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Community-Level CSR Implementation through the Lens of Institutional Theory: An Empirical Study

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Abstract

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Keywords

Corporate Social Responsibility, Institutional Theory, Local Community, CSR in India, Single Case Study

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Community-Level CSR Implementation through the Lens of Institutional Theory: An Empirical Study

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Researchers world over are increasingly realising that use of a theoretical framework is necessary for designing and conducting research on corporate-community relations. There are no empirical studies in India, to the best of our knowledge, which look at Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives of a corporate in local community through theoretical lens. The research questions we examine through this study are – firstly, how institutional pressure at the level of local community drives CSR practices of a company and secondly, to assess how community has perceived these CSR initiatives. To answer the same, the researchers studied CSR practices of Cairn India in Barmer region of Rajasthan as a single case within the theoretical framework provided by the institutional theory. This empirical study, based on interviews with employees and NGO partners of Cairn and perceptual study in the community, offers an on-the-ground glimpse of how the company is implementing CSR initiatives and associated challenges it is facing. The findings testify that managing local community expectations has certainly helped Cairn India to integrate community expectations into its CSR strategy. The study brings to light the fact Government and NGOs are important drivers of CSR at the local community level in developing countries like India. Keywords: Corporate Social Responsibility, Institutional Theory, Local Community, CSR in India, Single Case Study

Introduction

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is a global phenomenon (Jamali, 2014), however, in most of the countries in the world CSR spending is a voluntary and self-regulating activity of corporations (Afsharipour & Rana, 2014). Seemingly, India has become the first nation in the world to introduce mandatory CSR spending for many of its public traded companies (Jain, Aguilera, & Jamali, 2017). Legal provisions now have a definite influence on CSR activities of corporate India, but the fact remains that Indian companies have contributed immensely in social domain (Kanagasabapathi, 2007). In order to integrate corporate India's sustained focus on philanthropy and good social practices with inclusive economic growth of India and to ensure that CSR initiatives become an integral part of business strategy, Section 135 of the Companies Act, 2013 has laid emphasis on the CSR work to be carried out in "project mode" by the businesses in India. This will help to harness innovative project management expertise of the businesses to create value in development sector. It also requires the companies to undertake CSR activities, preferably, in local communities of its operation. World over, CSR activities are being recognized as a collaboration between corporations and the communities in which they are based and increasingly it is being emphasised that such collaboration should be based on reciprocity more than philanthropy (Boehm, 2002; Hamann

& Kapelus, 2004). Understanding and managing community expectations of local communities by designing CSR initiatives helps the corporates to “integrate community expectations into CSR strategies, and align company and community interests in developing countries” (Ogula, 2012, p. 2).

Local community in the present context are communities residing in geography in which the corporate operates (Galaskiewicz, 1997; Marquis, Glynn, & Davis, 2007). The CSR Rules, 2014 issued by Ministry of Corporate Affairs have given an inclusive definition of Corporate Social Responsibility. According to it, the term CSR includes but is not limited to:

- Projects or programs relating to activities specified in the Schedule VII; or
- Projects or programs relating to activities undertaken by the Board in pursuance of recommendations of the CSR Committee as per the declared CSR policy subject to the condition that such policy covers subjects enumerated in the Schedule.

This definition of CSR assumes significance as it allows companies to engage in projects or programs relating to activities enlisted under the Schedule VII to the Companies Act, 2013¹. However, it gives flexibility to the companies to choose CSR engagements that are in conformity with their CSR policy. Campbell (2006) has defined CSR as “a minimum behavioural standard with respect to corporation’s relationship to its stakeholders below which corporate behaviour becomes socially irresponsible” (p. 928). For the purposes of the article, both the definitions put together serve the purpose as the law now has laid the minimum behavioural standard with respect of CSR in India.

The research problem we are addressing, through a single case study of CSR initiatives of Cairn India, is to determine how local communities influence CSR implementation of corporates in developing countries like India. Accordingly, the objective of this article to examine the influence of local community on CSR initiatives of Cairn India operating in Barmer region in India in context of its effort to manage community expectations, associated challenges and to obtain a fit with business strategy. The present work provides a framework not only for understanding CSR initiatives in a theoretical perspective but also for understanding the expectations of various other interest groups, such as the government, associated with the business.

Our research work has important implications for any company in India as well as abroad which, due to nature of its business, has to work with local community closely and has to manage its expectations. Local communities and NGOs may also use the findings of the research to argue for necessary CSR spend by the companies on welfare and upliftment of local community only. In case of India, the Government may find support for its insistence on CSR spend in the local area of firm’s operation.

The Case Study Company: Cairn India Limited²

Cairn India Ltd³, a subsidiary of [Vedanta Resources](https://www.vedanta.com/), is one of the India’s largest Oil and Gas Company in the private sector and accounts for more than 25% of India’s domestic crude oil production. Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) currently holds a 30% stake in Cairn India. It is the winner of 2012 Platts Top 250 Global Energy Company award for the Fastest growing company in Asia and the World. Cairn India is a publicly listed company and

¹ Schedule VII to the Companies Act, 2013 enlists activities that may be included by *companies* in their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Policies.

² Retrieved 20th March, 2017 from <https://www.Cairnindia.com/>

³ It is in the process of being merged into its parent.

as of 27/06/2017 has a market capitalisation of more than USD 4 billion and is amongst the top 100 Indian companies listed on BSE. Its operations are spread over the states of Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh and Gujarat. Rajasthan alone accounts for whopping 82% of the total oil production with remaining 13% coming from Andhra Pradesh and five percent from Gujarat. The company's major oil fields are located in Barmer district in western Rajasthan.

