ASSESSMENT OF COMMITMENT OF PRIVATE COMPANIES TOWARDS CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITIES IN ZAMBIA: A CASE STUDY OF MTN-ZAMBIA

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ABSTRACT

This paper sought to assess the commitment of private companies towards corporate social responsibilities in Zambia: a case study of MTN-Zambia. The specific objectives of this paper were threefold; to determine the extent to which MTN is committed towards CSR in Zambia; to assess the CSR areas where MTN-Zambia is actively involved; and to ascertain the challenges that MTN-Zambia faces in the implementation of CSR activities. The paper was a desk review, and this meant that the results were based on secondary data only. The main findings of this paper revealed that, to a greater extent, MTN-Zambia was committed towards CSR in Zambia. This was evidenced by the numerous activities in various CSR in which the corporation was involved. These areas include but are not limited to education, health, infrastructure support/development, and cultural preservation. Despite these efforts, the paper further revealed that there were challenges that MTN-Zambia faced in the implementation of activities. With deliberate commitment towards CSR activities, it is hoped that communities will be positively impacted. The private sector was seen as an important instrument of development as it supported the government's support towards development.

Keywords: Corporate Social Responsibility, Corporate Social Initiative, Stakeholder Theory, MTN-Zambia.

INTRODUCTION

Globally, governments around the world are recognising the need for corporations to contribute meaningfully to the environments in which they operate. The contributions of corporations have to be voluntary. Therefore, as corporations operate and make profits, they need to plough back into communities, and this voluntary contribution is what is referred to as corporate social responsibility. Aside from profit, corporations must leave communities and the general environment better than they found them (Hirchiland, 2006). Corporate Social Responsibility could be understood as a notion whereby business entities consider the obligations they have to society. They have to take responsibility for the implications that their activities have on all their stakeholders that may be impacted directly or indirectly. Entities have to go beyond the usual need to comply with rules and regulations and devise initiatives to foster a quality of life for stakeholders. The implementation of corporate social responsibility also creates other benefits, such as expanded horizons for business diversification and increased clientele (Amalric, 2000). Thus, corporate social responsibility (CSR) is a voluntary action that is taken by a business in order to be socially accountable to itself, the public, and other concerned

stakeholders. Sometimes, corporate social responsibility is referred to as corporate citizenship. CSR can target morally central issues such as environmental protection and sustainability, or more ethical issues such as charitable practices. This means that CSR comes at a cost, where organizations can set aside as much as one percent of their profits for charity causes. Various literature on organisations supports the finding that consumers and investors/partners are more likely to be aligned with products/services from organisations that have strong support for CSR activities (Chigbu et al., 2016). Against this backdrop, this paper will assess the commitment of private companies towards corporate social responsibilities in Zambia, with a focus on MTN-Zambia. This paper will be a desk review that will rely on secondary data.

Objectives

General objective

To assess the commitment of private companies towards corporate social responsibilities in Zambia: a case study of MTN-Zambia

Specific objectives

1. To determine the extent to which MTN is committed towards CSR in Zambia
2. To assess the CSR areas where MTN- Zambia is actively involved
3. To ascertain the challenges that MTZ-Zambia faces in the implementation of CSR activities.

Research Questions

1. How committed is MTN-Zambia towards CSR activities?
2. What are areas where MTN-Zambia is actively involved?
3. What are the challenges that MTZ-Zambia faces in the implementation of CSR activities?

Significance of the Study

This desk research was important for giving the reader an insight into the commitment of private companies towards corporate social responsibilities in Zambia, with a focus on MTN-Zambia. This was also important for understanding how CSR activities are being implemented by private companies in Zambia by stakeholders. Furthermore, the insight given by this paper would enable policy makers to devise workable regulations and strategies to ensure that CSR activities are not superficial but yield the intended benefits in the communities in which these companies operate.

Summary

This section of the paper gave a background to the study on the assessment of the commitment of private companies towards corporate social responsibilities in Zambia: a case study of MTN-Zambia. The objectives of the study have also been highlighted as they guided the research paper.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This section presented the theoretical and empirical review of various scholarly works. Empirical literature was drawn from studies that were conducted in various parts of the globe and was collected and reviewed by the researcher. The theoretical review was composed of studies that were used to explain the phenomenon of corporate social responsibility.

