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EVOLUTION OF CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

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ABSTRACT

The relevance of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has increased manifold in the past two decades. Organisations have understood that its' CSR spending has long term effects in brand building, increasing consumer base, goodwill etc. CSR as part of an organisation's strategy is getting bolder and brighter day by day. CSR is not a sudden discovery. It has been carried out in different forms from time immemorial. With time and age the concept of CSR evolved, so did its definitions. Many other terms such as corporate citizenship, environmental sustainability, Corporate Social Performance etc are used as synonyms with subtle differences. This paper is focused on understanding the evolution and the current trends of CSR.

KEYWORDS

Corporate Social Responsibility, Strategy, Strategic Corporate Social Responsibility, Philanthropy.

INTRODUCTION

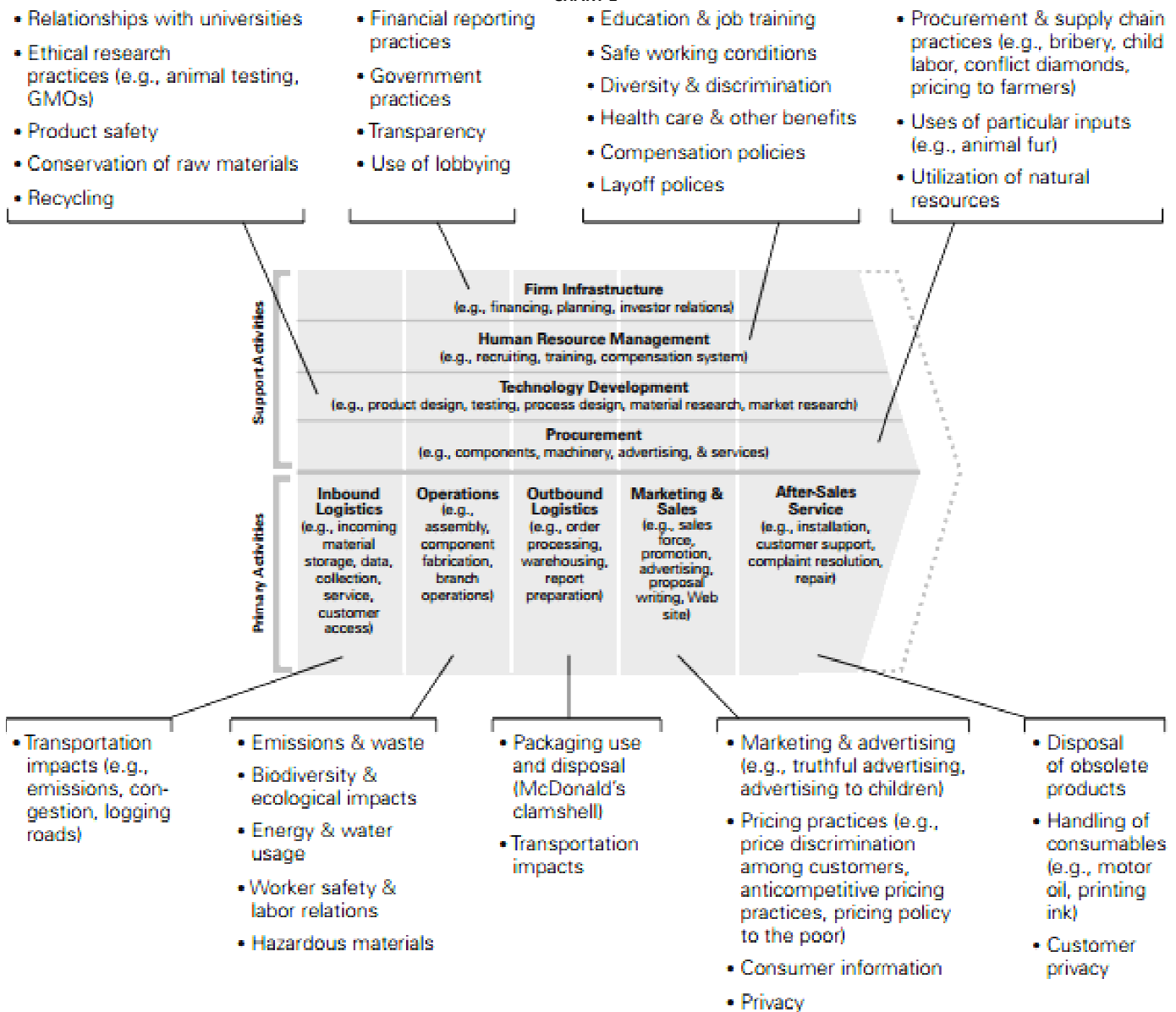
Business was defined as buying and selling of goods and services with the sole aim of making profit. Hence, the annual reports of companies were filled with reports on the sales growth and financial achievements. (Vivek Srivastava) There were businesses spending for social causes but was confined to religion like donation to churches, temples etc or to orphanages run by religious institutions. Welfare of the state was always considered as the responsibility of the government. It never came under the businesses' responsibility.

