBV company's competitiveness.

5.2.2 Conclusions: Research Objective Two

The second research objective, focused on the role of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in creating a competitive advantage for the IBV company in the Gauteng Province, was addressed in the primary study. Most of the participants acknowledged that the enhancement of reputation and brand image was an outcome of the role of CSR in creating a competitive advantage for the IBV company in the Gauteng Province. The study proposed that CSR played a crucial role in creating a competitive advantage for the IBV company in the Gauteng Province by ensuring operational efficiency and cost savings. CSR initiatives were affirmed as often leading to improvements in operational efficiency and resource management. Additionally, participants confirmed that CSR played a role in customer differentiation and market access, enhancing competitive advantage at IBV company in the Gauteng Province.

Against that background, the study concluded that CSR initiatives significantly contributed to operational efficiency and cost savings, thereby strengthening IBV company's competitive position. This highlighted the strategic nature of CSR, surpassing mere philanthropy and becoming a driving force behind tangible business benefits. The literature review supported these conclusions by emphasising CSR as a means for companies to fulfil their social responsibility, make positive societal and environmental contributions, and achieve employee engagement, risk management, and innovation (Marakova et al., 2021; Hang et al., 2022; Zhao et al., 2019). These insights not only contribute to an understanding of CSR's impact on IBV company's competitiveness in the Gauteng Province but also underscore the broader strategic implications of CSR in today's business landscape.

5.2.3 Conclusions: Research Objective Three

The primary study effectively addressed the third objective, focussed on recommendations for interventions that the IBV company can implement to improve the success of CSR initiatives and enhance its competitiveness in the business environment. To optimise the success of CSR initiatives and boost competitiveness, most of the participants emphasized that IBV company must ensure the strategic alignment of CSR with business goals. Additionally, participants recommended developing measurable impact metrics for CSR as a practical intervention for improving the success of initiatives and enhancing competitiveness in the business environment. Moreover, actively engaging stakeholders to understand their expectations and involving them in the CSR process was identified as another key recommendation for interventions. This approach fostered collaboration and ensured that CSR initiatives resonated with the broader stakeholder community.

In this regard, the study concluded that the active engagement of stakeholders emerged as a critical element. Involving stakeholders ensured a comprehensive understanding of their expectations and incorporated their perspectives into the CSR process, thereby fostering alignment with diverse needs. This participatory approach strengthened the impact of CSR initiatives. Drawing from the literature, a well-defined CSR strategy aligned

with overall business goals, stakeholder engagement, employee development, and effective communication were identified as essential interventions for success. By implementing these recommendations, IBV company can not only optimize the impact of its CSR initiatives but also communicate their success transparently to both internal and external stakeholders, contributing to enhanced competitiveness in the dynamic business environment (Zhao et al., 2019; Kotler and Lee, 2015; Freeman et al., 2010).

5.3 Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made:

5.3.1 Enhance Strategic Alignment with Corporate Values:

The study underscored the importance of strategic alignment between CSR initiatives and the corporate values and mission of IBV company. To optimize the impact of CSR on internationalization efforts and competitiveness, IBV company should continuously assess and reinforce the alignment of CSR strategies with the core values and mission of the organisation. This alignment should be an ongoing process, ensuring that CSR remained an integral part of the broader business strategy.

5.3.2 Integrate Measurable Impact Metrics:

The study emphasised the need for developing measurable impact metrics for CSR initiatives. IBV company should implement a robust system to quantitatively assess the outcomes of its CSR endeavours. This included tracking key performance indicators related to reputation enhancement, operational efficiency, and resource management. Establishing clear metrics would not only provide a basis for evaluating the success of CSR initiatives but also facilitated transparent communication of these achievements to stakeholders and the wider business community.

5.3.3 Strengthen Stakeholder Engagement:

The study highlighted the pivotal role of stakeholders in the success of CSR initiatives. IBV company should actively engage with its stakeholders, understanding their expectations and involving them in the CSR decision-making process. This participatory approach ensured that CSR programs resonated with diverse stakeholder perspectives, thereby increasing their effectiveness. Regular communication channels should be established to keep stakeholders informed about CSR activities and to gather feedback for continuous improvement.

5.3.4 Promote Employee Involvement and Awareness:

Given the multifaceted impact of CSR on operational efficiency and resource management, IBV company should foster a culture of CSR awareness among its employees. Employee involvement in CSR initiatives can lead to increased operational efficiency and a stronger sense of purpose among the workforces. Implementing training programs, recognition schemes, and opportunities for employee participation in CSR activities can contribute to a more engaged and socially responsible workforce.

5.3.5 Adopt a Community-Centric Approach:

Building on the study's findings that community involvement and localization are key factors in the success of CSR initiatives, IBV company should adopt a community-centric approach. This involved understanding the specific needs and dynamics of the local communities where the company operated. Establishing partnerships with local organisations, supporting community development projects, and actively participating in local initiatives can enhance IBV company's positive impact on the communities it served, further strengthening its competitive advantage.

By implementing these recommendations, IBV company will not only optimise the success of its CSR initiatives but also sustain a competitive advantage in the Gauteng

Province and beyond, positioning itself as a socially responsible and strategically aligned organisation in the evolving business landscape.

