

Social Corporate Responsibility of Champion Breweries and Socio-economic Development in Host Communities in Akwa Ibom State (2015-2022): A Critical Appraisal

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Abstract

As organizations seek to expand their patronage for profit-making, they develop different strategies to establish equilibrium with the host communities. One such strategy is Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) which has been ingrained in the organizational culture of Champion Breweries, Akwa Ibom State. However, some of the approaches of CSR have not matched the intrinsic essentials of socio-economic development, which is why the paper is aimed at examining the CSR of Champions Breweries to the host communities. The Stakeholder's Theory was adopted for the study. The qualitative method represented through the descriptive research design was used for the study. Data were also obtained through the interview method. It was discovered that Champion Breweries have contributed to socio-economic development in the host communities through donations for power supply, provision of annual scholarships to at least 10 indigenes of the host communities, and sponsoring free medical services. However, it was observed that these contributions were majorly presented in monetary forms through donations to certain institutions and projects, without concrete supervision on their uses and effects. It was recommended that Champions Breweries should not only focus on the monetary aspect of CSR but also include services, infrastructures and skill-based programmes in its CSR package.

Keywords: Corporate social responsibility, socio-economic development, stakeholders, champion breweries, host Communities, Akwa Ibom State.

Introduction

The main objective of a business establishment is to make a profit through increasing patronage and sales of the products or services it offers (Eweje, 2014). Due to increasing competition, coupled with the need to augment economies of scale, these business establishments develop strategies to meet the objective of profit-making. However, the objective of profit-making would be relatively intractable if the establishment has not gained the unequivocal acceptance of its nearby or host environment (Wopora, 2015). From the ecological standpoint, the ecology

of an organization includes the economic, cultural, social, and political dimensions of the immediate environment where such an organization is situated. These factors can directly or indirectly influence the success of an organization to a large extent, either positively or negatively (Riggs, 1980). Thus, to cultivate a positive synergy and ensure popular acceptance and patronage, business organizations invest in the development of the social, economic, cultural, and even political base of their immediate environment, particularly the host communities. According to Maimunah (2009), this investment is what connotes the practice referred to as Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR).

Concerning socio-economic development, CSR activities may include promoting a local sporting club, event or competition, provision of scholarships to indigenes of the area, provision of jobs, and other social services (Ebert & Griffin, 2017; Bettez, 2013). While the organization views these as a means of expanding its level of acceptance and business opportunities within the host communities, the host communities view CSR approaches as contributions to their social and economic well-being (Wopora, 2015; Nwoba & Michael, 2016). Essentially, the organization and the society benefit from CSR policies that are well executed. For the organization, there is an increase in its profitability because it can create a marketable environment for itself through the locals of the communities involved. Hence, such an organization tends to attract local patronage through public approval. For society, CSR approaches like employment provision for indigenous residents, provision of scholarships, establishment of social infrastructures such as boreholes for water supply, road construction, renovation of public/private schools, etc., are measures which could ensure the socio-economic development of the host communities. This explains the nexus between CSR and socio-economic development (Alo & Adeyokun, 2022).

CSR has remained one of the fundamental policies for Champions Breweries in Akwa Ibom State, aimed at maintaining a conducive operational environment. The industry has contributed to the socio-economic development of the host communities, which include Aka Offot, Nung Oku, Obot Idim, Ikot Oduot, Ikot Ambon, and Owotuta. These contributions have manifested in sectors like education, health, water supply sports development etc. (Akamu, 2018). For instance, in the aspect of educational development, Champion Breweries donated desks, chairs, and books to schools in the host communities. They have also contributed to other aspects of socio-economic development through donations for public infrastructure (Champion Breweries Annual Report, 2017; 2018; 2019; 2020; 2022; Bassey, 2018).

Despite these contributions, development in the host communities has remained low due to the presence of multidimensional poverty. Some communities like Ikot Oduot, Ikot Ambon, and Owotuta have not been able to access clean and potable water and other basic infrastructure like electricity. While this is blamable on the incapacity of the government to orchestrate development, it has also been observed that industries, organizations, firms, etc., around the communities, have not contributed significantly to development in their host communities. Hence, this study is an investigation into the role of Champion Breweries in the socio-economic development of Akwa Ibom State through its corporate social responsibility to the host communities from 2015-2022.