However, it can be observed that the businesses which ensured that it not only took care of its customers but also its' stakeholders built a stronger brand which never faded in the stakeholders' mind even though it sailed through many product lifecycles. The best example from India would be the TATAs. (Vivek Srivastava)

CSR in simple terms is, being socially responsible for all the activities an organisation does by the inclusion of public interest into its decisions keeping in mind the triple bottom line-People, Planet and Profit (Kaur, 2012)

Now, organisations have realised the importance of CSR not just because of reporting and compliance requirements but because it is a source of competitive advantage and its value can be benefitted throughout the value chain. This is explained by Michael E Porter's Value Chain (mapping social responsibilities to Value Chain) where each function at each stage is thought through to be complied ethically as well as by adding value. This model proves to generate shared value, that is, value for the organisation as well to the society at large.

CHART 1



Source: Michael E. Porter, *Competitive Advantage: Creating and Sustaining Superior Performance*, 1985

In developing countries the government alone cannot uplift the downtrodden. Hence, it is even more important for business houses and organisations to help eradicate the various social problems such as education, healthcare etc. (Kumar) In India, the Companies Act 2013 mandatory requires all companies with net worth of 500 crores or more or turnover of 1000 crores or more or profit of 5 crores or more to spend at least 2% of its average net profit for the preceding three financial years on corporate social responsibility activities. (Shetty, 2014) (KPMG, 2014)

The key to ensuring CSR compliance with benefits to the organisation is 'Strategic CSR' where an organisation's goals are in line with its' social responsibilities. Most of the organisations are adopting strategic CSR which, indeed, creates 'shared value'

OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this Research Paper is

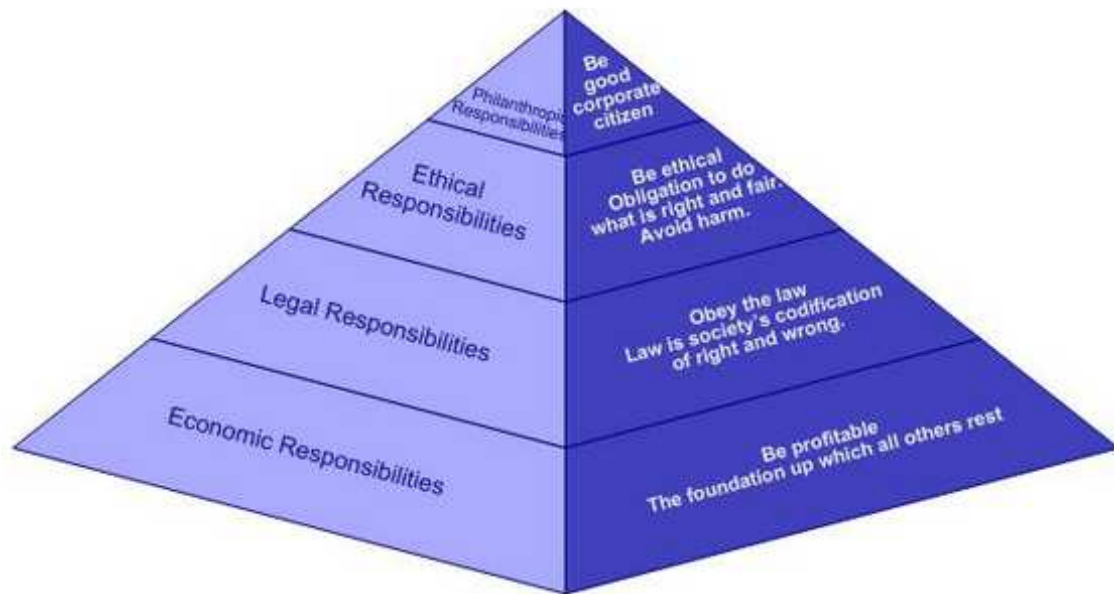
1. To identify the journey of CSR from philanthropy to Strategic CSR
2. To identify the recent trends of CSR in organisations

