



DIVERSITY SUPPORTIVE RATIO AND COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE IN SAFARICOM COMPANY (K) LIMITED

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## DIVERSITY SUPPORTIVE RATIO AND COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE IN SAFARICOM COMPANY (K) LIMITED

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Accepted: April 14, 2025

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.61426/sjbc.v12i2.3222>

### ABSTRACT

*The aim of this study was to investigate how diversity support ratio affects the relationship between CSR and CA. The study adopted a descriptive design with a target population of 250 employees, comprising of managers, cluster managers and departmental heads from Safaricom Company Limited. The study employed the use of a questionnaire with a Likert type question to gather primary data from the respondents. The questionnaires were administered through a drop and pick method. A pilot test was conducted prior to the main study, to test the reliability and validity of the research instrument and the results used to modify the questions to remove ambiguity, lack of clarity and test reliability. Data collected from the study was thereafter analyzed using statistical package for social sciences software and presented in tables, graphs and charts. Findings from the study showed there was also a statistically significant effect of satisfaction ratio on competitive advantage of Safaricom company, indicating that with a unit increase in satisfaction ratio, there would be a significant decrease in competitive advantage of Safaricom company by 0.062 units. The study found that there is a need for companies to emphasize on employee diversity to improve on the overall company image on the market and to able to attract more customers to the firm's product and services. Finally, the study recommended that companies in general should strive to build their corporate reputation through corporate initiatives to attract best pool of talents that will steer the company towards achieving a competitive edge among other rivals in the industry. The study suggests that further researches may be performed on the sustainability of corporate responsibility due to its resource intensive nature, to enable companies cushion themselves from this without eroding on their gains.*

**Key words:** Corporate Social Responsibility, Competitive Advantage, Diversity Support

**CITATION:** Nyang'au, F. G., & Omwenga, J. Q. (2025). Diversity supportive ratio and competitive advantage in Safaricom Company (K) Limited. *The Strategic Journal of Business & Change Management*, 12 (2), 476 – 487. <http://dx.doi.org/10.61426/sjbc.v12i2.3222>

## BACKGROUND

CSR is a company's commitment to contribute to long-term economic development by collaborating with employees, their families, the local community, and society at large to improve quality of life in ways that are both profitable and beneficial to the company (Coombs & Holladay, 2012). CSR though a long-term development strategy, benefits all stakeholders in terms of economic, social, and environmental benefits. Alternately, Dahlsrud (2014) defines social responsibility as obligations to pursue those policies, to make decisions or to follow those lines of actions which are desirable in terms of objectives and values of society.

Bursa Malaysia (2012) defines CSR as an open and transparent corporate practice based on ideals of ethics and values respecting society, workers, the environment, and shareholders. Consequently, Chege (2013) on the other hand opines that CSR is a company's efforts to develop a sustainable living that go above and beyond what regulators or environmental protection organizations may mandate. The purpose of CSR is to accept responsibility for the company's actions and to support a beneficial impact on the environment, consumers, employees, communities, stakeholders, and all other members of the public sphere who may be considered stakeholders through the company's activities. According to Saeed and Arshad (2012), corporate social responsibility (CSR) generates intangible resources within an organization that are crucial to securing competitive advantage because these qualities are desirable, uncommon, and difficult to mimic.

Organizations are constantly looking for new methods to expand their business and address new difficulties as they occur. These businesses are seeking to manage numerous factors at the same time, including employee motivation, productivity, profit growth, corporate ethics, and leadership, to mention a few. Every action performed (or not taken), every policy and practice put in place, and every company goal should be evaluated in terms of how it affects diverse stakeholders. Executives,

managers, shareholders, employees, and consumers' spring to mind as those who will be touched by organizational decisions and maneuvers, but the local community and society at large are frequently left out of the mix of stakeholders (Mwangangi, 2018).

This highlights how significant the CSR activities particularly diversity support ratio in ensuring competitive advantage in Safaricom company (k) limited.

