

Commitment to social responsibility and its role in ensuring the sustainability of economic institutions - Microsoft as a model –

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Abstract:

This study aimed to highlight the role of the organization's commitment to social responsibility in achieving sustainability, where this role was identified by clarifying the relationship between each of social responsibility and enterprise sustainability, and this is by studying the experience of MICROSOFT corporation. Both, and in the participation of social responsibility with the sustainability of the dimensions, an indication that the commitment to social responsibility is an advertisement for the institution's achievement of sustainability.

Keywords: social responsibility, enterprise sustainability, MICROSOFT.

JEL Classification: M14 ; Q56 .

Introduction

In a world where everything is constantly changing, markets shift, technology evolves, competition multiplies, and discussions about sustainable development, the environment, societal expectations, and needs grow louder. This is in stark contrast to the past, where businesses were primarily focused on maximizing profits at the expense of society. However, in today's era, these organizations are increasingly called upon to shoulder a portion of their responsibility and adopt a new vision based on the concept of meeting the genuine needs of society. Consequently, businesses have shown a growing interest in social aspects that go beyond their economic responsibilities, including the environment in which they operate, their various stakeholders such as suppliers, employees, and customers, as well as society at large. This reflects the prevailing modern approach known as "Corporate Social Responsibility" (CSR). Contemporary organizations have realized that by implementing the principles of CSR, they can benefit the communities they operate in while simultaneously enhancing their competitive capabilities to become sustainable enterprises.

Research Problem

Based on the preceding discussion, the research problem can be succinctly stated as follows:

How can the commitment of economic enterprises to their social responsibility contribute to their sustainability?

Research Importance

Social responsibility is considered one of the critical topics due to its significant impact on both society and the environment, making its study a pressing necessity in today's context. Therefore, the importance of this study lies in shedding light on the concept of corporate social responsibility as a strategy to achieve greater profits for the organization on one hand and to simultaneously attain social benefits. This, in turn, leads the organization towards ensuring sustainability.

Research Methodology

This study employs a descriptive and analytical methodology, relying on credible sources of studies that have addressed various aspects of the research topic. This approach helps in understanding the fundamentals of social responsibility, defining corporate sustainability, and focusing on the

role that a business's commitment to social responsibility plays in achieving sustainability.

The study particularly examines Microsoft's experience in this domain.

To achieve this, the following key areas will be explored:

- Social Responsibility؛
- Corporate Sustainability؛
- Microsoft's Programs in the Field of Sustainability through Commitment to Social Responsibility.

1- Social Responsibility

1-1- Definition of Social Responsibility

It is often challenging to reach a consensus on defining a specific concept that provides a comprehensive and all-encompassing understanding of a phenomenon, This challenge becomes even more pronounced when linked to behavioral sciences and societal research, particularly when it pertains to social responsibility. This complexity justifies the existence of multiple and diverse definitions for it. Herein lies a mention of the most significant of these definitions:

- Referring to the first attempt to define social responsibility, we find that Bowen was a pioneer in this regard, specifically in 1953, where he defined it as: "The commitment of businessmen to follow their policies, make their decisions, or pursue courses of action desirable in terms of the objectives and values of society ". (طاهري و قریش، 2021، صفحة 71)
- Social responsibility signifies the integration of social and environmental values into the core business processes of an organization and engaging with stakeholders to enhance community well-being. (شوادرة، 2022، صفحة 142)

Based on the above, and considering that an organization both impacts and is impacted by society, it can be said that social responsibility represents the right that society has in exchange for the services provided by the organization to carry out its activities. In other words, social responsibility represents the organization compensating the community in which it operates for the harm it may cause, thereby emphasizing the importance of positive compensation outweighing its negative impact.

