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Responsabilidad social empresarial y competitividad de microempresas comerciales de Escárcega, Campeche

***Corporate Social Responsibility and competitiveness of commercial
microenterprises in Escárcega, Campeche***

***Responsabilidade social corporativa e competitividade de microempresas
comerciais em Escárcega, Campeche***

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Resumen

Como exigencia de la sociedad, la responsabilidad social empresarial (RSE) ha cobrado relevancia y se ha documentado en las corporaciones y empresas de gran tamaño. Se ha dejado de lado la importancia que tiene esta en las microempresas, dado que estas representan más del 90% de la actividad económica en algunos países, como México. El objetivo de este trabajo fue identificar la relación entre la responsabilidad social empresarial (RSE) y la competitividad en microempresas del sector comercial del municipio de Escárcega, Campeche; el estudio presentó un enfoque mixto, no experimental y diseño transversal, con alcance correlacional-comparativo. Participaron 287 microempresas seleccionadas mediante muestreo intencional (no probabilístico). Se elaboró un cuestionario validado por cinco expertos, la fiabilidad del instrumento se obtuvo usando el coeficiente de alfa de Cronbach (α) con valor de 0.965. Los resultados indicaron una fuerte relación positiva entre la responsabilidad social empresarial (RSE) y la competitividad observada en las microempresas. Las pruebas de comparación (Mann-Whitney) mostraron diferencias en los niveles de competitividad según la antigüedad y el número de trabajadores. Se concluyó que la competitividad se relaciona con la implementación y la adopción de prácticas responsables que beneficien su crecimiento, lo que favorece el desarrollo y la supervivencia de las empresas en su entorno.



Palabras clave: responsabilidad social empresarial, competitividad, microempresas.

Abstract

As a societal demand, corporate social responsibility has been recognized and documented by corporations and large companies, while the importance of its role in microenterprises, which represent more than 90% of economic activity in some places, like México, has been overlooked. The objective of this work was to identify the relationship between corporate social responsibility (CSR) and competitiveness in microenterprises in the municipality of Escárcega, Campeche. The study employed a mixed-methods, non-experimental, cross-sectional design with a correlational and comparative scope. 287 microenterprises participated, selected through purposive non-probability sampling. A questionnaire validated by five experts was developed, and the instrument's reliability was obtained through Cronbach's alpha ($\alpha = 0.965$). The results indicated a strong positive relationship between corporate social responsibility and competitiveness in microenterprises. The comparison tests (Mann-Whitney) showed differences in microenterprises' competitiveness according to longevity and number of employees. It was concluded that competitiveness is associated with responsible practices that foster growth, favoring the development and survival of companies in their environment.

Keywords: corporate social responsibility, competitiveness, microenterprises.

Resumo

Como demanda social, a responsabilidade social corporativa (RSC) tem sido relevante e amplamente documentada por grandes corporações e empresas. No entanto, sua importância nas microempresas tem sido negligenciada, visto que essas empresas representam mais de 90% da atividade econômica em alguns países, como o México. O objetivo deste estudo foi identificar a relação entre a responsabilidade social corporativa (RSC) e a competitividade em microempresas do setor comercial do município de Escárcega, Campeche. O estudo empregou uma metodologia mista, não experimental, com delineamento transversal e abordagem correlacional-comparativa. Participaram 287 microempresas, selecionadas por amostragem intencional (não probabilística). Um questionário foi desenvolvido e validado por cinco especialistas; a confiabilidade do instrumento foi estabelecida por meio do coeficiente alfa de Cronbach (α), obtendo-se um valor de 0,965. Os resultados indicaram uma

forte relação positiva entre a responsabilidade social corporativa (RSC) e a competitividade nas microempresas. Testes comparativos (teste U de Mann-Whitney) mostraram diferenças nos níveis de competitividade em função da idade da empresa e do número de funcionários. Concluiu-se que a competitividade está ligada à implementação e adoção de práticas responsáveis que beneficiam o crescimento, fomentando o desenvolvimento e a sobrevivência das empresas em seu ambiente.

Palavras-chave: responsabilidade social corporativa, competitividade, microempresas.

