Corporate social responsibility: engaging the community

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CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY: ENGAGING WITH COMMUNITY

Abstract

Purpose: This paper extends corporate social responsibility (CSR) theory by exploring how firms engage with community. The community is frequently cited as a stakeholder of the firm but in spite of its status in networks has not been the focus of research. Drawing on community theory and Carroll's pyramid for the foundation of our study, we undertake an empirical investigation to advance knowledge in CSR engagement with a particular stakeholder group.

Design/methodology/approach: To generate in-depth insight, the study adopts a multiple case study approach involving the purposeful selection of three retail banks in Ghana as units of analysis. It draws on multiple data sources to strengthen its findings.

Findings: The study finds that community engagement consists of four spheres of activity: donations, employee voluntarism, projects and partnerships.   Philanthropy forms part of largely *ad hoc* CSR actions by firms. The study also finds that philanthropy is not merely a desired function of the CSR pyramid but an essential one.

Social implications: This research imparts increased understanding of how firms engage with an important but frequently overlooked stakeholder group – community.

Originality/value: This study presents specific theoretical extensions to CSR through its identification of four core activities of community engagement.

Keywords: stakeholder network, corporate social responsibility, community, philanthropy, retail banking.

Paper type: Research paper.

Introduction

Stakeholder theory states that a firm can enhance its corporate strategy by recognizing and

addressing the complexity of understanding the roles and interactions of firms and

stakeholders (Freeman, 1997). Debates on stakeholder theory also draw on the role of social

responsibility (for example Greenwood and Van Buren, 2010), in particular where

stakeholder network expectations inform a normative framework of social responsibility

(Maignan, Ferrell and Ferrell 2005). For this reason, several researchers assess that

engagement with stakeholders and different kinds of communities will impact on the firm

(Luoma-aho and Paloviita, 2010). The purpose of this paper is to investigate how CSR

strategies inform engagement with community. We find that firm CSR strategies consist of

five specific spheres of activities as follows: donations, employee voluntarism, projects,

partnerships and employee welfare. These activities as yet do not form part of a formalised

CSR strategy but are rather more *ad hoc*, they currently focus on the activity rather than the

outcome. Opportunities for optimising the CSR value may not be optimised.

The structure of the paper is as follows: a literature review of corporate social responsibility

and community, followed by the research design, findings and a discussion and conclusion

section.

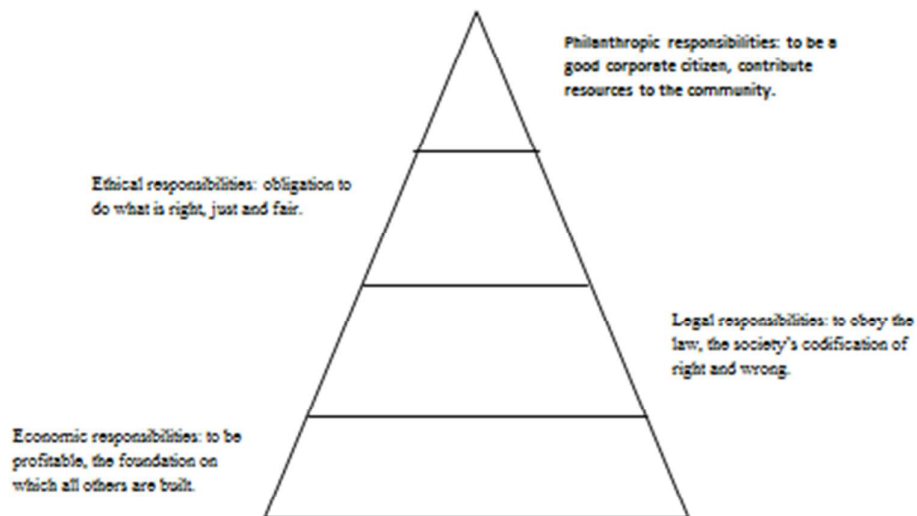**Corporate social responsibility**

By identifying and considering a range of stakeholders firms can gain competitive advantage

by engaging with customers and other partners and encouraging inter-group engagement

