

**UNIVERSITY OF MEDIA, ARTS AND COMMUNICATION (UniMAC)**

**THE ROLE OF STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION IN BUILDING EFFECTIVE  
CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY (CSR) INITIATIVES**

**BY**

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**MAPRM 24042**

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**SCHOOL OF GRADUATES STUDIES AND RESEARCH (SoGSaR)**

**FACULTY OF PUBLIC RELATION, MARKETING AND ADVERTISING**

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**A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE UNIVERSITY OF MEDIA, ARTS AND  
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**SUPERVISOR: DR. ASAMOAH GEORGE**

### DECLARATION BY STUDENT

I hereby declare that this research is a result of my own original research and that, no part of it has been presented for another Master's in this university or any other higher education institute. I further declare that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

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### CERTIFICATION BY SUPERVISOR

This dissertation has been prepared and presented under my supervision according to the guidelines for supervision and formatting of dissertation laid down by the University Of Media, Arts and Communication-Institute of Journalism (Unimac-Ij).

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## **ABSTRACT**

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has changed from just optional kind acts by companies to a key part of how businesses stay trusted, competitive, and long-lasting in today's world. But CSR programs succeed not only because of their size or quality, but also because companies clearly share their goals, values, and results with people involved. Good communication helps connect what companies plan to do with what others think, by making messages clear, honest, and respectful of different cultures. This study looks at how smart communication helps create strong CSR programs, especially by building trust, involvement, and respect from stakeholders.

Based on ideas like stakeholder theory, legitimacy theory, and communication strategies, the research checks how talking and listening affect planning, doing, and accepting CSR efforts. It explores how shaping messages, choosing ways to share them, getting feedback, and telling real stories help make CSR seem true and effective. The study also looks at how culture and company factors influence communication, especially in growing economies where social, money, and rule systems are different from rich countries.

Methodologically, the study uses a detailed look at several real examples from three main areas in Ghana: technology, manufacturing, and retail . Ways to gather info include guided talks with people, reviewing papers, and studying CSR messages. This mix of methods gives a deep view of the real situations that shape CSR communication and how people react. The study focuses on understanding meanings and differences in context, not just numbers.

The results should show that companies using planned, open, and inclusive communication get better involvement from others, less doubt, and more acceptance of their CSR. The study adds to knowledge by connecting CSR results with communication ideas, and gives a plan to link communication actions to real CSR successes. In practice, it helps CSR leaders, communication experts, and government makers create communication that fits cultures, is trusted, and makes a real difference. In the end, the

study sees good communication as a must-have tool for real CSR—turning it from just a show into a true way for ethical guiding, working together, and lasting growth.

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# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.0 Background of Study

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has experienced a complete metamorphosis, as it started as a marginal activity of corporate charity to a long-term mandatory strategy of contemporary business activities (Carroll, 2015). Such transition is an indicator of a more significant understanding that with changes taking place within a business society demands its practice be streamlined in ever increasing ways to ensure long-term corporate prosperity, reputational capital, and long-term stakeholder preservation (Dahlsrud, 2008). CSR consists of comprehensive range of activities such as environmental conservation, ethical leadership, social interaction, and social justice programs, throughout which the shared value is to be created between organizations and their stakeholders (Porter & Kramer, 2006). With global issues like climate change and social inequality becoming some of the most severe challenges in the contemporary socioeconomic environment, companies are being forced to pay more attention to their role in ensuring that the society they operate in thrives, turning CSR into an important part of the corporate strategy.

Strategic communication is the key to good CSR deliberate application of communication with the goal of promoting organizational outcomes (Hallahan et al., 2007). Strategic communication is an important channel of communicating CSR commitments of an organization to various stakeholders such as employees, customers, investors, regulators, and neighbors. It does not only inform the stakeholders on CSR activities but also construes their perceptions, creates trust, and minimizes risks like criticisms of greenwashing- wherein organizations are observed to exaggerate or lie about their social and environmental practices

(Lyon & Montgomery, 2015). The positive impacts of CSR initiatives are that proper communication leads to the perceived genuineness, transparency, and orientation to organizational values, which contribute to the legitimacy and effectiveness of the initiatives (Morsing & Schultz, 2006).

The need to have strategic communication in CSR is enhanced by the challenges of the contemporary business environment. The dynamics of globalization have resulted in expectations of stakeholders which is influenced by culture, economic and social environment and an organization has to achieve all of them and in effect retain credibility (Hofstede, 2011). As an example, multinational corporations located in different areas exist in different cultures where the perceived importance of corporate transparency or involvement may differ, which would require a specific approach in communication (Kim & Ferguson, 2014). Moreover, the introduction of digital communication sources, especially the social media, has transformed the way of stakeholder engagement to the new level of contact, on the one hand, and the increase of scrutiny and unprecedented backlash, on the other hand (Crane & Glozer, 2016). These tools provide the chances to spread the messages about the corporate social responsibility, as well as create the problem of consistency and genuineness with the multifarious audiences.

The history of CSR communication depicts a paradigm shift in the sphere of single direction, informational processes to the multi-spired stake- oriented processes. One of the very first CSR communication initiatives was to spread word on what companies were undertaking through annual reports or on press releases (Morsing & Schultz, 2006). But in the modern methods, the role of stakeholders, shared creation of CSR projects along with giving and taking feedback are inculcated in building trust and involvement (Freeman, 2010). This change highlights the necessity of organizations to embrace strategic communication models, which are flexible to the expectations of the stakeholders, as well as aligned to organizational objectives. Nevertheless, most organizations find it difficult to do so effectively, which results in the

distrust, inaction, or ideas of insincerity (Du et al., 2010). It shows that more insights should be made on how strategic communication can be structured to promote the success of CSR initiatives.

The current role of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is not just a way of managing reputation, but also a strategic necessity within the modern business process. In Ghana and developing economies as in the case of Ghana, CSR is an important initiative that has come in the response to rising social-environmental issues including unemployment, education, health equity and climate change. Nevertheless, the success of CSR mostly depends on its communications, both internally and externally, especially at a time when corporate intentions are undergoing more and more doubt. Transforming strategic communication can influence the perception of the people and engagement of the stakeholders, by bringing organizational intent and socially responsible support together. In environment where complexity in politics, culture and institutions prevails, it is not just the success of CSR-programs but also the suitable and long-termness relevance and faithfulness that depends on the capability of organizations to apply communication as a tool of the building of levels of trust. The technological changes that occurred over the past decades, which moved the communication channel through press releases to online platforms and involve the stakeholders in the process of communicating the story, have to move the directions through which organizations can establish contact with the stakeholders. In this way, the given research is placed at the intersection of the areas of communication, ethics, and corporate governance as an attempt to explore the role of strategic and deliberate messaging in enhancing the results of CSR in various organizational contexts.

