

Impression Of Covid-19 On Corporate Social Responsibility And Influence On Consumer Decision Making: An Analysis

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ABSTRACT

This article would reflect certain preliminary scrutiny on how COVID 19 could affect its evolution of CSR. Covid-19 pandemic provide a substantial chance for the corporations to move towards more unpretentious CSR and subscribe to cover urgent and contemporary challenges. This would also debate certain kinds of directions that in what ways consumer ethical decision making would be shifted. This pandemic provides a marvellous chance to scrutinize the association between the personal, situational factors in effecting the consumer ethical decision making taking into account the elements related with nature, and ongoing circumstances related at contextual level and personal factors for instance differences between the consumer's personality, rationality and emotions of the consumer for instance animosity, anxiety, fear and affirmative emotions etc.

Keywords: COVID-19, CSR, Consumer's Personality

INTRODUCTION

At the very outset let's get clear with the meaning and definition of CSR and COVID-19. The term CSR stands for Corporate Social Responsibilities. It is a self-regulating business model that assists the company be socially responsible—to itself, its stakeholders, and the public. By implementing corporate social responsibility, also called as corporate citizenship, corporate could be very much conscious of the kind of influence they are having on all phases of vicinity, for instance economic, social, and environmental, or in simple terms we can say that it is that strategies of the businesses which they use to build their goodwill in the market by the way of indulging themselves in any ongoing societal issues whether it may be related to environment, some change in policies of government, any economic matter, or any other such matters which involve society. Now the question is how CSR is beneficial to the corporate? Many people think that corporate(s) are private companies and their aim is only to earn profits by selling or providing the goods and services, though this is statement is true but earning profit by just simply selling goods is not that easy or for a moment if we say that selling goods and earning profits is easy, it's just for one time that customer will buy and what is the further guarantee that he/she will comeback in future too to buy your goods or services. So, to ensure that there is the good image of the brand in the eyes of public, they make and implement various strategies which is related to any social cause, so, that people can keep this thing in their minds that "yes! When there was so and so problem in the society, this particular company dealing in so and so product or service, considered it as their responsibility to help and came on front foot and helped

the society.” This is phenomenon of building goodwill and this whole process of building goodwill by the way of helping people in society is called CSR. All the major corporate(s) such as Xiamoi, Starbucks, Reliance, etc. strongly believes in excellent CSRs and are doing their best to develop it day by day.

According to the Starbuck, it has earned many of its CSR milestones ever since it had explored. As per the companies 2019 Global Social Impact Report, these accomplishment sentailed reaching 99% of, formulating a global connection of farmers, pioneering green building throughout its stores, contributing millions of hours of community service, and formulating a groundbreaking college program for its partner/employees.

Coronavirus is a recently discovered virus. It was discovered in the laboratory of Wuhan city of China in the year 2019. It is formerly known as COVID-19 and it is and infectious disease. The word ‘corona’ is a Latin word which means ‘crown’. And it is only reason that it got the name of coronavirus, as under microscope it was observed that the virus is having spikes all around it which means resembles a crown. It is a communicable disease which means that it spreads from one infected person to another person, which can make him fall sick too and he/she may also get prone to it. It is the family of viruses which basically causes respiratory diseases such as difficulty in breathing, common cold, etc. It can also include disease like SARS-CoV. As per WHO the symptoms of COVID-19 are divided into three parts i.e. most common symptoms, less common symptoms and very serious symptoms. At present (i.e. October 20, 2020) there are globally 40.3 Million (approx) cases out which 27.6 Million (approx) patients have got recovered and 1.12 Million (approx) have died due to it. Out of these huge number of case, in India there are 7,48,538 number of present cases, 6.73 Million patients have won the war against coronavirus and got recovered and 115K have died due to it as per Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW). To curb the problem, the government of India imposed the lockdown in nation for the very 1st time in the history on March 23, 2020 for 21 days to protect the citizens from the COVID-19. After the period of 21 days the lockdown was extended further. Day by day the situation was becoming worst so, as the government is liable to protect the life of its citizens, they decided to extend the lockdown till June 30th, 2020 in 4 different phases. Many people felt that there rights were violated and were imprisoned in their homes, but they didn’t knew that if the effected by COVID-19, there is no cure or any vaccine discovered till yet. Now also in some in states where the number of containment zones are high, there is still lockdown as to protect the residents of that particular area.