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Introduction

Changes in society have been relevant for improving or modifying the course of the role of organizations (companies) and their impact on communities. Economic growth and the way business is conducted are no exception. The concept of corporate social responsibility (CSR) has been consolidated as “the response of the largest multinational companies, in the context of their economic hegemony, to the pressures and demands of multiple groups in civil society” (Hernández & Ramiro, 2009, p. 276).

The definition of corporate social responsibility (CSR) offered by the Commission of the European Communities is perhaps the most successful and points to this concept as a voluntary integration (by companies) of social and environmental concerns into their business operations and their relationships with *stakeholders* (Commission of the European Communities, 2001). Originating as a reaction of large companies towards the social dimension, the essence of CSR is explained by Aset (2014), under the perspective that organizations should commit to providing greater education to society; a good and clear relationship with consumers; good labor treatment as well as respect for human rights and laws of the society where the companies are located; fighting against corruption and the care and protection of the environment.

According to data from Dini and Stumpo's book for the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), in Latin America (according to the formal economy), micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) represent 99.5% of businesses, and according to that number, the vast majority are micro-enterprises (88.4 % of the total). This distribution has remained relatively stable over the last decade, although a slight reduction in micro-enterprises has been reported for various reasons (Dini & Stumpo, 2020).

On the other hand, the National Institute of Statistics and Geography (INEGI, 2020) shows that the majority of companies in Mexico are micro-enterprises and represent more than 90% of the total number of businesses, employing just over 70% of the economically active population; in the state of Campeche, in 2020, there were approximately 37,000 economic units registered in the entity, most of which were retail businesses.

The National Statistical Directory of Economic Units (DENUÉ) records that the life expectancy of commercial establishments is at least 7.1 years. Furthermore, the microenterprise sector accounts for 97% of businesses in Mexico, and its composition is mostly informal, with some family-run organizations (INEGI, 2021). Additionally, the stratification of micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises is established according to the following criteria published in the Official Gazette of the Federation (DOF) and issued by the Ministry of the Interior (SEGOB) in 2009 (see Table 1, DOF, 2009):

Table 1. Stratification and characteristics of companies in Mexico

Size	Sector	Number of workers range	Annual sales amount range (mdp)	Maximum combined limit*
Microenterprise	All	Up to 10	Up to \$4 MXN	\$ 4.6 MXN
Small	Trade	From 11 to 30	From \$4.01 to \$100 MXN	\$ 93 MXN
	Industry and Services	From 11 to 50	From \$4.01 to \$100 MXN	\$ 95 MXN
Median	Trade	From 31 to 100	From \$100.01 to \$250 MXN	\$ 235 MXN
	Services	From 51 to 100	From \$100.01 to \$250 MXN	\$235 MXN
	Industry	From 51 to 250	From \$100.01 to \$250 MXN	\$ 250 MXN

Note: DOF (2009), Stratification and characteristics of companies in Mexico with data in the DOF. * Maximum Combined Limit = (Workers) X 10% + (Annual Sales) X 90%.

It is important to note that, according to the definition of a microenterprise (Table 1), microenterprises have a range of up to 10 employees. Finally, according to data from the Ministry of Finance and Public Credit (SHCP) in Mexico in 2017, micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) are concentrated in commerce, services, and the artisan industry, as well as in self-employment.

In Mexico, as indicated by Sánchez et al. (2019), the deficient competitiveness of micro-enterprises is one of the biggest problems and challenges faced by Mexican micro-industries; therefore, the organizations (micro-enterprises) remain in a static scenario, that is, without relevant changes in their growth and development.

Meléndez (2018) indicates that competitiveness is not a stage to be achieved, but rather a continuous process that, through joint efforts, leads to the acquisition of differentiating attributes, with results obtained in the long term. Furthermore, various researchers in the field of "business competitiveness" have attempted to develop methodologies to determine competitiveness in companies. The author considers indicators such as technology, innovation, culture, quality, and production. Likewise, Juárez and García (2000) add that the uniformity of the indicators used to measure competitiveness is not constant; therefore, they can be developed for specific aspects of interest and will depend on the components used to construct them. Finally, some authors state that competitiveness "becomes an indicator of efficiency, market presence, positioning, and advantage" (Jiménez et al., 2011, p. 216).

With reference to the above, Sánchez and Lardé (2006) point out that companies use the term competitiveness to mean the ability to compete in global markets with a global strategy, whereas for economists it is related to productivity and added value.

