

Corporate Social Responsibility in Saudi Arabia: Application of Carroll's Model

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Abstract

Unquestionably, the positive effects of corporate social responsibility (CSR) on consumer behaviour is well documented in prior literature. However, there have been few academic endeavours examine the Carroll's CSR Pyramid (1991) to explore the CSR experience from the young consumers' perspectives in the Middle East. To gain an in-depth understanding of CSR, this study conducts qualitative interviews with young Saudi consumers using the conceptual framework of Carroll's Pyramid. This study contributes to existing literature by revealing that young Saudi consumers recognise all four types of the responsibilities. However, they have different priorities, rather than the notion of economic responsibility being the foundational building block of CSR as articulated by Carroll. The findings also reveal that Islamic values, through philanthropy, must underpin any CSR practice. In addition, the proposed Islamic CSR pyramid has emerged from this study signifies that organisations should consider paying the Zakat as an obligation, always behave in an ethical manner and prioritise societal interest over maximising shareholder values. Overall, the study finds that Carroll's (1991) model is useful but inverted in the context of Saudi Arabia. The findings are particularly relevant for advancing CSR conception from Islamic perspectives.

Keywords - Corporate social responsibility (CSR); Carroll's Pyramid; Islamic values; Saudi Arabia

1. INTRODUCTION

“The challenge for corporate social responsibility (CSR) in developing countries is framed by a vision that was distilled in 2000 into the Millennium Development Goals ‘a world with less poverty, hunger and disease, greater survival prospects for mothers and their infants, better educated children, equal opportunities for women, and a healthier environment’ (UN, 2006: 3). Unfortunately, these global aspirations remain far from being met in many developing countries today”

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) referred to as ‘Saudi Arabia’ in this article] is located in the far south-west of Asia and bordered by Jordan, and Iraq on the north and northeast, Kuwait, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates on the east, Oman on the southeast, and Yemen on the south (see Fig. 1). According to General Authority for Statistics (2017), the total population of Saudi Arabia is 31.7m (as at 2016) and the youth segment (15–24 years) stands at around 4.79m of the total population. The two holiest places for Muslims are the Holy Mosque in Mecca and the Prophet Mosque in Madinah, both of which are located in Saudi Arabia.

According to Saudi Arabian Cultural Mission (2018), “Saudi Arabia is a founding member of Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), United Nations, League of Arab States, Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), and Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC); member of many international organizations, including the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the World Trade Organization (WTO); and signatory of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty”. The culture of Saudi Arabia is defined by its Islamic heritage, its historical role as an ancient trade centre, and its Bedouin traditions (Saudi Arabian Cultural Mission, 2018).



Figure 1. Map of Saudi Arabia (Source: <https://legacy.lib.utexas.edu>)

2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORY

Although corporate social responsibility is not an undiscovered phenomenon, it has not been investigated equally all over the world. Previous studies focused on the role of developed countries like the USA, Europe, and Australia to implement corporate social responsibility (Hofman, Moon, & Wu, 2015). The way to deal with CSR varied globally and also depends on situational factors such as profit margin of the organization,

the role of institutional investors and so on (Dyck, Lins, Roth, & Wagner, 2019). Recent studies investigated the role of multinational enterprises (MNEs) who spend a significant amount in corporate social responsibility (Asmussen & Fosfuri, 2019), the role of stakeholders in corporate social responsibility (Aguinis & Glavas, 2017), role of social networking and media entrepreneurship (Hossain, 2019), peer effect of CSR (Cao, Liang, & Zhan, 2019) and sustainable development (Astrakhantseva, 2019). Cause marketing, cause-related marketing or corporate social marketing (Shashidhar, Murugaiah, & Gonchkar, 2019) can be the way of sustainable development as discovered by the researchers recently. These all are part of corporate social responsibility includes providing fund, volunteering or even raising awareness for a social issue.