Study Location

The study was conducted in Champion Breweries PLC located in Uyo Capital City of Akwa Ibom State, one of the thirty-six States in Nigeria with a projected Population of over 3.5million people. The State was created on 23rd September, 1987. There are 31 local government areas including Uyo the State Capital. The State is strategically located at the Southeastern corner of Nigeria between latitudes 4°30¹ and 5° 33¹ North and longitudes 7° 30¹ and 8° 25¹East (Daniel &Udo,2018).

Concept of Corporate Social Responsibility

Corporate social responsibility is an issue that most organizations feel committed to. The concept reflects the things a company should do for the community within which it operates, which often times go beyond meeting its obligatory requirements (Mbat, Ibok & Daniel, 2013). In the last 50 years, there have been different definitions of CSR. A recent study identified 37 definitions of CSR (Carroll & Shabana 2010). This is because the definition of what the social responsibilities of businesses are is constantly changing. There are core disagreements between critics and advocates of CSR as it relates to the nature and scope of what constitutes the social responsibilities of businesses. It also relates to the differences in perceptions and understanding of the function and objectives of the company in any given society (Idemudia & Ite, 2006). Some scholars have attempted the definition of the term, for instance, Davis (1973) defined the term as the consideration of, and response to, issues beyond the narrow economic, technical and legal requirements of the firm, to accomplish social benefits along with the traditional economic gains which the firm seeks. For Koestoer (2007), CSR is simply the diverse ways through which companies address various social issues in their operating areas, whether individually or collectively. McWilliams & Siegel (2001) define it as actions that appear to further some social good beyond the interests of the firm and that which is required by law. According to Chapple & Moon (2005), CSR connotes the social involvement, responsiveness, and accountability of businesses, apart from their core profit activities and beyond the requirements of the law and what is otherwise required by government.

Some common themes can be deduced from the definitions of CSR above. The most prominent theme is that a company's CSR activities should exceed what the law requires in its obligations towards the society. For example, if an oil and gas company abides by environmental laws, it does not necessarily mean that it is socially responsible. It means that it is a law-abiding corporate citizen. However, if the company uses its resources to promote community welfare like providing free health service, it can be termed a socially responsible company (Banerjee 2007; Harrison & Freeman, 1995).

Another recurring theme in the definitions above is the discretionary and voluntary views on CSR. It means that CSR cannot be imposed on the company by the law. Companies that choose to engage in CSR activities are however expected to do so following local, regional, national and international codes of conduct that are not legally binding (Carroll & Shabana 2010). Finally, the conceptualizations of 'society' and 'social' tend to have been narrowed over the years to mean 'stakeholders'. This is based on the assumption that stakeholders are representatives of societal interests and pressurize these companies to respond to these interests (Banerjee 2007).

Carroll (1979) classified CSR into economic, legal, ethical, and voluntary responsibilities. According to him, the economic responsibility entails businesses can achieve their multiple corporate goals and long-run profit maximization by incorporating CSR into their business objectives. The legal aspect entails expectations that businesses should 'play by the book' by carrying out their business within the legally ascribed frameworks. Laws define the limits of tolerable behaviours of businesses, but do not define ethics (the right or wrong of business character). This means the expectation of society is that businesses should be ethical and act right. This may include preventing social and environmental harm like pollution (Jamali & Mirshak, 2006). Most businesses have subscribed to voluntary CSR. The ideology is that business and society are intertwined in an organic way. Carroll & Shabana (2010) posits that businesses ought to undertake voluntary and philanthropic CSR projects to cover important societal issues. These four responsibilities, as a whole, form the crust of social expectations and CSR of businesses. For example, businesses that want to be ethical (do the right thing) must be economical (not just seek profitability alone but to allow the economy to inform clear-cut incentives and opportunities to do CSR). Also, businesses can be legally responsible (follow

the established laws of the state) as a good corporate citizen. They can also engage in philanthropic and voluntary activities as a way to prove their responsibility.

Concept of Socio-Economic Development

Socio-economic development emphasizes progress in terms of both economic and social factors within a geographic entity. Economic development is the process of raising the level of prosperity through increased production, distribution and consumption of goods and services. Social development, on the other hand focuses on the concerns of the people as objectives of development and people-centered, participatory approaches to development measured through multidimensional poverty levels, employment, security, education, health, etc. (Fritz, 2018). Thus, socio-economic development can be generally defined as the process, changes, or improvement in the social and economic conditions that affect an individual or a society. These social and economic factors include income (GDP /Per Capita Income), health, levels of education, employment level, infrastructure, and environmental sustainability (United Nations Development Programme, 2023).