Many people during that time felt that unjust was being done with them as they were not allowed not to go out even to buy essential stuff and all at that time CSRs came as superheroes and took the advantage of the situation to help the public and build their reputation. The most imperative benefaction has been propounded by Volkswagen, Audi, etc. The MC Donald’s company had sent the message to the vicinity by bifurcating the logo ‘m’ bifurcated into two phases. The two phases of ‘m’ signifies the meaning of social distance. Additionally, the logo of Audi is represented by four separate rings and explaining the tagline to keep distance. The new logo of Audi is enough for understanding the significance of social distancing. Many corporates also have amended their advertisement slogan to formulate them to understand the significance of social distancing, apart from transforming their logos into new shapes. All these like changing of taglines, making new logos, etc. all are part of CSR, by these ways these companies have contributed during the pandemic by promoting the message of “Social Distancing and Staying at Home” of the government of India because public admire these brands and follow them, so, as to build their more strong image in the eyes of public, they did such acts to support the company’s CSRs.

LITERATURE REVIEW

India is known as the land of traditions and customs, here all people of all religions living together with the bond of brotherhood and enjoy. There are many religions followed and practiced in India, some of them are Hindu, Islam, Christian, Sikh, Buddhist, Jew, Parsi, etc. and the most common thing among all these religions is the tradition of daan, seva, and zakat, and is followed from centuries which aim at helping to shape the relationship between the privileged and the dispossessed (people of deprived class). The corporate leaders of the 19th Century had seen the beginning of the practices launched by corporate giving via trusts, and endowed institutions controlled by members of business families. After the First World War, a new picture of corporate philanthropy was seen that drew business leaders into the political fight for independence. Corporate philanthropy is basically the act companies under which they do welfare for society the way of donations either to individuals or any NGOs.

Also presently in India, the Companies Act, 2013 was amended in and made it compulsory that mandates the corporate to expend two percent of their average net profits of the recent three financial years towards the account of CSR. It was for the first time made when the act made it compulsory that private companies could participate in the public sector firms in annual donations for Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). According to Section 135(1) of the Companies Act, 2013, all firms having net worth above Rs 500 crore, turnover over Rs 1,000 crore, or net profit over Rs 5 crore are required to spend at least 2% of their yearly profits (averaged over 3 years) towards the account of CSR and establish a CSR committee to oversee the spending.

With the evolution of CSR now-a-days corporates not only just contribute or donate money to decrease the liability stated under section 135 of the Companies Act, 2013 but instead they take part in the activity with full enthusiasm, as it also increases their image in the eyes of the society.

The giant organizations, who are operating globally have also created their own foundations to directly help the society. One of the biggest and the finest example of the same is Being Human, founded by Salman Khan, a famous Bollywood actor. Other companies expended also money for the development of localities they worked in or for the communities they came from.

“From here we can conclude that India is developing in all aspects. Developing not only means adopting western culture i.e. eating or grooming like people of foreign countries but also means serving the people of deprived class of our Nation.”

IMPORTANCE OF CSR

CSR ensures that a business is involved in social issues apart from profit making, which attracts customer on basis that serve the society too at time when they need them. Some of the advantages of corporate social responsibility are:

- 1. Image in eyes of Public is Improved:** This is most beneficial part because consumers always check the image/reputation of a particular brand in the eyes of the public or society before buying the stuff. And as a result, the brand will appear much more favourable to consumers as it will have good brand value.
- 2. Increased Brand Awareness and Recognition:** If any corporate gets involved in some type of societal activity or helps the society during any difficult or unpredictable situation, then obviously people will remember that this particular brand came ahead during the particular problem. All these acts help to make a strong goodwill and gave them the recognition.
- 3. Cost Savings:** If the brand has become popular or people trust on then your brand it will always help in saving costs as there will be less expenditure of advertisement, packaging, promotions to attract people.