(Brodie et al. 2006; Lusch et al. 2007). Each stakeholder in the network confers a particular

knowledge set to its relationship with the focal firm and an increase of interest and

collaboration (Antonacopoulou and Méric, 2005). Behaviours prompted by this thinking are

the generation of products and services that customers are willing to buy, the creation of jobs

that employees are willing to fill, the development and maintenance of relationships with

suppliers that companies are eager to have and, finally, being good citizens in the community (Freeman et al. 2004). The focal firm can boost the goodwill that is associated with commitment to socially responsible behaviours and can consider such behaviours as being part of marketing initiatives (Sen et al. 2006). Such are the positive effects of socially responsible behaviours and the negative effects of CSR violation that most firms not only pay careful attention to CSR issues, but also actively participate in CSR activities (Lai et al. 2010).

Key constructs that emerge from the CSR literature is that it is a social obligation (Clarkson, 1995), it consists of managerial processes (Wood, 1991), it is a stakeholder obligation (Crane and Matten, 2004) and it is ethics-driven (Carroll, 1979). It is also acknowledged that since the business has the resources, the business' management talent, functional expertise and capital should be given a chance to solve social problems (Davis, 1973). Furthermore, the nature of obligations that businesses are expected to attend to is shaped by the economic environment. Much of the research on CSR has focused on its conceptualisation (Carroll, 1979) with contemporary studies on its implementation (Porter and Kramer, 2002; 2006), especially in developing countries. The most commonly described and used concept of CSR in the developed countries is that of Carroll's pyramid (Crane and Matten, 2004). This model proposes relative weightings for four functions of economic, legal, ethical and philanthropic functions, which each need to be fulfilled in order before moving onto the next one in the hierarchy. The economic and legal functions are based on notions of the old social contract and so renders them 'required' expectations of the community, the ethical and philanthropic functions are described as the new social contract; ethical being 'expected' and philanthropic being 'desired' responsibilities (Carroll, 1999). The CSR pyramid by Carroll (1991) has been cited by several authors of CSR (for example, Visser, 2006) and has evolved over two decades (for example Schwartz and Carroll, 2003) thus maintaining its relevance. Our

concern in this study lies principally with contemporary interpretations and practices of

philanthropy, which currently sits at the top of the pyramid as a desired responsibility.

Figure 1   CSR pyramid

According to the model, CSR constitutes four kinds of social responsibility: economic (to

make profit), legal (to obey the law), ethical (to be ethical) and philanthropic (to be a good

corporate citizen). The model categorises the different responsibilities hierarchically in order

of decreasing importance. The most fundamental and highest priority responsibility is

economic on which all the other responsibilities are predicated. The expectation at this point

is for the organisation to operate a successful business. Legal responsibilities require the

organisation to recognise that law is society's codification of right and wrong, hence, to obey

the law of the country is essential. Ethical responsibilities are those activities not codified by

law and but are expected by a society. The top is philanthropic responsibility which is

discretionary in nature. This responsibility requires the organisation to be a good corporate

citizen by contributing resources to the community and improving quality of life. Overall, the

pyramid purports that businesses that deem themselves socially responsible should

simultaneously fulfil this set of obligations, taking into consideration their decreasing

compliance or obligation.

Corporate philanthropy is a direct contribution of resources by an organisation and its

employees to a cause, to improve community well-being or to a charity, most often in the

form of cash grants, donation and/or in-kind services (Kotler and Lee, 2005). Although

described as being part of the new social contract in the pyramid, philanthropy is the most

traditional of all corporate social initiatives and has primarily been a major source of support

for communities in health, education, human service agencies, the arts and, in some cases, the

environment. According to Kotler and Lee (2005), terminology closely linked to philanthropy

includes community giving, community relations, corporate citizenship and community

affairs. Increasingly, philanthropy is used as a form of promotion, supporting a company's

image or brand through cause-related marketing, even though it still characterises merely a

fraction of overall corporate charitable expenditures. Philanthropy thus appears to cover

almost any class of charitable action that has some definable approach. In the corporate

context, it usually means that there is some connection between the charitable contribution,

the firm's business and the way a firm is in contact with its various communities (Porter and

Kramer, 2002). We reason accordingly that philanthropy is an appropriate construct through

which to explore firm engagement with community.

