

ISSN: 2278-9529



GALAXY

International Multidisciplinary Research Journal

January 2015 Vol. IV. Issue I

www.galaxyimrj.com

Editor-In-Chief- Dr. Vishwanath Bite

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Innovative Marketing Campaigns: Corporate Social Responsibility as a Modern Tool for Betterment of Society

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Abstract:

Earlier the companies were more profit driven. Later companies have realized that they have to contribute significantly to customers, employees, government, promoters and suppliers. The Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) broadly includes Business Ethics, Global Warming, Water Management, Community Engagement, Human Rights and preserving the natural resources. In this competitive world, the organizations have realized that they need to build close relationship with Society.

This study aims at understanding how companies are using CSR as an Integrated Marketing Program with innovative campaigns. Does CSR enhances the Brand Image of the Company and leads to Customer Satisfaction?

Keeping in the mind the research objectives of this study, this paper uses exploratory cum descriptive research design. A Survey Method is used by personal interaction. The Personal Interaction is limited to administration of questionnaires to collect required data. The statistical tools like z-test were used for statistical analysis.

Keywords: Brand Image; Corporate Social Responsibility; Customer Satisfaction; Indian Companies; Innovative Marketing Strategies by using Corporate Social Responsibility as Marketing Campaigns.

1. Introduction

In early 90's or pre liberalization era, majority of the companies concentrated more on the production and their aim was to achieve production efficiency, wherein the cost per unit was reduced. These companies offered products that are widely available to the customers with low cost and they strengthened the distribution channel or what we call as The Production Era, wherein the competitors were very few in that particular segment.

During Product Era, the companies emphasised product development linking with R&D efforts wherein the customers were offered quality products, both in terms of performance and innovative features.

In Sales Era, the companies opted for aggressive selling by using promotion as a tool to stimulate the customers to buy the product offering. Their aim is to sell what they make rather than what the market wants. The promotional tools used for identifying the prospects are Print ads, TV Commercial Ads, Direct Mail, Tele Marketing and Cold Calls.

In the Marketing Era, the company focuses more on market requirement linking with needs and wants of the customers. Here, the companies produce the product which is in line with customer

requirement. They also endure to provide a better product offering when compared to competitors. Hence the products given to the customers as per their needs will lead to better customer satisfaction and in turn companies can have better profits.

In Societal Marketing Era or Societal Concept or Cause related marketing, the companies realized that to sustain for a long period in market, they have to provide something more to the people, or society or community at large. Compelled with plenty of competitors in each segment they have to provide something in return to the people. Hence in company's perspective, they have realised that it is not sufficient to produce the product by reducing the per unit cost, or adding features to the existing product, or using various methods such as promotion for enticing the customers to buy the product, or just understanding the needs of the customers and providing the product is not adequate. The main objective of the company is to enhance the customers' and the society's well being. The companies run cause related marketing campaigns for enhancing corporate image, to negate negative publicity, for launching a new product or brand & increasing the customer base. They also look for well being of both internal & external stakeholders as well.

2.0 Corporate Social Responsibility

Corporate Social Responsibility is a process for assessing an organization's impact towards the society. Hence the Management has to evaluate their responsibilities. Corporate Social Responsibility starts with an assessment of their business through Customers, Suppliers, Environment, Communities and Employees.

Every individual living in the society has social obligations towards it, i.e. to observe certain norms of behavior which have social acceptance and sanction. Viewed in this perspective, businessmen, who are merely custodians of factors of production belonging to the society, have also an obligation to pursue those policies, to make those decisions and to follow those lines of action which are desirable in terms of the objectives and values of the society. Business managers are also a part of the society. So their decisions must be influenced by their obligations towards the society.

The management owes social obligations to two groups of society. They are-

- (a) Insiders: - Shareholders and employees; and
- (b) Outsiders: - Customers, the community, the government, suppliers, and society in general.

The emerging concept of Corporate Social Responsibility has a broader idea and not just limited to charity, but it also extends to the company's legal obligations into the social, environmental and ethical issues.

