

Analysis Of Corporate Social Responsibility Initiatives And Practices Of Corporate Sector During Covid Pandemic: A Case Study Of A Leading IT Firm**Dr. K.S. Ragini****Assistant Professor****School of Media Studies****Malayalam University****Kerala**Email: itsmeragi87@gmail.com

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Abstract

Covid 19 Pandemic has affected the whole world socially, economically, politically and posed serious challenges to each and every section of the society. The pandemic has affected people psychologically and put hardships on their daily lives. Apart from covid, the lockdown and the restrictions imposed by the government authorities have further aggravated the situation. Corporate firms and institutions are a vital part of the economic sector and have significant functions to perform in the business development of a nation. Corporate Social Responsibility measures and practices followed by corporate firms have further brought them near to the needs and necessities of the disadvantaged and the neediest of the society. To communicate effectively in a crisis situation is very crucial and corporate communication has to be done effectively especially in a stressful period. Corporate Social responsibility makes a company socially accountable. Corporate Citizenship hence is not only a business strategy concept to build reputation or brand image of a firm, but offering something more to society to overcome hurdles , helping hands to the marginalized sections and providing financial assistance and solutions to the people. The study examines and analyses the corporate social responsibility measures, strategies and practices implemented and executed by a leading IT firm Wipro Consultancy Services, India during the Covid 19 Pandemic period. The study also tries to explore the innovative communication strategies and the CSR initiatives employed by the firm in order to reach the society during the crisis situation. The study tries to find out the challenges in CSR communication strategy followed by the firm and tries to offer more effective communication strategies that would help the corporate world to establish a better connection with the world outside when the state needs it the most.

Keywords: Corporate Social Responsibility, Pandemic, Psychological, Social, Economic Impact, Corporate Communication, CSR initiatives, Annual Reports, Corporate Websites.

Introduction

Corporate social responsibility concept in corporate communication studies is a crucial and effective communication strategy to establish connection with the society, especially when the society needs it the most. Corporate firms and companies are viewing CSR concept not only as a strategy to enhance their reputation or promotion but also to cement better relationships with the society, making them socially accountable. Apart from providing financial assistance, the firms are trying to explore more effective communication strategies as part of CSR and trying to extend their community relations activities in order to establish their image among the public and to build a unique reputation among others.

Corporate firms with social responsibility initiatives can win the hearts of public, maintain a seamless relationship with the society and contribute to the developmental needs of the society .A firm involved in community relations can understand the needs and necessities of the society better and offer solutions to the problems of people. A business with social responsibility is the need of the hour prioritizing social, economic and environmental benefits. An employer with social responsibility adds to the value of an organization, morale and work ethics. A well planned, organized and structured corporate social responsibility team can contribute to the overall growth of an organization along with the development of society.

CSR concept has been widely discussed, practiced nowadays and has become a key component in the business strategy of organizations especially among IT firms. To be a part of society makes one socially accountable and responsible. CSR has thus become the central aspect of business and marketing communication strategy. Corporate citizenship enhances the corporate image and the corporate citizenship concept has to be reframed and revised in the post covid world for effective results and active involvement of firms in societal affairs. It invites customer satisfaction and more engaged employees that would result in better performance of firm as well as its employees. CSR in an organization allows conglomeration and partnerships with other firms, organizations, NGOs and government departments which provide a wider perspective to it and its wider application.

Methodology

Interviews were conducted with Corporate managers, HR managers and Public Relations officers of Wipro , a leading corporate firm regarding the CSR initiatives employed by the company during the last two years especially during pandemic, the CSR activities carried out by the firm

to fight pandemic situation, to understand the involvement of public in the initiatives and their participation, the challenges faced, inclusive projects handled by the firm during the crisis and other social responsibility measures implemented by the firm in this regard. 15 corporate communication professionals were interviewed. Interviews were also conducted with the beneficiaries of CSR projects and services offered by Wipro. Semi structured interviews were conducted among 100 respondents from three adopted villages of Wipro as part of their CSR initiatives in Bangalore. Content analysis method was also used to analyze and identify the social responsibility measures during the years 2020 – 21 and 2021- 22. Secondary data available on Wipro's website was also taken; an analysis of CSR reports published by the firm during the last two years was analyzed to find out the intensity of CSR communication during the pandemic.

