CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY LEADERSHIP

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Abstract: *Human resources are currently in the limelight for businesses. Employers are searching for individuals who can alter and sustain an organization's goals, in addition to having the necessary skills and expertise. Companies are on the lookout for allies, respectively employees who understand and support their mission. Moreover, these individuals should have the ability to train and eventually retain other employees. As a result, the formation of meaningful relationships has become a means of achieving loyalty. At first side, corporate social responsibility (CSR) leadership and a transformational leader appear to be an excellent match that might aid businesses within this matter. Therefore, the objective of the study was to identify if CSR leadership is a matter of transformational or transactional style in the current business environment, following a qualitative approach, respectively the collection and analyzation of secondary data such as scientific journals. The findings of the present study sustain that firms should strive for transactional leaders. Individuals nowadays are mostly concerned with obtaining personal benefits. As a result, they may view the variable of reward as a motivator to perform in accordance with expectations. Additionally, transformational leader are hard to find. Hence, promoting CSR leadership through transformational leaders has the potential to help the company achieve its goals while also increasing its credibility among diverse stakeholders.*

Keywords*: leadership, corporate social responsibility leadership, transformational leaders, transactional leaders*

JEL: M14, M12, M19

1.Introduction

As several concepts that have become a topic of interest in the past decades, the term of leadership does not benefit yet of a universally agreed definition (Northouse, 2015). Therefore, nowadays, leadership is linked to various terms and has different meanings, although the basis remains the same: leaders express themselves or their distinctive potential through others. Additionally, leadership was been frequently associated with three defining particularities of an individual placed in an important management position (leader), respectively traits, qualities and behaviour (Horner, 1997, p. 270).

The set of attitudes (behaviors) enhanced by an individual placed in a key management position and applied in the relationships formed with a group of followers is defined as the leadership style (Alheet, et al., 2021). Therefore, studies sustain that the main leadership styles are as follows: transformational, transactional, autocratic, democratic, and leisure faire (Alblooshi, et al., 2021). In a nutshell, a transformational leader inspires through its behavior others to act in a responsible manner (de Gennaro, 2019). Additionally, the leader creates a community which strives for achieving the company's goals. On the other hand, transactional leadership a constant interchange between the leader and its followers (Sanda & Arthur, 2017). Comparing with the transformational leadership style, the transactional one follows conventional and administrative principles in order to reward individuals for acting in accordance with the leader's intentions. Authoritarian or autocratic leaders may be perceived as more rigorous individuals due to the fact that they create a certain distance between them and their subordinates (Harms, et al., 2018). Following a milestones approach, autocratic leaders establish clearly what, how, and when tasks should be fulfilled (Hogg, 2021). Conversely, democratic or participative leaders act based on inclusive principle (Bavelas & Lewin, 1942). Hence, all members of the group are encouraged to provide feedback, share thoughts and propose solutions. Finally, laissez-faire or delegative leaders may be described as the less implicated type of individuals (Oshagbemi, 2004). They are not willing to counsel the members of the working group, and therefore followers may experience lack of motivation or stimulation to perform according to their potential and capabilities.

On the other hand, a CSR leader represents an individual who has the ability to inspire followers to act beyond their own interests and strive for achieving general welfare. Therefore, considering the corporate social responsibility (CSR) leadership framework and the particularities of each leader type, the objective of the study was to identify if CSR leadership is a matter of transformational or transactional style in current business environment. Within this scope, a qualitative approach has been followed in order to address the research question by collecting and analyzing secondary data.

2. Literature review

Defining the concept of leadership

As several concepts that have become a topic of interest in the past decades, the term of leadership does not benefit yet of a universally agreed definition (Northouse, 2015). However, most of the provided so far explanations share some common aspects (Daniëls, et al., 2019). For instance, Stogdill (1950) described leadership as the influencing act of motivating an existing group

of individuals to achieve an organization's objectives. Moreover, Fidler (1967) sustained that the concept represent the ability of an individual to determine and organize the labour of formed groups (Fiedler, 1967). Nevertheless, Rost (1991) perceived leadership as a determinant connection established between a leader and a follower who are sharing a common desire to change and goals (Rost, 1991). Kouzes and Posner (2017) defined the notion as being a business form of art which enables the leader to inspire others to act in a certain manner, based on shared values, aspirations and purposes (Kouzes & Posner, 2017). Consequently, nowadays, leadership is linked to various terms and has different meanings, although the basis remains the same: leaders express themselves or their distinctive potential through others. Additionally, leadership was been frequently associated with three defining particularities of an individual placed in an important management position (leader), respectively traits, qualities and behaviour (Horner, 1997, p. 270).

