

Policy to Practice: The Role of CSR in Marketing Swachh Bharat to Urban India's Marginalised Segments

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Abstract: To analyse the implementation of India's Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM) among urban impoverished populations in the Delhi NCR, this study looks at the strategic importance of corporate social responsibility (CSR). There is still a sizable "policy-to-practice" gap despite the Companies Act of 2013's successful shift of CSR from voluntary philanthropy to a formal obligation. The study finds "Infrastructure-Aspiration Paradox" using primary field data from 29 respondents. The results show that although corporate branding successfully raises "Dignity" and "Status" (55.2% positive sentiment), there is a serious infrastructure maintenance problem (72.4% negative sentiment). The data make it abundantly evident that installing a toilet is just the first step; what really changes lives is how it is maintained.

Keywords: corporate social responsibility (CSR); Swachh Bharat mission (SBM); behavioural modification; sanitation infrastructure; marginalized segments

1 Introduction

Nowadays, there is fierce competition in the business sector, making it difficult for a company to attract customers and succeed. Businesses can enhance their public image and succeed by following sustainable practices and demonstrating a strong commitment to social and environmental issues (Dhanesh, 2014; Thampi & Mon, 2023). Consequently, most enterprises currently perceive social responsibility as a strategy to cultivate client trust and loyalty. CSR is pertinent to corporate companies' strategic management decision-making process to improve business efficiency (Skare & Golja, 2014; Shane, 2017). Since ethical behaviour and social responsibility are essential to a company's success, many businesses today engage in CSR initiatives that focus on various topics. They utilise social responsibility to contribute to the community and demonstrate gratitude to consumers for their support through initiatives, campaigns, or personal empowerment. With its varied populace and intricate developmental requirements, India has led the way in this area by enacting the Companies Act of 2013 that mandates CSR. (Khurana, 2022). CSR is now a structured, policy-driven requirement rather than a charity endeavour, which has institutionalised the role of firms in supporting national development agendas (Das & Pandey, 2022).

Launched by the Indian government in 2014, the Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM) is a historic nationwide initiative that aims to achieve universal cleanliness and sanitation throughout the nation. The policy aimed to end open defecation, improve solid waste management, and change public attitudes toward sanitation and hygiene (Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, 2014). Despite the Swachh Bharat Mission's (SBM) primary focus on sanitation infrastructure development, ensuring the facilities' long-term sustainability and promoting genuine

behavioural changes, particularly in urban India's most vulnerable and marginalised communities remain major challenge.

A solid basis is provided by India's Companies Act, 2013's required CSR regulations, which mandate that businesses invest at least 2% of their average net revenue in social development initiatives (Companies Act, 2013, Section 135). Donations to the "Swachh Bharat Kosh" are included in Schedule VII of the Act, which specifically links corporate philanthropy to the mission's goals (Ministry of Corporate Affairs, 2014). India has transitioned from voluntary philanthropy to required compulsion in accordance with the Companies Act, 2013, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), as indicated by studies such as (Khurana, 2022).

The strategic importance of "Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)" in promoting the Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM) in urban India stands as a key focus of investigation. The exploration of marketing strategies centred on corporate social responsibility for the successful implementation of the Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM) targeting urban populations in India remains inadequate. The purpose of this research is to investigate the application of Corporate Social Responsibility to successfully implement the Swachh Bharat Mission to improve the living circumstances of underprivileged residents in the Delhi National Capital Region. More research has to be done to determine whether or not marketing and communication methods are effective in expressing these efforts to the intended recipients, particularly the disenfranchised groups of the urban population in India.

The central research question guiding this study is as follows:

What is the strategic significance of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in promoting the Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM) to underprivileged urban populations, and how do corporate-led programs facilitate enduring behavioural transformation?

2 Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Foundations and Evolution of CSR

The scholarly discussion on CSR is based on fundamental frameworks. (Carroll's, 1991) foundational research characterises CSR as comprising the "economic, legal, ethical, and philanthropic expectations that society imposes on organisations at a specific moment." This approach is endorsed by early theorists such as (Keith Davis and Clarence C. Walton. Frederick, 1960), who underscored a corporation's "public stance regarding society's economic and human resources, along with a commitment to ensure that these resources are utilised for expansive social objectives."

Author (R. Edward Freeman, 1984) states that managers must meet the requirements of varied stakeholders, including employees, consumers, suppliers, and local communities, who can affect a firm's performance. Further, The Author (Donaldson and Preston, 1995) advanced this perspective by highlighting the moral and ethical aspects of CSR and underscoring the business rationale for participation in such initiatives. Recently (Porter and Kramer, 2011) have advocated for "strategic CSR," contending that social efforts ought to be incorporated into fundamental business strategies to generate shared value.