Due to Globalization the companies have extended their operations without predefined geographical boundaries. Hence Indian companies have made their way as major players. India is currently the fastest growing economy in the world. Due to Liberalization, Privatization and Globalization the Indian economy has increased manifold in growth rates. In the present scenario, the companies are not expected in their traditional roles for profit maximization. In fact companies have realized that they have to work economically, socially and environmentally in a sustainable way. Hence the companies are working more for achieving transparency and accountability where they concentrate on the Shareholders and Stakeholders like, employees, customers, suppliers, channel members, promoters and civil

society. The companies have realized that they cannot work in isolation, and if they contribute to the stakeholders, it leads to positive impression in the minds of the community and the society at large.

Corporate Social Responsibility goes beyond charity or philanthropy, and companies have to act beyond its legal obligations and therefore have to integrate their company's objectives into Social, Environment and Ethical concerns in their business.

Corporate Social Responsibility is the continuous commitment from the company to work within appropriate Ethical Standards which in turn would lead to economic development. Hence the companies have to make profits and use it for the best interest of all the stakeholders and also maintain the quality of life of the workforce and their families, community and society at large.

3.0 The key components of Corporate Social Responsibility:-

Corporate Governance

The process should lead to better accountability, transparency, conformity with the legal obligations. This will lead to frame up the company's corporate objectives, protect the shareholder rights, and by doing this, the company will be able to work clearly within any legal framework and can create transparency for all the stakeholders.

Business Ethics

The companies aim for continuous value-based system and aim to maintain the ethical standards. Hence the companies are integrating their core values like honesty, trust, respect and fairness into their policies, procedures and decision making units. If the companies can take care of their stakeholders, then automatically it creates an environment where the company's image is enhanced as the stakeholders have belief and trust with the company.

Workplace and Labor relations

Human resources are very vital for any company, and Corporate Social Responsibility can contribute in improving the workplace in the aspects of health and safety issues thereby leading to better employee relations. Owing to this, employees can be retained and can reduce the costs in recruitment and training.

Affirmative action/good practices

Equal opportunity will be given by the employers to the people who are physically challenged, no Gender Difference, code of conduct and guidelines for prevention of sexual harassment at workplace, prevention of HIV/AIDS, employee volunteers for a social cause are few of the examples for good practices which reflect CSR practices in a company.

Supply Chain

The Corporate Social Responsibility is just not limited to the operations internally in the company, but it extends to the entire supply chain involving goods and services. If the company neglects social, environment and human rights or other aspects, then it leads to bad image for the company, and it can affect the business. Hence the company has to strategize their position to the entire supply chain. In the long term it generates a positive impact among the stakeholders.

Customers

The products and services of a company are customer driven. The cost and quality of the products is a major concern from the customer's point of view. But in the 21st century, the customers are concerned with increased awareness and means of communication. Customer Satisfaction and loyalty would depend on company's goods and services, but more importantly if the company is focusing or contributing to the Social, Environment, Supply Chain and human rights, eventually the customers stay loyal and that leads to greater customer satisfaction in the company's products or services as the company is contributing to the society as well as to the stakeholders.

Environment

Just meeting with legal requirements does not necessarily comprise Corporate Social Responsibility. It goes much beyond mandatory requirements and it should deliver environmental benefits too. The company can start up with better allocation and proper usage of natural resources, where the process should not impact on the environment. Hence the companies can reduce pollutants or emissions for improving the environment and produce environment-friendly goods.

Community

A major stakeholder to the business is the community; hence the company has to be involved with the community through direct interactions. The company has to observe whether there are any issues/risks faced by the community in surrounding areas of the company. Hence the company has to make positive changes in the lives of the people where the brand image of the company can be improved. The companies have to extend support and involvement with the community with a social cause, like providing funds for community projects.