5.4 Scope for further study

The primary goal of the study was to examine the role of CSR in creating a competitive advantage for IBV company in the private sector. However, there are still areas for further research such as:

- Technological Innovations in CSR to explore how emerging technologies, such as blockchain, artificial intelligence, or sustainable practices, can be integrated into CSR initiatives for enhanced efficiency and transparency.
- Consumer behaviour in CSR to investigate the influence of CSR on consumer behaviour and purchasing decisions in the Gauteng Province.
- CSR regulation and policy impact in examining the influence of local and national regulations on CSR practices in the Gauteng Province.
- Employee perspectives on CSR to explore the impact of CSR initiatives on employee engagement, job satisfaction, and retention within IBV company.
- Comparative analysis across industries to explore how CSR practices vary across different industries within the private sector in the Gauteng Province.

5.5 Conclusion

The primary goal of the study was to examine the role of CSR in creating a competitive advantage for IBV company in the private sector. The study explored the impact of CSR initiatives on the success of IBV company's internationalisation efforts and its competitiveness in the Gauteng Province.

The study underscored the significance of strategic alignment, wherein the integration of CSR with the organisation's values and mission emerged as a pivotal factor contributing to the success of internationalization endeavours. The study elucidated the multifaceted impact of CSR, highlighting tangible outcomes such as enhanced reputation, operational efficiency, and cost savings, fortifying IBV company's competitive position. Significantly,

the exploration of recommendations for interventions emphasized the critical role of stakeholder engagement and the development of measurable impact metrics.

Against that background, the study recommended that for IBV company encompassed enhancing strategic alignment by continuously assessing CSR initiatives against corporate values, integrating measurable impact metrics for transparent assessment, strengthening stakeholder engagement through active involvement and communication, promoting employee awareness and involvement in CSR, and adopting a community-centric approach by understanding and supporting local needs. By implementing these measures, IBV company will not only optimize the success of its CSR initiatives but also sustain a competitive advantage in the Gauteng Province and beyond, positioning itself as a socially responsible and strategically aligned organisation in the evolving business landscape.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Permission Letter



SWITZERLAND | LONDON | DUBAI | SOUTH AFRICA

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Registration No : 2019/479266/07
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Dear Xavier Ariel Ratheepaul

I, Hafiza Kader, the General Manager of the IBV Group grant permission to collect data at this site for your research project titled; The Role of CSR in Creating Competitive Advantage in the Private Sector: A Case Study of IBV Company.

I grant this permission as the authorized person to so in this company and am aware of the following,

1. The study is conducted as a UNISA researcher and remains the property of UNISA.
2. You can use the name of the company in your research project.
3. All data and information collected will be solely in the possession of the researcher.
4. I will not require feedback of the research.
5. The research may be published in the public domain under the supervision of the supervisor.

I wish the best and success in this research.



Hafiza Kader

General Manager

Cell: 082 060 7003 Tel: 031 332 0531
Email: hafiza@ibvglobal.com / hafiza@baysidegroup.co.za

Appendix B: Interview Guide

Demographic information

1. How old are you?

Age	Tick
18yrs-35years	
36-45 years	
Above 45 years	

2. What is your gender?

Gender	Tick
Male	
Female	

3. What is your highest level of professional qualification?

Qualification	Tick
Diploma and below	
Bachelor's Degree	
Post-Graduate and beyond	

4. How long have you been working at the organisation?

Years	Tick
Below 5 years	
6-10 years	
Above 11 years	

Section A: To determine the factors leading to successfulness of CSR initiatives in business internationalization.

- Can you please share your organisation's experience with implementing CSR initiatives during internationalization?
- What do you think are the key factors that have contributed to the successful implementation of these initiatives?

- How did you identify and prioritize these factors?
- Were there any challenges or obstacles that you faced during the implementation of CSR initiatives in different countries?
- How did you overcome these challenges?

Section B: To determine the role of CSR in creating competitive advantage.

- How does your organisation view CSR and its relationship to creating competitive advantage?
- Can you provide an example of how CSR initiatives have helped your organisation to gain a competitive advantage in the market?
- How do you measure the impact of CSR initiatives on your organisation's competitiveness?
- How does your organisation ensure that its CSR initiatives are aligned with its overall strategy and goals?

Section C: To suggest interventions that can be implemented to improve success of CSR initiatives to create high competitiveness in the business environment.

- Based on your experience, what interventions do you think can be implemented to improve the success of CSR initiatives?
- How can organisations ensure that their CSR initiatives are sustainable and impactful in the long run?
- What role do stakeholders, including customers, employees, and investors, play in the success of CSR initiatives?
- How can organisations communicate their CSR initiatives to stakeholders in a way that creates value for both the organisation and the stakeholders?

Appendix C: Informed Consent

[The Role of CSR in Creating Competitive Advantage in the Private Sector: A Case Study of IBV Company]

Dear Respondent

You are herewith invited to participate in an academic research study conducted by [Xavier Ariel Ratheepaul, student number: 65560485, Email: 65560485@mylife.unisa.ac.za], a student in the Master of Business Administration at UNISA's Graduate School of Business Leadership (SBL, Module code: MBA5929).