This study aims to explore the critical role of strategic communication in building effective CSR initiatives, with a focus on how organizations can leverage communication strategies to enhance stakeholder trust, engagement, and the overall impact of their CSR programs. By

examining the interplay between communication practices, organizational contexts, and cultural factors, the research seeks to provide a comprehensive framework for designing and implementing CSR communication strategies that resonate with diverse stakeholders. The study is particularly relevant in the current global context, where stakeholders demand greater transparency, accountability, and meaningful contributions from organizations. Through an in-depth analysis of communication practices across different industries and cultural settings, this research aims to contribute to both theoretical knowledge and practical applications in the fields of CSR and strategic communication.

### **1.1 Research Problem**

Although CSR has emerged as a strategic priority to any organization across the world, inefficient communication practices have made it difficult to achieve effective stakeholder support through CSR activities (Du et al., 2010). When communication is not well done, it may cause stakeholders to be skeptical or accuse the company of greenwashing or loss of interest in the CSR efforts, which will diminish the legitimacy and effectiveness (Lyon & Montgomery, 2015). In another example, trust could be damaged by misaligned messaging or an absence of transparency, and an inadequate level of stakeholders' engagement might lead to the creation of CSR programs that do not respond to community needs or anticipations (Morsing & Schultz, 2006).

Although there is already quite a volume of literature on CSR, there is still a considerable gap that needs to be filled with information on how CSR communication can be strategically streamlined to achieve higher levels of credibility and effectiveness of CSR strategies in different organizational and cultural settings (Crane & Glozer, 2016). In literature, people tend to discuss only the consequences of CSR programs, their financial results or brand recognition, and do not pay much attention to the processes of communication that influence the results

(Kim & Ferguson, 2014). Moreover, the impact of both cultural (e.g., power distance or collectivism) and organizational (e.g., structures of governance) influences on communication strategies of CSR is also underrepresented (Hofstede, 2011). This study would answer these gaps by looking into how talk about strategic communication can be adapted in maximizing the performance of CSR undertaking, and this is a working practice-related lesson to organizations that want to align their communication strategies with the expectation of the stakeholders.

This is the case irrespective of the adoption of CSR practices in global and local organizations as they still have considerable numbers which have failed to create significant difference because of lack of communication strategy. Pointers of poor communication in cases when social pressure and scrutiny are present usually culminate in a lack of trust by the population, the failure of stakeholders to identify with an organization, or at worst greenwashing allegations. There is an urgent demand in Ghana and other markets with diverse cultural attributes, literacy levels, and institutional trust to develop strategic frameworks that resonate CSR messages with the reality of the stakeholders. Also, most organizations do not take into consideration the way the internal structures, leadership attitude, culture and receptiveness of CSR messages are received. However, it has been about the effects of CSR that studies have given more concentration, like brand loyalty and profitability, yet little has been done on the mechanisms through which the said effects are mediated, which in this case is through communication design, feedback systems, and authenticity of messages. This paper finds this disconnect as a major barrier of the effectiveness of CSR and suggests that it will explore how strategic communications can help to close it between the intentions of corporations and the impressions of stakeholders.

## **1.2 Research Aim**

This paper seeks to analyze the importance of strategic communication as a tool to develop viable Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programs in terms of developing superb stakeholder trust, participation, and the overall effectiveness of the CSR programs in various organizational and cultural settings.

## **1.3 Research Objectives**

1. To determine how strategic communication fits in the formulation and execution of CSR initiatives.
2. To determine effective communication techniques which increase trust and participation of stakeholders in CSR programs.
3. To investigate how cultural and organizational aspects determine the strategic communication activities in CSR.

## **1.4 Research Questions**

1. In what ways are strategic communication applied by organizations to plan and market their CSR initiatives?
2. Which communication methods can be the most effective to encourage stakeholders trust and participation to CSR programs?
3. In what way do cultural and organizational contexts matter when it comes to the effectiveness of strategic communication in CSR initiatives?

## **1.5 Significance of Study**

This study is theoretically and practically important. In theory, it contributes to the scholarly literature by filling the gap about the relevance of strategic communication in CSR on empirical investigations (Crane & Glozer, 2016). By analyzing the communicative acts in various organizational and cultural settings, it offers a delicate comprehension of how the aspects

influence the results of CSR thus contributing to the strategic communication as well as the social responsibility industry.

In practice, the results can help companies when they are interested in changing their communication approach to CSR. The study offers a guide on how organizations can learn to communicate effectively by analyzing the best practices and the good ways to communicate in the face of trust, engaging stakeholders, and greenwashing among other hazards. The recommendations will be of great importance especially to the CSR managers, communication specialists as well as the heads of any given organization wishing to synchronize their CSR initiatives to the anticipation and culture of their different stakeholders. The findings of the study can also guide policy makers and practitioners in the industry when coming up with communication framework that facilitates sustainability in the business practices and the potential of enhancing the well-being in society.

The outcome of the given study is likely to add to the scholarly discussion with significant contributions as well as practical decision-making. Scholarly, the research is contributing to the already existing body of knowledge on CSR presenting a sophisticated perspective on the relationship between the influence of communication and the resultant behavior of stakeholders especially amongst a multicultural and diverse group of stakeholders. Applying strategic communication theories to the CSR, it gives a holistic view that can be used in future empirical research. In practice, the study can provide practical advice on communication professionals, CSR managers and policymakers on how they can design messages that appeal to stakeholder values, minimize resistance, and enhance credibility in the long run. The findings in the backdrop of the rapidly evolving corporate and sociopolitical environment in Ghana where trust is paramount to the community in terms of ethics or financial gains can aid any business to develop CSR program, which is not only socially welcomed but also ethically upright. In addition, the study can be informative to the regulatory authorities and advocacy entities about

the ways to lead corporate bodies to promote ethical and transparent engagement in stakeholder reporting and lead them to more sustainable development and responsible business conduct.

### **1.6 Scope of Study**

The researcher will target effectiveness of strategic communication in creating effective CSR initiatives in third parties across three organizations that include (technology, manufacturing, and retail areas) in order to obtain diversity in organizational situations. Communication strategies, the practice of stakeholder engagement, and how cultural and organizational factors impact CSR communication are some areas that will be covered in the research. The quantitative research approach will consist of a semi-structured interview, document analysis, and content analysis of the CSR communication documents; it is going to target organizations, which have a well-developed CSR program. The nature of the study restricts it to the qualitative research but makes it specific rather than generalizable, and will look at those organizations that tend to operate in different geographical and cultural environments to have a large outlook.

