

The role of social initiatives in organizational capabilities for value creation



 Ali Krubally

The University of Osaka, Graduate School of Economics, Osaka, Japan.

Email: u771386c@ecs.osaka-u.ac.jp



ABSTRACT

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This study examines the role of an organization's involvement in social initiatives in enhancing its value creation capabilities, drawing on the resource-based view (RBV) theory. It aims to clarify the mechanisms through which social initiatives, as a form of stakeholder engagement, contribute to strengthening organizational capabilities. The case study is based on qualitative data from 23 interviewees collected over three years, covering 11 social initiative projects implemented by Japan's largest logistics and delivery company, Yamato Transport. The findings show that social initiatives involvement enhances organizational capabilities by improving strategic positioning and generating both internal and external synergies within the firm's resources and through collaboration with key partners. However, this effect is dependent on the choice of social issues and the scale of projects to be sustainable. This means capabilities are enhanced when firms engage in social issues that are closely related to their core business and rooted in their firm-specific competencies. These findings suggest that companies that strategically align their social initiatives with their core business operations can better manage the trade-offs between social and economic expectations, ultimately creating greater value for all stakeholders.

Contribution/ Originality: This study is among the few that examine the effect of organizational initiatives on overall capabilities. It contributes to the existing literature by clarifying the mechanisms through which social initiatives, as a form of stakeholder engagement, enhance an organization's value creation capabilities.

1. INTRODUCTION

When business organizations engage in socially impactful endeavors, these activities are often categorized under the umbrella of corporate social responsibility (CSR). However, the strategic management literature presents numerous definitions of CSR, creating challenges for theoretical development and consistent measurement (McWilliams & Siegel, 2011). This lack of consensus complicates efforts to understand and evaluate CSR's impact on both organizations and society.

Additionally, there has been a growing call for corporations to focus on specific social responsibility initiatives that align closely with their core businesses. Scholars describe these corporate endeavors as *social initiatives*, emphasizing that such projects are tied to the firm's core competencies, have measurable social goals, and can be monitored over time (Bode, Singh, & Rogan, 2015; Brønn & Vidaver-Cohen, 2009; Hess & Warren, 2008; Pearce II & Doh, 2005; Porter & Kramer, 2006). Unlike traditional CSR activities, which often take the form of charitable donations or unrelated voluntary actions, social initiatives are integrated into a firm's business strategic operations, making them more impactful and sustainable for society and the organization (Porter & Kramer, 2006).

Despite the tangible social impacts of these initiatives, organizational researchers have sought to explore the broader implications of social initiatives on firm performance. These efforts often lead to multifaceted results, ranging from enhanced brand equity and marketing performance (Lai, Chiu, Yang, & Pai, 2010; Lu et al., 2020; Vallaster, Lindgreen, & Maon, 2012) to improvements of financial performance (Bhaskaran, Sujit, & Mongia, 2023; Choi, Kwak, & Choe, 2010; Humphrey, Lee, & Shen, 2012; Lin, Yang, & Liou, 2009). However, the relationship between social initiatives and organizational capabilities remains underexplored.

This study explores the dynamics between social initiative involvement and the development of organizational capabilities, with a particular focus on the mediating effects of stakeholder management, analyzed through the lens of the resource-based view (RBV). The resource-based view (RBV) conceptualizes organizational capabilities as a firm's ability to effectively deploy and coordinate resources through organizational processes to achieve a sustained competitive advantage (Amit & Schoemaker, 1993; Barney, 1991; Teece, Pisano, & Shuen, 1997).

Understanding capabilities within social initiatives is particularly important. First, social initiatives require the reconfiguration of organizational resources to embed sustainable social solutions into the firm's core business operations. Second, they involve continuous and direct collaboration with key stakeholders, including customers, local communities, and government entities, necessitating interaction between resource deployment and stakeholder engagement. Therefore, this study addresses the following research questions through a qualitative case study:

1. What effects does a firm's involvement in social initiatives have on its organizational capabilities?
2. How do social initiatives relate to stakeholder engagement and value creation for its stakeholders?

Using Yamato Transport, Japan's largest parcel delivery company, as a case study, this research investigates how social initiatives can simultaneously address pressing societal issues and enhance organizational capabilities. Yamato Transport has implemented over 600 active social initiatives, including collaborative agreements with more than 190 local governments. These initiatives address critical challenges, such as Japan's aging population, by integrating monitoring and welfare checks for elderly individuals living in isolated communities into regular delivery services operations (Liu, Goh, & Mouri, 2015). As of August 31, 2023, an estimated 10,000 households have benefited from these social initiative projects (Yamato Holdings, 2024a).