The role of the government to promote corporate social responsibility from the EU perspective has been discovered and revealed the importance and effectiveness of government in boosting CSR (Whitford & Provost, 2018). As stated earlier, more and more research on CSR has been conducted in developed nations in various aspects, however, the scenario is still under the shadow in the Asian region. Many countries in the Asian region are known as Muslim countries and they have specific Islamic principle which is indirectly a part of corporate social responsibility. Some of these principles are investigated, however, the understanding about the Islamic principle and CSR need deeper understanding. Islamic perspective and the role of CSR is lack of investigation (Darrag & E-Bassiouny, 2013), in spite of the empowered Muslim consumer sector. Among Asian nations, China currently catches the attention of the scholars and identified as one of the best examples of CSR practice among emerging economies (Fornes, Lopez, Bierens de Haan, & Blanch, 2019). On the other hand, the same has not been investigated in the Middle East Asian regions.

CSR is not considered as expenditure according to a recent investigation. Rather, studies revealed that the CSR performance of the organization and financial performance are positively correlated (Cho, Chung, & Young, 2019). The total growth rate of company asset may depend on the social contribution of the company (Cho, Chung, & Young, 2019). CSR activities also can affect sustainable growth and reputation of the organization. Another recent study revealed that CSR can maximize corporate value and help the organization for sustainable development (Lee & Lee, 2019). So, sustainable development and CSR is closely associated and discussed in the current literature. However, CSR experience from the young consumers' perspective, especially in the Middle East region, has not been discovered yet according to our knowledge and investigation. As the perception of CSR is always changing, it is a complex phenomenon to handle CSR in a timely manner with the right decision in right time (Lee & Lee, 2019) to ensure sustainable organizational development.

Managers responsible for handling CSR should be responsible and committed to achieving the target of CSR adaption process as investigated in the scholarly article (Osagie, Wesselink, Blok, & Mulder, 2016). Individual competencies were highlighted in this regard for the adaption process of CSR. Based on a survey in a Polish construction company, the researchers investigated the employee's perception about CSR practice in organization, cultural dimension and the effect, long-term orientation and so on (Kucharska & Kowalczyk, 2018). These all are influential factors in sustainable development and improved performance. As a result, the exiting literature examined CSR not only in a business perspective but also examined the individual perspective and the effect for long term development.

Based on the above discussion extracted from the scrutinized literature review, it is evident that the existing literature revealed CSR in multidimensional perspective including individual and organizational viewpoint. However, Carroll's CSR Pyramid in this context is still under the shadow. Revealing the concept of CSR with Carroll's CSR Pyramid in the Middle East region would fill the gap in the existing literature and help the managers, organizations, and decision-makers to handle CSR smoothly with a different viewpoint. Therefore, the goal of this study is to discover the Corporate Social Responsibility in Saudi Arabia with the application of Carroll's CSR Model which is shown in the following sections.

3. CARROLL'S CSR PYRAMID: TOTAL CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY (CARROLL, 1991A)

Carroll's (Carroll, 1991) four-pyramid model provides four different responsibilities, Philanthropic, Ethical, Legal, and Economic in order to achieve best practice in CSR. Figure 1 shows the four types of responsibilities.

Figure 1 portrays four types of responsibilities: economic responsibilities, legal responsibilities, ethical responsibilities, and philanthropic responsibilities (Carroll, 1991). According to Carroll (Carroll, 1991). (p. 40) "...these four categories or components of CSR might be depicted as a pyramid. To be sure, all of these kinds of responsibilities have always existed to some extent, but it has only been in recent years that ethical and philanthropic functions have taken a significant place". In particular, economic responsibility is the fundamental element to the CSR pyramid; the legal responsibilities come from political conditions; and finally, ethical and philanthropic responsibilities come from societal conditions. The organisations can contribute to the economy through making profit but need to comply with regulation, be ethical, and be good corporate citizen. Carroll's CSR pyramid (Carroll, 1991). was based on an earlier study of a three-dimensional conceptual model of corporate social performance (Carroll, 1979). Later, Carroll utilised this model in various contexts (Carroll, 1999; Carroll, 2015; Carroll, 2015; Carroll & Shabana, 2010). In recent, Carroll (Carroll, 2016) (p. 2) argues that:

"This set of four responsibilities creates a foundation or infrastructure that helps to delineate in some detail and to frame or characterize the nature of businesses' responsibilities to the society of which it is a part".