EVOLUTION OF CSR

(Campher, 2011) According to the Henk Campher, CSR is not a revolution but an evolution. It existed in some form or the other but its' importance have grown over the years owing to various factors such as increased stakeholder's awareness and demands. (Caroll, *The Four Faces of Corporate Citizenship*, 1998) (Delgado-Garcí, 2007)

CSR does not have a clear cut definition. Just as its' concept, its' definition also evolved with time. The first widely accepted definition came from Archie Carroll's CSR Pyramid (Caroll, *The Pyramid of Corporate Social Responsibility: Toward the Moral Management of Organisations stakeholders*, 1991) where the pyramid was divided into Economic responsibilities, legal responsibilities, ethical responsibilities and philanthropic responsibilities in hierarchical order with economic responsibilities holding the highest importance.

FIG. 1



Carroll's CSR Pyramid

A FEW OF THE POPULAR DEFINITIONS ON CSR

"Decisions and actions taken for reasons at least partially beyond the firm's direct economic or technical interest." Keith Davis (1960)

"Problems that arise when corporate enterprises casts its shadow on the social scene, and the ethical principles that ought to govern the relationship between corporations and society" Walton and Eells (1961)

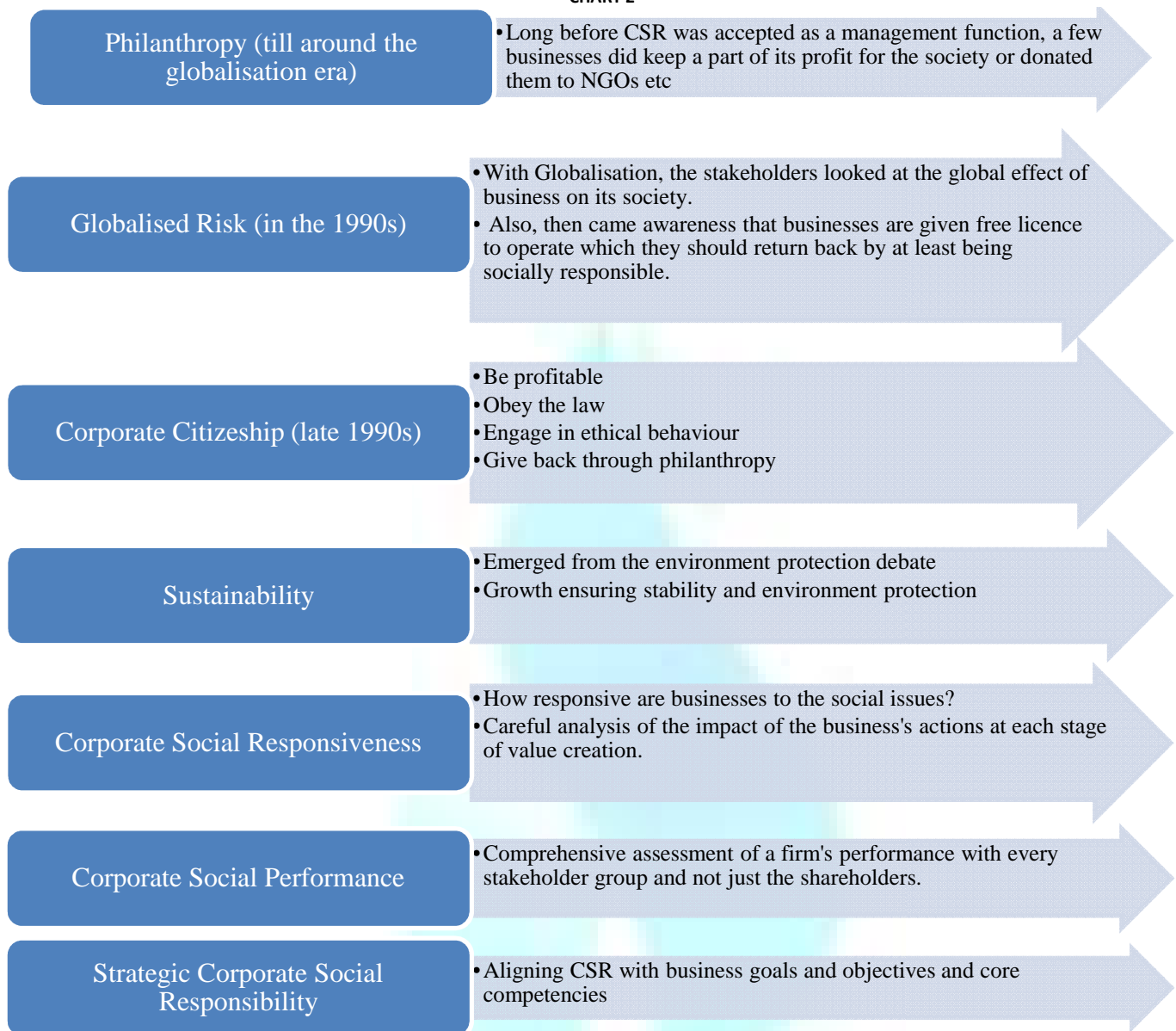
"The social responsibility of business encompasses the economic, legal, ethical and discretionary expectations that a society has of organizations at a given point in time." Archie B Carroll (1979)

"Corporate Social Responsibility is 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." World Business Council for Sustainable Development.

"Corporate Social Responsibility is Humanitarianism, not charity but social moral obligation of each and every individual and institution." Dr. Kurian John Melamparambil