Yamato Transport was selected as the focus of this study due to its status as Japan's largest transport and logistics company, with a century-long history and a strong track record of social initiative projects spanning over a decade. These initiatives represent a unique and successful phenomenon, making them highly suitable for in-depth qualitative case study. The research gathered diverse perspectives through informal and semi-structured interviews with stakeholders directly involved in these initiatives, including Yamato's delivery drivers, branch managers, local government officials, customers, and local business owners. These primary data sources were further complemented by publicly available materials such as city publications, Yamato Transport's consolidated annual reports from 2010 to 2024, and insights gained from ethnographic field trips to these communities, which provided firsthand experience of the social initiatives and interactions with individuals engaged in these projects.

The paper comprises a brief literature review exploring resource-based view (RBV) and its connection to social initiatives and stakeholder engagement. It also provides a detailed explanation of the research methodology, presents results, discusses key findings, and then a conclusion.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

2.1. Resource-Based View and Capabilities

The Resource-Based View (RBV) suggests that a firm's sustainable competitive advantage arises from its ability to acquire, develop, and leverage unique capabilities (Barney, 1991). Organizational capabilities are defined as the firm's ability to effectively deploy its resources to achieve strategic objectives, enabling it to respond to evolving market demands and stakeholder expectations. These capabilities encompass not only resource management but

also intangible assets such as organizational reputation (McWilliams & Siegel, 2011; McWilliams, Siegel, & Wright, 2006) and the routines and processes that enable firms to reconfigure resources in response to emerging market opportunities and changing conditions (Eisenhardt & Martin, 2000).

RBV emphasizes that firms possessing rare, valuable, and inimitable resources, when paired with superior capabilities, are well-positioned to maintain a competitive edge. These theoretical insights provide a foundational lens through which the relationship between social initiatives and capability development can be examined.

2.2. Social initiatives

Similar to traditional corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities, social initiatives represent efforts by firms to go beyond compliance with legal and regulatory requirements to engage in activities that promote social good (McWilliams & Siegel, 2001). However, social initiatives differ from traditional CSR in their design and implementation in that they are closer to commercial projects. These initiatives are explicitly connected to a firm's core values and competencies and are characterized by measurable, goal-oriented activities aimed at addressing societal needs (Hess & Warren, 2008).

Unlike traditional corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities, which may involve broad philanthropic efforts such as donations, social initiatives are designed to generate a tangible social impact that aligns with the company's strategic business goals (Porter & Kramer, 2006). These initiatives often go beyond symbolic gestures, embedding social objectives into the company's operations and leveraging organizational resources and expertise to create shared value for both society and the firm (Porter & Kramer, 2011).

The distinction between social initiatives and commercial projects lies primarily in their emphasis and purpose. While commercial projects prioritize profit generation, social initiatives focus on social impact, occasionally generating revenue but not as their primary objective (Bode & Singh, 2018; Bode et al., 2015; Hess, Rogovsky, & Dunfee, 2002).

Some examples from the literature include State Farm, an insurance provider that partners with a nonprofit organization in Chicago to sponsor home inspections in low-income neighborhoods, addressing potential safety hazards and funding necessary repairs (Hess et al., 2002). Similarly, United Parcel Service (UPS) applies its logistical expertise and infrastructure to deliver essential humanitarian supplies. Additionally, McKinsey & Co. offers pro bono consulting services to nonprofit educational and cultural organizations (Bruch & Walter, 2005; Hess & Warren, 2008). Another example of a social initiative highlighted by Bode et al. (2015) is a program at a leading global management consulting firm. This initiative allows employees to participate in consulting projects focused on social impact, providing the firm's top-tier expertise to mission-driven clients such as foundations, NGOs, and development agencies that would otherwise be unable to afford its standard business rates.

Yamato Transport is another example of a company that exemplifies this approach by signing an agreement with local governments to integrate welfare checks for elderly individuals living alone into its delivery services operations, with projects implemented in communities with a high number of elderly residents.

