

Retail sector employees' perceptions on managerial support for CSR initiatives

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Abstract

The approach to Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in organizations at both the micro and macro levels is critically important since it characterizes the relationship among stakeholders that is used in part, to define and control the strategic direction and performance of an organization. While profit maximization is important, an ethical moral compass is also critical. This study investigates whether or not managers are perceived by employees to be applying ethical principles and strategic thinking in their CSR initiatives. The purpose of the study is twofold. Firstly, to highlight that managers perceive that their CSR attitudes and behaviour are effective and that societal best interests prevail in all their dealings with employees and other stakeholders. Secondly, to ascertain whether employees perceive that their managers CSR attitudes and behaviours are inadequate to meet employee expectations and that their attitudes and behavior are superior in this regard. Structured self-administered questionnaires were collected from four supermarkets in Johannesburg. The sample consisted of fifty employees who were requested to complete the questionnaires. The sample of fifty employees in each of four anonymous retail supermarkets from different stores in Johannesburg, South Africa, responded to a structured questionnaire concerning CSR initiatives in the workplace. In general, the results of the research indicated that employees perceive that the CSR initiatives in place in their organizations were inadequate in that societal best interests were not always met. In addition, the managers' attitudes and behaviour concerning CSR in terms of the organization's performance were deemed to be poor.

Key words: CSR, society, employee expectations, managerial actions, supermarkets, retail stores



Source: http://img.ehowcdn.com/default/ds-photo/getty/article/41/254/89793425_XS.jpg

Concept clarification-Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) refers to companies taking responsibility for their impact on society. There is empirical evidence that suggests that CSR is increasingly important to the competitiveness of business enterprises. It can bring benefits in terms of risk management, cost savings, access to capital, customer relationships, human resource management, and innovation capacity (<http://ec.europa.eu>).

The notion of Corporate Social Investment relates to financial and non-financial investment in socially responsible initiatives which uplift society in some way or other. These corporate initiatives are undertaken to assess and take responsibility for the company's effects on the environment and its impact on social welfare. The term generally applies to the efforts of companies that go beyond what may be required by regulators or environmental protection groups (<http://www.investopedia.com/terms/c/corp-social-responsibility.asp>).

Introduction

Organizational intellectuals and academics have been theorizing, investigating and interrogating, CSR for almost forty years (Carroll, 1979; Margolis & Walsh, 2003). The indispensable elements of the phenomenon, as termed in the literature, have remained constant. It is important to determine how employees as stakeholders view the response of their managers to societal needs through CSR initiatives. CSR needs include how employees are treated in the workplace. The literature suggests that a stakeholder approach with regard to CSR is critical for good business. Every business, in pursuing its unique mission and vision, must seek to add value to the society in which it operates. In Stakeholder Theory, a stakeholder is considered to be any individual or group who may affect or be

affected by and impacted upon by the policies, actions, decisions, practices, or goals of a business (Freeman, 1984; Post, Lawrence and Weber, 1999). Stakeholders refer to those who have a direct or indirect interest or share or right in the outcomes of the actions of a business. Retail businesses and their managers should be aware of who their stakeholders are. In addition they should be aware of the right and responsibilities (economic, legal, environmental, ethical, political) of the stakeholders? Which strategies, actions or decisions should the business follow to meet its obligations and responsibilities to its stakeholders? What would be considered to be equitable for the stakeholders in terms of CSR activity on the part of the retail business in question? There is an obligation on the part of business to be involved in community affairs, and this is not only the preserve of a government (Chrisman and Carroll, 1984) in their determinations to merge profits, business objectives, and support of society. Drucker (1996) concurs with this analysis by stating that each and every business must assume full responsibility for the effect it has on its employees, the environment, the customers and indeed all stakeholders. CSR should be part of the DNA of every enterprise and it is important to align business interests with those of all the stakeholders, not only the shareholders (See Venn diagram 1) CSR is thus a huge challenge from a strategic management planning and triple-bottom-line perspective (one which incorporates profit, people and planet). The concept of CSR is not a new one (De Bakker et al., 2006). In essence the concept can be traced back to the early part of the twentieth century. The contemporary notion was forged by Bowen (1953), who recommended that businesses should take cognizance of the socio-economic consequences of their operational decisions. Ellen et al. (2006) suggested that consumer attitudes and beliefs about CSR standards/performance are understated and multifaceted rather than general and simple. Stakeholders tend to respond positively to genuine CSR efforts which are humane in

nature and they respond negatively to those that are egotistical and based on the ethic of self-preservation and merely profit maximization.

The literature on CSR is replete with definitions of what CSR entails. Basu and Palazzo (2008) for example have stated that CSR is “the process by which managers within an organization think about and discuss relationships with stakeholders as well as their roles in relation to the common good, along with their behavioral disposition with respect to the fulfillment and achievement of these roles and relationships”. Ihlen et al. (2011), however, propose that Bourdieu’s (1986) notion of social capital provides us with a constructive approach to the power constituents within the relationship between a business and its various stakeholders. Kotler and Lee (2005) simply state it to be the “commitment to improve community well-being through discretionary business practices and contribution of corporate resources”. Rawlins (2005) asserts that businesses “do good by doing good”, as in CSR, become employers of choice, neighbours of choice and vendors of choice. For him, the critical question is whether a business is accountable beyond its mandatory financial obligations.

Kotler & Lee (2005) view CSR from a marketing perspective and point out its importance or relevance for brand differentiation and thereby making a business more appealing to customers. They also established that there is nowadays a positive trend in increased corporate giving as a strategic imperative and also more reporting of CSR activities by businesses. Luo and Bhattacharya (2006) state that where there are CSR initiatives with specified financial, marketing, and communication objectives, these can serve to enhance the visibility of a business as well as customer satisfaction. Ultimately, this will hopefully produce positive performance, motivate employees and result in long-term financial gains. Basu and

Palazzo (2008: 124) suggest a process view to CSR: “Such a process view of CSR locates the phenomenon as an intrinsic part of an organization’s character (i.e., the way it goes about making sense of its world), with the potential to discriminate it from other organizations that might adopt different types of sense making processes”. McElhaney (2009) defines CSR as a business strategy that is integrated with core business objectives and core competencies of a business and is crafted to create added value.

Carroll et al. (1999) identified four critical levels of CSR involvement, namely economic, legal, ethical and philanthropic responsibilities of a business. In a sense this could be termed a ‘Social Economy’ which gives rise to job creation in new enterprises and which also adds to efficient competition and increased entrepreneurial activity. In the South African context this is especially important as it helps to meet the needs of the marginalized communities and promotes voluntary work in and training for the community. Socio-economic challenges are generally the responsibility of the state, and where the private sector embraces CSR and partners with the government, this ultimately increases employment within disadvantaged communities. From a moral and ethical perspective the *raison d’être* for people and organizations should be the service of mankind. Prudence should go far beyond profit maximization. Surely the entire point of business is to be of service to someone else? The reward of service will be more service in which organizations must be induced to take a more holistic look at CSR. Organizational sustainability is impossible without considering the sustainability of society and the environment. If organizations wish to be sustainable entities they should be guided by a moral compass and act responsibly by investing socially- thus becoming true corporate citizens. Respect for the rights and legitimate interests of all stakeholders should prevail. The recent global financial turbulence in markets and related crises

demand that organizations become truly active and effective CSR role-players. What are the appropriate roles of supermarkets and their managers in CSR initiatives given that they deal with a public at large which emanates from diverse socio-economic strata.

There has been a highly significant growth of the social economy in the majority of industrialised nations (Defourney and Borgaza, 2001) which is important, since it demonstrates the critical requirement for business to become more active in nurturing and supporting societal needs particularly at a time in which socio-economic challenges are manifesting themselves at alarming rates. Governments alone cannot provide the required support which is needed to improve the plethora of social ills prevailing in society.

