The Role of Banks in Corporate Social Responsibility

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The purpose of this paper is to explore the perception of respondents on corporate social responsibility (CSR) and banking practice of major banks in Hong Kong. This paper reviews literatures on management, quality management, banking industries, and CSR activities. Data was gathered via questionnaires from banking/ finance practitioners and academics in Hong Kong, the US and Scotland. The key CSR-related elements identified from quantitative analysis on collected questionnaires are: understanding complex financial services, conducting risk assessment, strengthening business ethics, implementing strategy for financial crisis, protecting rights of customers, and setting up channels for customers to address complaints. These elements can be classified into four main factors for a CSR framework for banks. The four factors are: internal management – implementing meaningful strategy and process and people management; external management – accountability for creditability and consideration of stakeholders. This study can help banking managers understand what should be done for the benefit of customers and the community for sustainability. However, allocating resources in banks for CSR activities has not been touched in this research. This opens a future research area for the academic community. Understanding the key elements of a CSR framework can help fulfill the principles of CSR and improve the level of customer satisfaction for increasing market share and profits ultimately. Researchers have not previously conducted an analysis from the viewpoint of banking and CSR related practitioners from the East and the West on CSR initiatives..

Keywords: *CSR, banking practice, framework of CSR.*

1. Introduction

Management without caring needs and expectations of stakeholders in a community will not be competitive compared with those who do in the 21st century. Demand for accountability and transparency from both public and private sectors has become soaring. In the olden days, management is seeking for survival and profits. Nowadays, management concerns managing financial and non-financial results with awareness of risk and maintenance of transparency. As a result, corporate social performance (CSP) has possessed equal importance of corporate financial performance (CFP).

The term "Stakeholder" has been put into today's management vocabulary. In fact, it provides a full picture for management to map their 'ought to be' – "obligations" and as well as their 'need to be' – "customers' requirements". Having a stakeholder map, it can widen the horizon of marketers in the sense of making them realize the importance of social responsibility; and the need of fulfilling requirements of customers and the society. Stakeholders do not want to have any undesirable events found in the market. Issues that they

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are concerned are things that affect their health and safety. Products or services that consist of misleading messages in advertisements are especially the worry of the public. They want to get a real message from marketers, instead of marketing gimmicks. Hence, marketers should develop an awareness of social responsibility when devising marketing campaigns

Schermerhorn (1999) has stated clearly that the main purpose of management is to induce a positive impact on human behavior in an organization. The control of human behavior can be found during the activities of planning, organizing, leading and controlling. Management of an organization can have internal and external control on human behavior. For the internal one, management can arrange appropriate training for staff in order to make them have self-discipline and commitment towards an organization. For the external control, proper supervision strategies can be used to limit staff's behavior.

In order to manage people's behavior successfully internally and externally, Drucker (2006) mentioned that realization of common goals and common values with ongoing training and timely responses to change were fundamental in management. In short, what we have learnt from Drucker is that management is about handling human beings, integrating variables, unifying objectives, developing people toward common objectives for results.

"Market standing, innovation, productivity, development of people, quality, financial results all are crucial to a company's performance and indeed to its survival." (Drukcer, 2006)

So, a manager needs to managing people, process and resources for results and for fulfilling requirements of stakeholders for quality. Quality concepts have been spread across industries and countries. Current practice of achieving quality in manufacturing and servicing industries is obtaining ISO 9000 and other industry-related certificates. How about quality standard used in banking industries? What are the common practices for banking organizations to prove their quality service? According to Kothari (2006), quality includes fulfilling a set of inherent characteristics, meeting stated or implied needs or expectations, conforming to specifications; and moving towards customer satisfaction. Bornman (2004) mentioned that there were many attempts to define "quality".

"One of the definitions used in managerial literature is that 'quality is the extent to which the product meets the demands; another is 'customer satisfaction'.

2. Organizational Culture and Committed Staff for Quality
In order to gain trust from the public, organizations shall not only provide quality products and services, but also develop responsible and ethical staff. Empowerment is important in establishing open organizational culture. Management shall have trust on their staff for policy involvement and decision-making. Empowerment not only means staff involvement in devising organizational policies, but also delegation and participation in decision-making.

