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# CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY AND THE CREATION OF COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE IN TELECOMMUNICATIONS INDUSTRY IN KENYA: THE CASE OF SAFARICOM LTD AND AIRTEL KENYA

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## ABSTRACT

*The purpose of this study is to examine the influence of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in firms' competitive advantages in the mobile phone industry. CSR concerns knowing managing and improving its impact on the economy, the environment and society. CSR activities have been hypothesized by many researchers to have influence on competitive advantage in industries characterised by stiff competition such as telecommunication. The target population consisted all mobile phone subscribers within Nakuru County from which a sample of 384 was obtained. Data was collected using a questionnaire and analysed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. The hypotheses of the study were tested by Pearson's Correlation and regression analysis. The findings of the study showed that CSR employed played a significant role in the creation of competitive advantage in both Safaricom and Airtel Mobile phone companies.*

## KEYWORDS

Corporate Social Responsibility, competitive advantage, Telecommunications industry, Safaricom, Airtel.

## INTRODUCTION

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is also known as corporate responsibility, corporate citizenship, responsible business, sustainable responsible business (SRB), or corporate social performance. CSR policy would function as a built-in, self-regulating mechanism whereby business would monitor and ensure their adherence to law, ethical standards, and international norms. Business would embrace responsibility for the impact of their activities on the environment, consumers, employees, communities, stakeholders and all other members of the public sphere. Furthermore, business would proactively promote the public interest by encouraging community growth and development, and voluntarily eliminating practices that harm the public sphere, regardless of legality. In a competitive environment, services are gaining increasingly more importance in the competitive formula in both firms and countries. Governments, activists and the media have become adept at holding companies to account for the social consequences of their activities. Myriad organizations rank companies on the performance of their corporate social responsibility (CSR), and despite sometimes questionable methodologies, these rankings attract publicity. As a result, CSR has emerged as an inescapable priority for business leaders (Porter & Kramer, 2006). In order to optimize on CSR activities and create competitive advantage companies must have knowledge and deep understanding its strategic engagement.

Today's organisation is judged by criteria, which is very different from those of two decades ago. It has not only to be efficient to satisfy the industrialist through earning increased profits or satisfy the investor and the financier by paying more dividends but it has also to be conscious of its wider societal needs. Increasingly today, people are arguing that government alone cannot deal with those pressing social issues such as unemployment, provision of education, health care and environmental preservation. They insist that corporations have an obligation to contribute to solving these problems. Organizations are sub-systems of society and operate and get their resources from the society (Kivuva 2003)

## TELECOMMUNICATION INDUSTRY IN KENYA

Telecommunication industry has undergone tremendous innovations with the proliferation of information and communication technology (ICT) following the deregulation and liberalization of telecommunication sector in 1997. The government of Kenya separated the then giant Kenya Posts and Telecommunication Company (KPTC) into three entities. Postal Corporation of Kenya (PCK) dealt with the handling of mails and Telkom Kenya dealt with landlines while Safaricom Ltd and Airtel Kenya Kenya were licensed to operate mobile phone services.

Consequent to the deregulation of the Telecom industry in 1997, Safaricom that is the leading mobile operator in Kenya, with a current subscriber base in excess of 12 million was formed. Faced with stiff competition from KenCell which later became Zain and now Airtel, Safaricom that was a wholly owned subsidiary of Telkom Kenya had to change tact in order to survive the onslaught of KenCell. Using its name as its logo, Safaricom's positioning statement 'The Better Option' underscored the brand's ambition to retain the current status of its mother brand – Telkom. During this period, the power of information technology, deregulation, changes in legislation, globalization of markets and stiff competition had made consumers more educated, more inquisitive and demanding. With a changed environment, serious marketing challenges arose for firms to survive and remain profitable. According to Charles and Gareth (1998), in today's global environment, change rather than stability is the order of the day. Rapid changes in technology, competition, and customers' demands have increased the rate at which companies need to alter their strategies and structures to survive in the market place. In their strategic response to these imperative changes, companies seek to strengthen their existing core competencies and build new ones in order to compete more effectively by going through a strategic change. Charles and Gareth (1998) define strategic change as "the movement of a company from its present state to increase its competitive advantage".

Hillman and Keim (2001) identify CSR activities as a form of corporate differentiation that generates a competitive advantage, for example in securing investment capital. Both Safaricom and Airtel Kenya have taken cognizance of the fact with the power of information technology, deregulation, changes in legislation, globalization of markets and stiff competition had made consumers more educated, more inquisitive and demanding (Capron and Holland, 1999 as quoted by Wambugu (2002) The customers are better educated, more inquisitive, sophisticated and deciding. Customer's expectations are high on issues of social responsibility from firms. The challenge has been for the firms to engage in social responsive activities and to create distinct products that are easily distinguishable, valuable and mutually beneficial to the firms and society. CSR programs have a central objective of earning the firm's competitive advantage over other participants in the industry.

Both Safaricom and Airtel have engaged themselves in CSR activities. For Safaricom, the initiatives have been implemented through the Safaricom Foundation. The activities include community service, education, environment, employee and products and services. On community service Safaricom seeks to make positive contribution to the community both through financial support and employee involvement in Health care, environmental protection, sports, culture and education.

Airtel on the other hand builds and operates world-class communications networks that deliver reliable and competitive services, is committed to enhancing positive social effects by investing in projects such as Water and Environment, Education and health, Arts and Heritage that are aimed at enhancing the quality of life in Kenya. On issues of health and education Airtel Kenya donated relief food to famine victims in the country and donated mobile phones and air time to relief agencies such as the Kenya Red Cross Society (KRCS). Airtel Kenya contributes to education by supporting various schools in terms of contributing learning materials such as books, and financial support to various schools across the country, for example the Starehe girls centre, where it has given books, fees. On arts and heritage Airtel Kenya is committed to supporting and nurturing talent among the youth. The company is a major sponsor of the Africa Education Journalism Award and the Kenya Music festival. It has sponsored the East Africa Universities challenge, a programme which brings talented students across East Africa together in exiting contests aired on Television across the three countries. It has also concentrated on building new talent in music and theatre.

Empirical evidence shows a positive association between corporate social and environmental performance and corporate financial performance (Orlitzky, et al, 2003). CSR offers a sustainable competitive advantage to an organization because it creates a good relationship between the organization and the society, which is good for business.

## STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The mobile telephony industry is relatively new in Kenya. In their efforts to maximize on their potential and profits these companies have significantly participated in CSR activities in different areas. Safaricom Ltd through CSR arm Sataricom Foundation has contributed over 1.8 Billion shillings in supporting more than 700 projects across the country for the last 10 years while Airtel Kenya through their philosophy to support education and community development has substantially invested its CSR global fund in Kenya. Previous studies have demonstrated a positive relationship between corporate social responsibility and organizational performance (Orlitzky, et al, 2003). Despite the commitment and the resources that the two leading operators; Safaricom and Airtel Kenya have put into the CSR activities, it has however not been established the extent to which CSR strategies have influenced these mobile firms' competitive advantage. This study therefore focused on examining the influence of CSR activities in creating the firms' competitive advantage in the mobile phone industry in Kenya.

## OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The main objective of the study was to assess the influence of CSR on firm's competitive advantage comparing Safaricom and Airtel mobile phone providers in Kenya. The study was guided by the following specific objectives :

1. To determine the extent to which the type of CSR engagement contributes to the competitive advantage achieved by Safaricom Ltd and Airtel Kenya
2. To assess the level to which CSR awareness among customers plays a role in creation of competitive advantage achieved by Safaricom Ltd and Airtel Kenya
3. To determine the role of CSR benefits to customers on competitive advantage achieved by Safaricom Ltd and Airtel Kenya.

## RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS

The research was guided by the following hypotheses

**H<sub>01</sub>:** The type of CSR engagements contribute differently to the competitive Advantage achieved by Safaricom Ltd and Airtel Kenya

**H<sub>02</sub>:** CSR awareness among customers of Safaricom Ltd and Airtel Kenya differ in their role of creating competitive advantage

**H<sub>03</sub>:** CSR benefits to customers differ in their role of creating competitive advantage achieved by Safaricom Ltd and Airtel Kenya.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

CSR refers to the obligations of organizations to pursue those policies, to make those decisions, or to follow those lines of action which are desirable in terms of the objectives and values of our society. Governments, activists and the media have become adept at holding companies to account for the social consequences of their activities.

CSR helps firms in their quest for organizational legitimacy. Firms are under the obligation not to abuse the power invested on them by society or they risk losing society's implicit endorsement. CSR holds that business should assume a leading role in making the world a better place: they should demonstrate corporate citizenship. This is taken to mean endorsing and pursuing the objective of sustainable development. CSR supporters presume, mistakenly, that the notion of sustainable development is well defined and universally agreed (Henderson, 2001).

The concept of corporate social responsibility and environmental management has also emerged as an important consideration for most organizations (Brown, 2003). There is increased pressure for organizations to become accountable to a wider set of stakeholders than just shareholders and creditors (Hackston and Milne, 1996), and it is argued that by promoting CSD and social responsibility, there will be benefits for organizations and society (Hall, 2002). The real emphasis of CSR is to encourage responsible business practices and thereafter community involvement. CSR is seeking to enhance the well-being of critical stakeholders such as employees, suppliers, stakeholders, and consumers. CSR is simply about how the business makes money and not how it uses its profits (Kivuitu, 2003).

## COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE

Competitive advantage is implementing a value-creating strategy not simultaneously being implemented by any current or potential competitors and when these other firms are not able to duplicate the benefits of this strategy (Barney, 2002). "A competitive advantage is the unique positional an organization develops vis a vis its competitors through its pattern of resources deployments and/or scope decisions" (Hoffer & Schendel, 1978). "The term competitive advantage is the ability gained through attributes and resources to perform at a higher level than others in the same industry or market" (Porter, 1980). "To gain competitive advantage a business strategy of a firm manipulates the various resources over which it has direct control and these resources have the ability to generate competitive advantage" (Reed & DeFillippi, 1990). "Any business with a competitive advantage is able to attract more customers than its competitors by having some special vectors that no one else possesses" (Mitch McCrimmon, 2008)

For any company strategy must go beyond best practices. It is about choosing a unique position and doing things differently from the competitor in a way that lowers costs or better serve a particular set of customer needs. Firms that invest in CSR have a competitive advantage in terms of service to the community which can contribute to the well-being and the success of the organization and to increase the market share. It is assumed that firms with a defined corporate commitment to ethical principles do better financially (based on annual sales/revenues) than companies that do not engage in CSR activities. They also have an enhanced brand image, reputation, an increased ability to retain quality work force, more effective risk management (Barney, 1991).

A firm may acquire valuable resources through history that cannot be replicated by other firms, such as positioning the firm in a valuable geographic location, being in a position to exploit a significant scientific breakthrough, or the development over time of a unique organizational culture (Barney, 1991). Socially-complex resources are created from the coordinated action of a large number of people, such as a dynamic corporate culture or a highly-regarded corporate reputation (Dierickx and Cool, 1989). These types of socially-based resources could be categorized in a similar way to the relationships an organization might hold with its stakeholders. Both historically-unique and socially-complex resources are particularly valuable because they have a high degree of sustainability of a firm's competitive advantage due to their low level of substitutability (Barney, 1991). The competitive advantage is held by the firm while it is difficult for competitors to duplicate the successful approach (Lippman and Rumelt, 1982).

Porter and Kramer (2006) argue that for any company, strategic CSR must go beyond best practices. It is about choosing a unique position – doing things differently from competitors in a way that lowers costs or better serves a particular set of customers' needs. Strategic CSR moves beyond good corporate citizenship and mitigating harmful value chain impacts to mount a small number of initiatives whose social and business benefits are large and distinctive. It unlocks shared value by investing in social aspects of context that strengthen company competitiveness. A symbiotic relationship develops: The success of the company and the success of the community become mutually reinforcing.

When a firm sustains profits that exceed the average for its industry, the firm is said to possess a competitive advantage over its rivals. The goal of much of business strategy is to achieve a sustainable competitive advantage. Porter identified two basic types of competitive advantage: cost advantage and differentiation advantage (Porter and Kramer, 2002)

#### THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

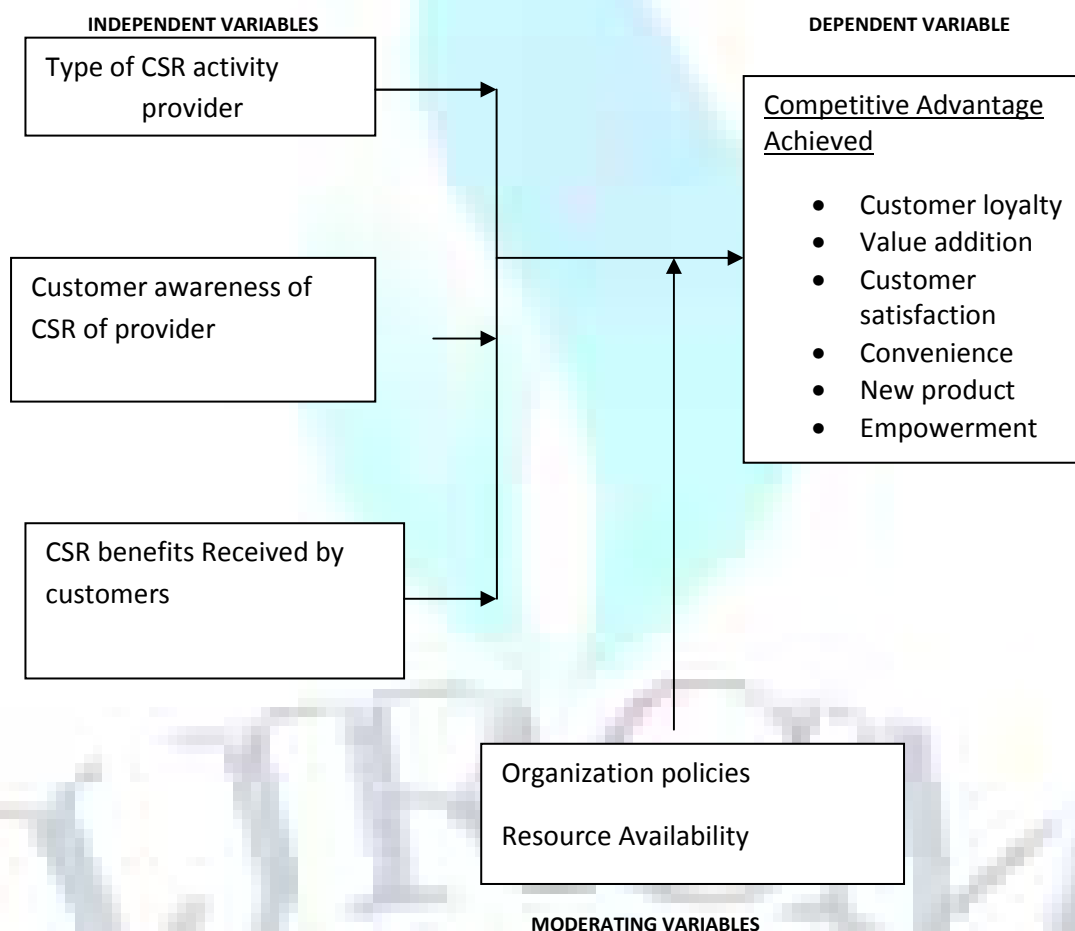
The study was based on the Resource-Based View (RBV) of the firm or on the resource based theory by Hart (1995). The RBV framework states that some firms are able to establish a sustainable competitive advantage through the resources or capabilities created from environmental responsibility programmes.

The RBV approach assumes that firms do not have an equal endowment of strategic resources and that resources are not perfectly mobile between firms. Three categories of resource are identified: physical capital resources such as physical technology, plant and equipment, geographic location, access to raw materials, human capital resources including the training, experience, judgment, intelligence, relationships, and insight of individual managers and workers; and organisational capital resources such as reporting structures, formal and informal planning, controlling and coordinating systems, and informal relations within a firm and between a firm and those in its environment.

The RBV stipulates that CSR activities should generate a resource for the firm that is a source of competitive advantage. The view was expounded on by McWilliams and Siegel (2001) by establishing that the level of investment that any specific firm should make in CSR programmes be based on cost-benefit analysis. The framework argues that the firm will invest in CSR to the extent to which consumers or other stakeholders value the 'social' attribute of the firm or product. Consumers seek CSR attributes because they wish to support firms that devote resources to CSR, or value the intangible attributes such as a reputation for quality and reliability that may be associated with firms engaged in CSR.

Golob and Bartlett (2007) acknowledge that CSR initiatives benefit stakeholders and consequently lead to competitive advantage. Strategic CSR has a positive correlation with financial performance and a negative correlation with altruistic CSR (Hillman and Keim, 2001). Stakeholder management investments provide a basis for competitive advantage by creating resources and capabilities for the firm that are difficult for competing firms to emulate or substitute. By developing longer-term interactions with stakeholders that are relational rather than transactional, the firm develops a capacity to expand its set of value-creating exchanges with customers, suppliers, employees, and communities that cannot be readily copied (Hillman and Keim, 2001). The firms with high level of corporate abilities generate positive market value from CSR actions. When coupled with high corporate abilities, CSR actions of a firm can generate favourable attributes and customer identification, thus leading to performance enhancing behaviours like customer loyalty.

#### CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK



#### The role of CSR on Firms' Competitive Advantages

#### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

##### RESEARCH DESIGN

The study employed a cross-sectional survey design. According to Owens (2002), Cross-sectional surveys involve collection of data whereby, data is collected at one point in time from a sample selected to represent a larger population. The design is an efficient method of collecting descriptive data regarding characteristics of a sample of a population, current practices, conditions or needs and preliminary information for generating research questions. In this study the researcher dealt with these weaknesses of the cross-sectional survey by selecting a sample through randomization and using a relatively large sample size of the of mobile phone customers.

##### TARGET POPULATION

The target population was all mobile phone customers living within Nakuru Municipality. According to the population census of 1999 the approximate population was 300,000 people. The number of mobile users in the town is very dynamic and no exact figures are available since most of the customers are also highly mobile. The study was specifically focused on mobile phone customers who were using Safaricom and Airtel service. However some of the subscribers were using both Safaricom and Airtel services and for this research, they were requested to choose their most preferred provider in their feedback.

**SAMPLING DESIGN AND SAMPLE SIZE DETERMINATION**

The customers' study sample size was determined using the formula provided by Mugenda and Mugenda (1999).

$$n = \frac{Z^2 pq}{d^2}$$

Where

- N = the desired Sample size (if the population is greater than 10,000).  
 z = the standard normal deviate at the required confidence level  
 p = the proportion of the target population estimated to have characteristics being measured.  
 q = 1-p  
 d = the level of significance set

Since p and q are unknown, both are set at 0.5, z = 1.96 and the study desires accuracy at 0.05 significance level, Thus, the sample size n will be:

$$n = \frac{(1.96)^2 (0.50) (0.50)}{(0.05)^2} = 384 \text{ respondents}$$

To ensure adequate representation of both firms in the study, the sample was divided as per the national subscriber numbers in the ratio of 12 million from Safaricom to 4 million subscribers for Airtel giving a distribution of 288 respondents for Safaricom and 96 respondents for Airtel. Quota sampling was used where those who were using both subscribers' services were requested to indicate their most preferred and grouped into their respective provider.

**INSTRUMENTATION**

For purposes of collecting primary data, the study used a questionnaire containing structured questions. The questionnaire was developed to establish the information on the levels of respondents' knowledge of CSR; they were developed on the basis of research objectives and hypothesis. The questionnaires were used to collect information related to type, extent of use and benefits of corporate social responsibility approaches used by the mobile phone service providers and their relative competitive advantages.