It is also clear that strong leadership demarcates businesses that are considered to be successful in driving CSR however this requires the buy-in from all employees of a company. CSR implies that a business should be held accountable for its actions that affect employees, the community and the broader environment. It also strongly implies that any negative business impacts on employees and society must be acknowledged and remediated against. Businesses such as supermarkets should also strive to use some of their resources (human and financial) to promote the uplifting of the immediate community from which their customers emanate. CSR should form an integral part of the operating strategy of a business enterprise. CSR as a fundamental facet of Corporate Citizenship cannot simply be circumvented (Weiss, 2003). This applies to all businesses including supermarkets irrespective of size or location.

CSR approaches and theories

Various efforts have been made to formalize and regulate CSR-related appraisals, measurements and reporting (ISO 14000,

AA 1000). The theory of CSR and its application, is however very dynamic, diverse and very environmentally specific. It is often critiqued as being a mere branding tool, and as “green-washing” corporate conduct, boardroom talk, and a public relations exercise (Frankental, 2001).

The Instrumental Theory approach, however, views a business primarily as a tool for the creation of wealth and social activities as a means to economic performance. These theories include two distinct approaches (Friedman, 1970, McWilliams and Siegel, 2001). Friedman ignored the very real positive benefits of having effective CSR policies in place which ultimately reduce costs and increase profits for shareholders. In the first approach profit maximization for shareholders is paramount for assessing CSR actions. In the second approach the focal point is to gain a strategic competitive advantage. Within this approach three distinct methods can be identified. Firstly there is social investment method which resides in a competitive context (Carroll, 1999; Sen et. al., 2001). This approach suggests that investment in philanthropic activities can be used by a business to improve its competitive advantage by creating social value. Secondly, the notion exists that a business possesses a range of dynamic capabilities, based on natural resources, which should be leveraged to support CSR (Pelozo and Shang, 2011; Obermiller et al., 2009). The premise here is that a business can outdo the competition by interfacing the human, organizational and environmental elements over a period of time to create optimum value-creating strategies. A third approach concentrates on the base of the economic pyramid which focuses on profit maximisation (Narwal and Sharma, 2008). Consequently the focus is not limited to a single societal challenge, but rather a myriad of opportunities in which to innovatively tackle a wider spectrum of societal challenges.

In the Integrative approach to CSR, the business concentrates on identifying, responding to, and meeting social demands. For many decades, many experts have argued that the purpose of a company is to maximise shareholder value and also to embrace broader social issues. In fact, companies are increasingly being requested to articulate their purpose in society and their directors are invariably held accountable to deliver on the stated purposes. Consequently controlling ownership should be in the hands of those who can ensure that the directors discharge their responsibilities as is the case with firms such as Bosch and Tata (The Economist March 21st, 2015).

This notion has greater social legitimacy and greater acceptance. It is essentially the stakeholder approach. This is basically the principle of public accountability, the identification and careful management of all stakeholders and CSR actions as they impact upon society (Freeman, 1984; Mitchell et al., 1997; Basu and Palazzo, 2008).

Business is progressively uncovering a role in society which surpasses its main functions of creating jobs and products and services, maximizing shareholder value and then paying taxes. It now also required to balance stakeholder needs and essentially elevate their stakeholder levels of satisfaction in terms of CSR activity. If the expectations and perceptions of the stakeholders involved with a business are met with regard to CSR, then the reputation of that business is enhanced (Hess and Warren, 2008).

The South African scenario

The King Committee of Corporate Governance under the chairmanship of Mervyn King, a Senior Counsel and former Judge of the High Court of South Africa and Professor Extraordinaire at the University of South Africa, was commissioned by the Institute of Directors in Southern Africa

(IoDSA) to develop a set of governance principles in 1992. These were aimed at promoting the highest standards of corporate governance within the South African business community. The first King Report on Corporate Governance (King I) was published in 1994 and set global standards of best practice. The second King Report on Corporate Governance was published in 2002 (King II). The third King Report on Corporate Governance (King III) was published in 2009. The principles and practices identified in King III, are a requirement for listing on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange (JSE). Non-listed companies are also expected to take note of, and adhere to the King III standards as much as possible. Principles must be applied (can be flexible) but then an explanation must be given as to why a business has deviated from international best practice. In terms of King III, social aspects are important for companies since they operate in a milieu and not in a vacuum and thus cannot ignore societal needs. Businesses should carefully consider local and global financial crises, climate change issues, ecological overextension, radical transparency, and the increased expectations of stakeholders who want to ensure and perpetually safeguard against any adverse impacts which may be made in breach of human rights or societal values in terms of the social contract.

The King III Report expressly defines Corporate Social Responsibility as *“Business decision making linked to ethical values, compliance with legal requirements and respect for people, communities and the environment proved by a comprehensive set of policies, practices and programmes that are integrated throughout business operations and decision-making processes that are supported and rewarded by top management”*. (www.iodsa.co.za/.../King_Co_de_of_Governance_for_SA_2009)

It is the responsibility of the board of directors of a retail group to create the

corporate strategy for CSR, and provide the overall direction as well as define the mission and/or vision which incorporates CSR. They also have authority to hire, compensate and dismiss the CEO and other top management employees. Most importantly, they control by monitoring, evaluating, and sometimes supervising top management. The board also reviews and approves the use of resources and care for the shareholders' and other stakeholders' interests. So while the Board does not manage the implementation of CSR policies, of for example a supermarket, they direct them. Given the unfortunate agglomerated deprivations including the social evils of the Apartheid regime, critical aspects for organizations to consider include good corporate governance as well as ethically and socially responsible investment. The monitoring of businesses with regard to CSR and encouragement of a climate of CSR are important.

Society demands greater commitment from business and increasingly demands changes in how businesses conduct their operations. In addition to honest reporting on the financial status of a business, CSR also requires that businesses support government in its initiatives to tackle the myriad of challenges to the environment and its actions with regard to social developmental practices. Business is continually probed to report on how its profits have been actually used to benefit society. Many businesses mention projects and donations on their websites as aspects of corporate social investment and CSR, but very few disclose the actual contributions that are supposedly made and their perceived benefits to society. Very often what is reported is paltry in the 'big picture' and in reality is miniscule in terms of actual amounts spent. This aspect needs to be further interrogated to ascertain if indeed it is especially prominent in the retail sector.

Supermarkets have a role to play in enabling South Africans to provide for their own needs, while households seek to

improve themselves and contribute to their communities. Consequently retail businesses need to make a quantifiable contribution to sustainable economic development. This can be achieved by augmenting and developing skills in the community by actively supporting projects that boost entrepreneurship and aid society in becoming sustainable. Retail stores have a role to play in helping to alleviate poverty. They can play a role in providing employment opportunities and also in supporting and empowering the local communities in which they operate. Managers of retail stores should articulate the strategic vision of their Board of Directors. This implies that make sound decisions relating to CSR and serve as role models while seeking to increase the welfare of all stakeholders. The policy of a Board of Directors concerning CSR should be carefully articulated, communicated and monitored. This is especially important for managers in retail stores and the employees that they oversee. This is fundamentally important given the role of CSR in enhancing company reputation and image in addition to improving the financial status of the business, while being guided by a 'moral compass'.

It is within the above context that the researchers conducted a research study at four anonymous retail supermarkets which was aimed *inter alia* at studying the extent to which employees perceive their managers to be embracing CSR as an operational imperative. The retail industry has a responsibility to promote business that is in line with ethical conduct and must take cognizance of what it entails to be a good corporate citizen. Merely complying with the legal imperatives required to operate a business is no longer an adequate approach. Retailers need to consider their social and economic impact on the communities in which they conduct business and the extent to which CSR is prominent. The research sought not only to derive an analysis of the existing situations concerning CSR at four supermarkets but

also produced interesting findings which are presented to show changes that are required to support effective CSR. The study also suggests what processes are required to be implemented by retail store managers to bring about meaningful CSR so as to ensure business sustainability.

