



UNIVERSITY OF MEDIA, ARTS AND COMMUNICATION (UniMAC)
INSTITUTE OF JOURNALISM

**CLICKS IN A CRISIS: ANALYZING NEWMONT AHAFO SOUTH'S DIGITAL
STRATEGY FOR ESG COMMUNICATION IN GHANA'S MINING SECTOR**

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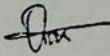
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DECLARATION

Candidate's Declaration

I Constance Owusu-Baah Anthony declare that this thesis, except quotations and references contained in published works, have all been identified and duly acknowledged, is entirely my original work, and it has not been submitted, either in part or whole, for another degree elsewhere. Therefore, I bear the responsibilities for any shortcomings.

All sources of information have been duly acknowledged through appropriate citations and references.

CANDIDATE'S SIGNATURE:  DATE: 17th November, 2025

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SUPERVISOR'S DECLARATION

I, the undersigned supervisors, declare that we supervised the preparation and presentation of this work in accordance with the guidelines for the supervision of MA theses as laid down by the University of Media, Arts and Communication (UnjMAC).

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ABSTRACT

The increasing centrality of Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) standards in global extractive industries has accelerated the need for strategic digital communication, particularly in developing-country contexts where mining operations significantly influence environmental systems, community welfare, and economic stability. This study examines how Newmont Ahafo South Mine in Ghana employs digital communication strategies to manage ESG-related crises, focusing on employee perspectives as a lens into organizational capabilities, constraints, and implementation realities.

Guided by a qualitative case study design, the research integrates three complementary data sources: netnographic analysis of 450 digital posts across Facebook, Twitter/X, corporate websites, and online news outlets (2018-2024); semi-structured interviews with ten employees representing communications, community relations, environment, operations, and management; and media monitoring of crisis-related reportage (2018-2024). This triangulated approach enabled in-depth understanding of communication patterns, internal workflows, crisis response dynamics, and platform-specific affordances. Findings reveal that Newmont's digital crisis communication strategy is multi-platform, adaptive, and sophisticated, yet effectiveness is highly conditional. Employees emphasized that email and SMS remain most reliable for internal and community-level communication, while Facebook and the corporate website serve as authoritative spaces for external updates and reputational signaling. However, substantial challenges emerged including resource limitations (only two full-time communications staff managing multiple platforms), lengthy approval hierarchies slowing crisis responses, digital divides affecting rural stakeholders, and absence of formalized digital communication protocols.

Analysis demonstrates that digital crisis communication intertwines with key theoretical constructs. Stakeholder theory manifests in differentiated platform strategies, though digitally marginalized groups face persistent access barriers. Legitimacy theory emerges as communication preserves trust and demonstrates accountability, yet employees note communication cannot compensate for operational grievances. Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT) implementation proves inconsistent due to legal and hierarchical constraints, while agenda-setting efforts face challenges from Ghana's polyvocal digital environment where activists, community groups, and media shape competing narratives.

The study concludes that effective ESG crisis communication requires not only strategic digital messaging but also organizational capacity, inter-departmental alignment, and substantive operational performance. Recommendations include increased investment in communication infrastructure, formalization of digital crisis protocols, proactive stakeholder engagement, and integrated communication combining digital and traditional channels to bridge digital access gaps. These insights contribute to scholarly discourse on ESG communication in developing-country mining contexts while offering practical guidance for strengthening digital crisis response systems.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION	i
ABSTRACT	ii -iii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	iv
TABLE OF CONTENTS	v-xi
LIST OF TABLES	xii
LIST OF FIGURES	xiii
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	xiv
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Background of the Study	1
1.1.1 Newmont Corporation and Ahafo South Mine Context	2
1.2 Statement of the Problem.....	4
1.3 Research Objectives.....	6
1.4 Research Questions.....	6
1.5 Significance of the Study	7
1.6 Scope and Delimitation.....	9
1.6.1 Thematic Scope.....	9
1.6.2 Communication Scope.....	10
1.6.3 Geographic Scope	10
1.6.4 Stakeholder Scope.....	11
1.6.5 Temporal Scope	11

1.7 Definition of Key Terms	12
1.8 Organization of the Study	13
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW	16
2.1 Introduction.....	16
2.2 Conceptual Framework.....	16
2.2.1 Environmental Social, and Governance (ESG) Principles	16
2.2.2 Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR).....	17
2.2.3 Crisis Communication	18
2.2.4 Digital Communication Platforms.....	18
2.4.5 Social License to Operate (SLO)	19
2.3 Global Perspectives on ESG Communication	20
2.4. Crisis Communication in Mining.....	20
2.4.1 Global Mining Industry ESG Challenges	20
2.4.2 ESG Communication in Ghana’s Mining Sector.....	21
2.4.3 Traditional vs. Digital Crisis Communication	21
2.4.4 Social Media in Crisis Communication	22
2.4.5 Employee Communication	23
2.5 Netnography as a Research Method	23
2.5.1 Origins and Development	23
2.5.2 Methodological Foundations	24
2.5.3 Applications in Corporate Communication	24
2.5.4 Strengths and Limitations	24

2.6 Theoretical Framework.....	25
2.6.1 Stakeholder Theory	25
2.6.2 Legitimacy Theory.....	25
2.6.3 Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT).....	25
2.6.4 Agenda-Setting Theory	26
2.6.5 Integrated Conceptual Framework.....	26
2.10 Chapter Summary	28
CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	29
3.1 Introduction.....	29
3.2 Research Design.....	29
3.3 Netnographic Research Approach	30
3.3.1 Conceptual Foundation of Netnography	30
3.3.2 Digital Platforms and Data Sources.....	30
3.3.3 Netnographic Data Collection Procedures.....	31
3.3.4 Netnographic Sampling Strategy	32
3.4 Semi-Structured Interview Methodology	32
3.4.1 Rationale for Interviews.....	32
3.4.2 Participant Selection and Sampling.....	33
3.4.3 Interview Protocol Development	34
3.4.4 Interview Procedures	34
3.5 Media Monitoring Analysis	34
3.6 Data Analysis Procedure.....	35

3.7 Ethical Considerations	36
3.8 Quality and Trustworthiness	36
3.9 Limitations of the Methodology	37
3.10 Methodological Integration and Synergies	38
3.9 Chapter Summary	38
CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS.....	39
4.1 Introduction.....	39
4.2 Digital Communication Channels and Platforms	40
4.2.1 Platform Portfolio and Usage Patterns.....	40
4.2.2 Platform-Specific Communication Characteristics.....	43
4.2.3 Platform Usage Prioritization and Decision-Making.....	43
4.3 Employee Perspectives on Strategy Effectiveness	46
4.3.1 Perceived Strengths of Digital Strategies	46
4.3.2 Limitations and Effectiveness Concerns.....	47
4.4 Implementation Challenges	48
4.4.1 Resource and Capacity Constraints	48
4.4.2 Coordination and Approval Processes.....	50
4.4.3 Content and Stakeholder Engagement Challenges	51
4.5 Theoretical Alignment in Digital Crisis Communication.....	52
4.5.1 Stakeholder Theory Application.....	52
4.5.2 Legitimacy Theory Manifestations.....	54
4.5.3 SCCT and Agenda-Setting Theory Implementation.....	55

4.6 Chapter Summary 56

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS... 58

5.1 Introduction..... 58

5.2 Discussion of Key Findings 58

5.2.1 Multi-Platform Strategies and Stakeholder Differentiation 58

5.2.2 Conditional Effectiveness and Context Dependency..... 59

5.2.3 Implementation Challenges and Organizational Realities..... 60

5.2.4 Theoretical Alignment and Practical Adaptation..... 61

5.2.5 Media Coverage Patterns and Crisis Visibility 62

5.2.6 Platform Diversity and Stakeholder Fragmentation 64

5.3 Theoretical Contributions 65

5.4 Practical Implications..... 66

5.4.1 Implications for Mining Companies 66

5.4.2 Implications for Policy Makers and Regulators 67

5.4.3 Communication Capacity Building and Resource Investment 67

5.4.4 Media Relations and Strategic Communication Partnerships 68

5.4.5 Addressing Substantive Grievances Through Operational Improvements 69

5.5 Study Limitations..... 71

5.6 Recommendations..... 72

5.6.1 Recommendations for Mining Companies 72

5.6.2 Recommendations for Policy Makers and Regulators..... 73

5.6.3 Recommendations for Future Research..... 74

5.7 Conclusions.....	76
REFERENCES.....	81
APPENDICES.....	84
Appendix A: Interview Protocol.....	82
Appendix B: Informed Consent Form	85
Appendix C: Ethics Approval Letter	88

LIST OF TABLES

Table 3.1: Research Participant Demographics by Department and Role

Table 4.1: Digital Communication Platform Usage Frequency and Characteristics

Table A.1: Ethics Application – Research Participant Categories

Table A.2: Ethics Application – Risk Assessment Categories

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 2.1: Integrated Conceptual Framework for Digital ESG Crisis Communication

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
EITI	Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative
ESG	Environmental, Social, and Governance
ICMM	International Council on Mining and Metals
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
SCCT	Situational Crisis Communication Theory
SLO	Social License to Operate
SMS	Short Message Service
SoGS	School of Graduate Studies and Research
UniMAC	University of Media, Arts and Communication

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

The mining industry has undergone significant transformation in recent decades, moving beyond traditional profit-centric models to embrace comprehensive Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) frameworks that prioritize sustainability, community welfare, and ethical operations (Fikru, 2024; Xiong, 2024). This shift reflects growing recognition that mining companies must balance resource extraction with environmental stewardship, social responsibility, and transparent governance to maintain legitimacy and secure long-term operational viability (Bice, 2024). In developing countries where mining contributes substantially to economic growth but also generates considerable environmental and social challenges, effective ESG management and communication have become critical determinants of project success (Idemudia, 2014).

Ghana's mining sector exemplifies these dynamics, with gold mining contributing approximately 5-7% of national GDP while simultaneously raising concerns about water pollution, land degradation, community displacement, and benefit distribution inequities (Ainoo, 2024). The sector employs thousands directly and supports numerous ancillary industries, yet tensions between mining companies and host communities frequently emerge over environmental impacts, employment practices, and perceived inadequate local benefits (Ansu-Mensah et al., 2021). These tensions can escalate into crises that threaten operations, damage corporate reputations, and undermine Ghana's mining investment climate.

The digital revolution has fundamentally altered how organizations communicate during ESG crises (Du Plessis, 2018; Luttrell & Wallace, 2021). Social media platforms, corporate websites, email systems, and mobile messaging applications enable real-time information dissemination, direct stakeholder engagement, and transparent crisis responses that were impossible in the pre-digital era. Mining companies increasingly leverage these digital tools to manage stakeholder relationships, respond to emerging issues, and maintain social license to operate (ICMM, 2023). However, digital platforms also introduce new challenges including misinformation spread, amplified criticism, permanent records of communication missteps, and stakeholder expectations for immediate organizational responses (Du Plessis, 2018).

1.1.1 Newmont Corporation and Ahafo South Mine Context

Newmont Corporation stands as the world's leading gold mining company with operations spanning Africa, Australia, North America, and South America (Newmont, 2024). Founded in 1921 and headquartered in Denver, Colorado, Newmont produces approximately 6 million ounces of gold annually and maintains industry leadership in sustainable mining practices, environmental management, and community engagement (Newmont, 2023). The company's commitment to ESG principles is evidenced through its adoption of the International Council on Mining and Metals (ICMM) sustainability principles, participation in the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI), and ambitious targets for carbon neutrality and environmental protection (ICMM, 2023).

Newmont's Ahafo operations in Ghana's Brong-Ahafo region represent one of Africa's largest gold mining complexes. Ahafo South began commercial production in 2006 and has since produced over 8 million ounces of gold through surface and underground operations (Newmont, 2024). The

newer Ahafo North development, located 30 kilometers north of Ahafo South, received development approval in 2021 and is transitioning to commercial production in 2025 (Newmont, 2025). The operations encompass multiple open-pit mines and underground workings extracting gold from oxide and sulphide ore deposits. Geologically, the Ahafo property lies within the Sefwi Gold Belt of southwestern Ghana, characterized by Birimian greenstone formations hosting significant gold mineralization (Newmont, 2024). The ore body contains grades averaging 1.5-2.0 grams of gold per tonne, processed through conventional milling, flotation, and carbon-in-leach recovery methods.

Economically, Ahafo South represents substantial investment exceeding \$850 million in development capital, creating approximately 2,500 direct employment positions during construction and 1,200 permanent operational jobs (Newmont, 2023). The mine's projected annual production capacity of 450,000-500,000 ounces positions it among Ghana's top gold producers. Beyond direct employment, the operation generates significant indirect economic activity through local procurement, contracting services, and community development investments. Newmont reports spending over \$40 million annually on local goods and services within the Ahafo region, supporting hundreds of small and medium enterprises (Ansu-Mensah et al., 2021).

The mine's social and environmental footprint encompasses ten host communities with combined populations exceeding 30,000 residents, predominantly engaged in agriculture and small-scale trading prior to mining development. Mining operations necessitated resettlement of approximately 800 households, requiring comprehensive livelihood restoration programs, infrastructure development, and ongoing community engagement (Ansu-Mensah et al., 2021).

Environmental management challenges include water resource protection in the Tano River basin, biodiversity conservation in areas containing endangered species, air quality monitoring to control dust emissions, and tailings storage facility management requiring stringent safety protocols. These technical, social, and environmental complexities create continuous communication demands and periodic crisis situations requiring strategic organizational responses (Newmont, 2024).