The significance of resource-based philosophy in relation to corporate social responsibility (CSR) is further examined by (Branco and Rodrigues, 2006). Because it emphasises the significance of intangible resources as critical components of business performance, the

research shows that the resource-based theory provides an excellent framework for examining CSR. Resources are the things that a business uses to run its operations, turning inputs into outputs. They can be either physical or intangible. Researcher (Mishra and Damodar, 2010) conducted an empirical analysis of the impact of CSR on the financial and non-financial performance of Indian companies, concluding that publicly traded companies engage in responsible business practices and achieve better financial outcomes than privately owned companies. The study's results show that good CSR toward suppliers makes them more competitive and improves their reputation in the global market.

Garg (2016) calculated CSR by adding employee welfare, philanthropic, and environmental costs. The studies showed that CSR improves current and future financial success. Author (Bala and Singh, 2014) analysed the corporate social responsibility initiatives of prominent private, multinational, and public sector enterprises in a variety of industries. The results suggest that the companies' CSR practices did not exhibit a significant difference. The singular distinction is in the objectives and preferences that are associated with the execution of corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives.

India's sanitation policy has been significantly changed by the Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM), although many issues still exist. Research suggests that infrastructure alone is not enough to end open defecation in settlements where poor maintenance, need to encourage them psychology (Biswas et al., 2020). The dignity of the impoverished populations of urban India depends heavily on sanitation. (Mishra & Verma, 2021). Research by (Thampi and Mon, 2023) highlighted that the Companies Act of 2013 has transferred Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) by elevating corporate participation from random acts to a systematic, policy-driven requirement. These CSR-led programs must incorporate successful social marketing and behavioural change if they are to succeed. The author (Kumar, 2020) emphasises that sustainable behavioural modification necessitates a transition from "awareness" to "social cohesion," in which group decisions and local leadership encourage the adoption of new hygiene norms.

2.2 The Relationship between Corporate Social Responsibility and Corporate Performance

The relationship between a company's financial and non-financial success and corporate social responsibility (CSR) has been the subject of extensive research. A Study by (Mishra and Damodar, 2010) conducted an empirical analysis of the influence of CSR on Indian corporations, indicating that publicly traded companies with responsible business practices exhibit superior financial performance compared to privately held organizations and (Pathak et al., 2012) identified a bi-directional causation between corporate social responsibility (CSR) and financial performance, indicating that robust financial health facilitates increased CSR expenditure, which subsequently bolsters the company's financial strength.

The research emphasises the non-financial advantages of Corporate Social Responsibility beyond financial measurements. A case study by (Dhanesh, 2014) on socially responsible Indian IT organizations, demonstrating a robust, significant, and favourable correlation between CSR practices and organisational-employee interactions. The research indicated that employee perceptions of legal, ethical, and discretionary components of CSR are positively correlated with trust, commitment, and satisfaction. Likewise, employee involvement in CSR initiatives cultivates collaboration and enhances the relationship between the firm and its personnel. A Study by (Bala and Singh, 2014) noted that while CSR policies may not significantly diverge among major corporate, multinational, and public sector entities, their goals and preferences in

program initiation do differ. By merging corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives with the Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM), the Indian government has collaborated with large corporations to make the nation cleaner. Beyond only providing financial assistance, they also construct hygienic infrastructure and spread knowledge of cleanliness.

Tata Steel: A notable corporate enterprise that has significantly contributed to the SBM. The corporation possesses an extensive history of community development, with its initiatives under SBM specifically concentrating on the construction of individual home latrines (IHHLs) and community toilets in the vicinity of its operations. Their approach puts community involvement first, providing facilities and making sure these resources are used and maintained (Tata Steel, 2022).

Hindustan Unilever Limited (HUL): In 2015, Hindustan Unilever Limited launched the "Swachh Aadat, Swachh Bharat" campaign. As part of the program, there are many media and on-site events that focus on promoting the "three clean habits": washing hands five times a day, using a toilet, and following safe drinking water practices (HUL, 2023). To urge people to keep things clean, Hindustan Unilever Limited, the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD), Xynteo, the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC), and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) celebrated Swachhata Hi Seva 2024 (HUL, 2024).