4.0 Characteristics of Corporate Social Responsibility

Currently, 95% of the 250 global companies are actively involved in CSR activities. But to achieve significant benefit, the companies have to invest in time and use resources in an optimum manner. There are five characteristics that can be used by companies for improving their CSR activities.

Credible: The companies have to work through transparency where they can set measurable goals which encourage their employees for new ideas and innovations.

Relevant: The companies have to prioritise issues which is highly needed like environmental issues or any social issues which is bothering the society. Hence the company has to work in tandem with the likes of the stakeholders.

Authentic: Authenticity is a buzz word for the companies who are adopting CSR activities. The company has to work in line with the company's culture and values for connecting with their stakeholders.

Engaging: The company's provide opportunity to all the stakeholders by using social sharing and other features that invite discovery and action.

Digestible: Most of the companies they emphasise more on transparency and due to this, they might lose their audience.

5.0 Advantages of Corporate Social Responsibility

88% of consumers prefer to buy the product from the companies who are actively involved in CSR Activities, for the betterment of society.

CSR helps in generating new business, increases customer retention, it also enhances long term relationships with customers, suppliers and various stake holders. It also creates an environment for happy workforce for employees and operating costs can be reduced. It can create an advantage over competitors. CSR increases the Brand Image and hence reputation of the business can be enhanced. It creates a positive publicity in the minds of the customers.

Public Relations: Companies engaging in CSR activities can offer Public Relations and can get media opportunities. If the company makes a donation to a community service project, they can send a Press Release, where it can include Publications, online sites, thereby building a favorable image about the company.

Human Resources: The companies who associate with CSR activities with a set of good values attract more number of talent searches whereby the employees who have been selected for the company feel very proud to be with the company.

Sponsorship Marketing Opportunities: The corporate companies that sponsor charitable events are more likely attract the customer to buy their products or services in line with target audience when compared to traditional sales efforts.

Team Building: When the company's values are shared by employees, it creates an environment for team building exercises as they have to work together for all charitable efforts which results in improved staff morale leading to job satisfaction.

Reduced Costs: Companies associated with CSR activities have an inherent set of good values, and it attracts more number of talent searches which reduces the recruitment costs. This kind of CSR initiatives like Green and sustainability could reduce waste and its associated costs. Hence these kinds of efforts taken by companies can be showcased using media which leads to a positive image of the company in the minds of the customers. Hence it reduces the need for paid marketing and advertising and can often reduce the cost of traditional marketing channels as well.

Expanded Customer Prospect Base: In this 21st Century, customers are very much aware of their needs and they are willing to buy the product or services from the companies whom they have good values and they are not willing to buy the product where the company has used child labour, or they are willing to buy the biodegradable products, where it can be recycled easily. Hence the company which comes under one or more social responsibility categories attracts more buyers in line with their specific needs or preferences. It makes companies easier to position their products with the conscious use of CSR Activities.

Improved Financial Performance: The companies that focus more on Stakeholders achieve four times the growth rate and eight times employment growth when compared to companies which focuses on Shareholders and profit maximization – Source: Harvard University Study

Enhanced Brand Image and Reputation: The companies that opt for CSR enhances reputation in public and reputation within the business community. Hence it attracts more capital and trade partners. The companies which focus more on better employee, customer and community relations rather than strong shareholders returns only, leads to enhanced Brand Image of the company – Source: Boston Consultancy Group.

Increased Sales and Customer Loyalty: The companies who concentrate only on tastes and preferences of the customers, like Price, Quality, Appearance, Availability, Safety and Convenience, will not necessarily lead to Increased Sales and Customer Loyalty. The companies have to be socially responsible with good values associated with stakeholder's leads to Increased Sales and Customer Loyalty.

6.0 Disadvantages of Corporate Social Responsibility

Companies play a vital role in society, providing jobs for their employees, paying taxes and producing products and providing services to the consumers. They also have a social function where they pursue voluntary activities to enhance their Brand Image by associating with communities and stakeholders. But CSR can cause some problems unless companies undertake it with care and planning.

