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ABOUT US

WHITE BLACK LEGAL is an open access, peer-reviewed and refereed journal providededicated to express views on topical legal issues, thereby generating a cross current of ideas on emerging matters. This platform shall also ignite the initiative and desire of young law students to contribute in the field of law. The erudite response of legal luminaries shall be solicited to enable readers to explore challenges that lie before law makers, lawyers and the society at large, in the event of the ever changing social, economic and technological scenario.

With this thought, we hereby present to you

LEGAL

UNVEILING THE STRATEGIC DIMENSIONS OF CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY: A COMPREHENSIVE ANALYSIS OF SAHARA INDIA PARIWAR'S INITIATIVES AND OUTCOMES.

AUTHORED BY - RUDRAAKSHA SHARMA

Abstract

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is commonly delineated as the systematic pursuit of a balance between economic, environmental, and social imperatives, often referred to as "Triple-Bottom-Line-Attainment." In this framework, it is imperative to differentiate CSR, constituting a strategic corporate management concept, from acts of charity, sponsorships, or philanthropy. While the latter can significantly contribute to poverty alleviation and directly enhance a company's reputation and brand, the concept of CSR distinctly transcends such endeavours. As organizations strategically enhance their corporate brand and objectives, the integration of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has emerged as a prominent consideration in management practice and academic discourse over the past two decades. Engaging in social partnerships with non-profit entities has become a prevalent CSR practice for numerous firms. This research endeavors to enhance comprehension of CSR by exploring its conceptual underpinnings and delineating its scope, utilizing Sahara India Pariwar as a case study. Mr. Subrata Roy serves as an exemplar of a commitment to uplifting the common populace and environmental conservation.

I. INTRODUCTION

"Complete societal contribution from business is contingent upon its efficiency, profitability, and commitment to social responsibility," asserted Sieff, the former chairman of Marks and Spencer plc. Across all businesses, embracing social responsibility is deemed ethically imperative. Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) encompasses considerations in the workplace (pertaining to workers), marketplace (encompassing customers and suppliers), environment, community, ethics, and human rights. Strategic CSR entails the intentional implementation of CSR initiatives aimed at enhancing

both social and business performance. Beyond its direct financial or social benefits, CSR yields positive outcomes for a company's reputation, customer satisfaction, employee appeal, and staff engagement. CSR is characterized by its dual nature as both a voluntary and moral obligation.

Traditionally, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has often been adopted reactively as a strategy to restore a company's declining fortunes by rebuilding trust within the communities where they operate. Examples such as Shell in Nigeria and Nike in various Asian countries exemplify this approach. However, due to the escalation of such incidents, businesses are now shifting towards a "proactive strategy." This involves a comprehensive assessment of the costs associated with neglecting social responsibility and opting for the minimum required compliance, leading to a reduction in expenditures in this domain.

In the realm of image management, endeavors by companies to address the repercussions of failing to fulfill social responsibilities are commonly framed as damage control exercises. Faced with challenging circumstances, companies increasingly view Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) as a means to enhance their corporate image. To capture media and public attention, companies articulate plans for various philanthropic activities. While this strategy is not inherently flawed, its efficacy is often compromised amidst critical and pressing business discussions. A more effective approach involves companies adopting a systematic and purposeful method for maintaining focus on social welfare initiatives.

This not only enhances the company's image in the short term but, when consistently pursued, contributes to building a positive reputation for societal concern in the long run. Such a reputation becomes an asset for the corporation in future business endeavors in the region. Conversely, the prevalent image-building campaigns, including CSR reporting, often present a series of disjointed narratives about the company's societal contributions, tangential to its core business strategy. This underscores the tendency for corporate headquarters to perceive CSR more as a tool for image development rather than as a strategy for constructing a sustainable business.

Sahara India Parivar, established by Subrata Roy, stands as an Indian conglomerate with diversified interests spanning banking, infrastructure and housing, media and entertainment, consumer

merchandise retail ventures, manufacturing, and information technology. The conglomerate is headquartered in Lucknow, India, and as of March 2011, boasted a market capitalization of \$25.94 billion. Notably, Sahara India Parivar is a prominent sports promoter in India, serving as the primary sponsor for various teams. The corporation holds a significant 42.5 percent ownership stake in the Force India Formula One Squad and actively supports the Indian national field hockey team. Committed to contributing to India's development, Sahara India Pariwar has consistently acted as a catalyst in numerous national development projects. By June 2010, the conglomerate had invested approximately 1041 crores in diverse social development, cultural, and sports programs, reflecting its dedication to the country's progress.

