

Coronavirus (Covid -19) Reinforces Corporate Social Responsibility of Business Organisations or Companies in Cameroon - A Case Study of Les Brasseries Du Cameroun

Dr. Evaristus Nyong Abam,

Department of Tourism and Hotel Management, Achas University Institute of Tourism and Business Management, Cameroon

**Corresponding Author:* Dr. Evaristus Nyong Abam, Department of Tourism and Hotel Management, Achas University Institute of Tourism and Business Management, Cameroon

ABSTRACT

Corporate policies towards business social corporate responsibility differs and although they may have a substantial common ground between them. When businesses or organisations do practices that involve initiatives that benefit society, this is referred to as corporate social responsibility and can encompass a wide variety of strategy that may range from giving away a fraction of a company's proceeds to charity or to implementing greener business operations and in a nutshell it is how companies manage the business processes to produce an overall positive impact on the society. It should be noted that the World Business Council for Sustainable Development believe that corporate social responsibility is the continuous obligation by the businesses or companies to behave in an ethical manner and thus contribute to the economic development while also convallescening the quality of life of its employees, their families as well as of the local community where these businesses are found not leaving out the society at large. Even though a lot of corporate social responsibility or corporate conscience or corporate citizenship or responsible business actions are regulated by the law, companies decide voluntarily or sometimes are obliged by law to contribute to a better society. It should be noted that this corporate self-regulation activities have been integrated into a business model and this can help build customer loyalty based on distinctive ethical values. It should be noted that Les Brasseries du Cameroun has been carrying out corporate social responsibility activities; however this research work will be based on its activities towards limiting or eradicating the coronavirus that has been declared a world pandemic by the world health organisation.

Keywords: Corporate social responsibility ,Covid-19, social responsibility, business, business organisation, organisation

INTRODUCTION

The name corona virus comes from the Latin word corona, meaning crown or halo and under an electron microscope; the virus looks like it is surrounded by a solar corona, this new strain that had not been previously identified in humans and its symptom or signs include fever, cough and shortness of breath and not leaving out breathing difficulties, equally in more severe cases, it can lead to pneumonia, multiple organ failure and even death. It should also be however noted that infected patients can also be asymptomatic, meaning they do not display any symptoms despite having the virus in their systems.

The World Health Organisation has named the disease COVID-19 which is a short form for "corona virus disease 2019", following its best practices for naming of new human infectious

diseases with the aim to lessen superfluous negative impact of disease names on trade, travel, tourism, or animal welfare.

According to (www.who.int) Nations or countries of the world continue to tally the cost of COVID-19 in the number of lives lost, in terms of economic disruption and in the threat to sustainable development where it's most needed. The world health organisation equally reveals that in these challenging times, many of people are doing the right thing by staying at home and that people and nations should remain united in facing this unprecedented challenge as the virus does not show favouritism equally it knows no borders and as we have seen over recent days, nobody is immune against this virus.

The world health organisation also reveal that as of April 25th 2020, more than 197,000 people

worldwide have died of COVID-19 virus as a result of the highly infectious respiratory disease caused by the corona virus and that countries around the world are scrambling to halt the spread of the corona virus pandemic.

BACKGROUND OF LES BRASSERIES DU CAMEROUN

Created in 1948 as a subsidiary of the French company, les sociétés anonymes des brasseries du Cameroun (**SABC**) otherwise called les brasseries du Cameroun (**BC**) is a brewery company in Cameroon with its main office and brewery in Douala and other subsidiary factories in Bafoussam, Douala, Garoua, and Yaoundé. In les brasseries du Cameroun, its main shareholders include: Les Brasseries et Glacieres Internationales (BGI) that owns 75% of the shares of the company, Heineken owns 8.8% of the shares etc. Les Brasseries du Cameroun brews, bottles and distributes several brands of beer including "33" Export, Beaufort, Castel, and Tuborg, as well as Amstel, Heineken, and Mützig. It also bottles and distributes Coca-Cola products in Cameroon and some local soft drinks like top and d'jino with an exclusive right. It should be noted that as of today it holds a 75% share of the Cameroonian market for beer and soft drinks. As per its annual report of the year 2000, it recorded a total sales of 170 billion FCFA (250 million US\$) and made a profit of 8.5 billion FCFA (11 million US\$). Most of its sales came primarily from within Cameroon's ten Region (95%) while the other 5% from exports to Chad, Equatorial Guinea, and Gabon. This company owns several Cameroonian football teams and is a major sponsor of the Cameroonian national football team. Since 1994, SABC owns and manage a football school in Douala called l'École de football des Brasseries du Cameroun (EFBC) that trains young Cameroonian talents (www.lesbrasseriesducameroun.com).

