



Corporate social responsibility communication in the Indian context

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to investigate corporate social responsibility (CSR) platforms and the communication surrounding those platforms in India. It seeks to establish the CSR platforms that are typically used, together with stakeholder attitudes to both the form and content of those platforms.

Design/methodology/approach – The paper refers to both primary and secondary sources of data, i.e. a survey of internet sources and a questionnaire survey.

Findings – The paper shows that the Indian corporations surveyed pursue a primarily philanthropic platform with a focus on community development projects, as predicted by previous studies. It also indicates, however, that Indian consumers may not value philanthropic CSR as highly as other CSR initiatives and that this may in turn influence their attitudes to different marketing communication strategies.

Practical implications – The paper suggests ways in which Indian corporations may formulate the form and content of their CSR policies in the future within a marketing strategy in order to influence their stakeholders positively and increase their competitive advantage.

Originality/value – The paper provides an innovative approach to investigating the consequences of how Indian corporations communicate their CSR policies to their stakeholders. It suggests a number of fruitful areas of enquiry with direct implications for Indian business in the future.

Keywords Corporate social responsibility, Marketing communications, Consumers, India

Paper type Research paper



Introduction

The well-known 2005 survey of corporate social responsibility (CSR) reporting in the Asia-Pacific region by Chapple and Moon, shows that nearly three quarters of large companies in India present themselves as having a CSR policy in place. This compares, for instance, with only a quarter of similar corporations in Indonesia, just over 40 per cent in Thailand, and around 30 per cent for both Malaysia and the Philippines,

A copy of the questionnaire is available from the first author.

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respectively, making India the “market” leader in the Asia-Pacific region (Chapple and Moon, 2005). In addition, Chahoud *et al.* (2007) observe that the business community (the Vaishyas) occupied a special place in ancient Indian society, providing relief in times of famine and other calamities, suggesting that CSR initiatives are nothing new for Indian society and also that they have always been conventionally philanthropic in nature. In contrast, however, Saha (2007) reports that at the time of writing in 2007, only five companies based in India had produced corporate responsibility reports that met the standards of the Global Reporting Initiative Guidelines, which is the global benchmark for CSR reporting standards. And furthermore, she points to a lack of structure in place to underpin CSR initiatives in the vast majority of the large national corporations and SMEs operating in India, along with a poor understanding of the role of stakeholder engagement that has resulted in several recent high-profile cases that have generated considerable negative publicity (e.g. Tata Motors in West Bengal).

In this paper, we will investigate CSR platforms and the communication surrounding those platforms in India. In doing so, we will report on the findings of two related exploratory studies, one focusing on the CSR initiatives currently being promoted within the Indian Oil and Gas sector through their corporate web sites, and a second looking at the attitudes held by educated Indian consumers towards different marketing communication strategies alongside different CSR initiatives. Our discussion will begin with a brief overview of the theoretical basis for the two studies, together with a number of practical examples taken from current Indian business, and we will then report in turn on the findings of each investigation. In the final section of the paper, we will speculate on what these findings could mean for CSR initiatives in India in the future.

Theoretical background: marketing communication strategies and CSR platforms

The Four Step Pyramid of CSR, as proposed by Carroll (1991), and adapted more recently by Visser (2007) for emerging economies, provided the theoretical underpinning in both studies. Carroll sees CSR campaigns as focusing on one or more of four sets of factors, each of which relates to the economic, legal, ethical and philanthropic obligations a business is said/considered to have to the society – or societies – in which it operates. In his original conception of a corporation’s obligations (Carroll, 1979), businesses were said to primarily consider their profitability (economic obligation) and their responsibility to conduct business within the law (legal obligation). Once these two obligations had been achieved, then they would take ethical concerns into consideration (norm-imposed obligations) such as minimizing environmental impact, followed by philanthropic or “discretionary” concerns such as contributing corporate resources to the (local) community (Carroll, 1991). For *Fortune* 500 corporations, researchers such as Esrock and Leichty (1998), and more recently Maignan and Ralston (2002), have shown that variations exist in the emphasis placed on these four different platforms, as a result of factors such as sector, geographical location and size. An example of this is the 2009 advertising campaign developed by Ogilvy for British Petroleum (BP) for the launch of BP ultimate, in which an ethical platform, i.e. consideration for the environment, was used to promote the corporation’s products (www.ogilvy.co.uk/index.php/our-work/bp-ultimate-takes-you-further/ accessed 28 January 2010).

