

# **Corporate Social Responsibility in Malaysia Housing Developments**

## **House-Buyers' Perspectives**

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#### **Abstract**

In recent decades, public awareness of corporate social responsibility (CSR) continues to increase. Today's consumers expect businesses to go beyond their profit agenda, and be socially responsible. The focus of this paper is the house-buyers' perspective of socially responsible housing developments in Johor Bahru, Malaysia. The study was designed to complement and triangulate the findings of developers' perspectives on CSR presented at the PRRES Conference in 2008. In this current paper, a qualitative approach, by way of house-buyer focus-group, was used to uncover house-buyers' criteria of basic housing development, levels of satisfaction with their current place of stay, their expectations on developers' social responsibilities, and factors influencing their purchase decisions. Research result showed that most house-buyers expect a socially responsible developer to provide more CSR features in their housing projects regardless of the type of property developed.

***Keywords: corporate social responsibility, housing development, house buyer, Malaysia***

## **INTRODUCTION**

Contemporary businesses confront intense pressures to address social concerns and socially irresponsible businesses can lose significant competitive advantage (Cleghorn 2004; Dirks 2004; Lewis 2003; Drucker 1993; Davis 1973, 1960). As a consequence, businesses see CSR as a value-adding strategy to enhance reputation by appealing to customers' sense of morality (Husted & Allen 2000). Today's consumers expect businesses to go beyond their profit agenda and be socially responsible (Brown & Dacin 1997; Creyer 1997; Ellen, Mohr & Webb 2000). CSR attracts public attention in Malaysia where many corporations integrate CSR into their business strategies (Md Zabid & Saadiatul 2002).

The company should be publicly accountable for their financial performance and social and environmental record (CBI 2008). More broadly, the value of CSR includes the extent to which companies should be socially responsible to various stakeholders and promote community improvement and sustainable development (CBI 2008; Idowu 2005). With the increasing public awareness on CSR, house-buyers prefer socially responsible developers who are sensitive to their housing needs.

House-buyers are instrumental for the success of a housing development, thus, this paper focused on elements of CSR from house-buyers' perspective, particularly their expectations for the provision of CSR features in housing developments. The study was designed to complement and triangulate findings of developers' viewpoint on CSR presented at the PRRES Conference in 2008. In this current paper, a qualitative approach, by way of house-buyer focus group, was used to understand house-buyers' criteria for housing, levels of

satisfaction with their current place of stay, expectations of developers' social responsibilities, and factors influencing purchase decisions. Research result showed that most participants expected developers to provide more CSR features in their housing projects regardless of the type of property developed.

## **BACKGROUND OF STUDY**

In this section we review past literature on CSR and follow with a discussion of housing development in Johor Bahru.

### **What is CSR?**

The intellectual roots of CSR can be traced back to the 19<sup>th</sup> Century when corporations were seen to be organically linked to their societal environment thus placing upon them the obligation to provide 'social service' transcending the mere generation of profits (Heald, cited in Frederick 1994). As a concept, Frederick (1994) states that CSR evolved in the 1910s when the role of corporate directors, as trustees for all stakeholders of an organization, was perceived as exceeding the narrow and sectional interests of shareholders or stockholders. As early as the 1930s, businesses have been educated on the need to be socially aware and responsible (Carroll 1979). The concept of CSR continued to attract public debate throughout the 1960s and 1970s as the United States was confronted by such pressing social problems as poverty, unemployment, race relations, urban blight and pollution parallel with its dynamically growing economy.

CSR definitions fall into 2 categories. First are those theorists who argue business is obliged to maximize profits within legal boundaries and minimal

ethical constraints (Friedman 1970; Levitt 1958). A second group of theorists advocate broader social obligations (Drucker 1993; Carroll 1979). It would appear from the literature that society adopts a normative stance requiring corporations to move away from their limited economic focus to fully recognize their wider obligations and responsibilities to society.

Bowen (1953) views CSR as the businessman's obligation to pursue organizational policies and decisions based on desirable social objectives and values. Businesses are not merely instrumental for the production of goods and services; they are forces that affect an entire society in diverse and complex ways (Epstein 1999). Thus, business should be ethically oriented and adopt the social values of human welfare and quality of life (Sharma & Talwar 2005).

Carroll (1979, pp.499-500) develops a classification of CSR widely adopted in literature (e.g. Lewin et al. 1995; Swanson 1995; Wood 1991). Carroll (1979) advocates that businesses must fulfil four responsibilities: economic, legal, ethical and philanthropic.

