



CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY TO CORPORATE ENVIRONMENT READY: A PARADIGM SHIFT TO ORGANIZATIONAL BRANDING.

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Abstract:

The corona crisis has its exasperating impact everywhere and especially the corporate world. The corporate world will realize a complete paradigm shift in their operations either internal or external.

CSR is a practice of business houses with an aim to contribute in societal activities like philanthropy, environment conscious activities, volunteering or ethical practices. The main purpose of CSR is to give back to the community, provide positive social values which leads to build a positive brand for their organization. We mostly come across many terms like blue ocean strategy, triple bottom line, sustainable development and etc. CSR is also one of the ways to achieve the aforementioned terms. CSR play a role to bridge the gap between the Symbolic Corporate Vision and Prevailed Corporate Practices.

The CSR is always seen as a completely inadequate response towards the pernicious activities of giant corporations. So now the corporate will have to reinvent the practices of CSR. Probably in future we will see CSR in a new frame termed as CER (Corporate Environment Ready). The term CER can be defined as any organization which uses an integrated process which is environmentally, socially and ecologically favourable. The aim of this paper is to empirically analyze the traditional processes of CSR used by top Indian organizations and to suggest new and improved version of CSR i.e. CER comprising of especially health and environment oriented activities in this new normal phase which can build a strong brand image of the organization.

Keywords: *CSR, Organizational Repute, Brand Image, Sustainable Development, Competitive Advantage, Environmentalism.*

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1.Introduction:

The business organizations dominate the society and environment i.e. they shape, nurture and control the society. Any change in the society is partially or fully influenced by the decisions of these business organizations. Globalisation has thrown many new challenges among the competing organizations like environmental responsibility, healthy financial position, happy and satisfied customers, cost minimization and sustainable practices. To mitigate these challenges, globalization has given birth to the practice of concept of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). Gradually and day by day the scope of CSR is expanding. In the initial days of CSR, welfare of employees was the core of CSR. After certain period the society also get added in the horizon of CSR and then philanthropy came into practice. Even today many business houses are still working on this particular concept. Now it is the call of time to rethink on the concept & practices of CSR. The organizations will have to broaden the purview of CSR which should include both internal & external environment as a whole.

Corporate Social Responsibility is an ethical practice of organizations to contribute to the growth & development of employees, stakeholders, local community & society with a view to gain organizational reputation.

CSR is a business technique when executed properly facilitates brand building of organizations. It is always expected from the organizations to think beyond financial benefits and try to consider the social, environmental and ecological impacts of any business decisions.

World Bank describes CSR as “the commitment of business to contribute to sustainable economic development, working with employees, their families, the local community and society at large to improve their quality of life, in ways that are both good for business & good for development”.

Corona Crisis has given a new challenge to the corporate world in terms of its business functions and survival. The time has come that the business houses act more in terms of health and environment. The corporate house associated with any industry and doing business will have to rethink in terms of its people, process, planet and profit. The time has come to reinvent the meaning of CSR. In this paper we will try to frame the activities of CSR in broader sense with the help of a model termed as CER (Corporate Environment Ready) Model. This model will be discussed in detail in the further section of this research paper. But before that let’s have a conceptual

understanding about Corporate Environment Ready. As the term is self explanatory with its word.

Corporate Environment Ready is an integrated approach of an organization engaged in business activities which is environmentally, socially, and ecologically favourable for both organization and society. It is a win-win strategy adopted by an organization with an aim to have sustainable growth & development. It is a long term strategy of an organization which aims to contribute in the employees, stakeholders, consumers, society and environment safety, growth & development. The corporate environment ready model can give leverage to the company’s growth and development along with a strong and stable organizational reputation.

Organizational Branding is the process of expressing or communicating to the community about the Symbolic organizational Mission and the prevailed organizational practices. Minor the difference between symbolic organizational mission and the prevailed organizational practices, higher will be the organizational Branding.

Organizational Branding is an integrated marketing communication technique, which tries to create a positive brand image in front of the society.