In proposing an adaptation of Carroll's original pyramid to accommodate the CSR initiatives pursued in emerging economies, Visser (2007) suggests that although economic responsibilities are given the most emphasis across the globe, philanthropy tends to be given the second highest priority in emerging economies like India, followed by legal and finally ethical responsibilities. In both of the studies, we discuss below we incorporated the Carroll-Visser CSR pyramid. In the first study, we investigated the CSR platforms presented by the top ten corporations operating in the Indian Oil and Gas sector, with particular reference to whether these were primarily ethical in nature or philanthropic, and in the second study, we focused on the attitudes of consumers as important groups of stakeholders, and we asked what their opinions were of the four different platforms, and how they would rank them.

In the second study, in addition to the CSR pyramid of priorities, we also incorporated Kotler and Lee's work on marketing communication strategies in CSR communication. Kotler and Lee (2004) distinguish six marketing communication strategies that can be used in promoting a company through its CSR policy. In each case, CSR is referred to as part of a marketing strategy which is designed to promote not only the corporation's image as a good corporate citizen, but also to persuade the consumer to buy a product or invest in a service. The six strategies are:

- (1) Cause promotion.
- (2) Cause-related marketing.
- (3) Corporate social marketing.
- (4) Corporate philanthropy.
- (5) Community volunteering.
- (6) Socially responsible business practice.

A full discussion of these six strategies is beyond the scope of this paper, but they can be summarized as follows:

- (1) In cause promotion, a corporation includes the promotion of consumer awareness of a particular societal cause as part of its CSR policy in an advertising campaign, simultaneously promoting the company or the company's products or services.
- (2) In cause-related marketing, a company is more actively involved with a particular societal cause as part of its combined CSR and marketing policies. It actively involves consumers in supporting a cause by buying the company's product, e.g. the corporation donates part of the cost of a product to that cause.
- (3) In corporate social marketing, advertising a product or service is combined with awareness-raising specifically targeted at changing the actual behaviour of the consumer population in a sustainable way that continues beyond the purchase of a product or service, or a promotional offer.
- (4) In corporate philanthropy, the corporation refers to its general CSR policy as a marketing communication strategy which may be unrelated to a specific product promotion.
- (5) In community volunteering, the emphasis is again on a corporation's CSR policy rather than a specific product promotion.

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- (6) In socially responsible business practice, the emphasis is on the corporation's behaviour in general as a good corporate citizen (Kotler and Lee, 2004).

A recent example of Corporate Social Marketing taken from the Indian context is the series of advertisements used in IOCL's "Thanks India" campaign, which the corporation ran in 2009 to promote the fact that it had become a *Fortune* 500 company (www.iocl.com/Talktous/AdCampaigns.aspx, accessed 28 January 2010). The series of advertisements included a logo used to promote the government-backed nationwide awareness campaign "Save Fuel Yaani Save Money", which aimed to promote the conservation of fuel (Times of India, 2009).

In the second study, educated Indian consumers were presented with an example used to illustrate each of the six marketing communication strategies. We selected educated consumers as our target group, primarily because we felt that they would be most likely to be influenced by CSR information, at least at the present time in the Indian context. In addition, although we accept that this introduces an obvious limitation into our study, we also felt that the wide range of educational and therefore literacy levels, within the general consumer population in India, would have introduced a set of additional (mediating) variables into the study which we did not aim to investigate, i.e. our intention was to investigate the potential influence of a particular marketing strategy and/or CSR platform on Indian consumers' attitudes to the corporation and the likelihood that they would buy products from the corporation, it was not in this instance to investigate the role played by educational level, literacy level or familiarity with English, etc. in the relationship between CSR and attitudes or behavioural intentions.

