

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF RESEARCH IN COMMERCE & MANAGEMENT

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**CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY AS A BRANDING TOOL WITH REFERENCE TO CARBORUNDUM
UNIVERSAL LIMITED (CUMI), KOCHI**

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ABSTRACT

Implementation of CSR policy may generate a trusting relationship that leads stakeholders to become committed to the organization. With the care for the community and markets the corporations operate in, will help the organization for a sustainable business growth. CSR activities will help CUMI to continuously interact with the community and thereby maintain an enhanced community relation. This will also help the company to establish their brand name among the society.

KEYWORDS

corporate social responsibility, branding tool, Carborundum Universal Limited, Kochi.

INTRODUCTION

Business is not divorced from the rest of society. How companies behave affects many people, not just shareholders. A company should be a responsible member of the society in which it operates.

What is the main purpose of a company's existence? Is it simply to maximize profits in order to satisfy the owners' requests and demands, or is it possible to see the company in a larger perspective in society? Should this perspective go beyond pure financial aspects of the activities? The quotation above refers to the ongoing debate about corporate responsibility. With the advent era of globalization and cut throat competition concern of the companies has shifted to Corporate Social Responsibility. CSR creates a landing place in the minds of target consumers. Due to global competition, increase in media clutter, less differentiation in brand, companies is using different tools to increase the value of intangible assets. CSR is not only creating the brand awareness among the consumers but also leads to a positive brand image in the minds of potential consumers. Brands must be inspirational in a socially responsible way to its stakeholders. To achieve the same, Corporate Social Responsibility has become more common business practices with reference to the corporate governance.

There is no one universally accepted definition. Different concerns define Corporate Social Responsibility differently. World Business Council for Sustainable Development defines Corporate Social Responsibility as "The continuing commitment by business to behave ethically and contribute to economic development while improving the quality of life of the workforce and their families as well as of the local community and society at large." Jamshedji Tata has very beautifully defined the Corporate Social Responsibility. "The clear definition of Corporate Social Responsibility is that the community is not just another stakeholder in our business but the very purpose of our existence."

Implementation of CSR policy may generate a trusting relationship that leads stakeholders to become committed to the organization through actions such as customer loyalty, stock holder, capital investments and supplier investments. CSR has become increasingly prominent in Indian corporate scenario because organizations have realized that besides growing their businesses it is also vital to build trustworthy and sustainable relationships with the community at large.

CSR is regarded as a part of the "triple bottom line", in which sustainability is built on financial, environmental and social grounds. Working actively with an increased awareness and focus of the responsibilities of a corporation gives the business communities the opportunity to be important and powerful actors in society. Corporate social responsibility is about businesses transforming their role from merely selling products and services with a view to making profits and increasing their revenue to the development of a society through their abilities of generating capital and investing it for social empowerment.

CSR practically has the same effects as advertisements, because it sheds a positive light on a brand or product. That is why CSR can also be seen as an expression of marketing. By including the brand name in social responsible campaigns, brand awareness and brand recognition are raised. It's clear that the concepts of value and values are rapidly merging in the minds of consumers. People want to be engaged with companies that share their values. CSR has an important role to play especially in building up trust or brand in the minds of the consumers. In an emerging market where consumers are looking for functional products which last longer is not a problem. A company which builds the image of producing quality products that last longer though they may not be on the cutting edge of technology will actually be able to gain strategic advantage in emerging economies.

Companies are encouraged to actively work with CSR. But it is not only an opportunity given to the companies; it is also in many cases expectation by customers, employees, society and other stakeholders. Firms all over the world are beginning to grasp the importance of intangible assets, be it brand name or employee morale. Only firms that have gained the goodwill of the general public and are ideal corporate citizens will be to develop these intangible assets into strategic advantages.

The desire of a good corporate citizen and improved brand image are the main drivers of CSR among companies. The role of business in society has undergone several changes. Awareness of the impact of business on society and environment has grown along with the increasing socio-regulatory pressures. It is no longer simple enough to employ people, make profits and pay taxes. Companies are now expected to be responsible, accountable and benefit the society as a whole. Business cannot escape from society and society cannot exist without business. Thus there is a two-way relationship between business and society. Business is expected to create wealth, supply market, generate employment, innovate and produce a sufficient surplus to sustain its activities and improve its competitiveness while contributing to the maintenance of community in which it operates.

