
ACHIEVING COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE STRATEGIES THROUGH SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY DIMENSIONS: AN APPLIED RESEARCH ON A SAMPLE OF BRANCHES OF AL-RAFIDAIN AND AL-RASHID BANKS

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Abstract

The research aims to determine the impact of social responsibility dimensions in achieving competitive advantage strategies, and a number of branches of Al-Rafidain and Al-Rasheed banks in the capital, Baghdad, were chosen as a field of study according to an analytical study approach.

This sample was chosen because of the presence of some social practices in the two banks that may be the cornerstone for formulating social responsibility.

The results of the field research were based on an analysis of the reality of the social activities and practices carried out by the two banks for the period from (2015 - 2019), as well as the statistical analysis of the research questionnaire that was prepared for this purpose and distributed to a purposive sample totaling (180), of which (169) were recovered, of which (155) were valid. and (14) invalid forms, and a set of statistical methods were used that were processed with the ready-made statistical program (SPSS). The research came out with a set of conclusions and recommendations, the most prominent of which was that social responsibility has a positive impact, as it achieves several benefits for society and banks together by creating good relationships with shareholders, making banks enjoy credibility, increasing employee loyalty, and combating poverty, unemployment, and pollution.

Keywords: competitive advantage strategies, dimensions of social responsibility, Rafidain and Al-Rasheed Bank.

Introduction

In recent decades, there has been increasing interest in the social responsibility of organizations, and many studies have focused on this topic. The reason for the interest lies in the increasing pressures and demands from society to feel that there is irresponsible commercial behavior on the part of organizations, “that is, the behaviors of organizations through their activities that affect society and the environment.” There was pressure from the

public demanding guidelines and regulatory principles that coincided with the developments taking place.

In addition, there was pressure from employees that the important and decisive factor was the increase in the intensity of competition and the desire to create what distinguishes its business from others, moving away from traditional methods, such as “price, product quality, Design, advertising” as it began to search for developing additional value through intangible assets such as reputation and relationships with stakeholders, whether internal or external.

In order to achieve this specific purpose of the research, a model of social responsibility was formulated, which consists of three dimensions (social, economic, and environmental). The social dimension includes four main variables (charity, equal opportunities, non-exploitation, and social justice), while the economic dimension includes four variables. The main ones are (poverty, unemployment, low standards of living, and development). As for the environmental dimension, it also includes four variables: (sustainability, protection, environmental compatibility, damage mitigation).

The first section

Research Methodology

1-1- The problem:-

Organizations are rarely interested in addressing environmental damage or providing support to social organizations and activities. Indeed, many of them have almost a severed relationship with their society, as we find that most of the work they carry out is simple and of a propaganda nature. The research problem can be summarized by trying to answer the following questions:
A- Does social responsibility in its dimensions (economic, social and environmental) contribute to Rafidain and Rasheed Banks gaining competitive advantages?

B- Do the dimensions (economic, social and environmental) contribute to building and strengthening the competitive advantage of the banks in question?

1-2- Importance:-

Therefore, the current research gains its importance through:

1- The widespread global interest in social responsibility, its management, and the benefits it brings to business organizations.

2- The need for Iraqi business organizations to understand the theoretical concepts and practical practices of social responsibility and the benefits resulting from it for the state, society and organization and its role in gaining competitive advantage.

3- Explaining the role that social responsibility can play in building the competitive advantage of Iraqi business organizations, which gives them the ability to enter the global competitive market.

1-3- Objectives:-

1. Formulate a theoretical framework that explains the relationship between social responsibility and its implications for building competitive advantage.

2. Building an applicable model to test the relationship and influence between social responsibility variables and the components of the competitive advantage of the two banks studied.
3. Testing the social responsibility model and its ability to achieve competitive advantage.