As a consequence of this, we are in a position to arrive at the conclusion that entrepreneurship serves as an example of how corporate social responsibility (CSR) is evolving from a purposeful act to a phenomenon that brings about socioeconomic transformation. Through its corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities, the company is working to improve the world by addressing a significant issue that is related to public health and sanitation.

2.3 Corporate Involvement in the Swachh Bharat Mission

Research demonstrates that firms, through their CSR funding, participate in the SBA, supporting tangible projects such as the development of sanitary infrastructure (Lawania & Kapoor, 2018.; Agwan, 2014). The contributions, particularly in the construction of toilets and trash management, are perceived as a public-private partnership aimed at realising the Clean India initiative (Agwan, 2014). The success of these programs is based on how well they encourage long-term changes in behaviour through community-led total sanitation. The talk about CSR in India shows a big change that happened because of the Companies Act of 2013. This law says that companies that qualify must give at least 2% of their average net earnings to CSR projects (Khurana, 2022).

The "Chatterjee Model" posits that corporate social responsibility (CSR) must align with the national objective of accelerating a country's transition from emerging to developed status (Chatterjee & Mitra, 2017). The authors (Thampi & Mon, 2023; Aamir et al., 2024) highlighted that CSR actions benefit society and enhance a company's brand image and public perception

2.4 Gaps in the Literature

Although many studies have evaluated CSR practices across sectors, a more comprehensive, comparative analysis of CSR initiatives is needed (Bala and Singh, 2014). Analysing how various organisations, such as Tata Steel and HUL, tailor their CSR initiatives in conjunction with SBM and their respective success rates is crucial. The association between Swachh Bharat Abhiyan and CSR is well-established, but the impact of CSR-led marketing on disadvantaged communities in urban India remains unclear.

Although the literature supports that companies' (CSR) programs and business performance are interlinked. But there exist gaps in the research. The direct impact that corporate social responsibility marketing has on the sanitation practices of these target groups is unclear. In order to close this gap, this study looks at how CSR-funded SBA initiatives are received on the ground, going beyond policy and financial analysis to consider the campaign's human-centric elements.

2.5 Theoretical Framework

This study employs a number of theoretical frameworks to assess the significance of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in the Swachh Bharat Mission. CSR Pyramid concept coined by (Carroll, 1991), this fundamental concept divides a company's social duty into economic, legal, ethical, and philanthropic aspects. Our research employs this approach to assess how SBM enterprises manage their ethical obligations, and voluntary philanthropy, along with their legal requirements (the Enterprises Act, 2013), the study of (Freeman, 1984) states that a company's performance depends on its capacity to manage relationships with customers, employees, suppliers, and the community. IN addition, the study of (Porter and Kramer, 2011) highlights that firms can gain a competitive advantage by tackling social issues in their fundamental business objectives. In line with these approaches, we proceed further to examine how companies adjust their SBM activities to marginalised urban populations' needs and expectations, providing benefits for the company and society.

3 Research Methodology

To identify the relevance of corporate social responsibility (CSR) in the context of the Swachh Bharat Mission, the study employed exploratory and descriptive research methodologies. The study's participants were underprivileged urban dwellers of Delhi's National Capital Region (NCR).

The sample size considered for the study is (N=29) marginalised individuals of the Delhi NCR Slum. A study by Braun and Clarke (2021) recommends a sample size between 8 and 16 interviews or three and five focus groups. Descriptive statistics of demographic profiles were examined using the statistical program SPSS. Semi-structured interviews and field observations were used to gather primary data, and a sample size of 29 participants was established in accordance with the study of Braun and Clarke (2021). During the data analysis process, recurrent patterns and challenges were found using thematic analysis in NVivo software. Using SPSS, descriptive statistics of demographic profiles were examined.

3.1 Data collection

Primary data was acquired via field observations and semi-structured interviews in the Delhi National Capital Region (NCR) in order to examine the "practice" of these programs. The study focused on underprivileged urban inhabitants who lived in slums where corporately supported sanitation programs were implemented. During the data analysis, recurrent themes and challenges were identified using the NVivo program's thematic analysis feature. A sample size of 29 participants was selected in accordance with the research conducted by (Braun and Clarke ,2021).