- Economic responsibility

As the basic economic unit in a market economy, a firm's prime social responsibility must be economic involving the production of goods and services at a reasonable profit. This CSR dimension is supreme as on it is predicated all other corporate social responsibilities.

- Legal responsibility

Businesses are expected to operate within the existing legal framework to achieve their objectives while meeting their economic responsibilities.

- Ethical responsibility

As not all ethical behaviour can be codified, businesses have an implicit social contract with society.

- Discretionary/Philanthropic responsibility

A corporation's must have an active but voluntary involvement in programs promoting human welfare and goodwill.

It is evident that stakeholder theory is a core element of the above definition of CSR. In the 1980s, the stakeholder concept was conceived by Freeman to complement and support the concept of CSR (Valor 2005). Stakeholder theory is based on the idea that corporations operate for the financial benefit of their owners, and the benefit of those with a stake in the business. Stakeholders include employees, customers, suppliers, and the local community (Sternberg 1997; Donaldson & Preston 1995). In other words, corporations are ultimately responsible and accountable to all the groups with a stake in the actions of the corporation (Freeman & Reed 1983).

To further clarify the nature of stakeholders, Trevino & Nelson (1999) classed stakeholders as primary and secondary. Primary stakeholders are those groups or individuals with whom the organization has a formal, contractual relationship and include customers, employees, shareholders, suppliers and the government. Secondary stakeholders are individuals or groups to whom the organization owes obligations but not in a formal or contractual arrangement. In stakeholder theory, organizations are responsible to their primary stakeholders and must deliver the best possible return or value to them. At the same time, organizations should not neglect their obligations to secondary

stakeholders even though they are not legally obligated (De George 1999; Trevino & Nelson 1999).

To uphold the interest of consumers, advocates of the concept of societal marketing believe a corporation should determine the needs, wants, and interests of target markets. The corporation should deliver superior products and services to customers in a way that maintains, or improves the well-being of consumers and society (Kotler & Armstrong 2004). The advocates of this concept claim business should balance three considerations when setting marketing policies: company profits, customer wants and society's interests.

Likewise, in the housing industry, developers identify what the target market wants to deliver superior products to house-buyers and anticipate the likelihood of market response. However, these tasks have to be done profitability (Carroll 1979). In line with Malaysia's national policy, housing developers must pay attention to protecting the natural environment and maintain the sustainability of the country's economic development (Singh 1994).

Therefore, all businesses, governments and citizens must act together to protect and improve people's living environment (Kotler et al. 2005). House-buyers do not look at house prices only; they also consider factors (Nanyang Siang Pau 21 December 2003) such as an environment conducive to their chosen style of living. To stay competitive, and be socially responsible, developers adopted strategies to include value-adding elements in their housing projects.

Holmes (2002) defines property-related CSR as primarily connected to environmental sustainability, as well as elements of ethical and social

responsibility. While Adair and Lay (2003) point out that property developers in the UK tends to focus on environmental issues, particularly in creating environmentally sustainable buildings and controlling energy usage; they nevertheless place less emphasis on social and community aspects. In general, property-related organizations view CSR as auxiliary to financial objectives. Consequently, CSR is carried out with the purpose of generating a better corporate image and reputation, with an expectation of enhanced profit (Frankental 2001).

In residential developments, projecting a positive brand image can give a developer more leverage than any other asset (New Straits Times 16 October 2004). A market survey in Malaysia revealed that, other than price and location, buyers rate a developer's reputation as the most important factor. Good image and reputation distinguish a developer from a competitor, engendering customer loyalty, and thereby allowing the company to occupy a unique position in the mind of a customer (New Straits Times 23 October 2004).

Sustainable development is promoted as a benefit for the general health and well-being of residents in housing developments (Wilkinson & Reed 2008). Sustainable housing development meets the housing needs of the present generation without compromising the interests of future generations (Chiu 2004). Thus, a simultaneous consideration of the present and the future in the built environment should be the starting point to implementing sustainable development (Oladapo & Olotuah 2007). Moreover, the quality and desirability of the physical environment in housing developments remains an issue (Betts & Ely 2005; Ring & Boykin 1986; Twichell 1947). Such

environmental factors include crowding of the land by buildings, mixing residential, business, and industrial uses, proximity to traffic, sanitary services, and essential community facilities.