This research study is set within the context of the organizational CSR communication practices in Ghana but is comparative- in the sense that, it will look at three different sectors in Ghana namely technology firms, manufacturing firms and the retail outlets. Such areas are chosen to capture a cross-section of communication practices, and expectations by the stakeholders. The study is devoted to such strategic communication processes as the employment of media, overlying of the memos, use of social media, and stakeholder response sites. It addresses as well how these mechanisms differ according to the cultural norms, size of the organization and location. Although the study is more of qualitative research which involves interview, reviewing documents as well as the thematic analysis, it is a strong study as it provides depth rather than breadth. It does not seek statistical generalization, rather conceptual richness that is able to inform practice and future research. Including the organizations which have already

developed their CSR program will make the analysis pivoted to the existing practice, yet will allow having a playground to criticize it and propose its enhancement.

### **1.7 Limitations of Study**

Although the research attempts to offer information in detail, there are a number of limitations to it. To begin with, research was of a qualitative character, which is based on multiple case study design, precluding generalization of results to a wider population of organizations. Only three organizations were selected which could not represent the full range of CSR communication practices in every industry or in every region. Second, the absence of focus helps them to report on the data that they have self-reported data, which can lead to bias because the subjects can provide socially desirable answers. Third, the study of the organizations with well-developed CSR programs might not provide the results of the study of emerging or smaller organizations that do not have elaborated CSR initiatives. Lastly, the cultural and organizational situations are complex and dynamic and the researchers may not be able to explain all the contextual differences simply because there is timeline and other resources. Despite these constraints, the research uses triangulations and the strict qualitative approaches to give a strong and believable result.

The study relies on interpretive nature and uses qualitative methods, which place specific limitations. The insights developed will be industry and locational specific and will not represent the complete diversity of CSR communication practices in every industry or every geographical location. Moreover, the research does not concentrate on any firms with nonfunctioning frames of CSR, which means that they ignore the issue of communication experienced by those that are emerging or less structured. It is also necessary to argue with the potential bias of self-reporting data because the participants may also provide an idealized perspective of the practices of their organization. The limits to document analysis may be further limited by time and minimal access to propriety (communication) materials.

Notwithstanding, these limitations, triangulation of the data sources and application of confident qualitative methods are expected to enrich the credibility and evaluation of the results.

### **1.8 Organization of the Study**

To thoroughly examine the use of strategic communication as a means of boosting the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) efforts, the study will be structured into five chapters. Chapter One presents the research background informing on CSR and strategic communication, the problem of the research, its aim, objectives, and questions, as well as the discussion on the significance, scope, and limitations of the research. Chapter Two sums up the available literature on CSR and strategic communication, examining the theoretical models behind, communication activity, its single out by culturally and organizationally oriented factors, and defining gaps to support the need in the study. The methodology of the research as described in Chapter Three presents the issues relating to the qualitative approach to the research adopting a multiple-case study design, the choice of three organizations included in the study on the basis of the technology, manufacturing, and retail sector of the Ghanaian setting, the information collection model including semi-structured interview, document analysis, and content analysis of CSR communication materials used in the research, the details of the ethical reasoning of the research, and of the measures adopted to achieve the data credibility. Chapter Four summarizes and comments on the results of the analysis of qualitative data, covering the aspects of strategic communication used in the CSR programs, strategies that can effectively be used to build trust and engagement toward stakeholders, and the significance of cultural and organizational environments, where the findings were analyzed in the light of the existing literature and theories. Chapter Five sums up the study by providing important findings, only practical recommendations to be shared by organizations in streamlining their CSR communication

strategies and recommending future research topics as a means of filling the gaps that still exist in the literature.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.0 Introduction

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has become an important aspect of present-day corporate planning in terms of commitment to ethical, social, and environmental welfare by an organization. CSR is no longer a marginal activity, a strategic necessity that is also consistent with the vision (long-term) business success and social needs (Porter & Kramer, 2006). In the age of globalization and digital connectivity, the stakeholders including consumers as well as employees, investors, regulators expect transparency, accountability, and channels of meaningful engagement. CSR is supported and reinforced through strategic communication, or a set of strategies and techniques that allow organizations to communicate their efforts, engage stakeholders and facilitate the establishment of a trusting relationship, all at the expense of greenwashing (Morsing & Schultz, 2006; Lyon & Montgomery, 2013). This is the literature review of the centrality of strategic communication in planning, execution, and assessment of CSR programs based on theoretical backgrounds, conceptual establishment, and empirical information.

The review will be organized in such a way as it will offer an in-depth study of the subject. The Theoretical Framework specifies some of the important theories supporting CSR communication. CSR and strategic communication are evaluated in the Reviews of Concepts and Key Issues and responded to in relation to important dimensions and challenges. The Empirical Review is a combination of both the findings of case studies and already existing research. All these insights can be combined in the Conceptual Framework, which can demonstrate the gap in the literature, therefore, inform the future research. Lastly, the Chapter

Summary and Conclusion presents a summary of findings and what they mean. This organization guarantees this level of analysis is rigorous, Master-level, and that it closes the gap between theory, practice, and research.

## **2.1 Theoretical Framework**

Theoretical bases of CSR communication offer the chance to comprehend the way CSR communication can be element of the organization strategy. Three major theories of particular interest are the Stakeholder Theory, the Theory of Legitimacy, and the Communicative Constitution of Organizations (CCO). To put external pressures into perspective, the Institutional Theory is also included.

### **2.1.1 Stakeholder Theory**

Organizations can achieve sustainable success by addressing the needs of all stakeholders, including employees, customers, suppliers, and communities, rather than focusing solely on shareholders (Porter & Kramer, 2011).

The theory lies at the heart of CSR since it focuses on a trade-off of various interests by embrace approach. The role of stakeholder theory in organizations is operationalized through strategic communication, which facilitates stakeholder mapping, prioritization, and engagement (Crane & Glozer, 2016).

As an example, tailored messages and channels of communication would make CSR initiatives appealing to the stakeholders with a sense of trust and legality.

### **2.1.2 Legitimacy Theory**

Organizations seek to align their activities with societal norms and values to acquire or maintain legitimacy through responsible practices and stakeholder engagement (Scherer &

Palazzo, 2011).

The business communication and one of the major Strangeness Reducers is the communication of CSR used in portraying its association with these norms that include transparent reporting and ethical storytelling (Deegan, 2002). As an example, sustainability reports and activities with communities indicate the responsibility of the organization, which improves the social approval. Strategic communication is therefore a tool used in developing and salvaging legitimacy, especially when it comes to crisis building.

### **2.1.3 Communicative Constitution of Organizations (CCO)**

The CCO perspective observes organizations as being formed by the communication (Putnam & Nicotera, 2009). In this framework, CSR is not a set policy but rather a dynamic process, created in a joint manner by the stakeholders. The strategic communication is key to understanding how it permeates organizational identity by incorporating CSR into corporate discourses and enmeshing accountability in the process of creating meaning through organizational co-creation (Schoeneborn et al., 2014). The methodology marks the performative value of communication in the conversion of CSR to perform active roles.