There are conflicting opinions regarding the advantages of Corporate Social Responsibility and its benefits, costs and actions.

Financial costs: Big MNC's or Corporate companies can afford monetary budget allocation to CSR activities like Event Sponsorship, Charitable Donations, Product Donations, commitment to voluntary environmental standards, but it is not always open to small businesses. Or if the companies spend adequate time in Environment Issues or Waste Management, they cannot expect financial returns in short term from their key customers from these programs. In spite of long term positive effects of improving the corporate image, the investment in CSR Programs may not get necessary result in measurable financial results or not able to measure the value of corporate responsibility – Source: Forbes Study, 2014.

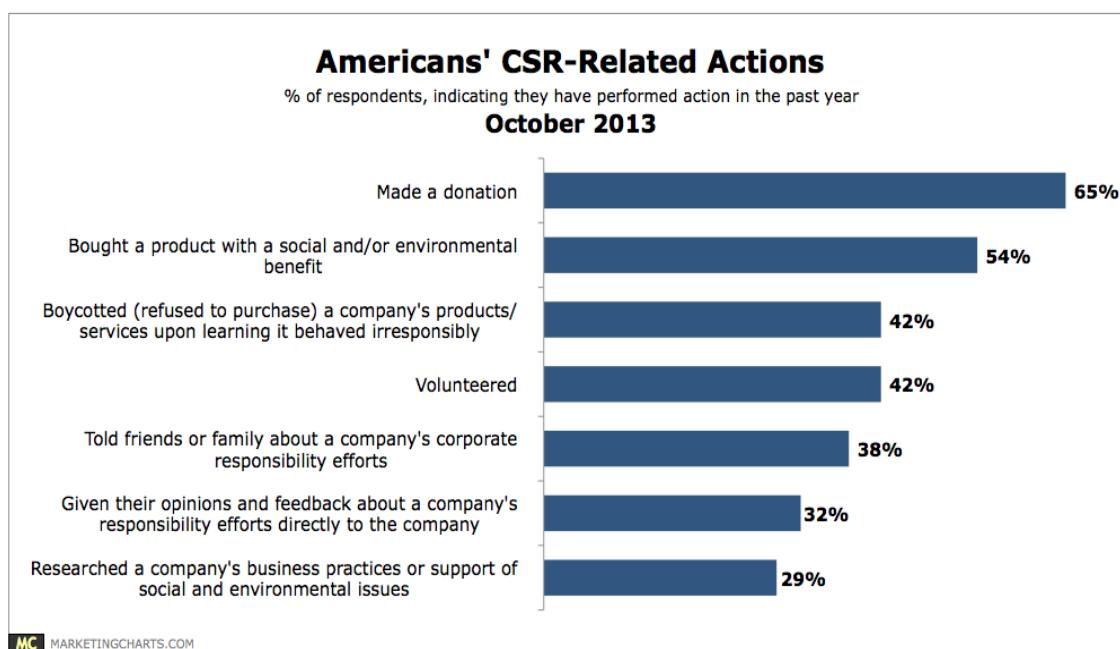
Social Benefit: Some critics claim that CSR only benefits the company image and the benefits for society are doubtful – Source: Corporate Watch, 2014.

Companies are not intended for saving the world: Critics often claim that companies have to focus on profits and leave social and environmental issues to the government or NGO's to deal with as companies do not have expertise and knowledge for handling social problems Source: HubPages, 2013.

Fairness: A company can choose to invest in Corporate Responsibility, where they can either select social concerns, environmental issues, civil or political cause. Therefore, the Board Members are free to come up with their personal opinions and/or biases while taking spending decisions resulting in more visibility rather than any measured benefit to the society or communities.

Unintended Consequences: When the companies are willing to spend money on CSR, it can also have unintended and unanticipated consequences. Wherever the companies want to exercise CSR Activity, there might be a conflict with government as both of them wants to initiate the same activity. Another unintended consequence happens when the company invests in CSR program which turns out to be inefficient.

