**SOCIETAL AND SOCIAL MARKETING**

**Learning Outcome 3: ACTIVITY 2**

**GROUP ACTIVITY**

**Walmart and corporate social responsibility (CSR)**

This teaching activity is designed to be completed in small groups of students. The group discussion time should run around 20 minutes, plus any additional class discussion time.

Read the background material here and answer the questions that follow.

In recent years, the concept of societal marketing has become more important, particularly to larger brands that are subject to greater mainstream and social media attention. The goal of being a good corporate citizen and contributing to society overall – the key shift from the marketing concept to the societal marketing concept – is executed both through corporate actions and through the communication of those actions to the customers of the firm and to the broader community. The following is a quote from an Adweek article on Walmart and CSR. According to Allen Adamson, North American chairman at brand consulting firm Landor Associates**, “In this new, transparent world, where everything a company does is seen by everybody and consumers are doing business with companies who ‘do the right thing’ in terms of treating their workers well, for the environment, sustainability.”** One of the most valuable brands in the world and the world’s largest retailer is Walmart. For a range of reasons, Walmart often suffers from a negative perception among parts of the community. It seeks to improve this perception through appropriate and positive corporate actions. For example, review its position on sustainability.

***Sustainable Products at Walmart and Sam’s Club | Our Pledge to Customers/Members***

Our customers and members count on Walmart and Sam’s Club to deliver affordable products in a way that is sustainable for people and for the planet. To meet those needs, we work with partners all along the supply chain to improve the sustainability of products we sell. We do this while working to offer quality products, everyday low prices and putting customers in charge of their food choices by helping provide clear, accurate information about food ingredients and production. But according to Walmart – quoted in the same article – the goal of their CSR is business and profit-based and not just a public relations (PR) exercise.Walmart spokeswoman Molly Blakeman said, **“These are first and foremost business decisions and not part of a concerted effort to alter perceptions of the company.”**

**Questions**

1. To what extent do you think Walmart’s CSR activities will help improve any negative image problems it may face?
2. In your opinion, are Walmart’s CSR programmes business-based decisions or are they mainly a PR exercise? Why?
3. Do you think that smaller brands need to be concerned with CSR issues, or is this primarily a concern for higher profile brands?
4. Do you think that acting with CSR can deliver profits or is it mainly an additional cost for firms?
5. If social media was not as prominent and influential as it is now (as was the case in the past), would large brands be so active with CSR programmes?