1-4- Research model:-

The research model shown in Figure (1) was built according to the following steps:

1. Determine the variables of the elements of social responsibility through a summary of the literature related to the subject of social responsibility, through three dimensions, a social dimension that includes four main variables (charity, equal opportunities, non-exploitation, and social justice) that directs towards achieving social performance, and an economic dimension. It includes five main variables (poverty, unemployment, low living standards, development), which are directed towards achieving economic performance, and the environment dimension includes four main variables (sustainability, protection, environmental compatibility, damage mitigation).
2. Determine competitive advantage strategies with their advantage (cost reduction, quality improvement, focus).
3. The model displays the paths of influence between social responsibility and competitive advantage strategies.

The mechanism of the model is as follows:

The model tests the impact between social responsibility in all its dimensions (economic, social, and environmental) separately in an attempt to know the level and extent of the positive results of the test, and thus achieve competitive advantage strategies.

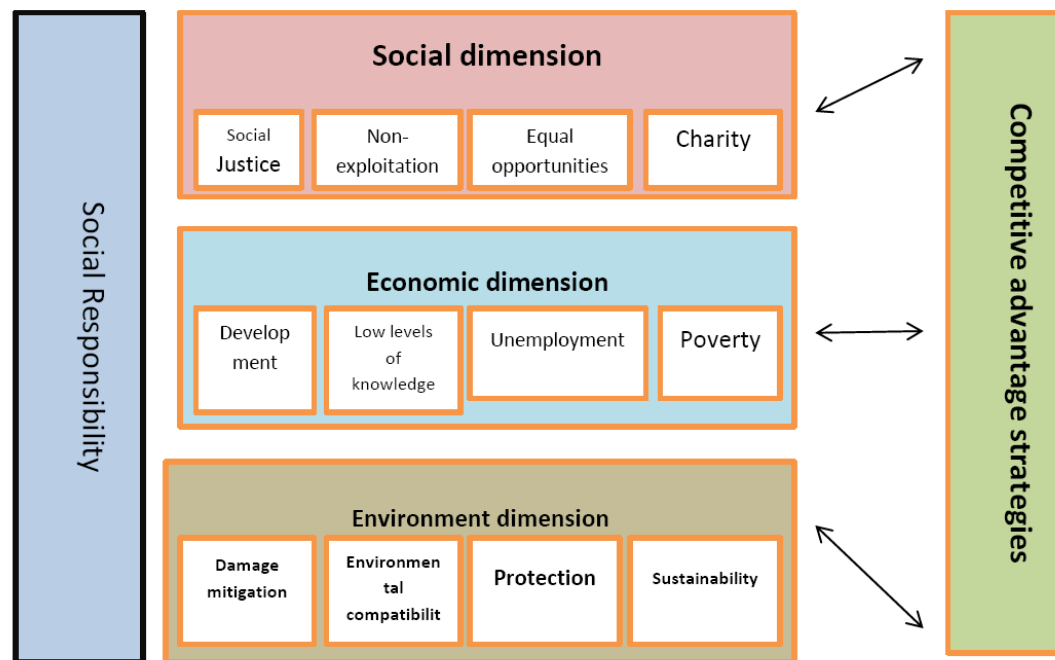


Figure (1): Research model

1-5-: Hypotheses:-

The first hypothesis: - There is a significant effect of the components of the social dimension of social responsibility in achieving competitive advantage strategies.

The second hypothesis: - There is a significant effect of the components of the economic dimension of social responsibility in achieving competitive advantage strategies.

The third hypothesis: - There is a significant effect of the components of the environmental dimension of social responsibility in achieving competitive advantage strategies.

The second section

Social Responsibility

2-1- The concept of social responsibility

Social responsibility is a strategic, proactive method of conducting business by organizations that takes into account the economic, environmental and social balance in order to achieve the organizations' competitive capabilities (Grigore, 2010:170) and is defined by (Hopkins et al, 2004:15) as voluntary and proactive actions coordinated in a strategic manner. It meets the needs of stakeholders, preserves the environment, and is determined according to ethical requirements in order to obtain long-term gains, while (Martos-Pedrero et al, 2019:2) sees it as a process of integrating environmental and social standards by organizations into processes that work interactively and continuously with stakeholders and are Voluntarily, several meanings crystallize through the historical development of social responsibility, including: William & David, 2006:6.

- Company responsibility.
- Good business citizenship at the global level.
- The social commitment of the organization or the nature of the business.
- Social relations with society.
- Social service for business organizations.