2.3. Stakeholder Engagement and Social Initiatives

Stakeholder management plays a vital role in social initiatives, as organizational social endeavors are often a direct response to stakeholders' expectations. An empirical study conducted in Australia by Taghian, D'Souza, and Polonsky (2015) examined managers' assessments of influential stakeholders in a firm's social activities. The study identified employees and unions as key internal stakeholders, while the public, media, and government were highlighted as key external stakeholders. Among these, the employees and the public were found to exert the most significant influence. This aligns with claims that the concept of social initiatives is shifting from a traditional focus on corporate responsibilities to society toward a strategic tool for stakeholder management (Hess & Warren, 2008).

Additionally, when social initiatives are grounded in a firm's core business competencies, they inherently involve engagement with primary stakeholders connected to its core business activities. This is particularly relevant because evidence from S&P 500 firms suggests that while effective stakeholder management increases shareholder value, involvement in social issues unrelated to primary stakeholders negatively affects shareholder value (Hillman & Keim, 2001). Addressing social issues that pertain to a firm's primary stakeholders, however, has been shown to enhance value creation for all stakeholders.

The social initiatives investigated in this study require resource reallocation and active collaboration with the firm's primary stakeholders, including local communities, customers, and local governments; by extension, central government entities. Given this context, this research aimed to examine the relationship between a firm's involvement in social initiatives as a form of stakeholder engagement and the development of organizational capabilities. Specifically, it seeks to understand the role of stakeholder engagement in fostering capability development within the social initiatives' context.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research Context

One of Japan's most pressing social issues is its declining birthrate and aging population, a challenge that is particularly pronounced in rural areas. In response, local authorities are increasingly finding ways to address these challenges. Local governments in rural communities, often constrained by limited human and material resources, face difficulties in ensuring the well-being of their growing elderly populations. To bridge this gap, they collaborate with business organizations that maintain regular interactions with residents. Examples include newspaper and magazine delivery providers, insurance companies, utility providers such as gas and electricity companies, and logistics and package delivery firms like Yamato Transport. This study focuses on Yamato Transport's involvement in these social initiatives, particularly its partnerships with local governments to monitor and support the welfare of elderly residents.

3.2. Case Selection and Data Collection

This research, conducted from April 2022 to March 2025, adopts a qualitative case study approach, with prolonged engagement with multiple stakeholders and sources serving as a key strategy to enhance credibility. While the company undertakes various social initiative projects, this research specifically focuses on those that are centered around the delivery merged with watch-over service support for elderly people. This allows a focus on the core of the phenomenon while applying replication logic within the findings, as outlined by Eisenhardt (1989).

The selection of cases was based on a systematic use of theoretical sampling and aimed to ensure the focus was on the core of the phenomenon, with inductively outlined findings based on the relationship between constructs within and across cases (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007). The projects examined are conducted through regular delivery of magazines from cities or daily shopping items from local businesses to elderly residents. During these deliveries, drivers perform welfare checks on elderly residents. The selection of cases focused on projects that started before 2015. Although several projects were found to be concluded or on hold, 8 projects were ongoing for over a decade, and an additional 3 similar projects were included for data richness, totaling 11 cases.

Table 1 presents the number of interviewees for this study, the organization and case they belong to, and the start year of each project studied.

Table 1. Interviewees.

Belonging to	Project start date	Number of informants
Public officials		
Case 1	2021	1
Case 2	2013	1
Case 3	2016	2
Case 4	2012	1
Case 5	2015	1
Case 6	2013	1
Case 7	2015	1
Case 8	2015	1
Case 9	2012	3
Case 10	2022	1
Case 11	2016	1
Yamato transport	--	3
Others + Business owners	--	5
		Total: 23

The participants in this study are divided into three main groups of project stakeholders. The first group consists of company employees, including two managers and one delivery driver, who participated in repeated informal and semi-structured interviews.

The second group comprises public officials from city and town offices, along with representatives from the Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and Regional Revitalization offices. Data from this group were primarily collected through semi-structured interviews, questionnaire responses, and files they shared. The third group includes local business owners and community members whose insights were gathered mainly through informal interviews conducted during field visits.

Data was collected from eleven of these similar cases through semi-structured interviews, complemented by data from the company's annual reports from 2012 to 2024, questionnaires, informal interviews, visiting the communities, and publicly available data by the firm and local governments accessible online and by request via email.

The combination of various primary methods, such as observation and interviews, with secondary methods, such as content analyses of reports by and about the firm, can help gain insight into the corporate intent behind specific acts of its social initiatives (Barnett, 2007).

