The Impact and Scope of Social Networking in Corporate Social Responsibility for a Sustainable Future in India

Vasundhara Kashikar (Asst. Professor)
Kishor Waykar (Subject Expert)
Tilak Maharashtra Vidyapeeth, Pune-37

Abstract

The concept of Corporate Social Responsibility has been well established in the business conglomerates of India and many are now influencing this role over the society. The need of CSR is even more urgent in developing countries where economic disparities are more pronounced and both ecology and society are even more vulnerable to human induced environmental hazards. The idea of environmental and social security being the priority is an initiative that should not only be the responsibility of the Government but also the corporate and private sectors. This upsurge has been possible because of the rise in social and digital networking making it easy for the companies to build campaigns effectively.

Although, much has been done in the theoretical domain to make Indian corporate aware of social responsibility and environmental ethic as an important segment of their business activity but very little has been achieved as yet. This paper examines the usage of social networking in effectiveness and its tactical advantage in spreading the CSR activities on a global platform and in turn addressing sustainable development issues right from poverty, global warming to gender sensitization. The research also highlights the importance of corporate social responsibility and their campaigns as a tool in spreading greater participation towards conservation and sustainability. This participation is possible only through global networking and this is what the paper seeks to find out; the usage of new media and social media in developing the campaigns and how they are disseminated through platforms making the public aware of the importance of achieving the sustainable development goals.

Keywords: Corporate Social Responsibility, Corporate Campaigns, Social Networking, Social Media Campaigns, Sustainable Development

Introduction

In the corporate business world, the concepts of corporate social responsibility and sustainable development goals are familiar. Corporate social responsibility activities are helpful for not only the reputation of the business enterprises but also can be effective in achieving the sustainable development goals. Nowadays, the need for these activities has grown a tenfold due to the awareness regarding the socio-economic as well as the environmental issues. The goals of these CSR activities are only met when the companies show a commitment towards achieving them and meeting the expectations of the stakeholders creating a balance between social integrity and economic prosperity in an ethical manner.

What is Sustainable Development?

The term sustainable development has been defined several times by several abut the landmark definition was given in 1987 by the World Commission on Environment and Development in the Brundtland Commission report titled 'Our Common Future' published by Oxford University Press, 1987. It states that sustainable development is "Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (Phophalia, 2021)
In 2015, the United Nations Member States have adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development which provides a blueprint for the social and economic well-being of the people and the planet. The Sustainable Development Goals alias SDGs are like an urgent call for all the developing

as well as the developed nations for a global partnership to generate solutions for ending poverty and deprivation with strategies to improve health and education, reduce inequality and aim towards an economic growth. Keeping these socio-economic goals in mind, the nations should also focus on issues of climate change, global warming and preservation of flora and fauna which categorize under the environmental goals.

The SGGs focus on the interlinking of primal factors of people, planet, prosperity, peace and partnership for which the Commission of Social Development is established. It ensures the achievement of goals of eradication of poverty and hunger, economic, social and technological progress, equality and employability of all; in turn promoting social equity for all despite the social barriers cast on the people.

Corporate Social Responsibility

Corporate Social Responsibility refers to a business management concept wherein social and environmental initiatives are hoisted by corporate companies and conglomerates for building a sustainable future. These initiatives are incorporated with the employees and the stakeholders in the business operations. There are three main categories of corporate social responsibility:

1.   Environmental initiatives where companies aim to reduce the impact on the environment by implementing waste management, recycling, reducing the usage of plastic, etc.
2.   Philanthropic initiatives include donations, fund raising events, local community projects, etc. to make a positive impact on the society.
3.   Ethical initiatives where all the employees are given fair treatment and the business focuses on equality of all stakeholders. It involves strategies like equal wages, diverse recruitment, opportunity for all, etc.

Effective implementation of these activities can garner support from the stakeholders and create a positive impact on the society. It will also help to build a healthy reputation for the company in the competitive environment. CSR helps the organizations with trust and loyalty building with their stakeholders with a promise of sustainable profits. This in turn shapes the opinions and thoughts of the consumers as well as the employees aligned with that particular organization.

Reports show that 59% of consumers expect businesses to consider the climate and environment within their business practices. Meanwhile, the number of employees who value CSR is also increasing. One study demonstrates that 64% of millennial generation wouldn't accept a job at a company that doesn't have a robust CSR strategy. (Corporate Social Responsibility and Sustainable Development Goals: what does it all mean?, 2020)

Research Objectives

1.   To study the importance & role of corporate social responsibility
2.   To study the different CSR activities and case studies aiming for sustainable goals in India
3.   To understand the impact of social networking campaigns in CSR activities aiming for sustainable development goals in India

Research Methodology

A qualitative research holds the understanding of a phenomenon or situation or an event by exploring the totality of the situation. So a closer look at the overall study of usage of social networking and its role in corporate social responsibility campaigns with the earlier phenomena is relevant in this paper. As the qualitative research is more of a research based on substantial and extensive literature, it was also supported by the popular research method of data collection which is case studies.

