



**CORPORATE STRATEGY, CSR PROGRAMMES AND THEIR ACCEPTANCE BY
SMALL AND MEDIUM ENTERPRISES (SMEs) IN GHANA**

BY

JUANITA MYRA GHANSAH

MASPRM23024

**A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE UNIVERSITY OF MEDIA, ARTS AND
COMMUNICATION (UniMAC), IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF A MASTER OF ARTS IN STRATEGIC
PUBLIC RELATIONS MANAGEMENT**

FEBRUARY, 2025

DECLARATION BY STUDENT

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

.....
Student Index number Signature Date

CERTIFICATION BY SUPERVISOR

This Dissertation has been prepared and presented under my supervision according to the guidelines for supervision and formatting of dissertation laid down by the University of Media, Arts and Communication (UniMAC)

.....
Supervisor Signature Date

ABSTRACT

The Title of this research work is “Corporate Strategy, CSR Programmes and Their Acceptance by Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in Ghana. Even though corporate social responsibility (CSR) programmes have become more well-known worldwide, Ghanaian SMEs still don't fully embrace them (Ansong Abraham 2017). In Ghana, the concept of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is evolving, with an increasing number of firms recognising its importance. However, the adoption and acceptance of CSR programmes among Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) still remain limited (Sarpong, 2021).

This research explores the details or components of corporate strategic management and how they affect CSR programme acceptance and implementation among Ghanaian SMEs. This study aims to close the gaps in literature and practice by shedding more light on the relationships between corporate strategy, CSR initiatives, and SMEs' acceptance of them in Ghana. The conceptual framework that was employed as illustrated in our Figure 2.1 shows how the four pillars listed in it determine the inter-relationships between corporate strategy, CSR initiatives, and SMEs' acceptance of them. The main theories that were used in our research work are the Stakeholder Theory and the Resource-Based View Theory. The qualitative research method was used in this research investigation. The Exploratory methodology which aids in the comprehension of the poorly understood study topic or subject was employed which uses focus groups, in-depth interviews, and observational studies.

Constructivism is the underlying philosophical theory. Jean Piaget (1896–1980), one of constructivism's principal proponents, proposes that people actively create knowledge through their interactions, experiences, and interpretations.

Implementing CSR is hampered by some issues, the most important of which are resource limits, including those related to money and human capital. SMEs also struggle to measure the observable effects of their CSR efforts and manage the expectations of various stakeholders. Despite these obstacles, CSR builds market trust, brand distinction, and consumer loyalty, all of which give businesses a competitive edge.

Overall, this research's findings highlight the strategic importance of CSR for Ghanaian SMEs while emphasizing the need for greater resource support and alignment with stakeholder expectations to maximize its impact. This study concludes that more acceptance can be fostered by matching CSR programmes with the strategic goals of SMEs. It also calls for corporations or state institutions and policymakers to collaborate to develop CSR initiatives with SMEs to increase their involvement and acceptance.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My greatest and foremost gratitude goes to God who is my sustenance, protection, and guide.

Next, I sincerely thank my supervisor, Dr Mrs Mavis Essandoh, whose knowledge, direction, and constant support were invaluable during this process. Your encouraging words and insightful criticism inspired me to reach this greater height.

I also want to express my gratitude to the faculty and staff, especially Kwabena the teaching assistant for supporting my studies and providing a vibrant and congenial academic atmosphere for me.

My heartfelt gratitude is extended to the study participants, who so kindly donated their time and experiences to provide the crucial data needed for this investigation.

I am incredibly grateful to my family, especially my parents Mr and Mrs Joojo Ghansah for their unwavering support, love, and patience. A lot of the strength to carry on came from your unfailing belief in me.

Last but not least, I dedicate this work to everyone who encouraged me to keep going and had faith in my ability.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION BY STUDENT– THESIS	ii
CERTIFICATION BY SUPERVISOR	ii
ABSTRACT.....	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iv
LIST OF FIGURES	vi
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	vii
CHAPTER ONE	8
INTRODUCTION	2
1.0 Background of the Study.....	2
1.1 Problem Statement	5
1.2 Research Aim and Objectives	5
1.3 Research Questions.....	6
1.4 Significance of the Study	7
1.5 Scope of the Study.....	7
1.6 Preliminary Literature Review	8
1.7 Research Methodology	13
1.8 Organisation of the Study	16
CHAPTER TWO	18
LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK.....	18
2.0 Introduction.....	18
2.1 Conceptual Framework.....	18
2.2 Theoretical Framework.....	22
2.2.1 Stakeholder Theory	22
2.2.2 Resource-Based View Theory.....	24
2.3 Review of Literature.....	26
CHAPTER THREE.....	39
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	39
3.0 Introduction.....	39
3.1 Chapter Overview.....	39
3.2 General Definitions of Research Methodology	39
3.3 Research Methods Used in Previous Studies.....	40
3.4 Proposed Methodology for this Study and The Justification	42
3.5 Research Design	42
3.6 Target Population	43
3.7 Sample and Sampling Technique	43