Carroll's CSR pyramid (Carroll, 1991) has been used by many studies (Abdeen, Rajah, & Gaur, 2016). However, only two studies focused on consumers' perceptions of CSR in Islamic countries, namely Indonesia and Malaysia (Arlı & Lasmono, 2010). Arlı and Lasmono (Arlı & Lasmono, 2010) conclude Indonesian consumers believe that the organisations should support on CSR initiatives including social and economic issues. This government alone cannot solve this issue. They also find that consumers purchase from an organisation with good image and reputation. Arguing in a similar vein, Mohamad Yunus (2017) investigate the consumers' purchase intentions and CSR in Malaysia. They find that Malaysian consumers consider the economic responsibility as a fundamental element of CSR, followed by philanthropic responsibility, ethical responsibility, and legal responsibility. In addition, they argue that organisation's irresponsible behaviour can spread through internet and face heavy criticisms. In this case, if the organisation ignores CSR could also face risk of boycotts from consumers (Abdeen, Rajah, & Gaur, 2016).

Most of the studies on consumers' perceptions on CSR are predominantly based on quantitative survey research which fails to provide a rich understanding of the issue (Abdeen, Rajah, & Gaur, 2016). As the result, to achieve the aims of the study, we adopted the interpretive paradigm – qualitative interviews which is discussed in detail in the next section.

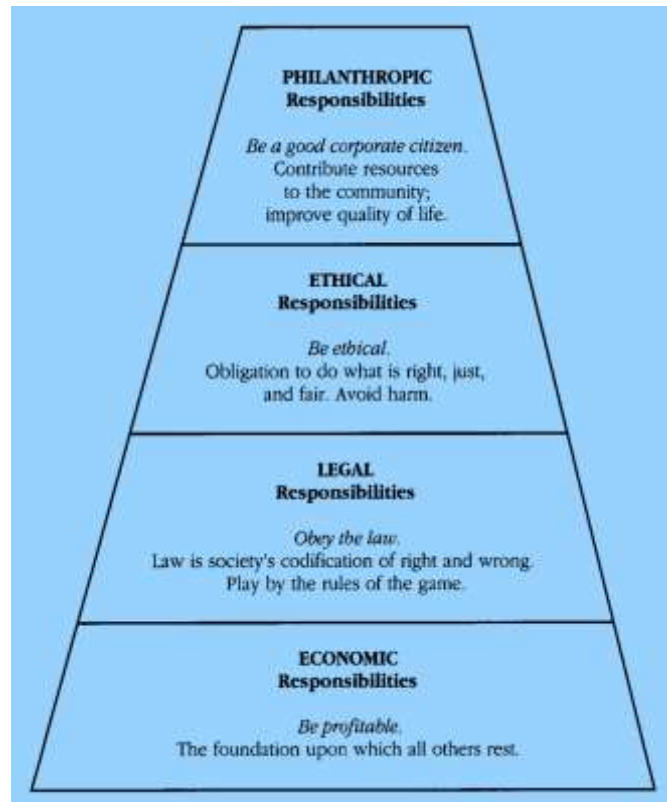


Figure 2. Carroll's Total Corporate Social Responsibility Pyramid (Carroll, 1991, p. 42) [7].



Fig. 3 CSR pyramid for developing countries 489

4. METHODS

The study utilized mixed methods: survey and interviews. The surveys were conducted

This study has adopted an interpretivist approach –qualitative interviews. This approach offers a rich understanding of the issues (e.g. this study focuses on the meaning of social phenomena rather than measurement (Collis & Hussey, 2014). The data was collected through in-depth semi-structured interview qualitative research. This method was deemed most appropriate to explore themes and identify issues that would remain hidden (De Ruyter & Scholl, 1998). The study also used non-probability technique of sampling.