"Corporate Social Responsibility is an organisation's obligation to consider the interests of their customers, employees, shareholders, communities and the ecology and to consider the social and environmental consequences of their business activities. By integrating CSR into core business processes and stakeholder management, organisations can achieve the ultimate goal of creating both social value and corporate value." Stanford University.

CHART 2



CSR EVOLUTION: IN BRIEF

(Butler, 2010) The former chairman and CEO, Neville Isdell coined the term 'Connected Capitalism' in which he opined that it is impossible for governments/non-governmental organisations to solve major issues. On the contrary, if the businesses, governments and NGOs go hand in hand there can be a major impact. According to Isdell, 'capitalism' is inevitable for growth. Hence, the concept is termed as 'connected capitalism'. This is nothing but re-coined CSR.

Many social activists claimed social and environmental issues as an end-result or carelessness of business operations without sustainable development in its fore view. Hence, the expectations of stakeholders also shifted from mere product or service quality to the social responsibilities of the business. Therefore, an entity's social responsibility started getting more importance and visibility.

PricewaterhouseCoopers define corporate sustainability as "aligning an organisation's products and services with stakeholder expectations, thereby adding economic, environmental and social value". (Hopkins, Articles: Definition of CSR, 2011). Sustainability was the other term associated with CSR. It implies that an entity should focus on its sustainable growth which is only possible by ensuring protection to the environment along with stakeholder's satisfaction.

Many conferences are held and committees are set up for CSR world over where the various organisations emphasise on how businesses take from society and is obliged to give it back. In recent years, Corporate Social Performance has emerged where not only the responsibilities of business towards society but also its responsiveness to the social issues is measured.