Only a few micro-enterprises identify the factors that define their competitiveness, making this topic complex and unfamiliar to this sector. This, in turn, reduces their ability to identify their own competitive advantage or the added value of their products and services, and limits their chances of survival due to a lack of information and a lack of interest in learning about and implementing formal and voluntary practices related to concepts such as Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR).

The goal of competitiveness, according to authors such as Vilanova, Lozano, and Arenas (2008), in relation to CSR, is to achieve prosperity for individuals by improving the country's standard of living. They suggest that, to achieve sustained prosperity over time, the nation (including businesses) needs to utilize its natural, human, and capital resources to achieve high levels of productivity.

Now, if we take into account the statistical data that highlight the enormous presence of micro-enterprises in society, Salaiza et al (2020) establish that CSR can become an element that contributes to greater competitiveness from a sustainable approach; likewise, due to the effect that SMEs have on the economy, the impact of these companies could generate a multiplier effect of development in society.

All of this background information has been very useful for understanding the relationship between CSR and competitiveness. Studies that isolate the concept have also generated work that seeks to reinforce the need for both in current organizations, specifically

in microenterprises. For authors such as Méndez, Rodríguez, and Cortez (2019), its importance in this context is partly due to CSR-related research that has been of interest to the academic and financial communities and that initially focused on the effect of CSR on companies' financial performance. Méndez, Rodríguez, and Cortez (2019) also point out that questions remain, such as whether companies achieve better performance by incorporating CSR practices, or whether companies that perform well have more resources to implement them. Furthermore, the question remains whether it is those companies, being larger and therefore more visible, that implement these practices. The unit of observation will be studied in the context of the suggested relationship between CSR and competitiveness, so the direction of causality with financial performance is purely informative regarding the generality of the concept.

Thus, both concepts are considered relevant for the formation of new demand standards for future and developing organizations, but even more so for those with a greater numerical and social presence, the micro-enterprises.

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) aims to satisfy the needs of stakeholders, which may include customers, employees, suppliers, and the surrounding community, enabling the company to contribute positively to society by engaging both internally and externally, while simultaneously generating long-term competitive benefits (Ortner, as cited in Lara & Sánchez, 2021). Based on this, as Porter and Kramer (2006) mention, CSR can be perceived as a strategy or tool that enhances an organization's competitiveness.

As previously mentioned, Mexico has a high percentage of microenterprises, and the southern region (specifically Campeche) also shows a similar rate. However, some statistical data found on the official website of the Mexican Ministry of the Interior (SEGOB) in 2016, within the compendium of economic and state information for Campeche, report that despite the number of businesses in the area, their contribution to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is less than that of other activities that contribute more to the population's GDP. Among the main activities are: oil mining (79.3%), construction (6.0%), commerce (2.8%), and real estate and rental services for movable and intangible assets. Together, these represent almost 90% of Campeche's state GDP; that is, one of the main sources of income comes from the tertiary sector, such as oil extraction.

Campeche is a state with low levels of social welfare (despite its high GDP per capita). According to Takahashi (2021) for the Nexos blog, referencing INEGI statistics, the metrics of Job creation and the number of employed people in Campeche are moderately

positive, but poverty and informality are high; in addition, it is the state in the country with the highest proportion of the population working in government. That is, the state has an oil-dependent economy, and the government has very limited other economic and industrial activities.

The National Statistical Directory of Economic Units (INEGI, 2016) indicates that the total number of economic units in the state was at least 40,213, representing approximately 0.8% of the total number of units in the country. By 2022, these figures had been decreasing due to changes and declines in oil activity in recent years, as well as the COVID-19 pandemic, which left devastation and a new normal in much of the world. This is relevant because Campeche's economy is complex. Within the state and in non-oil-producing areas (such as Escárcega and other municipalities similar to it), the situation is very different from the general GDP figures. However, due to the low population, these high indicators and this dependence are perceived as the only alternatives for economic development.

Escárcega, Campeche, is a young municipality created in 1939 and granted its status as the ninth municipality in July 1990. Despite the growth this population has experienced, and taking as a reference the INEGI (2019) in its latest Economic Census, the income of the state's population is based on the economic sectors listed below in order of impact: retail trade, temporary accommodation services, food and beverage preparation, other services excluding government activities, manufacturing, wholesale trade, health and social assistance services, business support services for waste management, cultural and sports recreation services, agriculture and animal husbandry, technical and scientific services, financial and/or insurance services, real estate or leasing services, educational services, transportation services, mass media information, mining, construction, and energy generation activities.