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Despite growing recognition of digital communication's importance in ESG crisis management, significant gaps exist in understanding how mining companies in developing countries operationalize digital strategies and how organizational actors perceive their effectiveness (Hilson, 2012; Idemudia, 2014). Most existing research examines crisis communication from external stakeholder perspectives or analyzes corporate messaging content without exploring internal organizational processes, employee experiences, or implementation challenges (Coombs, 2019). This oversight is problematic because employees particularly those in boundary-spanning roles connecting organizations with external stakeholders possess crucial insights into communication strategy development, resource constraints, coordination challenges, and practical obstacles that shape crisis communication effectiveness (Jin et al., 2012).

Employees serve multiple critical functions during ESG crises: they implement digital communication strategies developed by senior management, translate technical information into accessible public messaging, respond to stakeholder inquiries across multiple platforms, coordinate between departments with different priorities and expertise, and provide ground-level

intelligence about community reactions and emerging issues (Ansu-Mensah et al., 2021). Yet their perspectives on strategy effectiveness, resource adequacy, coordination challenges, training needs, and improvement opportunities remain largely unexplored in academic literature (Coombs, 2019). Understanding these organizational perspectives is essential for developing realistic, implementable recommendations for enhancing crisis communication practices rather than idealized strategies disconnected from operational realities.

Furthermore, while digital communication platforms have transformed corporate crisis responses globally, their adoption and effectiveness in African mining contexts remain underexplored (Ainoo, 2024). Ghana's mining sector faces unique contextual factors including limited digital infrastructure in rural areas, multilingual stakeholder populations requiring communication in English, Twi, Ewe and other languages, traditional authority structures where chiefs and elders play intermediary roles, and active civil society organizations monitoring corporate behavior (Ofori & Hinson, 2007). These factors may create implementation challenges, necessitate adaptations to global best practices, or require integration of digital with traditional communication channels that research has not adequately examined (Ansu-Mensah et al., 2021).

Additionally, methodological approaches for studying digital crisis communication require expansion (Kozinets, 2020). Much existing research relies on content analysis of corporate messages or survey methods that capture static snapshots rather than dynamic communication processes (Du Plessis, 2018). Netnographic approaches examining digital communication content combined with employee interviews can provide richer, more contextualized understanding of how crisis communication unfolds across time and platforms while revealing organizational perspectives often missing from external analyses. This study addresses these gaps by investigating

digital ESG crisis communication at Newmont Ahafo South Mine through netnographic analysis of digital content and in-depth interviews with ten employees involved in crisis communication processes, each interviewed for twenty minutes to gather focused yet substantive insights (Kozinets, 2020).

1.3 Research Objectives

The main objective of this study is to analyze Newmont Ahafo South Mine's digital communication strategies for ESG crisis management in Ghana's mining sector from employee perspectives.

Specific objectives include:

1. To examine the digital communication channels and platforms Newmont Ahafo South Mine employs for ESG crisis communication.
2. To assess employee perspectives on the effectiveness of digital communication strategies in managing ESG crises.
3. To identify challenges employees, face in implementing digital crisis communication strategies, including resource constraints, coordination difficulties, and technical limitations.
4. To explore how digital crisis communication strategies align with stakeholder theory, legitimacy theory, crisis communication theory, and agenda-setting theory.

1.4 Research Questions

This study addresses the following research questions:

1. What digital communication channels and platforms does Newmont Ahafo South Mine utilize for ESG crisis communication?

2. How do employees perceive the effectiveness of digital communication strategies in managing ESG crises?
3. What challenges do employees encounter in implementing digital crisis communication strategies?
4. How do digital crisis communication strategies align with theoretical frameworks of stakeholder engagement, organizational legitimacy, crisis response, and agenda-setting?

1.5 Significance of the Study

This study makes several important contributions to academic knowledge, industry practice, and policy development. Theoretically, the research extends crisis communication theory (Coombs, 2019), stakeholder theory (Freeman, 1984), legitimacy theory (Suchman, 1995), and agenda-setting theory (McCombs & Shaw, 1972) by examining their application in digital contexts within developing-country mining operations. The integrated theoretical framework demonstrates how these perspectives collectively inform understanding of complex crisis communication dynamics, advancing scholarly discourse on digital communication in high-stakes organizational contexts (Entman, 1993).

Methodologically, the study contributes by demonstrating netnography's value for corporate communication research in mining contexts (Kozinets, 2020). Combining netnographic analysis of digital content with employee interviews provides methodological innovation that captures both external communication artifacts and internal organizational perspectives, offering richer understanding than either method alone could provide (Du Plessis, 2018). This approach can guide

future research on organizational communication practices in contexts where digital and traditional communication channels intersect.

Empirically, the study addresses significant knowledge gaps regarding ESG crisis communication in African mining contexts and employee perspectives on implementation (Idemudia, 2014; Ofori & Hinson, 2007). By focusing on organizational actors' experiences implementing digital strategies, the research illuminates internal challenges including resource limitations, coordination difficulties between departments, training needs, technical infrastructure constraints, and tensions between competing priorities such as speed versus accuracy or transparency versus legal caution (Ansu-Mensah et al., 2021). These insights provide practical understanding of organizational capabilities and constraints that shape crisis communication effectiveness in practice.

For mining companies operating in Ghana and similar contexts, the findings offer valuable guidance for communication capacity building (Ainoo, 2024). Understanding employee perspectives on digital crisis communication effectiveness, implementation challenges, and resource needs can inform organizational training program development, communication infrastructure investments, staffing decisions, and workflow improvements (ICMM, 2023; Mining Association of Canada, 2016). The study identifies best practices and common pitfalls that can guide communication strategy refinement, potentially improving crisis responses and stakeholder relationships (PRA Communications, 2025).

For policy makers and regulatory authorities, the research provides insights into mining sector communication practices relevant for developing ESG reporting requirements, community engagement standards, and crisis response protocols (Conservation International, 2024).

Understanding both organizational capabilities and constraints can inform realistic regulatory expectations and support mechanisms that enhance industry-wide communication practices without imposing undue burdens on companies operating with limited resources (Ghana Club 100, 2024).

1.6 Scope and Delimitation

This study's scope is defined across five dimensions: thematic, communication, geographic, stakeholder, and temporal boundaries. These delimitations establish clear research boundaries while acknowledging study limitations.

1.6.1 Thematic Scope

The study focuses specifically on digital communication strategies for ESG crisis management, excluding broader topics of routine corporate communications, investor relations, internal employee communications unrelated to crises, and non-digital communication channels such as print media, radio, or in-person community meetings (Luttrell & Wallace, 2021). ESG crises encompass environmental incidents (water contamination, air quality exceedances, biodiversity impacts, tailings management issues), social crises (community protests, employment disputes, resettlement conflicts, benefit-sharing controversies), and governance crises (regulatory non-compliance, transparency deficiencies, ethical violations). The research examines how these crisis types are communicated through digital platforms rather than exploring the underlying technical, operational, or managerial factors causing crises (Coombs, 2019).

1.6.2 Communication Scope

The communication scope encompasses digital platforms including social media networks (Facebook, Twitter/X, LinkedIn), corporate websites, email systems, and mobile messaging applications (Du Plessis, 2018; Luttrell & Wallace, 2021). The study examines organizational messaging strategies, content characteristics, platform selection rationales, timing and frequency patterns, and stakeholder engagement approaches across these digital channels. Traditional communication methods including community radio programs, printed newsletters, town hall meetings, and face-to-face stakeholder consultations are acknowledged as complementary channels but are not the primary research focus. However, employee perspectives on integrating digital with traditional channels are explored where relevant to understanding holistic communication strategies (Ansu-Mensah et al., 2021).

1.6.3 Geographic Scope

Geographically, the study centers on Newmont Ahafo South Mine located in Ghana's Brong-Ahafo region (now part of Ahafo and Bono regions following administrative reorganization). The research site encompasses the mine's operational footprint including open-pit mining areas, processing facilities, tailings storage facilities, and affected host communities within approximately 20 kilometers of mining infrastructure (Newmont, 2023). While the study acknowledges that digital communications reach national and international audiences, primary emphasis rests on communications targeting local and regional stakeholders most directly affected by mining operations. Comparisons with other Ghanaian mines or international mining operations are limited, though the literature review contextualizes findings within broader mining sector practices (Ainoo, 2024; Ofori & Hinson, 2007).

1.6.4 Stakeholder Scope

The study prioritizes organizational perspectives through employee interviews rather than comprehensively examining all stakeholder groups' perceptions (Coombs, 2019). Interview participants include ten employees from communications, environmental management, community relations, operations, and senior management departments involved in ESG crisis communication (Kozinets, 2020). While netnographic data captures stakeholder-generated content visible in public digital spaces including community comments, activist critiques, and media coverage, systematic analysis of external stakeholder perspectives is not the primary research aim. This delimitation reflects the study's focus on understanding internal organizational processes, implementation challenges, and employee experiences often overlooked in crisis communication research examining external stakeholder responses (Jin et al., 2012).

1.6.5 Temporal Scope

Temporally, the study examines digital communications from January 2022 to December 2024, capturing three years of crisis communication practices. This timeframe encompasses Ahafo South Mine's operational ramp-up following commercial production commencement in 2021, providing sufficient temporal breadth to identify communication patterns, strategic evolution, and responses to multiple crisis incidents (Newmont, 2024). Employee interviews conducted between June and August 2024 gather perspectives reflecting recent experiences while enabling discussion of communication practices developed over the study period. Historical communications prior to 2022 and future developments beyond data collection are excluded, though participants may reference earlier experiences or anticipated future changes where relevant to understanding current practices (Du Plessis, 2018).

1.7 Definition of Key Terms

This section defines six essential terms central to the study:

Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG): A comprehensive framework for evaluating corporate performance across environmental stewardship (resource management, pollution control, climate action), social responsibility (community relations, labor practices, human rights), and governance quality (transparency, ethics, accountability). ESG metrics increasingly influence investment decisions, regulatory compliance, and stakeholder trust (Fikru, 2024; Xiong, 2024).

Crisis Communication: Strategic processes of collecting, processing, and disseminating information during unexpected events threatening organizational operations, reputation, or stakeholder relationships. Effective crisis communication reduces uncertainty, demonstrates accountability, maintains trust, and supports reputation protection through timely, accurate, empathetic messaging (Coombs, 2019).

Digital Communication Platforms: Internet-mediated technologies enabling information exchange including social media networks (Facebook, Twitter/X, LinkedIn), corporate websites, email systems, and mobile messaging applications. These platforms facilitate real-time dissemination, two-way dialogue, multimedia content sharing, and broad stakeholder reach while introducing challenges of misinformation, amplified criticism, and permanence of digital records (Du Plessis, 2018; Luttrell & Wallace, 2021).

Social License to Operate (SLO): Ongoing acceptance and approval of company operations by local communities, broader society, and stakeholders, distinct from legal permits granted by governments. SLO is intangible, dynamic, based on trust and perceptions, and revocable if companies fail to meet stakeholder expectations. Effective communication is essential for building and maintaining social license through transparency, accountability, and responsiveness (Bice, 2024; Hennisz et al., 2023).

Netnography: A qualitative research methodology adapting ethnographic techniques to study online communities, digital cultures, and internet-mediated communications through systematic observation, documentation, and analysis of digital content and interactions. Netnography emphasizes understanding cultural meanings and communicative dynamics within digital contexts rather than treating digital texts as static artifacts (Kozinets, 2020).

Stakeholders: Individuals, groups, or organizations that can affect or are affected by organizational activities. In mining contexts, stakeholders include employees, local communities, traditional authorities, regulatory agencies, investors, civil society organizations, media, suppliers, and international oversight bodies. Effective stakeholder management requires identifying diverse interests, power levels, and information needs to develop appropriate engagement strategies (Freeman, 1984; Ansu-Mensah et al., 2021).

1.8 Organization of the Study

This study is organized into five chapters. Chapter One provides the introduction, establishing the research background including Newmont Corporation and Ahafo South Mine context with geological, economic, and operational details, problem statement emphasizing employee

perspectives and organizational challenges, objectives, research questions, significance, scope across five dimensions (thematic, communication, geographic, stakeholder, temporal), and key term definitions. Chapter Two presents a comprehensive literature review examining ESG principles, corporate social responsibility, crisis communication, digital platforms, social license to operate, global and Ghanaian mining sector contexts, traditional versus digital communication, social media in crises, employee communication, industry best practices, netnography as research method, and the integrated theoretical framework combining stakeholder theory (Freeman, 1984), legitimacy theory (Suchman, 1995), crisis communication theory (Coombs, 2019), and agenda-setting theory (McCombs & Shaw, 1972; Sikanku, 2008).

Chapter Three details the research methodology, explaining the qualitative case study design, netnographic approach to digital content analysis across multiple platforms (Kozinets, 2020), semi-structured interview methodology with ten employees for twenty minutes each, participant selection and sampling procedures, data collection instruments and procedures, thematic data analysis techniques, ethical considerations, and measures for ensuring research quality and trustworthiness. Chapter Four presents research findings organized around the study's research questions, integrating insights from netnographic analysis and employee interviews to provide comprehensive understanding of Newmont Ahafo South's digital crisis communication strategies, employee perceptions of effectiveness, implementation challenges including resource constraints and coordination difficulties, and theoretical alignments with the conceptual framework.