Individuals who were aware of the CSR initiative had more positive company related associations, displayed greater organizational identification with the company and indicated a greater intent to purchase products, seek employment, and invest in the company than respondents who were unaware of the initiative. Therefore, CSR activity has the potential to increase not only CSR associations, attitudes and identification but also the intent of stakeholders to commit personal resources to the benefit of the company. A key implication is therefore, is that to reap the positive benefits of CSR, companies need to work harder at raising awareness levels.

Brand equity is one of the factors that increase the financial value of a brand to the brand owner. Elements that can be included in the valuation of brand equity include: changing market share, profit margins, consumer recognition logos and other visual elements. Survival of the company depends upon how responsible company is towards the society. More concerned a company is, it is easier for it to create a positive brand image on the minds of consumer that leads to working towards building brand equity. Corporate Social Responsibility is arguably the most important thing on any brand marketer's mind. It is important because studies increasingly show that consumers will spend their money on brands that reflect their values and concerns.

Present study focus on brand positioning tool through Corporate Social Responsibility with reference to Carborundum Universal Limited (CUMI), Kochi. Carborundum Universal Limited is a part of Murugappa Group. The firm pioneered the produce of coated Abrasives and Bonded Abrasives in India in supplement to the produce of Super Refractories, Electro Minerals, Industrial Ceramics and Ceramic Fibers.

CSR AT CARBORUNDUM UNIVERSAL LIMITED (CUMI)

CUMI was founded in 1954 as a tripartite collaboration between the Murgappa Group. The company pioneered the manufacture of **Coated Abrasives** and **Bonded Abrasives** in India in addition to the manufacture of **Super Refractories, Electro Minerals, Industrial Ceramics and Ceramic Fibers**.

With the state-of-art facilities and strategic alliances with global partners, CUMI has achieved a reputation for quality and innovation. CUMI is one of the five manufacturers in the world with fully integrated operations that include mining, fusing, wind and hydro power stations, manufacturing, marketing and distribution. Almost all of CUMI's ten manufacturing facilities have received the ISO 9001:2008 accreditation for quality standards.

The Murugappa Group is known for its tradition of philanthropy and community service. The Group's philosophy is to reach out to the community by establishing service-oriented philanthropic institutions in the field of education and healthcare as the core focus areas.

Carborundum Universal Limited "The Company" has been upholding the Group's tradition by earmarking a part of its income for carrying out its social responsibilities. They believe that social Responsibility is not just a corporate obligation that has to be carried out but it is one's *dharma*. Therefore, their philanthropic endeavors are a reflection of their spiritual conscience and this provides them a way to discharge their responsibilities to the various sections of the society.

They have been carrying out Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) activities for a long time through AMM Foundation, an autonomous charitable trust, in the field of Education and Healthcare, while also pursuing CSR activities for the benefit of community around their local areas of operations viz., locations where their plants operating.

The company shall seek to impact the lives of the disadvantaged by supporting and engaging in activities that aim to improve their wellbeing. They are dedicated to the cause of empowering people, educating them and in improving their quality of life. While they will undertake programmes based on the identified needs of the community, education and healthcare shall remain their priority. Across the different programme areas identified by the company, it would be their endeavor to reach the disadvantaged and the marginalized sections of the society to make a meaningful impact on their lives.

The company is committed to identifying and supporting programmes aimed at:

- Empowerment of the disadvantaged sections of the society through education, access to and awareness about financial services and the like;
- Provision of access to basic necessities like healthcare, drinking water & sanitation and the like to the underprivileged;
- Work towards eradicating hunger and poverty, through livelihood generation and skill Development;
- Supporting environmental and ecological balance through afforestation, soil conservation, rain water harvesting, conservation of flora & fauna, and similar programme;
- Promotion of rural sports, nationally recognized sports, Paralympics sports and Olympic sports through training of sportspersons;
- Undertake rural development projects;
- Any other programme that falls under company's CSR purpose including those listed in schedule VII of the Companies Act, 2013 as may be amended from time to time and is aimed at the empowerment of disadvantaged sections of the society.