Initially, the concept of leadership was been perceived as a native asset, that could not have been acquired over time (Bernard, 1926). This approach was based on the following belief: leaders are born with specific particularities that differentiate them from others. Therefore, at that time, the main focus of researchers and practitioners was to comprehend which are these traits that would contribute to the creation of leaders. An understanding of these attributes may have assisted employers in building powerful businesses by placing individuals with potential in key management position. Within this scope, identity, physical, and mental features have been analysed (Horner, 1997, p. 270). However, the results of the conducted studies have not revealed cohesion in term of traits. Consequently, the ensuing trend has been concentrated on understanding the behaviour of leaders, considering situational and organizational aspects (Saal & Knight, 1988). The findings were more consisted when behaviour was been correlated with specific organizational contexts. The latest tendency presented leadership as a compression of traits, behaviour and situational factors. In a narrowly manner, what leaders do, respectively their actions cumulated into a behaviour pattern, may be influenced by inborn or developed traits and, as well as by circumstances (favourable or not) (Saal & Knight, 1988). In addition, these three trends represent the milestones on which nowadays leadership studies have enlarged. In the 21st century, definitions mostly focus on revealing the main differences between the leadership and management concepts (Raffo & Clark, 2018) (Table 1).

Table 1: An overview of the main aspects of leadership definitions

Decade	Leadership Definition Emphasis
1900-1920s	*control, power*
1930s	*traits, influence*
1940s	*groups*
1950s	*groups, relationships, goals, effectiveness*
1960s	*behavior*
1970s	*organizational behavior, reciprocal process*
1980s	*influence, traits, transformation*
21st century	*leadership vs. management, process, authenticity, values, follower focus*

Source: Raffo, D. & Clark, L., 2018. Using Definitions to Provoke Deep Explorations into the Nature of Leadership., p.210

In a nutshell, a manager is assumed to be output driven, while a leader people-driven. Both imply the coordination of a group of individuals; are designed to achieve established objectives; involve planning activities and strategizing (Rosari, 2019). However, leadership besides efficiency and performance through obtained results involves the growing and inspiring pillar of followers (Table 2).

Table 2: Differences between the concepts of leadership and management

Management	Leadership
Companies manage complexity first by planning and budgeting.	Leading an organization to constructive change begins by setting a direction.
Management develops the capacity to achieve its plan by organizing and staffing.	The equivalent leadership activity is aligning people.
Management ensures plan accomplishment by controlling and problem solving.	For leadership, achieving a vision requires motivating and inspiring.
Influence relationship	Authority relationship
Leaders and followers	Managers and subordinates
Intend real changes	Produce and sell goods and/or services
Intended changes reflect mutual purposes	Goods/Services result from coordinated activities

Source: Rosari, R., 2019. Leadership definitions application for lecturers' leadership development, p.27-28

An overview of main leadership style

The set of attitudes (behaviors) enhanced by an individual placed in a key management position and applied in the relationships formed with a group of followers is defined as the leadership style (Alheet, et al., 2021). Therefore, studies sustain that the main leadership styles are as follows: transformational, transactional, autocratic, democratic, and leisure faire (Alblooshi, et al., 2021). Transformational and transactional are based on the act of motivating individuals. Transformational leadership may be described as a joint effort of leaders and followers to become better and therefore increase each and others motivation and integrity (Burns, 1978). As a consequence, transformational leadership implies that the behavior of the leader should be guided by principles, values and beliefs that would encourage individuals to exceed expectations (Bass, 1990). Thus, in this case, at the basis of the relationship formed between the leader and its followers relays appreciation, confidence, reliability and consideration. In a nutshell, a transformational leader inspires through its behavior others to act in a responsible manner (de Gennaro, 2019). Additionally, the leader creates a community which strives for achieving the company's goals. The transformational leader guides and encourages individuals to be independent think critically and be creative (Afsar, et al., 2019). Consequently, followers experience meaningfulness and engage with the organization. However, an important particularity of this type of leadership is the leader's orientation towards the prevention of mistakes (Puni, et al., 2021). The pillars of

transformational leadership are as follows: vision, influence, motivation, inspiration, cognitive stimulation, mentoring, coaching and personalized attention to each follower (Goonewardena, 2017, pp. 15-17).