1-2- Historical Evolution of Social Responsibility

The official birth of corporate social responsibility dates back to the 1950s, specifically in 1953 when Howard R. Bowen published "Social Responsibilities of Businessmen." This publication raised the question: What responsibilities can reasonably be expected of businessmen towards society? (José Paz, 2015, p. 9)

Generally, the historical stages of corporate social responsibility can be divided into four phases as follows: (العصيمي، 2015، الصفحات 17-21 بتصرف)

- **First Stage:** During this stage, private sector organizations lacked experience in implementing social responsibility practices. This stage was characterized by a scarcity of regulations governing social responsibility. In France in 1972, the "Marseille Declaration" proposed that companies could multiply like humans and that their continuity depended on their role as role models for other organizations. During the same period (early 1970s), United Nations-affiliated organizations, such as the Committee on Corporate Transparency and the Economic Cooperation Organization for Development, contributed to developing guidelines for the relationship between government, private sector organizations, and society.
- **Second Stage:** This stage emerged alongside several disasters (gas leaks, the Chernobyl reactor accident, oil spills, global warming, etc.). Companies began strategically considering the financial costs they could incur for environmental cleanup, as well as the potential damage to their reputation in communities. Additionally, businesses started adopting social requirements that could frame their social responsibility ethics.
- **Third Stage:** In the early 1990s, the concepts of transparency and collaboration between the environment and the economy crystallized in the minds of major private sector organization leaders. The "Earth Summit" in 1992 marked a significant turning point, resulting in the publication of "Agenda 21," which outlined sustainable development in detail. In 1994, political leaders, business representatives, and economists from various countries gathered in Germany to discuss environmental, climate, and energy issues and their social impacts. These conferences and others exerted pressure on companies to change their approach to their responsibilities towards the communities in which they operate.
- **The Fourth Stage:** In 2002, the World Summit on Sustainable Development was held in South Africa, during which numerous issues related to sustainable development were discussed. This event led to the

establishment of many organizations and programs working on these issues. However, despite various attempts, all stages of corporate social responsibility remained weak and required further review and more commitment to achieving sustainable development goals.

1-3- The Significance of Social Responsibility

For the Organization: The importance of social responsibility for organizations can be summarized as follows: (مهرى، 2012، صفحة 84)

- Enhancing the organization's image and maintaining its reputation in society. Most studies addressing the organization's image are considered crucial for organizations to gain the trust of stakeholders (customers, associations, civil society organizations, public authorities, local communities).
- Mobilizing and motivating employees to commit to voluntary and responsible policies. Social responsibility contributes to improving and motivating employees to work, enhancing the work environment, and fostering cooperation and cohesion among different parties, ultimately leading to the organization's internal growth.

For the Community: The importance of social responsibility for society includes the following aspects: (باشا، 2017، صفحة 146)

- Increasing social solidarity among various segments of society by creating a strong sense of belonging among individuals with special needs, such as the disabled, the underprivileged, minorities, youth, and others.
- Achieving social stability through the availability of a form of social justice and the prevalence of the principle of equal opportunity, which is at the core of social responsibility.
- Improving the quality of life in the community, whether in terms of infrastructure or cultural and social aspects.

For the State: The significance of social responsibility for the state can be summarized as follows: (شقراني، 2019، الصفحات 111-112)

- Commitment to social responsibility maximizes state returns due to organizations' awareness of the importance of a fair and proper contribution that bears the costs of social responsibility.
- Reducing the burdens borne by the state in fulfilling its health, cultural, and social responsibilities.
- Creating job opportunities and supporting social equality, as the growth of jobs in waste management and recycling is expected to deal with the waste resulting from income and population growth.