For each of the six strategies, our consumers were asked to indicate how the use of that strategy would affect their attitudes towards a generic corporation projecting itself in this way, and they were also asked to indicate to what extent this would influence their decision to buy or invest in a product or service. In addition, they were also asked to rank the six strategies in terms of their relative preference for each one. Finally, they were asked to give an indication as to how they would prefer corporations in India to communicate their CSR platforms with their stakeholders (in this case, consumers). Researchers such as Chaudri and Wang (2007), for instance, have shown that the form a CSR campaign takes may vary considerably across different corporations, but it is as yet unclear how such campaigns are actually received by different stakeholder groups. In the next section, we will go on to discuss the findings of both empirical studies.

Study I: CSR platforms in the Indian context

Table I presents an overview of the CSR initiatives that are currently being pursued in the top ten Oil and Gas corporations in India, on the basis of the CSR information reported on their corporate web sites (Sahu and Nickerson, 2008). The overview shows that the majority of the activities presented on the corporations' web sites were philanthropic in nature, providing support for Visser's contention that emerging economies tend to prioritize philanthropic over ethical concerns (Visser, 2007). IPCL, for example, initiates rural development programmes and provides support for the arts and for sporting events under the slogan "beyond business", BPCL has adopted 37 villages across India and the GSPC Group provides educational support to children from the economically weaker classes of society. Although corporations like Reliance,

Corporate	CSR focus and initiative
RIL ^a	Reliance Industries Limited has growth through commitments. For Reliance, growth is care for good health, for safety, for the environment, energy conservation and to think beyond business <i>Focus Areas.</i> Occupational health centers, environmental protection, energy conservation and social infrastructure, education, health, human capital development and infrastructure
IPCL ^b	Indian Petrochemicals Corporation Limited has gone beyond business by initiating aggressively rural development programmes <i>Focus Areas.</i> Community development, art and culture, sports
IOCL ^c	Indian Oil Corporation Limited has also set up the Indian Oil Foundation (IOF) as a non-profit trust to protect, preserve and promote national heritage monuments. Indian Oil has always been in the forefront in times of national emergencies. Indian Oil has supported innumerable social and community initiatives in India <i>Focus Areas.</i> Environment protection, social rehabilitation, social and community centers, health, education, sports and protecting, preserving and promoting national heritage monuments
ONGC ^d	Oil and Natural Gas Corporation Limited takes a proactive approach towards socioeconomic development by identifying projects at the plant level by involving the district administration, local representatives and recognized voluntary organizations. Priority is given to areas around the projects with the themes like: education, healthcare, family welfare and community development
BPCL ^e	Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited, as a corporate responsibility, today has adopted 37 villages across India. This includes making substantial investments for nearly a decade and a half in them to make them fully self reliant, providing them fresh drinking water, sanitation facilities, medical facilities, enhancing their income standards by imparting vocational training and agricultural innovations. However, BPCL also firmly believes that the only vehicle for raising the villagers from their present state is by educating the young and the old, a focus on providing grants for opening schools and opening adult literacy camps as well <i>Focus Areas:</i> HIV/AIDS care and prevention, agricultural upliftment, cattle care, education, health care, grain bank, community center, rain water harvesting, infrastructure development, counseling like addiction – the slow poison, parenting, women empowerment, grooming children
GSPC ^f	Societal development is one of the top priorities for Gujarat State Petroleum Corporation (GSPC). A Social Welfare Trust under the aegis of the GSPC Group contemplates to provide educational support to the children hailing from the economically weaker class of the society <i>Focus Areas.</i> AIDS prevention, girl child education, sports, community development, educational support to weaker section of people, setting up primary schools in rural
GGCL ^g	Gujarat Gas Company Limited along with its parent British Gas is committed to contribute to community development and different community activities. The projects undertaken include: An environment education bus – “Prakriti”. Prakriti, a project undertaken jointly with BG India aims to create environment awareness amongst children A CNG Mechanic Training Program in Surat aims to provide formal training on CNG vehicles thus helping mechanics develop skill sets which will earn them a better livelihood GGCL has also supported establishment of public infrastructure such as parks, gardens, traffic islands, etc