The concept of social responsibility covers three terms (organization, society, and environment). It achieves the relationship and dependency between business organizations and the society in which they operate, and within the environment that strengthens between both sides (Labbai, 2007:2). The level of expansion in the definition of social responsibility for society represents continued commitment. On the part of the business to act and contribute to the economic development of the company while at the same time improving the quality of life for the workforce, their families, the local community and society in general. (Al-Ghalbi and Al-Amiri, 2005: 50)

2-2- Dimensions of social responsibility

Social responsibility consists of three dimensions, based on the opinions of a group of writers and researchers who have dealt with this topic, despite the lack of consensus on the sub-components of these dimensions. These dimensions have been defined in a way that is consistent with the purposes of the research, which are: - (Martos-Pedrero et al, 2019:5-6) (International Institute for Sustainable Development, 2004:8)

A- The social dimension: It expresses social activities, programs, events and policies directed towards responding to the requirements and desires of stakeholders related to the work of the

organization, whether this relationship is direct or indirect. Variables of this dimension include: (charity work, equal opportunities, social justice, and lack of exploitation)

B- The economic dimension: A group of processes, activities, programs, procedures and policies of an economic nature, which take into account the orientation of the organization and its consequences. The most important variables of the economic dimension are: (poverty, unemployment, low living standards, and development)

C- The environment dimension: It means the activities, means, and programs that the organization carries out to maintain a clean and sustainable environment through the process of creating and preserving the environment by adopting proper behavior. This is done either through issuing regulations, penalties, or sometimes incentives. The environment dimension can be achieved through processes, products, and treatment. Waste and emissions and maximizing production efficiency through the use of resources and reducing practices that may negatively affect future generations' enjoyment of natural resources and among the most important components of the environmental dimension (sustainability, protection, environmental compatibility, damage mitigation).

2-3 The concept of competitive advantage

The concept of competitive advantage, as in many contemporary management concepts, has been given many definitions. Heizer (2001: 34) defined competitive advantage as “a system in which the advantage is available that exceeds what is available to competitors, and the idea is based on the value that it creates to provide the customer in a way Efficient. Competitive advantage is also defined as “the organization’s ability to achieve superiority, advantage, and preponderance over competitors in the market.

This superiority comes through developing distinctive capabilities in the organization. Accordingly, distinctive capabilities lead to creating competitive advantage. Distinctive capabilities require operations to focus On what you should do best (Al-Najjar and Mohsen 2009, 53). While (Kotler, 1997: 53) defines competitive advantage as “an organization’s ability to perform in one way or to identify methods that competitors cannot adopt at the present time or in the future.”

Likewise, (Hosseini et al, 2018:2-3) defines competitive advantage over It is “the organization’s exploitation of its internal strengths in performing its own activities, so that it creates value that other competitors cannot achieve in performing their activities.” While (Al-Ani, 2004: 81) states that competitive advantage “is the organization’s performance of its activities in a more efficient and effective manner in a way that makes it unique and distinct in creating value that other competitors cannot achieve in the performance of their activities, and can be maintained for a long period of time, if it is based on cognitive processes with a clear administrative methodology.”

(Kotler and Armstrong, 2007: 434) show that competitive advantage “is an advantage over competitors that an organization gains by providing greater value to consumers, either through lower prices or by providing greater benefits, which justify higher prices.” Potjanajaruwi, 2018: 106) believes that competitive advantage “is the organization’s ability to use resources more efficiently than its competitors through the use of what is called leverage for resources,

and that competitive advantage is the skill, knowledge, or resources that are difficult to copy or gain by competitors.”

2-4- Competitive strategies

The competitive strategies proposed by researchers in this field will be discussed.

A - Cost leadership strategy

(Wheelen & Hunger, 2004: 118) defined the cost leadership strategy as “a low-cost competitive strategy that targets the comprehensive, huge or broad market and requires the establishment of efficient enterprise activities, and an active effort to reduce costs through experience.” Vahdati et al, 2018: 3 defines it. Cost leadership strategy is defined as “an integrated set of procedures designed to produce or deliver goods relative to competitors' low costs with characteristics that are acceptable to customers.”