CSR includes environment sustainability, social responsiveness, philanthropy etc. All inclusive yet aligned to an organisation's objective is Strategic CSR.

Strategic CSR involves 2 components:

1. Aligning CSR to organisation's objectives
2. Aligning CSR to organisation's core competencies

By doing the above organisation's core objective is in line with the societies' expectations whereby there is shared value creation. It is a win-win situation for the organisation as well as the society at large. Strategic CSR implies full integration of CSR into an organisation's systems, processes, management and performance appraisal. For example, Walmart has integrated sustainability into its internal buying processes wherein the suppliers are indexed on quality and sustainability. (McHelney)

CHART 3



Source: (Kramer, 2006)

CURRENT TRENDS**1. INCREASED REPORTING REQUIREMENTS**

There has been an increase in reporting requirements by companies/ organisations on their status on CSR and CSP. The annual reports of companies include the various CSR activities that the company did, its CSR spending etc. The new company's act mandate in India is the first of its kind in the world to having made minimum 2% profit spending on CSR mandatory. (Our Work: Global CSR Disclosure Requirements)

2. CONSUMERS DEMAND FOR CSR

(Epstein-Reeves, 2010) A study done by Forbes in 2010 showed that more than 88% of the consumers want the businesses to achieve their goals while improving their society and environment and 83% of them want businesses to support charities and non-profit organisations. A business is impossible to survive without a strong consumer base. Hence, it can be observed that consumers prefer a socially responsible business over a normal business.

3. STRATEGIC CSR/ INCLUSION OF CSR IN LINE WITH THE OBJECTIVES OF THE COMPANY

(McElhaney, 2007) Strategic CSR creates a win – win situation to the business and society. It is the alignment of CSR of the company with a) its core business objectives b) its core competencies. The best example of strategic CSR is Toyota's car Prius. With increasing environmental concerns Toyota came up with a hybrid car which uses only 10% harmful pollutants. It has not only ensured environmental sustainability but also secured its space competition. With its patented technology, competitors of Toyota are licensing their technology from them. (Hopkins, Home: Articles: Strategic CSR and Competitive Advantage)

4. RATING AGENCIES: CSR SCORE

(Steven Scalat, 2010) The number of independent agencies rating a businesses' CSR or CSP are increasing manifold. Businesses also take help from these agencies to get them rated to see where they are placed.

