

## CSR Evangelism: Rural Consumers Walk down the Road to Enlightenment

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*This paper critically analyzes the corporate social responsibility (CSR) discourse as operative within a fast moving consumer goods (FMCG) organization, operating in the health food sector. The dominant CSR discourse propagated as a means of mutual value creation for the organization and also the bottom of the pyramid (BOP) is questioned. Consumer freedom at the BOP seems an elitist privilege for subaltern consumers, as corporate initiatives to do good get innocuously mired with divergent discourses of brands, consumer culture, power and politics. The study draws on empirical evidence from qualitative interpretive research, based on semi-structured interviews, document analyses, and participant observation. Data was analyzed using grounded theory method and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA).*

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### Introduction

Today's organizations seek to woo their customers by enticing them to pick and choose. The new organizational culture practices seem to further intensify this trend, and the discourse of CSR (which, as argued here, is a stylized marketing move to strengthen the Customer Relationship Management (CRM) movement in the villages and rural poor) seems to have gained ground recently. Both discourses are based on the promise of mutual value co-creation, and a win-win approach for both the organization and the customer. In the following account, we debate upon this notion of CSR, and argue that many of these consumer wants and desires are unreflectively created.

We provide a critique of two certainly distinct, but conceptually intertwined discourses on CSR and CRM. We assess the marketing techniques of value co-creation (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004a, 2000b), which encourages close and mutually beneficial company-customer relationships. Extending the scope of value co-creation, Prahalad (2004) builds the business case for tapping the bottom of the pyramid (BOP). For him, the poor-