Case Study Region: Barmer⁴

Barmer district in West Rajasthan is its major area of operations. The total population of Barmer district is about 26 lakhs with a literacy rate of 56.53% against the State's average of 66%. The male literacy rate is about 71% while woman literacy rate is only 41% in the region. According to the Human Development Report, 2007 issued by Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Government of Rajasthan, Barmer ranked abysmally low at 21st position out of the 32 districts of the state on Human Development Index. Only 28% of the households have access to electricity and less than 50% have access to safe drinking water. Due to these poor socio-economic indicators, local communities of the region seriously require support by way of government or corporate interventions.

Literature Review

Institutional Theory

Institutional theory recognises that *rationalised myths* constitute institutional structure of the environment in which an organisation operates (Scott, 2004). These "rationalized myths" are widely held beliefs and values and norms of the society (Campbell, 2007); they indicate what constitutes a proper organisation. Therefore, conformance to "rationalized myths" is important for organisations and these myths become deeply institutionalised when more and more organizations conform to them (Meyer & Rowan, 1977).

According to Campbell (2007), institutional theory links CSR practices to rationalised myths. Corporate social decision-making depends on the institutions within which it operates (Angus-Leppan, Metcalf, & Benn, 2010; Athanasopoulou & Selsky, 2015; Jones, 1999). Institutions promote and constrain appropriate behaviour and institutional pressures and set cultural, legal and moral boundaries for actors (organisations) to operate (Campbell, 2006). Organisations, in order to appear legitimate, respond to institutional pressures and adopt policies that are socially accepted and are most appropriate (Carpenter & Feroz, 2001; Deephouse, 1999; Deephouse & Suchman, 2008; Dowling & Pfeffer, 1975; Suchman, 1995). Various conceptual and empirical studies have analysed how institutional pressures exert influence on the way a corporate engages itself in CSR activities. National business systems (Kim, Amaeshi, Harris, & Suh, 2013; Matten & Moon, 2008); NGOs (Campbell, 2007; Helmig, Spraul, & Ingenhoff, 2016; Jamali, 2014); top management commitment (Angus-Leppan, Metcalf, & Benn, 2010; Martínez Ros & Kunapatarawong, 2013; Yin, 2017); employees and their union (Jamali, 2014; Miller & Guthrie, 2007); rating agencies (Avetisyan & Ferrary, 2013); local community (Galaskiewicz & Wasserman, 1989; Marquis, et al., 2007; Molotch, Freudenburg, & Paulsen, 2000) are some of the important institutions that provide pressure for CSR.

According to DiMaggio and Powell (1983), the source of institutional pressures is the process of homogenisation that they called isomorphism. According to them, "isomorphism is a constraining process that forces one unit in a population to resemble other units that face the

⁴ Retrieved 22nd March, 2017 from <http://www.census2011.co.in/census/state/rajasthan.html>

same set of environmental conditions” (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983, p. 149). They have referred to three types of isomorphism: coercive isomorphism (shareholder influence, employee influence and government policy), mimetic isomorphism (imitating CSR practices of other organisations to retain legitimacy) and normative isomorphism (pressures emerging from common values). These isomorphic processes drive the organisational practices including CSR practices (Chiu & Sharfman, 2011). Scott (2010) makes another important conceptualisation of institutional pressures. Taking it as the basis, one can say regulative, normative and cognitive pressures shape CSR. Regulative pressure in Scott’s phraseology is coercive isomorphism in DiMaggio and Powell’s typology; normative pressure is similar to normative isomorphism and Scott’s cognitive pressure is mimetic isomorphism under DiMaggio’s classification (Chua & Rahman, 2011). O’Connor and Gronewold (2013) used both these frameworks in conjunction to explain and understand CSR behaviour and communication in petroleum industry. The present research has also adapted DiMaggio and Powell’s concept of isomorphism and Scott’s framework to answer the research questions.

Institutional Theory and CSR

To understand the focus and form of CSR practices of Cairn India, we have made use of a framework consisting of only three institutional forces influencing CSR behaviour: the government, NGOs and local community; these are a part of regulatory, normative and cognitive system respectively.

Regulative (legal) systems: Regulative pressures. Regulative elements include laws, directives of the state, sanctions and regulations which tend to codify socially accepted corporate behaviour (Campbell, 2007; Scott, 2001). Governments do not want to leave CSR decisions to the discretion of managers (Knudsen & Brown, 2015; Liston-Heyes & Ceton, 2007; Steurer, 2010). The government at all levels in India—Central, State and local—has a similar outlook towards CSR in India. In order to understand the impact of community level features on organisations, it is important to assess as to how the mandate of government can influence behaviour of the corporates (Marquis & Battilana, 2009). Firms in oil and gas sectors depend heavily on various government actors. In his mixed method study of Chinese firms, Yin (2017) asserted that a politically embedded firm faces greater regulative pressure to take up CSR activities than others do. In a study of subsidiaries of Multinational Enterprises (MNEs) in Sri Lanka, Beddewela and Fairbrass (2016) found that regulatory pressures from the government, besides other institutional pressures, propel MNEs to take up CSR initiatives in community that are long term in nature, involve large investments and are in partnership with government agencies.