### Statement of the Problem

CSR has gained much attention by several organizations. Most of these organizations practice this as a form of conserving their operational environment while at same time providing favorable services to their customers, all in the name of creating an image on the customer's end about their products. Companies continue to engage themselves in CSR activities like financial scholarship programmes, improving employee welfare, supporting charities, community development and environment conservation through clean up exercises. Porter and Kramer (2015) add that as a marketing strategy, firms must recognize public expectations and constantly strive to improve their image as socially responsible institutions by finding and contributing answers to important socio-economic and environmental challenges and other connected issues.

Though many studies have been done on CSR for instance, Muhumed (2018) carried a study on CSR strategies and competitive advantage of commercial banks in Kenya. The study looked at influence of educational programs, staff welfare programs, environmental and enterprise development programs on the gains made by Equity Bank. According to Kudoyi (2013), corporate strategy was a tactic used by Kenyan commercial banks to recruit and keep workers. The research also showed that most employees felt at ease working for organizations that value social responsibility.

Though it is evident that so many studies have been done on CSR, it is also evident there is no evidence

of a link between diversity support ratio and competitive advantage of Safaricom. Because recorded proof is of less relevance, the researcher's focus is on determining the influence of diversity support ratio on the competitive advantage of Safaricom, as well as determining whether this institution recognizes any benefit from the expenditure incurred while performing CSR activities.

### **Objective of the Study**

This study established the influence of diversity supportive ratio on competitive advantage in Safaricom Company Limited. The research was guided by the following research question;

- What is the influence of diversity supportive ratio on competitive advantage in Safaricom Company Limited?

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Theoretical Framework**

The stakeholder theory contends that a firm has obligations to more parties than just its owners. Any individual or group that can influence or be affected by a company's decisions is referred to as a stakeholder. Employees, clients, suppliers, creditors, even the general public and rival businesses are all included (Freeman, 1984). Stakeholder theory's original proponent, Edward Freeman, acknowledged it as a crucial component of corporate social responsibility (CSR), a notion that acknowledges the obligations that organizations have in the modern world, whether they be financial, legal, moral, or even charitable. Some of the biggest firms in the world today assert that CSR is at the core of their company strategy. While there are many instances of businesses that truly have a "conscience," many others use CSR as a powerful PR tool to boost their brand and image but ultimately fall short of following through on their promises.

Michael Porter Theory of Competitive Advantage asserts that competitive advantage can come from a variety of sources, and it demonstrates how all

advantages can be linked to particular activities and the relationships among those activities, as well as relationships with supplier activities and consumer activities (Porter, 1985). One of the sources a company can utilize to strategically position itself is internal organizational variables that are linked with corporate social responsibility. According to Porter, who was referenced in Chew and Gottschalk (2013), resources are only useful when employed strategically to enable businesses to carry out tasks that provide them an edge in specific markets. Thus, Porter offers a framework for analyzing an industry's attractiveness that takes into account the group of companies who are producing almost identical items. Further, Porter defines competitive strategy as using offensive and defensive measures. Porter's approach focuses on a company's position inside a specific industry structure, but in the business world of the 1990s, industry structures are anything from stable and are going through significant changes (Bridoux, 2004).

### **Empirical Review**

CSR programs at the individual level put a greater emphasis on employees and cater to their unique requirements. They range from activities that address their requirements outside of the job, such as providing pension plans and profit-sharing, to programs that focus on professional growth, including supporting training and professional education (Cavazotte & Chang, 2016). In this study, organizational competencies were assessed using job satisfaction, job retention, and diversity across organization measures that were adapted from (Humaira, Iftikhar, Ali & Muhammad, 2016). Management assesses an organization's required organizational competencies once it has a clear understanding of them to determine what combination of personnel, competencies, systems, processes, facilities, and partnerships can be strategically used to maintain the organization's effectiveness and competitive advantage. Organizational diversity supportive ratio (DSR) contributes to competitive advantage by lowering turnover rates and attracting good talents. Zeb and

