

CSR Innovation: A Comparative Study of India and the UK

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Abstract

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This thesis contributes to the field of research on corporate social responsibility (CSR) and explores the underresearched phenomenon of CSR innovation. It sheds light on this phenomenon by comparing CSR innovation in two nations with differing degrees of economic development, namely the UK and India. An interpretive, multicase study approach was chosen to compare CSR initiatives of British and Indian retailers. Data were collected through interviews, archival research, and observation.

The research used sensemaking theory as a theoretical lens to examine how actors made sense of CSR innovation and communicated it to others. Data analysis was guided by a conceptual framework focussing on the triggers of sensemaking for CSR initiatives, formalisation as a key sensemaking process for CSR innovations, and the legitimisation strategies employed by the case companies. The analysis shows that CSR leaders, close followers, and aspirants think differently about CSR; it also points to broader patterns of CSR innovation in the UK and India. CSR innovations were identified in both the British and Indian retail industries, contextual differences between the innovations in the two countries were observed, and the complex nature and role of these innovations were illustrated. CSR innovation was seen as involving complex constellations of continuity and newness. The British companies studied engaged in deliberate CSR leadership, actively tried to change CSR practises, and

communicated these efforts externally. In contrast, the Indian companies mainly discussed CSR initiatives within the business, experimented with nonphilanthropic CSR, and tried to determine the role of CSR in the emerging Indian retail industry. The observed differences were traced back to country-specific regulatory and market environments and differences in field level conditions were highlighted. The study also examined the impact of environmental uncertainty on the management of CSR innovation and discussed strategies that the case companies use to deal with challenges related to CSR innovation.

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