The role of supermarkets

Supermarkets are large retail stores that operate on a self-service basis, selling *inter alia* groceries, fresh produce, meat, dairy products, bakery items and sometimes an assortment of nonfood goods. Supermarkets in South Africa are generally stores which are located in large numbers in cities and towns and their prevalence is increasing in outlying areas where they have to a large extent replaced the traditional cafes and grocery stores that were so prevalent up to the 1980's. As a rule they generally have decorative display facilities, and their primary advantages are their often low and enticing prices and shopping convenience factors. (<http://www.shopriteholdings.co.za/OurGroup/Pages/History.aspx>).

The purpose of supermarkets globally should be to serve stakeholders, provide products and services and satisfy consumer needs. Shareholders and Boards of Directors allow their managers as their agents to take risks on behalf of stakeholders. Supermarkets are generally limited liability institutions that have huge responsibility to engage with society and support innovation and entrepreneurship which are necessary to allow local communities to develop. It is critical for their sustainability to prioritize stakeholders' needs.

Supermarkets as part of larger chains are thus responsible to shareholders and stakeholders. CSR basically stated, refers to satisfying the responsibilities as well as obligations that an organization has towards all of its stakeholders. When one scrutinizes certain corporate practices, such

as profits versus environmental protection, CSR assists in differentiating between stakeholder expectations and corporate obligations. Supermarkets strive to create value for all stakeholders and do not exist in isolation. Business ethics may well be an oxymoron to many, but stakeholders are critical role-players. Consequently supermarkets as responsible organizations should think of the economic and social impacts of their products and seek out the synergy between their interests and those of the other stakeholders. Paluszek (1995:49) articulates that advocates of CSR must be committed to profits as well as the community where the profits are created. He further asserts that a business should not only operate within its traditional bounds but equally strive to improve the standard of living by generating jobs, offering products and services and paying taxes. It should thus also equally strive to demonstrate support for employees, empower customers and investors, and consider supporting the needs of local, regional, national and other members of the SADC community.

CSR will certainly enhance the reputation of a business as being morally bound to integrity, a rational discretionary choice bringing in economic benefits (Werther & Chandler, 2006). It is also a means for enhancing brand equity and sales and improving the credibility and character of a business which will stand it in good stead in turbulent economic times.

Global society has established norms and guiding principles or standards of conduct which are both legal and implied, and which are intended to guide businesses in their endeavours to improve their bottom-line' and make profits. The increasing of profits should not impair society in any shape or form. Supermarkets as legal entities, are artificial persons' and thus have rights and responsibilities. They are owned by shareholders but exist independently of them. Their CEOs, directors and managers have a fiduciary obligation to protect the investments of shareholders. In South Africa

there are no special laws that standardize CSR activities but there are a series of laws that speak about the responsibility of organizations towards society in general. Critically where there are good employee relations this will have a significant impact on a business's operations. It in part explains lower employee turnover rates, increased productivity, greater employee motivation and loyalty. Businesses should be concerned about their CSR performance as this invariably provides a competitive advantage in attracting applicants' (Turban & Greening, 1997).

Study objectives

In this study the researchers were primarily concerned with supermarket employees' perceptions of the conduct and attitudes of their managers' to CSR initiatives in terms of managerial attitudes and conduct. Are supermarket managers embracing CSR as per head office guidelines or are the intransigent? Furthermore are the managers perceived to be role models by their employees? The study sought to evaluate the gap between anonymous company policies and practices relating to CSR initiatives, and employee perceptions thereof concerning managerial actions. The study also suggested recommendations for operational areas requiring improvement.

Methodology

Research conducted by McDonald (2009) supports the conclusion that ethical philosophies and the values of management have a huge impact on the ethical choices as well as the behaviour of their employees. Where management is perceived to be unethical, this may lead to employees that are receptive to unethical conduct, paving the way for more serious wrongdoing or lack of appropriate actions such as failing to implement CSR initiatives in the workplace. The study deployed the qualitative approach that allowed the researchers to make interpretations and analytical deductions from gathered data and information.

This study was thus exploratory in nature and the researchers were primarily interested in employee perceptions of their managers' attitudes and behaviours with regard to CSR initiatives. The study targeted a random sample of fifty supermarket employees (including two suppliers) from diverse levels of operation in the organizational hierarchies from four different retail stores which requested anonymity for the purpose of this study. No inferences should be drawn as to links with any retail supermarket group operating in South Africa. Respondents were randomly selected so as to obtain responses to structured self-administered questionnaires at each of the retail stores. Senior management was reluctant to formally participate in the research for various reasons and so the research focused on lower-level employees who agreed to participate after hours and were solicited as they left work.

Respondents thus remained anonymous as did the retail group they worked for, and included employees at all levels except senior management. A shop steward and two suppliers also participated but accounted for only three respondents.

A simple questionnaire was designed and disseminated since it allowed contacts with otherwise inaccessible respondents, it is less costly than interviews and requires minimal human resources and allows time to think and take time in answering a question. Questionnaires are by their nature perceived as more anonymous and expand a geographic coverage area without increase in costs (Muchengetwa, 2014:52). Sampling is the process of selecting a portion of the population to represent an entire population (Diamantopoulos and Schlegelmilch, 2000). A sample is drawn as a result of constraints that make it difficult to cover the entire research population (Leedy and Ormrod, 2014). A sample comprising 50 employees from each of four supermarkets, including six at management or supervisory levels

and two suppliers and a shop steward were randomly selected and surveyed by making use of structured self-administered questionnaires. Each respondent received the same questions, in a consistent fashion. The sample was randomly selected to make sure that everyone in the sampling frame had an equal chance of being selected.

In order to generate relevant data for the study both primary and secondary sources were used. Primary data in this case included the information that the researcher discovered via the structured self-administered questionnaires (Creswell, 2009). Leedy and Ormrod (2014:80) state that such primary data is most valid, informative and generally truth-manifesting data for a researcher. The questionnaire was thus used to obtain facts and opinions. A literature review provided the researchers with an enhanced understanding of the research problem. The reviewed literature included, was generated from numerous e-sources, library books, journals and articles. The data was used to gain better insights on the research topic, to establish the basis for the theoretical framework and to design the questionnaire for retrieving the primary data. The data was also used to validate and compare the data gathered through the questionnaire to existing literature and articles on the research topic. Data analysis is the process of analysing data to determine results. Data analysis was conducted to reduce, organize and give meaning to the data. Data analysis involved working with data, categorising it (nominal), breaking it into manageable units, coding it and linking it and searching for patterns. Data analysis began together with data collection. The analysis techniques that were implemented were determined primarily by the research objectives and questions (Leedy and Ormrod, 2014).

The researchers identified patterns, features and themes. However it should be noted that responses were largely subjective in nature. Nonetheless the research was dynamic, situational, social, & personal and

the researchers explored, discovered and constructed and uncovered multiple realities relating to CSR in retail stores.

Research Questions

The relationship between manager and employee behaviours and attitudes were evaluated. Two research questions were proposed to demonstrate that managers of selected supermarkets have varied perceptions concerning issues and initiatives involving CSR, according to some of their employees, and they often overrate their behaviours and attitudes in this regard.

The first general proposition attempted to determine how the role of leadership and moral management inform CSR practices and if managers generally perceive that their CSR attitudes and behaviour are effective and societal best interests prevail in all their dealings with stakeholders.

The second general proposition was that employees view their managers as amoral and unethical and that they are more ethical and moral than those who lead them and they thus perceive that their managers CSR attitudes and behaviours are ethically and morally insufficient and that their attitudes and behavior are superior in this regard.

Respondents ticked their responses on the form provided which was designed and downloaded from SurveyMonkey and personally distributed to each respondent. This methodology reduces error due to interviewer variability and any differences in responses are due to true variation, not any inconsistencies in the conduct of interviews. Furthermore, any potential sources of error are reduced by standardization i.e. in question wording, memory, misunderstanding etc. The methodology also reduces intra-interviewer and inter-interviewer variability and thus makes it more likely to be valid. Each of the respondents experienced comparable working conditions. The response rate was 100 percent.

