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Corporate Socıal Responsıbılıty (CSR) as a Marketıng Tool: A Case of Multınatıonal Corporatıons in Nigeria

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Abstract

The study examined corporate social responsibility as a marketing tool amongst multinational corporations in Nigeria. Corporate social responsibility was broken down into four indicators which were accountability, transparency, responsibility and competitiveness. Therefore, the study was guided by four null hypotheses which state respectively that accountability, transparency, responsibility and competitiveness have no effect on marketing amongst multinational corporations in Nigeria. The study employed the path and factor technique for data analysis through the use of a statistical software package referred to as AMOS. The study employed Likert scale measurement in questionnaire examination and the sample consist of highly-placed managers in 15 multinational corporations in Nigeria. The questionnaire was properly structured and adequately developed and reviewed by experts. Essentially, the findings of the study were not surprising as they revealed that corporate social responsibility is a major factor influencing the level of marketing amongst multinational corporations in Nigeria. Specifically, responsibility and competitiveness were found to exert greater effect on organizational marketing strategy while accountability and transparency were found to exert lower effect on organizational marketing strategy as revealed by their respective path coefficients. The findings of the study were in addendum to the findings of Rindova et al. (2005) and Hair et al., (2006) who discovered that corporate social responsibility through its indicators of accountability, transparency, responsibility and competitiveness significantly influence organizational performance. Given the above useful findings of the study, the study recommends for effective marketing of products, multinational corporations in Nigeria should improve their commitment towards giving back to the society. This can be achieved if multinational corporations carry out their respective activities in an accountable, transparent, responsible and competitive way.

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Introduction

The topic of corporate social responsibility (CSR) has attracted interest from several researchers in recent time. As noted by Carroll (1979) one of the reasons for the increase in interest, comes from the wide adoption of CSR as a marketing strategy by most organizations chief of which are multinational corporations. Marketing researchers (Baker 2003 and Snider et al., 2003) observed that most organizations employ CSR more as a marketing tool than its actual traditional usage. This brings a question of what exactly is CSR and what roles does it play in organizational processes? According to Davis et al., (1966) CSR is a management concept that explains the approach used by organizations in integrating and incorporating environmental and social concerns in the whole of business operations. In the same vein, Wood et al. (2007) noted that the crux behind CSR rests on the fact that organizations need to pursue other pro-social and pro-environmental objectives which transcend the objective of maximizing profit. CSR is basically about developing ways in which organizations can give back to not just their customers but also to the environment. Therefore, it employs an approach of where organizations become community-friendly, employee-friendly and environment-friendly (Waddock, 2004). In recent times, other objectives of CSR which transcend profit maximization include the objective of charity donations, concerns of environmental externalities, fostering employee volunteerism amongst others. In the context of multinational corporations, agitation of host communities, issues of government policies and environmental degradation have heightened the need for CSR.

Given the need to promote sustainable living, there is a growing focus globally on CSR not only by multinational corporations and government but also by other requisite stakeholders (Snider et al., 2003). Globally, the proliferation of several CSR practices and standards have led to various developed principles, models and framework which govern the operations and activities surrounding CSR. Generally, given the increasing rate of multinational companies in Nigeria most of which are in the oil and gas sector, pharmaceutical industry, airlines and beverages industries, the need for corporate social responsibility has become more important than before. Nevertheless, research on these areas has acquired dominance in other countries and continents of the world such as Europe and America (Baker 2003).

Marketing researchers (Iqbal et al. 2003 and Davis et al. 1966) noted that there has been a diversion into the aspect of corporate social responsibility as a tool for marketing. Their view is based on the fact that multinational firms employ corporate social responsibility as a tool for gaining entering a particular market and acquiring large market share. Jones (1980) noted that the entry of most multinational organizations into Africa has been based on their desires to provide social infrastructure as well as solve several community issues. In his work, Husted (2003) observed that most multinational organizations employ a system referred to as participatory rural appraisal (PRA) in understanding and providing requisite solutions to the problems of the host communities. These activities are usually published in several mass media handles and other reports for a wider view and acknowledgement by requisite stakeholders of the benefits enjoyed by the communities through the multinational firms.

