# ROLE OF MEDIA IN PROMOTION OF CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY OF MEDIA

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## Abstract

*The media is at the same time an industry, a public service and a factor in political life. In a democratic country, it is considered as a third estate, the first two being judiciary and legislative. Media is considered to be a source of imparting education and providing information. Both electronic and print media can play a vital role in promoting technical and scientific thinking at the same time protecting our culture. It helps to form public opinion and acts as a bridge between the public and the government. But increasing commercialization and political pressure are responsible to divert media from its main track. Media is an instrument of social change and if it understands and fulfills its social responsibility, it may lead to a healthy and enriched society with holistic growth of a nation.*

## Introduction

In the past decade, social responsibility has gained considerable interest among academicians and business organizations. Every time, rising trend is seen in the business organizations of the country that holds the practice of social responsibility, may be under different titles such as corporate sustainability or corporate citizenship.  Corporate reports, CSR reporting and rating, respective web sites as well as other surveys conducted by renowned organizations like the Times foundation and 'Karmayog' well reveal impacts of fulfilling social responsibility by the corporate houses.

Though, the scenario was altogether different few years back. There is nothing to argue on the debate on the subject as suggested by Milton Friedman where he opined that 'the only social responsibility of business is to increase profits.' Now large number of business organizations thinks that investing a part of their business profits and efforts in the social order and natural surroundings from which they copy resources has constructive implications for their happiness. As Udai Pareek mentioned, 'All companies including multinationals have a responsibility to carry out their business and production process ethically. They should take into account people's human rights as well as the wider impact a company's operations may have on local communities and environment.'

The concept of 'Social Responsibility of Business' includes responsibilities towards itself, shareholders, employees, other business firms, government, customers, creditors and the society. Certain main features of social responsibility are also emphasized like in addition to make a fair and adequate return on capital, business must be just and humane as well as efficient and dynamic. Secondly, the social responsibility of business can best be assumed in an atmosphere of freedom with the least possible restraint on healthy completion. Thirdly, every business has an overriding responsibility to make the fullest possible use of its resources. Fourthly, it highlights the respective roles of the enterprises, the shareholders, the workers, the customers, the management and the community.

The payback of social responsibility are also substantiated by research focusing on the relationship between social responsibility actions and firm's financial show, competitive gain, repute and authority, employee attitudes and synergistic value creation. Recent studies have reported on the whole positive relationship between existence of social responsibility activities and monetary performance. Business organizations are looking forward and are making increasing investments in social responsibility related activities.

**Role of Media**

Distinct from making attractive and wide awake ads, corporations must obtain support of media in spreading awareness about social responsibility to the public at large. In the final scrutiny, social responsibility is all about serving the society to look beyond profits and hence the media which is a guardian of public good has a planetary role to play in this effort.

Volunteers from the society or the specific places where the corporations are launching their social responsibility can be used to seek initiatives by the media. They can also be used to publish articles pertaining to the human values and the job of the company in the promotion of social responsibility. Example of Infosys can be quoted to mention how this relationship is covered in the media. There are articles which indicate the praise that Infosys gets from the Indian public at large and this has been made possible because of intelligent media coverage. The other aspect is the way in which the society related works have been undertaken by Infosys and have been covered in the media tells volumes about how well the company has managed coverage by media.

Another important point is that the media can also act as a conscience keeper by regularly reminding corporations about the need to give back to society and to look beyond profits. On global scene, newspaper 'The Guardian' has been at the forward area in asking for the accountability and transparency from the corporations. Similarly in India, the newspaper 'The Hindu' does a noteworthy job of publishing articles and editorials that encourage the corporations to be socially mindful. Finally, the media can also take a decisive view of the social responsibility programs that a corporation claims to dedicate and it can also make sure that the corporation is not devoting in "Green Washing" where a corporation show off to follow social responsibility but in reality things are different.