I.I RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

- 1. Conceptual Understanding of CSR:
 - To gain a comprehensive understanding of the concept of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR).
- 2. Analysis of Sahara's CSR Framework:
 - To critically analyze the CSR framework implemented by the Sahara group, examining its structure, components, and guiding principles.
- 3. Evaluation of Sahara's Responsibility Fulfillment:
 - To assess how the Sahara group has fulfilled its corporate social responsibility towards all stakeholders.
 - o To identify and analyze specific activities, programs, and strategies devised and implemented by Sahara in alignment with CSR goals.
- 4. Examination of Stakeholder Care:
 - o To delve into the concept of Stakeholder Care as outlined by Sahara.
 - To analyze Sahara's approach and practices concerning stakeholder care, evaluating the effectiveness of the stated strategies.

Sahara India Pariwar has consistently demonstrated a commitment to facilitating India's progress into a developed nation, actively participating as a catalyst in the country's developmental projects. By June 2010, the conglomerate had invested approximately 1041 crores in diverse social development, cultural, and sports programs. The profit-sharing strategy of Sahara is distributed as follows: 40%

towards the welfare of Kartavya Yogis (Sahara employees), 35% towards the company's net owned funds, and 25% towards social development activities.

The conglomerate places a profound emphasis on the idea that Indian nationality transcends religion itself, celebrating Bharat Parva with zeal on every 26th of January and 15th of August. Sahara Utsav Yatra in 2002 aimed to instill a sense of nationalism and raise awareness about critical issues for the nation's development, covering over 24,000 kilometers and visiting more than 400 locations across India.

Sahara India Pariwar's engagement with sports is noteworthy, being the official sponsor of Indian Cricket since 2001. The conglomerate has sponsored various sports events, including the Calcutta Football League, Indian Hockey Competition, and the prestigious Sheeshmahal cricket tournament. Sahara has also been involved in the Indian Premier League franchise.

Beyond sponsorship, Sahara has adopted and supported numerous athletes in boxing, wrestling, archery, and shooting, providing them with the infrastructure needed for international success. The conglomerate sponsors the Senior National Boxing and Wrestling Championships and established the Sahara India Sports Awards in 2009 to recognize and inspire India's athletes. This comprehensive involvement in social development and sports reflects Sahara India Pariwar's holistic approach to corporate social responsibility and its dedication to contributing to the overall progress and well-being of the nation.

I.II RESEARCH QUESTION

How does Sahara India Parivar conceptualize and implement Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), and what specific activities, programs, and strategies has it employed to fulfill its responsibilities towards stakeholders? Additionally, how effective are Sahara's stakeholder care initiatives, as outlined by the company's CSR framework

I.III RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research approach used to perform this study is doctrinal interpretation and analytical of nature. The doctrinal material will be in the context of secondary data collection, which the researcher will have access to. Along with resources at the state and national levels, including publications, information, and other etymology.

II. HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Sahara India Pariwar, a multinational enterprise headquartered in Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh, operates across diverse sectors such as finance, infrastructure, real estate, sports, power, manufacturing, media, healthcare, life insurance, education, retail, e-commerce, electrical vehicles, hospitality, and cooperative societies. The corporate social responsibility (CSR) strategy of Sahara India Pariwar is intricately rooted in the principle of "Collective Materialism," emphasizing the harmonious integration of materialistic considerations with emotional dimensions for sustained collective growth, encapsulated within the overarching philosophy of "COLLECTIVE MATERIALISM."

Dedicated to fostering India's development, Sahara India Pariwar consistently acts as a catalyst for national development initiatives. As of June 2010, the conglomerate had invested a substantial amount, approximately 1041 crores, in a myriad of social development, cultural, and sporting programs. Governed by the Five Commandments, Sahara India proactively engages in promoting peaceful and sustainable development through all business activities, underscoring the importance of corporate sustainable development coupled with a sense of responsibility towards all stakeholders.