Even though the research findings cannot be generalized to all supermarkets as a whole, they nonetheless provided some indication of the risks around not being involved in CSR and how employee motivation may be negatively affected. Despite the fact that confidentiality was assured, respondents were initially not keen to respond to demographic variables and some failed to respond to education level and years of service in each of the supermarkets concerned until requested to do so. A total of 62 percent had been employed by their current employer for a period not exceeding eight years while 38 percent had worked between nine and fifteen years or more. A total of 44 percent of respondents had completed primary school level education while 56 percent had completed secondary school. A total of 24 percent had higher education qualifications. Employees thus had some level of education. The rationale for selecting the four retail stores to be studied was that each of them are representative of the greater South African retail picture but while each of them is similar in operation to retail groups which clearly do good work in the CSR arena, and have a desire to uplift society in their unique ways. However their employees do not necessarily concur that they in fact do so when it comes to managerial actions. This negatively affects their motivation and productivity levels in their capacities as employees' and internal stakeholders. Employees were not convinced that their respective stores led by managers who are not sold on the notion of CSR, are meeting their economic, social and environmental sustainability targets.

The Questionnaire

Use was made of structured self-administered questionnaires consisting of eight questions and an additional comments section which probed on CSR issues such as managerial attitude in the workplace. Questions were simply stated, unambiguous and intelligible. Generally this is convenient, shorter and easier for respondents to follow

as there are fewer open-ended questions and it is cheaper and quicker to administer. Unfortunately respondents cannot probe or be prompted and there are generally few open-ended or complex questions. The respondents could see the entire questionnaire before answering the eight questions posed and the additional comments section. Instructions to respondents stated that questions related to CSR and briefly explained the concept. They were requested to answer how they currently view CSR with regards to the immediate working environment and especially manager's attitude towards CSR and in the work climate in general. They were not requested to comment on how they would like CSR to be implemented. They were also informed that their responses would be anonymous. A number of key words/prompts were also included at the end to aid them in making additional comments if they so wished. These words included terms such as casual work, community support, charity, conflict, eco-friendly workplace, ethical trading, equity, fair trade, fairness, gender issues, health and safety, job satisfaction, part-time work, pay levels, philanthropy, role-ambiguity, shift work, sustainability, training, wages and work-life balance.

The above issues are critical in view of the current importance attached to CSR initiatives in all organizations. The self-administered questionnaires were completed during lunch breaks once permission was granted from the managers. Respondents were also engaged with after hours. Participation was voluntary in the research study. No undue influence was exerted to participate in the research. Participants were free to leave the study at any time without being required to furnish reasons for doing so. All participants responded to the questions.

The questionnaire included a Likert scale of measurement basis so that variables could be ranked. A Likert scale is a scale commonly involved in research that

employs questionnaires. It is the most widely used approach for ranking responses in survey. Respondents were requested to respond to simple questions on a five-point Likert scale ranging from: strongly agree, agree, neutral/neither agree nor disagree, disagree, strongly disagree. The questions based on the Likert scale were the following:

1. My organization is dedicated to promoting corporate social responsibility initiatives.
2. My organization visibly operates in a meaningful socially responsible manner.
3. I am satisfied with the CSR culture of my workplace.
4. Managers have a good understanding of CSR and what it entails.
5. My organization operates in a socially responsible manner.
6. My organization's work positively impacts people's lives in the broader community.
7. Non-managerial role employees have a better understanding of CSR than managers.
8. Managers in my organization are role models when it comes to CSR actions.

A ninth question (additional comments) provided respondents an opportunity to elucidate on aspects or raise related issues that were based on key concepts or prompts which were explained earlier in this article. Respondents gave their informed consent by completing and returning the questionnaires. To avoid ambiguity, the meanings of questions were explained when requested. The research sample was limited to respondents who volunteered to participate and the organizations in question remained anonymous throughout.

Research limitations and delimitations

Limitations' refer to the potential weaknesses in a study. While there are advantages to using questionnaires, these are also prone to social desirability bias (Gottsche, 2011). Questionnaires invariably

depend on subjects' motivation, honesty, memory and their ability to respond. While the intention was to obtain objective responses from the respondents, it was possible that emotive responses could be given by them. In such studies, respondents may also not be aware of the reason for a given activity and may not be sufficiently motivated to give accurate responses and they may seek to present themselves in a favourable light. An attempt was made to limit response bias by keeping respondents anonymous and they were also assured of the confidentiality of their responses. Question enabled the researcher to probe further by means of the additional responses' question.

The study was limited to assessing the effectiveness of supermarket managers in responding to CSR issues. The results of this study were limited in terms of generalizability as a random sample was utilized. Other constraints such as the time available to conduct the survey hindered the necessity of including a larger sample size (50 respondents from a population of 185). Incomplete questionnaires were also a limitation to the study as some individuals who participated did not complete the survey instrument accurately or make any comment in the additional question section. The sample of respondents consisted of 17 female and 33 male employees. Senior management were totally excluded since they did not wish to participate.

Delimitations' are defined as those characteristics that limit the scope and define the boundaries of a study. The delimitations were under the control of the researcher. The focus of this study was on assessing the effectiveness of managers in CSR issues from only four supermarkets from four different groups, and did not investigate the effectiveness of CSR initiatives of the supermarket groups as a whole. The study was also only confined to one city, namely Johannesburg.

Table 1. Demographic profile of respondents

| Total (n=50) | Male 33 | Female 17 | Total (n=50) |
|-------------------------|----------------|------------------|---------------------|
| Racial group | | | |
| Black | 28 | 16 | 44 |
| Coloured | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| Indian | 3 | 10 | 3 |
| White | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Age | | | |
| 18-30 | 13 | 4 | 17 |
| 31-40 | 10 | 9 | 19 |
| 41- 50 | 8 | 4 | 12 |
| 51-60 | 2 | 0 | 2 |
| Education level | | | |
| No formal education | 6 | 0 | 6 |
| Primary school | 15 | 7 | 22 |
| High School | 16 | 12 | 28 |
| College or higher | 9 | 3 | 12 |
| Household status | | | |
| Single | 14 | 5 | 19 |
| Family | 19 | 12 | 31 |
| Work experience | | | |
| Prior work experience | 21 | 4 | 25 |
| No prior work | 16 | 9 | 25 |
| Union member | 29 | 6 | 35 |
| Non-union member | 11 | 4 | 13 |
| Full-time work | 31 | 4 | 35 |
| Part-time work | 2 | 13 | 15 |

Table 2. Respondents' length of service in the retail store

| Length of service | | Frequency | Percent |
|-------------------|--------------------|-----------|---------|
| Valid | Less than 1 year | 7 | 14.6 |
| | 1-2 years | 9 | 18.8 |
| | 3-5 years | 18 | 37.5 |
| | 5-10 years | 10 | 20.8 |
| | more than 10 years | 4 | 8.3 |
| | Total | 48* | 100.0 |