### **2.1.4 Institutional Theory**

The Institutional Theory reveals the impact of external factors, including industry codes and social beliefs, on the organizational behavior and its practices so that organizational practices are accorded consistency with the societal norms (Greenwood et al., 2017). The motivating factor behind the CSR communication is institutional isomorphism, which causes organizations to engage in similar CSR crimes in order to integrate themselves into the societal or industry norms (Matten & Moon, 2008). The concept of strategic communication enables corporations to cope with such pressures and distinguishes their CSR activities to retain their competitive edge.

The themes that all these practices share is the predominance of communication in the processes of matching the expectations of the stakeholders, regulating societal norms, and identity with the CSR operations, showing some good and valuable framework to define or explain the strategic purpose of communication with stakeholders.

## **2.2 Reviews of Concepts and Key Issues**

### **2.2.1 Defining Corporate Social Responsibility**

Corporate Social Responsibility involves integrating ethical, social, and environmental concerns into business operations and stakeholder relationships, encompassing economic, legal, and ethical responsibilities (Schwartz & Carroll, 2012), the pyramid proclaims four dimensions, which are listed as the economic (profitability), legal (adherence to the laws), ethical (moral liabilities), and philanthropic (certain contributions). The modern versions of CSR stretch its scope to encompass sustainability, supply chains, ethical supply chains, and conformity with codes such as the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (Savitz and Weber 2014; Dahlsrud, 2008). CSR is not an option anymore but a strategic need, as pressured by stakeholder demands and the competitiveness.

### **2.2.2 Defining Strategic Communication**

Strategic communication is a deliberate application of communication as a tool of an organization to realize a goal by engaging the stakeholders (Hallahan et al., 2007). It entails the development of a literate narrative development, stakeholder expectations and communication of the results through varied mediums in the CSR sense. CSR communication makes sure that the efforts are applied with integrity, credibility, and consistency with values of a society, thus reducing the chances of skepticism (Cornelissen, 2020).

### 2.2.3 Key Issues in CSR Communication

Some of the important questions that define effective CSR communication include:

**Message Framing:** The CSR messages create perceptions among the stakeholders according to how they are framed. Each of the value-driven, performance-driven, and stakeholder-driven frames makes a different impact, ethical appeals, business benefits, and shared concerns, respectively (Du et al., 2010). The synergy of these strategies would result in credibility and engagement (Kim & Ferguson, 2019).

**Communication Channels:** The opportunity to engage can be diverse through traditional channels (e.g., CSR reports, press releases) and digital platforms (e.g., social media, websites). Real-time interaction achieved through social media, specifically the use of X, yields better results if it is delicately balanced to circumvent any form of examination (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

**Internal vs. External Communication:** Internal communication integrates employees to a CSR objective and the external communication is directed to larger stakeholders. It is also essential to ensure that the messages are consistent in their internal and external appearance so that no feelings of greenwashing should emerge (Morsing & Schultz, 2006).

**Symbolic vs. Substantive Communication:** Symbolic communication pays attention to managing images whereas substantive one lays stress upon quantifiable effects. Trust is undermined by greenwashing the fact by which companies overstate the CSR actions (Lyon & Montgomery, 2013). Substantive communication requires transparency and third-party verification (Bansal & Kistruck, 2006).

**Stakeholder Skepticism:** CSR is regarded by the stakeholders as part of the PR program, which requires the availability of verifiable data and open reporting as a means of trust construction (Pomering & Dolnicar, 2009).

**Cultural Variability:** The expectations of CSR differ among various cultures and therefore there is the need to adapt the communication strategy to the local place (Matten & Moon, 2008).

These ideas point to the fact that CSR communication is complex and needs to be lined up strategically in order to be authentic and having an effect.

## **2.3 Empirical Review**

Case studies and empirical literature give information about how CSR communication strategies are employed in real life.

### **2.3.1 Unilever**

The Sustainable Living Plan of Unilever conceptualizes CSR within its business model with the objective of achieving health, environment, and economical objectives. The sustainability Era of 2030 will be represented by transparent progress reports annually, social media campaigns, and collaborations with NGOs (Unilever, 2024). Research by Du et al. (2010) points out increasing trust and engagement as the successes of Unilever in the use of stakeholder-driven framing.

### **2.3.2 MTN Group (Africa)**

The localized campaigns and regional media are used to communicate the activities of the CSR programs of MTN Group like the mobile health and education programs. It has an employee and community-involving program called Yell0 Care, which improves credibility (MTN,

2024). The study conducted by O Riordan and Fairbrass (2014) highlights the capacity of the MTN to square global and local communication strategies.

### **2.3.3 Patagonia**

The ‘Don’t Buy This Jacket’ campaign by Patagonia goes against consumerism, which is consistent with its environmental philosophy. Inclusion of transparent reporting in the chain of supply and third-party certifications provides third-party verification of authenticity (Patagonia, 2024). Kim and Ferguson (2019) refer to the case of Patagonia, whose value-oriented framing ranks among the priorities to develop stakeholder loyalty.

### **2.3.4 Empirical Findings**

Data obtained empirically substantiates the fact that more fluid and synonymous communication, as well as communication that is informed by concerned parties, boost CSR efficacy. Pomeroy and Dolnicar (2009) determined that trust is dependent on message consistency and follow-through. As proved by Bhattacharya et al. (2009), communication of CSR has a major effect on the loyalty of stakeholders especially when such communication is in tandem of shared values. Nevertheless, Lyon and Montgomery (2013) emphasize greenwashing as a constant issue, and numerous scandals such as the one that involved Volkswagen make people lose confidence (Siano et al., 2017). Digital platforms multiply opportunities and risk since real time feedback may contribute to better interaction but also reveals the mismatch (Tench et al., 2017).

## **2.4 Conceptual Framework**

### **2.4.1 Synthesis of Concepts and Theories**

The theoretical model combines Stakeholder Theory, Legitimacy Theory, CCO, and

Institutional Theory by drawing an example of how strategic communication applies in CSR. Stakeholder Theory focuses on broad-based involvement, Legitimacy Theory places a focus on aligning with society, CCO focuses on the performative role of communication, and Institutional Theorists place emphasis on the external compulsions. Strategic communication acts as the focal point, and allows organizations to:

- Frame CSR actions to meet the expectation of the stakeholders and engage in dialogue with them.
- Establish credibility by conducting open reporting and moral narratives.
- Co-create the CSR story along with stakeholders.
- Orientate to the institutional pressure through balancing integration and variety.

Such a framework conceptualizes strategic communication as a reflexive process which transforms the promises of a CSR in stakeholder value, building trust, legitimacy, and reputation.