CSR & SDG: Interplay

Sustainable Development and Corporate Social Responsibility have become a prime concern in India since the 1990s. Corporate Responsibility established in India in three phases: one where business groups built up trusts and institutions recognizing the value of education and economic well-being for all. 1892, Jamshedji Tata established scholarships for students who wanted to travel overseas for

further education. The nature of philanthropy then shifted to the legal and liberal phase where banks were nationalized to focus on the shift from class banking to mass banking. In 1980s and 1990s, the industries were decentralized, globalization paved its way and the five-year plan was implemented. NGOs emerged which were empowerment oriented focusing on social and economic issues. Multinational companies and conglomerates have a global influence with which they can play an active role in confrontation with issues, stakeholders and institutional contexts. Their potential in being not only part of the problem, but also perhaps part of the solution, is increasingly recognised and has come to the fore in research interest in corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities and sustainable development implications of international business. (Kolk & Tulder, 2010)

Many CSR efforts in these organizations revolve around environmental and economic sustainability. A report was released in October 2005 by a leading law firm regarding the permit of environmental, social and governance issues in investment decision-making and ownership practices. The resulting report, released in October 2005, concluded that investors were not only permitted to but also sometimes required to take such factors into account. "Integrating environment, social and governance considerations into an investment analysis so as to more reliably predict financial performance is clearly permissible and is arguably required in all jurisdictions," the report concluded. (Bhagwat, 2011)

The ethical belief of give and take to maintain the reputation and social status of the company for a long-term should be grounded and the idea of sustainability should be incorporated in the business management. Any organization survives due to its interdependence on the employees and the stakeholders and the character should be maintained by fulfilling the company's commitment towards the society and the planet. This can be done by reducing ecological footprint and general acceptance of corporate social inclusion. There should be a sound stakeholder approach by maintaining the social and economic strand of the sustainable development concept. These activities are thus focused on corporate engagement in societal responsibilities by meeting the expectations of the stakeholders.

Importance of Social Networking in CSR

Sustainable business looks at how a business can adapt to global social and environmental trends, such as future regulation on carbon output, water shortages, and changing demographics. Social, Economic and Environment are the three pillars or dimensions of Sustainable development. (Ramachandran, 2020) CSR has become a hot topic for all the corporate organizations all over. It has become a global phenomenon. It is important therefore to maintain the interests of the societal groups and stakeholders all over the globe. The initiatives should be recognized and put forth on a huge scale which is only possible by the means of digital technology and new media.

Social media allow companies to engage with their interest groups, thus enabling them to solidify corporate social responsibility (CSR) policies. (Stanislavska & Pilar, 2020) The effectiveness of any CSR imitative is only recognized when it is communicated effectively with the stakeholders; internal as well external. More than 2 billion of the population across the globe use social media. Thus, if studied widely, social media has helped the organizations and companies to establish this suitable communication channel. The communication has thus become transparent, alleviating employee scepticism and educating all the interest groups about the activities and initiatives taken up by the companies.

The standard methods of communication of CSR initiatives include annual reports, press releases and website updates. But social media allows these activities to be spread across channels and offer interactivity, where the audience can actively participate and comment on the posts and campaigns. These dialogues have the potential to build trust and social capital. Communicating CSR through social media brings environmental and social justice issues to the forefront and builds engagement; enriches conversation between your brand and consumers; develops loyal, committed brand ambassadors; and enables your company to grow globally as an exponential organization. Inclusive by design, CSR for the future generation is one of the best uses of social media that builds hope for humanity and has the ability to transform our world for a better future. (Sood, 2021)

Case Studies: CSR Social Media Campaigns

To identify the usage of social media and networking in corporate social responsibility activities it is necessary to study the effectiveness of the platforms. This was studied through a detailed analysis of some campaigns and initiatives by the corporate organizations over the globe over the years and their impact.

1. P&G Love over Bias Campaign: - As the world's leading advertising agency and a brand with an audience of over five billion, the company had to come up with a campaign incorporating the winter Olympics. The brilliant idea of "Love over Bias" was initiated to encourage athletic excellence from all over the world celebrating athletes from all walks of life. The idea was to celebrate diversity and connect to the hearts of the people by a distribution of a clever TVC, alongside a series of Snap Chat stories, showcasing the struggles of the Olympian athletes due to the bias that they face and how a mother's love changed this plight and overcame all the bias and discrimination. The campaign hit the right spot and became a popular YouTube video because of the shares garnered by the celebrities like Ellen DeGeneres. This campaign is a perfect example of perfect choice of the social media platforms along with an incredible copy and powerful hash tag.