A multi stage sampling procedure using both quota and systematic sampling was used. Nakuru town was first divided into the regions: West, Central and East and three research assistants who were trained on data collection were assigned each of the regions and given 128 questionnaires to administer with the researcher closely supervising to ensure the process was done as accurately as possible. Systematic sampling was used to select the individual respondents where every tenth adult met and were willing were given the questionnaire to fill. This was done street wise until all the 128 questionnaires were filled per region. The purpose of the study was first explained to the respondent and in cases where they subscribed to both operators; they were requested to base their response on their preferred network.

**RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY OF RESEARCH INSTRUMENT**

A pilot study was conducted with 10 questionnaires two weeks before the study, in Njoro town amongst the customers of Safaricom and Airtel Kenya to test the reliability of the questionnaire. A Cronbach test was carried out yielding a value of 0.77, which was greater than 0.7 considered minimum acceptable levels of reliability in most social research (Mugenda & Mugenda, 1999). To examine its validity, expert judgment was sought, where the research supervisor and other experts in research were consulted. All arising issues in the instrument were identified and corrected

**DATA ANALYSIS**

The responses to the various items were first coded then keyed in a matrix to facilitate ease of coding and entry in to SPSS analysis software. Both descriptive (frequencies percentages and mean) and inferential statistics was used in the analysis. The role of the type of CSR engaged in by the provider in creation of competitive advantage was tested using logistic regression while the contribution of CSR awareness and benefits received by the customers to competitive advantage was tested using Pearson's correlation. The variables involved in the analysis were as indicated in Table 3.5.1

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

The data was successfully collected from all the 384 expected questionnaires based on desired sample proportions of 288 for Safaricom to 96 for Airtel. Preliminary screening of the questionnaires led to 16 questionnaires being disqualified due to incomplete response. The remaining 368 questionnaires representing 95% with valid response in a proportion of 224 for Safaricom, 76 for Airtel and 68 who used both were used as a basis for this analysis.

**DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION**

To understand the general characteristics of the respondents, analysis was done on several attributes and the outcome was as presented below:

**GENDER OF THE RESPONDENTS**

Each of the respondents was requested to indicate their gender as one of the key attributes of mapping out respondent's characteristics. Their responses were as provided in Table 1 below:

**TABLE 2: GENDER**

Gender	Count	Percent
Male	174	47.3%
Female	194	52.7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>368</b>	<b>100%</b>

From the analysis 47.3% of the respondents were male while 52.7 % were female. This shows a near balance of both genders in the analysis with a tilt towards more female. This provided a balanced view of both gender in relation to the content of the study.

**MOBILE SERVICE PROVIDER**

The next attribute to be evaluated was their choice of mobile phone provider and the outcome was as presented in table 4.2.2 below:

**TABLE 3: MOBILE PHONE SERVICE PROVIDER**

Provider	Count	Percent
Safaricom	224	60.9%
Airtel	76	20.7%
Both	68	18.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>368</b>	<b>100%</b>

Proportionately, (60.9%) of the respondents involved in the study were Safaricom users while 20.7% were using the Airtel services. Notably 18.5 % of the providers were using both service providers. This clearly supports the market share of the two service providers. The respondents were further asked to indicate their preferred service provider which was to provide a clear choice on which analysis will be based. Their responses were as indicated in table 4.2.3 below:

**TABLE 4: PREFERRED SERVICE PROVIDER**

Preferred Provider	Count	Percent
Safaricom	279	75.5%
Airtel	89	24.2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>368</b>	<b>100%</b>

The final proportion of the respondent's service provider after identifying the most preferred provider were 75% for Safaricom to 24.2% for Airtel indicating that 79.4 % of those who used both providers preferred Safaricom and 20.6% preferred Airtel giving Safaricom a three quarters proportion of market share as compared to a quarter for Airtel.

#### PERIOD OF SUBSCRIPTION

The researcher also sought to establish the length of time that the respondents have been using the preferred providers' services as an indication of their knowledge in their CSR activities. Their responses were as indicated in Figure 4.2.4 below:

TABLE 5: YEARS OF USING THE PROVIDER'S SERVICE

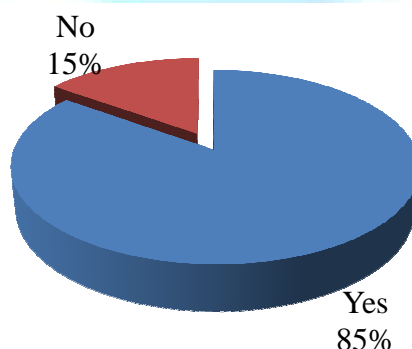
Preferred Provider		Length of Use				Total
		Below 1 Year	Between 1-3 Years	Between 4-5 Years	Over 5 years	
Safaricom	Count	10	77	49	143	279
	% of Total	2.7%	20.9%	13.3%	38.9%	75.8%
Airtel	Count	4	20	22	43	89
	% of Total	1.1%	5.4%	6.0%	11.7%	24.2%
Total	Count	14	97	71	186	368
	% of Total	3.8%	26.4%	19.3%	50.5%	100.0%

Slightly more than half (50.5%) of all the respondents had used their current providers for over 5 years of which 38.9% percents were Safaricom users and 11.7% were Airtel users. this was followed by those who used the providers services for between 1-3 years with a representation of 26.4 % 20.9% of which were Safaricom users while 5.4 % were Airtel users. Those who had between 4-5 years of engaging the services of the providers were represented by 19.3 % where 13.3% were Safaricom users and 6% being Airtel users. The least represented category were those who had less than 1 year engagement with their current provider (3.8% ) of which 2.7% and 1.1% were representing Safaricom and Airtel users respectively . Users of both providers exhibited a common increasing trend for providers with the majority having used their services for over five years. For this study trend give more confidence on the information provided as an indication of most participants have a clear understanding of providers competitiveness and their CSR activities.

#### RESPONDENTS' AWARENESS OF CSR

The researcher first sought to establish if the respondents were knowledgeable about the concept of CSR and their responses are presented in Figure 4.2.5.

FIGURE 2: KNOWLEDGE ON CSR



A majority of the respondents (85%) were aware of the CSR concept while 15% were not conversant with the concept. This is clear that most of the respondents were knowledgeable in the research area further supporting the validity of the information received for the study.