In homage to the profound ethos of "Bharatiyata," the Sahara Utsav Yatra of 2002 sought to evoke a sense of nationalism and propagate peace, harmony, amity, and brotherhood throughout the nation. Spanning over 24,000 kilometers and encompassing more than 400 sites across India in two phases, the Yatra served as a pivotal platform for raising public awareness on critical topics pivotal for the nation's growth. Launching the VEDAS initiative on June 10, 2013, Sahara India Pariwar commenced its comprehensive adoption of 1000 villages, initiating the project in Uttar Pradesh's Kannauj district and Bihar's Araria district. Embracing 1000 communities under VEDAS for holistic and sustainable development, the initiative targets 4.5 lakh rural homes, positively impacting 25 lakh individuals across seven states.

¹ Anonymous Author, CSR Information for The Sahara Group CSRHub (2011), link (last visited Aug 5, 2021).

Despite encountering controversies, Sahara India Pariwar has undertaken substantial projects, showcasing a steadfast commitment to fulfilling its legal and ethical responsibilities towards society and the nation.

III. CASE ANALYSIS

The following data has been collected from official publications of Sahara India Parivar under Newspapers and Hard Copy brochures-:

The Sahara Welfare Foundation, functioning as the social development arm of Sahara India Pariwar, is actively engaged in the pursuit of social welfare initiatives aimed at mitigating the hardships faced by individuals and fostering a sense of optimism for a more promising future. The Foundation's endeavors are particularly directed towards women and handicapped individuals who find themselves socially and economically disadvantaged, facing marginalization. The overarching objective is to institute and facilitate processes and initiatives that empower socially and economically marginalized and deprived individuals and communities, transcending barriers of age, caste, class, gender, or race, thereby enabling them to actively partake in the developmental processes conducive to a life marked by dignity and respect.

- 1. Mega Rehabilitation Project: Sahara Gram In the taluka Anjar district of Kutch, Bhimasar- Chakasar, situated approximately 15 kilometers from Gandhidham and spanning across 9457.31 acres, faced the devastating aftermath of an earthquake. Housing 3153 people, the village witnessed 19 casualties, with 135 individuals sustaining injuries and 801 households losing their homes. Sahara India Pariwar, in a gesture of emotional solidarity, promptly relocated the village. Within a span of 48 hours, members of the Pariwar were onsite delivering relief assistance, culminating in the rehabilitation of earthquake victims through the reconstruction of 839 dwellings equipped with basic community facilities.
- 2. Rehabilitation of survivors of Latur: Sahara Wadi Kilari, a village in Maharashtra's Latur district severely impacted by an earthquake, became the focus of Sahara India Pariwar's evacuation and rehabilitation efforts. Nobel Laureate Reverend Mother Teresa spearheaded the construction of earthquake-resistant homes, complemented by the provision of essential

community facilities.

- 3. Adoption of families of Kargil Martyrs Sahara India Pariwar has undertaken the noble initiative of adopting the families of Kargil Martyrs. Pledging emotional and financial support amounting to about 50 crores (USD 10.65 million) across seven programs, the Foundation extends monthly assistance while also providing support for special activities such as weddings and educational material procurement, with a concerted effort to build enduring emotional connections.
- **4. Financial Assistance to the families of Mumbai Martyrs** Affirming a commitment to the welfare of those safeguarding national security, Sahara India Pariwar offers monthly financial aid to the families of the Mumbai martyrs, equivalent to five times their current income over a decade.
- **5. Financial Assistance to the victims of Dhantewadha Naxal Attack** Extending a helping hand, Sahara provides financial aid of 2.5 lakhs to each of the five martyr families from Gorakhpur affected by the Dhantewadha Naxal Attack.
- 6. Programmes for Handicapped (Sahyog) Sahara India Pariwar, through the establishment of the Centre for Handicapped, addresses the concerns of physically challenged individuals nationwide. The center aims to identify challenges faced by disabled individuals, offering early detection guidelines, disability measurement, and comprehensive management and assistance to the guardians of disabled persons. Services provided include physical and audiometric examinations, speech therapy, I.Q tests, co-appliance maintenance, and the provision of necessary aids and appliances on a short-term basis.
- 7. "Sakshar Bharat" (Literacy Programme) This program strives to cultivate the overall personalities and functional awareness of children and adults residing in slums, fostering literacy and addressing issues influencing their daily lives.
- 8. "Janswasthya" Project (Health Programme) The initiative aims to provide multifaceted