In the year 2008, Les Brasseries Du Cameroun announced its acquisition of the majority shares in SIAC Isenbeck, - a subsidiary of the Germany-based group Warsteiner that suffered a significant setback in its operations and sales in Cameroon (**Ntiga, 2005**).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Armstrong et al (2013) while studying the effects of corporate social responsibility and irresponsibility policies reveal that the essential features of the corporate social responsibility

concept that are being reproduced in all the corporate social responsibility definitions.

Meanwhile according to (www.catalog.flatworldknowledge.com), it is the responsibility of businesses to do what's right even when not required by the letter or spirit of the law and this is referred to as the theory's of keystone obligation and that it should depends on a rational corporate culture that views the business itself as a citizen in society, with the kind of obligations that citizenship normally wants. According to current researchers there is hardly any one acceptable definition, however there are some essential features of the corporate social responsibility concept that are being reproduced in all the corporate social responsibility definitions namely: practices and values, beyond philanthropy, ethical responsibility, economic responsibility, multiple stakeholders orientation.

McWilliams et al (2001) reveal that corporate social responsibility should be measured at the organisational level where organisational policies take place and that such must align with and be integrated into a business model to be successful. They go ahead to affirm that a firm's execution of corporate social responsibility should go beyond conformity with the organisational regulatory requirements and they should equally should engage in actions that appear to add some social good beyond the interests of the firm and that which is required or guided by the law.

However (**Smith, 2013**) is of the opinion that human resource professionals should play a key role to help companies achieve their key corporate social responsibility objectives and employee's involvement is a critical success factor for achieving a company's corporate social responsibility performance. He further explain that a lot of organizations in the world have invested heavily in corporate social responsibility programs in a bid to reinstate trust among their shareholders, employees and customers and not leaving out the need to improve its brand.

McWilliams et al (2006) thinks that embedding corporate responsibility policies into a business is about making it an incorporated part of the culture of the organization and the human resource professional is ideally placed to measure organizational culture, understand it and change it if need be or where necessary. Also employees want to work for organizations

that are seen to have a strong commitment to corporate social responsibility and therefore developing a real and meaningful commitment is important to tout that as part of its overall employer branding strategy.

Paluszek (2016) is of the opinion that to become a more socially responsible organisation real and meaningful cultural change is necessary in order to ensure a culture of responsible and ethical business practices and sustainability that would permeates the entire organization.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

For this research work, the researcher used only secondary data that was information collected from the company's website as well as from its face book account.

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

1. Les sociétés anonymes des brasseries du Cameroun (SABC) Mask Challenge Group

In its effort to curb the spread of corona virus, les brasseries du Cameroun organised the mask challenge contest where its' clients participated in the challenge with original messages. Here clients participate in raising awareness against the COVID-19 and tries to win some great SABC prizes on a weekly base and also clients are required to send a picture of themselves with their mask on with an awareness message on the company's facebook account or through their whatsapp at 698 899 538. The messages will be posted on the page and the first five (5) who will get the maximum of like, shares and comments will win great prizes at the close of every week. The key point here remains the observation of barriers measures and awareness or fight against COVID - 19(web.facebook.com/lesbrasseriesducameroun).

2. Hand Washing Program in the Main Markets of the 10 Regions of Cameroon

This program of hand washing was launched in Douala where the SABC group officially launched this day 07/05/2020, at the PK10 market of Douala. In partnership with the Urban Communities and the city, the SABC Group will install in the markets of the national triangle of hand washing stations. This device aims to encourage people to regularly wash their hands. .It should be noted that this hand washing program in the

main markets of the ten regions of Cameroon is all about equipping main markets with hand washing stations and this device is aim to encourage people to wash their hands regularly in order to limit the spread of corona virus in Cameroon's markets (web.facebook.com/lesbrasseriesducameroun).