Normative (social) elements: Normative pressures. Normative pressures “introduce a prescriptive, evaluative, and obligatory dimension into social life” (Scott, 1995, p. 37). To get a license to operate, a business has to adhere to not only values, beliefs and norms set by society, but it also shares and internalizes the same. One of the most important elements of normative social system is the connection between local Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) and the corporate (Marquis et al., 2007). From the perspective of our article, we are including only the NGOs working at grass roots in the community in line with Marquis et al.’s (2007) assertion.

Cognitive (cultural) elements: Cognitive pressures. These include within its ambit less tangible institutions that have common or shared beliefs and expectations about what constitutes good corporate behaviour. Corporates should interpret these cognitive blueprints and understand what socially responsible behaviour is (Galaskiewicz & Wasserman, 1989). Differentiating rules under cognitive pressure from the other two, Bührman (2011) writes, “Rules are largely taken for granted and social behaviour is thus more based on orthodoxy (the

way we do things around here) than instrumentality (regulative) or appropriateness (normative). Compliance occurs as other types of behaviour are inconceivable” (p. 19). To take some examples, Marquis et al. (2007) suggested that whether corporates in an area support art or public works as a social issue depended upon the orientation of the local community’s desired drive for the nature of community intervention. Communities have a wide range of expectations from projects that entail exploitation of non-renewable resources and thus affect them adversely. It becomes imperative for corporates operating in such areas to understand such expectations and frame CSR policies and programmes accordingly (Idemudia, 2007). Scott (1995) asserts that cognitive elements lay the deepest foundation for institutions and provide framework for normative and regulative elements to lay norms and frame rules and laws.

Indian Context

Dhanesh (2015), based on 19 semi-structured interviews with business leaders and senior managers who were actively involved in shaping CSR in India, revealed that participants engage in CSR because of moral and economic imperatives. The article further proposed that the ancient Indian concept of dharma might be a probable theoretical framework to understand key determinants of CSR in India. Doshi and Khokle (2012) have mentioned the significant role played by institutional investors in monitoring social behaviour of organizations by opting out of organizations performing low on CSR. It states that labour unions are another source of pressure for firms to engage in CSR. Arevalo and Aravind (2011) surveyed 33 CSR managers of UN Global Compact participating Indian companies, representing a number of industry sectors. They found top management commitment as the most important driver followed closely by strategic motives. Arora and Puranik (2004), through a case study of the garment industry, have shown that market pressure (i.e., pressure to compete with global companies that have good CSR practices in domestic as well as international markets) and pressures from international buyers are important determinants, but civil society movements and regulatory environments, including judicial activism, are also important considerations.

Research Gap and Research Questions

There are no empirical studies in India, to the best of our knowledge, which looks at the CSR initiatives of a corporate in local area through theoretical lens. Though there are many theoretical frameworks available, researchers have emphasised the need for organizations to understand corporate social responsibility (CSR) through lens of institutional theory (Brammer, Jackson, & Matten, 2012; Doshi & Khokle, 2012; Orlitzky, Schmidt, & Rynes, 2003). The strength of institutional theory lies in the fact that it compliments other organisational theories such as stakeholder theory and legitimacy theory to understand how organizations respond to institutional pressures (Amran & Haniffa, 2011). In the Indian context, the local community has been an important institution influencing CSR behaviour of the companies. Shrivastava and Venkateswaran (2000) have named it as one of the four reasons for adopting CSR policies and practices by Indian companies—along with philanthropy, internal reasons and enlightened self-interest. Shah and Bhaskar (2010) and Shah (2014) have emphasised that corporates should be responsive to the needs of the community through their case studies on Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd and Tata group.

Accordingly, we pose two research questions:

1. How does institutional pressure at the level of local community drive CSR practices of a company?

2. How has the community perceived these CSR initiatives?

To answer these, we have reviewed CSR practices of Cairn India Ltd in the Barmer region of Rajasthan. It is in the business of drilling oil. Hilson (2012) has identified mining and oil and gas industries as two industries that have spear headed CSR movements in various countries. In India, researchers and management experts generally credit Tata Steel, a mining company, with pioneering the “CSR in community” concept in India (Sundar, 2013). According to an estimate made by NextGen, oil and gas companies made 38% of total CSR spent in India for 2014 - 2015. Evidence of similar high CSR spending by this sector exist in our country as well (Austin & Sauer, 2002; Frynas, 2012). Cairn India was, therefore, a perfect organisation to understand CSR spending.

Role of Researchers

The first author is associated with the community service wing of her college and her broad area of research interest is business ethics. The second author's research interest lies in the social sector and she takes up research projects in the field of CSR. This empirical study is a part of doctoral research for the first author under the supervision of the latter. High CSR spending by companies in the oil and gas sector, coupled with a dearth of empirical literature, motivated the authors to understand how the companies in this sector are implementing CSR initiatives to ensure that CSR integrates with business strategies. The first author did six years of schooling in the Rajasthan and has a working knowledge of the local dialect. This further motivated the authors to take up research in the Barmer region. We approached the CSR head of Cairn India to seek permission to take up the study. We used our findings for academic purposes only.. In order to address the problem of researchers' bias, we decided to select respondents who have spent a certain number of years living in the region. We interviewed employees who handled different responsibilities within CSR domain and the NGO members interviewed were implementation partners for different projects. To address ethical issues, we discussed anonymity and confidentiality with interviewees and respondents. We sought their permission to record interviews; some agreed and when others were uncomfortable, we made notes during the interview. Interviewees reviewed the recorded interviews and confirmed the accuracy of the content, which also helped in removing researchers' bias (Morse, Barrett, Mayan, Olson, & Spiers, 2002).