The respondents were selected from two major provinces in Saudi Arabia: a) Riyadh and b) Tabouk (see Figure 1). The red symbol of Figure 1 indicates the study location of two provinces. Riyadh is the capital of Saudi Arabia, having 15 municipal districts and more than 6 million people. According to the Ministry of Interior (Ministry of Interior, 2014), the population of Riyadh is composed of Saudi families with 65% and non-Saudi families and employment with 35%. The increase of the economic capabilities of Riyadh city including: large population growth, and employment opportunities growth. On the other hand, Tabuk, is the capital city of the Tabuk Region (northwestern) with population of 0.79 million. Geographically, it is close to the Jordan–Saudi Arabia border.

Three main conditions were set before conducting any interview: age group and nationality. It means that the age group should be between 18-26, and the participants should be Saudi National. Finally, the participants are regular customer (purchase products frequently, i.e. at least once a month). Table 1 presents the overview of the 34 interviewees of the study. According to [33] (p. 429) “...qualitative sample sizes of ten may be adequate for sampling among a homogenous population ...Others state that qualitative sample sizes of 20-30 are typically conducted by researchers to establish data saturation using a grounded theory approach to qualitative inquiry However, no evidence is presented as the basis for this latter sample size claim”. Table 1 shows that the highest number of participants were between the age group of 18-20 (15 interviewees). The

other age groups were: 21-23 (9 interviewees), and 24-26 (10 interviewees). In terms of gender, 21 participants were male and 13 were females. The majority (8 of 13) were students. Overall, 20 of 34 participants were students. Each participant was interviewed separately. The female participant was interviewed by the female researcher of the study. This is because the male researcher could not conduct the female participants due to the cultural customs of Saudi Arabia. The interview was conducted in Arabic and then transcribed into English. Each interviewee was coded as I1.... I34. The data were analysed following four steps: transcription of interview, developing codes, developing categories, and drawing conclusion. The interviews were analysed through NVivo 10 qualitative data analysis software. All responses were categorised into themes according to Carroll Pyramid. Two researchers of the study read twice the transcriptions in order to find out any discrepancy in translation. However, no such issues were found.

Table 1. Interviewees' profile.

Interviewee Code	Sex	Occupation	Age Group
I1	Female	Student	18-20
I2	Male	Student	18-20
I3	Male	Student	18-20
I4	Female	Student	18-20
I5	Male	Student	18-20
I6	Female	Student	18-20
I7	Male	Student	18-20
I8	Male	Student	18-20
I9	Male	Student	21-23
I10	Male	Student	21-23
I11	Male	Student	18-20
I12	Male	Student	18-20
I13	Female	Financial risk analyst	21-23
I14	Female	Investment banking analyst	21-23
I15	Female	Student	21-23
I16	Female	Lecturer	24-26
I17	Female	Student	18-20
I18	Female	Legal officer	24-26
I19	Male	Student	18-20
I20	Male	Student	21-23
I21	Male	Retailer (Branch manager)	24-26
I22	Male	Legal officer	24-26
I23	Male	Computer specialist	24-26
I24	Male	Car Dealer	24-26
I25	Male	Treasurer	24-26

Interviewee Code	Sex	Occupation	Age Group
I26	Male	Product development specialist	24-26
I27	Male	Data entry specialist	24-26
I28	Male	Secretary	21-23
I29	Female	Customer service officer	24-26
I30	Female	Student	21-23
I31	Female	Trainee	21-23
I32	Female	Student	18-20
I33	Female	Student	18-20
I34	Female	Student	18-20

Note: I = Interviewee; I1 = Interviewee No.1.

5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

5.1. New Definitions of CSR

As indicated in introduction, there are many definitions of CSR, and indeed no universally agreed definition. From the interviews, it is found that the majority of participants (25 participants) consider CSR a voluntary initiatives of organisations whilst 9 participants consider it as a mandatory initiative. According to the interviewees, the government should play a major role in developing the role of the organisations regarding CSR in Saudi Arabia.

