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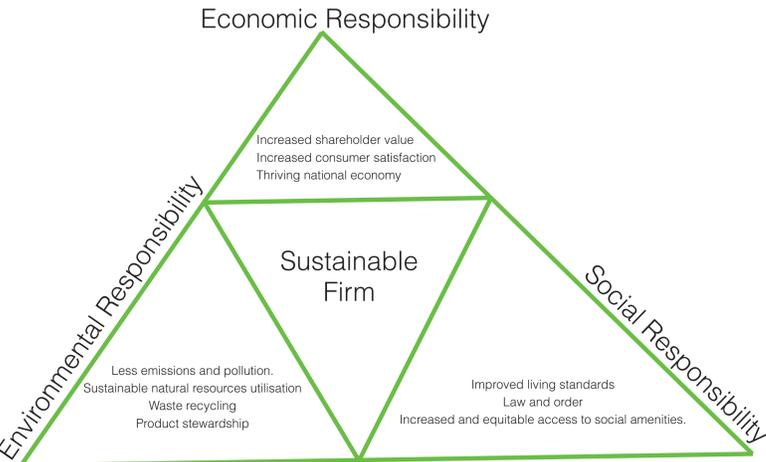
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Drivers of corporate social responsibility: a comparative analysis

Understanding corporate social responsibility (CSR)

- Corporate social responsibility is a fast growing concept in management with a focus on the contemporary role of business in society.
- Almost five decades of scholarly debate on the role of business in the society:
 - Howard Bowen's thesis (1953): business should contribute towards societal welfare.
 - Milton Freedman proposition (1962 & 1970): social responsibility of the business is to increase shareholder returns
 - Carroll's pyramid of CSR (1991) integrating economic, legal, ethical & philanthropic concerns.
 - The triple bottom line framework (economic, social and environmental concerns) by Elkington (1997)



- CSR still remains a contested concept; contested because:
 - It is open to different interpretations;
 - It is appraisive, and
 - It is complex and multi-faceted in nature. (Moon et.al 2004)
- Hence, no unified definition, and continues to be used interchangeably with other concepts: corporate citizenship, sustainability etc.
- However, all definitions bear some striking similarities.

Objectives

- Investigate and compare the drivers of CSR agenda pursued by corporations in the United Kingdom, South Africa and Malawi;
- Examine the role of multi-stakeholder partnerships on CSR agenda by different corporations;
- Draw appropriate lessons and implications for public policy and practice in Malawi and South Africa.



Research Methodology

- Qualitative research utilising case study strategy.
- Semi structured interviews and primary and secondary data review.
- Analytical technique: pattern matching (Yin 2003).

Contribution to the world of knowledge

- The study will provide:
- An increased understanding of the factors that account for different CSR agenda exhibited by corporations in different socio-political environments from their host countries.
 - An increased understanding of the nature of CSR in one of the poorest countries in the World where no empirical studies have been conducted.
 - An increased understanding of how colonial legacy influences the CSR model adopted by corporations operating in the former British colonies.
 - A better understanding of the public policy and practical implications of CSR theories within the context of a developing country.

Literature Review

- Most of academic literature focuses on the conceptualisation of CSR:
- CSR discourse constructed on moral, and altruistic ends in form of corporate philanthropy (Carroll 1991; Lantos 2001; Porter & Kramer 2002).
- Primary concern in CSR discourse is whether firms pursue it for self interest or doing so is ethically good.

Limitations:

1. Few empirical studies conducted to support ethical motive.
2. Studies conducted however remain inconclusive, making CSR being viewed as public relation tool.
3. Academic literature is very narrow, and focuses on CSR in developed countries, with few studies on developing countries.

Theoretical framework for understanding CSR

- Many theories available for understanding CSR.
- Two dominant theories:
1. Stakeholder theory (Freeman 1984 & 1999)
 2. Theory of enlightened self-interest (Wallich and Mc Gowan 1970; Keim 1978).

References: For detailed information E-mail: andmzembe@yahoo.co.uk