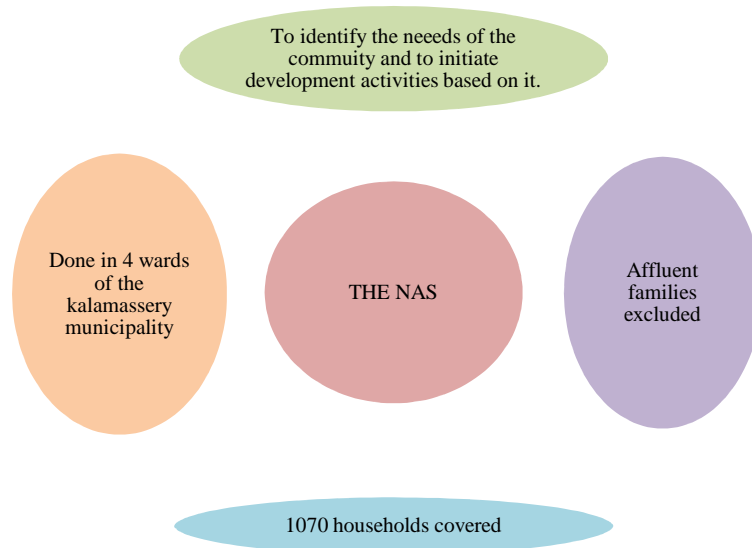
The approval of the CSR policy and oversight is the responsibility of the Company's Board of Directors. The CSR Committee shall recommend to the Board the amount of expenditure to be incurred on the CSR activities to be undertaken by the company as approved by the Board. In case of any surplus arising out of CSR projects, the same shall not form part of business profits of the Company.

The Murugappa Group has upheld its ancient family tradition of earmarking and spending a portion of family income for social service in its business enterprise also. Therefore, the Group invests a portion of its wealth — one per cent of profit after tax (PAT) for the welfare of society since it went into business.

This approach was institutionalized through establishing the AMM Foundation originally founded in 1953 as the AMM Charities Trust, the foundation works for the welfare of the community where Murugappa operates, with special thrust on education and health sector. Over the last eight decades, the foundation has built and maintains four high schools comprising 8000 students, a polytechnic institute of 1000 students, four no-fee hospitals and a rural research centre that focuses on the development of protein-efficient algae, natural dyes, organic farming and technologies for the rural and urban poor.

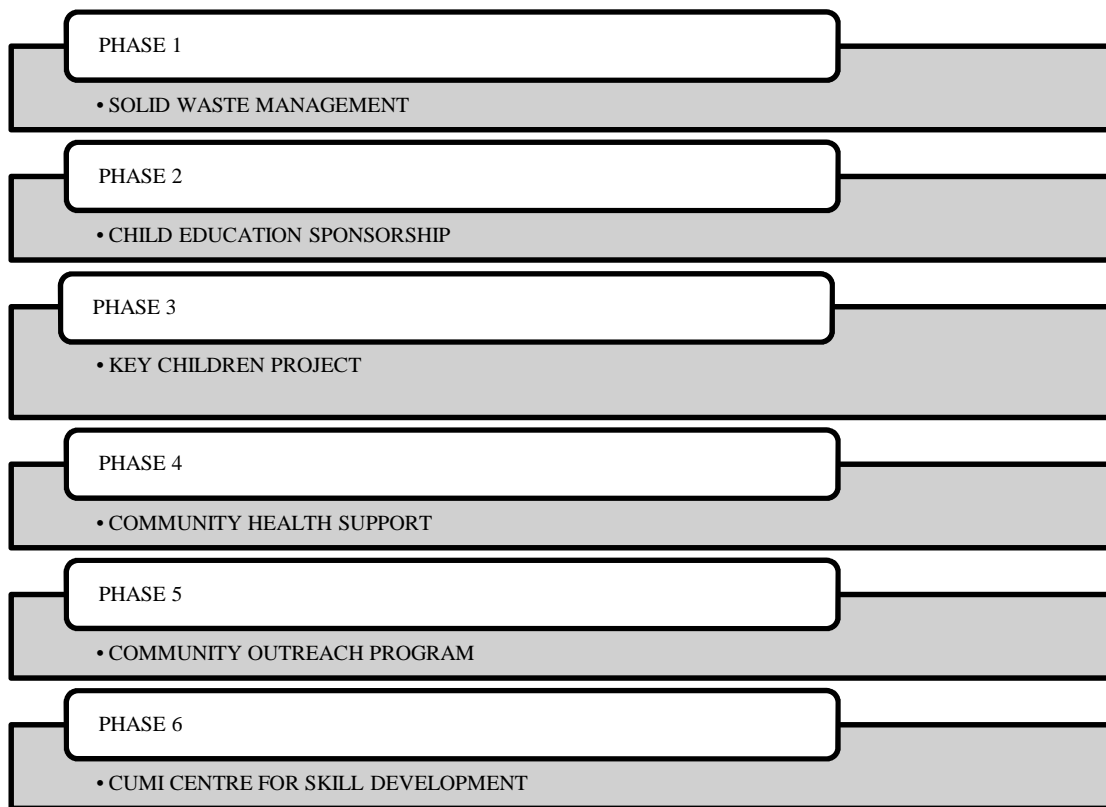
A Socio- Economic need assessment survey is carried out by experts to understand the need of community. On that basis CSR activities are done in the company.