3.8 Data Collection.....	44
3.9 Research Ethics.....	45
3.10 Chapter Summary	45
CHAPTER FOUR	45
FINDINGS, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION	45
4.0 Introduction.....	45
4.1 Data Analysis.....	46
4.2 Findings and Discussion	48
4.3 Chapter Summary	56
CHAPTER FIVE	57
SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS	2
5.0 Introduction.....	57
5.1 Summary of Key Findings	57
5.2 How the Study Answered the Research Questions	58
5.3 Limitations of the Study	60
5.4 Contribution to Existing Knowledge of CRS Initiatives by SMEs in Ghana.....	60
5.5 Recommendations.....	61
5.5.1 Policy.....	62
5.5.2 Areas for Future Research.....	62
5.6 Conclusion	63
BIBLIOGRAPHY	64
APPENDIX 1.....	67
INTERVIEW GUIDE	67

LIST OF FIGURES

1. **Figure 2.1** Conceptual Framework Diagram

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

1. Association of Ghana Industries (AGI)

2. Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)
3. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)
4. National Board for Small-Scale Industries (NBSSI,1990)
5. Research and Development - R&D
6. Selling, General and Administrative Expenses - SG&A
7. Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (SMEs)
8. Structural Equation Model (SEM)
9. World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD)

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Background of the Study

Johnson, Gerry; Scholes, Kevan; Whittington, Richard; Angwin, Duncan; Regnér, Patrick (2020) in their book “Exploring Strategy: Text and Cases” refer to corporate Strategy as a comprehensive plan that focuses on an organisation's long-term path while utilising key competencies and risk management. It tries to unify strategic priorities across business units.

(Collis & Cynthia 2021) in their book “Corporate Strategy: Resources and the Scope of the Firm” Collis and Montgomery examine how resource-based viewpoints can be incorporated into business strategy, stressing the value of setting clear limits and utilising resource synergies to gain a sustained competitive edge.

The European Commission (2011) originally defined corporate social responsibility (CSR) as "the responsibility of enterprises for their impacts on society." This definition has expanded in more recent times. Aguinis and Glavas (2019), for instance, stress that businesses have a variety of obligations, including financial, legal, moral, and discretionary ones, and that they must conduct their business in a way that maximizes profits for investors while also benefiting society. Likewise, Ioannou and Serafeim (2017) show that businesses of all sizes, including SMEs, have a big influence on the environment and society, which supports the notion that CSR is important for all types of businesses.

(Carroll & Shabana, 2019), building on these discoveries, have revised and improved the CSR conceptual framework. Their research broadens the scope of the traditional multi-dimensional model to include modern concerns like stakeholder engagement, sustainability, corporate citizenship, and environmental policy. According to this contemporary viewpoint, CSR today encompasses programs meant to promote long-term societal well-being in addition to conventional commercial goals.

Aside from these scholarly contributions, useful frameworks have developed as well. While the World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD, 2020) now defines corporate social responsibility (CSR) as "the ongoing commitment by business to behave ethically and contribute to economic development while improving the quality of life of the workforce, their families, the local community, and society at large," the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI, 2021) has updated its guidelines to assist organizations in measuring and transparently reporting on their sustainability performance. This revised definition emphasizes that a business must combine profitability and legal compliance with moral behaviour and proactive community involvement in order to be deemed socially responsible.

Businesses use corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives to manage their operations in a way that has a positive overall impact on society, in addition to ensuring ethical behaviour. These initiatives, which take into account both academic research and changing industry norms, are increasingly being created to match business plans with sustainable development objectives. This revised definition emphasizes that a business must combine profitability and legal compliance with moral behaviour and proactive community involvement in order to be deemed socially responsible.

Businesses use corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives to manage their operations in a way that has a positive overall impact on society, in addition to ensuring ethical behaviour. These initiatives, which take into account both academic research and changing industry norms, are increasingly being created to match business plans with sustainable development objectives considering the full environmental, social, and economic impact of the money, time and talents they employ in their business operations

Businesses with a strong sense of social responsibility work hard to conduct their operations in ways that benefit society rather than hurt it or the environment. These programs are

divided into four categories: financial duties, philanthropic endeavors, ethical responsibility, and environmental implications. In line with the company's values, objectives, and stakeholder expectations, corporate social responsibility (CSR) programs aim to address social, environmental, and ethical issues. These include community development, employee welfare, education and skill development, ethical business practices, charitable giving and community volunteering, job creation, and fair business practices.