Theoretical Review

One of the theories of CSR is the Triple Bottom Line Approach. The triple bottom line theory postulates that corporate leaders tabulate bottom-line results not just in terms of economic costs but also in line with an organization's effects in terms of social standing with regard to the environment. This concept is premised on two assumptions. The first one is that the three aspects of responsibility must be kept separate, with the end results being treated as independent. Secondly, in the areas of CSR, the organization should achieve sustainable achievements (Harchy, 2019).

The emphasis was that at the centre of ethics and economics, sustainability should be there to strike a balance. There should be a balance among three aspects: economic, environmental, and social sustainability. Economic sustainability entails placing value on long-term financial unity over unstable short-term profit realizations. The triple bottom line approach postulates that corporate organisations have a mandate to ensure business strategies that foster stability and prolonged action. The aspect of sustainability entails that, as a principle, it entails pacing value on projects or ventures that may not yield quick results but to also avoid disastrous losses. For instance, a corporation that may have bad disposal practices may save financial resources in the meantime. However, the discovery of these bad practices could result in harsh consequences such as litigation against the company. In this regard, the argument is that the need for corporate sustainability with regard to the financial aspect does not support poor dumping practices (Singh, 2014).

Social sustainability advocates for a balance to be struck between the lives of people and the way they live. Corporations (multilateral organisations) are minting millions of dollars while there are millions of people living in abject poverty. This increases the bridge between the rich and the poor. This increases the chances of instability as revolutions become eminent. History shows that such uprisings are common. This entails that for a corporate entity to be stable, it needs to strike a balance between sustaining itself and sharing the wealth with the people in the environments in which they operate. This argument entails that peace and order in the world can be fostered by an equal distribution of resources (Harchy, 2019).

The third aspect is environmental sustainability. This paradigm postulates that resources in the environment are limited. This scenario can prevent future generations from enjoying the same quality of life in a similar way that past generations did. This suggests the need for corporate entities to put in place strategies that safeguard the resources in the environment as they pursue profits. This is justified by the fact that the resources in the environment are very finite and need to be used sparingly. In sustainability practices, corporate strategies advocate for reuse and recycling to limit the disposal of harmful materials in the environment. Preservation of the environment is the obligation of corporate entities as regards the triple-bottom line model of responsibilities of corporate entities (Singh, 2014).

The three concepts of sustainability, that is, economic, environmental, and social aspects, are important in ensuring that corporate entities do not only focus on making money but also ensure that they act responsibly in the environments in which they operate. An important

difference that exists between corporate social responsibility and the triple bottom line approaches is the aspect of culture. This entails that CSR tends to be tilted towards American principles as it is more optimistic and changeable, and the triple bottom line tends to be more aligned with European beliefs of conservatism. The outlook for the European Union tends to focus on sustainability.

Stakeholder Theory

This theory is considered a mirror image of corporate social responsibility. This theory considers the world first before its operations. This theory describes the stakeholders who will be affected by the organizations' operations. This theory is important because it describes the relevant stakeholders that are likely to be affected either positively or negatively by the actions of a corporate entity. It outlines the just claims that stakeholders can make towards the corporation or the rights that they possess in ensuring that corporations are responsible for their actions. Some stakeholders may not have dividends or stock in corporate entities but have a moral claim to ensure that they hold entities accountable through their voices. Notable stakeholders may include but are not limited to suppliers, shareholders, employees, the community, and so forth (Hopkins, 2003).

With the formation of distinct stakeholders having been identified, at this point, shared ethics begin to be developed. The task that an enterprise has in this paradigm is that of maximising returns, not in monetary terms but in terms of the welfare of humans. Managers of entities are concerned with ensuring that the interests of shareholders are well represented in a balanced manner. For this reason, directors tend to be tasked with assuring shareholders of their plans to boost returns for the stakeholders. Shareholders also make up a substantial proportion of stakeholders. Directors spend substantial amounts of their time consulting with environmental entities about issues such as pollution management and work closely with consumers on suggestions of how products and services can be improved. In order to gain a good reputation and promote stakeholder ethics, transparency becomes an integral part that needs to be embraced (Crane et al., 2008).

