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A REVIEW OF CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY IN INDIA

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ABSTRACT

As per the new Companies Act 2013, corporate social responsibility is emerging as a catalyst in socio economic development of the country. Due to the provisions of corporate social responsibility, it is evolving as a new tool of social development. The practices and initiatives taken by corporate to develop the Indian society is making a robust change and it can be seen around us. This paper is an attempt to identify the outcomes, issues and challenges of corporate social responsibility.

KEYWORDS

corporate social responsibility, philanthropic, challenges, retention efforts.

INTRODUCTION

orporate Social Responsibility (CSR), also referred to as corporate citizenship or socially responsible business, is a form of corporate self-regulation integrated into a business model. The interest in CSR has grown with the spread of socially responsible investing, the attention of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and ethics training within organizations. Recent incidents of ethics-based corporate scandals have also increased awareness of CSR. Organizations that embrace CSR hold themselves accountable to others for their actions and seek to make a positive impact on the environment, their communities, and the larger society.

Corporate social responsibility may include philanthropic efforts such as charitable donations or programs that encourage employee volunteerism by providing paid time off for such activities. Many organizations seek to have an even greater impact through CSR initiatives that integrate social values into operational and business strategies. For example, to protect scarce natural resources, a firm may make a commitment to use only recycled materials in its packaging of consumer goods.

Many organizations promote their CSR efforts as a way of shaping public perceptions, attracting customers, and building good will with stakeholders. Public companies often report CSR policies and activities in their annual reports; some create separate documents or use their websites to describe and publicize their CSR-related efforts. Organizations and interested external third parties assess CSR performance by comparing, or benchmarking, the activities and their results with competitors or other sets of organizations. Measures include amount of expenditures or investment, degree of executive engagement, impact of implementation, and CSR outcomes relative to objectives. The scale and nature of the benefits of CSR to an organization can be difficult to quantify. Those driven by strategic and operational choices may result in higher or lower costs, but directly linking CSR initiatives to revenue increases is not always possible. Many organisation use non-financial measures to assess the benefits of CSR. For example, socially responsible practices can improve employee recruitment and retention efforts, be a means of managing risk, and provide brand differentiation. Some business critics of CSR, however, argue that too often it competes with a duty to maximize shareholder value. Others cast the CSR efforts of companies as "greenwashing" efforts to draw attention away from unpopular practices such as polluting the environment or outsourcing jobs overseas

OBJECTIVES

- 1. To study the CSR status in India.
- 2. To understand the meaning and various models of CSR.
- 3. To study the policies governing CSR in India.
- 4. To study the challenges faced by CSR in India.
- 5. To make suggestions for accelerating CSR initiatives.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research paper is an attempt of exploratory research, based on the secondary data sourced from journals, magazines, articles and media reports.

DEFINITION OF CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is a concept whereby companies integrate social, environmental and health concerns in their business strategy (policy) and operations and in their interactions with stakeholders on a voluntary basis. The social responsibility of business encompasses the economic, legal, ethical, and discretionary expectations that society has of organizations at a given point in time.

The European Commission's definition of CSR is: "A concept whereby companies integrate social and environmental concerns in their business operations and in their interaction with their stakeholders on a voluntary basis." According to CSR Asia, "CSR is a company's commitment to operating in an economically, socially and environmentally sustainable manner whilst balancing the interests of diverse stakeholders." Today the concept of CSR has undergone radical change. It has integrated social as well as environmental issues into their missions and decisions. Companies take keen interest in informing about their CSR activities to their stakeholders as well. Across the globe, business enterprises have undertaken CSR initiatives in the areas of water conservation, healthcare, rural welfare, environment protection, poverty alleviation, education, community investment projects, culture and heritage, bio-diversity, disaster management and relief, culture and heritage, green environment, product responsibility, governance, waste management and gender equality. use CSR to integrate economic, environmental and social objectives with the company's operations and growth."

CSR IN INDIA

CSR is not a new concept in India. Ever since their inception, corporates like the Tata Group, the Aditya Birla Group, and Indian Oil Corporation, to name a few, have been involved in serving the community. Through donations and charity events, many other organizations have been doing their part for the society. The basic objective of CSR in these days is to maximize the company's overall impact on the society and stakeholders. CSR policies, practices and programs are being comprehensively integrated by an increasing number of companies throughout their business operations and processes. A growing number of corporates feel that CSR is not just another form of indirect expense but is important for protecting the goodwill and reputation, defending attacks and increasing business competitiveness.