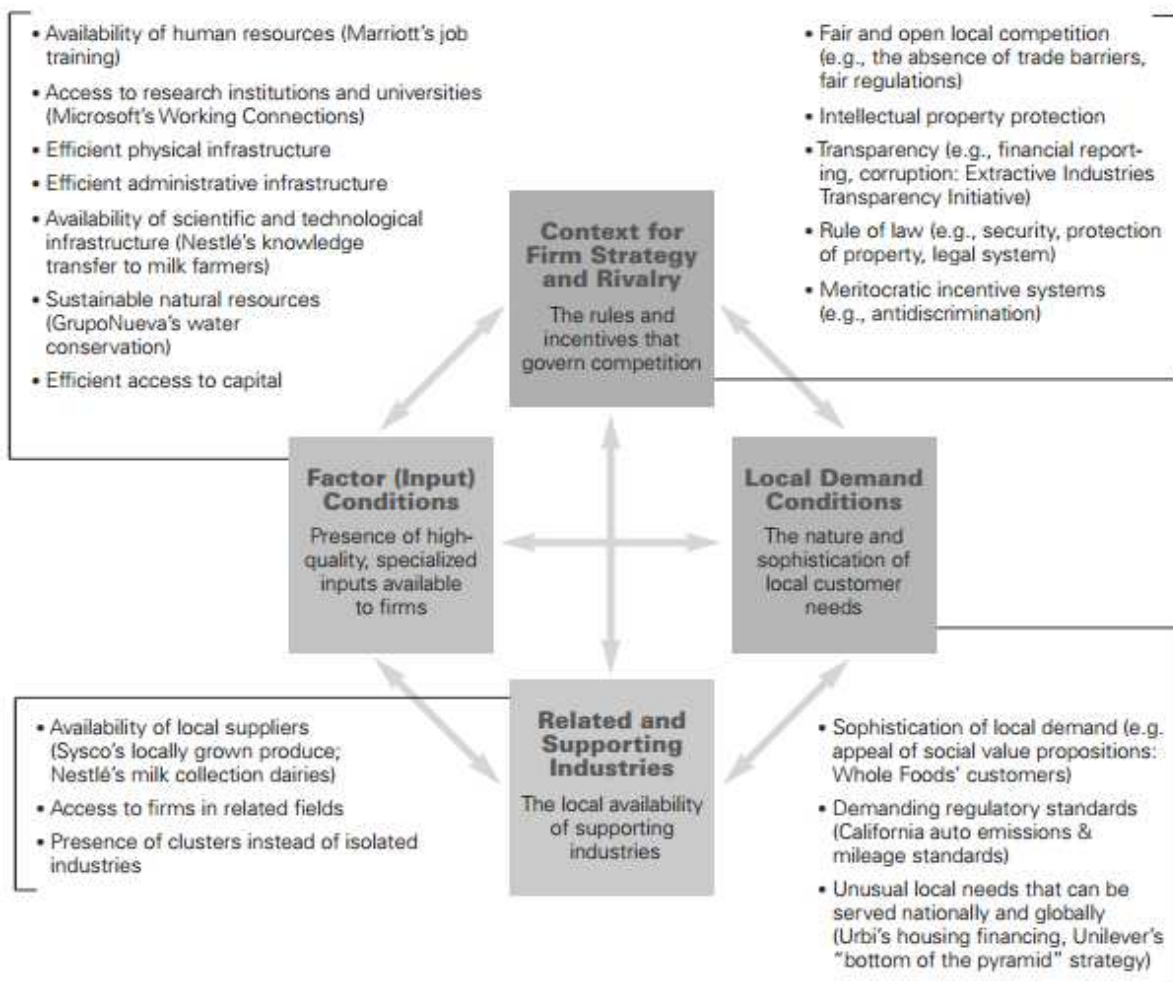
5. CSR COMMUNICATION

(Shuili Du, 2010) The CSR initiatives need to be communicated to the stakeholders to generate favourable stakeholder attitudes and better support. The mode for CSR communication should be decided looking into the type of stakeholder, the CSR initiative, social issue orientation etc. In short, CSR has to be positioned strategically. HP lost out when it failed to communicate its re-cycling strategy whereas Dell propagated its' planting of trees on each printer bought by their consumers – making it an environment friendly organisation. (McHelney)

6. CSR AS A SOURCE OF COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE

(Kramer, 2006) Media, government, social activists and society at large hold an organisation accountable for any of its wrong business practice. It can impair its brand image drastically. For example: The world-over protested against the child labour employed at Nike's outsourced factory. Same holds with the Pepsi Plant in India when it was found contaminating water. Hence, to ensure and expand space in the market place businesses need to be socially responsible. The model given by Michael Porter analyses how companies can gain competitive advantage by being socially responsible. The model explains how each of the external environment component can help fight competition such as encouragement of research, job training, transparency, adhering to standards, valuing local needs etc.

CHART 4



Source: Michael E. Porter, *The Competitive Advantage of Nations*, 1990

CONCLUSION

Corporate Social Responsibility is no more a term used as a synonym to Philanthropy which is keeping a part of profit to help the downtrodden. There is a lot of thought is put in to decide:

1. how to align the goals and objectives in line with CSR which includes community development, sustainable development, environment friendliness etc
2. on the quantum of funds to be allocated to CSR
3. how to publicise the same in a subtle yet strong fashion for brand building, increasing customer base, stakeholder satisfaction etc
4. on the recruitment in the CSR field to ensure that the organisation is responsive to social issues which affects its' corporate social performance.
5. on its' long term and short term CSR spending and to measure the same with the key CSR take-a-ways such as competitive advantage, strong brand name, loyal customer base etc.

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