Changing house-buyers' expectations, particularly of sustainable development, affects how many Malaysian developers approach housing-developments. As a consequence, over the last eight years, to attract buyers, developers provided more greens, landscaping, parks and recreational facilities. CSR features found in housing projects include more greens and landscaping, recreational parks, security facilities with gated and guarded features, sport club facilities, good infrastructure, attractive house design, and availability of community activities (Yam, Ismail & Tan 2008). A summary of CSR elements is depicted in Table 1.

Table 1: Summary of CSR elements in property

CSR elements	Examples
Environmental sustainability	Landscaping, sustainable timber supplies, environmentally-friendly materials, sustainable building designs
Social amenities	Recreational facilities, parks, play grounds, sport facilities, meeting places, schools
Safety of houses and surrounds	Safety of ingress and egress, and building materials, security facilities with gated and guarded features
Quality of the environment	Development density, proximity of public transportation, mix with industrial and commercial development, community activities
Sound infrastructure	Quality roads, wider roads
Quality product	Quality finishes and design

## **Housing development in the study area**

From a longitudinal study of buyer needs, Smith (1970) found that housing fulfils five needs: shelter, privacy, location, environmental amenities and investment. While house buyers desire a certain amount of each of these needs (Harris & Young 1983) these motivations relate closely to Maslow's (1970) hierarchy of needs.

From 1985-2004 housing developments in Johor Bahru underwent substantial change. The significant transformation indicates buyer preferences and requirements changed from basic shelter to quality living environment. Housing schemes, first introduced near Johor Bahru town-centre in the 1960s consisted of terraced, semi-detached, and detached houses, within a three kilometre radius of the town-centre. As Johor Bahru grew, housing spread to the outer bounds of the city to cater for the increased population.

In the early years, housing schemes merely comprised of houses with minimum finishes. However, since 2000 the housing market in Johor Bahru transformed due to an alarming crime-rate and the presence of new housing developers. New players introduced new features. These new features changed buyers' expectations and buyers pressured developers who responded to the changing market.

Continued economic growth for the past 10 years improved the well-being of people in Johor Bahru. Moreover, a person's awareness of CSR is closely associated with that person's education and wealth. The more educated and wealthier consumers are more likely to expect corporations to act responsibly (McWilliams & Siegel 2001). Likewise, as lifestyles evolve, purchasing

patterns change (Kelly 1991). Furthermore, social stratification and the influence of reference groups affect consumer behaviour (Black et al. 2003). While status aspiration and class identification guide neighbourhood choice, income presents as the constraint in buying a home (Coleman 1983). Buyers consider the basic features of a house and elements that improve their social status and quality of living.

Facing the problem of over-supply in Johor Bahru, most housing developers include CSR elements in their projects to improve competitiveness (Yam, Ismail & Tan 2008). Most developers who support CSR take it as a strategic tool to fulfil their obligation as a corporate citizen, and thereby improve marketability and financial performance (Carroll 1999; Lantos 2001; Maignan & Ferrell 2004; Maignan & Ferrell 2001; Yam, Ismail & Tan 2008). These developers view CSR as the provision of features and facilities above what is required by laws and regulations. They agree that CSR improves corporate reputation and project marketability (Maignan & Ferrell 2004; Maignan & Ferrell 2001; Yam, Ismail & Tan 2008).

### **Do buyers support socially responsible business?**

The field of *consumer behaviour* involves the study of individuals or groups while obtaining, using and disposing of products and services (Engel, Blackwell & Miniard 1995). Studies of *consumer behaviour* observe consumers' actions and the reasons for the actions. Given price and income constraints, consumers are expected to make purchase decisions that maximize utility and wealth (Gibler & Nelson 2003). Often, however, when selecting a

residential or commercial property a buyer will consider non-financial factors (Smith, Garbarino & Martini 1992).

A global survey in 1999 found that two-thirds of consumers wanted socially responsible business (Isa 2003). In addition, several studies suggest CSR programs have significant influence on outcomes to customer-related issues (Bhattacharya & Sen 2004). Moreover, CSR affects consumer-products responses (Brown & Dacin 1997) and consumer-company identification (Sen & Bhattacharya 2001). CSR strategy improves customer satisfaction which in turn helps realize the financial potential of CSR activities (Luo & Bhattacharya 2006). However, many financial payoffs from CSR take time to materialize (Mohr & Webb 2005) and this causes businesses to resort to undertaking activities to do no more than complying with laws and regulations.