Method

Research Design

The research question that steered the study was to determine how local communities influence CSR implementation of corporates in developing countries like India. We have chosen a descriptive single case study to answer our research question, as such a research design helps to describe an intervention or phenomenon in real-life context (Reast, Maon, Lindgreen, & Vanhamme, 2013; Yin, 2003). This design is appropriate for the present work because the focus of this research was to have a first-hand account of CSR implementation at the community level in order to gain a deeper understanding of the influence of local community expectations of CSR from corporates. The relative paucity of empirical research on CSR strategies adopted by organizations in India further motivated us to undertake the case study.

The unit of analysis in our study is a single household. Our unit of observation are the actors: Cairn India and its employees, its NGO partners and local community members. We

have used a mix of data collection approaches for our research—semi structured interviews with employees of Cairn India and its NGO partners, questionnaire surveys among members of the local community, focus group interviews with the local community, and content analysis of publicly available information about CSR initiatives of Cairn. George and Bennett (2005) and Gerring (2006) have noted that the use of a mixed method approach is possible with case studies. In order to study different corporate, community initiatives in the Niger delta, Idemudia (2009) also used perception survey and semi-structured interviews with case studies.

Sampling

We used purposive sampling for data collection. For semi-structured interviews, we obtained a list of Cairn employees with their names, responsibilities within CSR domain, and the number of years spent in the organisation. We selected employees who have spent more than two years in the organisation and who were working at middle or top level. We interviewed only grassroot NGO partners because of their connection with the local community. For our study, we included only respondents who had been living in the area for more than five years (Ololade & Annegarn, 2013) and had sufficient knowledge about issues in the region. The second reason for choosing this method of sampling was low population density of the sampled villages. Distance between two households varies from 200 meters to more than one kilometre in these villages. When it is difficult to have access to respondents in a primary survey, Neuman and Kreuger (2003) have suggested use of purposive sampling.

Participants

Participants included employees of Cairn India, its NGO partners and members of the local community. We interviewed two senior level executives (coded as L1 and L2); four middle level managers of Cairn from CSR department (coded as M1, M2, M3 and M4) and two site engineers (coded as E1 and E2) to get insights into the CSR practices of the company. We also interviewed representatives of five NGO partners to get a complete perspective of the work done by Cairn India in the field of CSR. We collected data from 97 respondents (women=46 and men=51) for study during April and May 2017 from two villages- Bhadka (n=48) and Bhimara (n=49). Cairn's CSR team suggested these villages because we wanted to carry out our study in villages where the company is carrying out extensive CSR activities. These villages have received a multitude of CSR investments. We drafted the questionnaire in English and then translated into Hindi. The first author's familiarity with the local dialect helped respondents understand the questions.

Data Collection

Our local context does not require third-party approval from any oversight Board (e.g., Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects). We adopted the below mentioned methodological procedures to gather data.

Analysis of secondary information.

To begin with, we analysed the content of Sustainability Reports for 2014, 2015 and 2016 to identify patterns and themes of CSR Cairn initiatives in the Barmer region in line with the recommendations of researchers (Guthrie & Parker, 1990; Niskala & Pretes, 1995). Next, to capture CSR vision of the company and to obtain a perspective of CSR implementation, we used website analysis, a common method in CSR research

(Susanne Johansen & Ellerup Nielsen, 2011; Vidaver-Cohen & Brønn, 2015). In order to identify NGO partners, we made notes from the internet and matched it against the list obtained from the company. Based on the analysis of secondary data, we drafted questions for semi-structured interviews and aspects to be covered through our survey among community members and insights we wanted to gain through focus group interviews.

Semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews are conversational in nature and can be easily combined with other methods of data collection (Clifford, Cope, Gillespie, & French, 2016). We also used this method to interview employees of Cairn handling different responsibilities and implementing NGO partners for different projects. We promised anonymity and confidentiality to interviewees to elicit an honest opinion. The interviews with each employee and NGO partner typically lasted between 30-45 minutes. There are many ways of recording interviews such as audio recording, video recording, notes written at the time of interview and notes written afterwards (Rabionet, 2009). We recorded some interviews and notes were taken when respondents were not comfortable. To ensure credibility of the interviews, we did verbatim transcriptions (Whiting, 2008) after hearing recordings separately. Both authors exchanged transcriptions and notes. We discussed and resolved discrepancies found after going through the recordings and transcriptions again. We analysed direct statements of interviewees to understand the issues and relevance to the context (Fredline & Faulkner, 2000).

Perception study through questionnaire survey and focus group study in the community. While a company's Sustainability Reports, web site and executives might talk of community empowerment and fulfilling community needs, some studies have pointed out a considerable gap between rhetoric reality (Banerjee, 2008; Hamann & Kapelus, 2004; Shamir, 2004). To know whether such a gap exists in Barmer, a perceptual study was undertaken. Such a study helps us understand how the corporation and the community collaborate for CSR initiatives from both perspectives rather than taking into account only "the voice of the corporation and neglecting the voice of the community" (Boehm, 2002, p. 171). We gathered quantitative data to capture the perception of the community through a questionnaire survey and received completely filled-out questionnaires from ninety-seven respondents. We conducted focus group interviews on gender lines (Idemudia, 2007) that enabled us to capture differences, if any, between the views of men and women.