3.3. Research Design

Within-case and cross-case data analysis are central to the research design employed in this study, owing to their ability to enhance theoretical rigor by uncovering patterns and contrasts across different contexts (Eisenhardt, 1989; Gioia, Corley, & Hamilton, 2013).

Data collection and analysis were simultaneous for the most part through systematically coding data within each case to preserve the unique narrative and contextual nuances and allow the emergence of common themes (i.e., Positioning and Synergy).

Using multiple data sources for each case, both in the original Japanese sources and their subsequent English translations, for in-depth data analyses to provide clarity while ensuring that the richness of each case's context is retained.

Table 2 provides a summary of the data coding guidelines adopted to ensure consistency and reliability.

Table 2. Coding guidelines.

Link between organizational capabilities and social initiatives			
Themes	Definition	Coding criteria	Examples
Positioning*	The strategic establishment of a firm as a trusted community partner and social value creator with a favorable relationship with stakeholders.	Existence of activities related to publicity, recognition, and impact on the target market. (Expressed in themes such as: customer service, customer focus, PR, branding, reputation, recognition, etc.)	For businesses, participating in the project builds community trust and supports their social contribution goals... Information about newly partnered organizations is introduced via the town's newsletter and website... By leveraging each other's strengths and fostering mutual cooperation, it is possible to create additional value...
Synergy*	Greater efficiency is achieved through the harmonious combination of internal organizational elements and collaboration with external stakeholders.	Existence of collaborative interactions leads to complementary and greater outcomes. Expressed in themes such as: win-win, cooperation, partnership, joint effort, greater social impact, combine strengths, etc.	It (this project) is extremely important. For example, the city alone cannot monitor every resident (elderly and living alone) who might not be seen or heard from for three days. With a population of over 300,000, it is simply impossible for city staff to cover all... While governments can provide overarching frameworks, such as legal systems and policies, the actual monitoring and action require manpower. For this, we rely on private companies... By working with private companies, we can bridge these gaps. Collaboration is essential, as private companies and local governments each have their strengths. Leveraging these strengths can help safeguard community safety and security.

Note: * This research adopts managerial understanding and the academic definitions of "synergy" from Harrison and St. John (1996) and Barakat and Boaventura (2019). Likewise, the concept of "positioning" is based on the work of Hooley, Broderick, and Möller (1998); Porter (2012) and Teece et al. (1997).

Following this, data are compared across cases to generate broader insights, enabling the discovery of both commonalities and differences relevant to the development of theoretical frameworks. By combining these methodologies, the study leverages cross-case analysis to derive meaningful theoretical contributions while maintaining the contextual depth and reliability of the findings. The main themes and recurring logic were presented as the research findings, supported by evidence, and explained through the underlying mechanisms in the results section.

4. RESULTS

This study reveals that a firm's engagement in social initiatives enhances its organizational capabilities by improving strategic positioning within its market. Additionally, by gaining synergy in resource allocation and with stakeholders and key partners. However, balancing the social activity selection and the scale of these projects is crucial for ensuring sustained value creation.

1. Strategic Positioning Through Social Initiatives

The firm's strategic positioning through social initiatives is evident in two main ways:

(i) Legitimacy and Trust as a Community Partner

Participating in social initiatives has been found to help the positioning of the firm as a trustworthy and important entity in the community that genuinely contributes to the well-being of its customers and society, as reflected in the statement from a city official:

"Collaboration with related institutions is essential. Leveraging private companies' technologies and expertise to address these social challenges is expected to enhance citizens' quality of life (QOL), making such collaboration critically important." (Mijima)

This perception is reinforced by association with and dissemination from public entity partners in these initiatives.

"Communicating project activities to the local community raises awareness of the partner organizations' efforts and fosters a collective monitoring mindset." (Case 5)

(ii) Leveraging core competencies for potential business opportunities

Another way in which social initiatives enhance strategic positioning is by allowing the firm to identify and seize new business opportunities aligned with its core competencies.

A notable example is how Yamato Transport transitioned from monitoring elderly residents as a pro bono social initiative project to developing a commercial subscription service for elderly monitoring. This service, called the "Hello Light Visit Plan," integrates IoT-enabled light bulbs ("Hello Light") with on-demand visitation services (Yamato Holdings, 2024b, 2024c).

This evolution in services was enabled by the firm's over-a-decade-long experience in elderly monitoring, positioning it as an industry leader in this emerging market.