Pioneers in the field of study like (Porter & Kramer, 2006), (Carroll, 1991), and (Elkington, 1997) have addressed the growing and significant role that corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives have played in improving stakeholder relations and company reputation in recent years.

The National Board for Small Scale Industries (NBSSI, 1990) has been using the phrases "fixed asset and number of employees" to describe small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs) in Ghana. A small-scale business is defined as one that has no more than nine employees and plant and machinery valued at no more than 10 million Ghanaian cedis (not including land, buildings, or automobiles). The Association of Ghana Industries (AGI) Business Barometer (2013) classifies organizations with more than five and up to 30 employees as small firms, and those with more than 30 and up to 100 employees as medium enterprises.

Due to their ability to increase employment and GDP growth, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are essential to Ghana's economy. Devermont, Judd, and Estes (2020) in their article "Supporting Small and Medium Enterprises in Sub-Saharan Africa through Blended Finance," argued that SMEs are the backbone of the global economy and comprise the majority of businesses in practically every region, including Sub-Saharan Africa.

This suggests that SMEs in society or the community have an equal responsibility to play when it comes to CSR issues. Even though these companies usually have trouble creating

long-term plans, corporate strategy is a useful tool for enhancing their (SMEs') performance and adoption of CSR (community social responsibility) programs.

The purpose of this study is to look into the relationship between corporate strategy, CSR initiatives, and small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs) acceptance of them in Ghana. In order to improve SME acceptance and overall business performance, the study will concentrate on comprehending how CSR initiatives can be strategically matched with corporate objectives. As stated otherwise, the goal of this research proposal is to examine the relationship between corporate strategy, CSR initiatives, and the adoption of these initiatives by SMEs in Ghana.

1.1 Problem Statement

In Ghana, the concept of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is evolving, with an increasing number of firms recognizing its importance. However, the adoption and acceptance of CSR programmes among Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) remain limited (Sarpong, 2021). This research seeks to explore the details or components of corporate strategic management and how they affect CSR programme acceptance and implementation among Ghanaian SMEs.

Despite the potential benefits of CSR programmes in fostering sustainable development and enhancing corporate reputation, SMEs in Ghana face unique challenges that affect their CSR engagement (The Business & Financial Times, 2023). These challenges include resource constraints, lack of awareness, and the absence of a regulatory framework that mandates CSR activities. The study will investigate the factors influencing SMEs' acceptance of CSR programmes, such as cultural expectations, market pressures, and perceived non-alignment with corporate strategy.

1.2 Research Aim and Objectives

This study attempts to provide a deeper knowledge of the dynamics between corporate strategy, CSR programmes, and their acceptance by SMEs in Ghana thus helping to fill the gaps in both literature and practice. It will provide information on how SMEs may use corporate social responsibility (CSR) as a tactical instrument to gain a competitive edge and improve society. This study is to contribute to the conversation on corporate social responsibility (CSR) and its influence on both corporate and societal development by investigating how SMEs and the larger community perceive these programmes.

This research aims at exploring the integration of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) into the corporate strategies of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) in Ghana, thereby enhancing their acceptance and implementation of CSR initiatives.

The objectives of this study on corporate strategy, CSR programmes and their acceptance by SMEs in Ghana are as follows:

- To assess the current state of CSR integration into the strategic planning of SMEs in Ghana by identifying the extent to which CSR is embedded in their corporate policies and practices.
- To examine the motivations and challenges faced by Ghanaian SMEs in adopting CSR programmes, including resource limitations, cultural factors, and market conditions.
- To explore the role of CSR in achieving competitive advantage for SMEs, considering how CSR initiatives can contribute to the enhancement of corporate reputation and stakeholder relationships

1.3 Research Questions

The research questions that emanate from our research objectives are as follows:

- How are CSR programmes integrated into the corporate strategies of SMEs in Ghana?

- What motivates Ghanaian SMEs to adopt CSR programmes, and what challenges do they encounter?
- In what ways can CSR programmes contribute to competitive advantage and enhancement of corporate reputation and stakeholder relationships for SMEs in Ghana?

1.4 Significance of the Study

Ghana's modern corporate social responsibility is framed in terms of development and reflects voluntary corporate self-regulation.