1-4- The Significance of Social Responsibility

Among the pioneering researchers and social managers who focused on the social dimension of organizations is Carroll, who presented one of the most renowned models. This model is based on four fundamental dimensions of social responsibility, and in 1991, he established a hierarchical framework for social responsibility with the following illustration: (José Paz, 2015, p. 9)

Figure (01): Levels of Social Responsibility According to Carroll

<p style="text-align: center;">Social Responsibilities:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">The responsibilities of the organization encompass its role as a responsible and contributing corporate citizen</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Ethical Responsibilities:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Ethical responsibilities entail adopting practices that are morally sound and just</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Legal Responsibilities:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Legal responsibilities require the organization to adhere to the law.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Economic Responsibilities:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">The expected role of the organization is to provide services and products to the community; therefore, it must remain profitable.</p>

Source: José Paz Rendal, 2015, p 9

1-5- Social Responsibility Strategies

Economic organizations engage in the process of diagnosing their external and internal environments to identify social and environmental issues and problems. Through the information available from this process, organizations can make informed decisions by following a specific strategy that serves as a strategic approach to social responsibility. Schermerhorn identified four strategies for dealing with social responsibility issues, as follows:

- **Voluntary Strategy** : This strategy implies that organizations take the initiative to provide for social requirements. Organizations adopting this strategy are designed to meet not only economic and legal

responsibilities but also ethical ones. They are willing to address crises, respond to external pressures, threats, and government regulations. Organizations employing this strategy assume responsibilities toward the actions they undertake. These management departments should have sufficient flexibility to support actions and initiatives that enhance their reputation in the market (بوسلامي، 2013، صفحة 65).

In this strategy, organizations adopt a broad social role, taking into account the interests and aspirations of the community in all their decisions.

- **Adaptive Strategy** : This strategy starts with economic and legal responsibilities, and then it considers ethical requirements by focusing on prevalent values, norms, and socially accepted behaviors in the society in which they operate (ايزيتي، 2018، صفحة 18)
- **Defensive Strategy** : According to this strategy, economic organizations focus on meeting the minimum legal requirements, the socially and environmentally imposed legal role. With increasing competitive pressures and voices calling for consumer and environmental protection, management of the organization resorts to legal maneuvers as a tactic to minimize or avoid the obligations associated with the problems caused by the organization. Thus, they protect themselves from legal action. The ethical responsibilities are neglected in this strategy, as it is based on responding only to external pressures and not on the organization's culture. (الحمدي، 2003، صفحة 01)

Resistance Strategy or Non-Adoption of Social Responsibility : This strategy represents a traditional view of the social role of an economic organization. Management of the organization sees itself as unbound and therefore not responsible for any social role towards any stakeholder. They view the sole purpose of their existence as achieving returns and profits through efficient economic practices. In this view, the economic role is the only responsibility of businesses. Any social benefits generated as a byproduct of this economic role are considered secondary and not something the organization should actively pursue. Therefore, in this strategy, no expenses are incurred for social activities because they are seen as costs that the organization should not bear. In this view, all decisions made are purely economic, and the organization rejects decisions that do not align with profitability and financial returns, even if they are beneficial socially. (شقراني، 2019، صفحة 59)

1-6- Foundations of Social Responsibility Success

In order for organizations to succeed in fulfilling their social responsibility, several foundations should be in place. These foundations are as follows: (التريكي و بازينة، 2016، الصفحات 47-48)

Belief in Social Responsibility: It is essential that organizations believe in the importance of social responsibility towards society.

- **Clear Vision:** The organization should have a clear vision regarding the social role it wants to adopt and the main issues it intends to address.
- **Integration into Activities:** Social responsibility activities should become an integral part of the organization's operations and should be monitored by top management, just like any other activities.
- **Financial Allocation:** The company's management should allocate funds for its social responsibility program within its various budgets.
- **Organizational Structure:** The organizational structure of the company should include an independent division or department responsible for social responsibility. This division should define its objectives, required plans, and be granted sufficient authority.

In addition to these foundations, some additional considerations are important: (حدو، 2015، صفحة 52)

- **Start with Small Initiatives:** If the organization is new to social responsibility, it's advisable to begin with small or self-contained initiatives, such as employee training, social welfare programs for employees, or environmental conservation activities.
- Organizations should not use social responsibility as a mere marketing or public relations tool. It should be a genuine commitment to making a positive impact.
- **Ethical Values:** The organization's approach to social responsibility should be grounded in strong ethical values that guide its strategies, plans, and objectives.