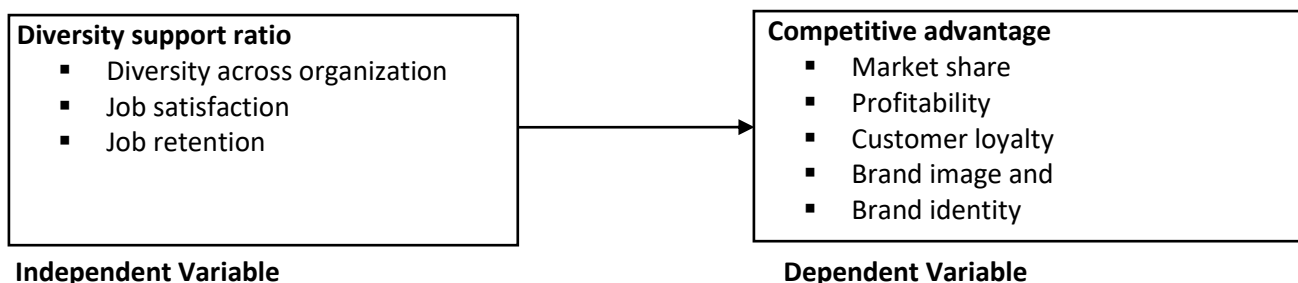
Asia (2016) support this claim that the involvement of DSR in excessive performance enhancement aids in the acquisition of a competitive edge in the market and so enhances the organization's reputation. DSR is considered as a metric that gives valuable insights into a major aspect of the company in form of ethnic diversity to bring multiple perspectives to improve business ideas and processes, and strengthens the company's branding (Choi, & Rainey, 2014).

Bonds within organizations can only grow, according to Bartlett and Ghoshal (2013), if senior managers and executives understand that the business is more than just an economic entity; it is also a social institution through which people act in concert holding a sense of association to achieve a common goal and gain competitive advantage. According to the resource-based view, a firm's primary sources and drivers of competitive advantage and superior performance in strategic management are primarily related to the characteristics of its resources

and capabilities that are both pricey to reproduce and valuable (Ali & Abdülkadir, 2015).

Surroca, Tribo, and Waddock (2010) assert that CSR initiatives aid in the development of human capital. First, commercial banks' commitment to CSR strategies tends to attract and retain better workers, lowering turnover and the expense of hiring and training new employees. Second, CSR strategies have an impact on workplace attitudes that support employees' moral qualities. Finally, the implementation of a proactive CSR strategy results in the invention of human resource practices with high commitment, promoting employee participation in enhancing the CSR management. It also supports collaborative activities that can increase corporate competitive advantage (Hart, 1995). The development of human capital resulting from CSR practices becomes a source of competitive advantage, enhancing organizational performance (Husted, 2003; Becker et al., 1996).

### Conceptual Framework



**Figure 1: Conceptual Framework**

### METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a descriptive design with a target population of 250 employees, comprising of managers, cluster managers and departmental heads from Safaricom Company Limited. The sample size for this study therefore were 72 respondents whom were drawn from the target population. Sample size was determined by Yamane's formula (1967). This study adopted stratified sampling technique where the respondents were grouped into different strata according to the management levels and then simple random sampling used to select the

respondents from each stratum to form the sample for the study (Sekaran & Bougie, 2010). The study employed the use of a questionnaire with a Likert type question to gather primary data from the respondents. The questionnaires were administered through a drop and pick method. A pilot test was conducted prior to the main study, to test the reliability and validity of the research instrument and the results used to modify the questions to remove ambiguity, lack of clarity and test reliability. Data collected from the study was thereafter analyzed using statistical package for social sciences



software and presented in tables, graphs and charts.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The purpose of the study was to establish the influence of diversity supportive ratio on competitive advantage in Safaricom Company Limited.