The study's results will add to the larger conversation about business and society's symbiotic relationship, which is important for building strong bonds and identifying distinctions that affect corporate social responsibility (CSR) policies.

The study will shed light on the ways in which CSR supports both economic growth and environmentally friendly corporate operations.

The study's conclusions can guide proactive policies to increase the strategic and operational efficacy of CSR activities within this corporate sector by encouraging CSR among SMEs.

The implementation of community social responsibility helps in improving learning and performance. This study by examining how learning orientation affects SMEs' internationalisation and performance when they participate in CSR helps in filling a major research vacuum on CSR implementation.

The findings from this study can have practical implications for businesses, policymakers, and other stakeholders in Ghana. It can inform the development of more effective CSR strategies that align with the needs and expectations of SMEs.

1.5 Scope of the Study

The study is restricted to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Ghana, with a focus on Tema SMEs, in particular Dutylex Company Limited in Tema.

This situation is worsened by the work's limited duration and lack of funding. Consequently, the research is limited to the context of SMEs in Ghana and Tema in particular. As such, the results or findings may not be easily applicable to SMEs in other countries or contexts.

1.6 Preliminary Literature Review

This chapter discusses the theoretical underpinnings of the study. It discusses the related studies carried out to examine why SMEs undertake CSR, the barriers to it and how the challenges can be solved.

The theories in this study in relation to the objectives are as follows:

- **Stakeholder Theory:** Organisations are traditionally perceived as being primarily focused on increasing the wealth of their shareholders, or the people who control the company's shares. According to this perspective, the firm's decisions and activities are primarily motivated by its bottom line and come at the expense of other interests, like the best interests of society. The traditional position pioneered by scholars like Milton Friedman in his influential work: *"The Social Responsibility of Business is to Increase its Profits"* (1970) argued that company executives had a duty to maximise shareholder value since they work for the shareholders. This conventional understanding of the corporation is contradicted by the stakeholder theory (Freeman, 2002).
- The primary recommendation of the stakeholder theory is that businesses should prioritise serving a wider range of interests rather than merely increasing shareholder wealth (Freeman, 2002) argued that rather than concentrating only on maximising profits for shareholders, firms should create value for all stakeholders, including communities, suppliers, employees, and customers. It is in line with this modern

thinking that SMEs may implement CSR initiatives to satisfy the demands of various stakeholder groups, such as the community, suppliers, customers, and employees.

- **Resource-Based View Theory:** The resource-based theory's central tenet is that a firm's capacity and resources determine its competitive advantage (Wernerfelt, 1984; Conner, 1991; Peteraf, 1993).

The RBV urges organisations to discover a "strategic fit" between their internal resources and competencies and the external environment in which they conduct business, as opposed to the positioning perspective of strategy that looks outward. According to RBV, businesses can gain a competitive edge by making efficient use of their resources. This idea explains the goal of investigating how CSR helps SMEs get a competitive edge.

- **Instrumental Theory:** This theory suggests that CSR activities are undertaken because they are expected to contribute to a company's financial performance. It aligns with the objective of assessing the impact of CSR on the operational and financial performance of SMEs. The most common form of instrumental corporate responsibility is the **"business case" approach**, which asserts that responsible business practices lead to financial gains. Decisions that enhance profitability are prioritized, while issues with no impact on profitability may be overlooked. Instrumental logic also applies to stakeholder relationships. Stakeholders' power to affect corporate objectives (such as maximizing profits) takes precedence over their intrinsic dignity or value of claims.

The following are some of the ways in which the suggested research is significant to theory and practice:

- This field's research advances theoretical knowledge.
- Investigating novel ideas, connections, and frameworks pertaining to corporate strategy and CSR enhances already-existing theories.

- Practical applications benefit from research findings. Policymakers, managers, and practitioners use evidence-based insights to make informed decisions.
- This study informs the design and implementation of CSR programmes. It helps organizations adopt responsible practices that align with societal expectations.
- Practical research tackles real-world problems. Solutions emerge from evidence-based practices grounded in research.

One of the relevant articles that were used as existing literature for this work is “The Role and Impact of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in Building Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) Brand Image in Ghana,” by Dr. Elvis Boateng, Dr. Seth Amoako, Kwasi Amoako, Kwadwo Acheampong, and Attoh Abraham. This study by Elvis Boateng ,2021. highlights the critical role of CSR in enhancing the brand image of SMEs in Ghana, advocating for more strategic engagement in socially responsible practices to foster brand loyalty and competitive advantage.

The article focused specifically on the context of Ghana, examining how CSR initiatives influence the brand image of SMEs operating within this country. The study was conducted in 2022.