On the other hand, transactional leadership a constant interchange between the leader and its followers (Sanda & Arthur, 2017). Comparing with the transformational leadership style, the transactional one follows conventional and administrative principles in order to reward individuals for acting in accordance with the leader's intentions. In addition, transactional leadership requires a clear establishment of responsibilities and roles. This leadership approach may be considered as more task oriented goals (Goonewardena, 2017, p. 14). Therefore, the follower's achievement is evaluated based on its ability to fulfill expectations. If these are met, the individual would be compensated accordingly. If not, the follower needs to support the negative consequences. Transactional leadership does not imply the avoidance of possible errors that may occur (Sanda & Arthur, 2017).

Authoritarian or autocratic leaders may be perceived as more rigorous individuals due to the fact that they create a certain distance between them and their subordinates (Harms, et al., 2018). Precision represents an important characteristic of these authoritarian individuals. Following a milestones approach, autocratic leaders establish clearly what, how, and when tasks should be fulfilled (Hogg, 2021). Additionally, authoritarian leaders are less oriented towards building a relationship with its followers, and therefore they adopt an independent behavior, minimizing the importance of the group in the decision making process (Van Vugt, et al., 2004).

Conversely, democratic or participative leaders act based on inclusive principle (Bavelas & Lewin, 1942). Hence, all members of the group are encouraged to provide feedback, share thoughts and propose solutions. Democratic individuals develop a bridge for communication between themselves and followers. However, the final decisions are made by the participative leader (Sargent & Miller, 1971). As a consequence, democratic leaders are willing to listen, opened to dialogue, as well as independent in terms of undertaken decisions.
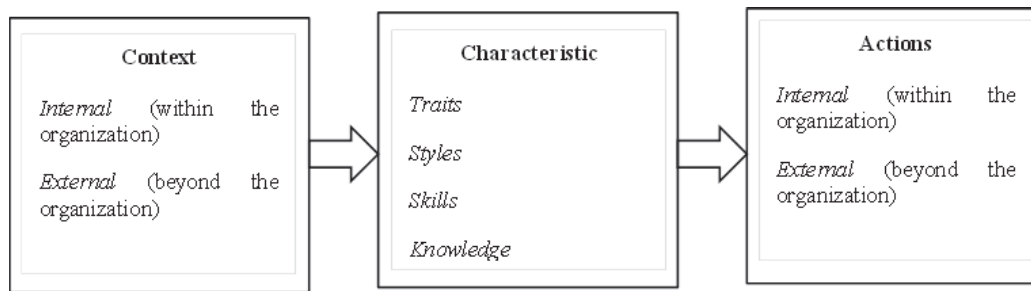
Finally, laissez-faire or delegative leaders may be described as the less implicated type of individuals (Oshagbemi, 2004). They are not willing to counsel the members of the working group, and therefore followers may experience lack of motivation or stimulation to perform according to their potential and capabilities. In addition, delegative leaders bypass the responsibility of decision making; do not offer compensations or recompenses; and avoid providing assessment performance to subordinates (Oshagbemi, 2004) .

Corporate social responsibility leadership

The social responsibility of organizations, irrespective of their size and field of activity, has become a topic of interest for researchers and practitioners in the last decades (Toma, 2012; Imbrişcă & Toma, 2020). In the case of business organizations, CSR has proved to be an important element of their strategies (Toma, 2012). In this regard, Visser (2011) sustained that CSR leadership may be defined as a joint effort for obtaining common wellbeing. As a consequence, a CSR leader represents an individual who has the ability to inspire followers to act beyond their own

interests and strive for achieving general welfare. Furthermore, Visser (2011) has proposed a fundamental representation of CSR leadership. Hence, the model components are as follows: context, characteristics and actions (Figure 1).