*Two external suppliers who responded were employed elsewhere

Table 3. Respondents' employment status

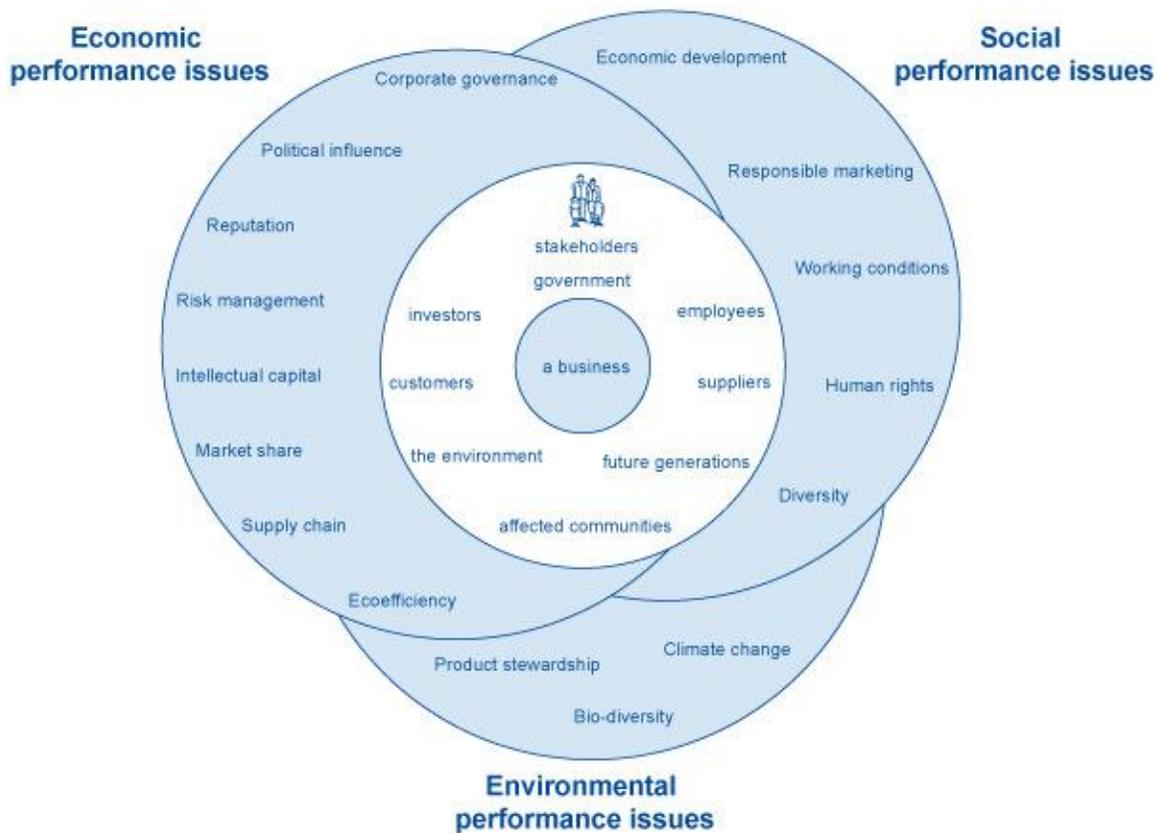
| Employment status | | Frequency | Percent |
|-------------------|-----------|-----------|---------|
| Valid | Part time | 15 | 30 |
| | Full time | 33 | 66 |
| | Total | 48 | 100.0 |

Table 4. Fields of employment of respondents

| Positions in which employed | Frequency |
|-----------------------------|-----------|
| Assistant manager | 2 |
| Cashier | 6 |
| Sales person | 3 |
| Security guard | 1 |
| Sales assistant | 4 |
| Clerk | 5 |
| Displayer | 2 |
| Driver | 1 |
| Merchandiser | 4 |
| Shop assistant | 2 |
| Supervisor | 3 |
| Part time - various roles | 15 |
| Total | 48 |

Figure 1. CSR duties and stakeholders

Source: http://www.metricstream.com/images/csr_keystakeholders_img.gif



Venn diagram 1. Source: http://www.unido.org/uploads/tx_templavoila/CSR_01.jpg

Findings

Although the study was based on subjective human perceptions and experiences it was valid in that it measured what it was supposed to (Hair et al., 2006). It was trustworthy in that the findings of the original data would in all probability recur and that the items in the questionnaire would yield similar results in another setting of a similar kind.

In terms of general proposition 1, that managers' perceive that their CSR attitudes and behaviour are effective and societal best interests prevail in all their dealings, the findings suggest that managers are essentially devoid of CSR notions or simply do not care in their pursuit of profit maximization. The general proposition is thus negated.

In general proposition 2 the employees perceive that their managers CSR attitudes and behaviours are insufficient and that their own attitudes, behavior and contribution to CSR exceed those of management. This general proposition was proved to be accurate and holds.

It was evident from the responses obtained that the researcher had underestimated the sensitivity of the subject under discussion. It was also evident that some responses had

a personal, emotional, psychological and even a political dimension to them. Employees, both male and female, were from diverse racial, educational, age, experience and organizational hierarchical backgrounds. Only 58 percent of employees (29) believed that their organization is dedicated to promoting corporate social responsibility initiatives. In addition, 24 percent (12) believed that their organization visibly operates in a meaningful socially responsible manner. It was rather interesting to note that only 8 percent of employees (4) were satisfied with the CSR culture of the workplace. Regarding CSR and what it entails, sixty six percent (33) felt that managers have a good understanding thereof. Only 18 percent (9) believed that their organization operates in a socially responsible manner while 24 percent (12) felt their organization's work positively impacts people's lives in the broader community. A total of 78 percent (39) had a firm belief that non-managerial role employees have a better understanding of CSR than managers. The most significant finding was that a mere 10 percent (5) employees considered their managers to be role models regarding CSR actions. Three managers suggested in the initial discussion that they were well versed in CSR initiatives and were in fact doing a great deal for the community in which they operated their business (general proposition 2).

Table 5. Participant responses

| Structured self-administered questionnaire Item # | Strongly agree | Agree | Neutral/neither agree nor disagree | Disagree | Strongly disagree | Total Responders (n=50) Male n=33 Female n=17 |
|--|----------------|-------|------------------------------------|----------|-------------------|--|
| 1.Organization is dedicated to promoting CSR initiatives | 3 | 26 | 0 | 19 | 2 | 50 |
| 2.Organization visibly operates in a | 0 | 12 | 18 | 15 | 5 | 50 |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|----|----|----|----|----|
| meaningful socially responsible manner | | | | | | |
| 3. Satisfied with the CSR culture | 0 | 4 | 13 | 30 | 1 | 48 |
| 4. Managers have a good understanding of CSR and what it entails | 4 | 29 | 11 | 2 | 0 | 46 |
| 5. Organization operates in a socially responsible manner | 0 | 9 | 9 | 21 | 11 | 50 |
| 6. Organization positively impacts people's lives in the broader community | 0 | 12 | 5 | 28 | 3 | 48 |
| 7. Non-managerial role employees have a better understanding of CSR than managers | 4 | 35 | 6 | 0 | 0 | 45 |
| 8. Managers are role models when it comes to CSR actions | 0 | 5 | 18 | 17 | 8 | 48 |
| 9. Additional comments | | | | | | 48 |

The area of additional comments yielded some interesting findings based on statements made by employees. This was completed by 48 respondents (96%) which in fact represents 100 percent of employees and is elucidated on below.

Thirty four employees (68%) in some way or other alluded to the idea that no training had been conducted for them in over a year and that consequently their staff development and promotion was impaired. Six women (12%) felt that gender inequality was prevalent in view of the fact that only men were employed as supervisors. Two male respondents (4%) stated they believed there was equal opportunity for the sexes and that gender equality thus existed in the

workplace. Gender discrimination in supervisory appointments was generally considered to be a blind spot within the supermarket industry based on 43 (86%) of the respondents comments. Forty five employees (90%) said they were paid low wages, poor conditions of service existed and managers were primarily to blame for this state of affairs. Thirty seven (74%) respondents believed that they were involved in CSR activities in their communities and some served in churches, shelters and assisted schools where possible. Their contributions were deemed necessary despite the poor wages they received from their employers.

Of the forty eight in-house store respondents, there were fifteen part time employees, some of whom were also casual employees and thirty three full time employees. The median for hourly rates in the supermarket sector are in the region of twenty one rand per hour for most levels of employ. According to respondents comments it is also evident that food retailers all face a shortage of skilled employees and this is most apparent in the areas of procurement and artisan skills. By engaging with stakeholders in the community from which part time employees are generally sourced and by engaging in closer collaboration and skills development support, part time work can become full time work. This will attract employees to the industry where higher salaries can be paid for newly acquired skills. Currently the

average cashier earns about R37 034 per annum (Payscale.com, 2015).