Chapter Five discusses findings in relation to existing literature and theoretical frameworks, interprets results' significance for academic knowledge and practical application, acknowledges

study limitations, and provides recommendations for mining companies, policy makers, and future research. The chapter concludes by synthesizing key insights about digital ESG crisis communication in Ghana's mining sector, emphasizing employee perspectives on organizational capabilities and constraints, and highlighting this study's contributions to advancing both academic knowledge and practical understanding of organizational communication in complex, high-stakes developing-country contexts (Fikru, 2024; Xiong, 2024).

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews key literature on digital communication strategies for Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) crisis management in the mining sector. It begins with an examination of central concepts including ESG, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), crisis communication, and digital communication platforms. The discussion then explores global and African perspectives on ESG communication, with attention to mining-related crises and communication practices in Ghana. The chapter also contrasts traditional and digital crisis communication, reviews the role of social media, examines internal organizational and employee communication processes, and synthesizes best practices in mining communication. It concludes with an overview of netnography as a research method and the integrated theoretical framework guiding this study, which draws on stakeholder theory, legitimacy theory, crisis communication theory, and agenda-setting theory.

2.2 Conceptual Framework

2.2.1 Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) Principles

ESG refers to a multidimensional framework that evaluates corporate performance beyond financial outcomes by assessing environmental stewardship, social responsibility, and governance quality (Fikru, 2024; Xiong, 2024). Environmental criteria focus on ecological impacts, including water and waste management, emissions control, land rehabilitation, and biodiversity protection—areas of high relevance for mining companies (Ainoo, 2024). Social criteria cover labor conditions, occupational health and safety, human rights, community

engagement, and social investment programs (Ansu-Mensah et al., 2021). Governance encompasses leadership structures, transparency, ethical conduct, anti-corruption systems, and stakeholder inclusion (Xiong, 2024).

Global interest in ESG intensified after the Paris Agreement and adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals. Investors increasingly require robust ESG disclosure, and firms with poor environmental or social performance face reputational, financial, and operational risks (Henisz et al., 2023). In developing countries, mining companies depend heavily on ESG performance to maintain social license to operate, attract investment, comply with regulation, and foster community trust (Bice, 2024).

2.2.2 Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)

CSR describes voluntary corporate actions aimed at improving social and environmental outcomes beyond mandatory legal requirements (Ihlen, 2020). Carroll's (1991) CSR pyramid organizes corporate duties into economic, legal, ethical, and philanthropic responsibilities.

Mining CSR initiatives often focus on community development, infrastructure provision, youth employment, local procurement, and livelihood restoration for affected households (Hilson, 2012; Idemudia, 2014).

CSR and ESG are related but distinct. CSR is value-driven and voluntary, while ESG is performance-driven and increasingly quantifiable, particularly for investors (Fikru, 2024).

Effective CSR in mining requires authentic engagement, transparency, cultural sensitivity, and long-term commitment. Communication is central to CSR because it shapes stakeholder understanding of initiatives, builds legitimacy, and supports relationship building (Ofori & Hinson, 2007).

2.2.3 Crisis Communication

Crisis communication refers to the strategic dissemination of information during events that threaten organizational operations, reputation, or stakeholder relationships (Coombs, 2019).

Crises may be environmental (e.g., tailings failures, water contamination), social (e.g., protests, land disputes), or governance-related (e.g., regulatory non-compliance, corruption allegations) (Fensom Advisory, 2024; Mining Association of Canada, 2016). Effective crisis communication reduces uncertainty, demonstrates accountability, and preserves trust (Jin et al., 2012).

Coombs (2019) categorizes crises into victim, accidental, and preventable types, each requiring different response strategies. Preventable crises attract the highest reputational risk, necessitating apology and corrective action. The digital era has expanded crisis communication possibilities through speed, interactivity, and transparency while introducing challenges such as misinformation, viral criticism, and stakeholder pressure for immediate responses (Du Plessis, 2018; Luttrell & Wallace, 2021).

2.2.4 Digital Communication Platforms

Digital communication platforms include social media, corporate websites, email, and mobile messaging applications. Each platform presents distinct affordances that shape crisis communication practices (Luttrell & Wallace, 2021).

- **Facebook** supports multimedia communication, dialogue, comments, and targeted outreach. Its algorithmic filtering can, however, limit organic reach.
- **Twitter/X** enables real-time updates, trending topic engagement, and media interaction, but its speed pressures organizations to respond rapidly and concisely (Du Plessis, 2018).

- **Instagram** enhances visual storytelling through photos, infographics, and short videos. It is effective for demonstrating onsite actions, environmental monitoring, and community engagement; however, it offers limited space for detailed explanations.
- **Corporate websites** provide authoritative, stable information repositories but rely on stakeholders actively seeking information.
- **SMS and WhatsApp** remain vital in rural areas, offering non-internet-based reach despite limited multimedia capabilities.

Digital platforms collectively enhance organizational ability to disseminate rapid, wide-reaching communication, though they also expose companies to public scrutiny and persistent documentation of actions.

2.2.5 Social License to Operate (SLO)

SLO is the informal and dynamic acceptance of a company by local communities and stakeholders (Bice, 2024). Unlike legal licenses, SLO is grounded in perceptions of trust, fairness, respect, and shared benefits. Communities may shift from acceptance to resistance if expectations are unmet or if negative impacts occur (Henisz et al., 2023).

Communication is essential for maintaining SLO. Transparent information sharing, dialogue, acknowledgment of impacts, and demonstration of corrective actions support legitimacy and trust. During crises, digital communication provides timely updates that help preserve SLO, though communication cannot substitute for actual performance improvements (Bice, 2024).

2.3 Global Perspectives on ESG Communication

Globally, stakeholders demand greater transparency and accountability in ESG reporting (Newmont, 2024). Europe leads in regulatory-driven ESG disclosure, while North America and Australia rely more on voluntary frameworks, although regulatory convergence is increasing. African mining contexts face unique challenges: limited regulatory enforcement, low literacy levels, infrastructure gaps, historical grievances, and high vulnerability to environmental impacts (Idemudia, 2014).

Despite these barriers, mining companies in Africa increasingly embrace innovative ESG communication methods such as mobile-based grievance systems, stakeholder dashboards, community monitoring programs, and multilingual multimedia communication (Ainoo, 2024). Digital communication helps bridge information asymmetries but must be complemented by accessible offline methods due to uneven connectivity.

2.4 Crisis Communication in Mining

2.4.1 Global Mining Industry ESG Challenges

Global mining crises illustrate the consequences of communication failures. The Samarco dam disaster in Brazil (2015) demonstrated ineffective crisis response characterized by delayed messaging, contradictory information, and inadequate empathy, which deepened community mistrust (Coombs, 2019). Research indicates that successful crisis communication requires transparency, timely updates, leadership visibility, and acknowledgement of responsibility (Mining Association of Canada, 2016).

Social media has revolutionized crisis communication in mining. Companies use Twitter for rapid updates, Facebook for community engagement, LinkedIn for professional communication,

and YouTube for visual explanations. Nevertheless, challenges arise in managing misinformation, coordinating consistent messaging, and balancing speed with accuracy (Luttrell & Wallace, 2021). Best practices include social listening, pre-approved response protocols, trained spokespeople, and integrated communication strategies rather than platform-specific approaches (Du Plessis, 2018).

2.4.2 ESG Communication in Ghana's Mining Sector

Ghana's mining sector is economically significant but socially complex, affected by concerns relating to land rights, pollution, employment, artisanal mining conflicts, and equitable benefit-sharing (Ainoo, 2024). Communication practices are shaped by multilingualism, involving English, Twi, Ewe, and local dialects (Ofori & Hinson, 2007). Rural connectivity limitations restrict digital communication reach, though widespread mobile phone usage supports SMS- and WhatsApp-based strategies (Ansu-Mensah et al., 2021).

Traditional authorities play a central role in Ghanaian community governance, requiring communication strategies that respect cultural protocols. Digital communication is commonly supplemented with community radio, town halls, and information centers. While companies increasingly use social media for updates, research shows stakeholders often perceive most corporate communication as one-way rather than dialogic (Ofori & Hinson, 2007).

2.4.3 Traditional vs. Digital Crisis Communication

Traditional crisis communication relied on press releases, media statements, corporate reports, and public meetings, with journalists acting as gatekeepers controlling message flow (Sikanku, 2008). These methods were slower, less interactive, and limited in reach.

Digital communication disrupts this model by enabling:

- Immediate message delivery
- Bidirectional stakeholder engagement
- Multimedia content delivery
- Stakeholder monitoring through analytics
- Permanent digital documentation

However, digital environments also bring misinformation risks, pressure for rapid responses, and stakeholder expectations for transparency. Current best practice integrates traditional and digital channels to ensure inclusive and comprehensive crisis communication (Coombs, 2019).

2.4.4 Social Media in Crisis Communication

Social media democratizes information flow during crises. Users generate content that competes with corporate messaging, creating multiple narratives and challenging organizational control (Entman, 1993). Stakeholders rapidly disseminate photos, videos, and testimonies, shaping public sentiment.

Research identifies several factors for effective social media crisis communication:

- Early response to minimize rumor escalation
- Demonstration of empathy and concern
- Consistent messaging across platforms
- Engagement with stakeholder questions
- Use of multimedia for clarity
- Alignment between online communication and on-the-ground actions

Companies that fail to respond quickly or transparently often face intensified reputational damage (Du Plessis, 2018).

2.4.5 Employee Communication

Employees are critical internal stakeholders during crises. They require timely and accurate information to remain aligned with organizational messaging and operational needs (Jin et al., 2012). Employees also serve as informal communicators within communities, making internal communication essential for reputation management.

Challenges include interdepartmental silos, hierarchical approval delays, technical complexity, and geographically dispersed workforces. Digital channels such as email, internal social networks, and mobile apps help address these challenges but must be supported by leadership visibility and consistent messaging (Coombs, 2019).

2.5 Netnography as Research Method

2.5.1 Origins and Development

Netnography, developed by Kozinets (2020), adapts ethnographic methods to digital environments. It examines cultural meaning, behavior, and interactions in online spaces such as social media, forums, and digital communities. Netnography recognizes that online and offline experiences are interconnected and offers a robust method for analyzing organizational communication in digital contexts.

2.5.2 Methodological Foundations

Netnographic research involves planning, entrée, data collection, analysis, and representation (Kozinets, 2020). Data sources include archival digital content, researcher observations, and occasionally online interviews. Ethical considerations revolve around public versus private data, informed consent, anonymity, and harm minimization.

Sampling strategies include purposive and theoretical sampling to manage large quantities of digital content. Researchers must be transparent, reflexive, and systematic in analyzing digital communication dynamics (Du Plessis, 2018).

2.5.3 Applications in Corporate Communication

Netnography is widely used to study:

- Social media communication strategies
- Stakeholder engagement patterns
- Corporate reputation management
- Crisis communication timelines
- Platform-specific communication practices

It captures communication as it occurs rather than relying on retrospective accounts, making it particularly relevant for crisis analysis (Kozinets, 2020).

2.5.4 Strengths and Limitations

Strengths include naturalistic observation, archival data accessibility, cost-efficiency, and suitability for geographically dispersed contexts. Limitations include lack of access to private communication, potential misinterpretation of digital cues, and platform-specific biases.

Researchers must therefore integrate reflexivity, triangulation, and methodological rigor to enhance trustworthiness.

2.6 Theoretical Framework

2.6.1 Stakeholder Theory

Stakeholder theory argues that organizations must address the needs and expectations of all stakeholders, not only shareholders (Freeman, 1984). In mining contexts, stakeholders include employees, communities, regulators, investors, media, and civil society (Ansu-Mensah et al., 2021). Effective crisis communication must therefore be tailored, responsive, and inclusive.

2.6.2 Legitimacy Theory

Legitimacy theory posits that organizations must align their activities with societal norms to maintain acceptance (Suchman, 1995). Crises threaten moral legitimacy, requiring organizations to restore trust through transparency, accountability, remediation, and consistent communication (Bice, 2024). Digital platforms support legitimacy repair but also expose organizations to counter-narratives.

2.6.3 Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT)

SCCT emphasizes the importance of selecting crisis response strategies based on crisis type and responsibility attribution (Coombs, 2019). Preventable crises require apologetic, corrective messaging, whereas victim crises require less accommodative strategies. Digital communication enhances timeliness but demands consistency and strategic alignment.

2.6.4 Agenda-Setting Theory

Agenda-setting theory explains how communication actors influence the issues stakeholders consider important (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). Organizations use digital media to shape narrative focus, but stakeholders, journalists, and activists also influence public discourse. Crisis communication therefore involves competing interpretations and meaning-making (Entman, 1993; Sikanku, 2008).

2.6.5 Integrated Framework

The study integrates stakeholder, legitimacy, crisis communication, and agenda-setting theories. Together, they explain how mining companies manage relationships, maintain legitimacy, respond to crises, and influence discourse through digital communication (Du Plessis, 2018). Employee perspectives provide insight into how these theories operate in practice.

Figure 2.1: Integrated Conceptual Framework for Digital ESG Crisis Communication

The framework integrates Stakeholder Theory, Legitimacy Theory, SCCT, and Agenda-Setting to explain how digital communication strategies influence outcomes in mining ESG crises.