Table I.
CSR platforms in the
Indian Oil and Gas sector

(continued)

Corporate	CSR focus and initiative
OIL ^h	The management of Oil India Limited understands that there is a need to strike a balance between the overall objectives of achieving corporate excellence <i>vis-à-vis</i> the corporate responsibility towards the community. It is this twin objective of business and social commitment that has prompted OIL to embark upon massive programmes of educational, health and infrastructural development endeavours; an attempt to invest technology with a human face <i>CSR initiatives.</i> Social survey, health (Oil's mobile dispensary services), education, general nursing midwifery training, financial assistance to socio cultural activities, rural development programmes, agricultural training, handicraft training
GAIL ⁱ	The Chairman and Managing Director of Gas Authority of India Limited (GAIL) says, "continuing commitment for operating the core business in a socially responsible way complemented by investment in communities to produce an overall positive impact on the society". The thrust areas are: healthcare/medical, literacy enhancement, environment protection, infrastructure, community development, educational aid and drinking
HPCL ^j	Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Limited has not distanced itself from its social responsibilities. Through its network spread across the country, HPCL carries out welfare activities for the betterment of the underprivileged. Over the years, HPCL has done considerable work under a special Component Plan. Aim is to contribute towards improving the quality of life <i>Focus Areas.</i> Primary education, health, drinking water, vocational training and infrastructure development in rural areas

Sources: ^awww.ril.com/html/aboutus/our_commitments.html (accessed 26 January 2010); ^bwww.kamayog.org/csr500companies/csr500companies_8241.htm (accessed 26 January 2010); ^cwww.iocl.com/Aboutus/Initiatives.aspx (accessed 26 January 2010); ^dwww.ongc.net/community.asp (accessed 26 January 2010); ^ewww.bharatpetroleum.com/corporate/csr.asp?from=corp (accessed 26 January 2010); ^fwww.gspcgroup.com/images/mar-apr-09.pdf (accessed 26 January 2010); ^gwww.gujaratgas.com/community.html (accessed 26 January 2010); ^hwww.oil-india.com/Initiatives.aspx (accessed 26 January 2010); ⁱwww.gailonline.com/gailnewsite/aboutus/beyondbusiness.html (accessed 26 January 2010); ^jwww.hindustanpetroleum.com/En/UI/CorporateSocialResponsibility.aspx (accessed 26 January 2010)

Table I.

IOCL and GAIL do include environmental protection within their published agenda, i.e. an ethical initiative since according to Carroll's original pyramid, this is generally considered as the "right" way to behave by a corporation, most activities are indeed of the "set aside funds for corporate/social community projects" type that Visser identifies as characteristic of the philanthropic focus in emerging economies (Sahu and Nickerson, 2008, p. 9). Interestingly, when compared with the findings of a similar analysis of CSR reporting (on the corporate web site) by ten global – rather than local, Indian – corporations operating in the same sector, e.g. BP, Shell, Exxon-Mobil, etc. it is possible to trace a clear division between an ethical platform (e.g. the environment) that is closely related to the corporations' core business on behalf of the global corporations, as opposed to a philanthropic platform that is unrelated to the oil and gas industry on behalf of the local, Indian corporations (Planken *et al.*, 2007). BP, for instance, pursues an (ethical) CSR platform in which they promote the need for sustainable energy. Although they do include community projects within this CSR platform, these can all be clearly related to BP's promotion of sustainable energy,

e.g. the implementation of solar panels in villages in parts of Africa, and this is also how it is presented specifically by the corporation (www.bp.com). Kotler and Lee (2004) suggest that relating CSR activities with core business activities (and vice versa) is a crucial marketing strategy, as it reinforces both sets of activities positively in the mind of the consumer.