(Thompson & Strickland, 2003: 117) believe that the approach to searching for and providing products with the lowest cost is a strong competitive approach in the markets, as many buyers are price sensitive, and the goal of these strategies is to achieve a cost advantage over competitors.

B- Differentiation strategy

(Johnson & Scholes, 2002: 115) defined the differentiation strategy as “providing a product or service that the user considers being of higher value than competing.” Jobber (2004: 687) pointed out that the differentiation strategy includes choosing one or more criteria from among the options that are used by many buyers in the industry, and the differentiation strategy is usually associated with exorbitant prices and costs higher than the average for the industry. The goal of the strategy is Differentiation is the opportunity for customers to prefer one product over another, thus centralizing marketing and strategic thinking for customers. Wheelen & Hunger (2004: 119) believe that a differentiation strategy is more likely to generate higher profits than a low-cost strategy because differentiation creates a better barrier to entry.

C- Focus strategy

(Hitt et al, 2001: 168) defines focus strategy as “an integrated set of actions designed to produce or deliver services that serve the needs of a specific competitive sector,” while Kay, 2014: 9, sees focus on one aspect of the market, i.e. A prestigious product position. (Hakkak and Ghodsi, 2015:300) consider that in the case of focusing on cost, the organization struggles to create cost benefits in its target sector, and in the case of focusing on differentiation, the organization seeks to be distinguished in its target market. Both of these are different aspects of the focus strategy. It is based on providing a better service than that provided by broad-based competitors who are trying to serve the target market segment of the organization that is focusing.

The third section

Presentation and discussion of the results of influence relationships

The first hypothesis: - There is a significant effect of the components of the social dimension of social responsibility in achieving competitive advantage strategies.

The following is inferred from Table (1), which includes the values of the regression results of the social dimension variables on the dependent variable (competitive advantage strategies):

- The value of the correlation coefficient of the dependent variable, competitive advantage strategies, with the social dimension variables in common was (0.520), indicating a strong and significant relationship for the social dimension variables with competitive advantage. This indicates that social responsibility has achieved clear social performance through its social dimension.
- The value of the explanatory coefficient (R^2) for the regression model was (28%), and this means that the social dimension variables explain its value (28%), of the dependent variable, competitive advantage strategies, while the rest is left to other factors, and this confirms the effect of the social dimension variables on social performance.
- The value of (f) calculated in the regression model was (6.16), which is greater than the value of (F) tabulated with a degree of freedom (88.1) and a level of significance (0.05), amounting to (3.97), which indicates the significance of the regression model and not rejecting the first hypothesis.

Table (1): Summary of the social dimension regression model on competitive advantage strategies

Competitive advantage strategies						Dependent variable
Decision	sig	F tabulated	F calculated	R^2	r	Independent variable
Do not reject the hypothesis	0.000	3.97	6.160	%28	0.520	The social dimension of social responsibility

Source: Outputs of the statistical program (spss)

Regarding the results of the variables that make up the social dimension, Table (2) shows the results of a regression analysis of the variables of the social dimension of social responsibility on the dependent variable, competitive advantage strategies, and the following is inferred from this: -

The values of (b) calculated for the social dimension variables (charity work, equal opportunities, social justice, non-exploitation) ranged.

- (0.750, 0.730, 0.947, 0.889), and this indicates that the change in the explanatory variable was followed by a change of one unit in the dependent variable, meaning that the social dimension variables referred to above affected the dependent variable, competitive advantage strategies, by a factor (b).
- The value of (t) calculated for the same variables above was (13.58, 9.64, 14.93, 12.66), which are all greater than the value of (t) tabulated with a degree of freedom (88.1) and a level of significance (0.05) of (1.99), which indicates the significance of the regression models and not Reject the hypothesis.