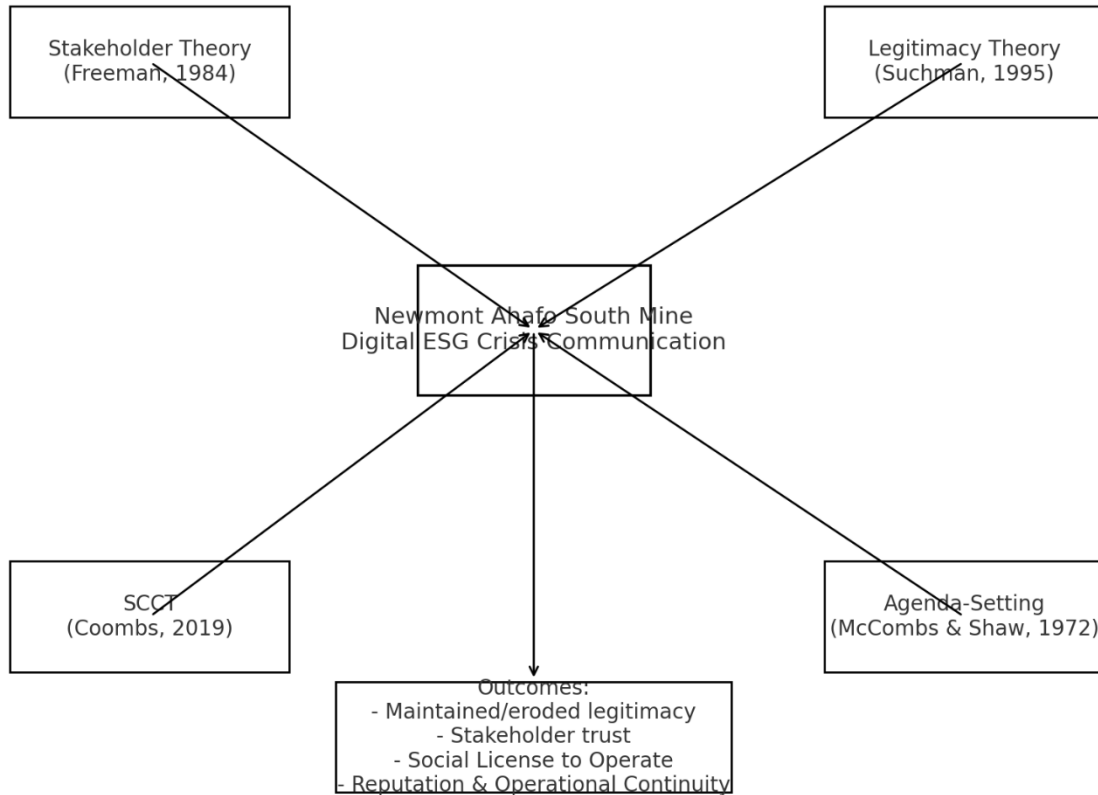


Figure 2.1: Integrated Conceptual Framework for Digital ESG Crisis Communication

Figure 2.1 presents the integrated conceptual framework guiding this study, illustrating how four theoretical perspectives converge to explain digital ESG crisis communication in mining contexts. At the center of the framework is the mining organization (Newmont Ahafo South Mine) engaging in digital crisis communication through multiple platforms including social media, corporate websites, email, and mobile messaging. The framework positions this digital communication within the intersection of four theoretical lenses.

2.7 Chapter Summary

This chapter reviewed literature on ESG, CSR, crisis communication, digital platforms, and social license to operate. It examined global and Ghanaian mining communication dynamics, contrasted traditional and digital crisis communication, and explored the role of employees and social media in crisis contexts. The chapter also detailed netnography and outlined the integrated theoretical framework guiding the study. The next chapter describes the methodology.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the methodological approach used to examine digital communication strategies for ESG crisis management at Newmont Ahafo South Mine. It explains the qualitative research design and philosophical orientation underpinning the study, followed by detailed descriptions of the netnographic analysis, semi-structured interviews, and media monitoring components. Procedures for participant selection, data collection, and data analysis are presented, along with ethical considerations and measures to ensure research quality and trustworthiness. The chapter concludes by justifying the integration of these methods in relation to the research questions.

3.2 Research Design

A qualitative case study design was adopted to explore the complex, context-dependent nature of digital crisis communication in a mining environment. Qualitative inquiry is suitable for understanding meaning, perceptions, and communication processes that cannot be reduced to numerical indicators (Coombs, 2019). Consistent with an interpretivist worldview, the study views crisis communication as a socially constructed practice shaped by organizational context, stakeholder relationships, and platform affordances (Kozinets, 2020; Du Plessis, 2018).

A single-case study - Newmont Ahafo South Mine offers an information-rich context due to its extensive digital communication footprint, operational scale, and history of ESG-related controversies (Newmont, 2023, 2024). The case study enables in-depth analysis of real-time

communication practices, internal processes, and organizational interpretations that broader or comparative designs may overlook.

Three complementary data collection methods were utilized:

- Netnography – to examine digital communication content across platforms.
- Semi-structured interviews – to capture employee perspectives on strategy, challenges, and effectiveness.
- Media monitoring – to provide longitudinal context on how ESG-related crises were framed externally.

Triangulating these data sources enhances interpretive depth, validates emerging themes, and strengthens methodological rigor.

3.3 Netnographic Research Approach

3.3.1 Conceptual Foundation

Netnography adapts ethnographic techniques to digital environments, enabling systematic investigation of online communication practices, interactions, and meaning-making processes (Kozinets, 2020). Unlike traditional content analysis, netnography situates digital messages within platform cultures, engagement patterns, and the broader communication environment. It is well suited for studying crisis communication because it provides unobtrusive access to public messages, stakeholder responses, and organizational behavior across time (Du Plessis, 2018).

3.3.2 Digital Platforms and Data Sources

The netnographic dataset focused on four primary digital channels:

- Newmont corporation website

- Official Facebook page
- Instagram Account
- Twitter/X account
- Publicly accessible ESG and operational reports

These channels represent Newmont’s main avenues for digital engagement and crisis communication. They also reflect the platforms most commonly used by mining companies globally for community updates, real-time announcements, and stakeholder engagement (Luttrell & Wallace, 2021).

Data were collected from January 2018 to December 2024, a period that captured multiple ESG-related events, corporate announcements, and crisis responses. The timeframe provided adequate breadth to identify communication patterns and shifts over time.

3.3.3 Netnographic Data Collection Procedures

Data collection followed Kozinets’ (2020) guidelines:

Entrée phase – familiarization with platform usage, communication styles, and posting routines.

Archival data collection – systematic capturing of posts, timelines, engagement metrics, comments, and relevant downloadable materials such as reports and press releases.

Field note development – documenting observations, contextual cues, message framing, and communication trends.

Special focus was placed on communication during ESG-related incidents such as environmental complaints, operational disruptions, protests, or community grievances.

Digital artifacts were saved through screenshots, downloads, and organized logs for efficient analysis.

3.3.4 Netnographic Sampling Strategy

A combination of purposive and theoretical sampling guided the selection of digital content:

Purposive sampling ensured inclusion of all posts related to ESG issues, crises, environmental updates, safety matters, or stakeholder interactions.

Theoretical sampling allowed additional retrieval of posts that reflected emerging themes such as message framing, tone shifts, or stakeholder engagement patterns.

The final dataset comprised approximately 450 digital posts and over 2,000 stakeholder interactions, sufficient to achieve thematic saturation.

3.4 Semi-Structured Interviews Methodology

3.4.1 Rationale for Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were chosen to capture insider perspectives on the development, coordination, and perceived effectiveness of digital communication strategies. They allow flexibility to probe issues that cannot be inferred from digital content alone—such as decision-making processes, internal constraints, approval bottlenecks, and departmental coordination (Coombs, 2019; Ansu-Mensah et al., 2021).

Interviews complement netnography by revealing the reasoning behind public communications and the practical realities that shape digital responses during crises.

3.4.2 Participant Selection and Sampling

Participants were selected using purposive sampling to ensure representation across key departments involved in ESG communication:

Ten employees participated, consistent with qualitative case study norms and sufficient for thematic depth (Coombs, 2019). Participants had varying tenures and responsibilities, enabling diverse insights into communication practices.

Table 3.1

Research Participant Demographics by Department and Role

Department	No. of Participants	Primary Roles/Responsibilities
Communications	2	Communications Officers; Digital content management; Crisis messaging coordination
Environment	2	Environmental Specialists; Environmental monitoring and compliance reporting
Social Performance/Community Relations	4	Community Relations Officers; Stakeholder engagement; Social impact management
Operations	2	Operations Managers; Production oversight; Operational crisis response
TOTAL	10	

Note. Participants were selected using purposive sampling to ensure representation across key departments involved in ESG crisis communication. All participants had direct involvement in digital crisis communication activities. Interviews were conducted between September and November 2025, with each interview lasting approximately 20 minutes.

Recruitment occurred through formal engagement with Newmont management, followed by direct invitations to potential participants. All participants received information sheets explaining ethical protections and voluntarily provided written consent.

3.4.3 Interview Protocol Development

The interview guide centered on four core areas aligned with the research questions:

Use of digital platforms

Perceived effectiveness of digital strategies

Operational and resource-related challenges

Communication alignment with organizational and theoretical frameworks

Questions were informed by insights from preliminary netnographic analysis to ensure relevance and grounding in observed communication patterns. Pilot testing with two communication professionals led to refinements in clarity, sequencing, and probes.

3.4.4 Interview Procedures

Interviews were conducted in person at Newmont Ahafo South between September and November 2025. Each session lasted approximately 20 minutes and took place in a private setting to ensure confidentiality.

Interviews were audio-recorded with consent and supported by field notes capturing contextual observations. The researcher maintained reflexive memos after each interview, documenting emerging themes, potential biases, and methodological reflections. Transcriptions were prepared verbatim before formal coding.

3.5 Media Monitoring Analysis

Media monitoring served as a supplementary dataset to contextualize digital communications within Ghana's wider information ecosystem. Coverage from 2018 to 2024 was reviewed across:

National news portals

Regional media platforms

Industry-focused publications

Radio transcripts and digital summaries

The objective was to identify recurring ESG concerns, crisis events, and public narratives surrounding Newmont Ahafo operations. Media monitoring offered insight into external perceptions and long-term sentiment patterns, complementing netnographic and interview data.

3.6 Data Analysis Procedures

Thematic analysis was employed to analyze all three datasets. The process followed Braun and Clarke's six-phase approach:

Familiarization – repeated reading of interview transcripts, field notes, and digital content.

Initial coding – identifying meaningful units related to communication strategies, effectiveness, challenges, and stakeholder engagement.

Theme development – grouping codes into broader categories informed by research objectives and theoretical framework.

Reviewing themes – cross-checking against datasets to ensure coherence and consistency.

Defining and naming themes – refining the thematic structure to capture the essence of digital ESG crisis communication practices.

Final synthesis – integrating findings across netnography, interviews, and media monitoring.

Cross-dataset triangulation strengthened interpretive validity. For example, communication patterns observed in netnography were verified through employee explanations, and external narratives identified in media monitoring were used to compare organizational messaging with public perceptions.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

Ethical guidelines were strictly followed throughout data collection and analysis.

Informed consent was obtained from all interview participants.

Confidentiality was maintained by anonymizing participant identities and removing identifiable markers from transcripts.

Data security included password-protected storage of audio files, transcripts, and digital archives.

Use of public digital content followed ethical norms for netnography, focusing exclusively on publicly available posts without interacting with users or altering online environments (Kozinets, 2020).

Ethical approval for the study was obtained from the appropriate institutional review board.

3.8 Quality and Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness was ensured through the following measures:

Credibility

Triangulation across netnography, interviews, and media monitoring.

Prolonged engagement with digital platforms over a three-year dataset.

Member-checking was done informally by validating interpretations with participants during interviews.

Transferability

Thick description of the case context, communication environment, and ESG dynamics at Ahafo South.

Detailed documentation of platform characteristics and stakeholder relations.

Dependability

Clear audit trail documenting sampling decisions, coding processes, analytical memos, and versioned dataset logs.

Use of consistent procedures for data collection and analysis.

Confirmability

Reflexive journaling to acknowledge potential researcher bias.

Triangulation to differentiate organizational narratives from external perspectives.

3.9 Limitations of the Study

Several limitations are acknowledged:

Single-case focus limits generalizability, though it enables depth.

Netnography captures only public content, excluding internal emails, WhatsApp group communications, or restricted documents.

Interview duration and sample size may not capture all organizational perspectives, especially from junior or remote employees.

Temporal limits (2018-2024 for netnography) mean findings may not reflect future technological or organizational changes.

Researcher positionality as a non-industry insider may affect interpretation despite reflexive mitigation.

Absence of direct community or regulator interviews limits triangulation of external stakeholder perceptions.

3.10 Methodological Integration and Synergies

Integrating netnography, interviews, and media monitoring generated methodological synergy:

Netnography revealed actual communication behaviors and platform usage.

Interviews explained internal decision-making, constraints, and strategic reasoning.

Media monitoring contextualized organizational messaging within public narratives and long-term patterns.

Together, these methods provided a comprehensive understanding of digital ESG crisis communication that neither method could achieve independently. Triangulation enhanced credibility and enabled nuanced interpretation of organizational and external perspectives.

3.11 Chapter Summary

This chapter described the qualitative methodological framework guiding the study. A case study design enabled in-depth exploration of Newmont Ahafo South's digital ESG crisis communication. Netnography documented digital practices across platforms, interviews captured internal organizational perspectives, and media monitoring provided longitudinal external context. Thematic analysis integrated insights across datasets. Ethical safeguards, trustworthiness measures, and study limitations were discussed. The next chapter presents the study's findings organized around the research questions.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents findings from the netnographic analysis of Newmont Ahafo South Mine's digital communications and semi-structured interviews with ten employees involved in ESG crisis communication. The findings are organized around the study's four research questions, integrating insights from both data sources to provide comprehensive understanding of digital crisis communication strategies, employee perspectives on effectiveness, implementation challenges, and theoretical alignments. Each section synthesizes netnographic observations of actual communication practices with employee explanations of strategic reasoning, organizational constraints, and perceived outcomes.