A firm representative reflected on this development:

"At that time, we said, let's work on monitoring together. But the issues aren't just about that. For instance, in our product lineup, we have something like the 'Hello Light.' We've been installing such things so that if there's an issue, we can respond immediately. There are so many challenges, but the biggest one is that it just doesn't work without people, right? Therefore, I think we need to create an environment where young people can raise their children." (Manager 2, Second Interview)

With Japan's aging population, it remains unclear how much of the associated social issues will be addressed purely through social initiatives and how much will evolve into viable business models. However, by aligning their social efforts with core competencies and focusing on social issues close to their main business activities, firms will be well-positioned to adapt and capture future opportunities in their respective markets.

2. Synergy through social initiatives

The concept of synergy in social initiatives, as demonstrated in the case data, centers on the interaction between a firm's internal resources and its relationships with external stakeholders. In these cases, external stakeholders primarily consist of local governments, community organizations that collaborate with the firm to implement the projects, and residents who serve as customers.

First, from a resource reallocation viewpoint, the firm strategically leverages its existing infrastructure, expertise, and operational network to deliver social impact solutions within its established market. This approach allows for cost-efficient implementation, as the firm incurs minimal additional marginal costs when providing these social impact services to communities where the market size is rapidly shrinking. A notable observation in this study was that in towns and cities where these social initiatives are implemented, there appear to be fewer or no other delivery service providers competing with Yamato Transport in these communities. This observed absence of competition may be attributed to the cost constraints associated with servicing these remote and sparsely populated areas.

Second, synergy is achieved through the participation of business organizations and diverse community stakeholders. Such collaboration is crucial to the success of these initiatives, as highlighted by a public official:

"This (project) agreement has facilitated coordination among private businesses, city offices, and other stakeholders like police or fire departments for timely checks and rescue efforts. This has, in turn, prevented potential critical situations for the elderly, increased awareness, and allowed early intervention... While administrative-led initiatives have their limits, collaboration between public and private sectors can lead to more flexible project implementation, ultimately enhancing community resilience." (Case 4)

Additionally, this synergy has been a key factor in the successful long-term implementation of these social initiative projects. Among the 11 cases studied, 8 have maintained continuous operation for over a decade. A public official highlighted the importance of this relationship:

"If the relationship places undue burden on one side, even well-conceived projects or cooperative frameworks risk being unsustainable. By leveraging each other's strengths and fostering mutual cooperation, it is possible to create additional value."(Case 4)

3. Seeking a balanced approach

The resource-based view (RBV) emphasizes maximizing value creation through organizational resources and capabilities that provide a sustained competitive advantage. While social initiatives as a form of stakeholder engagement are aimed at generating social value, researchers caution that they may also lead to a negative impact on stakeholder value (Hillman & Keim, 2001).

This raises a critical question: as a form of stakeholder engagement, how do social initiatives mediate the overall organizational value creation capabilities?

The findings show that social initiatives, when confined within the core business activities of the firm, can contribute to both social and economic value creation. However, achieving a sustainable impact requires maintaining a delicate balance between these two dimensions of value creation. As one of the managers interviewed stated:

"After all, at the end of the day, we're a for-profit organization without money, we can't take the next step. But if we prioritize profits above everything else, we lose focus on our customers, and in five or ten years, the company won't exist. On the other hand, if we lean too much toward serving customers (through these projects), we'll run out of money. I think that balance is extremely important." (Manager 2: Second Interview)

This requires a deliberate strategic effort to achieve.

"You've been there, (Case 9's location) right? It's deep in the mountains, and from a pure delivery perspective, it operates at a massive loss. But we balance it out with revenue from urban centers, so we manage to stay afloat. Nationwide, even some Prefectures operate at a loss (at times). Providing these services is costly, and stopping deliveries to remote areas isn't an option. Maintaining this kind of network requires significant investment and, most importantly, people." (Manager 2 third Interview)

Ultimately, these findings highlight that social initiatives are most effective when they align with a firm's core business operations. By integrating these initiatives strategically, organizations can enhance their positioning while leveraging internal resources and external stakeholder collaborations to ensure long-term social impact. Most importantly, maintaining a healthy balance between social and economic value creation enables firms to reconcile the inherent tradeoff and maintain a sustainable competitive advantage while delivering meaningful stakeholder value.