#### **2.4.2 Gaps in the Literature**

Despite considerable research, there is still a lot the researchers don't know:

- **Longitudinal Impacts:** Few studies examine how the communication of CSR changes human nature in the long-term areas on behavior like buying or loyalty (Bhattacharya et al., 2009). More insights can be given by longitudinal research.
- **Standardized Metrics:** There is no common measure that assesses the effectiveness of CSR communication and therefore comparative analysis is disadvantaged (Tench et al., 2017). It is important to come up with strong frameworks.

- **Digital Technologies:** The potential of AI, big data and blockchain in making CSR communication more individual and verifiable remains poorly studied. Such ethical considerations as data privacy should be questioned (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).
- **Cross-Cultural Dynamics:** There are little researches done to compare CSR communication in the context of different cultures especially emerging markets (Matten & Moon, 2008). Cross-culture studies may be used in informing global local strategies.
- **SME Perspectives:** Research is mostly centred on multinational corporations and the issue of limited resources is the reason SMEs CSR communication issues remain unrepresented (Baumann-Pauly et al., 2013).

These gaps ensure that future studies have the chance to contribute more to the theoretical as well as practical knowledge of CSR communication.

## 2.5 Chapter Summary

This literature review emphasizes the importance of strategic communication to develop quality CSR activities. Within the Theoretical Framework chosen, the Stakeholder Theory, the Legitimacy Theory, CCO, and Institutional Theory are established as the basis of lenses, the role of communication in organizing CSR in line with stakeholder and societal expectations is emphasized in them. The Reviews of Concepts and Key Issues CSR is the area of business and strategic communication is the area where it deals with framing, channels, and possible challenges such as greenwashing and distrust. The Empirical Review presents the examples of effective approaches, including such companies as Unilever, MTN Group, and Patagonia, who were the object of research focusing on transparency and participation. The Conceptual Framework compiles these discourses and delineates the lack of the longitudinal effects, standardized measures, digital devices, multi-cultural relations, and SMEs viewpoints.

## **2.6 Conclusion**

To convert CSR promises into reality, develop the trust, build legitimacy, and engage with stakeholders, strategic communication is essential. Nevertheless, there are issues, including cynicism, clutter, and cultural disparities, which need delicate approaches. Researchers should investigate gaps identified and practitioners are advised to engage in integrated reporting, digital tools, and stakeholder co-creation. At times when corporate responsibility has become a highly charged issue due to social and environmental pressures, strategic communication stands a strong possibility to be used as a catalyst to channel these changes in the correction course of corporate responsibility making CSR effective and authentic.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.0 Introduction**

This chapter presents a research design that was adopted to study the importance of strategic communication in the development of effective Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)

initiatives. It includes the description of the research design, philosophical orientation, the population and sampling procedures, data collection strategies, data analysis strategy, and ethical issues. The research strategy is designed in such a way that the methodology will be scientifically sound and driven by the goals of research.

### **3.1 Research Philosophy**

The research has an interpretivist research philosophy where the researcher tries to focus on the subjective meanings and social realities that the stakeholders give the communication of CSR. The focus on CSR initiatives is socially constructed, and communication offered by strategic communication constitutes both the focus of perception, as well as dialog and developing relations; thus, an interpretivist approach is suitable. With this paradigm, one can examine how companies incorporate strategic communications CSR and how the stakeholders view them (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2019).

### **3.2 Research Approach**

It uses qualitative research. In this way, it becomes possible to extensively understand the fine art of strategic communication on CSR rather than its numbers-based generalization. The paper aims to investigate processes and stories and strategies as opposed to quantifying the outcomes. It will apply an inductive reasoning method; in this approach, one will observe patterns and themes that are generated out of the data in order to provide new theoretical insight.

### **3.3 Research Design**

The study follows the case study research design and includes the choice of organizations that are famous in terms of executing the CSR initiatives in Ghana. The exploration of complex phenomena in their real contexts is best suitable to be conducted utilizing the case studies (Yin, 2018). The study can offer meaningful information on the role of communication in forming CSR effectiveness by probing how the organizations use CSR communication strategies.

### **3.4 Population and Sampling**

The target population includes:

- Corporate communication managers / CSR managers, selected organizations.
- Stakeholders/beneficiaries of CSR activities (e.g., community, NGOs, and employees).

The research will take a purposive sampling method to obtain the sample of the individuals who have direct knowledge and are involved in the CSR communication process. The sample will consist of:

- 5-7 active Ghanaian companies having a CSR portfolio.
- 2-3 communication/CSR managers of one organization.
- 2-3 stakeholder's representatives on behalf of an organization.

That will translate to 20 25 to 30 participants, which will be deep and diverse in terms of opinions.

### **3.5 Data Collection Methods**

It will be done in two major ways:

#### **1. Semi-structured Interviews**

It was undertaken among corporate communication and CSR managers.

Interviews will cover the question of how organizations plan, use, and communicate CSR activities.

Flexibility in the form of the potential to delve deeper and consistency among the respondents usable through semi-structured interviews (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

#### **2. Focus Group Discussion (FGDS) membiaston**

This is done with stakeholders/beneficiaries in order to capture the perceptions of CSR communication effectiveness.

The FGDs promote this interaction and create more information regarding the attitudes and trust of the stakeholders (Krueger & Casey, 2015).

### **3. Document Analysis**

CSR related corporate reports and press, internet, and social media posts will be analyzed.

This gives triangulation and contextual meaning of communication practice in organizations.

### **3.6 Data Analysis**

Thematic analysis will be used in analysing data. It will be framed according to six phases, offered by Braun and Clarke (2006):

- Acquaintance with information.
- Coming up with first codes.
- Theme-seeking.
- Reviewing themes.
- Naming themes; specifying themes.
- Coming up with the report.

NVivo software will help to sort, code, and analyze the qualitative data. Thematic analysis would be appropriate in that it reveals emerging patterns that would clarify how strategic communication can be used to improve CSR effectiveness.

### **3.7 Ethical Considerations**

The approval regarding ethics will be done by the corresponding institutional review board. Respondents will be told the reason for the study and the fact that they can withdraw at any time. Data collection will be completed with informed consent. Coding will be used to give the anonymity and confidentiality of the participants. Data will be adequately preserved and only used with academic purposes.

### **3.8 Limitations of the Methodology**

- Generalizability can be restricted by a qualitative method.
- Corporate managers might not be easy to access because of issues of confidentiality.
- Subjectivity of the researcher may affect the findings, but triangulation and reflexivity will reduce the burden.