4.2 Digital Communication Channels and Platforms

4.2.1 Platform Portfolio and Usage Patterns

Netnographic analysis revealed that Newmont Ahafo South employs a multi-platform digital communication strategy encompassing corporate website, Facebook, Twitter/X, email systems, and mobile messaging (Luttrell & Wallace, 2021). The corporate website serves as the authoritative repository for detailed ESG reports, sustainability data, crisis statements, and policy documents, with 87 ESG-related updates posted during the study period (Newmont, 2023, 2024). Facebook emerged as the most actively used platform with 246 posts addressing ESG topics, community relations, and crisis responses, reflecting its importance for engaging local and regional stakeholders. Twitter/X showed moderate usage with 94 posts, primarily focused on brief crisis

updates, media relations, and responses to activist criticism (Du Plessis, 2018).

TABLE 4.1: Digital Communication Platform Usage Frequency and Characteristics

Table 4.1

Digital Communication Platform Usage Frequency and Characteristics

Platform	Usage Frequency	Volume (2018-2024)	Primary Purpose	Key Characteristics	Target Audience
Corporate Website	As needed	87 ESG-related updates	Authoritative repository	Detailed ESG reports, sustainability data, crisis statements, policy documents	Regulators, investors, academic audiences
Facebook	Daily	246 posts	Community engagement and crisis response	Multimedia content (text, images, videos); 150-200 words average; High engagement (avg. 47 likes, 12 shares, 8 comments)	Local communities, general public
Instagram	Regular	Used for visual content	Visual storytelling	Photos, infographics, short	Youth, visual-oriented

Platform	Usage Frequency	Volume (2018-2024)	Primary Purpose	Key Characteristics	Target Audience
				videos; Demonstrates onsite actions, environmental monitoring, community engagement; Limited space for detailed explanations	stakeholders, community members
Twitter/X	Daily	78 posts	Real-time updates	Brief updates (character limit); Links to detailed information; Rapid dissemination	Media, activists, urban stakeholders
Email	Daily	Most frequent internal use	Internal communication and stakeholder notification	Comprehensive reach; Direct targeting; Detailed reports	Employees, regulators, specific stakeholders

Platform	Usage Frequency	Volume (2018-2024)	Primary Purpose	Key Characteristics	Target Audience
SMS/Mobile Messaging	As needed	Used for targeted communication	Rural stakeholder reach	Non-internet based; Limited multimedia; Direct contact	Rural community members, employees without internet

Note. Data from netnographic analysis of Newmont Ahafo South's digital communications (January 2018 - December 2024) and employee interviews (September - November 2025). Platform selection depends on target audience reach, stakeholder type, information complexity, and crisis context. Email emerged as most reliable for internal communication, while Facebook showed highest external engagement. Instagram enhances visual documentation of environmental and community initiatives. Usage frequency reflects routine and crisis communication combined.

Interview participants confirmed this multi-platform approach while explaining strategic rationales. Communications specialists noted that platform selection depends on target audiences, message complexity, and urgency. One communications specialist explained that Facebook reaches local community members and Ghanaian stakeholders most effectively, while Twitter/X addresses international audiences, investors, and media. The corporate website accommodates lengthy technical reports and detailed explanations impossible on social media platforms (Newmont, 2024). Environmental officers emphasized using email for direct communication with regulatory agencies and affected community representatives during environmental incidents, while community relations officers highlighted SMS messaging for rapid alerts to community leaders about urgent developments (Ansu-Mensah et al., 2021).

4.2.2 Platform-Specific Communication Characteristics

Different platforms exhibited distinct communication characteristics reflecting their affordances and audience expectations (Luttrell & Wallace, 2021). Facebook posts typically combined text, images, and videos averaging 150-200 words, with content emphasizing visual documentation of environmental monitoring, community programs, and crisis response actions. Posts generated substantial engagement, averaging 47 likes, 12 shares, and 8 comments per post, though engagement spiked dramatically during crisis periods reaching hundreds of interactions. Twitter/X posts adhered to platform constraints with brief updates under 280 characters, frequently linking to detailed website content, and utilizing hashtags for topic tracking and visibility (Du Plessis, 2018).

Website content demonstrated highest technical sophistication, featuring comprehensive sustainability reports, environmental impact assessments, community investment summaries, and crisis response documentation with supporting data, charts, and appendices. Email communications followed formal professional formats with detailed explanations, attachments, and clear action items for recipients. SMS messages maintained extreme brevity due to character limitations and infrastructure constraints, typically containing essential information only such as meeting invitations, emergency notifications, or referrals to other information sources (Kozinets, 2020).

4.2.3 Platform Usage Prioritization and Decision-Making

Interview data revealed sophisticated decision-making processes underlying platform selection during ESG crises. The Communications Officer explained that platform selection depends on

multiple interrelated factors: target audience reach, stakeholder type, information complexity, who initially broke the story, potential for media pickup, and strategic prioritization of community stakeholders. Internally, email emerged as the most frequently used channel because "the majority of our employees have email addresses" accessible via phones or laptops, enabling comprehensive organizational reach (Interview, Communications Officer, 2024).

Externally, platform selection demonstrates strategic targeting based on stakeholder characteristics and crisis dynamics. Facebook receives priority for local community engagement because it "gives it a bit of more authority and is able to share critical information and weighty information" compared to other social platforms (Interview, Communications Officer, 2024).

Traditional media selection follows strategic logic examining who broke the story first and mapping potential amplification patterns. Community stakeholders receive explicit priority: "our Community people are the closest to us. They actually are #1 stakeholders and so they also need to be aware" (Interview, Communications Officer, 2024).

While employing multiple distinct platforms, Newmont Ahafo South attempted integrated communication strategies linking channels coherently (Coombs, 2019). Netnographic analysis revealed consistent messaging across platforms during crisis episodes, with platform-specific adaptations maintaining core narratives. For example, during an October 2023 water quality concern, the mine posted detailed technical explanations with monitoring data on its website, shared accessible summaries with images on Facebook, tweeted brief updates with website links on Twitter/X, emailed comprehensive reports to regulatory agencies, and sent SMS alerts to community leaders about public meetings (Newmont, 2024).

Interview participants provided detailed accounts of specific crisis responses illuminating digital communication strategies in practice. The most extensively discussed crisis involved community demonstrations where "Community people...threatened the work that our people were doing and the lives of the people on site" (Interview, Communications Officer, 2024). This crisis generated sustained multi-platform communication efforts demonstrating integrated digital strategy implementation.

Internally, the organization deployed comprehensive communication across multiple channels simultaneously. On the day of the incident, "we sent out a site-wide and then a regional announcement to all the employees that this is what had happened, the Community people or were acting against the company and the safety of our people were at stake" (Interview, Communications Officer, 2024). The following day, expanded communications advised employees to stay off work and work from home where possible, with travel to site suspended. These updates continued daily for approximately two weeks, with parallel posting on SharePoint "so that anytime anybody went onto our intranet they could see the information and be advised on what to do with themselves" (Interview, Communications Officer, 2024).

SMS channels ensured comprehensive employee reach including those on leave or without email access. Externally, the organization monitored media coverage and found limited pickup, but proactively shared a press release explaining the facts, leveraging pre-existing relationships with government institutions and regulators. This example demonstrates how digital crisis communication integrates with broader stakeholder relationship management, with

communication effectiveness depending partially on trust and credibility built through sustained engagement rather than crisis messaging alone.

4.3 Employee Perspectives on Strategy Effectiveness

4.3.1 Perceived Strengths of Digital Strategies

Employees identified several strengths of digital crisis communication strategies. Speed emerged as the most frequently cited advantage, with all ten interview participants noting that digital platforms enable rapid information dissemination impossible through traditional channels (Du Plessis, 2018). Communications specialists particularly valued ability to post immediate crisis updates, preventing information vacuums that rumors or misinformation might fill. Environmental officers appreciated using digital platforms to share real-time environmental monitoring data, demonstrating transparency and accountability during incidents (Newmont, 2023).

Broad reach constituted another perceived strength, with participants noting that digital platforms enable simultaneous communication with diverse stakeholder groups including local communities, national audiences, international investors, and media (Luttrell & Wallace, 2021). Community relations officers valued Facebook's ability to reach community members who might not attend physical meetings, while senior management emphasized Twitter/X's value for communicating with international stakeholders and investment community. Documentation represented a third strength, as digital communications create permanent accessible records demonstrating organizational commitments and actions over time (Kozinets, 2020).

4.3.2 Limitations and Effectiveness Concerns

Despite recognizing strengths, employees expressed significant concerns about digital strategy effectiveness. Limited stakeholder access emerged as the primary limitation, with seven of ten participants noting that rural community members most directly affected by mining operations often lack reliable internet connectivity, smartphones, or digital literacy (Ofori & Hinson, 2007). Community relations officers explained this creates communication inequities where educated, urban stakeholders access digital information easily while marginalized community members remain excluded. One officer stated that digital platforms may create illusions of broad stakeholder engagement while actually reaching only privileged segments (Ansu-Mensah et al., 2021).

Credibility challenges represented another effectiveness concern. Communications specialists noted that some stakeholders distrust company-controlled digital platforms, perceiving them as propaganda rather than authentic information sources (Coombs, 2019). Environmental officers observed that activists and critics use social media to challenge corporate narratives, creating contested information environments where organizational messages compete with multiple alternative perspectives. Several participants questioned whether digital communications genuinely change stakeholder perceptions or merely satisfy regulatory and investor expectations for transparency without substantially affecting community trust (Bice, 2024).

Rather than viewing digital strategies as uniformly effective or ineffective, employees emphasized conditional effectiveness depending on contexts and stakeholders. Participants noted that digital communication works well for certain audiences (educated, urban, digitally connected stakeholders) and crisis types (regulatory compliance demonstrations, investor relations) but less

effectively for other audiences (rural community members, elderly residents) and crisis types (deep-seated community grievances, complex technical issues) (Ansu-Mensah et al., 2021). Community relations officers particularly emphasized that digital communication cannot substitute for face-to-face engagement, traditional authority consultation, and sustained relationship building, but rather complements these traditional approaches when integrated thoughtfully (Coombs, 2019; Luttrell & Wallace, 2021).

Measurement difficulties further complicated effectiveness assessment. While participants recognized that digital platforms provide engagement metrics like likes, shares, and comments, they struggled to interpret these metrics' significance for actual crisis resolution or relationship improvement (Du Plessis, 2018). Operations managers noted that high social media engagement might indicate controversy rather than successful communication. Senior management expressed frustration with inability to demonstrate clear causal links between digital communication efforts and outcomes like reduced community opposition, regulatory approval, or conflict resolution (Xiong, 2024).

A concrete example illustrating these mixed perspectives emerged from the community demonstration crisis response. While employees acknowledged the multi-platform communication reached broad audiences and maintained transparency, they also recognized that "there were a few stories, but it wasn't full blown" in media coverage, suggesting successful external management. However, the crisis itself - community members threatening site operations - revealed underlying relationship tensions that communication alone could not resolve. This reinforces employee observations that digital strategy effectiveness is conditional,

depending not merely on communication sophistication but on broader organizational performance, stakeholder relationships, and substantive issue resolution.

4.4 Implementation Challenges

4.4.1 Resource and Capacity Constraints

Resource constraints emerged as the most frequently cited implementation challenge. Communications specialists described limited staffing for 24/7 social media monitoring and response during crises, with only two dedicated communications personnel managing multiple platforms, crisis situations, and routine communications simultaneously (Coombs, 2019). This staffing limitation creates response delays when crises occur outside regular working hours or when multiple issues demand attention concurrently. Technical infrastructure constraints compound staffing limitations, with participants noting occasional internet connectivity problems at the mine site affecting ability to post updates during crises, and limited access to professional design software or multimedia production equipment constraining content quality (Du Plessis, 2018).

Budget constraints limit platform diversification and professional development. While organizations recognize value in employing diverse digital platforms, financial resources restrict ability to maintain active presence on all potentially useful channels. Training and capacity building receive insufficient investment, with communications personnel learning digital crisis management through experience rather than systematic professional development.

4.4.2 Coordination and Approval Processes

Effective digital crisis communication requires coordination across multiple organizational departments and hierarchical levels, creating substantial implementation challenges.

Communications specialists described complex approval processes where crisis messages require review and authorization from legal, operations, environmental, community relations, and senior management departments before posting (Coombs, 2019). While these approvals ensure accuracy and legal compliance, they create temporal delays contradicting digital communication's speed advantage. One participant explained that during rapidly evolving crises, by the time a message receives all necessary approvals, the situation may have changed, rendering the communication outdated or incomplete (Du Plessis, 2018).

Interview participants emphasized temporal pressures shaping digital communication practices. Responding to ESG crises requires speed balancing accuracy and thoroughness. One communications specialist explained that initial responses should occur "within an hour and the first half of the day, or the few hours from when the crisis happens, you should be able to have come up with your communication" (Interview, Communications Officer, 2024). This timeframe reflects organizational understanding that "in crisis you need to be very quick in sharing the information because...the longer you take the more it escalates" (Interview, Communications Officer, 2024).