Open management style should let employees have freedom in decision-making so as to increase their productivity and quality of work. Instrumental management style no longer survives in a world which focuses on values, workplace democracy and employee empowerment.

Michalos (2006) has claimed that commitment of staff is crucial and shall be supported with actions for reflection. Experience learning and experiencing personal satisfaction from living can let both organizations and employees grow for betterment.

Betterment for staff and organizations can help establish positive organizational culture to provide quality for customers, and more importantly, to gain confidence from the public.

"Only when we can satisfy our customers' demands, we can teach our colleagues various creative ways of dealing with our customers. This will enable us to foster a positive feedback cycle to serve our customers better. When our colleagues learn, they contribute at the same time and our customers benefit. We then fulfill our responsibilities towards the society, the region and our country.(Tsai et al., 2006).

According to Harrison (2000), the main factors affecting a person's performance are "knowledge, skill, motivation and environment". He pointed out people not perform well were usually caused by: inadequate information or reference materials; poor working environment or inadequate tools; poor incentives; lack of knowledge; lack of skill; and poor motivation.

Harrison brought up the point that the powerful thing that drove people behavior was self-image. In fact, ISO 9001: 2008 can act as a catalyst to strengthen the image of "involvement of staff" and "transparent". Besides, concepts like "corporate social responsibility" (CSR) and "ethics" have also become a fundamental part of the future development ISO 9001: 2008.

3. The Birth of New Version ISO 9001:2008 and the Emergence of New Standards of 26000

ISO 9001: 2000 has been recently upgraded into ISO 9001:2008 at the end of November, 2008 to clarify existing requirements of ISO 9001:2000. Examples are: explanation on 4.1 "Quality Management System"; outsourcing control, risk and impact, purchasing, clarification on 6.4 "Work Environment"; tangible, environmental and other factors, noise,temperature, humidity, lighting or weather, intangible, synergy, efficiency, effective, psychological, sensitivity, and ergonomics; elaboration on 7.5.4 "Customer Property"; intellectual property and personal data" are also considered as customer property which needs to be controlled based on the nature of the industries and the scope of ISO certification.

4. Explanation on 8.2.2 "Internal Audit", 8.2.3 "Monitoring and Measuring Process, 8.5.2 & 8.5.3

"Corrective and Preventive Actions"
"Impact on conformity to product requirements and on effectiveness of quality management system" (QMS)**.** From the clarifications in ISO 9001: 2008, a trend of QMS can be demonstrated – striving a balance on hard and soft resources with consideration of stakeholders for maintaining not only product but also system performance. "Risk and Impact" are also part of the QMS.

Apart from the new version of ISO 9001: 2008, the future ISO 26000 guidelines focus on social responsibility (SR). The ISO Working Group on Social Responsibility (WG SR) has a high level of consensus in considering the needs of stakeholders in coming standard ISO 26000 for the benefit of the community.

"The decision to move to the CD stage is not only a milestone in the process of developing ISO 26000. It is also living evidence that the multi-stakeholder approach adopted by ISO for this task is an effective tool for dealing with complex subjects in large and highly diversified groups."(Cajazeira, 2008). According to Cajazeira (2008), the major principles for ISO 26000 are: accountability, transparency, ethical behavior, consideration for the

stakeholders, legality, international standards, and human rights. It is the responsibility of organizations to consider the needs of the stakeholders in these seven aspects when designing work processes or executing business-related activities. In fact, the new version ISO 9001:2008 and coming ISO 26000 guidelines convey a message that non-economic inputs and soft side of outcomes are the trend of quality management system.

4. Trend of Integrating CSR into Quality Management
Idowu and Towler (2004) brought up the importance of "care" of organizations to the people and environment that they operate in. They mentioned that corporate social responsibility (CSR) reports are required in addition to traditional financial reports. They claimed organizations should make positive contribution to the society. This is the way to demonstrate that they do care people and environment in their operating environment. Hence, different kinds of CSR reporting systems emerge under this idea. Examples are ISO 14001 – Environmental Management System, SA 8000 system, and reports showing directors' contribution to CSR and charities.