Outside of the Oil and Gas sector, other sectors in India show a similar philanthropic focus. Ambuja Cements Ltd, for instance, works with 670 villages across ten Indian states on community development projects like water management (www.holcim.com), Tata Steel promotes land and water management initiatives in tribal areas of Jharkhand, Chattisgarh and Orissa (www.tatasteel100.com/centenary-guide/centenary-initiatives.asp) and Procter and Gamble India participate in a number of different community related projects in areas such as education, the fight against malnutrition and medicine (www.pg-india.com/hp/socialres.htm). P&G India, for instance, recently combined a philanthropic CSR platform with cause-related marketing, used to promote the corporation's Project Shiksha II; in this promotion, the corporation pledged to donate a part of the sales price of a number of its products to educate underprivileged children. In the next section, we will discuss the results of the second study, where a group of Indian consumers were asked to indicate their attitudes towards the type of project incorporated in a range of different CSR marketing strategies along with the impact that they considered these strategies would have on their attitudes to the corporation and their willingness to buy its products.

Study II: consumer response to CSR initiatives in India

In the last three weeks of March 2009, we conducted a survey (using a written questionnaire) with 95 respondents selected to represent the views of educated Indian consumers, as a powerful group of stakeholders with both an interest in CSR and considerable buying power. As we have discussed above, the respondents were selected through non-probability, convenience, sampling, and they were drawn from three postgraduate training courses being given at a government management institute, as well as from the employees at a large multinational corporation. Of the respondents, 52.6 per cent were male and 47.4 per cent were female, 87.4 per cent were aged between 18 and 35, 12.6 per cent were older than 35, and all held a university degree. The questionnaire was designed to investigate the attitudes and preferences of educated Indian consumers to the form and content that CSR messages can take, based on a previous questionnaire constructed by Dahl and Persson (2008). The respondents were asked about three aspects:

- (1) their attitudes to various marketing communication strategies, incorporating CSR, that can be used by corporations in communicating with their consumers (Kotler and Lee, 2004);
- (2) their attitudes to the different CSR platforms that corporations may pursue (Carroll, 1991; Visser, 2007); and
- (3) the channels they would prefer to be used in the communication of information related to CSR (Chaudri and Wang, 2007).

The questionnaire consisted of two parts. In the first part, the respondents were asked to what extent the six different CSR communication strategies would influence their attitudes toward the corporation positively, and to what extent they would be willing to

buy the corporation's products. Respondents read a statement referring to each CSR communication strategy, e.g. for the cause-related marketing strategy the statement was "The company informs consumers that it will donate 5% of the sales price of every product it sells to a research foundation that studies the effects of global warming", and they were then required to complete a seven-point Likert scale running from "completely disagree" to "completely agree" on which they indicated whether the particular strategy would influence corporate image positively (attitude to the corporation) and/or increase their willingness to buy products from the corporation (purchasing intention). Finally, they were asked to indicate their preference for one of the six different CSR communication strategies (i.e. cause promotion, corporate social marketing, corporate philanthropy, etc.). In part two of the questionnaire, respondents were asked to rank the four different CSR platforms (i.e. ethical, legal, economic and philanthropic) according to their relative importance by assigning a number from 1 to 7 for each of the four CSR platforms, where 1 was least important and 7 most important.

In the second part of the questionnaire, respondents were asked to provide information on the specific communication channels through which they would prefer to receive information about a company's CSR policy, e.g. via the corporate web site, via the annual reports, via non-governmental organizations (NGOs), etc. Balancing was applied to the Likert scale items in the questionnaire to counteract automatic scoring, and two versions of the questionnaire were created, each with the questionnaire sections as well as the items within each section presented in a different order, to counteract potential order effects.

The findings of the study show that, overall, all the six CSR marketing communication strategies distinguished by Kotler and Lee (2004) influence educated Indian consumers' attitudes to the company as well as their purchasing intention, in a positive way (all mean scores are within the upper range of the seven-point scale). Of these six, the strategies socially responsible business and cause-related marketing were ranked most positively (and therefore as potentially the most effective) strategies, both in terms of attitude to the corporation and willingness to buy a product (Tables II and III, where responses indicating disagreement and agreement have been clustered to indicate a negative or positive overall response to each strategy). In addition, despite the fact that, as we have discussed above, corporate philanthropy has been suggested (Visser, 2007) and observed (Sahu and Nickerson, 2008) as the most common CSR platform pursued by Indian business, corporate philanthropy was ranked by the respondents as their second to least preferred marketing communication strategy when asked to consider which strategies corporations should use in communicating information about CSR to consumers (Table IV).