**Review of Literature**

History speaks that in the decades of fifties and sixties, the literature was not greatly represented in social responsibility discussions. Among the well-known writers during that time were Keith Davis, Joseph W McGuire, William C Frederick and Clarence C Walton. Frederick opined that 'Social responsibility in the final analysis means a public attitude towards society's economic and human possessions and a readiness to see that those possessions are used for wide social ends and not simply for the hardly limited interests of private persons and firms'. Howard Bowen in 1953 was of the view that 'Social institutions created economic outcomes so it was to be expected that business firms should consider the social force of business activity.' Bowen said that, "Social responsibility refers to the obligations of businessmen to follow those policies or to make those decisions or to follow those lines of relationships which are sought-after in terms of the objectives and standards of our society." Social responsibility implies some kind of promise, through corporate policies and action. This view is reflected in a firm's social presentation, which can be judged by how a firm manages its community relationships, its social impact and the outcomes of its social responsibility policies and

actions. Social audits and its reporting are some of the examples of how companies assess their social presentation. In 1960's Keith Davies presented his paper saying that social responsibility refers to 'the company' consideration of, and response to, issues away from the economic, technical and legal necessities'. Frederick (1960) was of the view that 'Social responsibility means that company will supervise the process of an economic system that fulfill the prospect of the people. And this means, in turn, that the economy's means of production should be engaged in a way that production and allotment should increase complete socio-economic welfare'. In brief, the definitions of social responsibility in 1960's were an attempt to link society and businesses, defining society in larger terms. The social responsibility faction was an early and positive response to an article published in 1970 by Friedman stating that 'social responsibility of business was to increase its profits'

Going forward in eighties and nineties, there were lesser definitions but more efforts to compute and carry out research for the purpose of operationalizing social responsibility. It is a concept that can mean different things to different groups and stakeholders. In 1987 Gray & Owen mentioned social responsibility as "the procedure of communicating the social and environmental effects of business organization's economic actions to particular interest groups within society and to society at large". Till this day, academics do not have an agreement on its definition (Wood, 1991; Carroll, 1991). Bowen's definition of social responsibility of businessmen was 'it speaks of the obligations of businessmen to follow those policies to make such decisions or to act upon those lines of relations which are desirable in terms of the objectives and values of the society'.

In the same way, Perks (1993) defined corporate social coverage as "the revelation of those costs and benefits that may or may not be quantifiable money wise arising from economic actions and significantly borne by the community at large or other stakeholders". The phrase 'corporate social innovation' was first introduced by Rosabeth Moss Canter in 1999 who believed that companies need use social issues as a learning laboratory for identifying unmet requirements and for developing solutions that generate new markets. However, this decade 'marked a noteworthy growth in attempts to celebrate, or more accurately, state what social responsibility means' (Carroll, 1999). As per Carroll, "social responsibility encompasses the economic, lawful, moral and unrestricted (philanthropic) opportunity that society has of organizations at a given point in time. Large corporations began to go public about corporate social responsibilities and publish some of their efforts, but they also made public that 'any approach to corporate responsibility must start with the acknowledgment that the corporation must be profitable enough to provide shareholders a return that will encourage continuation of investment' (Wilson, 2000)."

Another movement appearing in literature is the increasing interaction between stakeholders. Firms are increasing their discussions with labor unions, environmental groups and other stakeholders and the functioning of certification solutions by corporations, which is the shop of codes of conduct monitoring and exposure (Kapstein, 2001). Kingston and Wagner (2004) regard leadership on sustainability and social responsibility as two important elements to set priorities and to ensure that commitments are achieved. An accountable venture also takes into account employees, suppliers, dealers, local communities, and the nation. Social responsibility of business takes into account the economic, legal, ethical, and discretionary opportunity that society has of organizations at a particular time (Turner, 2006). European Commission mentioned social responsibility as "a concept which the firm combines social and environmental concerns in their business activities and in their interaction with their stakeholders on a deliberate basis". World Business Council for Sustainable Development defined social responsibility as "the progressing commitment by business to behave fairly and give to economic development while improving the quality of life of the labor force and their families as well as of the local community and society at large."

Bebbington et al (2008) use the expression social responsibility reporting, which highlights the link between the role of reporting and the role of organizational and operations that are concerned with, and affected by the actions linked with social responsibility. Thus social responsibility has come out as the business issue of the 21st century and has been studied for over 50 years.

The healthy established definition of social responsibility is not a common term; MNC's prefers sustainable development or sustainable business whereas Indian companies talk about responsible business or Triple P (People, Planet, and Profit).