3.2 Data Analysis

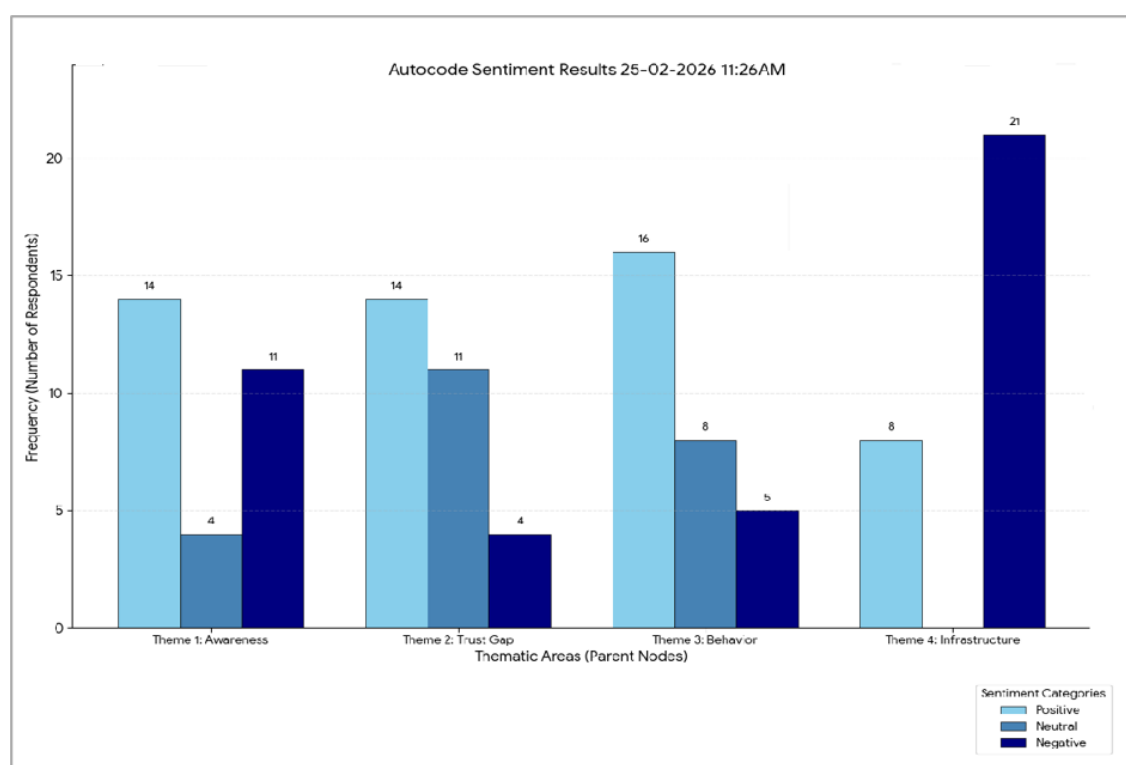
We used NVivo 15 software for data reduction and Sentiment analysis. Themes were identified as "behavioural issues, infrastructure sentiments, and community trust" through the use of thematic analysis. The sentiment data were generated using NVivo software, and keyword

frequencies were shown using tree maps. In addition, statistical tools such as SPSS and Excel were used for descriptive statistics to summarise the demographic profiles of the participants

4 Findings

Data was gathered from a sample of 29 respondents in the Delhi NCR area. Males make up 65.5% of the sample (N = 19), while females make up 34.5% (N = 10). According to Annexure, Table 4.1: Demographic Summary Profile, 37.9% of participants between the ages of (21- 30 years) and 41.4% of the all-ages group cited social media as their main source of SBM information. We can hence conclude that our sample indicates a comparatively youthful and technologically savvy generation.