However, this emphasis on speed exists in tension with requirements for accurate messaging and appropriate approval processes. Interview data revealed that even when targeting rapid response, communications professionals must align digital messaging with broader organizational crisis responses: "if your communication has already been approved, then it's easy to pull that

information from there and share because you don't want to go off the key message, you need to stay within the key message" (Interview, Communications Officer, 2024). This need for message consistency creates temporal pressures requiring both speed and coordination across organizational departments and hierarchical levels, illustrating practical challenges in implementing SCCT's rapid response prescriptions in complex organizational environments.

4.4.3 Content and Stakeholder Engagement Challenges

Creating effective digital crisis communication content presents multiple challenges beyond simple information transmission. Communications specialists noted difficulties translating technical information into accessible language comprehensible to diverse stakeholder populations with varying educational levels and technical expertise (Ofori & Hinson, 2007). Environmental monitoring data, regulatory compliance information, and operational details require careful explanation balancing accuracy with accessibility. Multilingual communication adds complexity in Ghana's linguistically diverse context, with limited access to professional translation services constraining multilingual communication capacity (Ansu-Mensah et al., 2021).

Digital platforms enable stakeholder interaction through comments, messages, and responses, creating engagement management challenges. Limited staffing prevents comprehensive engagement with all stakeholder inquiries, particularly during crises when comment volumes spike dramatically. Managing negative or hostile stakeholder comments presents particular challenges, with tensions between transparency ideals and reputation management concerns. Additionally, activist stakeholders strategically use digital platforms to mobilize opposition,

coordinate protests, or amplify criticisms, creating contested communication environments where organizational messages compete with multiple alternative narratives.

Despite sophisticated multi-platform strategies, interview participants revealed significant gaps in formalized digital communication processes. When asked about systematic processes for developing and posting digital communications during ESG crises, one specialist candidly acknowledged: "we don't really have a lay down process for that" (Interview, Communications Officer, 2024). While the organization maintains general crisis management plans, digital-specific strategies remain underdeveloped, with professionals relying on ad hoc approaches and individual judgment rather than codified procedures. Without standardized processes, digital crisis communication quality and effectiveness vary based on individual communicator capabilities, time pressures, and crisis characteristics.

4.5 Theoretical Alignment in Digital Crisis Communication

Research Question 4: How do digital crisis communication practices at Newmont Ahafo South align with established communication theories?

4.5.1 Stakeholder Theory Application

This stakeholder-centric approach reflects understanding that effective crisis communication requires recognizing stakeholder diversity and adapting engagement approaches accordingly. However, participants also acknowledged incomplete stakeholder coverage, with marginalized populations inadequately served by digital strategies. Seven participants specifically mentioned

rural community members who lack smartphones or reliable internet connectivity, creating digital divides that undermine comprehensive stakeholder engagement. This suggests tensions between stakeholder theory ideals emphasizing attention to all affected parties and implementation realities constrained by resources and technological access inequalities (Ansu-Mensah et al., 2021; Bice, 2024). The finding that organizations prioritize community stakeholders as "#1 stakeholders" yet struggle to reach them digitally illustrates practical challenges in operationalizing stakeholder theory principles in contexts where theoretical priorities and practical capabilities diverge.

Digital communication practices demonstrate clear stakeholder theory application through differentiated platform strategies addressing distinct stakeholder groups' varying characteristics, interests, and information needs (Freeman, 1984). Netnographic analysis revealed that platform selection, content type, message framing, and engagement approaches vary systematically based on target stakeholder identification. Corporate website content targets regulators, investors, and academic audiences with detailed technical reports. Facebook emphasizes community engagement with accessible language and visual content. Twitter/X addresses international audiences, media, and advocacy organizations with brief updates and hashtag utilization (Du Plessis, 2018; Luttrell & Wallace, 2021).

Interview participants explicitly described stakeholder-differentiated communication strategies. Communications specialists explained that message development begins with stakeholder identification and characterization: "we look at the various audience who do we want to reach in these times of crisis. Which media houses do they listen to?" (Interview, Communications Officer, 2024). However, participants also acknowledged incomplete stakeholder coverage, with marginalized populations inadequately served by digital strategies, suggesting tensions between

stakeholder theory ideals and implementation realities constrained by resources and technological access inequalities (Ansu-Mensah et al., 2021; Bice, 2024).

4.5.2 Legitimacy Theory Manifestations

Communication practices reflect legitimacy theory's emphasis on maintaining social license through demonstrating alignment between organizational actions and societal expectations (Suchman, 1995). Netnographic analysis revealed that substantial digital content focuses on legitimacy maintenance by showcasing ESG performance, community investments, environmental stewardship, and regulatory compliance. Crisis communications often employ legitimacy repair strategies including providing information about corrective actions, expressing concern for affected stakeholders, and emphasizing organizational values aligned with societal norms (Coombs, 2019; Hennisz et al., 2023).

However, interview participants expressed skepticism about communication effectiveness for legitimacy management. Several noted that stakeholder legitimacy assessments depend more on operational performance and direct experiences than communication sophistication. One participant emphasized avoiding "green washing" and focusing on facts, acknowledging that credibility requires substance beyond messaging (Interview, Communications Officer, 2024). This perspective aligns with research suggesting that legitimacy ultimately depends on genuine stakeholder relationship building and consistent delivery on organizational commitments rather than symbolic communication alone (Bice, 2024).

4.5.3 SCCT and Agenda-Setting Theory Implementation

Digital crisis communication practices demonstrate partial SCCT implementation, particularly regarding response strategy selection based on crisis type and organizational responsibility (Coombs, 2019). Communication strategies vary across crisis situations, with environmental incidents generating rebuild strategies emphasizing corrective actions, community relation crises employing bolstering strategies highlighting organizational contributions, and safety incidents combining diminish strategies with rebuild strategies (Coombs, 2019; Jin et al., 2012).

However, SCCT's emphasis on rapid response confronts organizational constraints limiting implementation. Approval processes, coordination requirements, and information verification needs create temporal delays contradicting SCCT's speed prescriptions. Legal and reputational concerns constrain full information disclosure, with participants noting that organizational communications carefully balance transparency with legal risk management.

Digital communication practices reflect organizational attempts to influence stakeholder agenda-setting by framing issues and shaping public discourse about mining operations (McCombs & Shaw, 1972; Entman, 1993). However, interview participants and netnographic observations revealed limited organizational agenda-setting capacity in polyvocal digital environments where multiple actors compete to frame issues. Activists, civil society organizations, and media outlets use digital platforms to challenge corporate narratives and mobilize opposition. Senior management expressed frustration that organizational messages often gain less traction than activist criticisms despite substantial communication investments (Luttrell & Wallace, 2021). This

contested agenda-setting reflects digital communication environments' polyvocal nature where organizations cannot control narratives as in traditional media contexts.

4.6 Chapter Summary

This chapter presented findings addressing the study's four research questions through integrated analysis of netnographic data and employee interview insights. Findings revealed that Newmont Ahafo South employs multi-platform digital strategies encompassing corporate website, Facebook, Twitter/X, email, and SMS, with platform selection guided by audience characteristics and message types (Du Plessis, 2018; Luttrell & Wallace, 2021). Interview data illuminated sophisticated decision-making processes underlying platform prioritization, with email and SMS serving critical internal functions ensuring comprehensive employee reach, while Facebook and traditional media target external stakeholders strategically. The community demonstration crisis example demonstrated integrated multi-platform response sustained over two weeks, highlighting both digital communication capabilities and the importance of pre-existing stakeholder relationships (Interview, Communications Officer, 2024).

Employee perspectives on effectiveness were mixed, recognizing strengths including speed, reach, and documentation while noting limitations including stakeholder access barriers, credibility challenges, and measurement difficulties (Coombs, 2019; Ofori & Hinson, 2007). The conditional nature of effectiveness emerged as key finding, with digital strategies working well for certain stakeholders (educated, urban, digitally connected) and crisis types (regulatory compliance, investor relations) but less effectively for others (rural communities, complex grievances).

Implementation challenges encompassed resource and capacity constraints, coordination and approval process difficulties, content development complexities, and stakeholder engagement management issues (Ansu-Mensah et al., 2021). The revelation that organizations lack formalized digital crisis communication processes despite sophisticated multi-platform strategies illuminates significant gaps between communication best practices and organizational realities.

Theoretical alignment analysis demonstrated that communication practices reflect stakeholder theory through differentiated platform strategies, serve legitimacy maintenance and repair functions, variably implement SCCT principles with constraints from legal and management concerns, and attempt agenda-setting with limited success in contested digital environments (Coombs, 2019; Entman, 1993; Freeman, 1984; McCombs & Shaw, 1972; Suchman, 1995). However, theory implementation faces substantial constraints including resource limitations, approval hierarchies, technological access inequalities, and polyvocal digital spaces where organizations cannot control narratives.

Overall, findings reveal digital ESG crisis communication at Newmont Ahafo South as complex practice balancing multiple competing demands including speed versus accuracy, transparency versus legal caution, broad reach versus targeted engagement, and theoretical best practices versus organizational constraints (Kozinets, 2020). Employee perspectives illuminate organizational struggles implementing sophisticated digital strategies with limited resources while navigating technological, social, and institutional contexts that complicate execution.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the study's findings in relation to existing literature and theoretical frameworks, draws conclusions about digital ESG crisis communication in Ghana's mining sector, and provides recommendations for mining companies, policy makers, and future research. The chapter begins by interpreting key findings and their theoretical and practical implications. It then acknowledges study limitations before presenting actionable recommendations for enhancing digital crisis communication practices. The chapter concludes by summarizing the study's contributions to academic knowledge and practical understanding of organizational communication in developing-country mining contexts.

5.2 Discussion of Key Findings

5.2.1 Multi-Platform Strategies and Stakeholder Differentiation

The finding that Newmont Ahafo South employs differentiated multi-platform digital strategies aligns with stakeholder theory's emphasis on recognizing diverse stakeholder characteristics and adapting engagement approaches accordingly (Freeman, 1984). This strategic platform diversification reflects sophisticated understanding that different stakeholder groups possess varying information needs, communication preferences, and digital access patterns (Ansu-Mensah et al., 2021). The research extends existing literature by documenting how mining companies operationalize stakeholder differentiation through platform selection, content

adaptation, and channel integration in developing-country contexts where digital infrastructure limitations and stakeholder diversity create unique challenges (Ofori & Hinson, 2007).

However, findings also reveal incomplete stakeholder engagement, with marginalized community members inadequately served by digital strategies despite being significantly affected by mining operations. This gap suggests tension between instrumental stakeholder management prioritizing powerful stakeholders and normative stakeholder theory emphasizing obligations to all affected parties (Freeman, 1984; Bice, 2024). The persistence of digital divides excluding vulnerable populations from corporate communications contradicts mining industry commitments to inclusive stakeholder engagement and social license maintenance (ICMM, 2023). These findings support calls in literature for mining companies to integrate digital with traditional communication channels, ensuring comprehensive stakeholder reach rather than assuming digital sufficiency (Hilson, 2012; Idemudia, 2014).

5.2.2 Conditional Effectiveness and Context Dependency

Employee perceptions of conditional effectiveness challenge simplistic narratives portraying digital communication as universally superior to traditional approaches. Findings demonstrate that digital strategies work well for certain stakeholders and crisis types but less effectively for others, suggesting effectiveness depends on complex interactions among stakeholder characteristics, crisis contexts, message types, and organizational capabilities (Coombs, 2019; Du Plessis, 2018). This nuanced understanding advances beyond early digital communication literature's techno-optimism toward more realistic assessments acknowledging both opportunities and limitations (Luttrell & Wallace, 2021).

The finding that credibility challenges limit digital communication effectiveness aligns with research demonstrating that stakeholders increasingly distrust corporate-controlled platforms, perceiving them as propaganda rather than authentic information sources (Xiong, 2024). This credibility deficit may be particularly acute in mining contexts characterized by historical mistrust, power imbalances, and perceived corporate capture of regulatory processes (Idemudia, 2014). Findings suggest that digital communication effectiveness requires not merely technological sophistication but fundamental trust built through consistent authentic engagement, transparent accountability, and alignment between communications and actions (Bice, 2024; Hennisz et al., 2023).

5.2.3 Implementation Challenges and Organizational Realities

The extensive implementation challenges employees described illuminate significant gaps between crisis communication theory prescriptions and organizational realities. While SCCT emphasizes rapid response importance (Coombs, 2019), findings reveal that resource constraints, coordination requirements, and approval processes substantially delay responses, contradicting digital communication's speed advantage. These challenges extend existing research documenting tensions between communication best practices and organizational constraints (Jin et al., 2012; Liu et al., 2011), providing detailed employee perspectives on specific obstacles including limited staffing, hierarchical approval requirements, and inter-departmental coordination difficulties (Ansu-Mensah et al., 2021).

Content development challenges particularly around technical translation and multilingual adaptation highlight communication complexities in contexts serving diverse stakeholder

populations with varying educational levels and linguistic backgrounds (Ofori & Hinson, 2007). These findings underscore that effective crisis communication requires not merely platform access but substantial organizational capacity for content creation, cultural adaptation, and sustained engagement. The resource and capacity constraints employees described suggest that smaller mining operations or companies with limited communication budgets may struggle implementing sophisticated digital strategies, potentially creating industry disparities in communication quality that disadvantage stakeholders of less-resourced companies (Mining Association of Canada, 2016).