TABLE 1: SOCIO - ECONOMIC NEED ASSESSMENT SURVEY (NAS)



The neighboring communities of Carborundum Universal Ltd. (CUMI) were selected for the study, namely the areas catering to wards 38, 39, 40 and 41 of Kalamassery Municipality. All the households of the wards were not included in the study as some of the areas are inhabited by rich families. Neighboring communities as well as the socio economic status were the criteria for arriving at a consensus on selection of the target area by the officials of CUMI and the Consulting Agency. This target area is basically an isolated area surrounded with numerous small scale industries.

CHART 1: THE COMMUNITY INTERVENTION PROJECTS IDENTIFIED WITH THE HELP OF NAS



I. SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT

The Solid Waste Management project was planned in 3 stages.

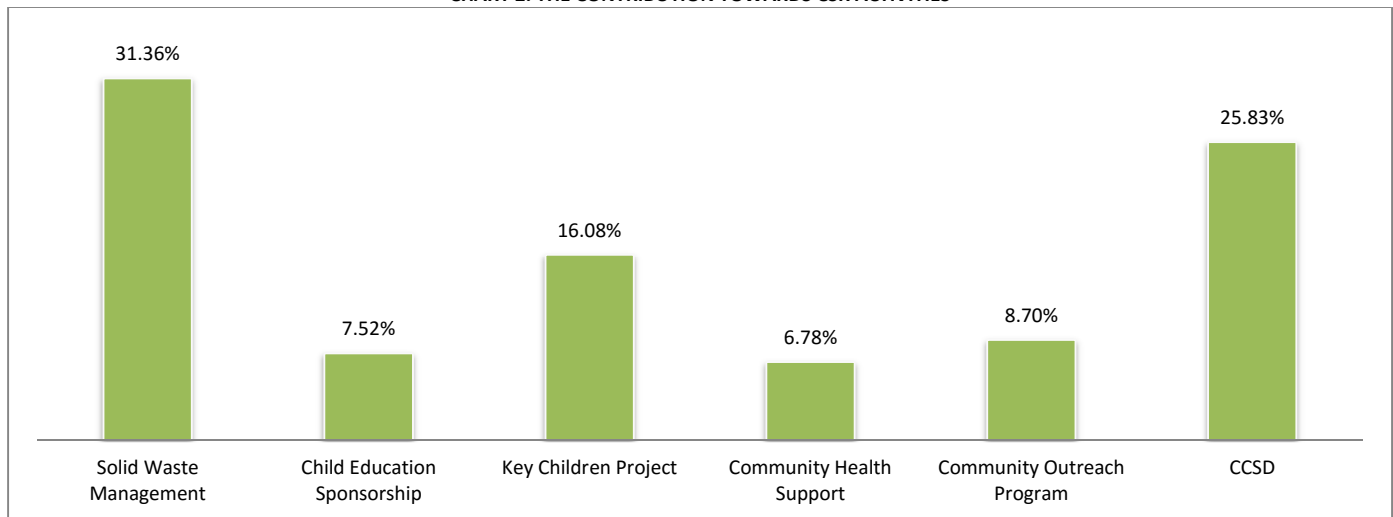
- In the first stage, Bio Gas plants will be provided to 100 beneficiaries. Each Bio gas plant will cost Rs. 10,500/- out of which CUMI will pay Rs. 8500/- Beneficiary has to pay Rs. 2000/-. These bio gas plants will work with kitchen waste and is very simple to operate. Through this they can save 30-40% LPG and can have a clean environment.
- In 2nd stage, for households which do not have space to accommodate a bio gas plant, vermin pots will be provided. Each vermin pot will cost Rs. 600/- out of which Rs 500/- will be paid by CUMI.
- In 3rd stage, for people who could not afford a bio gas plant or vermin pot, a system to collect daily waste will be implemented.