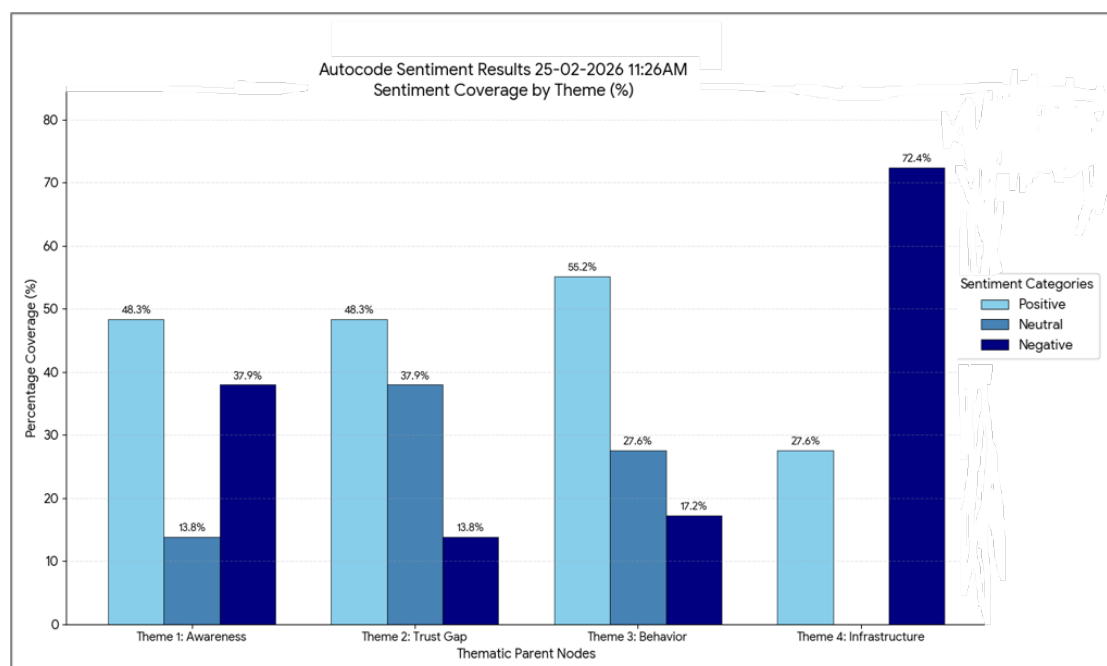
Figure 4.1: Sentiment Analysis



According to the sample, social media and radio/TV are used to reach the great majority of the population (83%, N = 24) (refer to Annexure, Table 4.1: Demographic Summary Profile). This suggests that the "marginalised segment" is heavily linked to digital and broadcast information streams. Community gatherings account for 7% (N=5) of direct, in-person involvement through meetings and on-site events. There is an "Engagement Gap" at the local, physical level, even though CSR is a very powerful marketing tool when used remotely (via digital reach).

For each of the four themes included in this Sentiment Analysis graph (refer Fig 4.1), sentiment analysis has been observed and categorised into three categories: Positive, Neutral, and Negative. The findings indicate that the largest factor for positive emotion (N=16) is behavioural change (Theme 3). This demonstrates that corporate-built facilities have been successfully adopted and that social status has increased. Therefore, we may infer that the greatest rewards are the psychological and social status advantages of corporate-built toilets.

Figure 4.2: Sentiment Coverage by Theme %



A high Neutral count (11) indicates that the society maintains a balanced view of corporate motivations and acknowledges the "Both" marketing and benefit aspects of CSR, leading to Trust Equilibrium (Theme 2). This shows that the dual nature of social benefit and business marketing is accepted by the community.

The most important conclusion from the preceding graph (see Fig. 4.1) for Infrastructure (Theme 4) is that, although people are generally positive about the concept of the toilets, they are dissatisfied with the facilities' actual condition. Stating categorically that the main causes of community discontent are cleanliness and upkeep. Additionally, Theme 1 (Awareness) has a high negative count, indicating that a significant portion of the public views corporate advertisements as less credible or unrelated to reality.

A significant gap between the functional reality of service delivery and the symbolic effectiveness of corporate branding is shown by the theme analysis. Although the Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM) has effectively used Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) to promote sanitation as a sign of "Dignity" and "Status," a serious operational issue is presently endangering this psychological benefit.

Analysing the distribution of coded segments to identify trends or connections between various nodes or categories might reveal information about the data's underlying themes or problems. To create a Tree Map, the study used NVivo software. The Tree Map shows how qualitative input is dispersed across several categories, including infrastructure, social standing, and trust, by mapping the frequency of certain nodes (refer to Fig. 4.3: Tree Map).

Figure 4.3: Tree Map

Broken- Infrastructure	Status	Convincing	Trust Gap
21	16		
Dirty- Infrastructure	Dignity	14	11
		Awareness	Functional
21	16	11	8

Source: NVIVO

The most contested and criticised component of the CSR project is infrastructure, as evidenced by the highest frequency of the term "Broken/Dirty" (n=21). The "Social Standing" node is still the second biggest despite the physical failure, as evidenced by the "Status/Standing" keyword being the greatest positive driver (n=16). Thus, we can infer that despite maintenance gaps constraining the practice, CSR alters attitudes and behaviours.

We may infer that "Broken" and "Dirty" are the sample's most statistically significant descriptors, confirming that the most contested and criticised part of the CSR project is maintenance of the infrastructure. The "Status/Standing" node was the second biggest (n=16) despite functional failures, indicating a lasting association between perceived social dignity and company branding. Hence, the CSR mission is failing in its primary service delivery while excelling in its marketing and psychological goals.