Mohr, Webb & Harris (2001) suggest two categories of consumers in relation to businesses' CSR initiatives. First, there are consumers who still base their purchasing on traditional criteria such as price, quality and convenience. Second, are people who base their purchasing decisions on the damage and benefit to society? As CSR initiatives are deemed important for improving customer satisfactions and financial performance, we asked if house buyers thought developers were socially responsible.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

A focus group is a group of individuals selected and assembled by researchers to discuss and comment, from personal experience, on a given problem, experience or other phenomenon (Basch 1987; Powell & Single

1996). Focus group discussions are one of the most widely used exploratory interview techniques for understanding the beliefs and perceptions of people (Hair *et al.* 2003; Khan & Manderson 1992; Kitzinger & Barbour 1999; Morgan 1996). Focus groups also provide an opportunity to triangulate an extant set of data (Morgan & Spanish 1984; Barbour 2007).

A focus group usually consists of a small number of people; 6-10 (Cooper & Schindler 2003), 6-9 (Kruger 1994). Too large or too small the group results in less than effective discussion (Cooper & Schindler 2003; Barbour 2007). The number of participants depends on the research questions, how the discussion is structured, and the size and layout of the room available for the discussion (Barbour 2007; Kroll, Barbour & Harris 2007).

The focus group method was employed to understand how house buyers perceived CSR in housing development, and how they expect a developer to be socially responsible, particularly regarding the CSR features in housing developments. A focus group is a qualitative research technique used to collect information through group interaction on a topic determined by the researcher (Kitzinger 1995; Morgan 1997; Morgan 1996; Morgan, Krueger & King 1998). In a semi-structured focus group, the researcher has a pre-determined list of topics to discuss but allows participants to respond in their own words (Hair *et al.* 2003; Cavana, Delahaye & Sekaran 2001), with the focus of discussion provided by the researcher (Morgan 1997).

The principle of group dynamics is applied to guide the group in an exchange of ideas, feelings and experiences on a specific topic that would be impossible without the interaction found in a group (Cooper & Schindler 2003; Kitzinger 1994; Morgan 1996; Morgan 1988). As well, a focus group

encourages participants to contribute to an in-depth discussion on the subject matter (Basch 1987; Kitzinger 1994).

A focus group is relatively an informal discussion with participants usually sharing something in common (Hair *et al.* 2003) and homogeneous to the topic (Khan *et al.* 1991; Morgan 1988). Therefore, participants should be homogenous in terms of background, but not attitudes (Cooper & Schindler 2003; Morgan 1988). Hence, locating participants is usually done through informal networks of colleagues, community agencies, and target groups (Hawe, Degelling & Hall cited in Cooper & Schindler 2003). However, to attract a wider range of opinions, participants are sometimes recruited through advertisements. Many researchers offer gifts to the participants as a token of gratitude (Barbour 2007).

The discussions were designed to supplement the major sources of data from developer interviews and housing development trend data (Yam, Ismail & Tan 2008). Only two focus group discussions were conducted. Group one consisted of six house-buyers from housing schemes with features such as impressive landscaping, recreational park and security facilities. The other group consisted of six house-buyers from housing schemes with basic amenities. All participants were recruited through the informal networks of colleagues and friends (Hawe, Degelling & Hall cited in Cooper & Schindler 2003).

A semi-structured focus group (Cavana, Delahaye & Sekaran 2001; Hair *et al.* 2003) was used in which a list of questions was designed to compare house-buyers' perception with findings obtained from developer interviews, housing development trend data and sales performance analysis (Yam, Ismail

& Tan 2008). To ensure the questions were clear and not leading a pilot test was conducted on four house-buyers. It was found most buyers were not familiar with the term 'CSR'. A thorough explanation of CSR was given before the commencement of focus group discussions. The pilot test took about 1 hour, 15 minutes.

A copy of the questions was given to the participants before the commencement of session. The list included questions about buyers' criteria for housing developments, satisfaction with their current abode, their perception and expectations of a socially responsible developer. Participants ranked a list of factors affecting their house purchasing decisions.

A tape-recording of the focus-group discussion (Barbour 2007) and the survey data were transcribed. In addition, the immediate observation and salient fact over the session were recorded to better interpret how participants respond to the topic raised (Morrison-Beedy, Cote-Arsenault & Feinstein 2001).