In the past five years, a series of CSR-related awards occur in Hong Kong. "Caring Company" and "Total Caring Award" of Hong Kong Council of Social Service (HKCSS) are successful ones. The scheme started in 2002 and in 2008, it added one more criteria - "Caring to Environmental" on top of "Caring to Community" and "Caring to Employees" to reflect the expectation of the society.

More than that, there is another one started gaining public concern - HKQAA-HSBC CSR Index jointly held by Hong Kong Quality Assurance Agency (HKQAA) and the Hong Kong and Shanghai Banking Corporation. This is the first structured and quantified CSR Index that is backed up by ISO 26000 Guidelines of CSR to measure organizations' maturity level of social responsibility practices in Hong Kong.

On 5th November 2009, the CSR Advocate Mark Presentation Ceremony was held to show recognition to 25 participated organizations covering construction, manufacturing, services, education and government offices. The timely HKQAA- HSBC CSR Index is to highlight the balanced approach adopted by participated organizations as the seven core subjects to be measured under the Index are: organizational governance, human rights, labor rights, the environment, fair operating practices, consumer issues, community involvement and development.

From ISO 9000 to CSR Index, the following characteristics of quality management system have been observed in a variety of industries across the West and the East; consideration of all stakeholders, especially employees, consumers and community in business practices, recognition of organizations' visions and practices, establishment of quality culture and transparency; and acceptance of benchmarking for continual improvement.

Though quality management standards are commonly used in manufacturing and servicing industries, they are not being practiced strongly in banking industries. How can banking organizations remain competitive with non-financial results, like demonstration of care when designing and promoting financial products to investors? People criticize that banking industry has its own unique standard operational procedures; and obtaining ISO-related certificates is time-consuming. This paper is not going to argue the adoption of ISO into banking industries. Instead, it focuses mainly on exploring the perception of people working in banking and finance industries on Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) as this can be regarded as a crystallizer for quality.

This paper reports on the results of a pilot study conducted among practitioners working in banking and finance industries with a target to answer the following questions: what are the key elements for fulfilling the principles of CSR in banking industries? And what are the main factors for setting a CSR framework for banks?

5. Role of Banks in Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)

Taking deposits, granting loans and providing complementary services are the core business of banks. No matter what kinds of countries, what kinds of culture, and what kinds of banking products and investors, banks need to be responsible for their customers in a social responsible way.

From literature, global regulations imposed for banks is holding reserve against loans and achieving AAA grade ratings. In the past years, some banks tried to bundle up loans to private customers and companies, and selling these to one another on the inter-bank market. According to Mcllroy (2008), these securitised loans are often referred as asset-backed securities (ABSs) and are then sold on as more complex financial instruments as collaterised debt obligations (CDOs). As the loans were removed from the banks' balance sheet, the banks were able to make further advances. The issue has been raised since then is on the security of loans, transparency of risk to investors, and regulations involved in further advances. As a socially responsible bank, it not only executes lawful banking practice, but also practices wisely and prudentially with close supervision of transactions for providing customer confidence under prosperous and glooming economic conditions.

Mcllroy (2008) brought up the need of risk management in banking industries after the sub-prime crisis with a proposal of the following three reforms; requiring banks to retain a proportion of any loan that they originate, insisting transparency of risks in financial products; and holding of capital for less pro-cyclical situation. *"Banks are regulated because of the possibility of systematic risks. Systematic risk is not and never will be a purely theoretical possibility."(Mcllroy, 2008)*

Mcllroy (2008) pointed out the problems facing presently are the growing acceptable systematic risks induced by market participants who put self-interest into their priority. As a result, he proposed the following regulatory reforms to fulfill the dimensions of CSR; "Human Rights", "The Environment", "Fair Operating Practices"; and "Consumer Issues", preventing banks from selling all the risks in products, increasing transparency of risk in financial products; and conducting reform against pro-cyclical situation.