### Descriptive Statistics

**Table 1: Influence of Diversity Supportive Ratio**

Statement	1	2	3	4	5	Mean	Std Dev.
The company offers satisfactory human resource benefits that breaks the jinx of employee turnover.	14.8	68.5	7.4	9.3	0	3.70	0.643
Social responsibility creates a sense of employee identity with the company and enhances deeper connection on work performance	21.3	63.9	11.1	3.7	0	3.63	0.487
Feeling positively about their organization's CSR initiative increases employee's intentions to stay with their current employer and their overall commitment to the organization	18.5	81.5	0	0	0	4.19	0.392
Engaging in CSR helps our company to attract top talent over other organizations.	63	37	0	0	0	4.61	0.738
Giving back to the community is a virtuous circle in which engaged employees are enriched by volunteering opportunities to further engage and encourage them in their work.	42.6	57.4	0	0	0	4.43	0.499
Improved organizational branding serves as a source of employee retention strategy	23.5	69.1	4.6	2.8	0	3.54	0.438

From the findings in table 1, it can be established that 14.8% and 68.5% of the respondents strongly agreed and agreed respectively that Safaricom company offers satisfactory human resource benefits in form of competitive remuneration packages and work-life balance to its employees that breaks the jinx of employee turnover. About 9.3% of the respondents disagreed to this fact while 7.4% held a neutral opinion. These results are a reflection of low staff turnover at the company for over the years as depicted by a mean of 3.70 and standard deviation of 0.643. This conforms with the findings of Chirimubwe, (2015); Goswami and Prajapati, (2019) who posit that offering fair

### Diversity Support Ratio

The study sought to establish from the respondents whether diversity supportive ratio influence competitive advantage of Safaricom company. The respondents were required to rate their opinion on a likert scale of 1-5, where 1=strongly agreed, 2=agree, 3=neutral, 4=disagreed, and 5=strongly disagreed. The results were presented in Table 1 below:

compensation packages and a positive work environment to employees will draw individuals to the business. Benefits derived by employees from the company also contributes to competitive advantage by lowering turnover rates and attracting good talents.

On whether corporate social responsibility created a sense of employee identity with the company and enhanced deeper connection on work performance, 21.3% and 63.9% strongly agreed and agreed respectively. However, 3.7% disagreed and 11.1% held a neutral opinion to the statement. On average, the study established that there was a strong sense of employee identity that enabled top

talents to be attracted to the company, thereby making it one of the most competitive telecommunication companies in the Kenyan market (mean of 3.63 and standard deviation of 0.487).

Findings also showed that the employees felt that CSR initiatives by Safaricom company had put their organization at the top notch of competition and influenced their continued commitment to work for the company. This was represented by 18.5% and 81.5% unanimous response from all the respondents who strongly agreed and agreed respectively to the statement. The mean was 4.19 with a standard deviation of 0.392, a reflection of close relationship to the mean. Surroca, Tribo, and Waddock (2010) also assert that CSR initiatives aid in the development of human capital by attracting and retaining better workers, lowering turnover and the expense of hiring and training new employees and impact on workplace attitudes that support employees' moral qualities.

On whether engaging in CSR helps the company to attract top talent over other organizations, all the respondents unanimously agreed as was represented by 63% and 37% of the respondents who strongly agreed and agreed respectively to the statement with a mean of 4.61 and standard deviation of 0.738. The unanimous affirmation by all the respondents reflects the company's resolve to its social responsibility strategy towards building a reputation as a socially responsible company towards its stakeholders in general. Zeb and Asia (2016) also support this claim that the involvement of DSR in excessive performance enhancement aids in the acquisition of a competitive edge in the market and so enhances the organization's reputation.

The study further found that giving back to the community had influence on employee engagement towards their work performance as was observed from 42.6% of the respondents who strongly agreed and 57.4% who were also in agreement. None of the employees involved in the study objected to this fact. The mean was 4.43 with a standard deviation

of 0.499, suggesting a closeness to the mean. In conclusion, the study found that CSR towards organization stakeholders was instrumental in motivating employees' job performance and work engagement and as a tool for achieving competitive advantage, provided a virtuous circle in which engaged employees were enriched by volunteering opportunities to further engage and encourage them in their work assignments. These results agree with those of Adebisi and Taiwo (2014) that carried a study on building a winning strategy for competitive performance using CSR focusing on MTN Nigeria. The study showed that good ethical and environmental CSR focused on the society had remarkable impact on the organizational performance of the mobile service provider.