These foundations provide a solid framework for organizations to build and implement effective social responsibility initiatives.

2- Sustainability of Institutions

Before delving into the definition of institutional sustainability, it is essential to define sustainable development, which is defined as continuous development with its ultimate goal and purpose being humanity. It emphasizes the balance between environmental, economic, social, and political dimensions, contributing to the sustainable development of natural resources. (حنون، 2021، صفحة 188)

2-1- Definition of Institutional Sustainability

- Institutional sustainability is a model through which an institution operates by integrating systematic management of social and environmental aspects into its business activities, alongside economic aspects. This is done to achieve sustainable business operations and to contribute to the overall sustainable development of the economy. (ستيتي، ساسان، و معيوف ، 2021، صفحة 231)
- The concept of institutional sustainability is fundamentally linked to Brundtland's definition, as affirmed by Dyllick and Hockerts in their definition of institutional sustainability as "meeting the needs of both direct and indirect stakeholders without compromising its ability to meet the needs of future stakeholders as well" . (جحنيط و كورتل ، 2021، صفحة 591)
- A sustainable institution is one that works to integrate and balance economic growth, social rights, and environmental management through its practices. (زرنيز، 2020، صفحة 100)

2-2- Dimensions of Institutional Sustainability

Institutional sustainability is achieved through an institution's commitment to social and environmental issues, aiming to fulfill its three dimensions, represented as follows:(ستيتي، ساسان، و معيوف ، 2021، صفحة 232)

- Environmental Dimension: This includes the quality of water, air, soil, climate change, biodiversity, and the preservation of natural beauty, among others.
- Economic Dimension: It encompasses economic development, economic growth, competitiveness, innovation, and industrial development, among others.

- **Social Dimension:** This covers unemployment, local and regional development, healthcare, wealth, social cohesion, and the distribution of services, among others.

2-3- The Relationship between Social Responsibility and Institutional Sustainability

Distinguishing between the concepts of social responsibility and sustainability can be challenging due to their significant overlap. Social responsibility involves integrating social and environmental concerns into the business activities of an economic institution. In contrast, sustainability means reconciling economic, social, and environmental aspects on a global scale. Social responsibility emerges as a strategic approach to achieving institutional sustainability through the following: (سنتيتي، ساسان، و معيوف ، 2021، صفحة 232)

- Social responsibility enhances the institution's image in society.
- Social responsibility serves as an effective tool to ensure institutional sustainability by giving it a competitive edge, enabling it to face competitors, and ensuring its survival and continuity.
- Social responsibility represents the ideal state for investors by increasing the long-term value of stocks. This is because the institution takes measures to mitigate future risks, gaining trust within the community.

To illustrate this further, we can compare the dimensions of both social responsibility and institutional sustainability, as follows:

Table (01): Dimensions of Social Responsibility and Institutional Sustainability

Corporate Social Responsibility	Organizational Sustainability
The Economic Dimension: Achieving profits for owners, employees, and shareholders.	The Economic Dimension: Growth / Efficiency / Stability
The Legal Dimension (Including the Environmental Dimension): Environmental Protection Laws: Preventing water, air, and soil pollution...	The Environmental Dimension: Preventing Pollution / Preserving Natural Resources
The Social Dimension: Enhancing the quality of life for employees and members of the community	The Social Dimension: Basic Needs / Employment

The Ethical Dimension: The necessity of adhering to values and guidelines and respecting the cultures of the community	/
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Source: Prepared by the researchers based on: (ستيتي، ساسان، و معيوف ،
2021، صفحة 232)

From the above table, it is clear that social responsibility and organizational sustainability share most of the same dimensions (economic, social, and environmental), with the exception of the ethical dimension in organizational sustainability. This implies that a company's commitment to social responsibility implicitly contributes to achieving sustainability.