Likewise, the rankings that the respondents gave to the four different CSR platforms did not reflect the prioritization of responsibilities suggested in the literature, since legal and ethical platforms were ranked as relatively more important than either philanthropic or economic platforms (Table V). In other words, the Indian consumers in our study did not respond (most) positively to the type of CSR platform that Indian corporations are most associated with (Chapple and Moon, 2005), nor did they view corporate philanthropy as a particularly effective marketing communication strategy. Three additional findings in the study suggest further ways in which Indian corporations can best communicate with stakeholders. First, in general, the majority of the Indian consumers in this study agreed that companies should report on both

environmental and community-oriented CSR activities, and not just on community-oriented projects as is often the case in the Indian context. The majority further agreed that independent, third parties should evaluate and report on corporations' environmental and community-based CSR initiatives (as well as corporations themselves). Finally, the respondents selected "independent media" as their preferred channel for receiving CSR information from companies, together with "the corporate web site" and "corporate advertising", and in particular, they identified the roles played by NGOs in disseminating CSR information about corporations, as well as the importance of "the company's annual report".

Discussion

The findings of the exploratory studies we have presented above provide a number of insights into the strategies currently being pursued by Indian business related to CSR, to what extent they reflect assumptions in the management literature on CSR, and how current CSR communication strategies could be adapted in the future. First, Indian

Table II.
Indian consumers'
attitude to corporation
per CSR strategy

CSR strategy	Attitude to corporation positive?			One-way ANOVA (repeated measures) ^b : only significant differences are indicated
	Means ^a	SD	Agree/disagree (%)	
1. Cause promotion	4.79	1.36	64.3/35.7	
2. Cause-related marketing	5.52	1.09	83.2/17.8	2 > 1
3. Corporate social marketing	5.43	1.26	83.2/17.8	3 > 1
4. Corporate philanthropy	5.16	1.37	77.9/22.1	
5. Volunteerism	5.52	1.3	81.0/19.0	5 > 1
6. Socially responsible business	6.05	0.96	94.7/5.6	6 > 5, 4, 3, 2, 1

Notes: ^aOn a scale from 1 to 7, where 1, least positive attitude and 7, most positive attitude; ^bWilks' Lambda = 0.55, $F(5,92) = 15.12$; $p < 0.001$; multivariate partial eta squared = 0.45; $n = 97$

Table III.
Indian consumers'
willingness to purchase
product per CSR strategy

CSR strategy	Willing to purchase from corporation?			One-way ANOVA (repeated measures) ^b : only significant differences are indicated
	Means ^a	SD	Agree/disagree (%)	
1. Cause promotion	4.15	1.42	43.1/56.9	
2. Cause related marketing	4.87	1.45	66.3/33.7	2 > 1, 4
3. Corporate social marketing	4.67	1.43	56.9/43.1	
4. Corporate philanthropy	4.25	1.51	50.6/49.4	
5. Volunteerism	4.45	1.57	53.7/46.3	
6. Socially responsible business	5.35	1.35	78.9/21.1	6 > 5, 4, 3, 2, 1 ($p < 0.05$)

Notes: ^aOn a scale from 1 to 7, where 1, least willing and 7, most willing; ^bWilks' Lambda = 0.56, $F(5,92) = 14.22$; $p < 0.001$; multivariate partial eta squared = 0.44; $n = 97$