"Businesses not only must deal with hard- number economic realities, but they also have to address the perceptions and beliefs of their customers. Thus, organizations must adjust to the changing outlook of the consumers who buy what they try to sell. It's not certain, however, what form this adjustment should take." (McEwen, 2008)

In order to fulfill the dimensions of CSR as mentioned n the above, Murphy (1999) identified some of the key steps to evaluate ethics in product / service management. First of all, marketers need to have an intention to identify and judge ethical behavior. Secondly, they need to establish proper channels to implement a particular marketing program with formal ethical analysis of products/ services. Consequences of marketing programs shall be clearly identified, and unethical practices shall be properly managed with staff commitment. Examples of implementing ethical marketing programs can be provision of sufficient product instructions as well as appropriate warning labels for the products that they introduce and maintain in the marketplace. Protecting environment, product safety and hygiene are hot issues in today's marketplace. Lastly, marketing organizations, including marketing staff of

banking and finance organizations should have ethical standards for developing and introducing new products. Specific ethical policies shall be put in place to shape ethical behavior of staff.

Besides, the importance of internal audit has to been emphasized, especially in banking industries. Coetzee and Fourie (2010) mentioned that internal audit had been perceived positively. They indicated that internal audit should focus on strategic, operational and business risks in addition to financial and compliance risks as 80% of loss in external shareholders' value in Fortune 500 companies could be linked to the first set of risks. Senior management and those of the chairpersons of the audit committees expect an increase in internal auditing involvement in risk-related issues. Coetzee and Fourie (2010) also highlighted that risk assessment had to be performed annually under the requirement of industries. So, what is the value from Internal Audit Function (IAF)? Barac, Plant and Motubatse (2010) quoted a survey conducted by (Institute of Internal Auditors (IIA) on five value-adding attributes for IAFs. They were: organizational alignment, extensive staff expertise, challenging work environment, risk assessment of the audit universe; and an array of audit services.

Furthermore, Barac, Plant and Motubatse (2010) shared the idea of Dittenhofer (2001) in the aspect of making a smooth internal audit process. They were: interaction with organization, internal restructuring, creation of new services and methods, and using technology.

All in all, CSR in banking industries shall comprise the above-mentioned elements: risk assessment, effective and efficient internal audit process with value added to stakeholders. Hence, in order to maintain competitiveness in the market and responsible to customers, bankers need to understand the economic situation, re-focus marketing strategy with prudent risk management system, identify the concerns of customers, implement fair operation procedures to protect customers and the community as a whole

6. Analysis

In order to obtain answers for the two research questions in this paper, a literature review on management, quality management, banking industries and CSR activities have been carried out. The questionnaire was adopted from articles written by Decker (2004) and Peterson and Hermans (2004) in a "7 Likert Scale". The questionnaires were collected through primary data techniques with face-to-face interviews. Respondents are either presently working in banking-related industries or exposing to finance academics. The researcher successfully collected 65 questionnaires from the following channels through convenience sampling: banking-related practitioners attending a Chartered Financial Planner (CFP) course in Hong Kong; working adults having investment experience attending a financial talk organized by a university in Hong Kong; managerial grade insurance practitioners working in Hong Kong and supervisory grade banking practitioners working in New York, U.S.; and professionals attending a quality management international conference in Scotland.

The number of collected questionnaires from the above sources is quite balanced. The following table shows the breakdown of questionnaires from different sources

Table 1. Respondents Profile

Respondents' country	Frequency	Percent

Hong Kong	18	27.7
Academic Talk	10	15.3
Insurance	12	18.5
Scotland	8	12.3
US - Global Bank	17	26.2
TOTAL	65	100.0

Among the five highest mean scores, Table 2 down below shows that four high-ranking statements (Q4, Q6, Q1, Q5) are found in factor 1) internal management – implementing meaningful strategy (six questions). Hence, banking practitioners need to be aware of the importance of implementing meaningful strategy for reaching customer expectation. Though Q25 and Q19 are the lowest mean scores of 5.00 and 4.70 respectively in table 7.0, they are over test value of 4 without sig.