Retailers, both small and large, can partner and collaborate with government in terms of the South African government's 2011 National Development Plan (NDP). This will encourage the establishment of business incubators which will incorporate early-stage entrepreneurial training, artisan training and will also provide assistance to small-scale community farmers who would then be able to supply stores with fresh produce. This is preferable to turning away local producers who are trying to make a meaningful contribution but lack the resources and need support to develop their fledgling enterprises. They can potentially be incorporated into the supermarket supply chains.

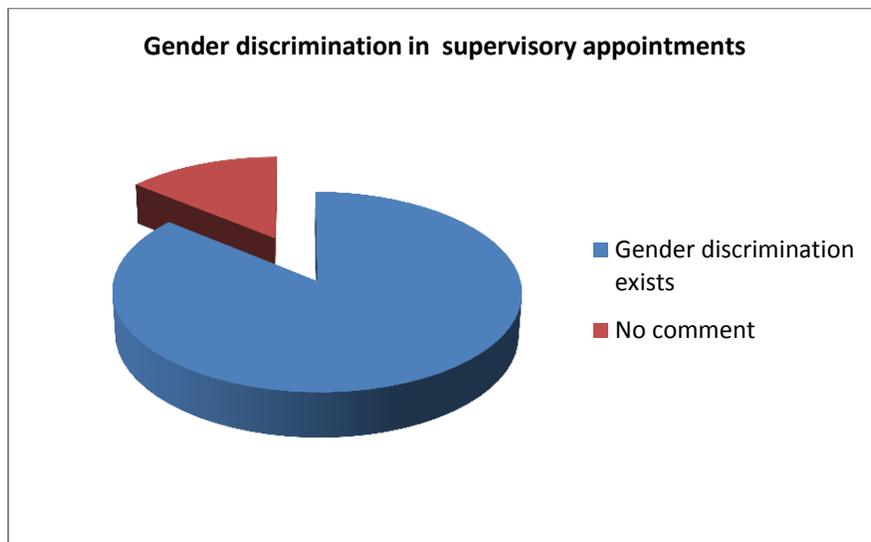


Figure 2. Gender discrimination

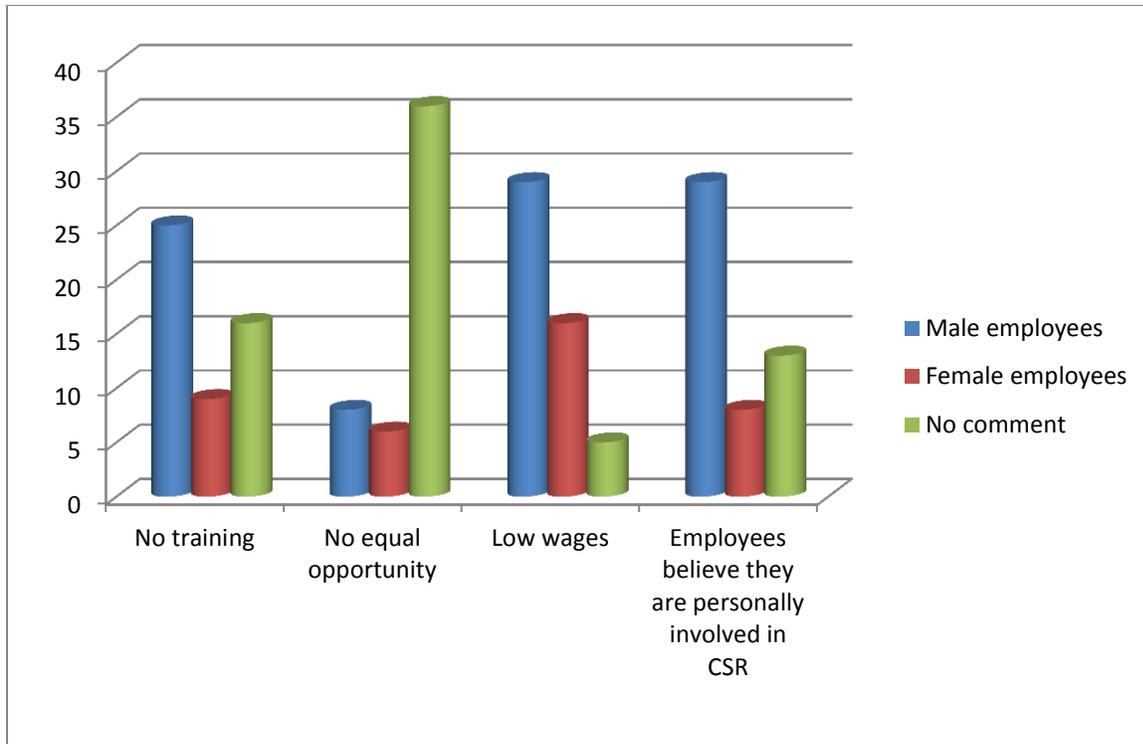


Figure3. Key issues unpacked

Twenty nine employees (58%) believed that although their managers assumed they were CSR effective, were in reality perceived by employees to be devoid of CSR activities. A trade union representative who was a shop-steward said that a mindset shift was still far off when it came to the store caring for the community. The majority of employees (90%) were not satisfied with the current levels of CSR activity and the related managerial activities in their organizations

While safety, basic conditions of employment and intrinsic work quality were not particularly concerning. Thirteen (26%) expressed concern in a lack of job security. Of these the majority reports were from women. Three (6%) stated that they felt threatened by casual workers who would accept less pay and perhaps cause them to lose their employment. This was due primarily to the managers' drive to hire what they termed cheaper workers'. Many employees were unskilled and most of the women that were employed were part-time employees.

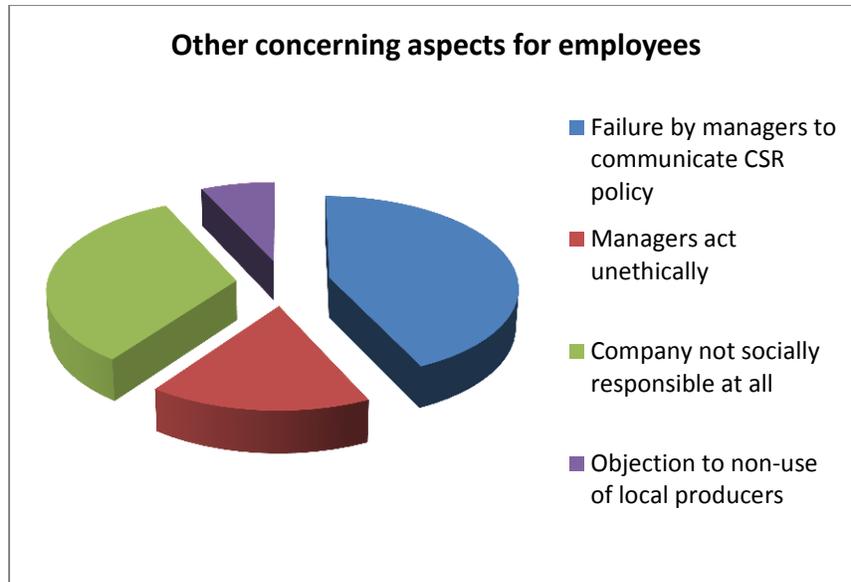


Figure 4. Concerning aspects for employees

Sixteen employees (32%) were aggrieved that they could not take leave to attend funerals, or care for their ill family members and blamed the managers for their insensitivity to family matters. Thirty-four (68%) mentioned that they were pleased with current transport arrangements to bus them to work daily from pre-determined 'pick-up' points. Twenty-nine (58%) of the respondents said that their company was not providing a working environment that was conducive to health and safety and that the managers paid lip-service to these issues. Forty-three (86%) felt that their company and especially their managers failed to effectively communicate its CSR policies to them. Seventeen respondents (34%) perceived that their store managers acted unethically at some point or other, and would, if possible would leave if they could find a 'better' job. Thirty-three (66%) considered their company not to be socially responsible at all. One explained that a school where his child was a scholar requested support in the form of a few dozen bread rolls for a school function and was promised support but none was actually forthcoming which was highly embarrassing for him. There were mixed reactions to whether or not their store was