Many companies are practicing from a long time some sort of social and environmental activities with a narrow goal i.e. to contribute to the prosperity of the society on which they depend for various kinds of resources. The companies basically practice CSR to defend themselves for the wrong deed. But now the current situation has raised a question or created a pressure to reframe CSR as a business discipline. Many corporate giants perceive that CSR stymie from the main business goal. The CER model may found to be impressive and making sense to those who perceive CSR as an obligation rather than responsibility. There is always a difference in opinion among the business houses that the business goals & motives cannot be aligned with the company’s social & environmental activities. But what if a new reframed CSR i.e. CER activities reduces business risk, enhances reputation and contribute in business goals, then it is all to the good. The CER model can leads to sustainability, triple bottom line, Blue ocean strategy, competitive advantage and Strong Brand equity. This paper will try to explain why firms should reconsider their CSR activities and provide

a systematic process in CSR to undertake it in the form of discipline of business organizations.

2. Literature Review: A Brief Story

The concept of CSR is existing in history but it got attention and recognition in the last decade. In the 18th century employers understood the importance of an efficient human resource in an organization and, lack of proper food, medical facility and housing will hamper the productivity of the workforce which will ultimately impact organizational growth. In recent times medical, housing and subsidized food facility is seen as a philanthropic effort but in past it was due to self interest of manufacturers (Brown, 2005).

Bernard Dempsey in 1949 in his article, published in Harvard Business Review (HBR) "The Roots of Business Responsibility", suggested a guideline for responsible business practices. He suggested four concepts in terms of justice: Exchange Justice- the trust lying in the exchanges in the market; Distributive justice- the trust between government and people; General Justice- acceptance of legal framework along with ethical obligations and last Social Justice- the responsibility to contribute in the well being and growth of individual and community.

Two months after Dempsey's article, Donald K. David argued upon business houses to contribute in public well beings and think beyond immediate business activities. Dempsey & David both asserted the reason behind the social obligation. 1) If there will be no man, then no business will even exist. 2) A well functional society will contribute in the excellence of the operations of the business. 3) The business houses have a control on resources and they have the capability to improve the status of society.

Bowen (1953); he defines CSR as an obligation, decision, course of action, repercussions or policies which leads to the desirable objective and values for the society.

Morrell Heald (1970); he expressed in his article which was actually a comprehensive history from 1900-1960 whose topic was "The Social responsibilities of Business: Company & Community 1900-1960". He mainly focused on the practices of social responsibility carried by business leaders.

Committee of Economic Development (CED, 1971); explains CSR as a business house which functions with the public approval and with a basic purpose of serving the society and satisfying their needs.

Eilbert & Parket (1973); explains CSR as to think it like a camaraderie. The concept express it in

two ways one to avoid doing anything that will spoil the relationship and second one is to be committed to help to solve the others problem or the commitment in general to play an active role in the social problems alleviation.

Prakash Sethi (1975); he distinguished the terms like social obligation, social responsibility and social responsiveness. He explains social responsibility as an activity which implies elevating corporate behaviour up to that level where it is identical with the prevailed social practices, values and expectations.

Archie Carroll (1979); he propounded a CSR model. The model categorizes the CSR in four different responsibilities i.e. economic, legal, ethical and philanthropic responsibilities. The economic responsibility suggests the organization to be profitable as all other activities depends on it. Legal responsibility suggest to obey the incorporated legal framework i.e. law. Ethical responsibility suggests doing fair and right practices in the business and avoiding harming the society. The philanthropic responsibility emphasizes being a good corporate citizen.

Jones (1980); explains CSR as an activity which is broader in sense, i.e. it is not confined to shareholders only but it comprises of society which includes customers, employees stock holders and community. The CSR is a self driven initiative and not influenced by the law.

Arlow & Gannon (1982); in their research found that high CSR performance leads to higher company performance, and all else being equal. CSR reveals the personal traits of the top management of an organization (Hambrick & Mason, 1984), so the top management engaged in CSR discloses values, preferences and inclination which actually reduce information asymmetry between company and society (Bitetkine 2011).

William Frederick (1986); he expressed that CSR should be connected with business ethics. He emphasized morally correct business activities will lead to CSR i.e. Corporate Social Rectitude.

World Business Committee for Sustainable Development (WBCSD, 1998); defines CSR as a continues obligation of business houses to act ethically and come up with economic development and improving the workforce living standard along with their family and society at large.