II. CHILD EDUCATION SPONSORSHIP

- This program is aimed at providing support to under privileged children for their continuous overall development during education period.

- They sponsor 50 children in the age group of 6-14.
 - Sponsorship for learning infrastructure annually for a period of 8 continuous years.
- III. KEY CHILDREN PROJECT**
- This project aimed at addressing the after- school hours of children whose parents are employed to effectively utilize the after school hours.
 - It help the youth in the community so as to engage in the segment to a great extent and this exercise will provide them with an opportunity to create a meaning in the social course.
 - It helps to prevent child abuse.
- IV. COMMUNITY HEALTH SUPPORT**
- Two sides of Edapally plants are thickly populated area mostly the working class. Neglected area noted in the survey was old age people, children and women.
 - To support them there is a dispensary with free medicine is facilitated which functions 6 days in a week.
 - CUMI is providing the service of doctor and supporting medical staff for 4 days and doctors from Cochin Cooperative Medical College extend their service on two days. All the out patients are supported with Generic medicines free of cost.
- V. COMMUNITY OUTREACH PROGRAM**
- Noon meals program for students at school.
 - Cultural development program for local community.
 - “CUMI’s light at your house” – program of energy conservation.
 - Health awareness program, Environmental awareness program, Pampa cleaning project.
- VI. CUMI CENTRE FOR SKILL DEVELOPMENT(CCSD)**
- Enhancing employability skill of young aspirants through holistic education
 - The objective of this initiative is to impart quality education for skill up gradation free of cost.
 - Enabling them to appear the relevant trade examination conducted by National Council on Vocational Training (NCVT).
 - Students are given exposure to manufacturing set up to minimize skill gaps felt by the industry in the field of technical education.
- VII. ASK (Attitude, Skill & Knowledge) CENTER**
- This project provides multiple platform to all demographic segments of local community viz, children, youth, women, and elderly citizen in promoting education, knowledge skill development, health and sports etc. as per the yearly plan.

CHART 2: THE CONTRIBUTION TOWARDS CSR ACTIVITIES



Source: primary data

CSR activities will help the company to continuously interact with the community and thereby maintain an enhanced community relation. This will also help the company for their branding. Consumer’s ability to accurately identify the CSR activities of the firm they consume from is, in general quite low. Usually awareness of CSR initiatives to be associated with a set of four factors like beliefs, attributes, attitudes and identification-those are internal to consumers, pointed out that CSR does not promote a brand and its effects can never be visible in the profit and loss account of a company. CSR plays a role in overall corporate objectives, as a better society means greater future market potential. The CUMI is using all these factors to aware the community about their CSR activities.

CUMI has no challenges from the community level while implementing these CSR activities. Because, it is own by the people and their representatives. The message CUMI wants to give to the CSR world and to the CSR beginners is that the company’s Corporate Social Responsibility should be worked on the basis of the people’s need. The only duty of the company is to support and encourage them.

WAY FORWARD

- Installation of 100 bio gas plants and 16 vermin pots completed as on 31 Dec 2011. Request for more installation bio gas plant for new beneficiaries will also be considered.
- As per the child sponsorship project, 50 children studying in classes from 3rd to 7th were selected for sponsorship.

ACCOLADES

Kerala Management Association has chosen CUMI-EMD for Management Excellence Awards 2012 for its commitment towards Corporate Social Responsibility.

SUGGESTIONS

- Educate the people on sanitation, and good habits through counselors appointed by the company.
- Open employment bureau, collect opportunities list for all kind of people and coordinate with unemployed youth to engage them gainfully.
- Conduct extensive and continual research on the concepts of Corporate Social Responsibility.
- Provide computers and free training for students in rural areas.
- Get affiliated with an NGO.
- Promote rural entrepreneurship.
- Develop women’s self-help groups to teach selling and book-keeping skills and build commercial knowledge.

- Establish positive relationships with other socially responsible companies.
- Involve employees in defining and advancing CSR.

CONCLUSION

Implementation of CSR policy may generate a trusting relationship that leads stakeholders to become committed to the organization. With the care for the community and markets the corporations operate in, will help the organization for a sustainable business growth. CSR activities will help CUMI to continuously interact with the community and thereby maintain an enhanced community relation. This will also help the company to establish their brand name among the society.

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