Therefore, the situation in Escárcega differs from that established at the state level, and that is why the competitiveness of businesses, especially micro-enterprises in the trade sector, would be so important for the area, since it provides a wide range of opportunities for growth or productive linkages when understood and defined along with the identification of concepts such as corporate social responsibility, which would determine a new future direction for its development as well as for the communities and interest groups to which these organizations (businesses) belong, potentially speaking of areas where commerce has a high presence.

Regarding CSR, considering the low level of social welfare in Campeche, Medina, Barroso and Ávila (2017) state that it is essential for these companies in the state to recognize the factors taken into account in the indicators of the relevant dimensions in this study (social, environmental and economic) of Social Responsibility, which of them are feasible to implement in their organizations and which are already implemented, whether planned or not, or are carried out by custom in the organization (not voluntary or formal).

Coliaza and López (2021) conclude in their study of 119 tourism companies in the municipality of Carmen, Campeche, that their findings indicate the high importance of CSR actions as an element of business innovation and a growth factor, since, in the globalized market, they provide a long-term competitive advantage.

Similarly, Magaña (2021), in his study of the perception of CSR in micro and small enterprises (MSMEs) in the capital of Campeche, indicates that while participants could identify the concept of Social Responsibility, their business vision did not include their involvement in environmental and social development, only in sustainable development. However, not all participants reported having access to altruistic events. Therefore, they considered the benefits of implementing social responsibility to be minimal, generally focusing on promoting their business and selling products and/or services.

Despite limited resources, these companies have integrated CSR into their business strategies, enabling them not only to become more sustainable but also to improve their competitiveness. These results align with the research objectives, as they confirm that CSR, beyond being an ethical responsibility, can function as a key strategic tool for SMEs (Becerra, 2025). It should be noted that microenterprises, due to their size and characteristics, play an important role in the business fabric, generating jobs and representing a daily workforce that drives every corner of the country. Villalobos (2024) considers it necessary to define CSR in terms of the conditions and actions of each economic entity as a Microenterprise Social Responsibility (MSR for future use), which includes those microenterprises that carry out voluntary social responsibility actions in their internal administrative management and in their relationship with the immediate environment, seeking well-being in the local economy, society, and natural resources. Furthermore, the micro-entrepreneur should assume a social commitment to inform his employees and the public about preventive measures for environmental care, from his establishment or through the social networks of the economic unit, even in the name of competitiveness.

Several studies show the relationship between CSR and competitiveness, the importance of the concepts, and their adoption; however, no studies were identified in the repositories consulted (Scielo, Dialnet, among others) on the relationship between CSR and competitiveness in the State of Campeche, nor are there any precedents in the municipality of Escárcega.

The objective of this work is to identify the relationship between corporate social responsibility and competitiveness in microenterprises in the municipality of Escárcega, Campeche.

Method

The present study has a mixed, non-experimental, cross-sectional design, of a correlational-comparative and descriptive type (data analysis).

Participants

For this work, 287 micro-enterprises participated through intentional (non - probabilistic) sampling during the month of September of the year 2023.

The surveyed microenterprises were integrated for the purposes of the research under the following inclusion criteria: belonging to the municipality of Escárcega, Campeche, having their operation active, being of the business of retail trade in one of the 26 different types of businesses, that is, that they are dedicated to retail marketing activities within the categories mentioned below: food and beverages, groceries, pets, cakes and pastry items, cell phone, meats and fresh products, among others; see Table 3 to observe the complete list.

Relevant points also included the requirement that companies meet the definition of a micro- enterprise by having 1 to 10 employees (see Table 1). For the data obtained, the valid categories were coded as having 1 to 5 employees and having 5 or more, with a maximum of 10 employees, in accordance with the Official Gazette of the Federation of Mexico regarding this stratification. Therefore, for this study, it was recoded into two categories: 1-5 and 6-10. The age of the micro-enterprises was then considered in two key aspects: 1 to 7 years of existence and 7 years or more. For this aspect (7 years), the life expectancy of businesses in Mexico was considered, specifically for companies of all sizes in the commercial sector, based on official INEGI statistical data (2020), with an average of 6.9 years.