3- Microsoft's Sustainability Programs through Social Responsibility Commitment

3-1- Introduction to Microsoft

Microsoft is an international company founded in 1975 that operates in the field of computer technology. Its headquarters are located in Redmond, Seattle, Washington, United States. For official information, you can refer to their website: <https://www.microsoft.com/investor/reports/ar21/download-center/>.

The following insights have been extracted from the company's annual report for the year 2021, serving our study as follows:

3-2- The Social Responsibility that Drives Sustainability at Microsoft

Microsoft in the Community: According to the company's annual report for 2021 :

(<https://www.microsoft.com/investor/reports/ar21/download-center/>)

- Microsoft is committed to building a more inclusive economy. One of its responsibilities is to help bridge the disability gap, which affects over one billion people with disabilities worldwide. For this reason, in April, we announced a new five-year commitment to incentivize the development of accessible technology, expand opportunities for people with disabilities in the workforce, and create a more inclusive workplace.

*Commitment to social responsibility and its role in ensuring the sustainability
of economic institutions - Microsoft as a model –*

- We continue to make our technology affordable and available to nonprofit organizations worldwide. This year, we donated and discounted \$2.5 billion worth of products and services to assist 295,000 nonprofit organizations in better serving their communities. Our employees also contributed an additional \$214 million to organizations and causes they care about.
- We remain committed to defending human rights, which includes taking actions to prevent modern slavery and human trafficking in our business and supply chain, supporting humanitarian efforts, and responding to emergencies. In the past year, we allocated resources to respond to events such as the Beirut explosion, hurricanes in Central America, wildfires in the United States, and more. To date, we have dedicated over \$410 million in funds, technology, and other resources to support ongoing COVID-19 response efforts.
- Our future opportunities depend on reaching and empowering all communities. We are committed to taking actions to address racial injustice and inequality, with significant input from employees and leaders who are members of the Black and African American community. In June 2020, our senior leadership team and board of directors announced a set of initiatives to improve the lived experience at Microsoft and drive change in the communities where we live and work. These efforts include increasing our representation and enhancing our inclusive culture by doubling the number of Black and African American individual contributors, senior contributors, and senior leaders in the United States.
- As of June 30, 2021, we employed approximately 181,000 full-time employees, with 103,000 in the United States and 7,800 internationally.

This section highlights Microsoft's role in society, clearly demonstrating the company's commitment to various social responsibilities toward the community. It showcases the social dimension of corporate social responsibility (CSR). Furthermore, it emphasizes the philanthropic aspect through charitable donations and support for nonprofit organizations and institutions.

-Microsoft and the Environment: According to the company's annual report for 2021:

)[https://www.microsoft.com/investor/reports/ar21/download-center\(/](https://www.microsoft.com/investor/reports/ar21/download-center/)

- while the pandemic has been the decisive issue over the past year, climate change is the challenge we face in our lifetime. As a global

technology company, we have a unique responsibility to play our part. In January, we released our first annual sustainability report, sharing our progress toward becoming carbon negative, zero waste, and water positive by 2030.

- In the fiscal year 2020, Microsoft reduced carbon emissions by 587,000 metric tons. We are building a planetary computer to help manage and protect the Earth's natural systems. We have committed to matching 100% of our electricity consumption with 100% carbon-free energy by 2030.
- We also acknowledge that solving the carbon issue will require new technology and partnerships. This is why we launched Microsoft Cloud for Sustainability, creating a new category of business operations to help every organization measure, report, and reduce its environmental impact. This is also the reason for our direct investments through the Climate Innovation Fund, which is valued at one billion dollars, to help institutions accelerate the development of solutions for carbon reduction and removal.
- Furthermore, we have embraced transparency by subjecting the data in our sustainability annual report to third-party auditing and accountability by including progress towards sustainability goals as a factor in executive compensation.

This section highlights Microsoft's significant efforts in the field of sustainability, especially environmental sustainability. It demonstrates a strong commitment to environmental responsibility, including compliance with environmental regulations, which represents the legal dimension of corporate social responsibility (CSR).