environmentally friendly and two respondents noted that employee toilets were blocked for over a week in one supermarket. Six (12%) mentioned leaking pipes and three (6%) spoke of very poor lighting in a stock room in the same store. Four (8%) mentioned filthy food preparation areas that could not be effectively cleaned due to 'staff shortages'. Stress was cited as a factor for staff absence by twenty (40%), especially on weekend shifts. Short and often split shifts were considered to be very negative aspects of work (18%) since their morale was adversely affected and made them less efficient. Seven employees (14%) objected to the fact that local food producers were not considered as suppliers and that some suppliers were in fact situated as far as Cape Town. This highlighted the fact that in some cases, local communities are not considered a viable source of supply for items such as fruit and vegetables. The perception was that managers only conducted business with 'white' companies and as such, locals were not assisted to develop their SMMEs. This was a surprising finding given the nature of Broad Based Black Economic Empowerment (B-BBEE) requirements. Very little employee support in personal

issues was forthcoming in one supermarket according to seven respondents (14%) and there was no support for local communities or indeed any charitable giving of note according to forty four respondents.

According to nine employees (18%) energy was poorly used and water was wasted. Nine respondents (18%) felt that their company was eco-friendly and that their managers were environmentally concerned citizens. When it came to ethical trading only thirteen (26%) believed their company was ethical in its business conduct. A problem that was mentioned by 38 (76%) of

respondents was the highly fragmented and unstable staffing in certain departments, such as bakeries, where for example employees were moved to other departments due to employee absences Managers were criticized for allowing unskilled employees to work with higher skilled employees. Often less skilled employees impeded the efforts of higher skilled employees who accused them of wasting their time due to their lack of skills in operating certain types of machinery.

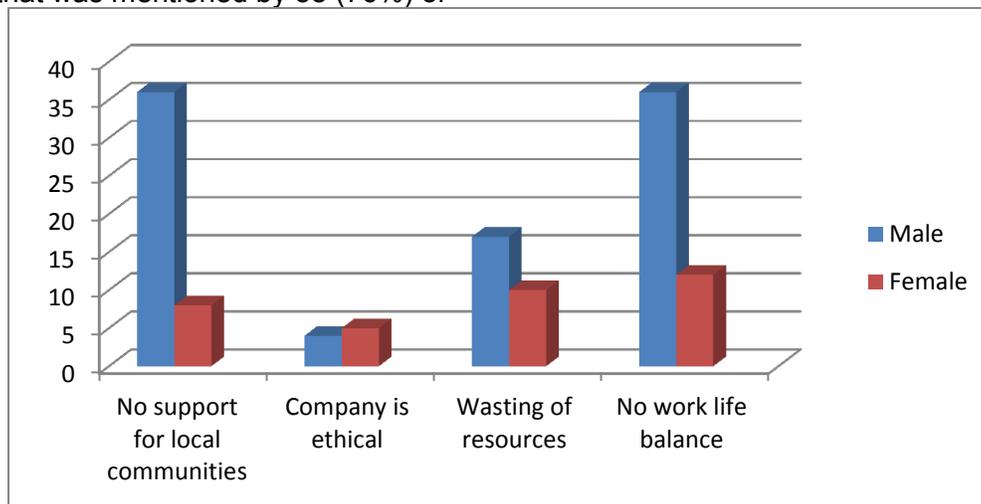


Figure 5. Other Gripes

Other issues mentioned were the rude attitudes and racist behaviour of supervisors and managers. Role ambiguity and conflict with managers was mentioned by ten employees (20%). Most felt there was no work-life balance and had very little personal time. Most respondents were also very unsatisfied with their pay. Various respondents (34%) said that the products being sold by their company were marked up as high as 500% in some cases and that customers were being crooked. One reported that in inventory control she was asked to state that a lesser amount of goods was actually in a store room. It was evident that on the issues of human responsibility, product responsibility and

environmental responsibility each of the supermarkets could do far better, especially if the managers showed greater awareness and understanding of CSR.

Conclusions and recommendations

Effective CSR requires every part of a business should understand how it can improve, and enhance the interactions with stakeholders. It also requires allowing stakeholders to see whether or not the business has sound CSR policies in a committed, open and transparent fashion and whether it is in fact involved in meaningful CSR activities that meet and exceed employee expectations. CSR needs

to be material and not merely a façade to boost a business's profits. The literature suggests that CSR also has a huge impact on reputational risk. The reputation of a business depends on the perceptions of stakeholders, and this means that each of them is a potential source of risk to be carefully managed through well - crafted CSR plans. According to Wagner et. al. (2009) such plans should manage the relationships with all stakeholders and especially employees. This is consistent with our findings. CSR needs to be a priority since it has a profound impact on employee motivation and also has potential to reduce reputational risks.

Since CSR is part of broader strategy via which supermarkets and other retailers generate reputational capital and manage a variety of risks so as to enhance their reputations, managers must be far more aligned towards CSR and what it entails in terms of the sustainability of their stores. CSR creates future opportunity and adds value to the business and society in a triple-bottom-line approach. Supermarkets should thus engage in strategic philanthropy by which their charitable acts improve operating conditions and enhance the quality of life in the communities in which they operate. They should consequently partner with NGOs and government bodies to help alleviate and solve the myriad of social, economic, and psychological problems which plague South African

society today. A strong moral compass is needed in the retail business in which, for example, cause-related marketing may flourish as supermarkets become corporate citizens. Of course as the old adage states 'charity starts at home'. With this in mind, how employees are treated is equally important since they are also 'customers' and important stakeholders in the community. Although employees may have diverse interests and expectations, the way they are managed will make or break the reputation of a supermarket. Supermarkets need to make tangible contributions to sustainable development and they can begin by developing skills and giving support to entrepreneurial enterprises in the community. They should provide at least, stable working conditions for employees that are relatively well paid - 'a fair wage for a fair job'. Managers must seek collaborative decision-making with head offices and employees in the 'trenches' and operate fairly and always in the public interest.

South African companies are obliged to comply with B-BBEE legislation in the course of implementing initiatives and programmes in their organisations that lead to inclusive employee and business demographics that are more representative of the country's population groups. They are also required to address the wider range of societal issues through "Corporate Social Investment" which incorporates CSR.