3. Phase 2 of the Solidarity Plan of the SABC Group

The SABC group, a citizen company decided to support hospitals and medical bodies that are on the front line of the fight against this pandemic - COVID-19 as soon as its presence was announced in Cameroon by the minister of public health.

On 25/03/2020, the Group goes to war against COVID-19 in Yaoundé after the hospital, the Yaoundé central hospital received a team employees from the SABC Group and they were heavily armed with essential products, including boxes of soap, bleach, hydro liquid, and hundreds of bottles of Vitale mineral water and these were hand to Professor's Joseph Fouda, director of the Yaoundé central hospital and his team to curb the spread of at COVID 19 to the hospital staff as well as clients of the hospital.

On the 18/04/2020, SABC group director took some important measures to curb the propagation of covid-19 to its employees, consumers and also the environment where its clients and company is found against all the risk of contamination. Also SABC also suspended its activities that have to do directly with general public.

On 04/04/2020, it was the turn of the Regional hospital and the Yaounde central prison, where support materials were given to these establishments.

On the 09/04/2020, the centre of disabled and orphanage and Bulu blind centre, SABC Group, a citizen company supported the vulnerable populations in the South West Region with a total of 40 bags of rice, 20 L of bleach, 5 boxes of household soap that were donated to these two centres.

On the 26/04/2020 was the turn of the Western Region where its employees visited some towns in this Region like Mbouda and Bagangté and supported hospitals and

doctors who are at the front line for the fight against COVID-19 and they equally visited prison premises in these towns where they provided food drinks and materials for protection again COVID-19.

On the 16th and 17th of April 2020 in the Northern Region, SABC Group as part of phase 2 of the solidarity momentum visited the two principal prisons in Garoua and prior to the visit at the prisons this team was at the district medical centre of Laindé.

Just like what happened in other areas the group brought prevention materials namely: alcohol, thermo-flash, exam gloves, bleach, soaps; essential commodities for the fight against COVID-19 and food (rice, soft drink, vital mineral water).

On the 17th of April 2020 in the Eastern Region, the SABC Group engaged against the spread of the COVID-19 at Christ King hospital in Nkolbikon 1 and at the secondary. Prevention equipments were handed to these health institutions and the secondary prison and the equipments include: alcohol, thermo-flash, gloves, bleach, soap and food (Rice, Soft drink, vital mineral water).

After the Littoral, South West and North-West Regions, the Group continues its crusade against the COVID-19 in the Southern Region where hand washing stations installed in the markets of Mfoumou, Lac, fruit market, New-bell, Carrefour Samba, Ebolowa 2. It should be noted that these stations will allow people to wash their hands regularly to limit the spread of COVID-19 (web.facebook.com/lesbrasseriesducameroun).

4. Fight against the-19: Group SABC and French Companies at the front

On 17/04/ 2020 in Yaoundé, 20 litres of hydro alcoholic solutions, produced by Groupe SABC, Total Cameroon, CAD Group and SOCUCAM, being the first donation was handed to Cameroon prime minister Joseph Dion Ngute.

This donation made by a group of French companies whose group SABC and the French embassy was aimed at supporting the government in the fight against the corona virus and by common agreement it will be distributed among the health institutions of Yaoundé, Douala and Bafoussam, the first

three Regions declared with COVID-19, by the Ministry of Public Health.

5. Facebook Account: Les brasseries du Cameroun on its facebook account design and paste gestures that encourage its customers to apply them every day to protect themselves and those around from COVID-19.

6. On the 28/04/2020 encouraging messages on COVID-19 such as protecting oneself and protecting your loved ones and customers to switch to home consumption were posted on its facebook account. Also messages like wishing its clients a pleasant week end while protecting oneself and protecting others and every difficult moment just makes us stronger were also posted on the company facebook account.

CONCLUSION

Corporate social responsibility is doing business in a responsible manner while taking into account the business environment and all the stakeholders involved. In a nutshell it is how companies manage the business processes to produce an overall positive impact on the society.

Also the business or firm has the choice of complying with the law or not and equally going beyond are three distinct strategy and choice that must be made by the organisation top management. Les brasseries du Cameroun has always kept to its policy of corporate social responsibility and more of it during this period of covid-19 where its group general manager as well as its' collaborators are send at the forefront of trying to provide valuable equipments that would be used to curb the spread of covid-19.

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