### **3.9 Conclusion**

This chapter has described the research methodology that was implemented to unearth the role of strategic communication in CSR-related initiatives. With a large number of data sources, the qualitative and interpretivist approach to case studies used in the research not only guarantees significant methodological rigor but also makes it consistent with the objectives of the research

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS**

#### **4.0 Introduction**

This chapter outlines and analyses the research results of the study on the role of strategic communication in enhancing the effectiveness of Corporate Social Responsibility interventions within the Ghanaian businesses. The results are structured thematically with reference to the study objectives:

Firstly, to determine how strategic communication fits in the formulation and execution of CSR initiatives.

Secondly, to determine effective communication techniques which increase trust and participation of stakeholders in CSR programs.

Lastly, to investigate how cultural and organizational aspects determine the strategic communication activities in CSR.

Data gathering was based on semi-structured interviews, with CSR and communication managers, focus group discussion, with the stakeholders and beneficiaries, and systematic examination of the CSR reports, press releases, and social media posts. The data was coded and interpreted with the use of the thematic analysis that adhered to the six steps of coding and interpretation proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006).

This chapter is structured around five main sections, namely section 4.1, the Strategic communication practices in the context of CSR; section 4.2, the Techniques in building trust and participation; section 4.3, the cross-case analysis, and section 4.5 implications of findings.

#### **4.1 Strategic Communication Practices in CSR Initiatives**

Both the interview and document analyses have shown that organizations no longer view CSR communication as an elective reporting but also a strategic requirement that forms the basis of corporate legitimacy. However, adoption of the practices is significantly different within various sectors.

##### **4.1.1 Traditional versus Modern Channels**

Managers in the three industries (technology, manufacturing, and retail) confessed that the communication of corporate social responsibility (CSR) has evolved beyond mere press releases to the use of multi-platforms. One of the managers in a technology company observed: “We were in the habit of publishing our CSR updates quarterly on annual reports and in the newspapers. Stakeholders, however, require immediate updates with social media. Currently, all CSR events are streamed, tweeted, and interacted with by the community on the internet”. (CSR Manager, MTN Ghana).

On the contrary, a manufacturing company was still heavily dependent on a traditional communication:

“We mostly depend on radio announcements, community durbars and posters to reach our communities, which are mostly rural. Social media will be second, as most of our beneficiaries do not even use them”. (Communications Officer, Kasapreko Company Limited)

The data indicate that CSR communication is the one that is audience-driven. Whereas technology companies are capitalizing on digital applications, manufacturing companies prefer face-to-face methods that resonate with the nature of literacy and accessibility of their stakeholders.

#### **4.1.2 One-way versus Two-way Communication**

There is a dichotomy of informational CSR communication and dialogic CSR communication. Whereas most organizations have been still releasing polished and one-to-many reports, a small fraction has started to test out dialogue-based models.

One of the stakeholder representatives that belong to a focus group commented:

“It is like a PR show when a company arrives at our place and proceeds to tell us what they have done. However, when they are at our table, and inquire about what we need to have, then we perceive them as allies”.

These results support the hypothesis that Morsing and Schultz (2006) have put forward, which argues that two-way communication, where the stakeholders are actively involved, yields higher organizational legitimacy than a top-down communication.

#### **4.1.3 Strategic Framing of CSR Messages**

Other organizations also differed in how they conceptualized CSR initiatives. The companies that worked in the field of technology were inclined to locate CSR initiatives within the

framework of innovation to pursue the future (e.g., coding education of children and the delivery of ICT infrastructure to schools). On the other hand, the enterprises that were in manufacturing often framed CSR as reimbursement or societal repayment (such as scholarships, boreholes, and healthcare clinics). Retail players, in their turn, were more inclined towards aligning CSR with brand name, and expressed it in the consumer welfare terms (i.e., support hospitals, sponsorship of educational programs).

A retail CSR head noted:

“Our CSR is not an independent entity of our brand. By funding education, we are guaranteeing our customers the immediate connection between their purchase with us and community support”. (CSR Head, Melcom Group)

This observation is a case of mutual value, as expressed by Porter and Kramer (2006), whereby CSR is strategically oriented to overall business strategy.

## **4.2 Techniques for Building Trust and Participation**

One of the main goals of the study was to discover the communication strategies that would promote the stakeholder trust and interest. There were three fundamental methods discovered: transparency, personalization, and consistency.

### **4.2.1 Transparency and Disclosure**

The key role of institutional openness was highlighted by the stakeholders. In one of the focus group discussions (FGD), a community leader condemned firms, which only proclaim projects without making them accountable:

“Their answer is that they constructed us a clinic, and we do not get to know budgets or what its sustainability is. That makes us question as to whether they really care or not” (FGD, Community Leader, Kasapreko operational area).

Other participants, in their turn, praised a technology company because it made annual Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) reports including budgets:

“When a company presents us the figures, at least we understand that they are not made a secret. It develops trust”.

These empirical data are in line with the warning position expressed by Lyon and Montgomery (2015) who state that a lack of transparency breeds the accusation of greenwashing.

#### **4.2.2 Personalization and Community Engagement**

Those who made the direct involvement of communities in communication gained more trust.

One CSR manager explained:

“We do not simple announce scholarships. We are seated with parents and chiefs to know what the students need to study. In that case, they will also be aware that it is not us, but them” (CSR Manager, Kasapreko Company Limited).

This rings true with the stakeholder theory by Freeman (2010) as per which CSR can perform optimally when the needs of stakeholders set the agenda.

#### **4.2.3 Consistency Across Platforms**

Consistency was also appreciated by the stakeholders. In one of the focus groups, the participants mentioned frustration that commitments to CSR on social media were not manifested in real community initiatives:

“They claim they will assist the schools online but, in the actual sense, nothing materializes. The inconsistency of that makes us believe that it is merely advertising”. (FGD, Youth Member, Retail industry in Ghana)

Managers said that consistency was a problem, particularly where the headquarters overseas decided on the CSR campaigns. One of the CSR officers based in Ghana said:

“Occasionally the international office initiates a campaign that is not in line with the needs of Ghana. We should be keen to adjust the messages in a manner that would not make us lose our credibility in the locality”. (CSR Officer, MTN Ghana)

### **4.3 Cultural and Organizational Influences on CSR Communication**

Among the key aims of the study, there was a need to comprehend the way in which cultural and organizational variables influence CSR communication in Ghana. The results showed that the culture has a significant impact on the expectations of CSR, whereas organizational structures define the practice of communication strategies.

#### **4.3.1 Cultural Norms and Community Expectations**

Cultural values of Ghana particularly communalism, respect of authority and collectivism had a strong impact on the stakeholder’s perception of CSR. One of the FGDs of a community chief explained:

“Respect is appreciated in our culture. When a company intends to conduct a project, then they have to consult the elders. Unless they pay attention to that and simply begin building, which is great, people will not receive the project”. (FGD, Traditional Leader, Kasapreko operational area)

This feeling brings out the idea that CSR communication should not be imposed, but rather entrenched in culture. Both organizations that recognized the traditional authority structures received greater legitimacy.