In summary of this theory, directors of entities have a mandate to engage all sides and strike a balance of interests for all stakeholders. At the same time, this would ensure that the interests of all stakeholders are considered and, at the same time, the benefits across the spectrum of those lives are spread.

Empirical Review

Telecommunication network providers have become an integral part of today's society. These organizations do not make homogeneous profits. This entails that their contributions towards CSR activities will differ from company to company. Telecommunication companies in countries such as Germany, Austria, Switzerland, and Liechtenstein generate some of the highest revenues.

This preceding scenario will be used to examine the dynamics of CSR activities in an oligopolistic market. Suffice it to say, there have been few studies on mobile network providers' CSR activities. This paper also compared and contrasted strategies of the companies' CSR practices. This paper identified mobile network providers in the DACH countries. The CSR activities that were from 2017 onwards were analysed. It was noted that diverse practices under

CSR were practiced. For companies operating in DACH countries, health and mobile radiation exposure are critical aspects in all their CSR strategies. Other areas of CSR include but are not limited to sustainability, energy efficiency, climate and environmental protection, infrastructure development, child protection, digital literacy and occupational health. A focus on the DACH countries shows that there are many dynamics in terms of the practice of CSR in an oligopolistic environment. Responsible companies' social obligations are being considered as a necessity in society (Marsden & Andriof, 1998).

According to Lee et al. (2015), in today's society, telecommunication is an integral aspect and users are ever increasing. With the huge stakeholder base of telecommunications, there is a demand that these companies act in a socially responsible manner. However, the demand and expectations for these companies to be socially responsible is not enough. There is a need for these companies to also be constantly reporting their CSR activity implementation in a standard manner. This ensures that companies are held accountable.

Henderson (2001) identifies that, if thorough implementation has to be done by corporate entities, there is a need for constant standard reporting. In this way, the entities can be monitored for effective implementation. It is also important to understand that CSR is part of a business management process and must be incorporated into a company's management strategy. A CSR framework has become important in ensuring that companies remain socially responsible and committed to fostering CSR initiatives. Moreover, there was little knowledge of the needed knowledge that was needed to implement precise CSR activities. This necessitated the need for profound knowledge of the way CSR initiatives tend to impact on the manner in which mobile companies communicate with regards to the holistic picture and the associated benefits.

In addition, a corporate image can be built by implementing CSR, and most companies are not leaving this to chance. A study was conducted in Asia, particularly Malaysia, on Corporate Social Responsibility activities in the Mobile Telecommunication Industry. This study was instrumental as it illustrated that in a competitive business environment, employees have a mandate to ensure that they prove themselves as socially responsive to the environment in which they operate. Active participation in CSR programs for organisations gives a competitive advantage over others as they become socially acceptable and recognized not only by communities but also by those organisations that seek partnership with corporations that are CSR active. This study in Malaysia found that companies believed that there were profit benefits in taking up CSR activities by companies. CSR could be used by companies to help prevent disasters, help people, and make their products and services better, among other things.

Although CSR has to be voluntary entered into by companies, the Malaysian government through the Malaysian Communication and Multimedia Commission (MCMC), which is a regulatory institution, has mandated mobile telecommunication entities to be actively involved in CSR activities that include but are not limited to customer-focused aspects. This expectation by the Malaysian government has led to all three mobile telecommunication companies being very active in CSR.

Although this study was important in highlighting the importance of regulators in the uptake of CSR by companies, some shortcomings were noticed. There is no consensus criteria on the measurement of CSR involvement by companies or even methods of assessments. In this regard, a company that realizes more revenue that others may be involved in CSR would decide to allocate the most minimal resources. Nevertheless, some companies that do not make so much profit may be committing more resources towards CSR activities. For instance, a percentage of a

company's resources may be committed, for instance, 10% of annual earnings to be committed to CSR. Customers and partners are more demanding than before that mobile communication providers act socially responsibly (BlowField, 2004).