Mc. Williams & Siegel (2001); define CSR as engagement in CS activities that is beyond government regulations and by this one organization can differentiate itself within a group.

Margolis & Walsh (2003); expressed that financial

aspects of CS performance have been extensively researched, but very few studies have been done about the other effects of CSR. Wood (2010) & Margolis & Walsh (2003); closely studied the CSR performance and asserted that it is the time to divert the focus from CSR affects on the firm towards how the firm can impacts stakeholders and society as a whole.

Mallen Baker (2004); propounded CSR is how the companies carry its business process to have an overall positive influence on the society.

International Labour Organization (ILO, 2007); CSR is a strong belief in the principles & values of an organization which considers the impact of business activities on society. It is a self driven activity carried out to exceed the compliance with the law.

CSR activities have a positive correlation with earnings forecasts (Lee, 2017) and thus open information sharing or communication (Jo & Kim, 2008).

Socially responsible organization attracts more investors (Day, 2001) and thus enables to enhance firm reputation (Jeong et al. 2018).

Blowfield (2008); asserted that many research have been done on impact of CSR on business and benefits for business but less about how CSR affects the major social issues it tried to tackle.

According to Bitetkine (2011) “the sets of dimensions that from reputation & legitimacy are often overlapping, and so the same dimensions can be used to make legitimacy and reputation judgments” (2011, p. 160)

Michael Hopkins (2014); defines CSR as a combination of three components 1) Corporate 2) Stakeholders 3) Ethical Behaviour. Corporate means group of people working together in an organization for profit. Stakeholders comprises of customers, employees, suppliers, shareholders and the local community. Ethical Behaviour comprises of Values, Code of Conduct and Corporate Governance.

3. CSR by Indian Companies: An Overview of select companies

We can say Indians have a great interest in CSR. In India CSR is regulated as per „The Indian Companies Act-2013“, Schedule- VII consisting of 10 areas, giving a way to Indian Companies to carry CSR activities. The Indian Companies have to spend 2% of their net profit in CSR activities or we can say CSR projects.

In this section we will try to explore few reputed Indian companies CSR activities on four different subjects **Profit, People, Planet & Process**. In profit section we will just consider how sound the

company is i.e. the financial position of the organization. As profit is the base of CSR.

In people, we will analyze the various CSR activities moving around the people welfare, development and safety.

In planet section we will examine the environmental activities carried by these organizations keeping in view their environmental footprints.

In process section there will be a different angle of study, as the past researchers have explored about the process with an external aspect. We mean to say that we will look over the manufacturing, distribution, waste management, supply chain management, packaging and etc. The motive behind such exploration is to make organizations understand and believe that these internal business processes do influence the CSR activities and organizational reputation.

Tata Group: A conglomerate diversified business enterprise which is in steel, automobile, software, consumer durables and fashion brands & accessories, the Tata group has more than 80 companies. The group spends more than the expected figure as per the Indian Companies act of net profit in various CSR activities, exceeding the government expectations. The group has a very healthy financial positions right from its establishment to the current time. The company’s CSR can be broadly classified as promoting education, Health, Livelihood, rural & urban infrastructure development. Besides this they undertake areas of sports, disaster relief, environment and ethnicity with the aim to improve the quality of life of community.

Reliance Industries Limited: One of the leading business house of India, conglomerate diversified in IT, oil & petroleum, digital services, media & entertainment. Financially a sound company with the highest market capitalization in India as of today. They are highly committed towards the CSR activities under the name of Reliance Foundation and umbrella organization for social initiatives. They have a firm belief in sustainable development, so their initiatives happen to be in conformity with the United Nations SDGs. They are focusing on rural development, environment conservation, health, education, sports, art & culture, water security and many more as the list will go on.

Indian Oil Corporation Limited: India’s leading oil & petroleum public sector Company. The company’s sustainability & CSR activities

focuses on providing safe, efficient & ethical customer services, which can curb the negative impact on environment and enhance the quality of life of community. They focus on efficiency in operations & processes, their CSR activities include safe drinking water along with water conservation, health care, education and employment generating training skills, women empowerment, environmentally sustainable practices within & beyond the organization.