5.2.4 Theoretical Alignment and Practical Adaptation

Findings regarding theoretical alignment reveal both application and adaptation of established communication theories in digital mining contexts. Communication practices demonstrate awareness of stakeholder theory (Freeman, 1984), legitimacy theory (Suchman, 1995), SCCT (Coombs, 2019), and agenda-setting theory (McCombs & Shaw, 1972), yet implementation reflects substantial modifications necessitated by organizational constraints, stakeholder characteristics, and technological affordances (Entman, 1993; Sikanku, 2008). This pattern of theoretical awareness combined with pragmatic adaptation suggests that practitioners draw on theoretical insights while recognizing that context-specific factors require flexible application rather than rigid adherence to theoretical prescriptions (Du Plessis, 2018).

The limited success of agenda-setting attempts particularly challenges assumptions from traditional media contexts where organizations possessed greater control over information flows. In polyvocal digital environments characterized by multiple competing voices, organizational capacity to frame issues and influence stakeholder attention appears substantially constrained

(Luttrell & Wallace, 2021). This finding suggests agenda-setting theory requires significant revision for digital contexts, acknowledging democratized information production and circulation that enable stakeholder counter-narratives challenging corporate framing (Entman, 1993). The contested nature of digital crisis communication may necessitate moving from agenda-setting to dialogue-based models emphasizing authentic engagement over persuasive messaging (Kozinets, 2020).

5.2.5 Media Coverage Patterns and Crisis Visibility

Media monitoring data from 2018-2024 reveals complex patterns in how Newmont Ahafo South's ESG issues achieve public visibility through digital and traditional channels. Coverage demonstrates substantial variation in sentiment distribution, with positive coverage frequently focusing on economic contributions (tax payments exceeding GH¢2 billion annually), community development initiatives (127 completed projects by Newmont Ahafo Development Foundation), and corporate social responsibility recognition. However, negative coverage persistently centers on four thematic clusters: community relations and resettlement conflicts, safety and security incidents, infrastructure development delays, and environmental concerns.

The media monitoring data identifies recurring crisis narratives that complicate organizational communication efforts. Community relations issues generated sustained negative coverage including accusations of "oppression and marginalisation against communities in Ahafo" by the Omanbotantim Association, resettlement conflicts with Tutuka and Dormaa Kantinka communities, and allegations that "five mining communities accuse Newmont of abuse of corporate power" (Media Monitoring Data, 2018-2024). These recurring themes suggest that

despite substantial community investment communications, fundamental relationship tensions persist, with digital platforms amplifying community grievances and providing alternative channels for stakeholder voice.

Safety incidents received particularly intensive media coverage, with security guard deaths, conflicts with illegal miners (galamsey), and youth clashes at Kenyasi generating extensive reporting across online, print, radio, and television platforms. Most notably, claims that "16 people killed in Kenyasi since 2004 linked to operations" by civil society organizations created sustained negative publicity that organizational communications struggled to effectively counter (Media Monitoring Data, 2019). This pattern aligns with agenda-setting theory insights that dramatic, conflict-oriented narratives often dominate media coverage regardless of organizational communication sophistication (McCombs & Shaw, 1972; Entman, 1993).

Infrastructure delays, particularly regarding the Hwidiem-Kenyasi road project, generated repeated negative coverage with community demands escalating to threats: "Construct our roads or we halt your operations" (Media Monitoring Data, 2022). Despite organizational communications emphasizing substantial road construction payments to government, media narratives focused on community frustrations and unmet expectations, demonstrating limited organizational capacity to control issue framing in contested digital environments. These patterns support findings regarding the constrained effectiveness of corporate agenda-setting in polyvocal digital communication spaces (Luttrell & Wallace, 2021).

5.2.6 Platform Diversity and Stakeholder Fragmentation

Media monitoring data reveals extraordinary platform diversity characterizing contemporary crisis communication environments. Coverage appeared across online news platforms (Myjoyonline, Modernghana, Citinewsroom, Ghanaweb, Business Ghana), print newspapers (Daily Graphic, Business & Financial Times, Chronicle, Ghanaian Times), radio stations (Anapua FM, Peace FM, Citi FM, Joy FM), television (Joy News TV, Adom TV, Citi TV, Metro TV), and social media (Facebook, Twitter/X). This multi-platform distribution creates both opportunities and challenges for organizational crisis communication.

Platform diversity enables broad stakeholder reach but simultaneously creates message control challenges and increases communication resource requirements. Interview participants acknowledged monitoring burdens: organizations must track coverage across dozens of platforms, respond to inquiries and criticisms on multiple channels simultaneously, and adapt messaging to each platform's technical affordances and audience characteristics. Community radio stations like Anapua FM received particular organizational attention because they reach local populations most directly affected by mining operations, yet monitoring and engaging with community-level media requires sustained resource investments that many mining companies struggle to maintain consistently.

The fragmentation of media environments means that unified organizational messages rarely achieve comprehensive stakeholder penetration. While positive coverage of tax contributions appeared in major business publications reaching investor and policy audiences, community stakeholders may primarily encounter information through local radio or social media where

coverage emphasizes grievances and conflicts. This stakeholder segmentation by information source suggests that effective crisis communication requires not merely message development but strategic platform targeting ensuring that specific messages reach intended audiences through their preferred and accessible information channels.

Moreover, media monitoring revealed that social media platforms enable rapid information circulation and narrative amplification that organizational communications struggle to match. Civil society organizations, community groups, and individual activists utilize Facebook and Twitter/X to share complaints, coordinate protests, and challenge corporate narratives, creating polyvocal communication environments where organizational voice competes with multiple alternative perspectives. This pattern reinforces findings regarding limited organizational agenda-setting capacity and the importance of building genuine stakeholder relationships that cannot be achieved through communication sophistication alone (Bice, 2024; Henisz et al., 2023).

5.3 Theoretical Contributions

This study makes several theoretical contributions. First, it advances stakeholder theory by demonstrating how digital platforms enable sophisticated stakeholder differentiation while simultaneously revealing persistent gaps in engaging marginalized stakeholders excluded by digital divides (Freeman, 1984; Bice, 2024). Second, it enriches legitimacy theory by documenting tensions between symbolic and substantive legitimacy management, showing how organizational actors recognize that communication sophistication cannot substitute for operational improvements addressing legitimacy threats (Suchman, 1995; Henisz et al., 2023).

Third, it extends SCCT by identifying organizational constraints that prevent theory implementation, highlighting needs for crisis communication theories attending to implementation challenges not merely strategic prescriptions (Coombs, 2019).

Fourth, the study challenges agenda-setting theory's applicability in digital contexts, suggesting that polyvocal communication environments fundamentally alter power dynamics enabling stakeholder agenda-setting alongside or against corporate attempts (McCombs & Shaw, 1972; Entman, 1993). Finally, by integrating multiple theoretical perspectives through an employee-centered lens, the research demonstrates value of examining organizational communication from internal perspectives, revealing implementation realities that external analyses miss (Ansu-Mensah et al., 2021; Ofori & Hinson, 2007). These contributions collectively advance scholarly understanding of digital crisis communication in high-stakes, resource-constrained, developing-country organizational contexts (Idemudia, 2014).

5.4 Practical Implications

5.4.1 Implications for Mining Companies

For mining companies, findings suggest several practical implications. First, effective digital crisis communication requires substantial organizational investment in staffing, training, infrastructure, and coordination mechanisms, not merely platform adoption (ICMM, 2023; Mining Association of Canada, 2016). Companies should realistically assess capacity requirements and develop implementation roadmaps addressing resource gaps. Second, digital strategies must integrate with traditional channels ensuring comprehensive stakeholder reach, particularly for marginalized populations inadequately served by digital platforms alone (Ansu-

Mensah et al., 2021). Third, communication effectiveness depends fundamentally on trust and credibility built through authentic engagement and operational performance, suggesting that communication investments should complement rather than substitute for substantive ESG improvements (Bice, 2024).

5.4.2 Implications for Policy Makers and Regulators

For policy makers and regulatory authorities, findings indicate needs for realistic ESG communication expectations acknowledging organizational capacity constraints, particularly for smaller mining operations (Ghana Club 100, 2024). Regulations should encourage comprehensive stakeholder engagement through multiple channels rather than privileging digital communication that may exclude vulnerable populations. Supporting mechanisms including training programs, communication infrastructure investments, and industry collaboration platforms could enhance communication capacity across Ghana's mining sector (Conservation International, 2024). Additionally, multi-stakeholder dialogue forums enabling direct engagement between companies, communities, civil society, and government may complement digital communication by building relationships and trust that enhance digital platform credibility (Ofori & Hinson, 2007).

5.4.3 Communication Capacity Building and Resource Investment

The revelation that organizations maintain only limited communications staff managing multiple platforms, crisis situations, and routine communications simultaneously highlights critical capacity gaps. Mining companies should invest in expanding communications teams, providing 24/7 monitoring capabilities, and developing employee competencies in digital content creation,

stakeholder engagement, and crisis management. Training programs should address not merely technical platform skills but strategic communication planning, cultural sensitivity, stakeholder analysis, and measurement methodologies enabling evidence-based communication improvement.

Technical infrastructure investments deserve priority attention, ensuring reliable internet connectivity at mine sites, professional design software access, multimedia production equipment, and social media management tools facilitating efficient multi-platform coordination. Budget allocations should reflect that communication effectiveness depends substantially on organizational capacity rather than merely platform access. Companies treating communication as peripheral function rather than strategic priority risk perpetuating implementation challenges that undermine digital strategy effectiveness regardless of theoretical sophistication (Du Plessis, 2018; Luttrell & Wallace, 2021).

5.4.4 Media Relations and Strategic Communication Partnerships

Media monitoring data emphasizes the importance of proactive media relations extending beyond crisis response. Positive coverage frequently resulted from organizational initiatives including press releases about tax contributions, announcements of community development projects, and facilitation of media visits to mining operations. However, the most favorable coverage often originated from third parties including government officials, industry associations (Ghana Chamber of Mines), and international partners, suggesting that organizational credibility benefits significantly from validation by respected external actors.

Mining companies should cultivate sustained relationships with media outlets serving diverse stakeholder populations, including community radio stations, national newspapers, and online platforms. Rather than viewing media as channels for message transmission during crises, organizations should engage media as partners in ongoing communication about operational performance, ESG initiatives, and community development. This relationship-building approach may enhance organizational credibility during crises when media coverage critically influences stakeholder perceptions and responses.

Furthermore, companies should recognize that they cannot control digital media narratives and should instead focus on ensuring accurate information availability and responsive stakeholder engagement. The media monitoring data demonstrates that organizations possessing strong pre-existing relationships with media outlets, government institutions, and community leaders achieve more balanced coverage during crises compared to companies lacking such relationships. This suggests that crisis communication effectiveness depends substantially on long-term relationship investments rather than short-term communication tactics deployed during crises.

5.4.5 Addressing Substantive Grievances Through Operational Improvements

Perhaps the most important practical implication emerging from integrated analysis of interview and media monitoring data is that communication effectiveness ultimately depends on substantive organizational performance addressing legitimate stakeholder grievances. Recurring negative media coverage themes - resettlement conflicts, infrastructure delays, safety incidents, environmental concerns - reflect actual operational challenges requiring remediation rather than merely communication issues amenable to messaging solutions.

Mining companies should recognize that digital communication sophistication cannot substitute for operational excellence, genuine stakeholder engagement, and consistent delivery on organizational commitments. The interview participant who emphasized avoiding "green washing" and focusing on facts acknowledged organizational understanding that credibility depends on alignment between communications and actions (Interview, Communications Officer, 2024). Media monitoring data reinforces this insight by demonstrating that positive coverage correlates strongly with concrete organizational achievements - tax payments, community projects, employment creation, infrastructure development - while negative coverage focuses on operational failures and unmet commitments.

This finding challenges instrumental approaches to crisis communication viewing it primarily as reputation management or perception shaping. Instead, evidence suggests that effective ESG crisis communication in mining contexts requires organizations to address root causes of stakeholder dissatisfaction through operational improvements, equitable benefit-sharing, transparent accountability, and respectful stakeholder engagement. Digital platforms may amplify these substantive accomplishments or failures but cannot fundamentally alter stakeholder assessments of organizational performance and legitimacy (Henisz et al., 2023).

For smaller mining operations with limited communication resources, this implies that resource prioritization should emphasize operational performance and direct stakeholder engagement over sophisticated digital communication systems. While digital platforms provide valuable communication channels, they achieve effectiveness only when organizations possess genuine substantive accomplishments and stakeholder relationships meriting communication. Companies attempting to build legitimacy primarily through digital communication without corresponding

operational excellence and stakeholder respect likely face persistent credibility challenges and escalating community opposition regardless of communication sophistication.

5.5 Study Limitations

Several limitations warrant acknowledgment. First, the single case study design focusing on Newmont Ahafo South limits generalizability to other mining companies, particularly smaller operations with different resources, or companies operating in contexts with different stakeholder dynamics (Kozinets, 2020). Second, netnographic analysis captures only publicly accessible digital content, excluding private communications and internal decision-making processes significantly influencing crisis communication strategies. Third, the ten employee interviews, while providing valuable organizational perspectives, represent limited sample unable to capture full diversity of employee experiences across organizational hierarchies and functional specializations (Coombs, 2019).