Data analysis focused on the identification of themes and the development of associated categories with a view to elicit the meanings developed and imputed by the focus-group participants (Parker 2008; Parker & Roffey 1997). Data analysis was informed by a grounded theory approach to understanding a 'real-world' situation, namely how participants perceived the relevance of CSR in housing development (Charmaz 2006; Glaser & Strauss 1967; Parker & Roffey 1997). To do this, coding was conducted to explore primary relevant themes that we could draw from the data. Coding is the result of 'raising questions and giving provisional answers about categories and their relations' (Strauss 1987, pp. 21-22). As a starting point, a pragmatic version of grounded

theory found themes likely to arise from the focus-group questions (Barbour 2007).

All data collected were analysed and coded for emergent themes. Categories were developed and recorded when deduced from the data and crossed-indexed to the source (Parker 2008). Data were coded in as many categories as appeared relevant. Thus, some data were coded under multiple categories. Categories with near zero data were discarded or merged with relevant categories. The categories developed and refined through a process of comparison, whereby data coded in a particular category were compared with data in other categories. This step of the coding procedure allows for category consolidation and identification of emerging categories (Parker 2008; Silverman 2000).

## **DISCUSSION**

We now discuss how participants responded to various issues concerning CSR in housing development. Housing projects in the study areas were broadly divided into two groups. Group 1 comprising house-buyers of housing developments of higher-priced houses with CSR features; Group 2 consisted of house-buyers of housing projects with basic amenities.

### **Basic criteria of a housing development**

Participants from group 1 indicated location was an important criterion because traffic was congested. Security was a major concern for all residents and some projects provide gated and guarded security facilities. Participants said recreational facilities like parks and sport clubs should be available. This

confirms the notion that a person's expectation of a socially responsible business correlates with that person's education and the wealth of their society (McWilliams & Siegel 2001).

On the issue of additional cost, all participants of group 1 were willing to pay for extra features; they were firm that they will pay no more than the value of the features. The question is how to determine what is 'fair' to pay?

For group 2, four participants felt housing price should be affordable and fair. They said location was an important criterion, but at the same time they are sensitive to pricing (Mohr, Webb & Harris 2001). Unlike participants from group 1, they placed less emphasis on recreational facilities and security features. This may be due to the fact that these additional features are associated with higher-priced houses. Harris and Young (1983) suggest that house-buyers have needs closely related to Maslow's (1970) hierarchy of needs.

House-design was not important to participants from group 2 who needed only basic design and practical layout (Smith 1970). However, participants from group 1 tended to emphasize house-design and wanted to have harmony-in-design within their housing schemes without much external renovation. The participants all lived in planned housing developments. This closely relates to their higher income which they tend to have different sets of needs such as by demanding for a better-designed house.

### **Level of satisfaction of their present housing projects**

All participants from Group One were satisfied with their present housing projects. They were generally happy with the living environment, particularly

on security features and greens. Workmanship, house design and infrastructure provided in their housing areas were also well received by them. It is worth noting that four participants expressed great satisfaction for the recreational parks and landscaping of their housing projects. To them, these facilities were important for their family healthy living.

The satisfaction level of group 2 was generally lower than group 1. This was possibly due to a difference in the living environment of the two groups. According to the participants of group 2, they had average facilities and infrastructure and mediocre playgrounds. Nor did they have crime prevention facilities despite a security problem.

### **Buyers' perceptions of a reputable developer**

For group 1, a reputable developer should deliver quality products and provide more than what is required by law. Participants said 'extras' should include security features, quality infrastructure like wider roads, amenities such as recreational facilities and landscaping. This response was within expectations as when house-buyers are wealthy and more educated; their expectation on developers will grow correspondingly (McWilliams & Siegel 2001).

Participants from group 2 were less demanding than Group A. Participants from group 2 thought developers should complete a house in time for the buyer to occupy it. Two participants indicated they wanted security and recreational facilities. We infer that participants in group 2 were more concerned about house delivery which saves them renting elsewhere. They were generally less wealthy and emphasize basic features.

### **Expectations on developers to be socially responsible**

Both groups of participants expected developers to provide buyers with a living environment that includes landscaping with recreational parks, greens, quality infrastructure, and security facilities. Community activities were also important as they bring residents closer and help create a pleasant neighbourhood.

All participants would pay a fair and reasonable price for extra features. However, participants of group 2 were price-sensitive. Research shows that developers in the study area committed to providing extra features such as recreational facilities and parks, security features and good infrastructure (Yam, Ismail & Tan 2008). Although part of the cost is paid by the developers, buyers bear the rest of the cost.

Regarding whether developers are socially responsible by merely complying with the minimum requirements of laws, most participants shared the view that developers should provide more than required. However, it was interesting that there was one participant from group 2 felt that complying with the minimum is also socially responsible. This participant said it is unfair to make developers responsible for the provision of extras because the government should provide all supporting amenities.