In their view, Waddock (2004) and Enahoro et al. (2013) stated that corporate social responsibility has resulted in the establishment of several community programmes and facilities which are labeled by the name of the organizing firm. This forms a public show which has the tendency of increasing the popularity of not just the organizing firm but also their brand. In support of this argument, Snider et al., (2003) noted that there seems to be a form of competitive rivalry amongst powerful organizations on the acquiring and establishment of branches in other nations. This has resulted in issues of bribery and lobbying which is a fundamental feature of most multinational organizations in Nigeria. The issue of providing adequate corporate social responsibility still remains contentious especially in Sub-Saharan Africa. As noted by Baker (2003), hierarchical and cultural issues in the African continent have militated the effectiveness of corporate social responsibility. This has limited the employment of this strategy as a tool for marketing in the African continent.

Essentially, marketing tools are those techniques, approaches and resources employed by organizations in implementing marketing programmes that will ensure the attainment of already established goals and objectives (McWilliams et al., 2000 and Waddock 2004). The use of corporate social responsibility as a marketing tool by multinational organizations rests on the idea that providing necessary facilities to host communities will ensure an increase in the sale of products and services. Jones (1980) noted that corporate social responsibility can be referred to as an indirect form of social networking in which the desires of the customers are firstly met to ensure that those customers are comfortable enough to patronize the organization. Corporate social responsibility falls under the aspect of social marketing in which societal demands are met by the organization in order for the demands of the organizations to be met by the society (McWilliams et al., 2000). As noted by Wood et al., (2007) recognition is pertinent for brand attachment and when an organization is recognized through its corporate social responsibility, there is tendency for an increase in brand attachment of such organization. A major aspect of corporate social responsibility being employed by multinationals is the aspect of philanthropy. Mujahid et al. (2014) posited that philanthropic activities are one of the major factors which have enlarged the recognition of most top multinational corporations in the world. The impact of philanthropic activities by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) is one of the areas which multinational corporations have impacted lives of societies. Several multinational firms have been known to engage in philanthropic community activities in a bid to increase recognition as well improve brand attachment (Korkchi et al. 2006). Therefore, the use of corporate social responsibility through carrying out philanthropic activities is one of the aspects in which corporate social responsibility is employed as a marketing tool.

The focus of this study is basically on selected multinational corporations in Nigeria. The study seeks to evaluate the corporate social responsibility as a marketing tool for multinational corporations in Nigeria. The study seeks to provide a more comprehensive insight into issues of corporate social responsibility in the marketing space in Nigeria by introducing accountability, transparency, responsibility and competitiveness as measures of corporate social responsibility. Given the above, the next section provides the research objectives and hypothesis of the study.

Research Objectives

i. To examine the effect of accountability on marketing
ii. To examine the effect of transparency on marketing
iii. To examine the effect of responsibility on marketing
iv. To examine the effect of competitiveness on marketing

Research Hypotheses

i. **H_{o1}:** Accountability has no significant effect on marketing
ii. **H_{o2}:** Transparency has no significant effect on marketing
iii. **H_{o3}:** Responsibility has no significant effect on marketing
iv. **H_{o4}:** Competitiveness has no significant effect on marketing

Literature Review

Accountability can be defined as an individual's actions in the context of a social structure or environment. It is a term that is distinct from responsibility since "responsibility may be assigned, enforced, or even incorrectly imputed to an individual or group by an external power" (Carroll, 1979). A corporation with accountability acts in accordance with established norms and justifies action that deviates from those norms in the business world (Waddock 2004). Overtime, there exists a growing desire for businesses to demonstrate accountability for their actions (Korkchi et al. 2006), academics indicate that the right measures and reporting approaches can assist assess accountability (Snider et al., 2003). Simply expressed, accountability is the obligation to account for the conduct for which one is held accountable (e.g., a CSR report). Because accountable organizations must not only communicate with stakeholders about the types of behaviors that promote the firm's values, visions, and effectiveness, but also publicly model those ideas (Wagner 2005), openness is one of the essential characteristics of accountability (Baker, 2003). In addition to openness, accountable companies practice answerability by taking proactive steps to clarify their decisions, actions, or pledges (Wood et al., 2007).

The GRI's Sustainability Reporting Criteria and the ISO series which forms the major accountability standards (McWilliams et al. 2000), can be used to ensure accountability because they oblige enterprises to follow the guidelines of the standard.

The degree of asymmetric information about control mistakes is characterized as transparency (Hair et al., 2006). Corporate transparency is defined as a set of features of a process that allow those outside the company to comprehend and analyze company-specific data (Wood et al., 2007).

A high level of transparency can help a company's CSR initiatives gain trust, which can lead to better strategic outcomes (Waddock 2006). Companies must adopt strategies to achieve transparency in order to ensure and strengthen public confidence in the integrity, quality, and efficacy of their products and services.