Table 2 presents the views of the participants regarding the definitions of CSR. It is observed from Table 2, the majority of the interviewees argue that the organisations should be more responsible in the form of giving back to society (e.g., donations). The interviewees also stress that companies use various forms of CSR initiatives including creating new jobs and protecting the environment. The results also show that job creation is seen as one of the important responsibility. This is mainly because the majority participants are young in this study, and they recognise that the unemployment rate in Saudi Arabia is high, and hence they consider to reduce it (Reinman, 2010).

Table 2. CSR Definitions from Participants.

Interviewees	CSR Definition
I2	I think CSR means creating jobs, donations, caring about environment. The CSR also includes caring about employees and customers.
I7	The CSR is the responsibility for the community. This responsibility can be in the form of donating money or moral support
I18	I believe that the CSR should be the balance between profitability of the company and socially responsible
I15	I do strongly believe that CSR means the giving back (e.g. donations) to the society
I28	I feel the CSR is more about positive image building of the company. This means that the company wants to present them to the public that they are very responsible to the society
I26	The CSR is a broad idea. I believe the CSR is the connection or communication between the company and the society. I also strongly believe that the CSR should be the norms or values to each company. In our society, some companies are certainly taking many initiatives.
I21	I have heard the term 'CSR' in one of my courses last year. But unfortunately I forgot the real meaning of it.
I23	I feel the company has a bigger role in developing our Saudi society. In this regard, the companies need to be more participative, cooperative, and responsive.
I34	As you know there are many companies doing great job in addressing the CSR in Saudi Arabia. In my opinion, CSR is the responsibility to the society and protecting the environment. The CSR is to create more jobs in order to reduce the unemployment in our country.

By analysing the comments from all 34 interviews, CSR can be defined as "All initiatives that a company consider has a positive impact on employees, shareholders, society and the environment".

5.2. Awareness of CSR

The interviewees were asked about the awareness level of CSR among young consumers in Saudi Arabia. The majority interviewees agreed that there is a low level awareness of the current CSR. The nine interviewees only believe that there is moderate level of awareness exist among young Saudi consumers. This is because young consumers are very active in social media and very responsive to the irresponsible behaviour of any organisation. These interviewees also mention that CSR concept is sometimes limited to ecology and environment. According to these participants, four primary sources of CSR information: social media, family, education, and work experience. One interviewee in particular demonstrate that "...as a medical professional, it is one of our values and responsibilities to be socially responsible, because we will be dealing with a lot of people which is part of society" [I20]. Another interviewee [I15] were aware about the concept from a business course in an international school in Riyadh. He also mentions that international schools teach CSR but the local schools do not include any subjects on CSR.

5.3. Views on Carroll's Pyramid in Saudi Arabia

5.3.1. Economic Responsibility

According to CSR Pyramid, economic responsibility is the first pillar of responsibility. Carroll (Carroll, 1991) therefore argues that profit is fundamentally important motive for any organisation and the social responsibility comes second. One interviewee put it in the following way:

"Well, I believe that organisations should strongly feel about their responsibility to the economy; As part of this, they may strategically introduce some projects to be beneficial to the economy and society they operate in". [I5]

Similarly, another interviewee agrees with Carroll's argument saying that:

"The societal issue should be secondary. At first, the organisations need to focus on making profit because they will be unable to contribute to society without profit". [I29]

"Organisations should support society and play a part in developing the country, especially the big companies that have huge budgets". [I16]

However, several interviewees consider risky strategy of making profit only. The organisations may become more selfish and will care themselves only. These interviewees also emphasise that large organisations should more contribute regarding the country's economic standing, create jobs, and support local communities. Interestingly, some interviewees mention that company may fulfil economic obligation by creating more jobs. Two interviewee stated that:

"In Saudi Arabia, we import lots of products from outside. If we produce some of the products companies may create new jobs which will be beneficial to our economy". [I4]

"Organisations should focus on reducing uprising unemployment rate. Profit is not the only parameter of success in today's world". [I33]