Analysis And Findings

Corporate social responsibility or corporate citizenship, an emerging field in the management research is viewed by corporate firms with utmost preference and importance. Wipro is a leading IT firm in India with a strong CSR policy and approach which has offered them a unique space among others. Corporate communication team at Wipro manages the communication effectively and constantly engages its employees in community relations campaigns and programmes. Interviews and analysis of annual CSR reports of Wipro reveals that the firm actively involves in social activities with strong CSR policy making them socially accountable.

During pandemic, the firm has taken special efforts to elaborate and revise the policies of CSR considering the crisis situation to be addressed. The Board committee revised the CSR plan to battle the Covid situation and was approved. Taking in to consideration the challenging times, it framed programs and policies to offer a helping hand to those struggling during pandemic situation. Social, political, economical, psychological condition of people during pandemic was researched and studied in depth and framed their CSR policies to offer solutions to the affected ones.

Corporate Social Responsibility Team And its Functions At Wipro

- i. The team conducts meetings quarterly in a year and assesses its activities.
- ii. The CSR board considers all the recommendations and proposals put forward by the members and take decisions regarding its implementation after consulting the management section of the firm.

Corporate Website And CSR Communication

Corporate website plays a crucial role in communicating CSR programs and initiatives. The corporate website has the following unique features, resulting in better CSR communication and well executed CSR projects. Need based experts group review CSR policies and make further revisions to meet the needs of the society. Features of CSR website includes:

- Fully functioning CSR website.
- CSR interactive features.
- Addresses community issues, issues related to environment, educational concerns etc.
- Presentational features highlighting CSR activities.
- They provide feedback mechanisms and interaction space to public on their websites encouraging public participation.
- They make use of social media as an effective communication tool to reach people and to publicize their CSR efforts as social media is a great resource for CSR communication.

Domains Of Engagement

As part of their CSR activities, Wipro engages in a various sectors including health, education, sanitation, environment, counseling, rural development projects, other societal development initiatives, gender development, business sustainability, primary health care, special policies for differently abled children, disaster management, rehabilitation projects etc. The firm also operates community development projects in co operation with government sector, NGOs and other social organizations. The company revised their CSR plan recently to meet the needs of society during pandemic. More inclusive developmental projects, rehabilitation schemes and effective crisis communication plans were framed to address the covid pandemic challenges.

Corporate Social Responsibility has a significant role in corporate communication sector especially during pandemic, as business, service organizations and global markets are strongly battling with the highly challenging time to establish themselves. CSR is a self-regulating business that offers public and its stakeholders a space to interact and participate at large for creating a scenario of being socially responsible and accountable.

Health Care Services

During pandemic, the firm could establish a unique position among other IT firms with its inclusive corporate social responsibility schemes. Wipro tried their maximum to reach people through various rehabilitation measures that helped many people and communities to overcome

crisis. The firm arranged covid quarantine facilities, medicines, and health information campaigns. diagnostics of Corona cases, treatment to covid positive patients, assistance to health workers, health insurance schemes to employees, corona testing services, provided medical products, supplying hygiene kits, provided emergency health care equipments to government, mass testing campaigns, hand washing campaigns, sanitizing public places, distribution of surgical masks, sanitizers, surgical masks etc thus providing livelihood initiatives to people in this challenging times. Majority of the respondents from the adopted villages, especially from the marginalized section opined that they were provided with the emergency medical aids, other health care services during covid pandemic that helped them to fight covid and to overcome the mental trauma. Wipro offered workshops and training sessions, medical camps on health care initiatives and encouraged its employees to participate actively in community health care projects and programs thus contributing to community development.