Community

The classification of community concerns particular features (Putnam, 2000; Harting et al.,

2006; Podnar and Jančič, 2006), such as the place of community affiliation; the country

where a community develops; the group of people with whom one carries out some activity

and shares interests with; the virtual community one takes part in, and so on. The meaning of

community may differ according to a particular point of view or discipline such as

philosophy, psychology, sociology, anthropology, political sciences, or town planning.

Nonetheless, for advancing knowledge, it is helpful to define at least the boundaries of

community, which has involved factors of interaction, identity and geography (Lee and

Newby, 1983). Freeman et al. (2006) refer to communities of place, communities of interest,

virtual advocacy groups and communities of practice. Identifying the different categories of

community allows companies to highlight behaviour that they could adopt in managing

relationships with their strategic stakeholders (Vos and Schoemaker, 2011; Luoma-aho and

Vos, 2009; 2010).

The community to which people may belong may be "no longer the community of place, but

an interest community within which a freely communicating society need not be spatially

concentrated for we are increasingly able to interact with each other wherever we may be

located" (Weber, 1963, p. 68). Community based on elements of interaction (face-to-face or

electronic) consists of people that develop social relationships, whether they are living in the

same place or not (Godwin, 1997). The value of a community is in its social capital. Social

capital has a cognitive dimension through which norms and values are developed (Nahapiet

and Ghoshal, 1998). Failure by corporate citizens to adhere to the etiquette defined by social

norms in building a relationship can damage any prospect of long-term trust (Anderson and

Jack, 2002). Cooke (2002, p. 11) supports and defines social capital as "the expression of

norms of reciprocity and trust between individuals and organisations that are embedded in a

system of cooperation." Social capital can favour community and can be based on such

unifying themes as culture, religion, or spatial proximity. Stocks of social capital, such as

trust, norms, and networks, tend to be self-reinforcing and cumulative. These virtuous circles

may result in social equilibria with high levels of co-operation, trust, reciprocity, civic

engagement, and collective well-being. Engaging with a community can enlarge stocks of

social capital. Firms have to consider the effects of their activities on communities and their

resulting stocks of social capital and may seek to contribute to stocks of social capital while

exploiting the value of such stocks.

Consequently, for firms to interact actively, and become an essential part of the community,

three types of strategies for interaction are identified as appropriate – collaboration,

cooperation and containment. Each strategy involves different goals, tools, actions and

interactions. The community relations actions – such as donations and contributions;

employee volunteerism; community-based programs; relationships with civic, professional

and not-for-profit organizations – have an array of elements in common (Altman, 1997)

including: moral and ethical obligations of the firm; provide economic benefits; integration,

common goals between corporation and its communities; responsibility to stakeholders;

include proactive action; partnerships across sector lines; active leadership.

This discussion suggests that community is a significant stakeholder in the network but as yet

there is limited understanding of how firms engage with this particular group or groups. We

have proposed Carroll's pyramid as having the capability in providing the theoretical

foundation for exploring this engagement. In the context of this study, we focus on

engagement with community of place, bound by geographic proximity, common interest,

elements of interaction and practice. We now move on to describe the empirical part of the

study.

Research design

To build on existing work on CSR and engagement with a particular stakeholder group, we

conduct our study in a developing country – Ghana. Work by Visser (2006) has already

theorised that Carroll's pyramid has some application in Africa but we reason that the

vastness and divergence of the continent merits further empirical work. We chose the retail

banking sector where there have been significant changes in the past couple of decades within

the country. Globally, retail banking is a sector where CSR activity may contribute to

building trust post financial crisis (Farquhar and Robson, 2014), spurring further interest in

CSR and its practices (McDonald, 2014). To generate the in-depth and within context

knowledge of CSR and community engagement, we chose a case study research strategy

(Eisenhardt, 1989).