support to improve the mental and physical health of marginalized communities, particularly the poor. By raising awareness about various health issues in socioeconomically backward areas, the project has benefited millions through a team of specialists and mobile vans. Collaboration with the Indian government's health-care initiatives, including the Revised National Tuberculosis Control Program, School Health Program, and Blindness Control, further underscores the societal impact.

- 9. Vocational Training Programme Founded on the belief that education and skill development should uplift the socioeconomically disadvantaged, the Vocational Training Program seeks to enhance functional knowledge, confidence, and natural abilities. By improving the current livelihood portfolio of individuals, susceptibility to shocks and pressures is reduced, allowing for effective resilience. The program was instituted with these objectives in mind.
- 10. Project VEDAS Launched on June 10, 2013, by Sahara India Pariwar, Project VEDAS is a comprehensive initiative involving the adoption of 1000 villages for long-term development. Announcing its commencement in 172 villages in Uttar Pradesh's Kannauj district and Bihar's Araria district, the project aims to embrace 1000 communities, reaching 4.5 lakh rural homes and impacting 25 lakh people across seven states. Under VEDAS, Sahara will implement various initiatives, including the provision of safe drinking water through water purification plants and water ATMs, and the facilitation of joyful education through over 500 Education Resource Centres equipped with smart interactive classrooms featuring highend Q Cloud technology. The project also encompasses the provision of free primary health care through Mobile Health Unit (MHU) vans, with a Medical Center for Serious Cases added at Central Point Village, each center serving a cluster of about 50 communities in its vicinity.
- 11. NCC Scholarship Demonstrating deep respect for the National Cadet Corps (NCC), Sahara India Pariwar has instituted a scheme to provide stipends and incentives totaling over 1 crore annually to over 800 NCC cadets. This initiative reflects Mr. Subrata Roy Sahara's association with NCC during his school and college days, where he commanded 1600 NCC cadets.

12. Pulse Polio Programme Focused on improving mental and physical health, the initiative aims to raise awareness about various health issues in socioeconomically backward areas. Benefiting millions of people through a team of specialists and mobile vans, the Pulse Polio Programme aligns with the Indian government's health-care initiatives, contributing to the success of the Revised National Tuberculosis Control Program, School Health Program, and Blindness Control.

In addition to the aforementioned projects, Sahara Welfare Foundation is actively involved in diverse initiatives, including blood donation and Hepatitis B immunization camps, awareness workshops, rehabilitation of challenged individuals, civic development projects, construction and renovation of cremation grounds, and disaster management. Since its inception, the Foundation has played a pivotal role in providing relief assistance in the aftermath of natural calamities such as the Orissa super cyclone, Rajasthan's drought, floods in Uttar Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, and the Gujarat earthquake.

Furthermore, the Foundation operates mobile healthcare units, with a commitment to bringing healthcare to the remotest rural regions where medical services are lacking. It also undertakes research and publication endeavors, intending to delve into issues related to social development. Dissemination of information and communication materials, along with the development of reading and reference materials, is an integral part of Sahara Welfare Foundation's commitment to advancing social causes.

IV. CSR POLICY ANALYSIS OF SAHARA

Sahara, in conformity with legal imperatives, allocates its profit-sharing in a meticulously structured manner, as delineated in the appended graphical representation. The apportionment reflects a dedicated commitment to corporate social responsibility (CSR) and is articulated as follows:

1. Welfare of Kartavya Yogis (Sahara Employees): 40% A substantial proportion, constituting 40% of the earnings, is earmarked for the amelioration of the well-being of Sahara's workforce, referred to as Kartavya Yogis. This allocation underscores the company's conscientious recognition of the pivotal role played by its employees, thereby accentuating the importance placed on their welfare, professional development, and overall prosperity.