5.3.2. Legal Responsibility

This is the second element of Carroll's CSR pyramid. The interviewees argue that there is no CSR related regulation in Saudi Arabia. As a result, many organisations do not bother to apply it. The interviewees also call for a CSR regulation in near future. The following interviewees stated that:

"I believe that the government must enact CSR regulations to protect the rights of employees and society". [I8]

"The government should develop policy to manage the CSR activities and to force company to do so". [I19]

Some participants also believe that the government should enforced the CSR regulation with the view of creating a support to the society. Interestingly, there were some disagreements amongst the interviewees: some participants agreed to make CSR regulations whilst others disagreed because they believe CSR is an optional strategy. The interviewees also perceive that paying the Zakat is an Islamic obligation and essential component. Organisation should have the right to choose whether they want to do more in term of CSR initiatives or not. This could be done through self-willingness rather introducing new regulation.

5.3.3. Ethical Responsibility

Ethical responsibility is the third element of Carroll's CSR pyramid. The majority of the interviewees ranked ethical responsibility is second most important element in CSR pyramid. The participants viewed that Islamic values and ethics are one of the core components in Islam. Two interviewees said:

"From Islamic point of view, ethics is one of the most important elements that any company must follow. What does Islam teach us? Off course we need to be ethical to the society". [I19]

"As a Muslim, we fear of God. Hence, the organisations should operate business in an ethical manner". [I25]

Saeed et al. (Saeed, Ahmed, & Mukhtar, 2001) argue that profit motives or profit maximisation is not based on Islamic values. Islamic values create a link between profit and societal benefit. The findings of the study are similar to the view of Miller and Deiss (Miller & Deiss, 1996) who argue that organisations need to develop an ethical corporate culture.

Indeed, the participants also stated that organisations should be fair and transparent to its all stakeholders. Some interviewees demonstrate the organisations should avoid unethical behaviour including political benefits, increase prices, and discrimination. These finding of the study are similar to the two studies (Siwar & Hossain, 2009). Siwar and Hossain (Siwar & Hossain, 2009) strongly suggest that organisations should avoid any form of discrimination. Specificaaly, Almoharby (Almoharby, 2011) claims that all people are equal regardless of their colour, race, gender, and characteristics. As a result, the Islamic background of participants affects their perception toward corporate responsibility especially in terms of ethical responsibility.

5.3.4. Philanthropy Responsibility

According to Carroll's CSR pyramid, philanthropy responsibility is the fourth element. The philanthropy from an Islamic point of view is quite different. According to the participants, Islamic philanthropy is one of the imperative constituent of Muslim obligations. Two forms of philanthropy in Islam: Zakat and Sadaqa. Zakat is an Islamic obligation. As prescribed in the Quran, all Muslims individuals and organisations should pay 2.5% of the

profit once a year to people in need. The organisations could do more donations through Sadaqa (i.e. voluntary donation). The findings are in consistent with Almoharby (Almoharby, 2011) who argues that CSR in Islam denotes as a religious and moral obligation.

Importantly, the interviewees mention that the organisations should donate privately which is the key elements of philanthropy in Islam. In other words, Muslims should not publicise the donation because the recipient may feel embarrassment. Nevertheless, the participants mention that some companies are donating with the real intention to media coverage and publicity. Accordingly, the real intention of donation is also important parameter of CSR activities from Islamic perspective. The findings also suggest that publicity intention could lead to hypocrisy which is prohibited in Islam.

Most of the participants (30 out of 34) strongly believe that the organisations should consider CSR activities as an investment from the Islamic point of view. By doing so, the organisations will receive the reward from the God. The findings reveal that the interviewees with Islamic background perceive the CSR almost in every aspect. This view is supported by (Siwar & Hossain, 2009) (p. 290) who argues “Islam is not only a religion, but is also a guideline for the complete way of life”. Accordingly, business ethics cannot be separated from ethics in the other aspects of a Muslim’s daily life (Almoharby, 2011).