Using purposeful sampling (Patton, 2002), we selected three banks (UT, Fidelity and Access)

for our study, following guidance that multiple cases allow for more robust findings

(Eisenhardt and Graebner, 2007). Case study research promotes an in-depth focus on

phenomenon in its naturalistic setting as an object of interest in its own right (Yin, 2009) and

here each unit of investigation presented a real-life, contemporary setting of CSR practices.

Multiple sources of data were generated during the period of 2008 to 2013, comprising semi-

structured interviews, archival data, media and documents, which we developed into a

research database (Yin, 2009).

For the primary data collection, we developed an interview guide focusing on questions of

how CSR practices were implemented, which particular were promoted and who was

engaged in these practices. In each case, we interviewed three senior managers. These

managers had been invited to participate because they had direct responsibilities and

oversight of strategic decision-making and CSR practice in their companies. They were the

CEO/Director, Head of Corporate Affairs/Corporate Communications, and Brand

Manager/Public Relations & Media Manager. Although the job roles are similar in terms of

the responsibilities of individuals, the job titles differ from case to case. Primary data

collection therefore consisted of nine interviews, which were recorded with the informants'

consent. Interview length varied between 45 minutes and just under two hours. The primary

data were supplemented with memos and further notes to capture immediate thoughts and

impressions (Charmaz, 2006).

In accordance with Miles and Huberman (1994), analysis of the data began with writing up

these field notes and transcripts into summaries. These summaries informed interview and

document coding. Content was coded following as much as possible informants' own

language and terms. We then extended these codes across the database of text, that is,

documents and archives. We analysed first the data within each case and then as our

confidence in the interpretation of the data grew we moved onto consider the codes across the

cases (Denzin, 1978). Constant and repeated comparison of data across informants revealed

major emerging concepts of the phenomenon (Patton, 2002). When an in vivo code was not

directly available or would violate confidentiality agreements then short phrases expressed in

first-order terms were used. As the transcripts were read and reread, new codes were created

and existing codes were adjusted. Constant iteration took place between data sets, emerging

theory, and relevant literature to identify the practices of CSR with relation to community.

First order practices were extracted which unlocked meaning in the data but needed to

uncover the deeper patterns in the data. A more structured second-order analysis provided a

greater degree of abstraction (Miles and Huberman, 1994) enfolding the literature in

supporting the emerging categories (Eisenhardt, 1989).   A third analytical stage consolidated

the themes into categories of CSR activities or practices that encompassed the data. These

categories are as follows: donations, employee voluntarism, projects and partnerships. We

present and discuss our findings in the following section.

Findings and discussion

In this section we organise our discussion around the four categories which emerged from the

analysis. We have condensed the evidence supporting the final category development in

Table 1.

Donations

Giving was primarily in the form of cash donations, events for fund-raising and giving of

resources such as equipment to NGOs, educational institutions and hospitals. According to

Carroll et al. (1999), philanthropic responsibilities of an organisation are a "desired" social

contract to the community and therefore remain a totally voluntary part of CSR. However,

these banks seem to apportion a high level of importance in a manner that portrays the

community depends on their donations and contributions. From an organisation's perspective,

one bank states that philanthropy is one of the reasons for its current successful business

operations; hence, this activity remains essential collateral for community relations. When

questioned about the motivation behind these donations and contributions, Fidelity bank

admitted that the public relations benefit derived were worth the effort and financial sacrifice

to create value in the community, thus, enhancing the organisation's reputation and the long-

run financial performance of the firm. Philanthropy in this study seems to be used

strategically by the banks for the purpose of building a good image and reputation – a finding

in accordance with Lantos (2001).