Figure 1: A prosed model of CSR leadership

Context	Characteristic	Actions
Internal (within the organization) *External* (beyond the organization)	*Traits* *Styles* *Skills* *Knowledge*	*Internal* (within the organization) *External* (beyond the organization)

Source: Visser, W., The nature of CSR leadership: Definitions, Characteristics and Paradoxes. 2011, pp.2

The context of CSR leadership comprises internal and external factors of the company. Current tendencies promote the importance of various parties of interest. Consequently, the focus of a firm has been swift from a single-minded perspective, respectively the fulfillment of shareholders' expectations, to a broader approach, namely considering the needs of all vital stakeholders (Khuong, et al., 2021). Moreover, stakeholders have been separated into two main categories, respectively internal and external (Modreanu & Andrișan, 2022). Those parties of interests within the company are represented by workers, investors, business owners or managers (Glaveli, 2021). Nonetheless, stakeholders beyond the firm comprises clients, providers (suppliers), organizations (governmental or non-governmental), local communities, the society overall and the environment (Macassa, et al., 2021). Due to the limited means of organizations, it may be impossible to meet or exceed all expectations, regardless of their typology (internal and external) (Marques, et al., 2020). Therefore, companies tend to focus on pillar that would benefit most of the vital parties of interests (Grădinaru, et al., 2021). For instance, sustainable business practices have become an important asset that firms may use in order to address a broader range of stakeholders (Kiba-Janiak, et al., 2021). In a nutshell, instead of focusing on satisfying individual needs, firms aim to find ways which enables them to meet collective demands and therefore create value simultaneously for more parties of interests. Within this scope, the following example will be considered: a company improves its daily operations, reduces its negative impact among the environment, and commercializes more sustainable products. At first side, the main stakeholder which may benefit of these initiatives is the environment. However, sustainable actions impact in a positive manner individuals as well (for examples, less pollution may improve one's health). If a firm has engaged with sustainable practices, suppliers willing to collaborate with this company may be influenced to adopt the same behavior. Hence, in this scenario, the society benefits of these policies also (a greater level of education and information among individuals and organizations is achieved by raising awareness of the relevance of the sustainable pillar and supporting the incorporation of these practices into corporate strategy) (Andrișan & Modreanu, 2022).

The characteristics component is relate to internal motivation, including aspects such as personal traits, belief and values of the leader and therefore the acquired skills, style and knowledge. Additionally, studies sustain that CSR leadership is associated with the following (Visser, 2011, pp. 3-4):

1. Understanding the bigger picture. The basis of CSR is change. As a result, companies are required to identify challenges that they may be able to resolve. CSR leadership assumed that in order to propose viable solutions the firm should comprehend initially which caused the acknowledged problems. Therefore, before taking certain actions, organizations need to understand the barriers that they may occur and mobilized resources accordingly.

2. Meaningfulness experiences. Due to the increase business competitiveness, it has become crucial for companies to create strong relationships with individuals (customers, employees and others) based on emotions. Along with functional benefits, organizations should strive for providing meaningfulness. Therefore, purpose represents an important aspect that firms should consider. The leader owns a significant role in the creating connections between individuals and enterprises.

3. Enhancing value. A leader should embrace and maintain strong values in order to influence others. Consequently, they should demonstrate a responsible behavior continuously, respectively professional and personal level. Thus, credibility increases if individuals observe that a leader's actions are consistent, promoting the same values, regardless of the situation.

4. Powerful vision. Nowadays, businesses are required to make a difference. Competitive advantage may be achieved by organizations which embrace various goals such as: economic (being profitable), social (helping those in need) and environmental (promoting and adopting sustainable practicing). All of these objectives develop and sustain a powerful, as well as meaningful vision. Firms should strive to build communities with relevant stakeholders. Each leader of an organization represents an important pillar within the company. In order to strive for determine affiliations, leaders should convince and motivate their followers of the veracity of companies.

5. An inclusive approach towards building trust. Responsible and successful businesses require a joint effort. Followers need a leader and conversely. Leader should guide, inspire and motivate, while the members of the group ought to grow, embrace and implement the learnings. In a nutshell, each component represents a critical aspect that has the potential to influence organizational performance.

6. An eagerness to experiment and be unconventional. A CSR leadership approach compels thinking outside the box. Hence, it implies that CSR leaders in order to tackle complex issues need to find and apply innovative solutions.

7. A long-term mindset on impacts. Companies should be aware of the impact of day to day business activities. Prior to the emergence of severe environmental concerns, CSR leadership entails recognition and action. As a result, businesses should adopt responsible behavior before suffering the negative repercussions of their lack of initiative in this regard.