72.1% (207 companies) of the total sample were 1-7 years old. 80 surveyed companies were 7 years or older, representing 27.9% of the total. This descriptive analysis is attached; see Table 2.

Table 2. Age of the microenterprise

Category	Frequency	Total	Cumulative
1 to 7 years	207	72.1%	72.1%
7 years and older	80	27.9%	100.0%

Note: Prepared by the author using data obtained through a survey (n=287). Processed in Jamovi 2.2.5.

The study's main inclusion criterion is that only microenterprises in the retail sector are considered in the sample. Among the participating companies, 26 different categories of goods were identified. The three most represented categories in the sample are: Groceries with 29.6% (85 microenterprises), Food and Beverages with 21.6% (63 microenterprises), and finally, Meat and Fresh Produce with 35 companies, equivalent to 12.2%. See Table 3 below.

Table 3. Categories of commercial microenterprises under study

Categories	Frequency	Total	Cumulative
Groceries	85	29.6%	29.6%
Food and beverages	63	21.9%	51.5%
Meat and fresh produce	35	12.2%	63.7%
Accessories, jewelry and gifts	16	5.6%	69.3%
Clothing and textiles	12	4.2%	73.5%
Footwear	9	3.1%	76.6%
Tortilla Shop	9	3.1%	79.7%
Hardware	8	2.8%	82.5%
Stationery	8	2.8%	85.3%
Makeup and beauty	7	2.4%	87.7%
Cakes and pastry items	5	1.7%	89.4%
Pharmacy and medicines	4	1.4%	90.8%
Motorcycle or car parts	4	1.4%	92.2%
Pets	3	1.0 %	93.2%
Cyber	3	1.0%	94.2%
Cellular telephony	2	0.7%	95.6%
Painting and maintenance	2	0.7%	96.3%
Cleaning supplies	2	0.7%	97%
Nail supplies	2	0.7%	97.7%
Smithy	2	0.7%	98.4%
Balanced animal feed	1	0.3%	98.7%

Handicrafts	1	0.3%	99%
Agricultural and beekeeping supplies	1	0.3%	99.3%
Solar supplies	1	0.3%	99.6%
Optics	1	0.3%	99.9%
Polyethylene and bags	1	0.3%	100%

Note: Prepared by the authors using data from the survey (n=287). The categories correspond to retail trade.

With reference to the number of workers in micro-enterprises, 92.2% of the sample had 1 to 5 workers, which corresponds to 265 units out of 287; the rest of the companies (22 micro-enterprises) represent 7.7% of the total, see Table 4:

Table 4. Number of workers in the microenterprise

Category	Frequency	% of Total	Cumulative %
1 to 5 workers	265	92.3%	92.3%
More than 5 workers	22	7.7%	100%

Note: Prepared by Jamovi using data obtained through a survey (n=287). Recoding criteria ("1-5 vs. 6-10").

Instrument

A questionnaire was designed as the instrument for this study. It is divided into two sections. The first section contains three *items* identifying the microenterprise, and the second section comprises 28 *items* derived from the two research variables. Some items were adapted from the theoretical framework used. This questionnaire was operationalized with dimensions (subscales): 14 *items* were linked to corporate social responsibility (CSR), and the other 14 were directly related to the competitiveness of the microenterprises. Each variable had its own subscales (dimensions). The questionnaire uses a Likert scale format (5), allowing respondents to indicate their level of agreement with the questions on a scale from "Strongly disagree" to "Strongly agree," with intermediate options of "Neutral,"

"Agree," and "Disagree." The questionnaire was administered using a survey technique. ISO 26000 was used as a reference and source for developing the *items*.

The instrument's reliability is supported by Cronbach's alpha. (α) for both variables, obtaining values greater than 0.90. (excellent ≥ 0.90) demonstrating high reliability both individually and globally, see Table 5:

Table 5. Reliability of the measuring instrument

Variable	Items	Cronbach's alpha (α)
Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)	14	0.933
Competitiveness	14	0.938
Global	28	0.965

Note: Prepared by the author using data from Jamovi, $n = 287$. α = Cronbach's alpha; CSR = corporate social responsibility.

Procedure

The designed questionnaire was subjected to an application process through the *Google Forms* application described in Leyva, Pérez, and Pérez (2018) as a support tool because *Google Forms* allows sending a survey, asking questions to a certain public (students, companies, etc.), or even collecting other types of data and information easily and efficiently.