4. **An Advantage Over Competitors:** By developing CSR, a brand can outperform that it is even helping the society at difficult times, among the competitor's when their CSR system is either not fully advanced or is not there.
5. **Increased Customer Engagement:** More and more customers will be attracted towards the brand as they will see that the corporate is involved in serving the society even being the private company. It could be done through promoting the pictures of the same on the social media handles using appropriate hashtags. The customers will see all such stuff and starting following the brand and all its social media pages and will get engaged with your brand and operations.
6. **More Benefits for Employees:** There are certain benefits available for the employees when we improve CSR. The workplace for the employees will turn out to be a more positive and productive place to work, and by involving them and promoting things like volunteering, you encourage your brand's growth individually and as well as in the eyes of the society.

HOW COVID-19 WAS HOSTSHOT FOR THE CSRs

The situation of COVID-19 is the most unexpected and very devastating situation, thousands of people lost their lives due to this disease of coronavirus. There is usually a saying that for everything, there is a time. It means that each and everything should be done on its proper time, it shouldn't be either too early or too delayed.

Similarly, for corporate also, everything till mid-March, 2020 was normal but after that they also came in the phase of depressions as other living beings because of lockdown. For a very common man or for a person to survive there are three basic needs i.e. roti, kapda and makan, without which survival is impossible. As soon as the lockdown was announced, the rich people who can afford everything went to the shops and started buying the essential goods required in bulk and for poor people nothing was left and the thing which was available was sold at very high, that he can't think of buying it. To curb the same many corporates came on the front end and started distributing the goods of which are essentially required for survival like roti and kapda. Many of corporates performed various activities to convey the message of social distancing. Another problem was of makan which means house/home or shelter to live. Many workers have migrated from their native states to different parts of the country; with the motive to work, earn and survive. But due to lockdown, their source of incomes became nil and they were left with very less funds, which were not enough even to pay the rents of their residences. And ultimately, they have to go back to their native places or villages, but then the transport facility was not available. So, many corporates came ahead with their CSR plans to help these people. Also many famous personalities like bollywood actor – Sonu Sood, came ahead and helped innumerable people. He helped many people in getting back them to their homes and also gave them the enough food.

WHAT IS ETHICAL CONSUMER DECISION MAKING

The term "ethical decision making" refers to the process of choosing the best option available from the all the alternatives available by the consumer. While making ethical decision, the consumer should think that whether it will benefit or not from all aspects and then only take the decision. In case, if he/she takes the wrong decision and then regrets later on his own decision, then that decision taken will be totally unethical. It can also be understood as the process of taking wise decision, so, that there might be no regret in future on the decision taken.

The process of making wise or ethical decision involves the following steps:

1. **Identify the Ethical Dilemma** –Firstly the consumer has to recognize what exactly he needs and once he has decided, he must come across all the questions like how, what, when and all, considering all

aspects. But here, if the decision is quite simple like right or wrong, then is no process of ethical decision making is required; because, for example, Amit (a consumer) is sick and wants the medicine, at that time he will not look which medicine company he should choose, instead he will simply choose the particular medicine that will make him fine, and here the decision take by him is right and no ethical decision making is required.