Lastly, the actions component of the CSR leadership model enhances the internal and external outcomes. Considering the business context and the particularities of the leaders, decisions

are taken. These reflect the company's ability to create shared value; to respond and generate change in an innovative and creative manner (Holtbrügge & Oberhauser, 2019). From an internal perspective, CSR leadership actions orientated towards employees may assist the firm in retaining valuable workers (Ali, et al., 2020). Additionally, from an external perspective, these may help a company to attract individuals (for instance, customers, employees and suppliers) by creating a positive image of the organization.

3. Research methodology

The present paper represents a qualitative study due to the fact that it implied the collection and analyzation of secondary data such as scientific journals. Within this scope, the research has been focused on the following three aspects: the comprehension of the leadership term; an overview of the main leadership styles (transformational, transactional, participative, autocratic and laissez-faire); an understanding of the main characteristics of CSR leadership. Additionally, the objective of the study was to identify if CSR leadership is a matter of transformational or transactional style in current business environment.

4. Results and discussions

Is CSR leadership a matter of transformational or transactional style?

From a theoretical point of view, CSR leadership appears to be more transformational in nature due to the fact that there are several similar characteristics between these concepts such as: the desire to achieve positive change; people-driven orientations; good intentions; aiming to develop meaningful connections between individuals; adopting values and responsible behavior in general; creativeness and innovation (Figure 2).

Figure 2: The CSR concept and transformational leadership
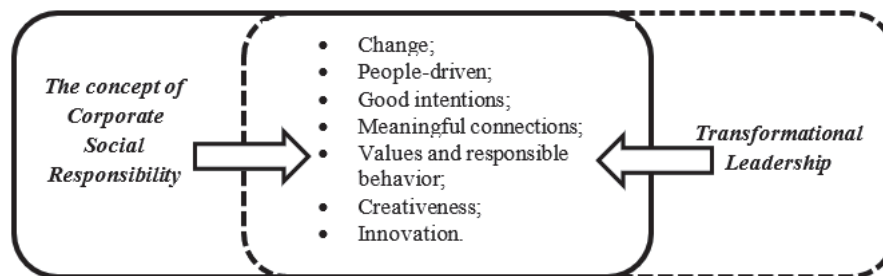
Source: Author's own contribution based on literature review

Moreover, CSR leadership has been promoted intensely in the past decade, and therefore a considerable number of companies sustain that they apply responsible principles on daily basis or, at least, have the intention of adopting them and improve their ways of doing business overall. However, the question is how many of these organizations have transformational leaders? If the percentage of this type of leader would have been high, most probably CSR would have become a worldwide standard business practice by now (taking into account that the CSR subject has been approached by practitioners and researchers since 1953). Therefore, considering a pragmatic angle, CSR leadership may be associated more with the transactional model (Figure 3). The popularity of CSR in the business field has increased due to its strategic potential. Hence, studies sustain that strategic CSR may be perceived as an asset firm use in order to gain competitive advantage.

Figure 3: Strategic CSR and transactional leadership
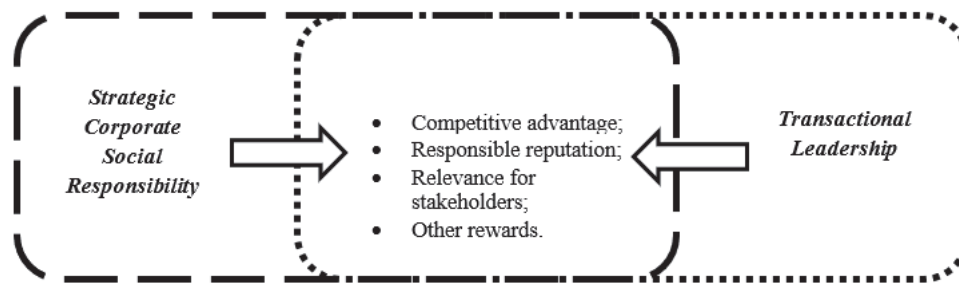
Source: Author's own contribution based on literature review