The purpose of the study is to examine the role of CSR in creating a competitive advantage for IBV Company in the private sector. The study will explore the impact of CSR initiatives on the success of IBV Company's internationalization efforts and its competitiveness in Gauteng Province.

All your answers will be treated as confidential, and you will not be identified in any of the research reports emanating from this research.

Your participation in this study is very important to us. You may however choose not to participate, and you may also withdraw from the study at any time without any negative consequences.

The data collection will be conducted through interviews of which a copy of an interview guide is attached. The interview sessions will take about 25-35 minutes of your time.

The results of the study will be used for academic purposes only and may be published in an academic journal. We will provide you with a summary of our findings on request.

Please contact my supervisor, [**Professor Lorna Holtman, Email: lbholtman2018@gmail.com**] if you have any questions or comments regarding the study. Please sign below to indicate your willingness to participate in the study.

Yours sincerely

Name: Xavier Ariel Ratheepaul

Cell: 0636850610

Email: 65560485@mylife.unisa.ac.za

I, _____ [REPONDENT
NAME], herewith give my consent to participate in the study. I have read the letter and understand
my rights regarding participating in the research.

Respondent's signature

Date

Appendix D: Ethical Clearance

Researcher: Mr Xavier Ratheepaul
IBV/BHM: Group Financial and Operations Manager
Pretoria
65560485@mylife.unisa.ac.za 0636850610

Supervisor: Professor Lorna Holtman ; lbholtman2018@gmail.com

The Role of CSR in Creating Competitive Advantage in the Private Sector: A Case Study of IBV Company

Qualification: MBA

Thank you for the application for research ethics clearance by the Graduate School of Business Leadership_RERC for the above mentioned research study Ethics approval is granted for two years.

- The **low-risk application** was **reviewed** by Graduate School of Business Leadership_RERC on **09 October 2023** in compliance with the Unisa Policy on Research Ethics and the Standard Operating Procedure on Research Ethics Risk Assessment.
- The proposed research may now commence with the provisions that:
1. The researcher(s) will ensure that the research project adheres to the values and principles expressed in the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics.
 2. Any adverse circumstance arising in the undertaking of the research project that is relevant to the ethicality of the study should be communicated in writing to the Graduate School of Business Leadership_RERC .
 3. The researcher(s) will conduct the study according to the methods and procedures set out in the approved application.
 4. Any changes that can affect the study-related risks for the research participants, particularly in terms of assurances made with regards to the protection of participants' privacy and the confidentiality of the data, should be reported to the Committee in writing, accompanied by a progress report.
 5. The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to any applicable national legislation, professional codes of conduct, institutional guidelines and scientific standards relevant to the specific field of study. Adherence to the following South African legislation is important, if applicable: Protection of Personal Information Act, no 4 of 2013; Children's act no 38 of 2005 and the National Health Act, no 61 of 2003.
 6. Only de-identified research data may be used for secondary research purposes in future on condition that the research objectives are similar to those of the original research. Secondary use of identifiable human research data requires additional ethics clearance.
 7. No field work activities may continue after the expiry date (**December 2024**). Submission of a completed research

Page 1 of 2

ethics progress report will constitute an application for renewal, for Ethics Research Committee approval.

Additional Conditions

1. Disclosure of data to third parties is prohibited without explicit consent from Unisa.
2. De-identified data must be safely stored on password protected PCs.
3. Care should be taken by the researcher when publishing the results to protect the confidentiality and privacy of the university.
4. Adherence to the National Statement on Ethical Research and Publication practices, principle 7 referring to Social awareness, must be ensured: "Researchers and institutions must be sensitive to the potential impact of their research on society, marginal groups or individuals, and must consider these when weighing the benefits of the research against any harmful effects, with a view to minimising or avoiding the latter where possible." Unisa will not be liable for any failure to comply with this principle.

Note

The reference number 2023_SBL_MBA_055_FA-1559 should be clearly indicated on all forms of communication with the intended research participants, as well as with the Committee.

Kind regards,



Prof N Mitwa
Chair of Graduate School of Business Leadership_RERC
E-mail: wiltonb@unisa.ac.za



Prof P Mswell
Executive Dean / By delegation from the Executive Dean of Graduate School of Business Leadership_RERC
E-mail: mswelp@unisa.ac.za

Appendix E: Turnitin Report

Similarity Report

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Appendix F: Supervisor Consent Form

MBLREP / MBL5913 / MBA5929

CONSENT TO SUBMIT RESEARCH REPORT FOR EXAMINATION 2023

Consent is hereby given to:

Student name: Xavier Ariel Ratheepaul

Student number: 65560485

to submit her research report in its final form.

Supervisor Signature:



Date: 03 January 2024

Supervisor Name: Prof Lorna Holtman...

The student acknowledges that sufficient feedback was provided by the supervisor and that s/he took the responsibility to attend to the feedback in a way that satisfies the requirements for a research dissertation on the MBA and MBL level.

Student signature:



Date: 03 January 2024