2. **Collection of Information** –The consumer will next gather information like from what all sources he can get that product or service in order to make an informed decision. He/she will also collect the information of the suppliers or a company who is going to supply him the required goods or services.
3. **State the Options** – After collecting the information about the various alternatives or options available in the market, he will brainstorm his mind to identify all options available and will think about each option available as an individual option. This brainstorming is necessary because it makes the person to go through all the options available, from all aspects.
4. **Apply the Ethical Principle to the Options** – Focus on the ethical principles (autonomy, beneficence, non-maleficence, and justice) and ethical values and concepts (paternalism, confidentiality, and informed consent). One or more of these will apply to most situations. State how each alternative will impact on the ethical principle or rule by developing a list of pros and cons. Do this for each option. This process will help you see what ethical principles are in conflict in the situation. Refer to the ADHA Code of Ethics for guidance.
5. **Make the Decision** – After applying the ethical principles to the alternatives available, he will make the list of Pros and Cons and then could compare the options by weighing them, i.e. Option 1 v/s Option 2 v/s Option 3 and so on. And on comparison the decision comes out is obvious because he himself have gone through comparing process and knows what is better for him as per his requirement.
6. **Implement the Decision** – This steps is the most important step of the whole ethical decision making process because here the consumer takes his final decision. If the consumer takes any wrong decision he will regret in future and apart from it whole ethical decision making process will be vain. And many consumer misses this steps i.e. implementation of decision making and hence suffers in future.

Hence, it is very often and noted that the best decision is not the decision which comes to the mind first. Instead, the decision taken after the identification of all the alternative courses is considered the best, because at that time, we are at that stage where we have gone through all the all the alternatives and know that the decision we are going to take is totally ethical or wise.

WHAT PROBLEMS DID CONSUMERS FACED WHILE THEY WERE LOCKED IN THEIR HOMES

Getting locked in the homes for the people who used to roam freely here and there! was one of the most faced by problem by people. But this was done by the government in order to protect the life of its citizens from the spread of coronavirus. Before March 23rd, 2020 the state governments have ordered the magistrates to impose curfew under Section 144(1) of The Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973 in their respective constituencies.

We know almost every individual is connected to market, no matter directly or indirectly. The behaviour of the consumers changed rapidly during the lockdown. The consumers faced many problems like:

- Buying of goods in bulk, because people knew that soon there will be the shortage of goods, as there was zero movement during the lockdown.

- Hike in prices of essential items, every shopkeeper knew that people will have to buy the goods at anyhow, because the 1st lockdown was for 21 days and was extending on and on, because of which the supply of goods was also decreased.
- Coming to 3rd or 4th day of lockdown only, the stock of goods was completely disappeared from the market, because people bought in huge quantities.
- Increased black-marketing, as some shopkeepers stored the stock at their homes and used to say there is no stock, but they later during the mid-lockdown used to sell that thing for double price, and used to exploit the consumers.
- Exploitation of consumers by charging double or triple price of even very basic items.

We should not think of one bright side of the coin i.e. rich class of people of the society instead we should also think of people of the middle-class and poor class of the society (daily wage workers or who cannot afford to buy the essential items in the bulk). In India, the number of such people is more than rich class people. So, they often became the target of black-marketing and were always charged increased prices. Many daily wage workers became jobless and were thinking what to eat and how to buy it? It is completely contrary that the person who thinks twice to buy something in the normal days and now has to buy at double prices.

The same thing happened in case of corona protective equipments like masks, sanitizers, gloves, PPE kits, etc. The shopkeepers knew that the demand for all these will increase, so, already started storing it, formerly known as black marketing only. It was also observed that the shopkeepers selling these things were charging even more than MRP like N95 mask, whose price was around Rs.150 was being sold at around Rs. 350–400 which even a common man can't afford to buy to protect himself from the outbreak of COVID-19.

Also some people felt that during this lockdown, their right of life and liberty as mentioned in Article 21 of the Constitution of India was violated. But it was nothing as such, whatever was done to protect their lives only.

ACTIVITIES OF CSR DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC & ITS PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL

CSR is a situation which would probably not even fantasize by anyone. Ideally it is not possible for government alone to cope up the situation, so corporates had to put their steps into it. So, there are so many inferences which justified the fact.

