

# *Definition of CSR*

Constructing the notion of “Corporate Social Responsibility” (CSR) starting with Bowen as a concept of obligations of businessman to the society (Bowen, Gond & Bowen, 2013) has had no end in terms of definition. Evolution of the CSR construct since 1950’s is parallel to the change in the businesses’ way of thinking and today CSR is accepted to be the umbrella term for the concept of the responsibilities of a company for a sustainable economy, environment and society covering the entirely voluntary, corporate-led initiatives.

Although the expanding literature on this issue has provided a clearer understanding, it is still problematic to find a commonly accepted definition and a conceptual framework for CSR throughout the diverse theoretical perspectives. Economist Milton Friedman (2002) is one of the first scholars to define the social responsibility of business from a different perspective, arguing that “the economic contribution of business to its shareholders is its first and most fundamental corporate social responsibility”. Conceptualizing the responsibility of a business restricted to its shareholders is no longer accepted within the business era of the latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, as there has been an increased recognition of stakeholder concept together with the shareholders for the business to be responsible of. Regarding the discourse on framing the responsibility on economic contribution is also not sufficient for a sustainable business. To address this challenge, more definitions on CSR has been structured however the most influential model has been provided by Archie Carrol (1991) with an analytic framework for CSR, defining the social responsibility of a business as “economic, legal, ethical and discretionary expectations that society has of organizations at a given point in time”. This modern paradigm considers businesses to

be responsible of a larger society and a wider spectrum of issues and stakeholders. From this perspective, the responsibility of a business extends beyond making profits to include protecting and improving society's welfare and the environment. Numerous definitions of CSR has been made following Carroll's, and all are related constructs such as the citizenship of business, social and environmental impacts, economic benefits of exchange and the nature of stakeholder theory itself. Alexander Dahlsrud (2008) with his recent study found and analyzed 37 definitions of CSR, originated from 27 authors covering a time span from 1980 to 2003. Five dimensions (environmental, societal, economic, stakeholder, voluntariness) of CSR were identified through a content analysis of the definitions, proceeding that the majority of academic approaches to understanding CSR had something in common, acknowledging the responsibilities of business towards the society and environment that go beyond their own interests and legal obligations. Despite the challenge of lack of one universally accepted definition, understanding how CSR is socially constructed in a specific context is critical to take it into account when business strategies are developed. At this point, Votaw's (1972) statement is the best contextual definition for CSR. "*The CSR term is a brilliant one; it means something, but not always the same thing, to everybody.*"

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