Table 1: Evidence for dimensions

Third order categories	UT Bank	Fidelity Bank	Access Bank
Donations	Philanthropy is one aspect of CSR we cannot do away with. It's so important ..., but those we give donations to on an annual basis look forward to it. And we work on Social Upliftment – which involves donations to our Orphanages."	In the past, we have provided a GHS50,000 water network support to the military academy at the Teshie camp. In the past 3 years we have provided financial aid to students of University of Ghana, and we have signed a contract up to 2015 to give them GHS72,000 per year." What we also did was to provide financial support to the 37 Military Hospital to purchase and install an MRI scanner... at the same time gave them Cedis20,000 to refurbish the building in which they installed the machine.	The bank was the first institution to donate money to the Global Fund – I think we gave them $1million. So for example if we were supporting a school needing a computer lab, we would provide funding to cover the cost of build or refurbishment, and purchase of computers.
Employee volunteerism	We engage staff on the road show for our Financial Literacy Programme.	For example, if the issue requires community cleaning, the local branch is better placed to take this up and make an impact, build intimacy, trust, positive perception and a shared responsibility with the branch manager, staff and community, no matter how small the giving is. I'm hoping we can set up a strong employee volunteering programme, where they will be allowed to do what they want to do. The volunteering will fit in the financial literacy programme, because that is key.	We have branch clusters, so for instance, we have a branch in Osu, Oxford, another in Osu, Watson, etc they form one cluster and they take care of EVP specific to the area's needs. In Accra only, we have 14 different EVP groups now.
Projects	We have a major CSR function that takes place every year between April – May where the team travels around the country to serve our customers in the communities – it's called the Financial Interest Programme. UT's current strategy is to get 300,000 customers to bank with us by the end of 2013. So every community activity and every plan is geared towards that. In going into the market, we not just training them to keep their books but	My general direction is to focus our efforts of community programmes around financial services, which is our core business. However, we recognise that we are in a very deprived country... people get their cash and have money, where do they spend their money most – it's in education, in health and in housing. Those are the areas with the big need. So in terms of the social agenda, that's where I will focus things on.	We want to be the most respected bank in Ghana and Africa. This we believe will be majorly driven by our commitment to community investment and CSR" Community investment programmes look at 5 thematic areas of health, education, environment, culture and sports. "Sometimes, even our business ideas our driven by our community projects.

	also encourage them to save with us as well. It's also important our CSR is in tandem with our core business practice – this becomes easier, we have the skills to deliver it and it helps our business too. Hence, our Financial Literacy Programme. We have another programme coming up in the Ashanti region in Kumasi called "Wu sika tisen"(How is your money?).	Out of a population 24million, there are 22 million SIMs in a holistic and embracing way; this is CSR because the majority of these people are unbanked. And quite a lot of the unbanked live in conditions of deprivation, a lot of which is increasingly being resolved at the macro level by the government, so what's left for us to do is to take financial inclusion, knowledge transfer and skills enhancement and capacity building.	2 years ago, we assembled 120 SMEs and delivered a workshop in partnership with Friends of Africa – a one day training on how to develop workplace policies with facilitators from across Africa and Asia.
Partnerships	We also bought a Mobile Screening Unit which we use in the communities in collaboration with Cancer Society of Ghana with GIZ formally GTZ and its based on a 3 year partnership we have with them. Based on these partnerships, we are able to align our CSR to fall in line with the Millennium Development Goals – 4 of them – maternal health, child mortality, poverty alleviation and malaria. We have an entrepreneurial programme with business starters whom we also give some business grant to do their business and monitor how well they do.	We are pioneering agency banking in Ghana, which means that shops, pharmacies, retailers, etc can all become banking agents. We are working with Care International to use our agency banking model to reach savings groups, so we can partner with these guys.	We invest in building skills so we support Students Unions in universities to support them in building relationships with businesses to provide them with opportunities in internships and placements. That football there is from an "Alive & Kicking" campaign in partnership with a British NGO, recently registered in Ghana helping disability people to get jobs so they train them to make handmade footballs. So typically, our interests are to support their cause which is giving skills and jobs to people with disabilities and that will benefit the community.

Giving which supports education institutions or provides financial aid to university students also strengthens the quality of human resources or physical infrastructure upon which the business success depends in the long run.

Both the community and the bank thus prosper. In terms of the approach, one informant stated that this activity was done on an *ad hoc* basis. Elsewhere the findings indicate that the cases supported a strategic approach as being more sustainable for the businesses. Attempts to make donations consistent had been going on for three years in one of the cases and in another a five year contract had just been signed. These efforts indicate long-term relationships although they are not repeated in all the cases. There is however the implication of a co-operation approach to CSR as they continue to develop mutual understanding of the needs of the community and their respective constructive feedback (Freeman et al. 2006).