In order for this process to be effective, there is a need to ensure that guidelines are put in place to foster the process of monitoring. According to Smith (2003), it is easy for corporate entities to conduct CSR activities of their choice, but the most important thing is the manner in which the CSR activities are conducted. CSR has, over the years, propagated an interest in research for managers. Other scholars, such as Maignan & Ferrell (2004), have argued that CSR. There are a wide range of instruments that have been developed to foster CSR activities among corporations. Some of these instruments include but are not limited to certification, strategic documents, as well as sustainability reporting among companies that are in the communications sector. The European Commission (2004) added that these comprehensive systems assist with the modelling of CSR in mobile communications companies. Sustainability and social responsibilities can be made better by putting them in CSR frameworks and reporting on CSR plans and accomplishments.

Wang et al. (2016) noted that there is little knowledge about the implementation of precise CSR activities where entities are involved, in particular, a deep understanding of ways in which CSR activities can impact existing and potential customers of mobile companies and the long-lasting impact on the overall reputation of the company. Customers are paying more attention and are demanding mobile service providers be socially responsible. This shows that companies need to be constantly watched to make sure they are being proactive about CSR activities.

A study was done on corporate social responsibility and its link to strategy among mobile telephone service providers in Kenya. This study was motivated by the fact that corporate leaders were seeing the need to integrate social responsibility activities into their main business operations and strategic positioning. The main objective of this paper was to identify the corporate social responsibility practices of the mobile telephone service providers in Kenya and establish whether these corporate social practices were connected to the strategies of the respective corporations (Muriuki, 2008).

The findings of the paper indicated that a 60% rate in terms of responses was recorded. Content analysis was used to generate tables, graphs, and charts that were used to present the responses. The paper revealed that the corporations that were part of the study practiced CSR and included such activities in their strategic plans. These plans were elaborate enough to monitor CSR activities periodically and systematically. Most of these companies were found to have functional departments that plan and allocate resources to those particular activities.

CSR practices are imbedded in the company's mission, vision, and values. The various strategies had formal CSR policies with a clear direction for funding and implementation. Both Zain Kenya and Safaricom Foundation had an allocation of resources to ensure the daily operations were understood by all staff. The difference in CSR implantation between Safaricom Foundation and Zain Kenya was that the former concentrated its CSR activities in areas that were already included in its policy, while the latter focused its CSR activities on sponsorship of activities through organizations that had products and services closely aligned with Zain objectives (Muriuki, 2008).

CSR activities were seen as offering plausible aspects such as loyal customers and general improvement of the business operations in the community in which they operate. It was

also seen as a key determinant in shaping companies' relationships and future with their stakeholders, as well as an opportunity to meet societal needs that individual philanthropy may not be able to address.

Still in East Africa, a study was done in Uganda on corporate social responsibility with a focus on the mobile telephone service providers. The main objective of this paper was to analyse the corporate social responsibilities undertaken by the mobile telephone service companies in Uganda. The findings of the paper revealed that Uganda as a country has had an increase in the number of private sector players. As a result, the private sector was seen as being capable of fulfilling the corporate social responsibilities needed to alleviate poverty in the communities in which the mobile providers operate. The study population was the mobile telephone service providers. The study employed the use of semi-structured interviews as well as questionnaires to collect primary data. An analytical framework that was used focused on four categories of stakeholders composed of the government, employees, community, and clients. The three main mobile telephone providers in Uganda include Mobile Telecommunication Network, Zain, and Uganda Telecommunications Limited (UTL). This paper established the main areas where the mobile service providers had performed well in realizing CSR activities. Some of the main areas included philanthropy and legal compliance. Notably, some companies did not comply with tax responsibilities that were expected of them (Mutoigo & Sjjaka, 2004).