- 2. Company's Net Owned Funds: 35% A significant allotment of 35% is directed towards reinforcing the company's financial robustness through the augmentation of its net owned funds. This allocation substantiates the company's strategic focus on fortifying its financial position, enhancing operational resilience, and facilitating sustained growth in compliance with pertinent legal frameworks.
- 3. Social Development Activities: 25% Sahara dedicates a noteworthy 25% of its profits to engage in impactful social development activities. This committed allocation underscores the organization's dedication to proactively contribute to societal well-being by addressing a spectrum of socio-economic challenges and fostering holistic community development in alignment with legal obligations.

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Framework: Sahara rigorously adheres to a comprehensive CSR framework, intricately interwoven with ethical business practices. Key tenets of this framework encompass:

- **Corporate Governance:** Adhering to principles of good governance in all facets of business operations to ensure transparency, accountability, and ethical conduct.
- **Legal Compliances:** Ensuring strict adherence to relevant laws and regulations governing corporate conduct.
- **Labor Standards:** Maintaining and upholding standards that prioritize fair labor practices, encompassing lawful remuneration and humane working conditions.
- **Diversity:** Promoting and fostering diversity and inclusivity within the workplace, ensuring a non-discriminatory environment.
- **Human Rights:** Upholding and respecting fundamental human rights principles in all business dealings.
- Workplace Policies: Implementing comprehensive workplace policies aimed at fostering a positive, equitable, and legally compliant work environment.

Stakeholder Care: Sahara places paramount importance on stakeholder care, demonstrating a profound commitment to:

• Respecting Interests: Prioritizing the interests of all stakeholders, including shareholders,

- staff, clients, suppliers, and the broader community, in strict accordance with legal obligations.
- **Risk Mitigation:** Developing robust mechanisms for actively involving, informing, and mitigating inherent risks with all stakeholders to ensure legal compliance.
- **Safe Workplace:** Ensuring a workplace environment that is not only safe and sanitary but also imbued with compassion, respecting the dignity of employees, as mandated by legal standards.
- **Equal Opportunities:** Offering equal chances and preserving opportunities on an equitable and non-discriminatory basis, adhering to legal norms.
- **Grievance Redress:** Establishing an effective grievance redress procedure in strict compliance with legal standards.

Society Care: Sahara actively fulfills its social responsibility by undertaking various legal obligations:

- Community Development: Strategically conducting economic and social development activities within communities and geographic regions, especially those in proximity to operations, adhering to relevant legal frameworks.
- **Healthcare Promotion:** Advocating and promoting healthcare initiatives, including preventative measures, in compliance with legal standards.
- **Training Support:** Encouraging training initiatives for community members while adhering to all legal requisites.
- **Institutional Support:** Establishing and supporting institutions and hostels for women, orphans, and the elderly, ensuring legal compliance.
- Social Disparity Reduction: Implementing concrete measures to reduce socially and economically disadvantaged disparities in accordance with legal mandates.
- **Cultural Protection:** Protecting and preserving national cultural, artistic, and cultural assets, respecting legal stipulations.
- **Support for Armed Forces:** Taking legally permissible actions for the benefit of veterans, war widows, and their dependents within the Armed Forces.
- **Disaster Relief:** Engaging in legally compliant relief and management efforts in the aftermath of disasters.
- **Professional Rural Development:** Contributing to legally sanctioned professional rural development initiatives.

Care of Environment: Sahara, cognizant of its environmental responsibilities within the bounds of legal frameworks:

- **Long-Term Viability:** Structures its firm to ensure the long-term viability of the environment, in compliance with applicable legal standards.
- **Pollution Control:** Implements robust pollution control and prevention measures, strictly adhering to legal requirements.
- Waste Management: Manages waste through recycling and reduction practices in accordance with relevant legal stipulations.
- Sustainable Resource Management: Ensures natural resources are managed sustainably, in conformity with legal mandates.
- **Resource Efficiency:** Demonstrates efficient resource utilization practices, complying with legal norms.
- Cleaner Manufacturing: Adopts cleaner manufacturing processes as a proactive response to climate change, aligning with legal requirements.
- Energy Efficiency: Advances energy efficiency and environmentally friendly technology within legal parameters.

