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VOLUNTEERISM AND CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY IN UKRAINIAN COMPANIES DURING WAR

Since the start of the ongoing large-scale war in 2022, both volunteerism and corporate social responsibility (CSR) in Ukraine have changed dramatically. As a result of military threats, economic instability, and mass displacement, businesses have adopted a much wider-ranging social responsibility than before. CSR has transcended its traditional reputation/ethical rationale and now constitutes part of organisational resilience and national support. Ukrainian businesses have shown their willingness to provide humanitarian assistance and support to the armed forces, as well as engage in volunteer activities, thereby aligning business activities with community needs.

The aim of this research is to analyse the role of volunteerism and corporate social responsibility in Ukrainian companies during wartime, identify the main directions of CSR activities, and examine practical examples of business contributions to social resilience.

The impact of war is evident in how CSR's emphasis has changed; it now focuses on short-term responses with greater impact. Many companies have committed their funds, materials, and human resources to both their workers and communities. A large portion of companies are also providing assistance to military personnel, internally displaced residents, and local citizens. While this occurs, companies attempt to provide uninterrupted business operations, therefore maintaining employment and thus continuing to contribute to the national economy. Those two types of simultaneous objectives (survival of the company and social responsibility) are what constitute the definition of CSR under the conditions/aspects of the war in Ukraine.

Some real-life examples from Ukraine demonstrate how companies have made a transformation. The retail company Nova Poshta has helped keep logistics operating throughout the country, delivering humanitarian aid, helping volunteer organisations

and providing connectivity in the most frontline countries throughout Ukraine. Additionally, the company has supplied volunteers and charity agencies with free/donation-based shipping services. ATB grocery store chain has also ensured stable supply of essential goods to all categories of people, particularly in areas where there have been hostilities and has assisted with humanitarian efforts by providing financial assistance. Rozetka has actively supported fundraising campaigns, provided military support and resources, and supported charity initiatives by supplying necessary equipment. The energy company DTEK continues to repair damaged infrastructure under very dangerous conditions, providing electricity to millions of citizens and for high-priority infrastructure. These examples demonstrate that large businesses in Ukraine are integrating CSR into their core operations, not treating it as an isolated function.

The key areas of CSR activities among Ukrainian companies during the war are summarised in the following table.

Table 1. CSR activities in Ukrainian companies during the war.

| CSR Direction | Description |
|------------------------------|--|
| Humanitarian aid | Provision of food, medicine, and essential goods to civilians |
| Support for the Armed Forces | Financial donations, equipment supply, logistical assistance |
| Employee support | Evacuation, financial aid, psychological support, flexible working formats |
| Infrastructure support | Restoration of energy, logistics, and critical services |
| Volunteer engagement | Involvement of employees in volunteer initiatives and fundraising |

Ukrainian businesses have adopted a new strategy which includes the embrace of volunteerism through their corporate strategies as part of their response to wartime, which has been an important aspect of corporate strategy development in Ukraine. Employees often directly volunteer for various projects and activities, and this type of

volunteering involvement is supported by organisations via flexible work schedules or organisation-led programs; however, companies are also using volunteerism as a way of developing strong internal relationships and employee engagement within their organisations by meeting immediate social needs while at the same time contributing to long-term employee loyalty by providing employees with opportunities to develop strong organisational commitment (e.g., positive influence on employee commitment and loyalty is positively correlated with socially responsible business practices) in times of uncertainty and high levels of stress.

On the other hand, implementing CSR in wartime is very challenging for many organisations because of many barriers (e.g. limited available financial resources, supply chain disruption, security risks, etc.) that create barriers to conducting business. Many organisations continue to make CSR a priority in their organisations despite these challenges. Furthermore, organisations see the long-term value CSR provides for both society and business sustainability; thus they recognise CSR as an effective tool for crisis management to allow them to respond to extreme situations, while simultaneously building trust and confidence with the public.

In conclusion, volunteerism and corporate social responsibility have become integral components of business strategy in Ukraine during wartime. Companies are not only economic actors but also active participants in national resilience and recovery. By supporting employees, communities, and the military, Ukrainian businesses contribute to both immediate humanitarian needs and long-term development. This transformation highlights the strategic importance of CSR in crisis conditions and provides valuable insights for management practices in other contexts facing instability.

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