Results

Our first research question relates to examining how institutional pressure drives CSR company practices. Second, we assessed how the community has perceived these CSR initiatives. To answer the first, we used qualitative methods and established relationships between the institutional theory and CSR practices through content analysis of a website, sustainability reports and the direct relevance of interview statements of employees and NGO partners. We had identified categories of institutional pressures based on literature review; therefore, we adopted deductive content analysis approach as suggested by Elo and Kyngäs' (2008) for such types of research work. It involved development of a structured categorisation matrix as a first step, review of the data next and then coding according to correspondence with the identified categories (Polit & Beck, 2004). Only the contents that fit the categorisation matrix constitute data (Sandelowski, 1993, 1995). We undertook quantitative perception study in the community to answer the second question and used SPSS 20 to analyse the data.

Institutional Pressures and Cairn India's CSR Policies: A Qualitative Analysis

To understand the focus and form of CSR practices in the region, we have made use of framework consisting of only three institutional pressures influencing CSR behaviour– the government, NGOs and local community, and these are a part of regulatory, normative and cognitive system respectively.

Regulative pressure exerted by the government. The regulatory pressure, in Cairn's case, manifests itself in the form of aligning CSR programmes of Cairn for the betterment of local community with the priorities, schemes and resources of the Rajasthan state and the local government. Eighty-two percent of its oil production comes from Rajasthan. During FY 2014-15 and FY 2015-16, Barmer's share in the CSR budget of the company stood at 90% and out of it, nearly 85% of CSR spending was on programmes for the welfare of local communities. Cairn is implementing CSR projects in partnership with various government bodies, as well as village Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRI) and Rural Development Organizations (RDO).

To take an example, the top priority of the State Government is to provide safe drinking water to the people of the region. With 10.4 percent of the country's geographical area, 5.66 percent of the population⁵ and 11.27 percent of the livestock⁶ Rajasthan has only 1.16 percent of surface water available in the country. Moreover, the average rainfall in the state is erratic and ranges between only 200mm to 400mm. Saline groundwater is high in TDS, fluoride, nitrates and bacteria resulting in adverse impact on health. The situation is particularly worse in the Barmer district as it is a part of the Thar Desert. In order to provide access to safe drinking water in the Barmer region, Cairn has initiated the "Jeevan Amrit" (Life's Nectar) project in partnership with Public Health and the Engineering Department of the Rajasthan Government, Tata projects and respective village panchayats. Under the project, Cairn has already established a hundred Any-time Water (ATW) kiosks with reverse osmosis plants in many villages. Barmer will have nearly 330 such ATWs under the project over a period of the next three years, and that would cover about one-third of the population in the region.

The Rajasthan Government is committed to developing skills for women and youth in order to enhance their employability. The Central Government has also launched the Skill India Programme with a similar purpose. The Centre of Excellence set up by Cairn in partnership with the Government of Rajasthan provides vocational training and develops local vendors; they have trained about 12,000 people at CEC during the last nine years. The initiative seems to be sustainable as there is considerable government support.

Normative pressure exerted by NGOs. NGOs serve as an important link between corporate and local communities. Corporates fund them to carry out CSR initiatives and NGOs depend on corporate funds to run their programmes. We wanted to assess how NGO partners of Cairn perceive CSR spending. We asked them why CSR is so important. We got the following responses:

Industry is nothing without CSR. It is based on Principle of equity. By way of CSR activities, industries share its gains with people who it may be adversely affecting. (NGO A)

CSR has a religious orientation. For corporates, it is a formalised way of spreading happiness in the community in which it is operating. (NGO B)

⁵ Retrieved 18th February, 2017 from <http://www.census2011.co.in/census/state/rajasthan.html>

⁶ Retrieved 21st February, 2017 from http://dahd.nic.in/sites/default/files/Livestock%20%205_0.pdf

It is a sustained good behaviour of the corporates to bring social change and it shows sensitivity of the corporate towards the people it is affecting. (NGO C)

CSR is an act to build goodwill and credibility in local community and the corporates should do it with passion. (NGO D)

Cairn displaced people for land acquisition. Consequently, it should undertake CSR in this region to mitigate problems of these people. It is important to have a social connect and CSR is the vehicle for the same. (NGO E)

From all these statements, it is clear that NGOs operating in the region are of the view that corporates should undertake CSR programmes because it is the right thing to do and lends legitimacy to it. Cairn India has tied up with many NGOs—both local and some with national presence—working at a grass-roots level in the Barmer region ever since it started CSR work in the region in early 2000's. Cairn selected NGO partners based on their scope and nature of work and expertise. For example, it tied up with Society to Uplift Rural Economy (SURE) to carry out its dairy project because of SURE's local connection. M2, one of the Cairn's executives states, "So, called right wing NGOs have tried their hands at various things but have failed here because community knows what they want from us. For us NGOs working at grass root are important because they understand the pulse of the community."

Cairn wants to strengthen its relationship with NGO partners. L1, one of the senior executives at Cairn asserts,

In order to encourage partnership between partners, to build trust between the corporate and its NGO partners and to identify the right projects where Cairn can extend support to partners and develop synergies, we have decided to organise frequent Partner Summits. It will be an excellent platform for interaction between CSR team members and partners on one hand and among the partners also.