corporations – at least the ones in the sector that we have referred to here – are pursuing a primarily philanthropic platform focusing on community development projects. This seems to confirm the findings of previous studies (Chapple and Moon, 2005; Sahu and Nickerson, 2008) and supports assumptions in the CSR literature (Visser, 2007). Although there is some indication that a few Indian corporations are looking for sustainable solutions of mutual benefit to both the corporation and their stakeholders, e.g. the supplier networks sustained by Fab India and discussed by Ramachandran and Patvardhan (2007), it seems that, on the whole, corporations in India have yet to move beyond charitable, albeit very laudable, initiatives. Second, the findings of our consumer survey indicate that corporate philanthropy as a marketing communication strategy, and philanthropy as a CSR platform, may not be the most effective strategies if the intention is to influence the educated Indian consumer's attitudes to the corporation positively or increase their intention to purchase the corporation's products. Of course, pursuing a philanthropic stance and using this to underpin a marketing campaign will always present a corporation in a favourable light, albeit only in the short term, but our findings would indicate that alternative strategies and alternative initiatives may be equally, if not more, effective. Furthermore, it seems clear from the consumer questionnaire that ethical and legal concerns were of importance to our Indian stakeholders, perhaps more than making profits and pursuing philanthropy, and that this is therefore also something that corporations might need to take into consideration. Although these attitudes may partly be explained by the fact that the survey took place in the aftermath of the Satyam scandal and in the run up to the 2009 national elections in India, such that ethical concerns were very much in the public consciousness at that point in time, it seems plausible that this is in fact a reflection of what Saha (2007) has

CSR strategy	%	Frequency
1. Socially responsible business	42.1	40
2. Corporate social marketing	22.1	21
3. Cause related marketing	14.7	14
4. Volunteerism	13.7	13
5. Corporate philanthropy	2.1	2
6. Cause promotion	0	0
Total	94.7	90

Note: Ordered by reference, 1-6

Table IV.
Preferred marketing
strategy

CSR platform (more to less important)	Means (SD)	One-way ANOVA (repeated measures) ^a : only significant differences are indicated
1. Ethical platform	6.57 (0.68)	1 > 3, 4
2. Legal platform	6.54 (0.73)	2 > 3, 4
3. Philanthropic platform	5.86 (1.00)	
4. Economic platform	5.79 (0.99)	

Notes: ^aWilks' Lambda = 0.55, $F(3,94) = 25.34$; $p < 0.001$; multivariate partial eta squared = 0.45; (1, not at all important; 7, very important; SD in brackets) and the results of a one-way ANOVA (repeated measures); $n = 97$; ordered by importance 1-4

Table V.
Mean scores on relative
importance of the four
CSR platforms

described as the “ethical crash course” that corporate India must engage in the years to come, in order to keep pace with other parts of the world (see also Angur (2009) for a discussion on corporate governance in India). Similarly, the emphasis placed by our respondents on the need for independent media in disseminating CSR information and an acknowledgement of the specific role that can be played by NGOs in India alongside corporations, underlines not only the need for ethical business practices, but also the importance of involving different groups of stakeholders in constructing business strategy, beyond the conventionally restricted view of stakeholders as investors, suppliers, employees and customers.

Conclusion and suggestions for further research

In this paper, we have identified several areas that could form the basis of further investigation in the future. Our studies looked only at large corporations in one sector operating in India, and only at educated consumers living in urban areas, and it would therefore be useful to investigate both the CSR initiatives being pursued by for example SMEs and Indian firms in other sectors of industry, as well as the attitudes held by other types of consumers, e.g. with lower levels of education or living in rural areas. We are not aware of any previous studies that have specifically evaluated end-user response to CSR platforms and to the ways in which Indian corporations communicate their CSR policy to stakeholders, but we believe that this type of enquiry in particular will form an extremely fruitful and useful area of study that can have direct implications for Indian business. Understanding more about the most effective ways to communicate with stakeholders on CSR initiatives, in terms of both content and form, will help corporations to shape their CSR policy within a wider corporate marketing strategy, which could in turn lead to increased competitive advantage. Recent research by Ayuso *et al.* (2007), for instance, has demonstrated that a focus on CSR leads to increased stakeholder engagement, which in turn leads to an increase in profits (Bhattacharya and Sen, 2004). In other words, a greater understanding of the impact of different CSR platforms together with the most effective ways through which to disseminate them may help both corporations and stakeholders alike to identify “global sustainability challenges” that can then be translated “into profitable business opportunities” (Saqib, 2007, p. 13). This paper has been an attempt to contribute to furthering that debate in general, and for Indian business in particular.

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