Enhanced Scrutiny: Normally when the company undertakes a social responsibility, there will be intense scrutiny i.e. from critics, customers and competitors. If the company takes an initiative on energy efficient manufacturing methods and if they promote recycling through public awareness campaign, the immediate reaction from the competitors is that the other operations of the company is not environment friendly. In another situation where the company wants to support local charity, they might withdraw the sponsorship during financial hardship. The customers might feel that the same company has become insensitive to public concerns.



Source: Cone Communications / Ebiquity Research

Figure 1 clearly indicates that 65% of the companies contributed to NGO's through donations and 54% of the customer's prefer to buy a product of the company who have been associated with a social cause or environment friendly.



Source: Good Must Grow's Study

Figure 2 clearly indicates that when compared to last year 2013 there is an increase in 2014 where 65% of customers have purchased a product or services where the company is associated with CSR Activities.

7.0 Objectives of the Study

1. The concept of Corporate Social Responsibility
2. The characteristics of Corporate Social Responsibility
3. Advantages of Corporate Social Responsibility
4. Disadvantages of Corporate Social Responsibility
5. Innovative Marketing Strategies used by various companies by using Corporate Social Responsibility as Marketing Campaign.

8.0 Limitations

The study had to be completed in a short span. The study is restricted to Corporate Social Responsibility as a Modern tool for Marketers using it as Marketing Campaigns by various companies' products or services.

9.0 Review of Literature

Windsor (2001) examined the future of Corporate Social Responsibility or the relationship between business and society in long run. The researcher tried to find out whether the organization and society will come closer to each other in future or not and what will be the changing phase of CSR.

Nigel Sarbutts (2003) explored the way of doing CSR by small and medium sized companies. The research depicted that a structured approach to managing corporate reputation and profit maximization of SME's through CSR whether it is good or acceptable.

Moon (2004) It examined the role of government in driving corporate social responsibility among the corporate. The study explained that the drivers of CSR are related with business and society through policies and regulations.

Mc William & S. Seigal (2010) provided the importance of CSR as a strategy of enhancing reputation of companies. The study indicated that firms selling convincing goods which comes under the umbrella of CSR activities leads to consumer loyalty and increased revenue. Further the study also indicated the importance of advertising for providing information to consumers

Agunis, Glovas (2012) It provided a framework of CSR actions which affects external as well as internal stakeholders and outcomes of such actions.

The Economic Times (11 Jan.2013), news highlighted about the company Dell's strategy of motivating its employees in initializing CSR. The news discussed that company's employees are the power that forced the company to do more for the society. Company with its employees has engaged in social responsibility activities in the areas of education, environment and employee's welfare. Beside Dell Company, the news also discussed about other companies like Maruti and Godrej and concluded that these companies also provide induction training to its employees for preparing them for community services. Maruti Company run a program named e- parivartan for a group of employees to make them aware about community problem and their solution.

10.0 Methodology of the Study

Subjects: 100 Customers, who visited various Malls in Mysore region during September, 2014.

Questionnaire: Self structured questionnaire was prepared with the help of the experts to analyze the perception of the customers towards Brand Image of the Products/Services offered by companies who are associated with CSR Activities.

The questionnaire consisting of 25 questions of which 4 questions each is used for 5 parameters.

Parameters: Brand Image, Corporate Social Responsibility, Customer Satisfaction, Indian Companies, Innovative Marketing Strategies by using Corporate Social Responsibility as Marketing Campaigns.

Duration: September, 2014

Procedure: The questionnaire was administered to 100 customers who visited various Malls in Mysore region, during September, 2014 and collected back the information.

To fulfill the objectives of the study z-test was used.

This paper also uses exploratory cum descriptive research design.

Data Sources

Primary data has been used by administering questionnaire to the customer.

Secondary data has been used through appropriate websites, Magazines, E-Journals, Newspaper articles.