When further unethical crises arose, such as those involving WorldCom and Enron, the public demanded more transparent reporting and evidence of better ethical conduct. However, for businesses, determining the ideal level of openness is a trade-off game involving flexibility (Frederick, 1960). In order to be balanced, a company's minimum but ideal level of transparency is to attain International Standards (Hall et al. 2004). Companies will be able to run more efficient and transparent procedures, as well as boost customer satisfaction, if they follow the standard criteria. As a result, these high and objective standards distinguish a company's procedures and, as a result, set it apart from competitors. ISs are a dependable sign of quality and transparency because of their efficient work procedures and high-quality orientation.

Competitiveness is a key factor in a company's long-term viability. To remain competitive, businesses must not only deliver high-quality products or services, but also display effective CSR management (Hrebiniak et al. 1985). According to research, comprehensive social and environmental policies reveal a part of top global firms' effective management (Snider et al., 2003). Companies can gain more importance in the minds of stakeholders and hence establish a strong reputation by using these techniques (McWilliams et al., 2000).

Furthermore, while there may have been no previous transactions between sellers and purchasers, a high reputation may communicate the seller's competency and goodwill from a transaction standpoint (Carroll, 1979). The dimension of collective response and recognition that a corporation has long gathered in its commercial field is the foundation of organizational reputation (Snider et al., 2003). Stakeholders observe a company's actions and build up opinions over time. As a result, reputation minimizes stakeholder uncertainty, and purchasers can rely on their faith in the reputation of sellers to assess the cost and benefit (Wagner, 2005).

Companies' financial performance may increase as their competitiveness improves (Baker, 2003). The major influences pushing firms toward corporate responsibility are stakeholder pressures (Iqbal et al., 2012; Waddock et al., 2002). Business executives must carefully assess which areas of CSR to engage in in order to satisfy various stakeholders, as the CSR agenda is obviously about strategic decisions (Husted, 2003; McWilliams and Siegel, 2001). Indeed, companies may employ methods to reinforce their objectives, sending a strong message about the company's commitment to social responsibility (Meyers et al. 2006). Firms require both internal and external interconnected networks to respond to concerns on corporate responsibility.

Companies must construct internal responsibility management systems that define corporate standards and codes of behavior and monitor their implementation (Hrebiniak et al. 1985). Externally, corporations must at a minimum follow globally recognized norms or standards of behavior in order for their responsibility management systems to be credible (McWilliams et al. 2000). Waddock et al. (2004) suggested a total responsibility measurement (TRM) strategy to help organizations think through their reactions to these challenges in order to meet public expectations about corporate responsibility. According to previous study, a reliable indicator for of process quality control is international standards (Snider et al. 2003). Faced with social demands and externally imposed expectations, businesses must take more proactive responses to public issues in order to demonstrate their duties to diverse stakeholders.

Methodology

Employed in the study was the structural equation modeling which was used in examining a hypothesized model, which included assessments of both the measurement and structural models. Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was used to assess the measurement model's adequacy, and path analysis (PA) was performed to investigate the existence of a casual relationship between the independent and dependent variables. The evaluation of whether variables in the hypothesized model are related in line with the observed dataset is a part of the analysis of CFA. Meanwhile, PA uncovers accidental links between latent variables by specifying how some independent variables in the model affect directly or indirectly the dependent variable (Hair et al. 2006).

Being assessed in this study is the structural model using x2/df, the root mean square residual (RMR/RMSR), the goodness-of-fit index (GFI), the comparative fit index (CFI), and the root mean square error of approximation, as proposed by Snider et al. (2006) and Rindova et al. (2005). (RMSEA). Nevertheless, because the major goal of DA is to forecast which companies will apply for the IS and which will not, a weighted combination was employed in this study of the four factors to better estimate company application likelihood.

The survey used a five-point Likert scale approach, with responses which goes from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Two bilingual coworkers assisted in fine-tuning the questionnaire's substance and wording. The relationship between the individual items and the idea was subjectively examined using expert judge ratings in this type of validity. Following that, the content of the questionnaire was checked by a number of academic specialists and managers to guarantee that each of the measurement instruments was understood. Based on their involvement in this study area, four academic professionals were identified.

The study engaged highly-placed managers of top multinational corporations in Nigeria through a face-to-face interview process which was a better approach of determining content validity.