Using digital questionnaires, the city of Escárcega was surveyed over an 18-day period. Micro-entrepreneurs were asked to answer all questions completely and objectively (the questionnaire did not allow for unanswered questions to avoid bias from forced responses and missing data that could affect the quality of the study and its results). Participants were informed of the confidentiality of their data, as it was part of an academic research project aimed at understanding the impact of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) on the competitiveness of micro-enterprises in the retail sector of Escárcega, Campeche. Through the survey, support and follow-up were provided to businesses to ensure the successful completion of the survey, which took place in September 2023.

At the end of data collection, the information was analyzed using Jamovi, a free statistical analysis program with a simple, intuitive, and user-friendly interface (Sánchez, 2019). Version 2.2.5 of the program was used in this study. According to The jamovi project (2022) is an open statistical software for desktop and cloud.

Spearman's rank correlation coefficient test (ρ) was used to test the relationship between corporate social responsibility (CSR) and competitiveness, given the identified non-normal distribution of the data, and the Mann-Whitney U test was used to validate the significant differences of company age and number of employees in competitiveness.

Results

The results for the variables show that CSR has ($M=48.71$, $Min=18$, $Max=70$, and $SD=13.21$). Competitiveness has ($M=51.72$, $Min=17$, $Max=70$ and $SD=12.51$). See Table 6.

Table 6. Integration of descriptives

			Statistical	Standard error of the mean (SEM)
CSR	Average		48.71	0.77
	95% confidence interval for the mean (CI)	Lower limit	47.17	
		Upper limit	50.24	
	Average reduced to 5%		48.90	
	Median		50.00	
	Variance		174.45	
	Standard deviation (SD)		13.21	
	Minimum		18.00	
	Maximum		70.00	
	Range		52.00	
	Interquartile range (IQR)		21.00	
	Asymmetry		-0.28	0.14
	Kurtosis		-0.89	0.28
Competitiveness	Average		51.72	0.73
	95% confidence interval for the mean (CI)	Lower limit	50.26	
		Upper limit	53.17	
	Average reduced to 5%		52.13	
	Median		53.00	
	Variance		156.62	

Standard deviation (SD)	12.51	
Minimum	17.00	
Maximum	70.00	
Range	53.00	
Interquartile range (IQR)	21.00	
Asymmetry	-0.35	0.14
Kurtosis	-0.79	0.28

Note: Original work, The jamovi Project (2025), provides a descriptive analysis of data obtained through a survey. The second column corresponds to the standard error.

In the normality tests, although Shapiro-Wilk is used with greater power to detect deviations from normality, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test stands out given the sample size (287), indicating a value where $p < 0.001$ with respect to the significance level used ($\alpha = .05$), as can be seen in Table 7, showing that the data are not normally distributed:

Table 7. Normality test

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^{to}			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistical	gl	Next.	Statistical	gl	Next.
CSR	0.078	287	< 0.001	0.962	287	< 0.001
Competitiveness	0.088	287	< 0.001	0.962	287	< 0.001

Source: Prepared by the authors from Jamovi using data obtained through a survey, $n = 287$.

Based on the previous test and the result (data not normally distributed), the non-parametric Spearman's rank correlation coefficient (ρ) was used. The data indicated a strong positive association between corporate social responsibility (CSR) and competitiveness, as evidenced by Spearman's rank correlation coefficient. (ρ) . See Table 8.

Table 8. Correlation Matrix

		CSR	Competitiveness
CSR	Spearman's coefficient (ρ)	-	
	p- value	-	
COMPETITIVENESS	Spearman's coefficient (ρ)	0.894	-
	p- value	<.001	-

Source: Prepared by the authors from Jamovi using data obtained through a two-tailed survey; $n = 287$; $\alpha = .05$

Comparative tests were used to identify statistically significant differences in competitiveness between the company identification variables (age of the microenterprise and number of workers).

Competitiveness based on age showed statistically significant differences. Companies older than 7 years had a higher median competitiveness score ($Me=56$) than companies younger than 7 years ($Me=51$), and this difference was significant ($U= 6513$, $p\text{-value} < 0.01$). See Table 9, which also includes the effect size (r) and the difference of means (95% confidence interval).