Supportively, Atakpa (2016) in reference to Meier (1989) notes that development is more than the growth rate of the Gross National Product (GNP). Essentially, growths in the monetary/financial status of a country must reflect on the institutions, technical know-how, and general lives of the constituents of such state. Hence, socio-economic development includes variables of modernization such as improvement and adoption of modern technical know-how, improved institutions, improved attitudes of the people, and the existence of an all-inclusive and rational policy apparatus to ensure the equalization of economic and social factors of livelihood.

According to Atakpa & Udoms (2021), development is measured by the indicators of health, education, food, safe water, sanitation, and affordable housing for people, which are also factors of human development. Following this basis, socio-economic development refers to the extent through which countries prefer to allocate GNP among these factors of human development (Udoms, et al, 2017).

Corporate Social Responsibility and Socio-economic Development: The Nexus

The debate of integrating sustainable socio-economic development into CSR was introduced by the 1987 Brundtland Report. The main ideology is that the development of a community must be balanced with the necessity to satisfy human needs. The corporations are to focus on the negative consequences of their business operations which could threaten the existence of future generations (Eweje, 2011). Integrating socio-economic development into corporate strategy can be challenging and complex and companies have to deal with these challenges and complexities. This can be achieved by identifying opportunities, and their responsibilities toward the environmental, social, and economic aspects of their operations (Baumgartner 2014).

The concept of sustainable socio-economic development in CSR connotes a company's capacity to resolve the expectations of its present direct and indirect stakeholders without jeopardizing their capacity to meet the expectations of future stakeholders (Dylick & Hockerts, 2002). In the same vein, Székely & Knirsch (2005) argue that it entails companies being able to maintain their corporate reputation, and profitability, embracing ethical business practices, and building and maintaining positive relationships with their stakeholders. There are growing national and international interests in the role of CSR in society as regards the perceived and real effects of globalization and development vis-à-vis meeting the growing demands and expectations of society. These interests hinge on the ideology that globalization must grow in consideration or support of sustainable development, not at the expense of it (Eweje 2014).

The Stakeholder's Theory

Freeman (1984), one of the most influential scholars of Stakeholder theory identified the stakeholders as a series of groups (workers, customers, suppliers, local community etc.) that both affect and are affected by the company's actions. Stakeholders are those people who have certain interests in a venture. They may either be the beneficiaries of that venture or sponsors or those undertaking such venture (Russo & Perrini 2009). Therefore, a stakeholder can be defined as any individual, group, or institution that has a vested interest in the natural resources of the project area and/or who potentially will be affected by project activities and have something to gain or lose if conditions change or stay the same (Golder, 2005). Stakeholders are important as they must be considered if a CSR initiative will achieve its goals because their participation and support are vital to their success. A CSR development initiative must first identify all primary and secondary stakeholders and then develop a strategic view of the relationships between the different stakeholders and the issues they deem as important (Moura-Leite, et al, 2014).

Donaldson & Preston (1995) divided the stakeholder theory into three attributes: descriptive, instrumental, and normative. The descriptive is used to describe how a company operates and shows the merits and quality of the company's activities. The instrumental aids them to examine how stakeholder management can contribute to the achievement of organisation goals. Lastly, the normative attribute helps a company to carry its stakeholders along i.e. they provide an ethical justification for managing stakeholder relationships (Moura-Leite, et.al., 2011).

There are two types of stakeholders identified by Ralston (2010): the primary stakeholders who are directly affected by a business' activity e.g. customers and investors, and the secondary stakeholders who influence or are affected by the company's activities, but do not directly participate in the company's business activities and are also not crucial for the company's survival e.g. local community, media and NGOs. In CSR, the stakeholders' theory stresses the importance of companies being able to recognize and embrace their responsibilities towards their local host communities when pursuing legitimacy vis-à-vis focusing on justifying the ethical considerations and meeting legal requirements. This means that implementing CSR initiatives can reinforce the relationship between the company and its host communities (Hah & Freeman, 2014). The incentive for CSR lies in the company's need to attain and maintain trustworthiness and legitimacy i.e. for their host community to trust them and recognize them as legitimate entities (i.e. grant them the social license to operate). While this ranges from passive conformity to active concessions, the company may need to prove itself by responding ethically to the demands, and pressures and increasing the expectations of local communities (Hah & Freeman, 2014).

