In the year 2006, an entrepreneur by the name of Blake Mycoskie traveled through Argentina. On his trip, he noticed that mass numbers of children were without something that is essential to someone’s life: a pair of shoes. Later that year, Mycoskie created a company, known as TOMS Shoes. To this day, TOMS Shoes has been a top force driving the footwear industry, but with a twist. TOMS presents itself as a company where their corporate social responsibility is fully integrated into their business model. Their CSR is known as the “One for One” philosophy (TOMS, 2006). The “One for One” strategy is simple. Whenever someone buys a pair of TOMS Shoes, TOMS effectively will donate a pair of shoes to a child in need.

TOMS’ business model and CSR plan is simple, effective and its positive results is fully involved with all of the operations in regards to social and environmental awareness around the world. TOMS makes sure the consumer is aware of where their product is being made, that they oversee their suppliers and vendors, and that when communicating with them, they are abiding by the laws in their respective countries when the products are purchased (TOMS, 2006). TOMS also puts an emphasis on their employees’ well-being. It is made sure each employee who works at TOMS is properly trained on a number of business and leadership topics, which include anti-human trafficking and slavery prevention. Along with all of their efforts to maintain a responsible business, TOMS is a member of the AFAA and are regular contributors to their environmental and social committees (TOMS, 2006).
Finally, it is worth noting that TOMS has also expanded their line of products. In 2011, the company decided to launch an eyewear line and similarly to the “One for One” campaign with shoes, TOMS would start donating glasses or providing surgery to restore sight to those in need. The same formula was adopted in 2014 when TOMS introduced their own brand of coffee beans and would set out to donate 140 liters of water to someone in need. Most recently, in 2015, TOMS launched its own series of bags and now, every time a person buys a TOMS bag, the company will go out of their way to help deliver a safe birth to a mother in need (TOMS, 2006).

TOMS’ business model and CSR plan is simple, it is effective, and its positive results have been recognized in the industry and beyond. The ability for a company to integrate their CSR as such a key component into their business plan is a risk on many levels, especially its financial welfare. Yet, owner Blake Mycoskie and his team genuinely care about their mission and the integrity of the company. This in turn, influences consumers to choose companies like TOMS, when wanting to purchase a designer shoe to wear, because they know what mission they are investing in. Strategic CSR is becoming more prominent in business models today and the expectation is much more than the simple process of donating large sums of money to organizations.

As previously mentioned, TOMS is excelling at this and not only do they have the consumer following to back it up, they also have been recognized by multiple different credible sources, both scholars and experts in the entrepreneurial industry. One such recent admission comes from an article by The Huffington Post. It talks about the success of the “One for One” model from TOMS and gives background information on why starting a business with a well-established mission and CSR plan will garner success and how to do so. The first piece of advice mentioned in the article revolves around the idea of having a “One for One” type plan. The article outlines the idea that if one is just starting a business, they should try to form a strategic partnership with a relevant organization depending on what field the business lies in. Once a business has further expanded and grown, it is recommended to create a branch that focuses on performing charitable tasks and events (Guo, 2015). This outline directly emulates the one TOMS has had tremendous success with over the past 9 years, donating over 35 million pairs of shoes in over 70 countries around the world.
A second source proclaiming TOMS achievement in 2015 over the CSR model of TOMS Shoes is Business Today. In this case study, the editors and experts of business today examine some of the key components aligned with the “One for One” model. Included in its praise are TOMS’ use of social media and its effect on its consumer base with the intention of telling a compelling story. (Angus et al., 2015) The idea of telling a story and showcasing it through a global lens, like a TV commercial, is an example of great marketing, especially if the story is successful in portraying a message, such as donating shoes to those who need them most. This causes a chain reaction for celebrities and influential figures to embark on their mission and support their cause. This is the second positive appraisal for which Business Today comments. TOMS did not pay any celebrities to advertise their product, but instead, celebrities became interested because of the strong social media presence and general attitude of celebrities’ tendency to join charitable causes. These two key components have aligned celebrities with what top figures at TOMS want to do (Angus et al., 2015). This is to tell a story. Their story may not be the only one of its kind, but what this article focuses on is the success of how TOMS reaches their audience as a unique brand.

TOMS has developed such a brand where above everything they sell, the forefront of their goals is to help those in need. The ability to include the CSR as such an integral part of their company is bold and innovative, but there are some things that TOMS could improve about their company, just like anyone else in the business world. First, as one of the (if not the) primary starter of this type of movement, TOMS needs to be careful that this can easily be replicated and ultimately enhanced. It would be unethical for TOMS to patent this type of strategy, so they need to make sure that their business model stays atop of the pack. (Angus et al., 2015) Aside from this point, they will need to continually watch over their vendors and how they are making the products, make sure their employees are receiving their full benefits and programming and staying true to their mission statement as a whole. One cannot fault a company whose main priority is to help others, and this is why TOMS is one of the leaders in this category today.
Bibliography