Cognitive pressure exerted by the local community. When Cairn started operations about two decades ago, it identified the needs of the communities of Barmer based on baseline surveys, inputs from government officials and community meetings. The community sought interventions in many areas. For the holistic development of the area, Cairn has focused on five areas: livelihood (farm and vocational skill), education, health, water and sanitation for intervention. One of their flagship CSR projects is Project RACHNA (Reproductive and Child Health Nutrition & Awareness). The primary objective of implementing this project is to ensure the well-being of woman and child. In fact, there are a few other successful interventions in the local community that caused such profound difference in the lives of the people living in the area. One such project is the illumination of a small village of 500 people, Meghwalon ki Dhani, for the first time since India's independence through installation of solar micro-grid.

Results of Perception Study: A Quantitative Analysis

The factors to be included (Refer Table 1) in the perception survey were similar to those identified in previous studies done by Idemudia (2007) and Ite (2007) in Niger Delta and adapted as per the requirement of our study.

The first factor identified for the study was whether corporate CSR activities are actually identified in consultation with the local community as claimed by the company. About sixty-five percent of the people agreed with the statement. However, the analysis of results

reveals that statistically significant perceptual differences exist among women and men on the issue of identification of projects in consultation with local community ($U = 794, p = .001$). Cairn identifies projects in consultation with the local community, but women do not have much say in this matter. The woman responsible for running Anganwadi (a type of rural mother and childcare centre in India) at Bhadka asserts, “Cairn calls a meeting of villagers when they want to start a project. Though some women attend these meetings, they are hesitant to speak.” A study by MPOWER⁷ has also found that local traditions of Rajasthan restrict women participation in decision making in the state. Thus, local tradition may be responsible for dormant participation of women in meetings organised by Cairn.

Table 1: Questions Asked from Respondents at Both the Villages

F1: The company plans various activities in consultation with the community.
F2: The company provides adequate information about the work for the community it is doing in our area.
F3: The company extends help to the villagers in the area of getting livelihood.
F4: Local vendors and contractors have got work from the company.
F5: The company has improved access to water, medical facilities, skill development and better agriculture practices in the village.
F6: The company contributes to important local needs/events etc.
F7: NGO partners work with dedication.
F8: There is no siphoning off funds by NGO partners.
F9: The company officials meet villagers regularly to know the impact of their projects.

Table 2: Village-Wide Analysis of Community Perceptions

	Bhadka (n= 48)			Bhimara (n=49)			Total (n=97)		
	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree
F1	7	13	28	6	8	35	13	21	63(65%)
F2	6	8	34	9	12	28	15	20	62(64%)
F3	8	7	33	8	9	32	16	16	65(67%)
F4	6	16	26	5	12	32	11	28	58(60%)
F5	7	8	33	19	8	22	26	16	55(57%)
F6	10	10	28	7	14	28	17	24	56(57%)
F7	5	9	34	4	7	38	9	16	72(74%)
F8	6	7	35	6	6	37	12	13	72(74%)
F9	8	8	32	6	8	35	14	16	67(70%)

Note: Figures in parentheses indicate the percentage of respondents agreeing with the statement.

The second factor picked up for study was knowledge among villagers about Cairn’s CSR work. The majority of the villagers (about sixty-four percent) perceive that the company provides adequate information about the work for the community it is doing in their area. The local community has sufficient knowledge about Cairn’s CSR initiatives as it works with

⁷ The Mitigating Poverty in Western Rajasthan (MPOWER) is a poverty reduction initiative being run since 2007 in arid zone of Rajasthan and targets all households under Below Poverty Line (BPL) category. International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), Sir Ratan Tata Trust and Government of Rajasthan fund it.

grassroot NGOs and Panchayats that help in the dissemination of information about the projects. There is embeddedness of all current NGO partners of Cairn CSR in the community; many of their staff members belong to this region and have familiarity with the area and hands-on experience of the approach they could follow in order to work with and for the community. Considering low level of literacy, especially among women, NGOs are increasingly using audio-visual aids to spread information about the projects.

Third, we wanted to assess the perception of Cairn's help to villagers in the area of livelihood. About sixty-seven percent of villagers agreed that the company extends help to the villagers in the area of getting livelihood. Cairn's "Barmer Unnati (progress) Project," in partnership with TechnoServe, is training the farmers of the region about good agricultural practices, and its dairy farming programme with SURE has improved farmers' income considerably. Focus of "WADI Programme" being implemented with BAIF, an NGO, is on encouraging horticulture farming and building water harvesting structures (called "Khadins") in the region with community participation.

Roughly sixty percent of the people living in Barmer are of the view that local vendors and contractors got work from the company while a large chunk has reserved their opinion. As one of the Cairn executives, M1 puts it,

In Cairn, CSR has two parts- one is the overall development of the area so that the quality of life improves and second is addressing specific needs of the land contributors. Both are important constituents of local community. Barmer is predominantly an agricultural economy and these land contributors do not have alternate source of livelihood. They want regular income. We have to work in tandem with them. The vendor development programme of Cairn has trained more than 427 vendors since 2009-10. We require our service companies to hire at least seventy percent unskilled labour locally. We cannot deny the fact that protests for job hiring, vehicle hiring and award of contracts happen occasionally.

To the next factor under study—improvement in access to water, medical facilities, skill development and better agriculture practices in the village—about 57 percent of the people in the two villages agreed. A Mann-Whitney U test of data in Table 2 indicated that there is statistically significant difference between perceptions of villagers in both the surveyed villages with regard to the above statement. Households in Bhimara are not satisfied regarding access to drinking water or the provision of medical facilities in the area ($U = 847.5, p = .008$).