Table (2): Regression of the dependent variable, competitive advantage strategies, on the social dimension variables

Competitive advantage strategies					Dependent variable
Decision	Sig	t tabulated	t calculated	β	Independent variable
Do not reject the hypothesis	00.0	1.99	13.58	0.747	Charity
Do not reject the hypothesis	0.00	1.99	9.64	0.717	Equal opportunities
Do not reject the hypothesis	0.00	1.99	14.93	0.847	Social Justice
Do not reject the hypothesis	0.00	1.99	12.66	0.809	Non-exploitation

Source: Outputs of the statistical program (spss)

The second hypothesis: There is a significant effect of the components of the economic dimension of social responsibility on competitive advantage strategies. The following hypotheses stem from it:

The following is inferred from Table (3), which includes the values of the regression results of the variables of the economic dimension, social responsibility, and the dependent variable, strategies for competitive advantage:

- The value of the correlation coefficient of the dependent variable, competitive advantage strategies, with the economic dimension variables was (0.511), indicating a strong and significant relationship for the economic dimension variables with competitive advantage strategies.
- The value of the explanatory coefficient (R2) for the regression model was (26%), and this means that the economic dimension variables explain its value (26%), of the variable adopted for competitive advantage strategies, while the rest is left to other factors, and this confirms the effect of the economic dimension variables on competitive advantage. .
- The calculated (f) value for the regression model was (5.945), which is greater than the tabulated (f) value with a degree of freedom (.188) and a significance level (0.05) of (3.97), and thus the second main hypothesis was not rejected.

Table (3): Summary of the economic dimension regression model on competitive advantage strategies

Competitive advantage strategies						Dependent variable
decision	Sig	Tabulated F	Calculated F	R ²	r	independent variable
Do not reject the hypothesis	0.000	3.97	5.945	%26	0.511	The economic dimension of social responsibility

Source: Outputs of the statistical program (spss)

Regarding the results of the variables that make up the economic dimension, Table (4) shows the results of the regression analysis of the economic dimension variables on the adopted variable, competitive advantage strategies, and the following is inferred from this: -

- The (b) values calculated for the economic dimension variables (poverty, unemployment, low living standards, development) ranged (0.562, 0.855, 0.750, 0.675), and this indicates that the change in the explained variable was followed by a change of one unit in the dependent variable, that is, The variables of the economic dimension affected the variables of competitive advantage strategies by the aforementioned factor (b).
- The value of (t) calculated for the same variables above was (10.706, 15.592, 10.933, 12.107), which are all greater than the value of (t) tabulated with a degree of freedom (88.1) and a level of significance (0.05) of (1.99), which indicates the significance of the regression models and the lack of Rejecting the first, second, third, fourth and fifth sub-hypotheses, and this indicates the importance of the implications of the economic dimension of social responsibility for competitive advantage strategies.

Table (4) Regression model of the components of the economic dimension on competitive advantage strategies

Competitive advantage strategies					Dependent variable
decision	Sig	Tabulated t	Calculated t	β	independent variable
Do not reject the hypothesis	0.000	1.99	10.706	0.562	poverty
Do not reject the hypothesis	0.000	1.99	15.566	0.855	unemployment
Do not reject the hypothesis	0.000	1.99	10.993	0.750	Low standard of living
Do not reject the hypothesis	0.000	1.99	12.107	0.675	Development

Source: Outputs of the statistical program (spss)

The third hypothesis: - There is a significant effect of the components of the environmental dimension of social responsibility in achieving competitive advantage strategies

It is inferred from Table (5), which includes the values of the regression results for the environment dimension variables on the dependent variable, strategies for competitive advantage, that the following are:

- The value of the correlation coefficient for the dependent variable, competitive advantage, with common environment dimension variables was (0.618), indicating a strong and significant relationship for the environment dimension variables with competitive advantage strategies. This indicates that social responsibility has achieved clear environmental performance through its environmental dimension.
- The value of the explanatory coefficient (R²) for the regression model was (29%), and this means that the environment dimension variables explain its value (29%), of the dependent variable, competitive advantage strategies, while the rest is left to other factors, and this confirms the influence of environment dimension variables on competitive advantage strategies.
- The value of (f) calculated in the regression model was (6.16), which is greater than the value of (f) tabulated with a degree of freedom (88.1) and a level of significance (0.05), amounting to (3.97), which indicates the significance of the regression model and not rejecting the third hypothesis.