Fourth, twenty-minute interview duration constrained depth of exploration possible for complex topics, potentially missing nuanced perspectives longer conversations might reveal. Fifth, the study examines specific timeframe (2022-2024), though digital technologies, stakeholder expectations, and organizational practices evolve continuously, potentially limiting findings' temporal relevance (Du Plessis, 2018). Sixth, researcher positionality as external academic without direct mining industry experience may have influenced participant responses and data interpretation, though this outsider perspective also provided analytical distance valuable for objective assessment. Finally, the research captures organizational perspectives without systematically examining external stakeholder perceptions, providing incomplete understanding of communication effectiveness from recipient viewpoints (Ansu-Mensah et al., 2021).

5.6 Recommendations

5.6.1 Recommendations for Mining Companies

Based on findings, several recommendations emerge for mining companies seeking to enhance digital ESG crisis communication. First, companies should conduct comprehensive stakeholder access assessments identifying digital infrastructure limitations, literacy constraints, and communication preferences across diverse stakeholder groups (Ansu-Mensah et al., 2021). These assessments should guide integrated communication strategies combining digital platforms with traditional channels ensuring all stakeholders receive crisis information through accessible means. Second, companies should invest in communication capacity building including adequate staffing for 24/7 monitoring during crises, training programs developing employee competencies in digital content creation and stakeholder engagement, and technical infrastructure supporting reliable internet connectivity and multimedia production (ICMM, 2023; PRA Communications, 2025).

Third, organizations should streamline approval processes balancing necessary oversight with rapid response requirements, possibly establishing pre-approved message templates and delegating authority to communication professionals during crises (Coombs, 2019). Fourth, companies should develop robust coordination mechanisms facilitating information flow and decision-making across departments, including crisis communication teams with representatives from communications, operations, environmental management, community relations, and legal functions. Fifth, organizations should invest in multilingual and culturally adapted content creation, employing translation services and local cultural advisors ensuring messages resonate with diverse stakeholder populations (Ofori & Hinson, 2007).

Sixth, companies should develop formalized digital crisis communication processes documenting platform selection criteria, content development procedures, approval workflows, and response timelines, creating consistency while allowing flexibility for context-specific adaptation.

Seventh, organizations should implement comprehensive monitoring systems tracking coverage across digital and traditional media platforms, enabling rapid identification of emerging issues and coordinated responses. Eighth, companies should prioritize relationship building over transactional communication, investing in sustained stakeholder engagement, transparency, and accountability that build trust enabling more effective crisis communication when challenges arise (Bice, 2024; Henisz et al., 2023).

5.6.2 Recommendations for Policy Makers and Regulators

Policy makers and regulatory authorities should develop realistic ESG communication requirements acknowledging organizational capacity constraints while encouraging best practices. Regulations should mandate multi-channel communication strategies ensuring marginalized populations receive information through accessible channels, not merely digital platforms. Government investment in rural internet infrastructure and digital literacy programs could reduce access inequalities limiting digital communication effectiveness. Policy makers should facilitate industry collaboration platforms where mining companies share communication best practices, coordinate crisis responses affecting multiple operators, and collectively address sector-wide communication challenges (Conservation International, 2024; Ghana Club 100, 2024).

Additionally, regulatory authorities should establish multi-stakeholder dialogue forums bringing together mining companies, community representatives, civil society organizations, traditional authorities, and government agencies for ongoing communication about mining sector challenges and opportunities. These forums could complement digital communication by building relationships, addressing grievances, and developing collaborative solutions to complex ESG issues. Policy makers should also support communication capacity building through training programs, technical assistance, and resource mobilization particularly benefiting smaller mining operations with limited internal communication capabilities (Mining Association of Canada, 2016; Ofori & Hinson, 2007).

5.6.3 Recommendations for Future Research

Future research should address several gaps identified through this study. First, comparative research examining digital crisis communication across multiple mining companies of varying sizes and resource levels could illuminate how organizational capacity influences communication strategy development and implementation. Second, longitudinal studies tracking crisis communication effectiveness over extended timeframes could reveal how stakeholder perceptions and organizational practices evolve, providing insights into long-term communication impact. Third, stakeholder-centered research systematically examining how different stakeholder groups perceive, interpret, and respond to digital crisis communications could provide crucial recipient perspectives missing from organizationally-focused studies (Ansu-Mensah et al., 2021; Bice, 2024).

Fourth, research comparing digital crisis communication effectiveness across different developing-country contexts could identify context-specific factors influencing communication strategies and outcomes, enabling more nuanced theoretical development. Fifth, experimental or quasi-experimental research designs testing specific communication interventions could provide causal evidence about effectiveness currently lacking in observational studies. Sixth, research examining unsuccessful crisis communication cases alongside successful examples could illuminate critical success factors and failure modes, providing balanced understanding beyond best practice documentation. Finally, interdisciplinary research integrating communication, development studies, political ecology, and African studies perspectives could enrich understanding of how digital communication intersects with broader social, political, and economic dynamics shaping mining sector relationships (Idemudia, 2014; Hilson, 2012).

5.7 Conclusions

This study examined digital communication strategies for ESG crisis management at Newmont Ahafo South Mine in Ghana, integrating netnographic analysis of digital communications, employee interviews, and media monitoring data to provide comprehensive understanding of communication practices, effectiveness perceptions, implementation challenges, and theoretical alignments. Findings revealed sophisticated multi-platform strategies encompassing corporate website, Facebook, Twitter/X, email, and SMS, with strategic platform selection guided by stakeholder characteristics and crisis contexts. However, digital strategy implementation confronts substantial challenges including resource constraints, coordination difficulties, content development complexities, and stakeholder engagement management issues that complicate execution of theoretically-informed best practices.

The integration of interview data providing insider organizational perspectives with netnographic observations of actual communication practices and six years of media monitoring evidence creates rich empirical foundation demonstrating both communication sophistication and persistent implementation challenges. The community demonstration crisis example illustrates how organizations deploy multi-platform responses sustained over extended timeframes, while the candid acknowledgment that "we don't really have a lay down process" for digital communication reveals significant gaps between communication ideals and organizational realities (Interview, Communications Officer, 2024). Media monitoring data documenting recurring crisis themes including community relations conflicts, safety incidents, infrastructure delays, and environmental concerns demonstrates that despite substantial communication

investments, fundamental stakeholder tensions persist requiring operational improvements beyond messaging solutions.

Employee perspectives emphasized conditional rather than universal effectiveness, recognizing digital communication strengths including speed, reach, and documentation while acknowledging limitations including stakeholder access barriers, credibility challenges, and measurement difficulties. This nuanced understanding challenges techno-optimistic narratives portraying digital platforms as universal solutions, instead revealing that effectiveness depends on complex interactions among stakeholder characteristics, organizational capabilities, crisis types, and contextual factors. The finding that community stakeholders are prioritized as "#1 stakeholders" yet face persistent digital access barriers illustrates tensions between stakeholder engagement ideals and implementation constraints shaped by technological infrastructure limitations and resource scarcity (Interview, Communications Officer, 2024).

Theoretical analysis demonstrated that communication practices reflect stakeholder theory through differentiated platform strategies, serve legitimacy maintenance and repair functions, variably implement SCCT principles constrained by organizational realities, and attempt agenda-setting with limited success in polyvocal digital environments where multiple actors compete to influence stakeholder attention. The study makes important theoretical contributions by extending stakeholder theory, legitimacy theory, SCCT, and agenda-setting theory into digital developing-country mining contexts while highlighting implementation challenges requiring theoretical attention. The recognition that positive media coverage correlates with substantive organizational achievements rather than communication sophistication alone underscores that

legitimacy ultimately depends on operational performance, equitable benefit-sharing, and genuine stakeholder relationships rather than strategic messaging (Media Monitoring Data, 2018-2024).

Practical implications emphasize that effective digital ESG crisis communication requires substantial organizational investment in capacity building, formalized processes, authentic stakeholder engagement, and operational performance improvements. Mining companies should recognize that digital platform adoption alone proves insufficient without corresponding investments in staffing, training, infrastructure, coordination mechanisms, and relationship building. The extraordinary platform diversity documented through media monitoring - spanning online news, print, radio, television, and social media - creates both opportunities for broad stakeholder reach and challenges for message control and resource allocation. Organizations must strategically target platforms ensuring messages reach intended audiences while recognizing they cannot control narratives in contested digital spaces where stakeholders utilize platforms to challenge corporate perspectives.

For policy makers and regulatory authorities, findings suggest needs for realistic communication requirements, digital infrastructure investments, capacity building support, and multi-stakeholder dialogue forums complementing digital communication with direct engagement. Regulations privileging digital communication risk excluding marginalized populations most affected by mining operations yet least likely to access digital platforms. Supporting comprehensive stakeholder engagement through multiple channels, facilitating industry collaboration on communication challenges, and investing in rural internet infrastructure and digital literacy could

enhance communication effectiveness across Ghana's mining sector while promoting inclusive stakeholder participation.

The study's integration of multiple data sources - netnographic analysis, employee interviews, and media monitoring spanning six years - provides methodological contributions demonstrating value of triangulated approaches combining observable communication practices with insider organizational perspectives and longitudinal media coverage patterns. This multi-method design enables comprehensive understanding impossible through single-method approaches, revealing both communication sophistication and persistent challenges while grounding theoretical analysis in rich empirical evidence. Future research should extend these insights through comparative studies across companies and contexts, stakeholder-centered investigations examining recipient perspectives, and longitudinal analyses tracking communication evolution over time.

Ultimately, this research demonstrates that digital ESG crisis communication in Ghana's mining sector represents complex organizational practice balancing competing demands including speed versus accuracy, transparency versus legal caution, broad reach versus targeted engagement, and theoretical best practices versus organizational constraints. Success requires not merely technological sophistication or strategic messaging but fundamental commitment to operational excellence, authentic stakeholder relationships, and alignment between communications and actions. The finding that organizations recognize communication cannot substitute for substantive performance provides hopeful foundation for more effective, ethical, and sustainable mining sector communication practices that genuinely serve stakeholder interests rather than

merely managing organizational reputations. As digital technologies continue evolving and stakeholder expectations intensify, mining companies embracing this substantive approach will likely achieve stronger social licenses, more resilient community relationships, and enhanced long-term operational sustainability compared to companies treating communication primarily as reputation management tool disconnected from operational performance and stakeholder wellbeing.

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APPENDIX A
INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Study Title

Clicks In A Crisis - Analyzing Newmont Ahafo South's Digital Strategy for ESG
Communication in Ghana's Mining Sector

Interview Duration

Approximately 20 minutes

Introduction Script

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this research study. This interview will take approximately 20 minutes. The purpose of this study is to understand how Newmont Ahafo South Mine uses digital communication platforms to manage ESG-related crises, and to learn about your experiences and perspectives as an employee involved in these communication processes. Your responses will be kept confidential, and you may decline to answer any question or stop the interview at any time. With your permission, I would like to audio-record this interview for accurate transcription. Do you have any questions before we begin?

Section 1: Background and Role

1. Can you briefly describe your current role and responsibilities at Newmont Ahafo South Mine?

Probe: How long have you been in this position? What are your main duties?

2. How is your role involved in ESG crisis communication at the mine?

Section 2: Digital Communication Platforms

3. What digital communication platforms does Newmont Ahafo South use for ESG crisis communication?

Probe: Which platforms are used most frequently? Why these platforms?

4. How do you decide which platform to use for different types of ESG crises?

Probe: Can you give an example of a recent crisis and the platforms used?

Section 3: Crisis Communication Strategies

5. Can you describe the process for developing and posting digital communications during an ESG crisis?

Probe: Who is involved? What are the key steps? How long does it typically take?

6. What types of messages or content do you typically communicate during ESG crises?

Probe: How do you balance transparency with organizational interests?

Section 4: Effectiveness Perceptions

7. In your opinion, how effective are digital communication strategies in managing ESG crises?

Probe: What works well? What doesn't work as well?

8. How do you measure or assess the effectiveness of digital crisis communications?

Probe: What indicators do you look for? How do stakeholders respond?

Section 5: Implementation Challenges

9. What challenges do you face when implementing digital crisis communication strategies?

Probe: Resource constraints? Technical issues? Coordination difficulties?

10. How do you handle situations where stakeholders have limited access to digital platforms?

Probe: What alternative approaches do you use?

Section 6: Stakeholder Engagement

11. How do different stakeholder groups respond to digital crisis communications?

Probe: Communities? Regulators? Investors? Media?

12. How do you manage negative comments or misinformation on digital platforms during crises?

Section 7: Closing

13. What improvements would you recommend for digital ESG crisis communication at the mine?

14. Is there anything else about digital crisis communication you would like to share?

Closing Script: Thank you very much for your time and valuable insights. Your perspectives will contribute significantly to understanding digital crisis communication in the mining sector. If you have any questions or would like to add anything after this interview, please feel free to contact me. Your responses will be kept confidential and used only for research purposes.

APPENDIX B
INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Research Study Title

Clicks in a Crisis - Analyzing Newmont Ahafo South's Digital Strategy for ESG Communication in Ghana's Mining Sector

Principal Investigator

[Your Name] [Your Institution] [Contact Information]

Purpose of the Study

You are being invited to participate in a research study examining digital communication strategies for ESG crisis management at Newmont Ahafo South Mine. The purpose of this study is to understand how digital platforms are used for crisis communication, employee perspectives on effectiveness, implementation challenges, and alignment with communication theories. This research will contribute to academic knowledge and practical guidance for mining companies.

Participation Requirements

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to participate in a semi-structured interview lasting approximately 20 minutes. The interview will be audio-recorded with your permission and will include questions about your role, experiences with digital crisis communication, perceived effectiveness, challenges, and recommendations. You may be contacted for follow-up clarification if needed.





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