- **Key Financial Performance Highlights** : According to the company's annual report for 2021

)[https://www.microsoft.com/investor/reports/ar21/download-center\(/](https://www.microsoft.com/investor/reports/ar21/download-center/)

- I have had the honor of witnessing how diligent work, the commitment of Microsoft employees, the ingenuity of our partners, the trust of our customers, and the support of our shareholders translate into strong results. In the fiscal year 2021, we achieved revenues of \$168 billion, an 18% increase year-over-year. Operating income grew by 32% to \$70 billion, and we continue to create successful new franchises.

- Some of the key achievements in the fiscal year 2021 compared to fiscal year 2020 include:

- Commercial cloud revenue increased by 34% to reach \$69.1 billion.

Commitment to social responsibility and its role in ensuring the sustainability of economic institutions - Microsoft as a model –

- Commercial Office products and cloud services revenue increased by 13%, driven by a 22% growth in Office 365 commercial.
- Consumer Office products and cloud services revenue increased by 10%, with Microsoft 365 Consumer subscribers reaching 51.9 million.
- LinkedIn revenue increased by 27%.
- Dynamics products and cloud services revenue increased by 25%, driven by a 43% growth in Dynamics 365.
- Server products and cloud services revenue increased by 27%, fueled by a 50% growth in Azure.
- Revenues from Windows Original Equipment Manufacturer (OEM) licensing increased slightly.
- Commercial Windows products and cloud services revenue increased by 14%.
- Xbox content and services revenue increased by 23%.
- Advertising revenue on the search network, excluding acquisition costs, increased by 13%.
- Surface revenue increased by 5%.

This part provides a detailed breakdown of Microsoft's financial performance, highlighting increases in revenue and earnings. It demonstrates the economic dimension of corporate social responsibility (CSR).

3-3- Results and Discussion

The study focused on exploring the dimensions of social responsibility as inferred from the presentation above and then compared them to the analysis section. In light of theoretical perspectives, Microsoft has committed to its social responsibility, indicating:

Table (02): Social Responsibility Dimensions Achieved by Microsoft

The Economic Dimension	Microsoft has experienced growth in its revenues and returns, indicating its financial success and profitability. This dimension primarily focuses on the company's economic performance.
The Social Dimension	Microsoft recognizes its responsibility to contribute to enhancing the quality of life for individuals in society. It strives to achieve this goal by providing products and services that improve people's lives.

	The company also actively employs as many workers as possible, which contributes to job creation and economic opportunities.
The Charitable Dimension	Microsoft engages in charitable activities and donations. It takes an interest in supporting non-profit charitable organizations and institutions. This dimension reflects Microsoft's commitment to philanthropy and giving back to the community.
The Legal (Environmental) Dimension	It focuses on preserving available resources, which likely includes responsible use of natural resources. The company also works to reduce emissions of harmful materials and gases to protect the environment. It promotes resource sustainability through sustainable programs, which may include initiatives to reduce waste and promote eco-friendly practices.

Source: Prepared by the researchers

These dimensions collectively demonstrate Microsoft's multi-faceted approach to corporate responsibility, encompassing economic success, social impact, charitable giving, and environmental stewardship. These efforts showcase the company's commitment to both its shareholders and the broader society and environment.

It is evident that Microsoft has successfully incorporated various dimensions of social responsibility, including environmental, legal, philanthropic, and economic aspects, as highlighted in the provided information. This commitment aligns with their sustainability goals and contributes to a positive impact on society and the environment while maintaining strong financial performance.

Conclusion

Enterprises operate in an environment characterized by intense competition and constant change in surrounding conditions, especially when it comes to the needs and desires of the society in which they operate, which calls for achieving sustainable development. This has necessitated their commitment to what is known as social responsibility. Microsoft is one of these institutions, and the study has shown that its commitment to social responsibility has led to its sustainability.

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