5.4. Proposed Islamic CSR Model [Revised Carroll's CSR Pyramid]

Based on the findings of the study, it can be argued that Carroll’s CSR pyramid (Carroll, 1991) is supported in Saudi Arabia. However, participants have different views in terms of the order of four responsibilities of CSR pyramid. Accordingly, we propose a modified CSR pyramid from an Islamic perspective (please see Figure 3). The participants do not consider the economical responsibility as the fundamental building block of CSR. According to the participants, Islamic values as a fundamental building block underpins the CSR decisions of organisations. Therefore, under the Islamic philanthropy organisations that practice CSR must pay the Zakat. As mentioned earlier that Zakat is the mandatory Islamic obligation and is the minimum practice of CSR. The majority participants believe that ethical responsibility should be the second block of CSR pyramid. The organisations need to apply Islamic values and behave in an ethical and responsible manner to the society. According to the participants, legal responsibility should be the third and economic responsibility as the fourth respectively. Based on the Islamic CSR pyramid, the economic responsibility positioned at the top of the pyramid only after three elements. The results also do not support Friedman’s (Friedman, 1970) argument who argue that the major objective of the organisation is to maximise shareholder’s values. To sum up, the results of the study demonstrates that the CSR pyramid is converted upside down from Islamic context.

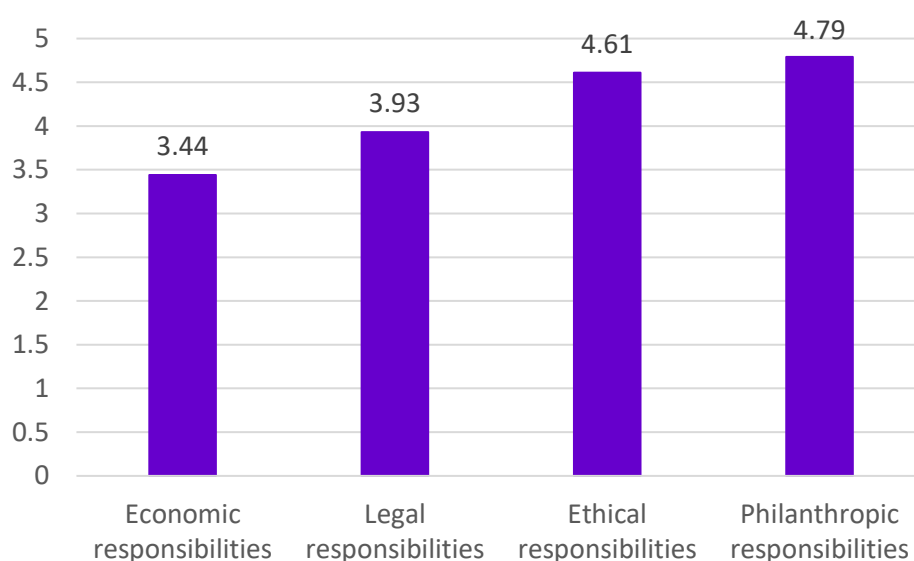




Figure 3. Carroll's Model Application in Saudi Arabia

6. CONCLUSION, LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Due to lack of research in the Middle East (Choi & La, 2013; Fatma & Rahman, 2016; Aitken & Watkins, 2016; Alvarado-Herrera, Bigne, Aldas-Manzano, & Curras-Perez, 2015) this study explores the consumer perceptions on CSR in Saudi Arabia. Applying Carroll's model, this study reveals that internalising CSR is the basic principle under Islamic value-oriented CSR. Importantly, the study finds an inverted Carroll's model in Saudi Arabia. This finding also raises challenge for western multinationals which are more toward public displays oriented. The findings have some implications for future study. For example, CSR managers should understand the local values in implementing CSR strategy. In particular, multinational companies' managers should stress the value orientation of CSR in a country where the business operates. This is due to the fact that one strategy may not fit for all countries. Since this study only covers two administrative areas in Saudi Arabia, the generalisability of the study is not possible. The future study could focus on an increase in sample size and covering more administrative areas. Future study could also focus on the perspectives of students from various disciplines (Business Major Students, Engineering major students, Computer Science major students).

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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