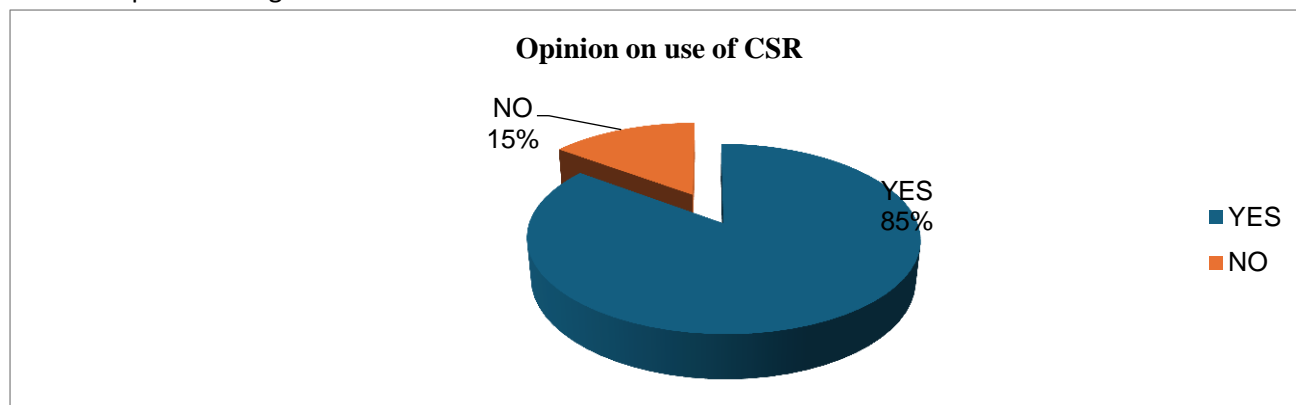
Consequently, the study found that 23.5% of the respondents strongly agreed and 69.1% agreed that improved organizational branding was a source of employee retention strategy of Safaricom company. The respondents argued that most people would be comfortable working with reputable firms and companies that have positioned themselves as competing brands in the marketplace. 4.6% of the respondents had a neutral opinion whereas 2.8% disagreed with the statement. The mean was 3.54 with a standard deviation of 0.438, indication of the closeness to the mean. This concurs with the assertion that a firm's primary sources and drivers of competitive advantage and superior performance are primarily related to the characteristics of its resources and capabilities that are both pricey to reproduce and valuable (Ali & Abdülkadir, 2015).

### **Competitive Advantage**

The general objective of the study was to examine the influence of corporate social responsibility on competitive advantage of Safaricom company. This variable sought to examine the competitive advantage of Safaricom company in relation to acquiring and maintaining largest market share, high profitability, customer loyalty, brand identity and image among its competitors in the mobile telecommunication industry.

The researcher sought to know whether the use of CSR played any role in making Safaricom company gain competitive advantage among its rivals in the industry. The results of the study revealed that 85% of the respondents agreed that in deed CSR was a

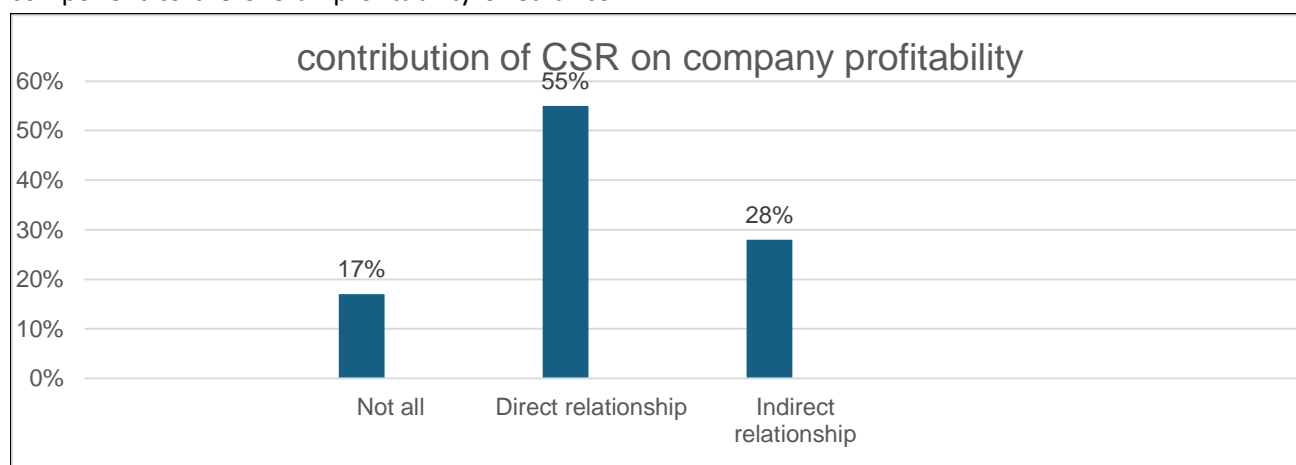
key tool that Safaricom used to penetrate the market and achieve a competitive edge among their rivals as compared to 15% who objected. The results are shown in figure 2 below:



**Figure 2: Opinion on use of CSR**

The researcher also sought to know the extent to which the respondents' believed CSR was a key component to the overall profitability of Safaricom

company. The responses were presented as follows in Figure 3:



**Figure 3: Contribution of CSR on company profitability**

Results show that majority of the respondents to the study, accounting for 55% believed that CSR was an important strategic tool that directly and greatly contributed to the overall profitability of Safaricom company. This was followed by 28% who cited that CSR had an indirect relationship with profitability of the company and 17% who argued that there was no relationship at all between the two. These findings concur with Okiro, Omoro, and Kinyua

(2013) that discovered a positive correlation between CSR initiatives and higher sales levels in the local setting.

Consequently, the researcher sought to know the extent to which the respondents felt their company aimed at achieving each of the following statement on Competitive advantages. They were required to rate their opinion as follows; 1=strongly agree, 2= Agree, 3=Neutral, 4=Disagree 5=Strongly disagree.



**Table 2: Influence of CSR on Competitive Advantage**

Statement	1	2	3	4	5	Mean	Std Dev.
To have the largest market share among its telecommunication rivals	0	0	0	1.9	98.1	4.98	0.136
To be the customers' preferred service provider in the market	0	0	0	25.9	74.1	4.74	0.442
Well trained and motivated workforce leading to superior performance	0	0	0	72.2	27.8	4.72	0.452
Engaging in matters of corporate interests, societal needs and environmental concerns boosts corporate image among market players	0	0	0	66.7	33.3	4.33	0.476
Our company offers services that are customer friendly to enhance customer loyalty and satisfaction	0	0	1.9	3.7	94.4	4.93	0.328
CSR has enabled our company build a brand image in the market that draws customers' attention	0	0	33.3	31.5	35.2	4.02	0.835
CSR contributes to high performance achievement of our company, a reflection of its steady profitability in the industry	0	0	0	62.8	37.2	4.37	0.487

Findings shown in table 2 above shows that 1.9% of the respondents agreed and 98.1% strongly agreed that through its continuously CSR programmes engagements, Safaricom company has acquired and gained the largest market share among its telecommunication rivals. None of the respondents gave a contrary opinion, implying that all the respondents had a unanimous opinion about the statement. The mean for the result was 4.98 with a standard deviation of 0.136, suggesting a close relationship to the mean. The results signify the significant role CSR plays in making Safaricom company to gain competitive advantage over its telecommunication service providers as reflected from its annual profitability reports. The study by Njoro (2015) also revealed that CSR played a key role in the company's customer acquisition and retention, enhancement of brand reputation and increased usage of the company's products and services across the Kenyan market

When the respondents were asked whether Safaricom performs CSR to be the customers' preferred service provider in the market, 25.9% agreed and 74.1% strongly agreed to the statement.

The mean was 4.74 with a standard deviation of 0.442. The results are an indication of a strong relationship between CSR and customer preference on company products and services. Therefore, the study concluded that for any company to gain competitive advantage, then they must be involving themselves with initiatives that promote their corporate interests, customer value and the general environmental wellbeing of their operational environment. This can be explained by the fact that, if an organization adopts a socially responsible stand, it will have a positive impact on customers' attitudes and purchasing habits, hence increasing the likelihood that they will patronize socially conscious businesses and opening up opportunities for profit maximization (Chandler, 2017).