1. **Ambuja Cement had given 3.3 Crore to NGO's to Working on COVID Relief:** The Ambuja Cement and ACC both collaboratively were the part and parcel of Lafarge Holcim group and associates as they had jointly contributed Rs 3.3 crore to three NGO's to assist the daily wage earners, immigrant workers, slum dwellers etc across the country during the lockdown.
2. **Coal India Donated Rs 221Crore to Prime Minister Fund:** State Run Coal India Ltd had also decided to donate Rs 221 crore to the prime minister's citizen assistance and Relief in Emergency situations to stand against the Coronavirus.
3. **Bosch India Donated 50 Crore to Stop the Spread of COVID-19:**As a part of the CSR initiatives, the Bosch India had donated 5 crore additionally and promised to further contribute another 45 crore rupees for the welfare for the victims of COVID-19.
4. **Walmart, Flipkart Donated Rs 46 crore towards India's COVID-19Efforts:**In order to encourage India's fight against the COVID-19, the Walmart and Flipkart had given 46 crore.

5. **Dalmia Bharat Group Donated Rs. 25 Crore for COVID-19:**The Dalmia Group had also donated Rs. 25 crore on the account of PM-CARES for the victims of coronavirus.
6. **Infosys had also Collaborated with Narayana Health City to Open 100 Bed Quarantine Facility for COVID-19 Patients:** Infosys had also partnered with Narayana to set up more than 200 beds so that the persons who are victims of coronavirus should also get healed or recovered.

STUDY ON MATTERS – WHERE WERE THE CONSUMERS RIGHT AND WRONG

There is a very famous saying that “**CLAP DOESN'T RINGS WITH ONE HAND**”, it means that there cannot be the mistake of one person only, instead the other person is too liable for the same. Here we will see that if some places the consumers are right then the corporates are wrong; and vice-versa.

- **The Place where the Consumers were Right and Business Houses/Shopkeepers were Wrong**

The shopkeepers firstly did a lot of black marketing of essential products during the COVID-19. The pharmacists also increased the price of most needed thing i.e. Face Shields, Face Masks, Gloves, PPE Kits, etc. amid the COVID-19 outbreak. Some, shopkeepers stored the goods and then started selling it at doubled or triple prices. Some shopkeepers who used to sell inferior quality of goods also started keeping their own prices and often do flaunting by charging overprices. Hence, in all these instances the customers were 100% right and at no fault whereas big or small business houses/shopkeepers were wrong. All such acts exploited the customers a lot.

- **The Place where the Business Houses/Shopkeepers were Right and Business were Consumers Wrong**

There are very few instances that where the business houses/shopkeepers were wrong and consumers were right, but yes, such examples also exist. Many people who even want to live the life of luxury had faced such problems. For example: online food ordering – people in big cities had used online food ordering apps like Zomato, Swiggy, Food Panda, etc. during the lockdown imposed for around 4 months. They don't think of the aspect that what if they get infected through coronavirus from delivery boy who delivered their order. And if they get infected by eating that food then the people often start defaming that brand or sue the company. Are they sure that they got infected by delivery boy only not through chef or any other person? It could be through chef who made the food, the person on billing counter, the 3rd party who the delivery boy met before giving him the order, etc. Here, ultimately the consumers are wrong that firstly they want luxuries and then want to complain, which is not accepted at all.

INFLUENCE OF COVID-19 ON DECISION MAKING OF CONSUMERS

It had been observed in the era of lockdown that numerous consumers had been locked up in their houses and apartments with the kind of restricted access except the internet. The decision making of the consumers could be immoral and unethical for instance contemporary pandemic as observed by accumulation of stock of food, medicines, hygiene and the other sanitation products and even the bog roll all over the world. However, it seems that consumer decision making is all consist of self-centred interest and fear, exasperation and anxiety. This situation had probably forced the retailers of the supermarkets to kindly take those measures for instance giving opening hours for the important employees and senior employees. Nonetheless there are some people who had shown their compassionate behaviour during the tenure of pandemic which include for instance purchasing the groceries for super senior citizens and panic consumption.