Table 9. Comparison and integration test of descriptives of the age of micro-enterprises

						95 % Confidence Interval					
		Statistica l	p	Differen ce of means	EE of the differen ce	Lower	Superi or			Effect Size	
COMPETITIVE NESS	Mann- Whitne y U	6513	0.00 5	5.00		-8.00	-1.00	Correlatio n biserie of ranks		0.213	
Integration of descriptives											
	Category	N	Average	Median	SD	HE					
COMPETITIVENES S	1 to 7 years	207	50.3	51	13.2	0.914					
	7 years and older	80	55.4	56	9.86	1.10					

Source: Prepared by the authors using data obtained through a survey, two-tailed tests; $\alpha = .05$. $r = Z/\sqrt{N}$. Prepared by the authors using survey data (n = 287).

Companies with more than 5 employees have a median competitiveness score (Me=59), while companies with 1 to 5 employees have a median competitiveness score (Me=52). This difference is statistically significant (U = 2000, p-value < 0.01). See Table 10, which includes the effect size (r) and the difference in means (95% confidence interval).

Table 10. Comparison and integration test of descriptive statistics of the number of workers

						95 % Confidence Interval			
		Statistical	p	Difference of means	EE of the difference	Lower	Superior		Effect Size
COMPETITIVENESS	Mann-Whitney U	2000	0.014	7.00		-12.00	-1.00	Correlation biserial of ranks	0.314
Integration of descriptives									
	Category		N	Average		Median		SD	HE
COMPETITIVENESS	1 to 5 Workers		265	51.2		52		12.7	0.780
	More than 5 Workers		22	58.3		59		7.65	1.63

Source: Prepared by the authors using data obtained through a survey, two-tailed tests; $\alpha = .05$. $r = Z/\sqrt{N}$. Prepared by the authors using survey data (n = 287).

Discussion

The objective of this research was to identify the relationship between corporate social responsibility (CSR) and the competitiveness of microenterprises in the municipality of Escárcega, Campeche.

The main finding indicated a strong relationship between corporate social responsibility (CSR) and competitiveness, as reported in the results (Spearman's $\rho = 0.894$, $p < .001$). This relationship has been previously discussed, as some authors, such as Meza (2007, as cited in Cárdenas and Ríos, 2016), suggest that CSR is associated with a company's ability to become more competitive, both through increased economic benefits and the essential role it plays in the positive development of factors necessary for the company's sustainability, survival, and successful long-term success. This study focuses on a specific company size (micro-enterprise).

It revealed that corporate social responsibility (CSR) is neither formal nor practiced voluntarily in most cases, as evidenced by items such as “Does your business’s mission, vision, and values include considerations on issues related to the company’s responsibility to society?” in which 45.6% responded negatively. Companies reported progress in technology,

corporate identity, and, in some cases, formal status (legal establishment and registration with tax authorities), which aligns with their competitiveness.

The theory presented in Lara and Sánchez (2021) coincides with the main results observed in the relationship, as it raises the importance of CSR for achieving the company's objectives through obtaining competitive advantages, thus generating differentiation from rival companies or competitors, indicating competitiveness (quality, service, innovation, strategy, competitors, customer relations, technology, among others).

Some studies suggest that companies become more profitable and competitive through their association with Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), as it enables them to improve their processes through technological advancements and increased innovation, leading to improvements in time, quality, and other aspects (Lara & Sánchez, 2021). In this case, the authors used innovation as a key aspect for this perspective on the relationship. Furthermore, the study is generalized from an organizational perspective, while the present research adopts a business perspective. It is acknowledged that the chosen design is limited because it does not allow for causal inference, and that competitiveness was measured in a general way (using innovation as an indicator rather than a variable).

Finally, Gallardo and Sánchez (2007) found in Spain that CSR influences the success of microenterprises and subtly impacts innovation, enhancing its effect. This is consistent with the main result of the association between variables shown in this exercise, since, as mentioned earlier, innovation is part of the identified competitiveness. It is relevant to note that their work was generalized across all sectors and at the regional level in Spain, unlike this study, which focuses on a specific city in Mexico (Escárcega) and uses a non-probabilistic sample, with retail trade as the main inclusion criterion.