2. Lenovo-Yuwa #PitchToHer : - Yuwa is a non-profit organization which helps girls from impoverished families to stand on their feet. This organization partnered with Lenovo and the agency Experience Commerce to plan a campaign #PitchToHer inviting brightest of minds to pitch innovative games and technology which can impact the lives of the girls. This video was passed on through YouTube and the idea was to offer internship to the selected pitch ideas in the Lenovo Yuwa. With a little push, the Yuwa girls brought the whole village in the limelight of technology. This campaign could have touched a million hearts if the video and strategies were implemented on the right social media platforms with maximum reach and impressions.

3. Surf Excel India's 'Back To School' Campaign on Facebook : - A noble initiative by the team at Surf Excel in partnership with Guide Star India; a place where you can connect with NGOs all over India, this campaign's motive was to support the education of kids who cannot afford it. Through a campaign video and posts on Facebook, the parents were encouraged to donate old notebooks, textbooks, stationery to the organization which will be used by these kids. In addition to that, with every like on Facebook a donation of 50p will be made was the promise. Through social media it was easier for the people to donate by locating an NGO and making the donations. The brand carried out a successful CSR initiative and leveraged the Facebook application at its maximum potential.

Conclusion

The concept of Corporate Social Responsibility has been well established in the business conglomerates of India and many are now influencing this role over the society. The need of CSR is even more urgent in developing countries where economic disparities are more pronounced and both ecology and society are even more vulnerable to human induced environmental hazards. Through the study done in this paper, it was possible to identify the effectiveness of the social media platforms and their impact on the people at a global scale.

The initiatives and campaigns run under the name of CSR can be effectively put forth on these social media campaigns and thus increasing the sustainability of the business, people and planet; for now and the future.

Bibliography

1. Social Media Campaigns That Nailed CSR. (2019, November 12). Retrieved May 2022, from Zavy: https://www.zavy.co/blog/3-social-campaigns-that-nailed-csr-and-made-a-difference

2. Baxi, C., & Sinha, R. (2012). Business and Society in India - An Overview. In C. Baxi, & R. Sinha, Corporate Social Responsibility (pp. 1-5). New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House.

3. Bhagwat, P. (2011). Corporate Social Responsibility and Sustainable Development. Conference on Inclusive & Sustainable Growth. Institute of Management Technology.

4. Corporate Social Responsibility and Sustainable Development Goals: what does it all mean? (2020, December 22). Retrieved May 2022, from Social Good Connect: https://socialgoodconnect.org/corporate-social-responsibility-sustainable-development-goals/

5. Kolk, A., & Tulder, R. V. (2010). International business, corporate social responsibility and sustainable development. International Business Review , 119-125.

6. Naidu, V. (2012, June 29). 6 Smart And Impressive CSR Campaigns On Social Media. Retrieved May 2022, from Business 2 Community: https://www.business2community.com/social-media-articles/6-smart-and-impressive-csr-campaigns-on-social-media-0203090

7. Phophalia, S. (2021, May 11). Interplay between 'Corporate Social Responsibility' and 'Sustainable Development'. Retrieved May 2022, from TaxGuru Complete Solution: https://taxguru.in/company-law/interplay-csr-sustainable-development.html

8. Ramachandran, R. (2020). CSR and Sustainable Devlopment: A Primer. SSRN Journal . Sood, K. (2021, February 6). Use of Social Media in CSR for the Benefit of Future Generations. Retrieved May 2022, from The CSR Journal: https://thecsrjournal.in/social-media-csr-kunal-sood-trend/

9. Stanislavska, L., & Pilar, L. (2020). Corporate Social Responsibility and Social Media: Comparison between Developing and Developed Countries. MDPI Journal , 1-18.

10. Tek-Yew, L., & Shyen, W. (2020). How Corporate Social Responsibility contributes to sustainable development. Retrieved May 2022, from Curtin University: https://news.curtin.edu.my/insight/2020-2/how-corporate-social-responsibility-contributes-to-sustainable-development/

11. Waio. (2017, July 19). The Best 10 CSR Campaigns Of The Last Years. Retrieved May 2022, from Brand Minda: https://brandminds.live/the-best-10-csr-campaigns-of-the-last-years/

12. Tilak, G., & Sundke, A. (2021). Impact And Adverse Effects On The Youth Of Crippled Language Used In Social Media.