Table (5): Summary of the regression model of the environment dimension on competitive advantage strategies

Competitive advantage strategies						Dependent variable
decision	Sig	Tabulated F	Calculated F	R ²	r	independent variable
Do not reject the hypothesis	0.000	3.97	6.160	%29	0.618	The environment dimension of social responsibility

Source: Outputs of the statistical program (spss)

Regarding the results of the variables that make up the environmental dimension, Table (6) shows the results of a regression analysis of the variables of the environmental dimension of social responsibility on the dependent variable, competitive advantage strategies, and the following is inferred from this: -

- The calculated (b) values for the environmental dimension variables ranged (sustainability, protection, environmental compatibility, damage mitigation). (0.655, 0.750, 0.844, 0.901), and this indicates that the change in the explanatory variable was followed by a change of one unit in the dependent variable, meaning that the variables of the environment dimension referred to above influenced the dependent variable, competitive advantage strategies, by a factor (b).
- The value of (t) calculated for the same variables above was (12.54, 10.64, 13.93, 12.55), which are all greater than the value of (t) tabulated with a degree of freedom (88.1) and a level

of significance (0.05) of (1.99), which indicates the significance of the regression models and the lack of Reject the hypothesis.

Table (6) Regression of the dependent variable, competitive advantage strategies, on the environment dimension variables

Competitive advantage strategies					Dependent variable
decision	Sig	Tabulated t	Calculated t	β	independent variable
Do not reject the hypothesis	00.0	1.99	12.54		Sustainability
Do not reject the hypothesis	0.00	1.99	10.64		Protection
Do not reject the hypothesis	0.00	1.99	13.93		Environmental compatibility
Do not reject the hypothesis	0.00	1.99	12.55		Damage mitigation

Source: Outputs of the statistical program (spss)

The fourth section

Conclusions and recommendations

First: conclusions

1. The interest in the dimensions of social responsibility (social, economic, and environmental) is reflected in improving the reputation of the two banks, increasing the level of loyalty of their customers (internal and external), increasing their business, improving their reputation, and this is reflected in achieving a competitive advantage that distinguishes it from the rest of the banks operating within the banking sector.
2. Social responsibility has a positive impact, as it achieves several benefits for society and banks together by creating good relationships with shareholders, making banks enjoy credibility, increasing employee loyalty, and combating poverty, unemployment, and pollution, and this in turn leads to creating a competitive advantage for them.
3. The results of the analysis comprehensively indicated that there is no clear and organized approach to social responsibility in the banks studied, but rather practices of social activities in some aspects of the banks' work.
4. The importance of social responsibility was not seen in the banks studied, considering that they play a role and are considered a major partner in the process of sustainable development.
5. The failure of the investigated banks to assume their social responsibility and the benefits they achieve for both society and banks through creating good relationships with shareholders, ensuring that banks enjoy credibility, increasing employee loyalty, and combating poverty, unemployment, and pollution.

Second: Recommendations

1. The need for banks to resort to using an open-book policy, according to which bank employees inform members of society and others about any potential negative effects that may affect the environment.
2. Work to create a kind of necessary balance in responding to the needs and expectations of internal and external stakeholders through social responsibility activities, because giving priority to responding to the needs and expectations of one party of stakeholders at the expense of another may not lead to achieving the desired results of social, economic and environmental performance, which is the advantage. Competitiveness.
3. Work to improve the apparent deficiency in understanding the nature and practices of social responsibility. Therefore, the concept and values of social responsibility practices should be spread and enriched among employees of the banks studied, by establishing systems and controls that emphasize the ethical, social and environmental practices of banks in the internal and external fields.
4. Working to grant credit and banking facilities to individuals or companies that operate according to the “environmentally friendly” green buying and selling mechanism to reduce pollution and maintain a clean environment, and this in turn will reflect in gaining a unique competitive advantage for banks.
5. Calling on the investigated banks to adopt the proposed study model for social responsibility, and the social, economic and environmental dimensions it found, leading to achieving social, economic and environmental performance that aims to build strategies for competitive advantage.

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