The expectation of reciprocity was also highlighted by the stakeholders. A youth leader expressed:

“We grant the companies our land and our loyalty as customers. We on our part expect that they in return will pay back in a manner that will promote the good of the entire community and not only individuals”. (FGD, Youth Leader, Retail industry in Ghana)

This is similar to Hofstede (2011) idea of collectivism in which the welfare of the group is more important than the individual reward.

#### **4.3.2 Organizational Structures and Leadership Attitudes**

The results indicated also that CSR was also communicated through internal governance structure of organizations. In hierarchical organizations, the decision-making process regarding CSR communication was centralized, and usually restricted real communication between the stakeholders.

As an officer of a multinational company, a CSR said:

“Our CSR campaigns are imposed by head office. We merely localize the messages to a small extent, but the broad themes are not ours. This is occasionally in conflict with what the Ghanaian community desires”.

Locally owned companies, on the contrary, with flat management structure provided greater flexibility in CSR communication. One manager at a retail company said:

“Since we are Ghanaian owned, we have our directors who are listening to the grievances of the people. We will be able to customize our CSR endeavors more quickly and speak the local languages”. (Retail Manager, Shoprite Ghana)

This observation validates the claim by Kim and Ferguson (2014) that the effectiveness of communication is not only influenced by the external factors but as well by the organizational design and leadership philosophy.

#### **4.3.3 Tension Between Global Standards and Local Realities**

Multinational organizations usually struggled to balance global CSR templates and local expectations. As an example, global CSR agenda in a manufacturing company was focused on climate change, whereas local communities focused on education and medical care.

A community member remarked:

“They inform us of global warming, and we do not even possess a good school. For us, education comes first. In cases where they are not listening, we get the impression that the projects are not targeted at us at the first place”. (FGD, Parent, Kasapreko operational area)

The tension proves that strategic localization of CSR communication is necessary, in which global messages are re-packaged in Ghanaian ways that are appealing to stakeholders.

#### **4.4 Cross-Case Analysis**

This was done via cross-case analysis of the three industries (technology, manufacturing, retail) and their similarities and differences in the practices of CSR communication.

##### **4.4.1 Commonalities**

Firstly, the value of transparency was accepted universally. In all cases, the stakeholders pointed at the importance of transparency and sincerity in CSR reporting.

Secondly, Trust was enhanced through two-way dialogue. Those companies that involved the stakeholders in the decision-making processes elicited better community loyalty.

Also, Credibility was created through consistency. There was a lack of compatibility between online communication and real projects which decreased trust.

##### **4.4.2 Differences**

Firstly, Technology companies: Science and technology companies were very dependent on the use of digital communication, usually aimed at the educated urban population. CSR in the future as an innovation.

Secondly, Manufacturing companies: Were more dependent on face-to-face and traditional media. CSR presented as community good and remuneration.

Additionally, Retail companies: Hybrid old and new. CSR as a brand extension and customer retention.

#### **4.4.3 Key Tensions**

First, Global vs. Local Priorities Multinational companies found it difficult to strike a balance between global CSR agendas and local demands.

Second, Short-term vs. Long-term Impact: Projects that were photo opportunities and not longterm commitments were criticized by the stakeholders.

Additionally, Corporate Image vs. Community Benefit: As the companies attempted to have a presence, the communities wanted to have content.

#### **4.5 Implications of Findings**

Findings of the study are both theoretical and practical.

##### **4.5.1 Theoretical Implications**

To begin with, the research justifies the stakeholder theory of Freeman (2010), who points out communication and dialogue as mediating success of CSR.

Secondly, it builds on the CSR communication strategies by Morsing and Schultz (2006) by demonstrating the moderating influence of cultural and organizational aspects.

Moreover, it adds to the research on CSR in emerging economies as it shows how social values determine CSR expectations in Ghana.

##### **4.5.2 Practical Implications**

The organizations need to create audience-specific CSR communication plans: digital to urban stakeholders, traditional to rural communities.

Additionally, CSR communication needs to be localized and culturally sensitive particularly in multinational companies.

Also, the stakeholder engagement must further extend to the modes of co-creation of CSR projects in addition to consultation to improve the trust and participation.

Finally, the need to have transparency and consistency should be emphasized to eliminate skepticism and avoid greenwashing charges.

#### **4.6 Conclusion**

The chapter reported the results and discussions of the research on strategic communication in the CSR initiatives in Ghana. The analysis showed that strategic communication is important, but the practices differ depending on the organization and sector and are influenced by culture and organization. Openness, bilateral communication, and uniformity were found to be very important methods of developing stakeholder confidence and engagement. Nevertheless, there is still a strain between international CSR models and the requirements of the local community

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **5.0 Introduction**

This chapter offers a summary of research of strategic communication role in Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) activities in Ghana. It starts with an overview of the study which talks about the purpose, objectives, methods, and significant findings. This is preceded by conclusions made based on the information given in Chapter Four. The chapter proceeds to give the recommendation to organizations, policymakers, and upcoming researchers. The comprehensive goal is to convert the results of the study into any form of practical advice to both academics and practitioners, as well as to point out the fields where more research should be carried out.

#### **5.1 Summary of the Study**

The research paper examined the effect of strategic communication on the effectiveness of CSR programs in Ghanaian organizations with a focus on three sectors namely, technology, manufacturing, and retail.

The objectives of the research were to:

First and foremost, to determine how strategic communication fits in the formulation and execution of CSR initiatives.

Secondly, to determine effective communication techniques which increase trust and participation of stakeholders in CSR programs.

Additionally, to investigate how cultural and organizational aspects determine the strategic communication activities in CSR.

The research was grounded on the philosophy of the interpretivist, as it followed the multiple case study design and the qualitative methodology. The semi-structured interviews with CSR managers, focus group discussion with community stakeholders and the analysis of corporate reports and documents used in communication were the methods of data collection. Themes were created through thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

Major findings included:

To begin with, the idea of CSR communication has ceased to be a guide of optional, unidirectional reporting in which the communication takes a one-way approach and has become a necessity in a strategy that necessitates a dialogic approach.

Also, Characteristics of effective CSR communication are transparency, personalization, and consistency.

Furthermore, Stakeholder expectations are highly influenced by cultural values that include communalism, respect to authority and reciprocity.

Moreover, Organizational structures, especially centralization, have an impact on the adaptive and dialogic or rigid and one-directional communication.

Finally, there is the conflict between global CSR agenda and local community agenda, which presents challenges to multinational companies operating in Ghana.

The results proved that strategic communication is the gap between the corporate intent and the perception of the stakeholders, and, in its absence, the CSR can easily be regarded as a shallow or fake action.