#### CSR ACTIVITIES INVOLVED IN BY THE PROVIDERS

It was important that the research sought the respondents' knowledge of the specific CSR activities that the two operators were engaged in. their response were as presented in Table 4.3.1 below:

TABLE 6: KNOWLEDGE OF CSR ACTIVITIES SUPPORTED BY THE PROVIDERS

CSR Activity		Safaricom		Airtel	
		Yes	No	Yes	No
Environmental Protection	Freq	193	86	69	20
		69.2%	30.8%	77.5%	22.5%
Access to clean Water	Freq	119	160	36	53
		42.7%	57.3%	40.4%	59.6%
Promote Culture & Heritage	Freq	180	99	63	26
		64.5%	35.5%	70.8%	29.2%
Promotes Quality Healthcare	Freq	167	112	64	25
		59.9%	40.1%	71.9%	28.1%
Affordable Products & services	Freq	223	56	71	18
		79.9%	20.1%	79.8%	20.2%
Community service	Freq	208	71	69	20
		74.6%	25.4%	77.5%	22.5%
Promotes Sports	Freq	239	40	77	12
		85.7%	14.3%	86.5%	13.5%
Sponsor Education for the Needy	Freq	209	70	65	24
		74.9%	25.1%	73.0%	27.0%

The feedback from the analysis indicated that 69% were aware of Safaricom's engagement in environmental protection activities while 77% recognized Airtel participation in the same. On support for access to clean water 42.7% and 40.4% were aware of Safaricom and Airtel participation while 64.5% and 70.8% were aware of their support for promotion of culture and heritage activities. Further, 59.9%, and 71.9% identified their participation on promotion of healthcare respectively.

On provision of affordable products and services, 79.9% and 79.8% of Safaricom and Airtel customers indicated that they were aware of the providers' participation. On the support to community service, promotion of sports and sponsoring education for the needy, 74.6%, 85.7% and 74.9% of Safaricom customers had knowledge their providers' participation while 77.5%, 86.5% and 73% of Airtel customers indicated the same respectively. In general it was clear that more than half of the respondents were aware their provider's participation in the various CSR activities highlighted in the study.

**EXTENT TO WHICH THE PROVIDERS ARE ENGAGED IN THE CSR ACTIVITIES**

The research went further and sought the extent to which the providers were using them. Their feedback was as presented in Table 4.4.1 below;

**TABLE 7: RATING ON KNOWLEDGE OF OPERATORS CSR ACTIVITIES**

	Provider	Response					Mean score
		SD	D	N	A	SA	
Employed many Kenyans	Safaricom	2.2%	1.8%	7.9%	30.5%	57.7%	4.40
	Airtel	6.7%	0%	11.2%	34.8%	47.2%	4.16
Sell Environmentally friendly Products	Safaricom	8.2%	14.7%	31.5%	29.0%	16.5%	3.31
	Airtel	9.0%	9.0%	36.0%	30.3%	15.7%	3.35
Sponsors Sports	Safaricom	3.2%	2.5%	13%	36.9%	43.7%	4.15
	Airtel	5.6%	4.5%	18.0%	27.0%	44.9%	4.01
Sponsor street children Rehabilitation	Safaricom	7.2%	13.3%	29.7%	29.7%	20.1%	3.42
	Airtel	4.5%	14.6%	32.6%	22.5%	25.8%	3.51
Country wide Network	Safaricom	2.9%	2.5%	3.9%	30.1%	60.6%	4.43
	Airtel	5.6%	2.2%	10.1%	27.0%	55.1%	4.42
Works with Police	Safaricom	6.5%	10.4%	20.4%	29.7%	33.0%	3.75
	Airtel	11.2%	6.7%	19.1%	28.1%	34.8%	3.69
Sponsor HIV AIDS programs	Safaricom	8.6%	6.5%	41.2%	29.7%	14.0%	3.34
	Airtel	11.2%	5.6%	43.8%	23.6%	15.7%	3.27
Poverty Eradication	Safaricom	3.9%	11.5%	24.7%	42.7%	17.2%	3.58
	Airtel	7.9%	9.0%	28.1%	28.1%	27.0%	3.57
Gender Empowerment	Safaricom	3.9%	15.4%	33.7%	34.8%	12.2%	3.36
	Airtel	10.1%	7.9%	36.0%	31.5%	14.6%	3.33
Human Rights Sponsor	Safaricom	6.1%	12.5%	37.6%	33.3%	10.4%	3.29
	Airtel	5.6%	14.6%	32.6%	28.1%	19.1%	3.40
Sponsor Medical Camps	Safaricom	5.7%	15.1%	36.2%	23.7%	19.4%	3.36
	Airtel	5.6%	10.1%	29.2%	39.3%	15.7%	3.49
Natures Talents	Safaricom	4.3%	7.2%	15.1%	36.2%	37.3%	3.95
	Airtel	5.6%	2.2%	23.6%	30.3%	38.2%	3.93
Engages in ethical business	Safaricom	2.9%	9.7%	17.2%	37.3%	33.0%	3.88
	Airtel	4.5%	11.2%	14.6%	27.0%	42.7%	3.92
Provides Tailor made Products	Safaricom	3.9%	6.5%	18.6%	44.1%	26.9%	3.84
	Airtel	5.6%	3.4%	30.3%	30.3%	30.3%	3.76
Supports Educational Programs	Safaricom	5.4%	7.9%	19.7%	37.3%	29.7%	3.78
	Airtel	3.4%	9.0%	27.0%	31.5%	29.2%	3.74
Support Health & Safety Programs	Safaricom	6.1%	10.0%	28.7%	37.6%	17.6%	3.57
	Airtel	4.5%	6.7%	36.0%	29.2%	23.6%	3.61
Support culture and heritage	Safaricom	9.0%	10.0%	21.9%	38.7%	20.4%	3.52
	Airtel	6.7%	3.4%	34.8%	23.6%	31.5%	3.57

Where: **SA** strongly Agree. **A** Agree. **N** Neutral. **D** Disagree. **SD** strongly Disagree

From the results of the analysis as presented in table above, Majority of the respondents (57.7% and 47.2%: Mean 4.40 and 4.16) were in strong agreement that their provider has employed many Kenyans. On whether they agree with the concept that their provider was selling environmentally friendly products, majority were neutral with a representation of 31.5% and 36% (Mean 3.31 & 3.35) for Safaricom and Airtel respectively.

However, a majority of both set of customers strongly agreed (43% and 44.9%, Mean: 4.15 & 4.01) that their provider was engaged in sponsoring sport activities. An equal percentage of Safaricom customers (29.7% Mean 3.42) were neutral and did agree that Safaricom was in support of street children rehabilitation while a majority (32.6% Mean 3.51) of Airtel subscribers were neutral. Both set of respondents strongly agreed that their provider had a nationwide network coverage as represented by 60.6% and 55.1% (Mean: 4.43 & 4.24) for Safaricom and Airtel respectively. The respondents rating of their providers supports for security by working with the police resulted in a majority (33% & 34.7%, Mean: 3.72 & 3.69) indicating strong agreement for Safaricom and Airtel respectively.