Suzlon Group: Suzlon Group one of the world largest wind turbine manufacturers providing green energy solutions. The Suzlon believes that sustainability can be achieved by the integration of all resources i.e. financial, natural, social & human, which ultimately enhances the business advantages. Suzlon CSR model „SUZTAIN“ incorporates the implementing & monitoring of CSR activities. They have a strong belief in hundred percent green business initiatives. They are involved in livelihood enhancement, education, environment, health care & civic amenities.

Wipro: Wipro limited is a giant global information technology consultant and business services providing company. The company is always recognized for its philanthropic commitment, sustainability and good corporate citizen. The domain of CSR activities includes education, health care, community ecology, business sustainability and faculty development programmes in various engineering colleges across the country.

SBI: India's largest commercial bank decorated with a crown of premier institution in financial Sector. The group has its footprints across several countries of this world. The bank firmly believes in its business sustainability and offers products and services in a responsible manner taking the social & environmental aspects in account. The bank's digitalization commitment & its green banking services has reduced its carbon footprints & get it closer to SDGs. Paper usage reduction, solar ATM's community development programmes and health care initiatives shows their commitment towards the society & environment.

ITC: ITC is one of the India's leading private sector companies with magnificent market capitalization. It has presence in FMCG, hotels, agri business, packaging & paper boards & specialty papers. The company which is carbon positive from many years. The company is

engaged in afforestation programmes, water shed development, livestock development, education, health & sanitation, solid waste management and organic farming. ITC carries its CSR activities through public private partnership as they consider government as important stakeholders in terms of CSR implementations.

Coal India Limited: An organization committed to fulfill the energy requirements of the country in the primary energy sector. Coal India uses CSR as a strategic tool for sustainable development. They believe to integrate business process with social processes. The areas which they cover under their CSR policy is poverty eradication, hunger & malnutrition, health care, education, vocational skills development, air, water & soil conservation, protection of flora & fauna & rural development projects. They carry their CSR activities with the local government bodies. They encourage the development & introduction of environment friendly technologies.

Hindustan Unilever: Hindustan Unilever (HUL) is India's largest fast moving consumer goods company working from last 80 years in India. A company with a large brand portfolio is a part of everyday life of millions of consumers. The company as per the schedule VII of Indian Companies Act carries various CSR activities like Project Shakti- to promote education, Swachh Aaadat Swachh Bharat –to eradicate hunger, poverty, promotion of sanitation & health care, promotes ecological balance, protection of animals & forest, promoting education & disaster relief programmes. The various programmes of HUL have been integrated with their business i.e. CSR & business processes moves parallelly.

4. Objectives of the Study:

The objectives of the above research study are as follows:

- To examine the scope of CSR in Building the Organizational reputation.
- To understand the limitations of CSR.
- To suggest CER (Corporate Environment Ready) model for building organizational reputation.
- To suggest to implement the CER (Corporate Environmental Ready) model as Business Strategy tool.

5 Research Methodology:

Exhaustive Literature review regarding the title and its related concepts has been done. Secondary data inclusive of quantitative & qualitative has been analyzed. The sources of information are

from various research publications, published newspapers, journals-online & printed, books, magazines and websites,. The information is collected from libraries and websites. The literature is cross checked and validated to gives the latest information.

6 Corporate Environment Ready Model:

Before discussing the CER Model, let's have an overview of some models which explain the scope of CSR for companies. These models actually suggest a way to move towards social responsibility or obligation of organization towards the society & environment. Few important & notable models include Carroll's Model, Halal's Model and Ackerman's Model.

Carroll's Model: Archie B. Carroll in 1979 propounded his hierarchical model defined as CSR for the Business houses towards the society. His model is in pyramid shapehaving four categories starting from the bottom to the top. The four categories are:

- i. Economic: This category is at the bottom of the model, mainly expressing about profit for organization.
- ii. Legal: It explains about compliance as per law.
- iii. Ethical: It explains about the norms or practices which the society expects from the business organization.
- iv. Philanthropic: It explains about the engagement of business enterprises in community development or other social projects.

Halal's model discuss two aspects, the first one is about the organizational work, interest and distribution of profit. The second aspect is about social activities. He suggest tohave a coordination between the organization and social decisions so that the future of the organization & societyshould be safe.

Ackerman's Model: This model has three phases for defining the CSR.