Limitations

This paper was desk research and relied on secondary data. Google scholar was used for some of the important references in this paper. And another challenge is the corporate social responsibility topic itself. Corporate social responsibility is slowly gaining ground and a lot of companies are now being expected to implement these CSRs, and the challenge arises when trying to measure its applicability and performance. In most cases, there are bodies that are put in place to regulate how companies and institutions run and failure to comply with the set regulations can lead to punitive actions against those companies. But with corporate social responsibility, another approach must come into play as CSR itself is subjective and has been characterized by the lack of a universally agreed upon definition. Different approaches have been used, such as the stakeholder theory, which states that the company's responsibility is to any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the organization's objectives (Freeman, 1984). The European Commission looks at corporate social responsibility as not only intending to fulfil the legal expectations but also going beyond compliance and investing more in human capital, the environment, and relations with stakeholders (European Commission, 2001). There is a need for actual research that is based on primary data to assess the commitment of private companies towards corporate social responsibilities in Zambia.

METHODS

Research Design

This paper used a mixed-method approach. This means that both qualitative and quantitative methods were employed in the research. Kombo & Tromp (2014) noted that qualitative and quantitative research methods can be used together as they are complementary. The two approaches can be used to maximise their strengths while minimising the weaknesses of

each other. The justification of using this approach was also justified by Johnson Onwuegbuzie (2004), who pointed out that mixed method approaches in research tend to be used as they rely on each other's strengths and reduce likely weaknesses.

Study Population

The population that was considered under this research were private sector companies, particularly MTN-Zambia. This corporation was one of the three main telecommunication companies in Zambia that provided mobile services.

1. Data Collection
2. Secondary Data

Secondary information was collected through desk reviews. This information was drawn from various literature on CSR. The works of other scholars were reviewed. The reviewed data included articles, books, and published research papers.

RESULTS

This section presents an analysis of the data that was collected in the form of tables and figures. These tables and figures show the various distributions of variables as collected from the secondary data sources.

Extent to which MTN is committed towards CSR in Zambia

To a larger extent, MTN-Zambia showed commitment towards CSR. This is evident from various literature as indicated by Mooba (2017) that, despite an increase in the excise duty on airtime to 17.5 percent in 2017, MTN Chief Executive Officer Charles Molapisi remained optimistic and assured its commitment to invest in corporate social responsibility programmes. Over $10 million was to be spent in this regard to upgrade infrastructure for improved operations.2000 kilometers of fiber optic cables were to be installed from Lusaka to Nakonde, passing through Kalumbila in the north-western province of Zambia, during the 2016 upgrade of infrastructure.

According to Adali (2018), MTN-Zambia has also made deliberate efforts to support the Ministry of Health in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic through material support. In addition, there has been the distribution of sanitary products that included washing facilities, hand sanitizers, face masks, and surgical gloves that were valued at a total of K50,000. This contribution was aimed at supplementing the government's efforts to reduce the spread and adverse effects on the communities in which MTN operated. This is what the CEO of MTN-Zambia had to say:

"It is our belief that everyone deserves the benefit of a modern connected life. Therefore, the only way people can enjoy these benefits is if they possess a healthy status in mind, body, and soul, and that is the reason we are coming onboard to give our support to alleviate the effects of

the pandemic on the lives and wellbeing of the community." At the same time, we would like to commend the Government of the Republic of Zambia, particularly the Ministry of Health, on their efforts to save citizens' lives. MTN Zambia is a trusted friend of the people of Zambia and will always rise to the occasion whenever called upon to contribute to the improvement of the wellbeing of the Zambian people. In addition, a digital learning platform called MTN e-Tutor.

The sentiments that were shared by the Chief Executive officer were in line with those of the General Manager for Corporate Services. It was further added that: Improvement of health and enhanced quality of life has always been a key focus area for us at MTN Zambia with regards to the quality of life has been a focus area for our corporate social responsibility. We will support innovative ways in which we can partner with other stakeholders to improve the lives of our citizens. This is the reason we saw fit to join the Ministry of Health in this fight against COVID-19 Table 1.