Personal Factors which are related with nature and ongoing situations of the pandemic at a contextual level:

- **Consumer Personality Differences:** It depends upon the different personality traits of the people and they are affected accordingly. The personality could be better understood by BIG FIVE ASPECT SCALE and each trait composed of two of the components:
 - a) openness is composed of receptiveness to experience as well as intelligence or it would be preferred for abstract thinking.
 - b) conscientiousness is composed of industriousness as well as orderliness
 - c) positiveness and excitedness is attached with extraversion
 - d) pleasantness is composed of politeness and compassion
 - e) neuroticism is composed of negative emotion which includes withdrawal.

If neuroticism is one of the major traits of personality of an individual then it would not be difficult for the individual to face this pandemic as a neuroticist would always have an attitude of withdrawal and also if you are low at extroversion it means that the people are enjoying the social distancing as this is the real time when they would be at positive side .If someone is low in agreeableness as well as openness you would be likely to be end in sensitivity.

- **Rationality:** It had been observed that many of the amendments in the behaviour of the consumer are likely to continue at a pace long after the pandemic situation. For Example:
 - a) 60% of the participants were putting more efforts on self-care and mental soundness, with about six out of ten consumers were observed to exercise from home itself.
 - b) 64% of the participants told that they are more emphasized on limiting the wastage of the food and would be continuing the same in the near future.
 - c) 50% of the consumers had told that they had become more health super conscious and would continue to be the same.
 - d) 40 percent of the participants has chosen more sustainable choice when they are going for the shopping

- **Consumer Emotions**

- a) **Fear:** The scariness of the COVID-19 would put adverse influence on the health of the millions of patients who are feeling the exposure by the impact of novel coronavirus pandemic. The influence of fear could impact us in a way that it influences our interferon system and do mess up with a lot of physiological systems.
- b) **Anger:** The anger in terms of frustration of the coping with the pandemic can take many forms. So, the person at times becomes very irritating when he is exposed of all the negative vibes and news.
- c) **Hope:** In the midst of the coronavirus, it had been observed that throughout the era of pandemic it had been justified that doctors had not let the hope to be withered by the patients so in these days the doctors in order to charge their patients with enthusiasm and an attitude of optimism. They had started celebrating the birthdays of their patients in the hospitals itself with full on music and other joys. This had formulated an environment of assertiveness in the mind of all the victims of the coronavirus patients.

A BRIEF ANALYSIS ON HOW CSR REACTED TOWARDS THE SITUATION OF PANDEMIC

The CSRs reacted very positively towards the pandemic of COVID-19, they didn't afraid or went behind or resisted from helping the public. And why would they go behind? This is because they knew that COVID-19

pandemic was a hotshot where they can grab opportunity of increasing the goodwill of their business, make themselves popular, etc. They whatsoever best was possible for them. Some brilliant examples of works of CSR during the COVID-19 are. It also donates Lifebuoy sanitizers, Domex bathroom and floor cleaners, soaps, hand washes, health kits to the hospitals and also to people who live the life of poverty.

SUGGESTIONS AND CONCLUSION

In this article, we have offered some preliminary thoughts and musings on how this contemporary pandemic would impact the CSR, psychology, attitudes, perception of the people. COVID–19 had given a great chance to all the organizations to engage themselves into several other kinds of CSR activities. For consumers the formulation of the decision making in an ethical way is very much required as it would be helpful in transforming the consumers for more obedient consumption.

This article could be concluded in a way that our academic communities to involve in such a research that encourage to pen down the opportunities and challenges for the COVID–19 in the post coronavirus so far. In terms of the behavior of the consumers there is a dire need to indulge in research that how citizens, customers and consumers would react towards the several lockdown restrictions. Amendments to the behavior is very much imperative for instance tourist choices, moving to online shopping, entertainment however the alterations of beliefs, attitudes, and musings would also be taken into consideration.

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