- i. First Phase: To recognize the social issues by the top management to be addressed.
- ii. Second Phase: To appoint an employee or specialist to understand the issues and measures to eradicate such issues.
- iii. Third Phase: To implement the strategy suggested by the specialist.

{INSERT FIGURE -1}

Kumar, P. & Veer, C. 2020, Short ALT Text for Figure-1, p-12 (90 words) The Corporate Environment Ready Model (Kumar, P. & Veer, C.

2020 model) describes about considering the organization's process like ecological raw material procurement, to final distribution process, along with People, Planet and Profit while considering the CSR activities. The internal processes of organizations have an impact on the community as a whole. Most of the organization didn't consider it or ignore it while considering CSR. This model suggests considering process as an important variable while designing CSR because it impacts the society in major manner and influence the organizational reputation.

7 The Elements of the CER Model (Figure- 1):

Today Brand image of an organization is one of the most important factors which are considered while evaluating the reputation of any organization. This reputation depends on many factors which are directly related to the organization, such as profit earned, employee's welfare, business process, environment friendly and CSR. The Corporate Environment Ready Model (CER) is an integrated model or coordination of above mentioned factors which contributes in the enhancement of organizational reputation.

Let's understand what the model tries to explain. An organization is a body which is interconnected with profit, process, people & planet. The organization cannot survive with the absence of any one of these factors. Let us explain it in detail successively and individually:

Profit: The profit is like oxygen for an organization, without it survival can't be expected. An organization earns profit by satisfying its customers by the products or services it offers. Apart from this the organization enhances profit by reducing the unnecessary cost incurred in the business. This reduction can occur by introducing new efficient technology, by innovation, product modification and etc. These innovations or newness brings a competitive advantage which also facilitates profit enhancement. The competitive advantage put the organization at a higher level which leads to a strong brand image in market, which generates more revenue in terms of business thus results in more profit.

Process: The business process is an important variable which affects the overall organizational reputation. The organizations business processes is mostly directed towards efficiency and effectiveness. This is actually the correct way to examine the business process. The business

process is the methods or techniques used in the business activities. The business process is an important factor in terms of effectiveness of the CSR and organizational reputation. This particular factor consists of Total Quality Management (TQM), Business Process Reengineering (BPR), Supply Chain Management (SCM) and Research & Development (R&D).

TQM: Quality has become an important term or aspect in corporate world. "The term quality refers to a sense of recognizing that something is better than something else" (VSP Rao, 2005, p. 60). It means doing things right in the first time, rather than committing mistakes and then correcting it further. According to Edward Deming (internationally recognized contributor to Japanese quality improvement initiatives) TQM is an organizational culture which is committed to continuous advancement of skills, process, product & services and customer satisfaction. TQM is termed as an organizational culture because it is seen as a deeply inherited practice which reflects in every aspects of the organization. Few of the Deming's advice on quality achievement are:

- a) Always have a reason or purpose for improvement of process and cost reduction.
- b) Stop recognizing business on the basis of price tag only.
- c) Constantly & continuously improve the production system & services.
- d) Accept modern methods of technology.
- e) Create a sense of innovation in the organization.
- f) Take actions to achieve positive transformation.

The main idea: TQM

- i. Do it right in the first time.
- ii. Be customer oriented
- iii. Adapt continuous improvement as important and inseparable aspect of life.
- iv. Build team & empower them.

BPR: Business Process Reengineering primarily focuses on doing things in better way by continuous and incremental improvements. BPR means an evaluation of what organization is all about. Thus making significant and changes for the organizational success and for achieving its core values.

R& D: Research & Development Every organization is mostly dependent on the R & D team for some new or improved innovative product or services. The trend which is seen in R & D department is, they mostly improve or innovate an existing or new products or services

on the parameter of cost reduction, usage, added features, packaging & handling, recycling of wastages and etc. The evaluation of above parameters is necessary but evaluating it in terms of societal & environmental impact is also important. This small improvement can add more to the organizational reputation. This new approach can save resources of the organization which can be utilized for more beneficial activities.

SCM: There is a term in computer language "Garbage in Garbage out". The supply chain management involves this same concept. It involves flow of raw materials to the final distribution of products & services. Suppose if an organization is procuring below standard raw material with a view to reduce cost, and then the final product after processing will be a low standard finished good. This will have its own consequences in terms of health and on environment. The top management will have to consider it too as it also impacts organizational reputation.