Table 1 CSR AREAS WHERE MTN- ZAMBIA IS ACTIVELY INVOLVED	
CSR AREA	**SPECIFIC ACTIVITIES**
Education	Supporting e-learning
Health	1. Covid Sanitary products 2. Financial support
Infrastructure	Financial support
Cultural preservation	Financial support to traditional ceremonies

MTN-Zambia envisages its future as being linked to the socio-economic and endeavors to enhance the socio-economic welfare of people both in Africa and the Middle East where it operates. MTN-Zambia has imbedded corporate social initiatives into its strategic policy, and it is hoped that more beneficiaries will be helped through capacity building and self-reliance by harnessing technology. The nature of MTN's business is to contribute to social development through necessary support to develop and drive the utilization of digital technology for corporate social initiatives (Chigbu et al., 2016).

Another notable corporate social initiative by MTN-Zambia was the 21 Days of Y'ello Care campaign. Employees of MTN were encouraged to roll up their sleeves and make a positive difference in their communities by volunteering to help people. This was a yearly activity composed of employees who volunteered to be part of high-impact social projects in various communities. This initiative produced positive results for more than a decade after it was launched. There has been constant improvement to this program from year to year based on lessons learnt.

This could further be exemplified by the collaborations that MTN-Zambia has had with line ministries such as the Ministry of Labour and the Ministry of General Education to implement high-impact projects along the 2019 Y'ellow Care theme of creating a brighter future for the youth in communities. In this regard, MTN-Zambia was a recipient of the prestigious MTN Group Award for the most creative social media post for the Y'ello Care period (Chigbu et al., 2019).

Cultural preservation in Zambia has also been a focus area for MTN-Zambia. Zambia as a country is endowed with a rich cultural heritage and traditional practices. There is a diverse range of ceremonies that are celebrated yearly that are centered on 72 ethnic groups. MTN has

made deliberate efforts to be a part of these ceremonies by supporting them through contributions to necessitate the successful holding of these cultural ceremonies (Chigbu et al., 2019).

Challenges that MTZ-Zambia faces in the implementation of CSR activities. One of the notable challenges that MTN-Zambia faced in the implementation of CSR activities was the alignment of CSR initiatives with all the major needs of communities. This was because MTN-Zambia could not implement all activities at once (Mwansa, 2019). Against this background, it would be important to work with local leaders to ensure that the activities that MTN-Zambia undertakes reflect the needs of communities. Companies usually have the freedom to give back to society through initiatives of their choice. For the sake of record, some companies may be involved in CSR activities for the sake of record that they are implementing such activities. However, CSR activities must have a high impact on communities and leave a lasting impression in order to change the welfare of people (Mwansa, 2019).

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Extent to which MTN is committed towards CSR in Zambia. The findings indicated that MTN-Zambia was involved in CSR activities to a greater extent. CSR activities form part of MTN's strategic plans alongside providing communication services. This was a way of giving back to the society in which MTN-Zambia's Corporate Social Responsibility was being implemented. The extent to which MTN-Zambia's commitment towards CSR was demonstrated by its numerous initiatives that were implemented as part of its CSR activities. This was also backed up by the inclusion of CSI into the strategic plan. This means that as MTN operates from year to year, it carries along the corporate social plans and implementation. This means that corporate social responsibility tends to be consistent as opposed to being a one-off activity. The incorporation of Corporate Social Responsibility by MTN in its strategic plan demonstrates a commitment to ensuring the commitment and continuation of social initiatives. These results are consistent with the argument by Bowrey and Clement, who point out that if thorough implementation must be done by corporate entities, there is a need for constant standard reporting. In this way, the entities can be monitored for effective implementation. It is also important to understand that CSR is part of a business management process and must be incorporated into a company's management strategy. A CSR framework has become important in ensuring that companies remain socially responsible and committed to fostering CSR initiatives. It is worth noting that there was little knowledge of the needed knowledge that was needed to implement precise CSR activities. This necessitated the need for profound knowledge of the way CSR initiatives tend to impact on the manner in which mobile companies communicate with regards to the holistic picture and the associated benefits. CSR areas where MTN- Zambia is actively involved.