Analysis:

The purpose of the study was to analyze the customers' perception towards Brand Image of the product/services offered by companies who are associated with CSR Activities. To accomplish the purpose of the study, we constructed self-prepared questionnaire with the help of experts and administered to one hundred respondents and collected back information during the period September 2014. The collected information was tabulated accordingly. To fulfill the objective of the study following statistical hypothesis was constructed and tested subsequently.

Statistical Hypothesis:

$$H_0: P = 0.5$$

$$H_1: P \neq 0.5$$

Where P = Proportion of customers, who prefer Brand Image.

To test above hypothesis, z-test was used and

$$z = \frac{p - P}{\sqrt{\frac{PQ}{N}}}$$

$$\text{Where } p = \frac{X}{N} = \frac{62}{100} = 0.62$$

X = Number of customers preferred Brand Image

N = Total number of Respondents

Therefore, **z = 2.4**

Since calculated z-value was greater than 1.96, the test was significant at 5% levels i.e. customers do prefer significantly the Brand Image of the product/services offered by companies who are associated with CSR Activities at 5% levels.

11.0 Innovative Marketing Strategies used by companies using Corporate Social Responsibility as Marketing Campaigns for Promotion; Few Cases

1. Excel Industries Ltd.

The company has initiated CSR in the areas of Rural Development and contributed to socially relevant projects and also for community. They also have to take proactive precautions related to environment, health and safety measures as per regulatory norms in developing, manufacturing, storage and handling and distribution of chemical products.

2. Titan Industries

The company has provided opportunities for physically challenged. They have also started with the project with Myrada where they create self help groups amongst rural woman for outsourcing components relating to watch thereby encouraging Woman Empowerment.

They have also started Titan School and Foundation for Education, where Scholarship was provided for the students from Dharmapuri and Krishnagiri based on the academic performance and socio-economic background.

They have also built Township for the community in Hosur where they have provided a home to 1300 residents.

They are with Community Forums like Eye Care Camps, Eve Donation, AIDS Awareness, No Tobacco Drive and Children Programs.

They have a partnership with NGO's like CRY and Ashray

3. Nestle India Ltd.

The company's objective is to optimise usage of natural resources and to reduce waste and emissions. They have Green House Gas and Waste Water Plant, whereby it reduces the usage of water and energy. Hence the company have developed proactive measures to protect the environment.

The company believes that its investments have led to sustainable long term growth as well as economic and social progress for the community. They provide ample opportunities through either direct or indirect employment that leads to the development of the whole community. The company has done extensive work at Moga to develop dairy farmers. They also educated the farmers with good dairy practices and the supply chain. They installed farm coolers and chillers for milk collection which benefited 100, 000 farmers.

They also conducted dairy development programs amongst village woman and trained them in good dairy practices which include personal health, hygiene, water conservation which got benefitted to 30,000 women from 500 villages from this initiative.

They also provided clean drinking water facilities in village schools. They created awareness of cleanliness and hygiene towards the society. It reduced the illness amongst children and the community appreciated the water education which got benefited to 33,000 school children. They are more aware of protecting the resources for water conservation.

4. Wipro Ltd.

They contributed in the areas of Education, Community and Social Development. Wipro Ltd. Provides rehabilitation to survivors of natural calamities and provide learning opportunities to the children from under-privileged sections of the society. These programs have been successfully implemented in Besantnagar, Chennai and Viveknagar, Bangalore. The Wipro volunteers work with the students on 1st and 3rd Saturday of every month.

They have been associated with the NGO MakkalaJagriti which focuses on providing exciting, safe and secure environment to children of under privileged sections of the society in the area of education.

They also conduct Summer Camp for children where they interact with children using creative and innovative ways in arts, crafts and other fun activities. This results in discovering the hidden talents of the children like storytelling, hand puppets, painting and clay modelling. The company has provided adequate infrastructure in the schools like toilet block of both the sections.

5. Godfrey Phillips India Ltd.

The company has taken several initiatives like Godfrey Phillips Bravery Awards, Blood Donation Drive and Woman Empowerment Projects.