The theory is apt for explaining the nexus between the CRS of Champions Breweries and socio-economic development in the host communities. This is supported by the identification of local communities as secondary stakeholders whose actions might influence the company's activities and vice versa. For instance, a violent revolt by community members might disrupt activities in the company. The theory therefore explains the need for Champions Breweries to identify its critical stakeholders including the host communities, to ensure and establish a peaceful co-existence with them. This would go a long way in ensuring stability and the "ease of doing business" factor. Such CSR strides are experimented through socio-economic indices such as the provision or sponsoring of free health care services, provision of scholarships to students in host communities, provision of social infrastructures like clean and safe drinking water, construction or reconstruction of damaged roads etc. Thus, there exists a symbiotic relationship between CRS and socio-economic development.

Appraisal of Corporate Social Responsibility of Champions Breweries in the Socio-Economic Development of Host Communities in Akwa Ibom State (2015-2022)

Various socio-economic projects and initiatives have been undertaken by Champion Breweries between 2015 and 2022. However, these activities were more in 2019, 2021, and 2022. In 2022, the company allocated Three Million Six Hundred Thousand Naira for the Community Bursary Award and Eight Million, Three Hundred and Seventy-Two Thousand Naira for the donation to schools, including desks, chairs, and books. Additionally, the provision of Two Million, Nine Hundred and Twenty-Two Thousand Naira was made for exercise books. The company sponsored sports tournaments with Two Hundred and Fifteen Thousand Naira in 2022, Four Hundred Thousand Naira in 2021, and Two Hundred Thousand Naira in 2020. One Million Naira was allocated for the sponsorship of a beauty pageant in 2022 and 2021, while Three Hundred Thousand Naira was allocated in 2020. A donation of Two Hundred Thousand Naira was made to the Manufacturers Association of Nigeria in 2022 and One Hundred Thousand Naira in 2021 (Annual Report of Champions Breweries, 2021; 2022)

Table 1 shows the activities of Champions Breweries about socio-economic development of the host communities between 2015 and 2022.

Table 1: Activities of Champions Breweries about socio-economic development of the host communities between 2015 and 2022 (all figures/amounts in Naira: ₦)

Projects	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	Total (₦)
Community Bursary Award	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3,600,000	3,600,000
Donation to schools (Desks, Chairs and Books)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	8,372,000	8,372,000
Donation of exercise books	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2,922,000	2,922,000
Sponsorship of sports tournament	-	-	-	1,500,000	1,700,000	200,000	400,000	215,000	4,015,000
Sponsorship of beauty pageant	-	-	-	-	-	300,000	1,000,000	1,000,000	2,300,000
Donation to Manufacturers Association of Nigeria	-	-	-	-	-	-	100,000	200,000	300,000
Sponsorship of carnivals and festivals	-	-	-	-	1,700,000	-	-	-	1,700,000
Scholarships to indigenes of the host communities	1,200,000	1,200,000	2,400,000	1,875,000	1,200,000	-	-	-	7,875,000
Grant to Awa Iman Youth Association for solar water project	-	-	-	-	1,000,000	-	-	-	1,000,000
Grants to labour unions	-	-	-	-	700,000	-	-	-	700,000

and trade associations									
Grants to UNIBEN and UNN alumni associations	-	-	-	-	500,000	-	-	-	500,000
Donations of less than N200,000 to individual community members	-	-	-	-	1,080,000	50,000	-	-	1,130,000
Free eye screening for indigenes of the host communities	720,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	720,000	1,440,000
Grand Total (₦)	1,920,000	1,200,000	2,400,000	3,375,000	7,880,000	550,000	1,500,000	16,309,000	35,134,000

Source: Author's computation from the Annual Report of Champions Breweries from 2015-2022

As indicated in Table 1, in 2015, a total of One Million, Nine Hundred and Twenty Thousand Naira was spent by the organization on CSR activities including scholarships and free eye screening for indigenes of host communities. In 2016, a total of One Million. Two Hundred Thousand Naira was expended on scholarships to indigenes of host communities. Hence, only one CSR project was undertaken by the organization in 2016. In 2017, a total of Two Million Four Hundred Thousand Naira was spent on scholarships to indigenes of host communities. In 2018, a total of Three Million Three Hundred and Seventy-Five Thousand Naira was spent sponsoring sports tournaments and scholarships to indigenes of host communities. In 2019, Seven Million Eight Hundred and Eighty Thousand Naira was spent to sponsor sports tournaments, sponsorships of carnivals and festivals, scholarships to indigenes of host communities, grant to Awa Iman Youth Association for solar water project, grants to labour unions and trade associations, grants to UNIBEN and UNN alumni associations, and other donations individually below Two Hundred Thousand Naira.