In estimating the employment of corporate social responsibility as a marketing tool, the managers were requested to provide evaluation to the ingredients of the items for measurement and to proffer requisite comments on items which need to be either removed or added. Essentially, the questionnaire was adequately adjusted and completed after several evaluation by experts was carried out which was necessary in order to avoid issues of vague questions and to ensure that questions are presented in requisite shapes and standards. After all questionnaire adjustments were completed, the total measured variables in the questionnaire summed up to 13. The study employed randomization approach in collecting requisite data which was categorically based on a population size gotten by employing the database of the Common Wealth Magazine 2019 (Hair et al., 2006). There was need to ensure that respondents employed in the study were adequately sufficient which led to an employment of 15 multinational corporations in Nigeria. The randomization technique was aided by the Random Number Generator which is one of the most commonly used computer program employed for random number generation. Overall, the selected multinational corporations received questionnaire after which recovery was made and the datasets employed for the study comprised about 190. Based on the theory of organizational structure and stakeholder's theory of corporate social responsibility, the measurement of the variables employed in this study is given below as;

Figure 1: Variable Development and Measurement

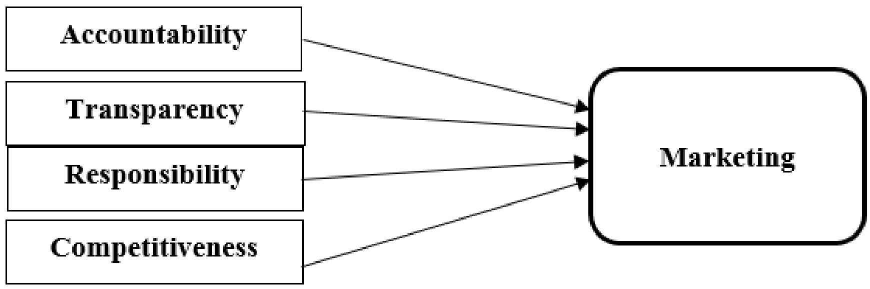
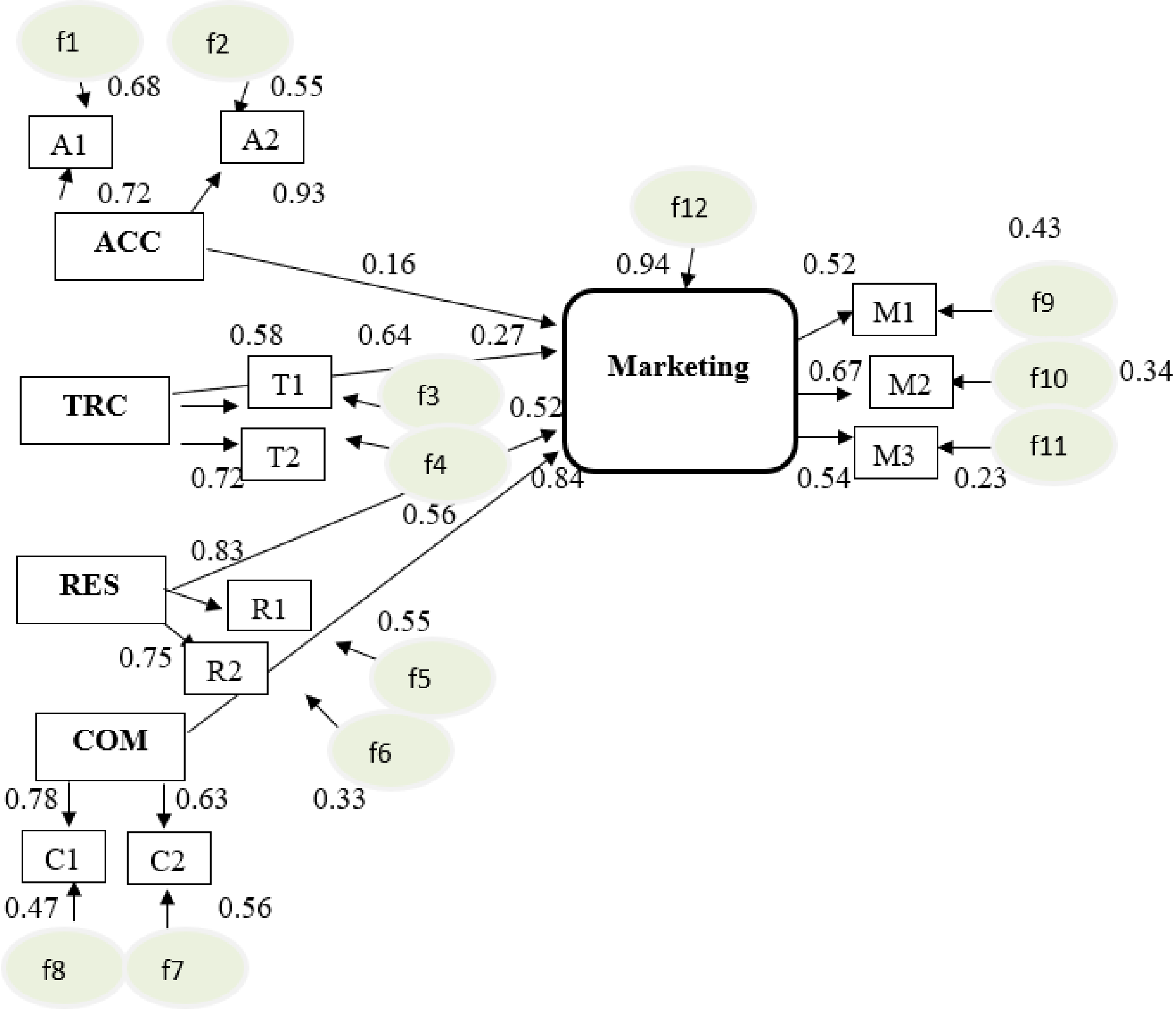