**Objective of the Study**

The objective of the study is to find out the role of media in the promotion of the activities corporate houses undertake for the social well being. It has been claimed by few companies that their efforts for the weaker and backward sections of the society not only financially but also in the other constructive ways do not come into limelight because media especially print media give due space for appreciating and publicizing the efforts of only those companies which give them good business. The objective of this paper is to look into the matter and to understand the role media plays in publishing the efforts of the business organizations.Mutual Trust and Understanding

It is observed that there is a lack of trust between the media and corporations, as a result both works individually instead of jointly. The media explains that companies perform community activities to attract media coverage. Consequently, they are sometimes unwilling to cite company' names when publishing their practices due to 'indirect publicity' reasons. Some of the media persons are of the view that they were willing to bring to notice company's name, if they are sure of real results and affect on the ground, and if such companies can be crystal clear and professional in mentioning figures, statistics, reports, etc. and demarcate their impact on the community. On the reverse, corporations lack trust for the media because they feel that media agencies are not always answerable and transparent, and necessitate looking at their own social responsibility. Large number of corporate houses feels that the media should not sit in a position to give judgment. Among other grievance that the media sector face, were that several members from the general public feel that this sector is only motivated by politics and comes to activities only when asked by politicians or highly political/ important figures, and even when they show, they merely choose press release and make a quick exit, instead of becoming deeply concerned in such events. The interesting point is that representatives of some media did not counter or rather agreed to these themselves, and they were frank enough to say that their own companies need to: establish a clear vision and mission statement that include the community; develop codes of conduct, and also provide their employees with regular training on subjects like transparency and responsibility. Likewise, the information media can take steps as channels for dialogue and communication among citizens, and as medium for diffusing developmental consciousness, and a character of harmony and joint action, and for cementing the common cultural elements necessary for development to succeed.'

On behalf of the people of the country, the media represent a commanding device of monitoring and accountability. In this respect, the role of the information media takes on added importance when mechanisms of discussion are unhealthy or do not exist, and system lacks transparency', as is the case in a country like India. Since media performs a critical function in holding other parts of society to account the most important thing for them is to be transparent and accountable, but the question is who holds the media to account? For both companies and the community, media can do wonders by coverage of corporate social responsibility

and sustainable development. Organizations, who try in right earnest to do good for the community by allocating part of their human and financial resources to useful developmental projects gets benefit by receiving positive publicity and increased reputation. Unfortunately, this has not always been the case, both in India and globally. To resolve this issue, it is necessary for the media to increase its' understanding of the field and to realize that some organizations really merit to be given such publicity in return for their hard work. Such advertising will in turn motivate other organizations to get mixed up, thus bring about more initiatives that will do well to the community and will augment a cycle of sustainability.

**Research Methodology**

The research methodology used for this study usually remained the personal interviews and the questionnaires from the management of leading newspapers in the city which included managing directors and the editors. Particularly, three major Hindi newspapers were selected for the study viz Dainik Bhaskar, Rajasthan Patrika and Dainik Navjyoti. The response of the above newspapers was very welcoming and they all claimed to be fair and just enough to analyze the efforts of the companies in true manner and publish the details accordingly. They denied on any kind of biasness on the basis of the business they get from the companies to publicize their social responsibility deeds.

**Findings**

Media is a great source of communication with the common public. It has a wide reach even to the interior most areas of the nation. They have a capability to understand the problems. These are the people who have the power to promote awareness and knowledge among people. The coverage of media is invaluable as the media have a large existing audience which covers more demographics. Social responsibility and media go hand in hand, with the media disseminating social responsibility activities and information to the public. Media is probably the most influencing industry which reaches almost every home in the world in one form or the other. The media has the enormous influence on the public conscience.

The press exerts a considerable influence on our lives. To the common man the press is not only a source of information but also of views and opinions. Thus, corporate have a platform to give the true picture of their social work which is trustworthy and has a wide reach. Same way the reciprocated response of public can be collected by the corporate houses for improvement in future.

**Limitations of the Study**

The area of the study is only limited to the city of Jaipur where the number of registered offices and head offices of the major corporate houses is very less. The scope of the study is large if undertaken in bigger cities. Further, the study is restricted to the print media and not the other forms of media whereas the electronic media has a greater impact and an almost equal reach these days.

**Suggestions**

The social responsibility being understood by the corporate houses whose economies are even bigger than some of the nations of the world can really leave a great impact on the holistic growth of the nation's economy. Media can play a vital role in publicizing the efforts of these tycoons which would not only

educate common public about their focus towards social responsibility but also motivate these business houses to be more sensitive in this field as they would have the feeling of being audited by the society. If media becomes more responsive in publishing such news in an unbiased way, with the ethical norms of journalism and leaving behind the commercialized thinking, it may lead to a big positive change to the society. The coordination of media and corporate houses in fulfillment and publicizing of the social responsibility efforts would surely result in the holistic growth of the nation.

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