The study also found that Safaricom company had well trained and motivated workforce that translated to their superior performance over their competitors, as was represented by 27.8% and 72.2% of the respondents who strongly agreed and agreed respectively. The mean was 4.72 with a standard deviation of 0.452, an indication of the closeness to the mean. Adeleke (2014) also found

that there was a strong correlation between CSR and customer satisfaction that resulted from performance of motivated workforce of the company. Consequently, Kudoyi (2013), observed that corporate strategy was a tactic used by Kenyan commercial banks to recruit and keep workers. The research also showed that most employees felt at ease working for organizations that value social responsibility.

When the respondents were asked whether engaging in matters of corporate interests, societal needs and environmental concerns would help in building corporate image among market players, 66.7 % of the respondents agreed and 33.3% strongly agreed. This implied that CSR programmes enhanced company outlook among its stakeholders and consequently influenced the perception of people about the company's image in the market. The mean was 4.33 with a standard deviation of 0.476, implying the data was distributed around the mean. The findings corroborate Chandler (2015) views, that points out that when the perspective of a pure profit-oriented organization is used, the more social responsibility initiatives that organization engages in, the better off they are set for long-term financial success.

The study also found that Safaricom company offered services that were customer friendly and this significantly influenced customer loyalty towards their products and services. This was represented by 94% of the respondents' opinion who strongly agreed to the statement and 3.7% who agreed whereas 1.9% disagreed. the mean was 4.93 with a standard deviation of 0.328. This

showed that the data collected was distributed around the mean. These findings also concur with Kubai and Waiganjo 2010 who in their study found that CSR had become a significant factor in shaping positive customer impressions, particularly among the beneficiaries, who showed a strong capacity to attach to the bank both now and in the future.

Majority of the respondents, who cumulatively adds up to 66.7% held the view that CSR was an important asset to the company that provided a firm with a sustainable competitive advantage through enhanced corporate reputation and a brand image in the market that draws customers' focus. 33.3% held a neutral opinion on the statement, while there was no respondent who neither disagreed nor strongly disagreed with the statement. The results had a mean of 4.02 and a standard deviation of 0.835, an indication data distribution around the mean.

Consequently, the study also established that CSR contributed to high performance achievement of Safaricom company, which was a reflection of its steady profitability in the industry as opined by 62.8% who agreed and 37.2% who strongly agreed. However, there were no respondents who neither disagreed nor strongly disagreed with the statement. The mean was found to be 0.437 and a standard deviation of 0.487. In conclusion, the study observed that CSR was a vital asset to company's competitive advantage and investments in firm's reputation work as self-reinforcing processes, resulting in enhancement of the firm's reputation and revenue performance.

### Regression Analysis

**Table 3: Coefficients<sup>a</sup>**

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error		
1	(Constant)	5.229	.216		.000
	Diversity Ratio	.062	.042	.217	.049

a. Dependent Variable: CA

The co-efficient for diversity supportive ratio had a p-value of 0.049. This was less than  $p < 0.05$ , leading

to the conclusion that, diversity supportive ratio had a statistically significant effect on competitive

advantage of Safaricom company. The regression coefficient was 0.062 depicting a positive relationship with competitive advantage of Safaricom Company. The results imply that increase in diversity supportive ratio by 1 unit increased competitive advantage of Safaricom Company by 0.062 units.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Diversity supportive ratio was found to have a statistically significant effect on competitive advantage of Safaricom company, depicting a positive relationship with competitive advantage of Safaricom company. The results implied that CSR enhances diversity across the organization where organizations get pools of talent from different

backgrounds with varied knowledge and skills, creates job satisfaction through motivations hence reducing employee turnover concerns of the organization.

There is also a need for companies to be agile in ensuring that their employees are well taken care of in terms of meeting their job requirements, job satisfaction, diversity and motivation so as to paint a good company image in the market. As much as the company involves itself in social responsibility, the first step starts with employee outlook which then translates to their performance and the overall organizational performance in terms of meeting their purposed goals.

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