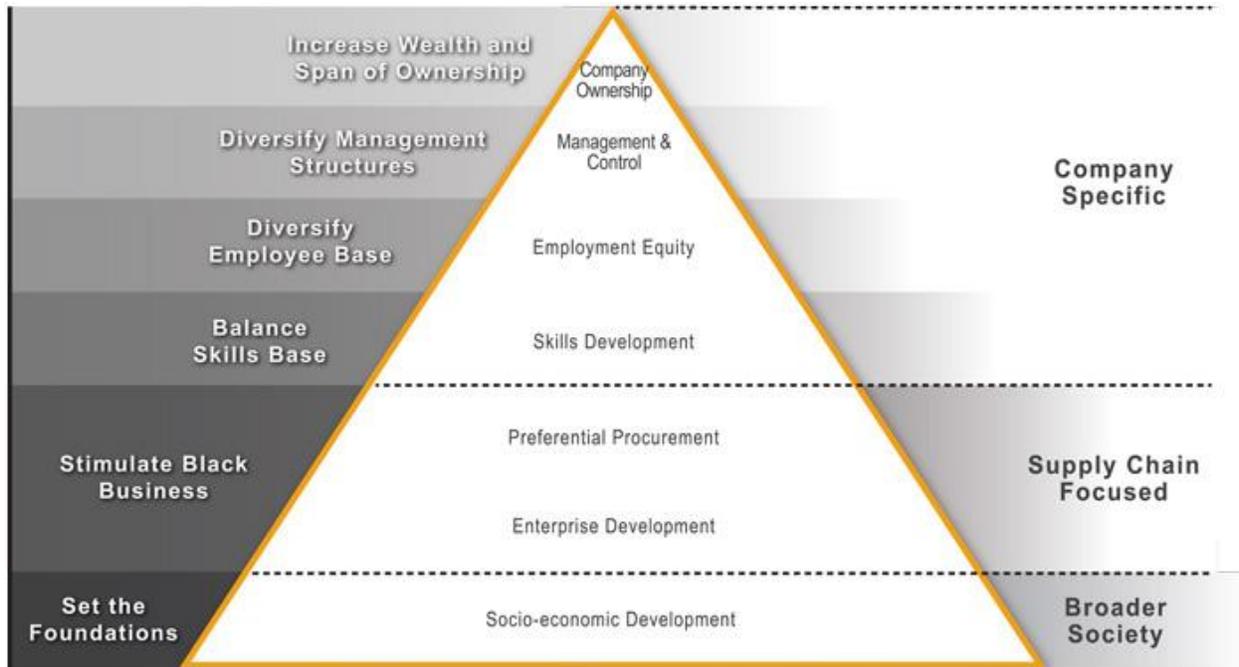


Figure 6. B-BBEE legislative framework (Source: The Moss Group and Dorrington Matthee Consulting, 2009)

Retailers need to demonstrate they are transformed entities that comply with legislation, failing which, their reputations may be tarnished and their businesses become unsustainable. Thus, in terms of the South African legislative framework as shown above, managers of stores need to, as a basic requirement, develop employee skills, adopt equity practices and promote diversity in the workplace in line with head-office policy where applicable. Preferential procurement policies and enterprise development also need to be followed as national socio-economic growth is sought (Sustainalytics, 2012). It is evident from the study that much work still needs to be done by some retail store managers concerning many employee issues and gripes.

Managers need to, as a matter of urgency, use strategic planning principles to address the relationship of the supermarket they manage with all the stakeholders involved. By identifying and knowing the interests of

stakeholders, they can be involved in and drive CSR and ultimately improve the reputation of the company and its profits. It is important to note that it is evident from the findings that some managers are not aware of the fact that legal requirements and ethical standards are not innately divergent to one another, but they are nonetheless not one and the same thing. Managers also need training on aspects relating to promoting quality of life and work for employees. They should be collaborating and obtaining the buy-in of employees in decision making regarding CSR. This is significant since the employees are also stakeholders within their respective communities. Managers should be cognizant of the interests of their employees and seek to align these with those of the company. The bottom line is that managers need to operate their stores so as to meet or exceed stakeholder expectations in all areas of operation. A suggested process model follows in Figure 7 below:



Figure 7. A Process Model for retail stores leading to successful CSR operationalization (Authors' own)

Mutually beneficial relationships should be non-negotiable to ensure a win-win scenario. CSR needs to be enacted with a genuine desire to support society and should not be an impression management tool. A sense of openness and transparency is vital concerning CSR and what a business is doing in this regard. Retailers should generally analyse their total value chain to identify areas, whether these be in either products or practices, where they can leverage their influence to go beyond legislative compliance and drive stronger ethical norms. In doing so, they can preempt the costs related to complying with future legislation and build a reputation as a strong corporate citizen (Sustainalytics, 2012).

When managers ignore CSR issues, either intentionally or not, or explicitly or not, this sends a negative signal to employees. Failure to enact CSR will invariably damage the image and reputation of the business. Managers should be instructed by their superiors and trained to demonstrate that their operations adopt CSR principles as a matter of course, and that these are effective, efficient, reliable, non-exploitative, and dependable in terms of serving societal

needs and boosting company reputation and sales. Stakeholder engagement must be at the core of any CSR strategy. If managers are deficient in awareness about their business's obligations to their stakeholders, this could create a serious legitimacy breach. The identification of stakeholders, and engagement with them, leads to highly effective management and decision-taking and decision-making in CSR activities and issues. Every business needs to demonstrate that it is responsible and responsive to societal needs and has shared interests with government as well as all the other stakeholders.

A business manager needs to monitor the effectiveness of CSR activities and adapt these where deemed necessary. It is the managers who as role models create and define the CSR culture that exudes a business. Once considered successful, CSR activities should be marketed externally to create awareness of the caring ethos which pervades the business. This should not be viewed however as a self-promotion exercise but rather as an acknowledgement of the organizations social contract with society. Benchmarks for measuring social and environmental

performance should be in place and there should also be mechanisms through which businesses can monitor and evaluate their CSR performances.

It is also important to be realistic about what a company can deliver concerning CSR and managers should not promise what the business simply cannot do. They should also work closely with head-offices where applicable and obtain inputs from community leaders as to what may be required. The integration of CSR into a supermarket's operational culture starts with top management who should collaborate with all stakeholders to launch the necessary mechanisms for an effective CSR policy and then embed it within the supermarket.

Further research studies should consider researching a larger sample that includes supermarket employees from across the nation. To monitor their CSR performance, the questionnaire could be accepted as an official instrument by supermarket groups and viewed as a tool to guide them on what they need to do to enhance their reputations and become more sustainable while supporting societal needs.

Managerial Implications: This study suggests that using employee data, to analyse the attitudes of managers to CSR, is relatively reliable and managers need to focus on effective CSR outcomes as well as their employees' expectations. If managers strive to effectively respond to CSR issues and to their employees' as stakeholders, who are very aware of and sensitive to business and social responsibility issues, they need to meet any moral obligation they have to society in general and not simply offer a façade of caring for stakeholders. More specifically, they need to identify and develop operational plans in congruence with head office strategies that consolidate employees' feelings of affective commitment and behavioral intentions concerning CSR.

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PTO...

Annexure 1.

**Structured Self-Administered Questionnaire
5 Point Likert Scale Survey**

Retail sector employees' perceptions on managerial support for CSR initiatives

The following questions ask you about CSR and its importance to you and your company manager. Circle the number that most closely indicates the extent to which the item is present in your current job. Your responses are totally anonymous and you are not obliged to complete this questionnaire- it is purely voluntary. Be as candid as possible. You may raise additional points of concern in question space number 9.

Please specify your role by checking the Respondent Type/s that most closely matches your position and place a tick alongside your role. Also complete the demographic profile questionnaire which is on the flipside of this one. Please ask if you are unsure about what a question is asking you to comment on.

| | |
|----------------------------------|--|
| Assistant manager | |
| Cashier | |
| Sales person | |
| Security guard | |
| Sales assistant | |
| Clerk | |
| Displayer | |
| Driver | |
| Merchandiser | |
| Shop assistant | |
| Supervisor | |
| Part time - various roles | |

Circle the correct numeric response to each question

Survey scale:

1=Strongly Disagree 2= Disagree 3= Neutral 4= Agree 5=Strongly Agree

Question

| | | | | | | |
|---|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | My organization is dedicated to promoting corporate social responsibility initiatives. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2 | My organization visibly operates in a meaningful socially responsible manner. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3 | I am satisfied with the CSR culture of my workplace. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4 | Managers have a good understanding of CSR and what it entails. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5 | My organization operates in a socially responsible manner. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6 | My organization's work positively impacts people's lives in the broader community. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7 | Non-managerial role employees have a better understanding of CSR than managers. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 8 | Managers in my organization are role models when it comes to CSR actions. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 9 | Additional Comments: | | | | | |

PLEASE COMPLETE SURVEY BY:

RETURN TO:

THANK YOU FOR YOUR WILLINGNESS TO PARTICIPATE!

18/12/2014

Prof A Nicolaides

Prof G Brown