Companies have specialized CSR teams that formulate policies, strategies and goals for their CSR programs and set aside budgets to fund them. These programs are often determined by social philosophy which have clear objectives and are well defined and are aligned with the mainstream business. The programs are put into practice by the employees who are crucial to this process. CSR programs ranges from community development to development in education, environment and healthcare etc.

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CSR has gone through many phases in India. The ability to make a significant difference in the society and improve the overall quality of life has clearly been proven by the corporates. Not one but all corporates should try and bring about a change in the current social situation in India in order to have an effective and lasting solution to the social woes. Partnerships between companies, NGOs and the government should be facilitated so that a combination of their skills such as expertise, strategic thinking, manpower and money to initiate extensive social change will put the socio-economic development of India on a fast track.

NEED FOR CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY IN INDIA

CSR as a strategy is becoming increasingly important for India today because of three identifiable trends:

- 1. Changing social expectations: Consumers and society in general expect more from the companies whose products they buy.
- 2. Increasing affluence: This is true within developed nations, but also in comparison to developing nations. Affluent consumers can afford to pick and choose the products they buy.
- 3. Globalization: Growing influence of the media sees any mistakes by companies brought immediately to the attention of the public.

POTENTIAL BUSINESS BENEFITS OF CSR

The nature of benefits of CSR for any organization can vary depending on the nature of the enterprise. The business case for CSR within a company will likely rest on one or more of these arguments.

1. HUMAN RESOURCES

A CSR programme can be an aid to recruitment and retention, particularly within the competitive graduate student market. Potential recruits often ask about a firm's CSR policy during an interview, and having a comprehensive policy can give an advantage.

2. RISK MANAGEMENT

Managing risk is a central part of many corporate strategies. Reputation as take decades to build up can be ruined in hours through incident such as corruption scandals or environmental accident. These can draw unwanted attention from regulators, courts, governments & media. Building a genuine culture of doing the right thing within a corporation can offset these risk.

3. BRAND DIFFERENTIATION

In crowded market places, company's striving for a unique selling proposition. That can separate them from the competition in the minds of consumers. CSR can play role in building customer loyalty based on distinctive ethical values.

4. LICENSE TO OPERATE

Corporation are keen to avoid interference in their business through taxation. By taking substantive voluntary steps, they can pursuit governments that they are taking issues such as health & safety, diversity, or the environment seriously as good corporate citizen for positive impact on the environment.

CSR have no boundaries and are not constrained by race, color, or religion. Sadly, concern for the community is often mistaken for socialism. On the contrary, every citizen is an asset in economic activity and has opportunities to succeed. CSR is a culture and unwritten contract with the community. This invisible culture can shape brighter future for nations. If employees don't see the point of CSR initiatives, or understand the message, initiatives are unlikely to be effective. Organizations must realize that government alone will not be able to get success in its endeavor to uplift the down trodden of society. The present societal marketing concept of companies is constantly evolving and has given rise to a new concept- CSR. Many of the leading corporations across the world had realized the importance of being associated with socially relevant causes as a means of promoting their brands. It stems from the desire to do well and get self-satisfaction in return as well as societal in remote areas. Also some companies have already started using the CSR as a strategy, which aims at mutual development of company and the community simultaneously

SUGGESTIONS

Companies can set a network of activities to be taken up in a consortium to tackle major environmental issues. It would also provide an opportunity to learn from each other. Everyone in the organization needs to recognize their own role in promoting CSR. Companies should provide wider professional development activities. Training, conferences and seminars could be organized by companies to disseminate and generate new knowledge and information in this sector. A strong budgetary support would definitely help to grow this sector and research related to respective industry would enhance their organizations contribution further. Government regulations which are supporting in this direction could attract more response from organizations. All this would also lead to benchmark CSR activities. Companies need to involve their stakeholders in order to build meaningful and long term partnerships which would lead to creating a strong image and brand identity. It is also suggested to review existing policies in order to develop more meaningful visions for the companies and broaden their contributions to reach to local communities.

CONCLUSIONS

Corporate sustainability is an evolving process and not an end. The Companies bill is a good initiative on the part of the government however what would be included in spending on CSR is unclear and is left for the companies to decide. Across the globe, the concept of CSR has been accepted as an element for success and survival of business along with fulfilling social objectives. However, the challenge for the companies is to determine a strong and innovative CSR strategy which should deliver high performance in ethical, environmental and social areas and meet all the stakeholders' objectives.

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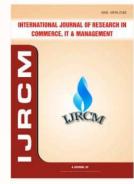
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