Comparing with elements of CSR from past literature (see Table 2); there are not much differences between the expectations of house-buyers in the study area and the literature. It is worth noting that although the environmental sustainability was one of their priorities; however, they demanded neither for environmentally-friendly materials nor energy-saving designs for their houses.

We believe this is because of the use of environmentally-friendly material has not been so widespread in Malaysia housing industry. However, their expectation for a greener living environment is definitely a positive sign for sustainable development.

Table 2: CSR elements in property

CSR elements	Past literature	Findings house-buyers' expectations
Environmental sustainability	Landscaping, sustainable timber supplies, environmentally-friendly materials, sustainable building designs	More greens, landscaping
Social amenities	Recreational facilities, parks, play grounds, sport facilities, meeting places, schools	Recreational facilities, parks, sport amenities (sport club)
Safety of houses and surrounds	Safety of ingress and egress, and building materials, security facilities with gated and guarded features	Security facilities with gated and guarded features
Quality of the environment	Development density, proximity of public transportation, mix with industrial and commercial development, community activities	Community activities
Sound infrastructure	Quality roads, wider roads	Quality infrastructure
Quality product	Quality finishes and design	Quality finishes and design (only for higher-priced houses)

### Ranking of factors influencing house purchase decisions

Each participant was asked to rank the importance of factors influencing their house purchase. Location, price, CSR features and project environment were ranked higher than three other factors (see Table 3). This is expected as location and accessibility are significant in affecting buyers' decision-making (Holmes 2002; Lim 2000).

We now look at the ranking orders of the two groups (See Table 4). Location, Price, CSR features and Project environment were ranked as the four most important elements considered by both groups in their house purchase. However, while group 2 participants viewed price as the most important factor, group 1 participants placed less emphasis on price. This is understandable as group 2 participants were less wealthy and tend to be more price-sensitive. Group 2 participants seek to fulfil their basic need for shelter (Maslow 1970; Smith 1970). Therefore, developers must cautiously price their products when they target less affluent buyers.

Moreover, group 1 participants, living in estates with CSR features, tend to emphasize CSR features and project environment. This group of buyers were less sensitive to pricing but considered other non-financial factors in their purchase decision (Smith, Garbarino & Martini 1992). Project environment (Betts and Ely, 2005; Ring and Boykin, 1986; Twichell, 1947) was given emphasis by both groups and deemed important for general well-being. Besides the influence of reference groups and social stratification, changes to life-style also affected purchase patterns (Black et al. 2003; Kelly 1991).

**Table 3: Ranked factors influencing purchase decisions**

<b>Factor</b>	<b>Mean *</b>	<b>Ranking</b>
Location	1.50	1
Price	2.67	2
CSR features	3.00	3/4
Project environment	3.00	3/4
Amenities	5.75	5
Property features	6.33	6
Developer reputation	5.75	7

\* A smaller number signifies a more important factor.

**Table 4: Comparison of ranked factors influencing purchase decisions**

Factor	Group One		Group Two	
	Mean *	Ranking	Mean *	Ranking
Location	1.33	1	1.67	2
Price	4.00	4	1.33	1
CSR features	2.50	2/3	3.50	3/4
Project environment	2.50	2/3	3.50	3/4
Amenities	6.00	6/7	5.50	5
Property features	6.00	6/7	6.67	7
Developer reputation	5.67	5	5.83	6

\* A smaller number signifies a more important factor.

## CONCLUSION

Research findings showed that a great majority of house-buyers in Johor Bahru expected a socially responsible developer to provide more CSR features such as more greens, recreational parks and facilities, security features, good infrastructure, et cetera. This corresponds with Yam, Ismail & Tan's (2008) findings that developers in the study area are committed to providing CSR features. However, less wealthy buyers were more sensitive to house price. Thus, developers must be prudent in pricing products or they may drive away this group of consumers.

Although all participants indicated their readiness to pay for CSR features, we learnt nothing about how much premium house-buyers would pay for such extras. To complement the research findings of this study, we recommend that future researchers study how much the premium house-buyers place on CSR features. We also recommend research into how buyers view CSR for different types of properties. These studies would be important guides to developers to formulating socially responsible activities that satisfy house-buyers' needs and improve corporate reputation and financial performance (Brown & Dacin

1997; Drumwright 1996; Maignan & Ferrell 2001; Sen, Bhattacharya & Korshun 2006).

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