The village head of Bhimara stated the reason during focus group discussion

Bhimara has two clearly demarcated settlements, proper Bhimara village and Harponiyon ki Dhani that is a part of the village but at a distance from the main village. The initiatives have not been able to reach Harponiyon ki Dhani as much as they have in the main market area.

The majority of the respondents (57%) agreed that the company contributes to important local needs, events, and so forth; the analysis of results reveals that statistically significant perceptual differences exist among women and men on the issue of Cairn catering to local needs ($U = 870, p = .014$). A member of partner NGO asserted, "Women across castes in Barmer do not enjoy a powerful position even now. Cairn does not see them as stakeholders. Women and child welfare is on its agenda but not women empowerment."

The findings of the survey reveal that the community does not doubt the sincerity of implementing NGO partners and does not perceive them as corrupt. About seventy-four percent

of the villagers agreed that the NGO partners work with dedication and there is no siphoning of funds by them.

To assess the level of satisfaction of the community with CSR initiatives and the impact of their projects, the company officials meet panchayat heads frequently. About seventy percent of the respondents agreed with the statement.

Table 3: Gender wise Analysis of Community Perceptions

	Women (n=46)			Men (n=51)			Total (n=97)		
	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree
F 1	9	15	22	4	6	41	13	21	63
F2	8	9	29	7	11	33	15	20	62
F3	8	9	29	8	7	36	16	16	65
F4	7	11	28	4	17	30	11	28	58
F5	13	9	24	13	7	31	26	16	55
F6	12	13	21	5	11	35	17	24	56
F7	5	9	32	4	7	40	9	16	72
F8	8	7	31	4	6	41	12	13	72
F9	10	7	29	4	9	38	14	16	67

Overall analysis of data in Table 2 and 3 reveal that not all respondents share positive perception on any of the factors under study about Cairn's CSR initiatives. This indicates that Cairn has to cater continuously to community expectations despite a positive perception about it in the community. As one of the engineers, E1, observes, "Sand storms, blockade of oil facilities and community protests to settle some or the other issue are major threats to our production and have an adverse effect on-time delivery." The roots of high community expectation can be traced primarily to land acquisition policy and development needs of the region. A member of an NGO partner who has worked for more than twenty-five years with foreign funding agencies and Cairn in the region says:

When ONGC/Cairn acquired land, it paid huge amounts of compensation to the poor farmers. Only few of them bought new land with the money so received. Many of them splurged and some bought SUVs. Now they pressurise Cairn to hire their vehicles and give them contracts. The State Government, too, relies on corporates in Barmer to carry out developmental work. The cumulative effect of all this results in high expectation of community from Cairn and consequent pressure upon them to meet their demands.

Discussion

Our study has identified the institutional pressures that drive CSR practices of a company and has assessed how community has perceived these CSR initiatives. Our analysis reveals four main findings—Firstly, Government, NGOs and local community are important drivers of CSR at the ground level in developing countries like India. Secondly, Cairn has to cater continuously to community expectations despite a positive perception about it in the community. Thirdly, we learnt how an oil company could manage community expectations through various ways. Fourthly, CSR has increasingly become a part of business strategy for companies such as Cairn India.

Institutional Pressures for CSR

To cope up with the regulative pressure associated with Government, Cairn has aligned CSR programmes for the betterment of local community with the Government's focus areas and schemes. The results section has details of some of these schemes. Cairn's good relationship with NGOs in the area is a reflection of normative pressure. Lucea (2010) and Ite (2007) have recognised the pressure exerted by NGOs on corporates. Cairn also values its relationship with its implementation partners.

Community's Perception

Unlike oil companies in the Niger Delta which did not accept any responsibility for development in their host communities in the beginning (Aaron, 2012), Cairn realised the importance of local community for its business. The community sought interventions in many areas. Local communities in other regions of the world also have similar expectations from oil companies (Idemudia, 2007; Wasserstrom & Rieder, 1998). Cairn helps villagers in the area. It is the endeavour of oil companies' world over to source goods and services locally. According to UNCTAD's World Investment Report, 2007, nearly seventy percent of goods and services purchased by oil companies in Brazil and Malaysia is sourced locally, while in Indonesia and Nigeria, the share of local content is about twenty-five and five percent, respectively. The mobile health van (MHV) and water kiosks both have issues of limited accessibility to the population in the vicinity. The most vulnerable have not been able to avail the benefits of MHV. There is a discontent in these parts of the village. Cairn should disseminate information about its project to all the settlements in a village. It may be challenging as most of the villages in Barmer have more than one settlement, generally based on caste. Cairn may ask implementing NGO partners to address the issue. CSR programmes cannot factor in specific needs of women unless consultation with them takes place for identifying the projects. Renouard and Lado (2012) also found similar endorsement of cultural inequalities by oil companies in Niger Delta region. Cairn should encourage women's participation in community connect meetings. All this requires behavioural change where NGO partners can play an important role as they enjoy immense trust with the community. Community connect events are being organised to develop mutual trust. Third party baseline surveys, similar to those been conducted by oil companies in Niger Delta (Ite, 2007), are also carried out to assess the satisfaction level of community on Cairn's CSR projects.

Managing Community Expectations

Cairn is trying to manage community expectations through various ways. Firstly, it has created Community Engagement Cell that is a kind of grievance mechanism⁸, which has helped it to reduce tensions. M3, Cairn's executive, gives an example from one of the situations.