Nowadays, variety is no longer an issue. Individuals are able to purchase products or services regardless of the physical distance through the use of the Internet. In addition, they are not constrained by the requirement to labor in a specific country. As a result, the possibilities are endless for those who are willing to experiment. While the progress accomplished so far has benefited businesses, it has also generated some concerns among them. Therefore, currently, stakeholder loyalty is considerably more difficult to obtain. CSR, regardless of its form or appliance, has been recognized as a possible solution that may enable firms to consolidate the relationships formed with relevant parties of interests. Consequently, the relationship between CSR and businesses might be characterized as transactional. Companies embraced CSR policies and expect to be rewarded. On the other hand, the aim of the CSR concept is to build a responsible culture at organizational and individual level. If firms continue to sustain CSR activities, the purpose of concept is fulfilled (to some extent, all parties involved win). Thus, before being transformational, CSR is transactional. It is inefficient for an organization to communicate solely on the basis of good intentions considering the general reluctance of individuals. Moreover, taking into account the practical nature of CSR, transformational leaders should be motivated to comprehend the concept and integrated it in their behavior while maintaining their particularities and ways of working with the members of the group.

5. Conclusions

Human resources are currently in the limelight for businesses. Employers are searching for people who can alter and sustain an organization's goals, in addition to having the necessary skills and expertise. Companies are on the lookout for allies, respectively individuals who understand and support their mission. Moreover, these individuals should have the ability to train and eventually retain other employees. As a result, the formation of meaningful relationships has become a means of achieving loyalty. At first side, CSR leadership and a transformational leader appear to be an excellent match that might aid businesses with this matter. On the hand, transformational leader are hard to find. Therefore, the findings of the present study sustain that firms should strive for transactional leaders. Individuals nowadays are mostly concerned with obtaining personal benefits. As a result, they may view the variable of reward as a motivator to perform in accordance with expectations. Hence, promoting CSR leadership through transformational leaders has the potential to help the company achieve its goals while also increasing its credibility among diverse stakeholders.

Additionally, the results outline the idea that the number of the transformational leader is quite low comparing with the remaining leadership styles and considering the literature review based particularities identified for this typology of leader. For instance, it may be assumed that female leaders are more inclined to adopt a CSR transformational leadership behavior due to the native maternal instinct present in most cases. From a historical perspective, the social status of women shows an impressive evolution. For example, considering the emblematic moment presented in the Holy Scriptures, namely the creation of humanity, the woman can be perceived as the companion of the man. Therefore, their role in Christian communities is quite limited compared to that of men and is largely limited to women's ability to procreate. Although the beginning was not promising or favorable for supporting the development of women, in modern society gender equality is promoted, starting from professional and family opportunities. Women's emancipation is currently being pursued. As a result, women hold key or leadership positions in organizations, albeit in far lesser numbers than men.

According to current studies, female leaders have the following traits: persuasion, empathy, flexibility, charisma, and the ability to take risks. Consequently, the leadership styles employed by women can be deemed transformational at first glance. On the other hand, women leaders are more likely to feel compelled to demonstrate, assert themselves, and earn the respect of their subordinates. The social perception of women and the position expected of them is the major impediment they encounter in their relationships with employees. Emotion, sensitivity, sacrifice, maternal instinct, and the ability to construct and sustain others are frequently associated with the concept of woman. Some of these features are illustrative for the modern leader's theoretical description. On the other hand, at the non-declarative level the leader is associated with the term power (transmitted through attitude, behavior, physical presence and mentality). As a result, a disproportionately large number of women in leadership positions compensate for this ideological image centered on the female gender by adopting a stricter, authoritarian, and even slightly masculinized demeanor. They often use apparent harshness to ensure that they are respected and listened to by others. Therefore, it can be said that some women are inclined or

aspire to acquire a different behavior than the one considered native when they take over leadership position, due to the expectations they face at social level. In conclusion, transformational leadership in practice is less popular among female representatives as well. Consequently, they are inclined to adopt a transactional, democratic or participative leadership style (specific also to men leaders). Furthermore, it can be stated that CSR leadership is not a matter of gender and transformational leadership is, to some extent, an ideological concept. In practice or daily live, CSR leadership may be adopted by transactional, democratic or participative leaders. Hence, the transition from companies which enhanced social missions (for example, reduce poverty) to those which focus more on the sustainable issues (reduce their negative environmental footprint) may be perceived as a compelling argument in this regards. Nowadays, firms are focusing their CSR efforts on the sustainable pillar because the return is more in line with their expectations. Together, CSR and leadership, sustain the collective win.

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