Competitiveness showed significant findings regarding the number of employees. The most competitive companies were those with more than 5 employees ($Me=59$; Mann-Whitney test). The size of the workforce and its potential for adequate human capital management suggest (not causally) a favorable correlation with achieving higher competitiveness scores on the instrument used. According to Saavedra García et al. (2013), companies achieve competitiveness through the knowledge, level of training, and skills of their employees, which are powerful resources. Company size is positively associated with human capital management practices, as human resources have become the main pillar of competitiveness in companies (Spanish Chambers of Commerce, 2005).

On the other hand, the age of the business showed significant differences between the categories of 1 to 7 years of existence and 7 years and older (using the Mann-Whitney test, $Me=51$ for companies with 1 to 7 years of existence and $Me=56$ for companies with more than 7 years). Companies with greater age present a higher competitiveness score, which projects and broadens the context of the scenarios found, with the increase in these (workers and age) being indicators of competitiveness. This coincides with the importance of considering the survival of companies, since for Sansores et al. (2020), SMEs face a series of factors (age, size, among others) that have conditioned their age. In this sense, in Mexico, the microenterprise has become the most vulnerable sector, presenting the highest probability of failure in its first year of opening and the lowest life expectancy (below the threshold of 6.9 years considered in this study previously in the theoretical framework). Therefore, in accordance with this work, the age of companies represents an important factor for their survival and permanence, since the data shows that establishments with a greater number of years in the market (on average from 7 to more than 10), develop and forge the capacity to face changes that occur in their environment: new competitors, loss of purchasing power of consumers, among others.

Despite the contribution that the current research represents towards the understanding and identification of CSR and competitiveness in local micro-enterprises in Escárcega, possible biases in the study are considered, such as the use of intentional sampling, which provides limited coverage. In addition, the unique context, as previously stated, was directed to a specific area and sector at a single point in time and therefore limited external validity.

Conclusion

The study observed a strong positive association between competitiveness and the performance of companies that reported having at least one process related to environmental care and protection. These companies also maintain formal or informal internal policies (written or communicated to staff) aimed at transparency in their accounts, processes, and operations. Furthermore, they indicate an interest in their image and the recognition of their competitors, and they utilize their own or outsourced professional services to improve their management or address any identified needs.

As noted at the outset, based on data from Dini and Stumpo (2020), Latin America's economic fabric is characterized by a high prevalence of microenterprises (88.4%), which therefore play a fundamental role and exert significant social, economic, and environmental influence. Multiple Characteristics of microenterprises are shared across regions like Mexico, and something similar is observed in the city where the present study was conducted.

Given that CSR has practices and actions that are strongly linked to the competitiveness of an organization, the importance of the study lies in the fact that the identification of the relationship expands the precedents in the study of competitiveness under different approaches where there is not only an economic benefit but an integral influence for society, the environment and the economy, which is enriched by including all the economic actors that sustain a region.

In the future, it would be positive for this work to be expanded and continued to generate a conceptual model that benefits implementation through guidelines that guide the adaptation and adoption of responsible practices in an effective, friendly and complete way, including key aspects such as innovation for comprehensive measurement and monitoring and control processes through human capital and technology grounded in monitoring and feedback instruments.

A new study will need to be conducted to develop and analyze existing models for large companies, moving towards micro-enterprises, as a voluntary implementation of the concept, regardless of whether its practice has been formal or not previously, or, if applicable, to introduce the concept to organizations as a first step.

Finally, it suggests considering a pilot plan as a first stage, using a finite, controllable sample given the current resources available, and subsequently aligning the conceptual model and implementing actions, good practices, and initiatives to observe its behavior and evaluate the results.

Future lines of research

Future research lines and areas of opportunity include further study of competitiveness and its relationship to corporate social responsibility (CSR). This will involve examining the nature of the activities carried out or the business activities of the economic units, as well as compiling samples from different geographic areas that present similarities to this work or new challenges specifically within the commercial and service sectors in urban and rural areas of Mexico and other Latin American countries.

One example has been analyzing the survival of the microenterprise (previously defined period with seniority), considering its social responsibility practices and its positioning in the community, which leads to identifying other issues and lines, such as the formation of identity and commitment if they are established as representative or emblematic business brands of a place.

In general, analyzing each dimension and its implications with other significant aspects of the microenterprise can, through longitudinal studies, lead to the adaptation and adoption of a working model and to the effective implementation of CSR for the survival and competitiveness of these units.

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