The level of support that the providers were giving to HIV and AIDs programs received a neutral response for both of the providers with 41.2% & 43.8% (Mean: 3.34 & 3.27) for Safaricom and Airtel respectively while an equal proportion (28.1% Mean 3.58) of Airtel users were equally neutral and in agreement as compared to 42.7% (Mean: 3.57) for Safaricom users who were in agreement. Gender equality promotion and sponsoring human rights received a neutral verdict for both providers with 33% & 37% (Mean: 3.36 & 3.33) and 36% & 32% (Mean: 3.29 & 3.40) for Safaricom and Airtel customers respectively.

Sponsoring medical clinics saw a majority (36.2% Mean: 3.36) of Safaricom customers neutral while most (39.3% Mean: 3.49) Airtel customers were in agreement. When the concept of nurturing talent was evaluated, the outcome received a majority (37.3% & 38.2% Mean: 3.95 & 3.93) rating for both providers was a strong agreement. Engagement in ethical business was by the majority (37.3% Mean 3.88) of Safaricom customers were given a rating of an agreement. The same element received a strong agreement (42.7% Mean 3.92) by Airtel users. As to whether their providers were providing tailor made products, a majority (44.1%, Mean 3.88) of Safaricom were in agreement while Airtel customers equally gave a 30.3% (Mean 3.92) for strong Agreement.

Consensus rating of an agreement for support of educational activities was received with 37% & 31% (Mean: 3.84 & 3.92) respectively for Safaricom and Airtel customers. Finally, majority (37% & 38% Mean: 3.51 & 3.61) of Safaricom users gave their provider an agreement in support health safety and cultural activities while on the same, a majority (36% & 34%, Mean: 3.52 & 3.70) of Airtel respondents were neutral. From the response it was evident that most respondents were in agreement of their providers support for CSR activities.

**BENEFITS ACHIEVED THE PROVIDER FOR ENGAGING IN CSR**

The respondents were requested to indicate the extent to which they agree with the benefits enjoyed by their provider to have associated with their engagement in CSR activities. Their response were as summarized in Table 4.5.1 below

TABLE 8: BENEFITS AND CSR ENGAGEMENT

Response	Provider	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean
Offers Superior Services Quality	Safaricom	3.30%	3.90%	10.00%	41.90%	40.90%	4.13
	Airtel	2.30%	6.70%	9.00%	41.60%	40.40%	4.11
Better Satisfying Services	Safaricom	2.50%	4.30%	9.00%	45.20%	39.10%	4.15
	Airtel	5.60%	6.80%	11.20%	34.80%	41.60%	4.12
Handles Complaints Efficiently	Safaricom	2.20%	3.90%	11.80%	40.90%	41.20%	4.14
	Airtel	2.20%	5.60%	9.00%	43.90%	39.30%	4.00
Enjoys flexible market	Safaricom	4.30%	4.70%	14.70%	41.20%	35.10%	3.98
	Airtel	2.20%	2.20%	16.90%	41.60%	37.10%	4.09
Enjoy Higher societal standing	Safaricom	2.50%	4.70%	15.10%	43.00%	34.80%	4.03
	Airtel	4.50%	1.10%	14.60%	37.10%	42.70%	4.12
Greater customer loyalty	Safaricom	1.40%	3.90%	12.90%	44.40%	37.40%	4.12
	Airtel	1.10%	6.70%	18.00%	34.80%	39.40%	4.04
Greater market share	Safaricom	2.50%	2.90%	7.50%	34.10%	53.00%	4.32
	Airtel	2.20%	2.20%	7.90%	37.10%	50.60%	4.31
Better customer relationship management	Safaricom	1.10%	4.70%	14.70%	42.70%	36.90%	4.10
	Airtel	1.10%	2.20%	13.50%	37.10%	46.10%	4.25
Newer Service delivery strategies	Safaricom	2.90%	2.90%	18.30%	39.40%	36.60%	4.04
	Airtel	3.40%	5.60%	21.30%	36.00%	33.70%	3.91
Better market positioning	Safaricom	1.80%	2.90%	13.60%	38.00%	43.70%	4.19
	Airtel	1.80%	2.90%	13.60%	38.00%	43.70%	4.06
Better relations with public and government	Safaricom	2.90%	2.50%	17.60%	37.30%	39.80%	4.09
	Airtel	4.50%	0.00%	29.20%	32.60%	33.70%	4.91
Better staff motivation	Safaricom	2.50%	3.90%	26.90%	37.30%	29.40%	3.87
	Airtel	2.20%	5.60%	36.00%	25.80%	30.40%	3.76
Better products Offered	Safaricom	3.60%	2.90%	10.00%	47.00%	36.60%	4.10
	Airtel	4.50%	7.90%	6.70%	43.80%	37.10%	4.01
Affordable Products	Safaricom	10.00%	8.60%	14.30%	39.10%	28.00%	3.66
	Airtel	11.20%	14.60%	14.60%	31.50%	28.10%	3.51

Where: **SA** strongly Agree. **A** Agree. **N** Neutral. **D** Disagree. **SD** strongly Disagree

From the above findings most of the respondents were in agreement that their provider was offering superior service quality as were represented by the highest percentage of 41% (Mean 4.13 & 4.11) for both providers respectively with those who strongly agreed having 40%.

On customer handling, a majority (41.9%, Mean: 4.15) of Safaricom customers strongly agreed with their providers handling of their complaints while there is an agreement for the same by Airtel customers (43.8% Mean: 4.12). Further the respondents view of whether the products provided were satisfying, 45.2% (Mean: 4.14) of Safaricom customers were in agreement while 41.6% (Mean: 4.00) of Airtel customers were in strong agreement with the proposition. The same trend was also exhibited by their response on whether their provider was handling their complaints efficiently where 41.2% (Mean: 3.98) of Safaricom customers were in strong agreement while 43.8% (Mean: 4.09) of Airtel customer were in agreement.

The providers market flexibility received the highest rating of 41.2% (Mean: 4.03) and 41.6% (Mean: 4.12) in agreement from both Safaricom and Airtel users respectively. Majority (43% Mean: 4.12) of Safaricom's customers gave an agreement to their providers societal standing while 42.7% (Mean: 4.04) of Airtel customer strongly agreed that it enjoys a higher societal standing. In their rating for customer loyalty, 44.4% (Mean: 4.32) of Safaricom respondents were in agreement while 39.3% (Mean: 4.31) as a majority of Airtel customer were in a strong Agreement. On the respondents rating on the providers market share, 53% and 50.6% (Mean: 4.10 & 4.25) of Safaricom and Airtel customers respectively were in strong agreement while 42.7% (Mean: 4.04), a majority of Safaricom customers and 46.1% (Mean: 3.91) of Airtel users were in agreement of their provider having better customer relations. The ability of the service providers to use newer service delivery strategies received a strong agreement by both providers majority with 39.4% and 36% (Mean: 4.19 & 4.06) for Safaricom and Airtel respectively.

