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Enhancing brand preference through corporate social responsibility initiatives in the Thai banking sector  
DOI: 10.1108/13555851011062296  
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**Abstract**  
Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to investigate the efficacy of three corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives on brand preference in the Thai banking sector. Design/methodology/approach – A 2 × 2 × 2 between subject experimental design was used to test the hypotheses in a bank setting. Three CSR initiatives were tested against a predictor variable of perceived brand quality and moderated by age, CSR predisposition and cultural values. The CSR initiatives comprised commitment to CSR; type of CSR programme; and transparency. Written vignettes disguised as press releases by the bank were used as stimulus materials and a survey completed by 219 consumers in Thailand. Findings – Overall, all three CSR initiatives had a modest but significant effect on brand preference. The level of influence varied according to age, CSR predisposition and cultural values. While older customers placed more emphasis on perceived brand quality overall it was also found that the type of CSR programme could significantly affect brand preference. In those groups high on the cultural value of individualism, commitment to CSR was found to be a strong contributor to brand preference. Similarly in those groups with a high power distance, brand preference was more influenced by CSR initiatives. Research limitations/implications – While CSR initiatives make modest improvements to brand preference overall, more substantial impacts occur under situational conditions. Discovering and exploiting such situations is critical to any firm making substantial investments in CSR. Practical implications – The differential impact of CSR initiatives on brand preference highlights the importance of carefully targeting stakeholders to optimise CSR investments. Communication strategies need to ensure that the appropriate message is designed for particular audiences. Originality/value – A specific dependent variable of brand preference is used in this study, together with three specific CSR initiatives and three moderating influences. In addition, perceived brand quality is utilised as a benchmark variable to test the strength of CSR initiatives. © Emerald Group Publishing Limited  

**Author Keywords**  
Banks; Brand image; Consumer behavior; Corporate social responsibility; Thailand  

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Document Type: Article
Source: Scopus