Table 1: Variable Development and Measurement

Variables	Labels	Measurement	Source
Accountability	ACC	Answerability and the rate of openness in management	Child (1972) and Hair et al., (2006)
Transparency	TRC	Governance code of transparency and incorporating good practice	Rindova et al., (2005) and Wood et al., (2007)
Responsibility	RES	Hierarchy of effects through the incorporation of total responsibility management	Snider et al. (2003) and Meyers et al., (2006)
Competitiveness	COM	Trust, reputation, honesty and commitment	Wagner (2005) and Waddock (1997)

Source: Wood et al., (2007)

Results and Discussion
Figure 2: Result of the Path Model Estimation



Using the AMOS software for analysis, the results of the individual indicators of the model are presented in the figure above. The analysis was done such that each question in the questionnaire was represented by each indicator while the error term value was indicated by f. Essentially, each of the independent variables was represented by two indicators having their corresponding standard error value (Arbuckle, 2007). For instance, ACC has two lines going to A1 and A2 in the figure. Also, the AMOS statistical software analysis is such that the higher order factor prediction has a residual error term which represents the remaining residual variance after having completed the estimation. For instance, by combining all four independent variables f13 represents the associated variance. From the estimated result, it was found that there is a significant effect of accountability, transparency, responsibility and competitiveness on marketing among multinational firms in Nigeria. This is because:

H_{01}(b = 0.16, p = 0.025) for accountability,
H_{02}(b = 0.27, p = 0.0155) for transparency,
H_{03}(b = 0.52, p = 0.034) for responsibility and
H_{04}(b = 0.84, p = 0.004) for competitiveness.

Therefore, the null hypotheses are supported by the model and corporate social responsibility has a significant effect on marketing amongst multinational corporations in Nigeria. Also, the result indicates that if accountability increase by one standard deviation, the effect on marketing will be an increase by 0.16 standard deviation. Furthermore, if transparency increase by one standard deviation the effect on marketing will be an increase of 0.27 standard deviation. Finally, as both responsibility and competitiveness increase by one standard deviation the effect on marketing will be an increase of 0.52 and 0.84 standard deviation respectively.

Reliability of Measurement

Table 2: Reliability Measurement of Result

Variable	Label	Reliability of Items (>0.5)	Reliability of Composite[b] (>0.6)	Average Variance Extracted (AVE[c]) (>0.5)
Accountability	ACC1	0.72	0.93	0.825
	ACC2	0.93		
Transparency	TRC1	0.58	0.72	0.65
	TRC2	0.72		
Responsibility	RES1	0.83	0.83	0.79
	RES2	0.75		
Competitiveness	COM1	0.78	78	0.705
	COM2	0.63		

Sources: Waddock et al. (2004); Wagner (2005) stated an accepted value as being greater than 0.3

Table 2 above gives the reliability of measurement of the result obtained from the model. Item reliability, composite reliability, and average variance extracted (AVE) are used to assess reliability, as recommended by Hair et al. (2006) and Rindova et al., (2005). The observed items' dependability ranged from 0.55 to 0.94. All of the items scored highly on their marketing-related indices, showing that they had convergent validity. Also, ranging from 0.72 to 0.93 was the composite reliability for the variables indicating that all of the indicators used in the study were highly reliable. All AVE values (range from 0.65 to 0.82) above the 0.5 criterion, showing that the measures were truly indicative of corporate social responsibility.