Employee volunteerism

Employee volunteerism programmes (EVP) across the three cases were variable. One case was dependent on this dimension for its community engagement. The second case seemed to adopt a rather intermittent approach and in the third there was no evidence of this activity. It was acknowledged that EVP was important in reaching the community. The bank most active in EVP was adamant on keeping EVP at a local community level, thus ensuring the branches met the real needs of the specific community. In order to understand what the local community needs are, requires an ongoing dialogue from the bank which is consistent with one of the key actions mentioned by Freeman et al. (2006). However, there was little evidence of formal dialogue between the banks and the communities but rather mostly reactive responses to requests from individuals and institutions to support their causes. In addition, the narrow geographical proximity implies the recognition of community needs in one local community anticipates similar needs elsewhere (Leisinger, 2007).

Although employees play this pivotal role in philanthropic community engagement, there was limited evidence of how the banks supported employees. This is in contrast to developed economies such as the US and Europe, where the role and rights of employees are fundamental and have been long-standing items on CSR agendas with organisations (Matten and Moon, 2008). The idea of a basic good salary and some benefits such as healthcare seemed sufficient. According to Dartey-Baah and Amponsah-Tawiah (2011), there are many CSR issues on employee welfare that firms in Ghana should be concerned with – amongst others, rising unemployment, employee protection and wages, and discrimination against women in the workplace. Indeed, one informant indicated that human resources was solely responsible for welfare of employees in that particular bank.

Projects

Projects were very varied. One consisted of training centred on the development of financial skills (The Financial Literacy Programme). Representatives of the bank visit communities around the country to train customers and traders in book-keeping and saving. The same bank also runs an entrepreneurial programme for start-ups which provide business grants on due diligence and mentoring to ensure the businesses are sustainable. This is in line with the bank's current strategy to obtain 300,000 customers by the end of 2013. Porter and Kramer (2002) recommend that corporations analyse their prospects for social responsibility using the same framework that guides their core business choices, in so doing, they would discover that CCR can be a source of opportunity, innovation and competitive advantage. Therefore, social investments through community-based programmes are potentially cost-effective ways to build the business and improve competitiveness. A collaborative approach between the bank and community supports the shared objectives and identity, including a longer term commitment to build on shared visions between the bank and the community to promote trust and add to the value of social capital within that community.

Apparent recognition to move towards sustainable practices that utilise the skills and

expertise within the business, hence, the Financial Literacy Programme, the SME training

workshops and the agency banking model to improve financial inclusion presents challenging

opportunity to formalise policies and structures for CSR practices in the banking sector.

Partnerships

These projects are implemented in partnership with other organisations, such as NGOs and

charities. According to the evidence in the study, these partnerships are forged to work on

maternal health, child mortality, poverty alleviation and malaria. These areas do not

necessarily have any synergy with the core business of the banks so the value of these actions

on the overall strategy of the cases may need further action. These tensions are ongoing and

lead to identifying the wants and needs of community. This dimension reveals efforts to

understand the distinctive features of their stakeholders by drawing on the strengths of

specialist organisations to engage with another stakeholder, that is, community. Firms may

lack the specialist resources to involve themselves effectively in public welfare issues (Shaw

and Barry, 1992), hence rely on partnerships with non-profit organisations to do so.

Consequently, strategies for engagement with communities via their relationships with other

organizations/stakeholders are identified as co-operation and sometimes collaboration

strategies (Freeman et al. 2006). These interactions allow the bank and partner organisations

to identify and organise useful and functional activities and programmes which coordinate

and integrate with each other to create stocks of social capital with the community, as well as

provide economic benefits for the bank.

There was also evidence of collaboration with global for profit firms principally to create

business opportunities with technology. This particular activity brought together both

philanthropy and corporate strategy as through an investment in technology with the

aspiration of capturing larger market share. Through this investment, this increase in market

share would ultimately help in putting in place the processes and services to reach the

unbanked. According to PricewaterhouseCoopers Survey Report 2010, transformation of

technology and information systems is the backbone for improving service delivery and

sustaining product development. Pioneering organisations integrate social initiatives into their

core activities by actively channelling their research and development capabilities towards

socially innovative products and services. This technological advancement in the bank is

linked directly to developing their CSR strategy on financial inclusion.

Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to explore firm CSR practices or activities with a particular

stakeholder group, that is, community. We identified four categories of community

engagement undertaken by the cases in the study as follows: donations, employee

voluntarism, projects and partnerships. These categories took in key operational sectors such

as health, education, women and children, arts, sports and housing or infrastructure.

Although employee volunteerism has unique characteristics and could potentially be

distinguished as a separate initiative, some models and definitions (Porter and Kramer, 2002)

include it as a form of corporate philanthropy (see also Schwartz and Carroll, 2003). CSR

directly impacts the very people who invest in the company, therefore creating a cycle of

benefit for both the organisation and the community. Strategic corporate social investment's

legitimate focus allows for a meaningful benefit for society, which is also valuable to the

business, (Porter and Kramer, 2002). It is more beneficial to a firm if their social and

economic goals are not inherently conflicting, but rather integrally connected.

It is evident in the data that the banks seek to behave responsibly towards community. In the

definitions of their understanding of CSR, all the managers described it as activities targeted

to the community for a positive impact in various ways such as reducing poverty, financial

support, knowledge transfer and skills enhancement in the area of capacity building. The

community sectors in which the banks operate are similar and overlapping – education, health,

sports, culture and arts, and social 'uplift'. The move of philanthropy towards sustainable

CSR delivery to the community is described variously by informants as "social investment",

"community investment" and "impacting the community in such a way that the business

grows". The latter specifically refers to the banks community relations strategy and activities

geared towards meeting their business development goals. This is supported by Porter and

Kramer (2002) who pointed out that it is more beneficial to a firm when their social

investments provide economic returns. However, there is the challenge of how closely linked

these social interventions are linked to the business' core operations. In any case, this changes

the notion of social contract for philanthropic actions from 'desired' to 'expected'

responsibilities.

There is the lack of formal dialogue between these banks and community as decisions are

primarily made at executive management level at managers' discretion and/or by use of

"relevance" criteria identified by the bank in the priority sectors, where the focus is on one

sector for example health for the whole year, which is thought to be more impactful in the

community. Where there is reliance of another bank on a local partner organisation, the

decision to fund or support a particular community project may be driven by the NGOs

agenda. Whether community engagement is achieved delivered through donations, employee

volunteerism (EVPs), training or partnerships, the study finds that community engagement

benefits include community perception of the banks. These benefits include good corporate

reputation, trust building trust and increased customer loyalty.

This study makes several contributions. Theoretically the study extends CSR theory by illuminating how a firm engages with a particular stakeholder in this case, community through four spheres of activity. These four spheres may form the basis of strategic engagement. The study also finds that community is potentially an important stakeholder group in the firm network and that engagement is enhanced through partnerships with other stakeholders and organisations, who may not yet be within the network. Thus engaging with community has the potential to extend the network.

The study also finds that in some instances philanthropy may be strategic but remains largely an *ad hoc* component of CSR.   The findings indicate that the cases engage with community by providing significant resources which promote social welfare and community goodwill but at the same time fulfil very real needs so that retail banks have no option but to provide it. This obligation on retail banks changes philanthropy from a desired response of the pyramid to an expected responsibility or even an essential category. This removes philanthropy from the discretionary level of the pyramid, redefining it as essential and thus at the same level as economic and legal in the pyramid (see Figure 1).

Whilst the engagement and CSR initiatives outlined above are of benefit to the community and the firm, they are planned on an ad hic basis. Further benefit could be gained by incorporating such initiatives into a strategic plan and thus aligning them with other community and stakeholder activities.

This study on community engagement and CSR serves as a basis for recommendations for further research. Further work in CSR could focus on the development of community engagement and community relations strategies which fit into the overall corporate strategy.

Secondly, the findings depict community actions rather than outcomes. The outcomes would

provide evidence to continued firm engagement with community and assist in building

positive perceptions, corporate reputation, trust and customer loyalty.

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