Equal strong agreement of represented 43.7% (Mean: 4.09 & 3.91) of both providers customers was received for having a better position in the market, the same trend in response was received in relation to how the provider was relating with the general public and government agencies where 39.8% and 33.7% (Mean: 3.87 & 3.76) being the majority of Safaricom and Airtel customers who were with a Strong agreement. Motivation of employees received the 37.3% and 36% (Mean: 4.10 & 4.01) as the majority for agreement and being Neutral from Safaricom and Airtel users respectively while their views on their providers offering better products receives a majority of 47% and 43.8% of Safaricom and Airtel customers respectively being in agreement.

The last attribute to be rated by the respondents was in relation to affordability of providers products and services where 39.1% (Mean: 3.66) of Safaricom users and 31.5% (Mean: 3.51) a majority of Safaricom and Airtel user were in Agreement. It was evident that a most of the respondents were in either in agreement or with a strong agreement towards the benefits their providers were benefiting from the use of CSR activities except for staff motivation where majority of Airtel responds were neutral.

#### THE BENEFITS ARISING TO THE CUSTOMERS FROM USING CSR

The respondents views on the benefits accrued to the customer as a result of the CSR were as presented in Table 4.6 below:

TABLE 9: CSR BENEFITS TO THE CUSTOMER

Benefits of CSR	Provider	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean
Very Satisfied with Provider	Safaricom	2.9%	6.1%	15.4%	41.6%	34.1%	3.98
	Airtel	2.2%	5.6%	16.9%	41.6%	33.7%	3.99
Very Loyal to My Provider	Safaricom	2.5%	7.5%	13.3%	39.4%	37.3%	4.01
	Airtel	3.4%	3.4%	22.5%	39.3%	31.5%	3.92
Received Value for Money	Safaricom	5.4%	11.5%	22.6%	37.3%	23.3%	3.62
	Airtel	5.6%	12.4%	14.6%	40.4%	27.0%	3.71
Convenience of transacting	Safaricom	3.9%	5.0%	9.7%	41.2%	40.1%	4.09
	Airtel	2.2%	3.4%	13.5%	38.2%	42.7%	4.16
Empowered by the provider	Safaricom	5.0%	9.3%	15.8%	38.7%	31.2%	3.82
	Airtel	6.7%	3.4%	18.0%	36.0%	36.0%	3.91

Where: **SA** strongly Agree. **A** Agree. **N** Neutral. **D** Disagree. **SD** strongly Disagree

The response received in relation to the user's view on the benefits accrued to them indicative a competitive advantage achieved by the providers saw a majority (41.6%, Mean: 3.98 & 3.99) of Safaricom and Airtel respondents were in agreement that they were satisfied with their provider. The same rating of

agreement was also received in relation to their loyalty to the provider where 39% were of Both Safaricom and Airtel respondents (Mean: 4.01 & 3.92). On whether the providers engagement on CSR has created more value for them, a majority of both Safaricom 37.3% and 40.7%, Mean: 3.62 & 3.71) were in agreement. On convenience of transacting, majority (41.2% Mean: 4.09) of the Safaricom customers were in agreement while a majority (42.7% Mean: 4.16) of Airtel customers were in strong agreement.

On the last attribute on whether the providers having empowered the respondents, a majority of Safaricom customers were in agreement while an equal proportion 36%, (Mean: 3.82 & 3.91) of Airtel were either in agreement and also with a strong agreement. It was evident that a majority of the customers were in agreement of the benefits attributed their providers engaging in CSR activities

#### HYPOTHESES TESTING

To determine the influence or relationship of CSR activities on the firm's competitive advantage, three hypotheses were tested as shown below:

**HO<sub>1</sub>: The type of CSR engagement by the service provider do not contribute to the competitive Advantage achieved**

To test the relationship between type of CSR engaged in and competitive advantage the researcher multiple regression where the types of CSR activities adopted was tested against competitiveness. The results from the regression model contained eight independent variables representing the different types of CSR against the levels of competitiveness achieved by both firms, and individually were as indicated in Table -

TABLE 10: MULTIPLE REGRESSION RESULTS

	Model R <sup>2</sup>		Model Summary				
			Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Combined	0.059	Regression	10.245	8	1.281	2.802	0.005
		Residual	164.056	360	0.457		
		Total	174.302	368			
Safaricom	0.063	Regression	8.492	8	1.062	2.257	0.024
		Residual	126.999	270	0.470		
		Total	135.491	278			
Airtel	0.157	Regression	6.085	8	0.761	1.859	0.078
		Residual	32.724	81	0.409		
		Total	38.809	89			
Both	0.11	Regression	3.880	8	0.485	0.916	0.510
		Residual	31.237	59	0.529		
		Total	35.118	67			

The combined test including both Safaricom and Airtel customer's significantly explained 5.9% of the variations in competitiveness achieved by both firms. Individually, the CSR activities used by Safaricom significantly explained 6.3% of the variances in its competitiveness while the choice of Airtel CSR activities explained 15.7% of the variances in its competitiveness; however the model did not attain statistical significance. Based on the P values of the three tests, the null hypotheses for the combined model and for Safaricom were rejection while that of Airtel was accepted. for those who were using both providers, the model explained 11% of the variances in competitiveness achieved but was not statistically significant. This led to the conclusion that that the type of CSR engaged in by the providers does play a role on creation of competitive advantage achieved by Safaricom, while it does not for those using Airtel or both providers.

Pearson's Correlation was used to test the second hypothesis on whether there was relationship between the level to which the provider was using the mean score of both CSR activities and competitiveness achieved. The outcome was as presented in table below 4.8.1.

**HO<sub>2</sub> : Awareness of CSR activities contributes to Competitive Advantages of Mobile telephone companies**

TABLE 11: LEVEL OF CSR ENGAGEMENT AND COMPETITIVENESS

Preferred Provider		Level of CSR Engagement		Competitiveness
Safaricom	Level of CSR Engagement	Pearson Correlation	1	0.176**
		Sig. (2-tailed)		0.003
		N	279	279
	Competitiveness	Pearson Correlation	0.176**	1
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.003	
		N	279	279
Airtel	Level of CSR Engagement	Pearson Correlation	1	0.202
		Sig. (2-tailed)		0.058
		N	89	89
	Competitiveness	Pearson Correlation	0.202	1
		Sig. (2-tailed)	0.058	
		N	89	89

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Form the analysis, it was established that only Safaricom had a significant relationship between the level of engagement in CSR and the competitiveness seen from the view of subscribers. For Airtel it was found not to be significant and hence the null hypothesis was accepted leading to the conclusion that there no relationship between the level of CSR engagement by Airtel and competitiveness achieved.