5. DISCUSSIONS

Engaging in social initiatives often necessitates adaptation to evolving market environments and changing stakeholder expectations. This adaptation requires resource reallocation, process innovation, and the development of new competencies, all of which are closely tied to the enhancement of organizational capabilities. By exploring these connections, we gain a deeper understanding of how social initiatives contribute not only to societal well-being but also to the strategic development and competitive advantage of firms.

This study demonstrates the dynamic relationship between social initiatives and organizational capabilities, shedding light on the mediating effect of stakeholder engagement, leading to greater value creation. The findings extend existing literature on business organizations, social activities, stakeholder theory, and the resource-based view (RBV) by revealing the nuanced mechanisms through which firms can achieve their social and economic goals through social initiatives.

Below are the contributions, their implications, and opportunities for future research. The findings align with and extend prior research on the strategic benefits of corporate social initiatives as a form of stakeholder engagement, particularly in the firm's positioning: by building a trustful relationship with its primary stakeholders (Bhattacharya, Korschun, & Sen, 2009; Hillman & Keim, 2001; Jonas, Boha, Sörhammar, & Möslin, 2018) and enhancing its sustained innovative capabilities (Ayuso, Rodríguez, García-Castro, & Ariño, 2011; Chen, Qalati, & Fan, 2025). This dual impact is magnified by the synergistic effects of resource reallocation within the firm and collaboration with public partners.

Notably, social initiatives serve as a critical form of stakeholder engagement through which firms balance their inherent social and economic goals by focusing on social issues within their sphere of operations. When these initiatives relate to the firm's core business and primary stakeholders, they enhance the overall capabilities for value creation while enabling the firm to pivot effectively in changing business environments (Eisenhardt & Martin, 2000).

Empirical research on the tradeoff between social activities and profitable operations has produced varied results. For instance, Mithani (2017), in a longitudinal study with a sample of 5999 firms found that social activities could weaken the impact of R&D and innovation capabilities when managerial attention is diverted to greater emphasis on social contributions.

On the other hand, a multi-country study by Fu, Boehe, and Orlitzky (2020) found a positive association between social initiatives and financial performance when firms specialize in their social activities through knowledge-based capabilities developed in the process.

The results of this study highlight that the seemingly contradictory findings in the literature regarding the social and economic trade-offs can be reconciled by understanding the mechanisms that create a "win-win" rather than a "win-lose" scenario, as also noted by Epstein, Buhovac, and Yuthas (2015). These mechanisms are the interplay within the type and scale of social activities chosen, the nature and proximity of these initiatives to the firm's primary stakeholders, and the alignment with the firm's core competencies and resources required. For example, McWilliams and Siegel (2000) observed a neutral impact of social activities on a firm's financial performance when such activities were carefully and strategically specified. Consistent with this, the present research focused on Yamato Transport's specialized social initiatives, which it seamlessly integrated into its core business operations. The findings demonstrate that these initiatives enhance the firm's overall value creation capability by fostering strategic positioning, generating synergy, and paving the way for a healthy balance between social and economic objectives.

6. IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

This study examined the relationship between social initiative involvement, as a form of stakeholder engagement, and organizational capability for value creation using Yamato Transport as a case study. The findings illustrate how social initiatives not only address critical societal challenges but also enhance the firm's strategic positioning as a specialist in addressing specific social issues within its business domain, going beyond the dichotomy of being either a socially responsible or irresponsible organization.

The results underscore the importance of aligning social initiatives with a firm's core competencies to foster a "win-win" scenario. By embedding social activities within organizational processes, firms can create shared value that enhances their social impact and gains sustained competitive advantages.

The findings have several implications; first, they outline strategic actionable outcomes for businesses navigating the challenges of balancing social and economic responsibilities for their stakeholders by focusing on activities that align with their core strengths and address primary stakeholder needs. Second, the study shows that authenticity is gained through long-term partnership social initiatives that contribute meaningfully to communities while avoiding being perceived as superficial or symbolic acts of corporate social responsibility. Third, through specialization within what social issues to address, it enables firms to effectively address social issues while simultaneously building specialized capabilities that position them for present and future market opportunities.

In conclusion, these findings underscore the potential of selecting the right social initiative and scale that align with the main operations and primary stakeholder needs of the firms to create shared value, improve innovation, and drive sustained growth.

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Transparency: The author states that the manuscript is honest, truthful, and transparent, that no key aspects of the investigation have been omitted, and that any differences from the study as planned have been clarified. This study followed all writing ethics.

Competing Interests: The author declares that there are no conflicts of interests regarding the publication of this paper.

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