The results in Table 1 reveal that MTN has been involved in philanthropic activities such as charity activities in various parts of Zambia. MTN-Zambia has made donations to schools, hospitals, and correctional facilities as a way of giving back to society. These included donations such as sanitary materials to combat COVID-19. This was a way of supporting the efforts by the Ministry of Health in the fight against the spread of COVID-19. In this regard, it can be seen as being instrumental in supplementing efforts by the Zambian government in critical areas. MTN-Zambia has also been an important driver for the preservation of Zambian heritage and culture.

As a company, MTN-Zambia has supported ceremonies with various materials and finances. The organization of these ceremonies usually requires large amounts of financial support to be held. Without partners from the corporate world such as MTN, it would be a huge challenge to organise and hold these rich ceremonies that are essential for the preservation of culture. For the younger generations and tourists, it becomes a chance to learn about the Zambian traditions that are showcased through holding traditional ceremonies that are centered on the 72 ethnic groups of Zambia.

Challenges that MTZ-Zambia faces in the implementation of CSR activities. The implementation of CSR activities was not without challenges in many cases. The main challenge that was documented in Zambia as one of the challenges faced in the implementation of CSR activities was the inability to address most of the community's needs. In this regard, a notable recommendation was the need to work with local leaders to ensure that the activities that MTN-Zambia carries out reflect the needs of communities. This would ensure that CSR activities are not implemented just for the sake of formality. Moreover, MTN in other countries has had its own challenges in the implementation of CSR activities. For instance, the study that was conducted on MTN-Nigeria that sought to examine the corporate social responsibility intervention in the development of digital libraries in the universities of developing countries revealed that CSR has created a drive for the development of digital libraries in Nigeria. Technical issues were noted as challenges in the implementation of CSR. For instance, low band width, lack of allowance of storage devices and system breakdown affected the effectiveness and importance of the digital libraries. Socio-political reasons were not a challenge to the implementation of CSR initiatives (https://www.mtn.zm/mtn-zambia-offers-support-to-fight-against-covid-19 (Links to an external site.)). Curan (2015) argued that challenges to CSR can also emanate from society's failure to accept some CSR initiatives, especially if a corporation's activities that generate profits are inappropriate for the good of society. For instance, if a corporation that pollutes the environment in the quest of making a profit decides to plant some trees in a community, it may be regarded as not being genuine. Some scholars, such as Mikel (2019), argue that firms should be held accountable for their practices that have a bearing on the environment in the communities in which they operate. CSR is seen as a practice that justifies the perpetuation of profit generation in society. For this reason, it is argued that the true purpose of a corporation is to realise a profit in order to satisfy the stakeholders. The economic perspective holds that the main reason for the existence of businesses is to generate profits, and any latent function outside this purpose tends to undermine the primary function of a business. Corporate entities have an obligation to make as much profit for stakeholders as they can. Spending money on socially responsible initiatives tends to be a backlash on the reason for the existence of businesses. This argument is challenged by consumers, who are shareholders and expect the company to be more responsible (Bell, 2012). Moreover, the percentage of resources allocated to corporate social responsibility tends to be very negligible. According to Curran (2015), there is a lot of scepticism that lingers behind corporate social responsibility. Corporate social responsibility tends to be seen as a public campaign with a hidden agenda. Even businesses that have made commendable, genuine strides in corporate social responsibility tend not to convince customers. Therefore, there is a need for businesses to be careful not to be deemed as showing off their corporate social responsibility engagements. This practice of corporate entities boasting is discouraged, especially when profits have been realized as a result

of long-term bad practices, and communities expect companies to be commended for practicing corporate social responsibility (Singh, 2014).

CONCLUSION

The paper sought to provide an assessment of the commitment of private companies towards corporate social responsibilities in Zambia that focused on MTN-Zambia. The findings of this paper revealed that, to a greater extent, MTN-Zambia was committed towards CSR in Zambia. This was evidenced by the numerous activities in various CSRs in which the corporation was involved. These areas include but are not limited to education, health, infrastructure support/development, and cultural preservation. Despite these efforts, the paper further revealed that there were challenges that MTN-Zambia faced in the implementation of activities. With deliberate commitment towards CSR activities, it is hoped that communities will be positively impacted. The private sector is an important instrument of development as it supports the government's support towards development.

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