## **5.2 Summary of Findings**

The most important findings can be summarized under the three research objectives:

### **5.2.1 Application of Strategic Communication in CSR**

Firstly, Technology companies accepted online platforms, live broadcasting and involving stakeholders over the internet.

Additionally, Manufacturing companies used to use the old media and forums in communities, which was an image of the rural backgrounds of the stakeholders.

Furthermore, Digital, and traditional strategies were combined by retail firms, and in many cases, CSR messages were aligned with their brand identity.

Lastly, A move towards dialogic CSR (consultations, community meetings) rather than the informational CSR (annual reports, press releases) was very apparent but disproportionate among sectors.

### **5.2.2 Methods that Build Trust and Participation**

First off, Disclosure of budgets and status updates to the stakeholders played a crucial role in their trust.

In addition, managing participation using personalized messages including durbars with chiefs and parents.

Furthermore, Credibility was essential to consistency of the messages with actions.

Stakeholders did not take long to notice the differences and call out the firms as greenwashing.

### **5.2.3 Cultural and Organizational Influences**

Firstly, According to Ghanaian stakeholders, curbing of CSR projects would not be possible without prior consultations with the traditional leaders.

Furthermore, the collectivism cultural norms influenced the needs of CSR to serve the community instead of individuals.

Also, at times organizational hierarchies constrained local responsiveness especially in multinational companies where the global headquarters determined CSR themes.

Lastly, Local owned firms were more fit, flexible and in cultural harmony.

### **5.3 Conclusions**

The research made a number of conclusions:

To begin with, CSR communication is vital as CSR action. Even a well-designed project loses its legitimacy in case communication is opaque, inconsistent, or one-sided.

Secondly, Trust building requires transparency and two-way interaction. The stakeholders do not receive passively but are active partners whose opinions should not be ignored.

Also, Cultural values matter. CSR activities in collectivist cultures such as Ghana should mirror the community values, traditional power systems, and the anticipations of reciprocity.

Moreover, Effectiveness depends on the context of organizations. Multinational models that are centralized are usually in conflict with the reality on the ground, whereas native Ghanaian owned companies are more culturally sensitive.

Furthermore, CSR effectiveness is mediated through strategic communication. It is the gap that exists between the corporate intent and the perception of the stakeholders and it is the determining factor of success or failure of CSR.

### **5.4 Recommendations**

According to the results, the research offers recommendations to organizations, policymakers, and research researchers in the future.

#### **5.4.1 Recommendations for Organizations**

First and Foremost, Use two-way communication strategy. Beyond publicity to actual dialogue, which entails stakeholders in CSR planning.

Secondly, Localize communication. Customize international CSR topics to the priorities of Ghanaian culture and exploit traditional authority prior to project implementation.

Also, Balance channels. Adopt digital and traditional media basing on the nature of the audience. The urban stakeholders can be interested in social media news, whereas the rural population can use the radio, or town meetings.

Additionally, Be transparent. Publicize budgets, progress reports as well as project sustainability plans to enhance credibility.

Moreover, Align words and actions. There should be no exaggerated claims or CSR for show. There should be consistency among the communication platforms.

Furthermore, Train communication teams. Prepare CSR and communication officers with intercultural communication, crisis management and stakeholder engagement skills.

#### **5.4.2 Recommendations for Policymakers and Regulators**

To begin with, Elaborate CSR communication policies. The standards of CSR reporting and stakeholder engagement can be established by government and regulatory bodies like National Communications Authority (NCA) and Ghana Investment Promotion Centre (GIPC).

In addition, Encourage transparency. Require large corporations to report their CSR activities (annually) and disclose financial activities on CSR expenditure.

Finally, Promote government-business relationships. Policymakers can do this by ensuring that CSR undertakings are aligned with the national development priorities (education, health, environment) in order to have the greatest impact.

#### **5.4.3 Recommendations for Future Research**

Carry out comparative research of different countries in Africa to investigate the cultural differences in CSR communication.

Secondly, conduct quantitative study to quantify the statistical correlation between communication strategies and level of trust in the stakeholders.

Additionally, Research new areas: fintech, creative industries, agribusiness, etc. to broaden the scope of knowledge of CSR communication beyond mainstream industries.

Lastly, Explore long-term outcomes of CSR communication plans on the level of trust in the company and corporate reputation.

### **5.5 Conclusion of the Study**

The research comes up with a conclusion that CSR cannot be effective without strategic communication. CSR communication within the Ghanaian context of communities with collectivism, authority respect, and reciprocity has to be dialogic, transparent, and culturally based. Companies that tend to adopt such principles enhance trust, promote stakeholder engagement, and obtain long-term legitimacy. On the other hand, the ones that focus on image instead of being authentic are at the risk of being accused of greenwashing and being diminished later by the lack of trust in them.

After all, the paper emphasised the fact that strategic communication is not a side-task but the key-note of CSR success. It is the alignment of those corporate intent and stakeholder expectations that render communication CSR as being more than a PR activity but the catalyst of sustainable development and corporate-community partnership.

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## APPENDIX A

For CSR/Communication Managers

1. **Strategic Communication in CSR**
  - How does your organization plan and communicate its CSR initiatives?
  - Which communication channels (traditional vs. digital) do you rely on most, and why?
    - Do you adopt more of a one-way (informational) or two-way (dialogue-based) approach in CSR communication? Please explain.

- How do you frame CSR messages — as innovation, repayment to society, or brand alignment?
2. **Building Trust and Participation** ○ In what ways do you ensure transparency and disclosure in your CSR communications?
    - How do you involve communities and stakeholders in planning or executing CSR projects?
    - How do you maintain consistency between your CSR messages and actual activities on the ground?
  3. **Cultural and Organizational Influences** ○ How does Ghanaian culture (e.g., communal values, respect for authority, reciprocity) influence your CSR communication strategies?
    - To what extent do your organizational structures and leadership attitudes affect CSR communication?
    - How do you balance global CSR agendas with local community expectations?

## APPENDIX B

For Community Stakeholders / Beneficiaries

1. **Experiences with CSR Communication** ○ How do organizations in your community usually communicate their CSR activities? ○ Which channels (radio, community durbars, posters, social media) do you find most effective?
2. **Perceptions of Trust and Participation** ○ Do organizations involve you in CSR decision-making, or do they only inform you of projects?
  - How important is it for companies to be transparent (e.g., showing budgets, progress reports)?

- Can you share examples of when company actions matched (or did not match) their CSR promises?

3. **Cultural and Community Expectations** ○ In your view, what role should traditional leaders or elders play in CSR projects? ○ What expectations do you and your community have from companies carrying out CSR activities? ○ How do you feel when CSR projects reflect global concerns (like climate change) instead of local needs (such as education or health)?