They have educated tobacco farmers about good Agricultural Practices. They have been associated with charitable groups.

Woman Empowerment Project is aimed to make woman more self sufficient and independent by providing them adequate training. This drive helps in promoting gender equality. They have been associated with NGO's like Navjyoti, Vidya for supporting for the good cause of the society.

6. Maruti Suzuki Ltd.

The company is practicing 3R i.e. Reduce, Reuse and Recycle. They are able to recycle 100% of waste water which directly reduces fresh water consumption by 28%. They have also adopted rain water harvesting methods.

The company has facilitated Environment Management System and regular training will be provided for the suppliers to be aware of Environment Issues.

They have opted for Kaizen on the shop floor, where their objective is to implement energy saving technologies, where it increases the productivity levels.

They are frequently promoting the road safety and safe driving in the country. The company manages two institutes of Driving Training & Research (IDTR) in Delhi and there are 43 Maruti Driving Schools across India in 38 different locations with strong Dealership Network. They have come up with world class driving test tracks and advanced computer simulators, and have trained 41,500 people so far.

They have a MOU with Government of Gujarat at Gajadara village in Vadodara District, where they provide driving training to tribal youth, which helps them to get jobs. They also have a MOU with Government of Haryana where training institutes are placed in Rohtak and Bahadurgarh.

The company has been closely associated with local communities where they have adopted four villages surrounding its Manesar Plant i.e. Kasan, Dhana, Alihar and Baas Kusla and it has launched programs for underprivileged communities in the areas of Health, Education, Basic Infrastructure Development and Employment opportunities for the community.

7. Godrej Industries Ltd.

The company has built a residential township for the community. They believe in protecting the Environment, Safety and Health aspects as a core value. Godrej has been successful in orienting to thousands of school & college with their Mangrove Awareness Programs.

Godrej provides opportunity to Researchers and Naturalists to conduct studies in eco-system. They have been associated with Encon Group for Energy Conservation and they have also been associated with Envirotech Group for pollution reduction. Garden Department takes care of natural environment in many areas in Mumbai.

The company has also focused on proliferation of various species of orchids and medicinal plants.

The company has come up with Garden Township at Vikhroli. In 1996, Godrej adopted a System Approach with due consideration to the Mangroves. By conservation of Mangroves helped the company image and it strengthened business relationships with clients, customers and government.

In Godrej Udayachal Schools, right from pre-primary level the children were educated on environment so that they can get exposed to the mangrove area, and are introduced to plant and animal life: flora and fauna.

To encourage the students to become Naturalists as their career, High School Special Mangrove Club and the Soonabai Pirojsha Ecological Mangrove Project has been initiated as a program in Mumbai City for school and college students.

Every year thousands of students visit the mangrove area as organized tours and they get educated, as it is guided by Naturalists, It increases the interest among the students.

12.0 Conclusions

In this 21st Century, 95% of the 250 global companies are actively involved in CSR activities.

The companies can run cause related marketing campaigns with CSR Initiative by contributing to all the stakeholders which enhances the corporate image in the minds of the customers, community or society at large. The companies have realized that they cannot work in isolation. Hence they have to provide sustainable growth for all the stakeholders wherein it creates an environment for the stakeholders to have more belief and trust towards the company, which leads to Brand Loyalty.

CSR enhances the reputation of the company due to positive word-of-mouth in the minds of the customers.

If the company neglects social, environment and human rights or other aspects, then it leads to bad image for the company, and it can adversely affect the business. Big MNC's or Corporate can afford CSR Activities but it is unlikely so for the small business units.

54% of the customer's prefer to buy a product of the company who has been associated for social cause or CSR Initiative or environment friendly for betterment of society.

When compared to last year 2013 there is an increase in 2014 where 65% of customers have purchased a product or services where the company is associated with CSR Activities.

Hence we conclude that the customers do prefer the Brand Image of the Products/Services offered by companies who are associated with CSR Activities.

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