**HO<sub>3</sub>: The nature of CSR benefits do not contribute to competitive Advantages of Mobile telephone companies**

The third objective of the study was to establish the level to which the benefits due to engaging in CSR activities have influenced the competitiveness of the Mobile phone providers. Pearson correlation was used as a test statistic and the results are as presented in table below.

TABLE 12: CRS BENEFITS AND COMPETITIVENESS

Preferred Provider		Competitiveness	Benefits of CSR
Safaricom	Competitiveness	Pearson Correlation	1
		Sig. (2-tailed)	0.630**
		N	279
	Benefits of CSR	Pearson Correlation	0.630**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	1
		N	279
Airtel	Competitiveness	Pearson Correlation	1
		Sig. (2-tailed)	0.746**
		N	89
	Benefits of CSR	Pearson Correlation	0.746**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	1
		N	89

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

From the findings, the benefits customers had received due to the provider engaging in CSR activities were found to have significantly strong relationship for both Safaricom and Airtel with the level of competitiveness achieved by the providers.

## DISCUSSIONS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

From the analysis it was established that the majority (60.9%) of the respondents involved in the study were Safaricom users while 20.7% were using the Airtel services. Notably 18.5 % of the providers were using both service providers which was a reflection of the current market share of the two service providers. For those who used both providers they were also found to have more preference to Safaricom. This can be attributed to the provider having been the first entry into the market before airtel and has continued to carry out aggressive marketing. It was notable that majority of the respondents were aware of the CSR concept and acknowledged that their providers were actively undertaking various CSR activities.

While relating the involvement in CRS activities by the providers with the level of competitiveness achieved through a multiple regression, it was noted that the type of CSR played a significant role in the competitiveness of Safaricom while to the contrary it does not for Airtel. Based on the argument of Lippman & Rumelt (1982) pioneering firm will find the impact of their CSR being well sustained as compared to those coming in later who will in most cases be duplication already existing programs. Safaricom being the market leader may have perfected on its CSR activities giving their competitors no room to strategically perfect the act but are overshadowed by its success.

When the relationship between the level of CSR engagement was tested against competitiveness using Pearson's correlation test, it was established that there was a statistical significant relationship with competitiveness achieved by Safaricom while it wasn't with Airtel. As established by Hillman & Keim (2001) there is a positive correlation between CSR and financial performance. Since it's formation Safaricom has consistently made supernormal profits providing it with an opportunity to invest substantial amounts in CSR activities across the country. Its CSR activities are known to a large proportion of it's subscribers as a result of their magnitude and accompanied by promotions which may be closely linked with it's contribution to the competitiveness achieved.

On the benefits customers had received due to the provider engaging in CSR activities, it was found to have statistically significantly strong relationship for Safaricom and for Airtel with the level of competitiveness achieved by the providers. The ability of CSR to give direct service the community is closely related to the benefits that will accrue to the company (Barney 1991) as it is closely related to improved brand image, reputation and increased ability to relate with the customer. The relationship between the providers benefits can be related to Potter & Kraner (2002) preposition recommending business not to engage in CSR for the sake of pure philanthropy, rather it should transform it's use into a competitive context in which a business benefits choosing a pressing but carefully chosen need that benefits both the company and the customers. It has been notable that both providers have been keen in choosing the CSR activities mainly through evaluating the benefits to be accrued to their communities involved.

## CONCLUSION

From the findings the researcher can conclude that majority of mobile phones users within Nakuru town were clearly aware of their providers participation in different CSR activities. This gives a strong indication of good publicity that has always accompanied engagement in CSR activities as a marketing tool. It was also very clear that the two providers were engaged in almost all eight types of CSR activities that were indicated in the study. The level to which the providers were engaged in the CSR activities having received approval of an agreement by the majority is a clear indication that the users were also knowledgeable of the extent that providers were committed to the activities as a sign of community support and giving back to the society.

It can also be concluded clearly from the finding that engagement by mobile phone providers in the specific types of CSR activities cannot be ascertained to influence a specific elements associated with attainment of competitiveness as measured using the five indicators adopted in the study. This clearly points out a picture that suggests provider's engagement in several different rather than a single CSR activity as a way of attaining the desired levels of competitiveness collectively. The collective effect of engaging in different CSR activities bring about a collective influence that can be identified with the level of competitiveness achieved.

On the level to which the different provider should engage themselves in the different CSR activities, there is need for an independent critically evaluate by each provider to ascertain the extent to which they are able create a competitive edge. This was based on the fact that Safaricom was found to achieve statistically significant relationships between its levels of engagement and competitiveness while Airtel could not.

The benefits perceived to have been received by the users of mobile phone services was found to play a very significant role in creating competitiveness sought by the firms. Just like any user of products or services, it is critical for mobile services to deliver a bundle of benefits that each customer can identify with. Ultimately it can be concluded that irrespective of the type or level of engagement in CSR activities by the providers, it is the perceived benefits that played an important role in creation of the desired competitiveness.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

As much as there are several activities that qualify to be considered as areas of engagement as a CSR, it is important that they are critically evaluated to determine their impact on the firm's competitiveness. Mobile phone service providers therefore should critically analyse their portfolio of CSR activities and select strategically those that are likely to generate the desired levels of competitive advantage. More, so they should select projects or activities that can be identified with specific attributes identified with their competitiveness.

Based on the relationship between the levels of subscriber's awareness on the CSR activities undertaken by their provider, it is recommended that they should continue to attach adequate levels of publicity to any activity engaged in. As a marketing tool CSR activities need to be effectively communicated to the general public and indeed to their customers so as to give it the desired impulse and influence consumer attitudes and perceptions. It is also recommended that the providers adopt effective publicity tools that will ensure that their activities are widely communicated and influential in the mind of the consumer with the aim of creating the desired levels of loyalty and commitment.

Finally, in relation to the perceived benefits accrued from engaging in CSR activities that defines competitiveness, it is of key interest that the providers should consider clearly identify, packaging and delivering through their CSR activities visible benefits that can be identified by their customers. Customer participation, involvement and awareness at any stage of the CSR activity should be considered to effectively transfer the benefits to them. It is also of paramount importance for every CSR activity chosen to carry specific benefits relevant to the specific market.

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