Model Validation Summary

Table 3: Model Validation Summary

Summary Result	Chi-Square (df)	RMSR	GFI	CFI	RMSEA
Outcome	92 (38)	0.03	0.82	0.89	0.06
Value Accepted	Lower value preferable	< 0.05	>0.80	>0.80	< 0.15

Source: Snider et al. (2003)

The result of the validity test using the Chi-square (x2) technique is presented in table 2 above. When comparing models, Chi-square is useful, and a model can be said to be a better model when it has a lower value of x2 as compared to other models (Meyers et al., 2006). The x2 value, however, should not be used as the primary criterion for evaluating models (Hrebiniak, et al. 1985; Snider et al. 2003). Researchers have proposed focusing on more pragmatic approaches to the evaluation process (Carroll 1991; Hair et al., 2006) to overcome the x2 difficulties related with sample size (i.e. asymptotically correct). The result from table 2 above demonstrates that there is a good fit to the data, showing that the predicted model fit the data. Therefore, it is concluded that the model is statistically significant and there is joint effect of the explanatory variables on the dependent variable included in the model.

Discussion of findings

The study was an attempt at evaluating the effect of corporate social responsibility on marketing amongst multinational firms in Nigeria. Essentially, the findings of the study are not surprising given that empirical studies suggest that corporate social responsibility has in recent times been employed as a marketing strategy by most top organizations chief of which are multinational corporations. The study employed as indicators of corporate social responsibility, accountability, transparency, responsibility and competitiveness which served as the independent variables in the model. The study employed the path and factor analysis which were developed based on existing theories on empirical construct for corporate social responsibility. The study was guided by four null hypotheses which revealed that the findings supports the proposed model as the stated null hypotheses could not be rejected at a given level of significance. The study also employed the chi-square technique in testing the overall validity and robustness of the estimated model. The findings revealed that there is joint significance of the indicators and independent variables employed in the study. Therefore, the predicted model was found to fit the data. The result also indicated that accountability, transparency, responsibility and competitiveness has significant effect on marketing amongst multinational corporations in Nigeria. The implication of the result is that multinational corporations in Nigeria can employ accountability, transparency, responsibility and competitiveness as an approach of marketing goods and services. Therefore, when an organization is reputed for its accountability, it sells itself to the public and potential customer and this will have significant effect on sales pattern of such organization.

Furthermore, another useful implication of the finding is that the path coefficient of some variables were greater than the ones for others. This however, does not indicate that some variables were not significant in the model. Instead, the variables with greater path coefficients (such as competitiveness and responsibility) had more impact on marketing than the variables with low path coefficients (such as accountability and transparency). Competitiveness is a major determinant of marketing as it ensures commitment which stands as a prerequisite for better organizational performance (Child 1972). In the same vein, Rindova et al., (2005) stated that a fundamental attribute of business success is responsibility. When organizations display astute responsibility towards all stakeholders, the effect will be a sharp increase in performance of the organization.

Conclusion

Examined in the study was the effect of corporate social responsibility on marketing amongst multinational corporations in Nigeria. Corporate social responsibility was broken down into accountability, transparency, responsibility and competitiveness. The study was guided by four null hypothesis based on the various indicators of corporate social responsibility. The study employed the path and factor technique for data analysis through the use of a statistical software package referred to as AMOS. The study employed Likert scale measurement in questionnaire examination and the sample consist of highly-placed managers in 15 multinational corporations in Nigeria. The questionnaire was properly structured and adequately developed and reviewed by experts. Essentially, the findings of the study were not surprising as they revealed that corporate social responsibility is a major factor influencing the level of marketing amongst multinational corporations in Nigeria. Specifically, responsibility and competitiveness were found to exert greater effect on organizational marketing strategy while accountability and transparency were found to exert lower effect on organizational marketing strategy as revealed by their respective path coefficients. The findings of the study were in addendum to the findings of Rindova et al. (2005) and Hair et al., (2006) who discovered that corporate social responsibility through its indicators of accountability, transparency, responsibility and competitiveness significantly influence organizational performance. Given the above useful findings of the study, the study recommends for effective marketing of products, multinational corporations in Nigeria should improve their commitment towards giving back to the society. This can be achieved if multinational corporations carry out their respective activities in an accountable, transparent, responsible and competitive way.

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