In 2020, a total of Five Hundred and Fifty Thousand Naira was expended on the sponsorship of sports tournaments, beauty pageantry, and other donations below Two Hundred Thousand Naira to individuals. In 2021, a total of One Million, Five Hundred Thousand Naira was disbursed to organise sports tournaments, beauty pageantry and the Manufacturers Association of Nigeria. In 2022, a total of Sixteen Million, Three Hundred and Nine Thousand Naira was spent on bursary awards to community members, provision of desks, chairs and books to schools, sponsorship of sports tournaments, pageantry, support to the Manufacturers Association of Nigeria, and free eye screening for indigenes of host communities.

Generally, from 2015-2022, a total of Thirty-Five Million, One Hundred and Thirty-Four Thousand Naira, was expended by Champion Breweries on CSR projects in the host communities. However, the amount spent on the provision of desks, chairs and books to schools and scholarships to indigenes of the host community constitutes the highest with Eight Million Three Hundred and Seventy-Two Thousand Naira and Seven Million Eight Hundred and Seventy-Five Thousand Naira, respectively. The amount spent as a donation to the

Manufacturers Association of Nigeria constitutes the lowest with Three Hundred Thousand Naira.

Criticism of Corporate Social Responsibility of Champion Breweries in Host Communities in Akwa Ibom State (2015-2022)

There is evidence that Champions Breweries is committed to the discharge of its CSR to the host communities in Akwa Ibom state. While its strides in areas like the payment of bursaries and grants and the provision of solar panels for water supply are commendable, the argument against these strides is that investments in sports, beauty pageantry, and carnivals/festivals in the host communities do not truly reflect the core tenets of socio-economic development. Their recreational and cultural contents may not significantly address the immediate/felt needs of community members. Second, the concentration of education grants to the alumni of the University of Benin (UNIBEN) and the University of Nigeria, Nsukka (UNN), only, is considered as biased, since state-domiciled institutions like the University of Uyo, Akwa Ibom State University, Akwa Ibom State Polytechnic, etc. with a greater number of the student population from the State being left out of such grants.

Most importantly, it is observed that the CSR activities of Champion Breweries are predominantly monetary, with a minor concentration on the infrastructural, service or skill-based aspects of socio-economic development. Additionally, the donations by Champion Breweries in the host communities lack local content. By local content, there are no identified strategies to direct donations to the poorest residents of the host communities who are mostly engaged in agriculture for subsistence and commercial purposes, rather, these donations are directed to graduates (the alumni associations) who have attained a level of human capacity development through tertiary education. Hence, the CSR of Champion Breweries can be described as elitist.

Conclusion

The socio-economic development of communities is the responsibility of the state and its institutions, however, to ensure equilibrium in its relations with different stakeholders, business organizations have undertaken diverse services to their host communities in what is known as Corporate Social Responsibility. For Champions Breweries, the strides in CSR has been delivered through community bursary awards, donation to schools, provision of infrastructure, scholarships to indigenes of host communities, etc., which are commensurate with socio-economic development. However, it has been argued in this paper that the CSR activities of Champions Breweries are majorly monetary with little concentration on the service or skill-based aspect of development, just as investments in areas like pageantry and sports tournaments, though commendable are not significantly commensurate with the human capacity needs, and by extension, the actual socio-economic development imperatives of the host communities.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this paper, the following recommendations are made:

1. Champion Breweries and other organizations in Akwa Ibom State should concentrate their CSR programmes and projects on the major aspects of socio-economic development including health, infrastructure, education, craftsmanship, etc.
2. Corporate Social Responsibilities in organizations like Champion Breweries should be such that has a direct impact on the lives of the people, to ensure the betterment of lives, and not just for cultural aggrandizement or recreation.

3. Champions Breweries and other organizations should not only focus on the monetary approaches of CSR but also the service, infrastructural and skill-based aspects of development.
4. In cases where grants are given, they should be directed to the unemployed or jobless residents of the host communities with a cogent business plan. This would boost the proliferation of Small and Medium-sized (SME) businesses, which would also reduce the rate of unemployment and poverty. The farmers should not be given prime attention in this regard.

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