Besides, Table 3 shows the mean scores of the four factors. The statements with highest mean scores, five are found with a mean of 5.9 or above. For those with lowest mean scores, two are found with a mean of 5.0 or below. All means are significant at .000 (2-tailed) for One-sample T-test.

Table 2. Results of Descriptive Statistics – Overall Ranked Mean

	N	Mean	SD
Statements with Highest Mean Score			
Q4 I think banking organizations should conduct risk assessment of financial products.	65	6.14	1.03
Q6 I think frontline staff of banking organizations should well understand complex financial services before offering to customers.	63	6.11	1.11
Q1 I feel banking organizations should protect the rights of customers in providing details of \ financial products.	65	6.06	1.10
Q5 I think banking organizations should strengthen business ethics training to staff.	65	5.95	1.20
Q9 I think banking organizations should take timely actions to address customers' complaints on financial products.	64	5.94	.94
Statements with Lowest Mean Score			
Q25 I think the more meaningful social activities that banking organizations engage in, the more preferences will be given to them.	61	5.00	1.43
Q19 I think banking organizations should invite representative customers in meetings before promoting new financial products.	63	4.70	1.77

*p <.001 for One-Sample T-test where the test value = 4 on 7-point scale

Table 3. Factor analysis

	Component			
	1	2	3	4
Q6 I think frontline staff of banking organizations should well *understand complex financial services* before offering to customers.	.89			
Q4 I think banking organizations should conduct *risk assessment* of financial products.	.87			
Q5 I think banking organizations should strengthen business *ethics training* to staff.	.80			
Q3 I think banking organizations should *implement strategy for the financial crisis.*	.78			
Q1 I feel banking organizations should *protect the rights of customers* in providing details of financial products.	.63			
Q16 I think banking organizations should set up effective *channels for customers to address complaints.*	.56			
Q24 I think banking organizations should be *accountable* to their performance.		.85		
Q25 I think the *more meaningful social activities* that banking organizations engage in, the *more preferences* will be given to them.		.83		
Q21 I think *bad management is correlated to financial crisis* in banking organizations.		.81		
Q22 I think *accountability* is correlated to financial crisis in banking organizations.		.77		
Q23 I think *transparency* on monitoring financial products in banking organizations to the public is lacking.		.72		
Q20 I think banking organizations should bring forth *programs and policies to enrich wealth knowledg*e of banking service staff.		.60		
Q10 I think banking organizations should *take a looser attitude to support greener industries.*			-.86	
Q11 I think banking organizations should *comply more than minimum regulations.*			-.67	
Q2 I feel banking organizations should *work closely with Hong Kong government* for adjusting banking conduct.			-.66	
Q8 I think banking organizations should *build staffing capability* in promoting financial products.			-.55	
Q13 I think banking organizations should *engage in community development.*			-.51	
Q19 I think banking organizations should *invite representative customers* in meetings before promoting new financial products.				.67
Q17 I think banking organizations should *provide lending options to low income individuals* and small business.				.61
Q7 I think banking regulators should *examine the suitability of advertisements* on financial products for social responsibility.				.56

Rotation Method: Oblimin with Kaiser Normalization

6.1 Mean Scores in Four Factors

A 7-point scale ("1" = strongly disagree, "7" = strongly agree, "0" = not relevant) was used in the questionnaire which consisted of 4 factors – (A) internal management –implementing meaningful strategy, (B) external management – accountability for creditability, (C) internal management - process and people management, and (D) external management – consideration of stakeholders. The following Table 4 with statements showing the mean scores of 5.33 and over.

Table 4. Results of Descriptive Statistics, Means of Four Factors

Scale	N	Mean	SD
Factor 1 (Internal management –implementing meaningful strategy)	65	5.97	.93
Factor 2 (External management – accountability for creditability)	65	5.41	1.09
Factor 3 (Internal management - process and people management)	65	5.49	.95
Factor 4 (External management – consideration of stakeholders)	65	5.33	1.04

Table 5 demonstrates that Respondents with age over 31 and up are more concerned on banks implementing strategy as the mean scores are over 6.00 out of a 7-point scale, especially the age group of 31-40 years with the highest mean score of 6.37.