People: Corporate is nothing but a group of people engaged in an integrated activity to run the business keeping in view the profit or the expected common end result. The people in this model comprises of employers, employees, suppliers, stakeholders and customers. Employees here represent the people working in any organization, with their family members, friends, relatives who constitute a society or community.

Stakeholders comprises of the owners, who have initiated this activity or taken a risk with an objective of earning profit and serving the community.

Suppliers are those members who are facilitating the business activity from outside, right from the raw material procurement to the distribution of finished goods.

The customers are those who are actually purchasing the products or availing the services to satisfy their needs & wants.

Planet: Planet is a silent player which is contributing in a major manner in the business functioning with its limited resources without asking a single question. The earth is providing its resources by the composition of air, land & water along with from the forest and wildlife. The efficient utilization and conservation of these resources is necessary for long term survival of a business.

CSR & Four Factors: All these interrelated factors play a vital role in the existence of CSR and makes CSR effective and meaningful. If you will give an insight, you will find that most of the organizations (excluding the exceptional ones) focus on only three factors of CSR . i.e. people, profit & planet. They either ignore or not consider process as an important factor for success of a CSR activity.

Profit is what which determines the level of CSR by an organization. So if there is no profit then there will be no CSR. As it is the base of this activity. So undoubtedly considering profit is necessary.

CSR from one point of view can be said that it is for people. Whether be an employee who expects both monetary & non- monetary benefits in return for the contribution towards the organizational growth. Customers & members of the society are the user of the products or services and they are also contributing in the success of the business so they are also the part of CSR. Suppliers are those who are facilitating the business activities. The stakeholders are the actual player or planner of CSR because of government regulations as well as their self interest.

The planet is the purveyor of resources so it becomes the obligation of the business houses to act towards the safeguard and conservation of planet. But there is a loop hole in the practicing of conserving or protecting the planet. Suppose an organization is involved in a business activity and the wastage of the industry is being disposed in the nearby area whether in a river or on land. At the same time the company is involved in CSR activities like education, wildlife protection or ancient monument conservation. Then this good deed can't justify the aforesaid wrong practice. The issues should be resolved at the originating point i.e. water should be treated properly and then discharged to the river. Few organizations are doing this job.

The composition or integration of all these four factors i.e. people, planet, process and profit will take CSR to a new level with more effectiveness. Then the organization will be termed as CER (corporate environment ready). This CER label will undoubtedly enhance the reputation of the organization. CER model can result in various advantages like strong brand equity, competitive advantage, reduced cost, delighted customers, motivated employees and a balanced ecology.

8 Findings:

- CSR is considered as a moral responsibility which a corporate pursues.

- CSR is mostly philanthropic in nature while CER is both sustainable & philanthropic.
- CSR is determined after profit while CER actually strives to enhance profit and a higher level of CSR.
- The organizations are focusing on profit, people & planet only while planning the CSR objective.
- There is a strong and hidden link between business processes and CSR.
- CSR seems to a tool to mitigate the wrong deeds of corporate while CER can improve the process which will add more value to the organizational reputation.

9 Suggestions: CSR seems to be an orthodox style, which is actually not clear in its objective. So my suggestions for the corporate firms are as follows:

- CER model can be helpful in curbing down the environmental footprints.
- CER model can positively impact the organizational branding.
- CER model will lead to enhanced profit through cost reduction.
- CER model will improve the internal business process.
- CER model will lead to sustainable development.
- CER model will lead to motivated employees, confident stakeholders and a satisfied customer base.

10 Conclusion: To conclude, organization will have to understand that, the CSR is not effective in current scenario due to its philanthropic nature. The organization will have to think beyond the social obligation, and then only sustainable development will come in picture. CSR can reduce poverty, malnutrition and improve health but it will be a temporary solution. The actual impact of business firms is on overall environment. So there is a need to reinvent CSR, i.e. to think beyond philanthropy and move towards sustainability through CER.

In the end, a company which is philanthropic but is not aware with its broader role will not survive very long. As per Michael Porter- if any company wants to be good by donating money for social cause only, is actually wasting money i.e. not sustainable, then shareholders will lose interest in long run.

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