The study comes to the conclusion that although businesses have effectively used their brands to promote a feeling of dignity, operational negligence poses an immediate threat to the durability of this behavioural shift. the "Practice" of maintenance is struggling, which is the major cause of the negative judgment.

5 Discussions

The study's findings illuminate the strategic growth of corporate social responsibility (CSR) in India and its importance in the implementation of societal business management. A broad framework for corporate social responsibility (CSR) is less effective than one that leverages the unique assets and advantages of a corporation.

The tangible characteristics of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) assets and their socio-psychological impact are conceptually at odds, according to a critical synthesis of the empirical data. 72.4% of respondents have a negative view of Theme 4 (Infrastructure) and facility

maintenance. Regarding perceived social status, Theme 3 (Behavioural Change) continues to have a noteworthy positive resonance of 55.2%.

This discrepancy implies that the marginalised group in Delhi NCR feels less functionally dissatisfied thanks to a symbol of power established by business associations, symbolised by terms like "Dignity" and "Respect." This demonstrates that while businesses are adept at creating and marketing restrooms, they have trouble with the "practice" of maintaining them clean and in working order.

The results of our study highlight the need to evaluate the importance of infrastructure sanitation. The analysis shows that sanitation is strongly promoted and supported (Theme 1), but institutional hygiene implementation needs more attention. When corporate and social goals are strategically aligned, both parties gain. This finding is in line with the Study of (Porter & Kramer, 2011), who argued that the Creating Shared Value (CSV) paradigm is based on this idea of enhancing the economy and society.

6 Implications for Policy and Practice

The study's findings provide an essential roadmap for organisations implementing corporate social responsibility initiatives in the urban development sector. The current regulatory framework frequently favours "tangible output"—such as the quantity of restrooms constructed—over "sustained outcomes"—such as the number of facilities that remain clean and operational over time. To make sure the facility stays operational, the regulatory bodies should mandate an "Impact and Maintenance after a certain period of time. A minimum portion of any infrastructure-based CSR budget should be ring-fenced for operations, according to policy frameworks

7 Conclusion

In the context of sanitation initiatives in the Delhi NCR area, this study has assessed the relationship between community perception and corporate intent. The study concludes that although Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has effectively moved beyond the conventional "non-profit model to generate actual symbolic capital, it is still essentially restricted by a sustainability deficit. The primary finding demonstrates that the corporate brand is a powerful tool for behavioural modification, as we can see from graph 4.2, the dominance of the behaviour node (55.2% positive, Theme 3). By portraying sanitation as a symbol of "Status" and "Dignity," the initiative has managed to. But the Infrastructure node's empirical and visual dominance (72.4% negative density) implies that this success is in transition. Corporate engagement is currently optimised for visibility (Theme 1) rather than viability (Theme 4), as evidenced by the current "Policy-to-Practice" gap.

In the end, the study comes to the conclusion that pragmatic reciprocity is the cornerstone of CSR credibility in underserved populations. As long as the functional utility is preserved, the community is open to taking part in the corporate "marketing narrative." In addition to causing these assets to physically fail, failing to close the maintenance gap will result in a sizable "Trust Deficit," reversing the positive behavioral gains made thus far. To make the CSR initiatives effective there should be a balance maintained between corporate goals and their successful execution. Future studies should concentrate on the long-term consequences of different CSR programs, particularly when assessing how sustainable behavioural modifications are. This will provide governments, businesses, and non-governmental organisations with a wealth of useful data that can be used to improve the efficacy and long-term viability of social development programs in India.

The quality of the life-cycles maintained, rather than the amount of infrastructure created, will determine the success of CSR in the twenty-first century. Although the underprivileged group has accepted the "Dignity" provided by corporate branding, it is now the responsibility of the corporate sector to uphold that dignity through dependable, consistent, and useful service delivery. Maintenance is necessary to keep the bridge between aspiration and reality from collapsing.

ANNEXURE

Table 4.1: Demographic Summary Profile (N=29)

Category	Variable	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)	Group (%)	Total
Gender	Male	19	66%	100%	
	Female	10	35%		
Age	21–30	11	38%	100%	
	31–40	6	21%		
	41–50	3	10%		
	51–60	8	28%		
	Above 60	1	3%		
Information Source(Awareness)					
a) (Mass Media)	Social Media	12	41%	83%	
	Radio / TV	12	41%		
b)Physical Outreach	On-site Events	3	10%	17%	
	Community Meetings	2	7%		
Source: SPSS					

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