This comprehensive and legally compliant approach underscores Sahara's unwavering commitment to corporate responsibility, ethical conduct, and sustainable business practices.

V. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

CSR activities align with a simplistic business theory that operates under the assumption that consumers will perceive these activities at face value and attribute positive characteristics to the company, consequently leading to a more favorable evaluation. This rudimentary perspective dovetails with a substantial body of research in attribution theory, which illustrates a widespread correspondence bias. This bias entails the tendency of individuals to attribute internal characteristics, such as positive intentions or goodwill, to an entity based on its observable external actions, such as engaging in CSR initiatives. The underlying assumption is that consumers, in their evaluations, will readily accept CSR efforts as genuine indicators of the company's positive values and intentions,

reinforcing a positive image of the organization in their minds (Yoon 2009)².

CSR, in many instances, has functioned as a reactive strategy employed by companies to address declining fortunes by regaining the confidence of the communities in which they operate. Examples such as Shell in Nigeria and Nike in Asian countries underscore the common trend of utilizing CSR as a means of mitigating reputational challenges. However, the prevalence of such reactive measures has prompted a shift towards a more "proactive approach" among companies. This involves a thorough analysis of the potential costs associated with neglecting social responsibility, leading companies to engage in the minimum necessary actions to fulfill their obligations while minimizing spending in this area. For these companies, CSR is often viewed as a compulsory cost rather than an opportunity. This narrow perspective obscures the broader potential that CSR holds for businesses in terms of aligning with their core values and activities. A myopic focus on minimal compliance can lead to missed opportunities for meaningful engagement with stakeholders and communities, potentially hindering the realization of the full benefits that CSR can bring to a company's reputation and overall success. Companies that approach CSR solely as a cost and obligation may inadvertently neglect the strategic and long-term advantages that comprehensive CSR practices can offer. It is crucial for businesses to recognize that any complacency in fulfilling their social responsibilities may expose them to the risk of corporate scandals, which can incur significant costs, both financially and in terms of reputational damage, when brought to light. This highlights the importance of adopting a proactive and strategic approach to CSR, not only as a compliance measure but as an integral part of a company's commitment to sustainable and ethical business practices. The Sahara Welfare Foundation, an integral social development entity within the overarching Sahara India Parivar, dedicates itself to transformative social welfare endeavours. Its overarching mission is to alleviate the burdens of individuals, infusing their lives with newfound optimism and the promise of a more vibrant future. The Foundation's initiatives specifically target women and persons with disabilities, individuals who find themselves socially and economically disadvantaged, resulting in their marginalization from mainstream society. The primary objective is to instigate and support processes and initiatives that empower socially and economically marginalized communities, transcending distinctions of age, caste, class, gender, or race. The ultimate aspiration is to actively involve these

² Yeoson Yoon, The Effect of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Activities on Companies with Bad Reputations (2009).

individuals in their developmental journey, granting them the means to lead lives marked by dignity and respect (Gill & Kathuria 2014)³.

V. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is defined as an integral and comprehensive framework embedded within a company's operations, supply chains, and decision-making processes. The evolving dynamics of the relationship between corporations, the state, and society have necessitated a shift from autonomous business-centric operations to a more humanitarian and socially responsible approach. This study explores consumer perceptions of CSR, emphasizing the importance for companies, such as Sahara, to understand and meet the expectations of their stakeholders in fulfilling social obligations.

Despite facing controversies and irregularities, Sahara has demonstrated resilience in maintaining its commitment to CSR. Notably, the company undertook innovative initiatives, such as setting Guinness World Records, to instill a sense of nationalism and preserve its corporate identity amid ongoing investigations.

The efforts of Sahara, including the Guinness World Record achievements and the launch of Sahara Q Shop, reflect a strategic and proactive approach to CSR. These initiatives not only contribute to societal well-being but also serve as a testament to Sahara's commitment to ethical and sustainable business practices.

As the landscape of CSR continues to evolve, it is evident that companies, by understanding and meeting societal expectations, can not only fulfill their obligations but also harness the potential for positive impact, bolstering their reputation and long-term success.

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³ Divya Gill & Ishan Kathuria, Corporate Social Responsibility: A Case Study on Sahara India Pariwar 5 (2014).

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