Cairn has decided to use Schnell technology to build "Nand ghars" (anganwadi) in the region. The local contractors who have expertise in conventional "brick and mortar" technology were unhappy, as the company did not give any business to them since they lacked expertise in the new technology. Through Community Engagement Cell, Cairn came to know about their grievances and local contractors were impressed upon the fact that Schnell technology is better

⁸ A grievance mechanism is defined in this context, "A company-supported, locally based and formalized method, pathway or process to resolve community concerns with, or grievances about, the performance or behavior of a company, its contractors or employees" (Hill, 2010, p. 7).

suiting in the situation and they should give up their own interest in the larger interest of the community.

Secondly, Community connect meetings are being used as an opportunity for setting expectation within community so that it gets interested in long-run outcomes of the projects rather than short term benefits. Local communities should understand that any corporation cannot lead the development agenda; it can contribute to socioeconomic development and cannot replace government (Cash, 2012). Thirdly, Cairn India is undertaking CSR initiatives through the “sustainability model” wherein communities take initiative on projects initially activated by a corporate under the CSR umbrella. In such cases, after a given period, corporate interventions and support are no longer required. Cairn is encouraging local community participation to ensure smooth transition of ownership of the projects. The World Bank regards participation or self-help as one of the best ways to develop (Ellerman, 2001; Frynas, 2012). This is important to ensure that CSR policy leads not merely to community development but also to sustainable community development. Another important change is entering into strategic partnership with the government for CSR initiatives. Ite (2007) and Ogula (2012) noticed similar shifts in the CSR strategy of the Shell Petroleum Development Corporation in the Niger Delta while Muthuri, Chapple, and Moon (2009) pointed out that change from a “paternalistic approach” of the community development to a multi-sector partnership arrangement ensured sustainable employment in Magadi by Magadi Soda Company in Kenya. L2, a senior executive of Cairn, said,

Initially for any project, we understand that community needs enormous handholding. We want the sustainability to be a built-in feature of CSR initiatives. To take some examples, for making solar micro-grid project sustainable, we have started a flourmill in the village. The community is managing the same and is meeting the running expenses of the solar plant out of the income generated from the mill. The community is also running the Water RO plants on revenue model.

CSR and Business Strategy

CSR is an integral part of Cairn India’s business strategy. Idemudia (2007) and Idemudia and Ite (2006) in their empirical studies on CSR practices in the Niger Delta have also concluded that CSR practices in the oil companies in the region have been integrated into corporate strategy. The institutional pressures, seemingly, have resulted in Cairn undertaking CSR initiatives in the community in Barmer region of Rajasthan in India to create “shared value” (Porter & Kramer, 2011, p. 64) between the business and the community. A community so empowered helps the corporations have a healthy business environment and social licence⁹ to operate (Altman, 1999; Goddard, 2005; Hess, Rogovsky, & Dunfee, 2002; Waddock & Boyle, 1995).

A major share of CSR spending (about 85%) is on programmes for the welfare of local communities. Aaron (2012) had also noticed similar high spending by Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC) in the Niger Delta region.

⁹ Social licence has been defined as “the demands and expectations for a business enterprise that emerge from neighbourhoods, environmental groups, community members, and other elements of the surrounding civil society” (Gunningham et al., 2004, p. 308)

Implications of Findings, Limitations and Future Research Direction

Our study demonstrates that existence of multiple interest groups within the community in Barmer—local vendors, contractors, politicians and demands of the community put pressure on the corporations and pose a tough challenge for a balancing act between meeting community expectations and taking care of their bottom-line. An understanding of local community expectations and managing it has helped Cairn India to integrate such expectations into its CSR strategy. It has also maintained a very close relationship with the government and a healthy one with its NGO partners. An important implication of our findings relates to community assets. As per the requirements of the Companies Act 2013, corporates should use project mode to carry out projects, this will result in the creation of assets in the community. Community ownership may not be possible in all cases. Corporates working on the ground should look at developing social entrepreneurs to own such post-project assets. Based on our study, we can conclude that if any corporate has to acquire land for setting up its operations, it becomes its responsibility to guide the land givers about financial planning and ensuring the proper end use of the compensation so given. It will go a long way to manage community expectation and pressure emerging out of it.

We included only three types of institutional pressures at the level of local community and did not examine the impact of other pressure groups such as peers, media and employees. In addition, due to time and resource constraint, we could cover only two villages for our survey as most of the villages in Barmer cover huge areas and have more than one settlement. We could not study the perspective of general community and land contributors separately as most of Cairn's CSR initiatives are targeted at both rather than only one of them. Consequently, the study may have missed some useful insights. Longitudinal study may throw more light on how the Companies Act 2013 is influencing CSR implementation. We undertook the present study in one of the oil companies that is in the private sector. The use of a single case study method implies that our findings may have limited generalisability (Du & Vieira, 2012; Eisenhardt, 1989).

Future research may extend the work to all companies in India and other oil producing companies—both private and public—in oil and gas sectors. The majority of the world's largest oil and gas producing companies, including India, are state owned (Marcel, 2007). It will be interesting to know if oil Public Sector Units (PSUs) also work under the pressure of the local community. Such research will help to assess whether the findings can be generalised and whether isomorphic forces are actually at play. The empirical context of our study is limited to the oil industry. It would be interesting to examine whether new age firms in renewable energy sectors such as wind energy and solar energy, which need to acquire land for their operations, have to deal with similar kinds of pressures and whether their CSR initiatives and CSR communication exhibit similar characteristics.

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