Education

Wipro upholds a history of contributing to school education in India in partnership with various other network organizations, NGOs and other social organizations. During the pandemic, education system has undergone a drastic change turning everything in to online mode of teaching and learning. In a developing country like India, students faced several hardships in attending online classes such as network issues, data package issues, non availability of wifi, laptops, and mobiles at their home which further acted as barriers for online education. As part of their CSR activities Wipro took initiative in providing ICT tools , laptops and other online tools to children, provided counseling sessions to children in stress management, training sessions for students on using online communication platforms such as google meet, zoom, webex, microsoft teams and awareness classes on its applications. The student community from the adopted villages responded positively on Wipro's educational efforts and expressed gratitude on initiating and providing online educational aids that helped them to participate actively in online education which was the need of the time. Children with no mobile phones and other ICT gadgets were provided technological aids and tools that really benefitted them in their education during pandemic.

Counseling Sessions

Respondents were of the opinion that sessions on psychological enhancement for children, adults and old aged people ,sessions on gender equality, addressing domestic violence cases, stress

management, awareness classes on home Vs work balance techniques, engaging and handling children at home during lockdown, work from home issues, sessions on encouraging vocational skills among children were conducted by the firm that helped them to gain and maintain psychological balance during stressful period.

Environmental Initiatives

Sustainable development can be achieved only through strict environmental protection and preservation laws. Wipro has included ecological programs in their business strategy and actively participate in government initiatives on ecological preservation. The firm has taken strict measures to protect environment in their campuses through various eco friendly schemes. During pandemic, firm has also launched a waste management system in disposing masks. The firm conducted awareness campaigns for the masses on the necessity of disposing masks in the proper way thus preserving environment which further created environmental awareness among villagers and imparted classes on the need for preserving nature for future generations.

Gender Initiatives

Lockdown has further put an additional pressure on working women as they have to work from home and do the additional responsibilities at home which has further caused mental agonies and psychological discomfort among them. Taking this in to consideration, Wipro has put forward employee friendly measures for work including work time reduction for women having children below two years. Interviews reveal that they have further initiated counseling sessions for women employees who face work load stress thus helping them in stress management. The employees also availed counseling sessions from supporting teams at Wipro on family matters including domestic violence cases which were on the rise during the lockdown period. Classes on gender rights and laws were imparted to its employees contributing to gender awareness and personality development that really benefitted its employees prioritizing gender equality.

Rural Development Projects

Covid 19 posed serious challenges all over the world including unemployment, poverty, economic insecurity, public health etc. It affected the socio economic condition and infected the whole global population in some way or the other. It has put many people jobless and put hardships on their daily lives. People struggled to make both ends meet in this economic risk situation. Analyzing and understanding the worsened condition, Wipro extended its service and operations to rural community in boosting their livelihood opportunities. Respondents opined

that measures were taken to organize skill development programmes to youth, providing economic assistance to young entrepreneurs through their CSR schemes and assistance to small scale industries to overcome the financial crisis. The firm implemented innovative ideas to support local communities to battle covid 19 including mobile care units for remote areas, community health care facilities including medical assistances to corona affected patients in the community, distribution of medicines and other related medical equipments including pulse oximeter, BP apparatus , BP monitor with pulse oximeter to marginalized sections of the community.

Discussion And Conclusion

Effective CSR policy and proper implementation of CSR projects and schemes offer firms a unique reputation and branding strategy. Moreover it takes the firm to hearts of millions and also offers solutions to diversified problems and challenges existing in society. Community relations play a significant role in corporate communication. Though covid pandemic affected the corporate world immensely, the corporate industry tried their maximum to fight the crisis, retain business and to withstand the challenges of the pandemic. The findings of the study reveal that during pandemic, the firm tried its best to reach the common or layman to offer solutions to their problems affected by them socially and economically through their CSR activities. CSR provided them a path to reach millions during crisis. Every organization has to review and restructure its CSR policies and strategies to meet the needs of the time especially during crisis situations. CSR Communication and other philanthropic activities by organizations have a crucial role to play during pandemic period. Dedicated and responsible CSR team is the need of the hour to establish and maintain a responsible and accountable etiquette among organizations.

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