Table 5. Factor 1 and age

Question		N	Mean	SD	F-Value
Factor 1	19 or below	2	5.00	.24	4.2*
	20 - 30 years	31	5.74	.93	
	31 - 40 years	19	6.37	.64	
	41 - 50 years	3	6.28	.63	
	51 years or above	8	6.30	.76	
	Total	63	6.00	.86	

Notes: *denotes significance at 5% level.

Table 6.0 demonstrates that respondents who are "Administrator" are more concerned on banks implementing strategy as the mean scores are over 6.42 out of a 7-point scale. Actually, the rest of the listed occupations in the questionnaire have a high mean score – over 6.00, except "Clerks" – 4.38.

Table 6. Factor 1 and occupation

Question		N	Mean	SD	F-Value
Factor 1	Administrator	8	6.42	.7868	8.3*
	Professional	24	6.18	.68	
	Skilled Worker	6	6.25	.56	
	Worker in service sector	12	6.23	.77	
	Clerk	7	4.38	.85	
	Others	4	6.05	.63	
	Total	61	6.01	.91	

Notes: *denotes significance at 1% level.

6.2. Working Experience and Perception

Referring to Table 7. Working Experience in the above, most respondents have over 5 years working experience with a rather low percentage of 4.8 in the range of 6 months to 1 year. And, Table 12.0 and Table 13.0 show respectively that this age group has the highest mean score in factor 1 – internal management of implementing meaningful strategy (mean score - 6.25); and factor 2 – external management – accountability for creditability (mean score – 5.71). Factor 1 and 2 are the critical areas for bank practitioners to consider when executing CSR activities.

Table 7. Working Experience

Working experience	Frequency	Percent
Less then 6 months	6	9.7
6 months to 1 year	3	4.8
Over 1 year to 3 years	13	21.0
Over 3 years to 5 years	4	6.5
Over 5 years	36	58.0
TOTAL	61	100.0

Table 8. Factor 1 and working experience

Question		N	Mean	SD	F-Value
Factor 1	Less then 6 months	6	4.69	.68	5.0*
	6 months to 1 year	3	5.78	1.17	
	Over 1 year to 3 years	13	6.07	.65	
	Over 3 years to 5 years	4	5.54	1.14	
	Over 5 years	*36*	*6.25*	*.83*	
	Total	62	5.99	.92	

Notes: *denotes significance at 5% level.

Table 9. Factor 2 and working experience

Question		N	Mean	SD	F-Value
Factor 2	Less then 6 months	6	4.58	1.01	3.7*
	6 months to 1 year	3	4.83	.99	
	Over 1 year to 3 years	13	5.41	1.27	
	Over 3 years to 5 years	4	4.13	2.03	
	Over 5 years	*36*	*5.71*	*.74*	
	Total	63	6.00	.86	

Notes: *denotes significance at 5% level.

7. Conclusion

Based on the above analysis on ranked mean, one-sample T-test, independent T-test of age group and working experience, correlation and Ishikawa diagram, an organization needs to have the followings in place in order to become a social responsible bank to meet customer requirements:

Establishing a mindset of risk management, business ethics and corporate social responsibility through internal management of people and process;

Understanding complex financial products through external management of economic situation and internal management of people and process for the benefit of investors, management and community;

Protecting rights of customers with setting up channels for customers to address complaints through internal management of implementing strategy for financial crisis and external management for stakeholder consideration, accountability and creditability.

All in all, management of a banking organization shall have appropriate policy in place for establishing positive organizational culture and social responsible mindset of staff members. If commitment for becoming a social responsible banking organization between management and staff, and accountability and creditability can be demonstrated through effective and efficient internal audit, customers and the community will be benefited with risks reduced and quality enhanced

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