Two main groups were involved in this work apart from the field interviewer, the Association of Ghana Industries (AGI, Kumasi-Ashanti Region) who supplied the documents containing the secondary data and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in the Kumasi metropolis who granted permission to grant interviews that were to solicit further data about the actions of the plastic and rubber industry.

In this work (article) the impact of CSR on SMEs is explored through some key roles, which include:

Enhancing Brand Image: CSR initiatives positively contribute to the brand image of SMEs by demonstrating a commitment to ethical practices, social responsibility, and community engagement. This can differentiate SMEs in the competitive market.

Building Customer Loyalty: Engaging in CSR helps SMEs foster trust and loyalty among customers. Consumers are more likely to support businesses that are perceived as socially responsible and committed to positive societal impact.

Community Relations: CSR initiatives can strengthen relationships with the local community, enhancing goodwill and support. This can lead to increased customer patronage and community involvement.

Improving Stakeholder Engagement: Effective CSR communication can enhance engagement with various stakeholders, including customers, employees, suppliers, and the community, leading to better collaboration and support.

Risk Management: By adopting CSR practices, SMEs can mitigate risks associated with negative public perceptions or regulatory pressures. A proactive approach to social responsibility can help manage potential crises.

Long-term Sustainability: Engaging in CSR promotes sustainable business practices, which can lead to long-term viability and success for SMEs. This focus on sustainability can also appeal to increasingly conscientious consumers.

In short, the study argues that CSR plays a crucial role in shaping the brand image of SMEs in Ghana, providing both reputational benefits and practical advantages in building relationships with stakeholders

Elvis Boateng et al realised that there are some key challenges SMEs face in communicating their CSR efforts:

Limited Resources: SMEs often have constrained budgets and staffing, which can hinder their ability to effectively promote and communicate their CSR initiatives.

Insufficient Expertise: SMEs may lack the necessary skills in public relations and marketing to craft compelling messages that effectively convey their CSR efforts.

Measurement Difficulties: SMEs often face challenges in measuring the impact of their CSR initiatives, making it hard to communicate tangible outcomes and value to stakeholders.

Stakeholder Engagement: Engaging with stakeholders effectively can be difficult for SMEs, particularly in identifying the right channels and methods to reach their audience.

The article advises that by overcoming these challenges listed above, SMEs can improve their CSR communication strategies, thus enhancing their brand image and stakeholder relationships.

Findings

The Research by Elvis Boateng et al on The Role and Impact of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in Building Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) Brand Image in Ghana came up with some data. About the perception of CSR held by firms, CSR has a positive impact on SMEs' brand image with nearly 87% of respondents. In addition, seventy percent (70%) responded that the management of their SMEs is concerned with employees' needs and wants. Again, it was discovered that the provision of full and accurate information about the products to consumers is perceived as one of the practices of CSR. Concerning, the motives of CSR practices by SMEs, all the respondents (100%) agreed that their organizations practice corporate social responsibility (CSR) to project the right corporate image, used as a marketing strategy, and to make employees happy and satisfied. It was further identified that all the motives behind SMEs' practice of CSR have been admitted in this study by an average of approximately eighty two percent (82%) of the respondents, except for community pressure

which was declined by one-third of the respondents. Majority (90%) of the respondents admitted the relevance of CSR as beneficial regarding increased attractiveness to potential recruits and enhancing the morale and retention of employees as well as saving costs and increasing efficiency at work. Data collected on the two variables: perception and benefits of CSR were first tested using cross-tabulation to establish if there exists any correlation. The two variables were found relational with a positive Pearson Correlation coefficient of 0.827 at a 95% confidence level. All the respondents attested to CSR's impact on creating value for customers through quality products, price, place, and promotion. It was further supported by all SME representatives that corporate social responsibility positively impacts their move towards innovation and creativity. It was discovered from the EPA officials that the rubber and plastic firms under their jurisdiction are monitored in terms of noise control, wearing of safety and protected garments, and waste management controls. Frequent unannounced visits are done as well as responding to whistle-blowers' information about bad practices. Again, it was discovered that plastic and rubber firms are performing well in terms of employment, generous donations to both individuals and groups, and being obliged to societal protection rules.

1.7 Research Methodology

Research Design: The qualitative method is the overall strategy used in this investigation. Exploratory research methodology will be the research approach employed. This is to acquire a greater comprehension of the poorly understood research problem or topic. We will employ qualitative research techniques like observational studies, focus groups, and in-depth interviews.

Constructivism will be the guiding philosophical theory. According to constructivism as propounded by its chief proponents like (Piaget, 1980) people actively create knowledge through their interactions, experiences, and interpretations. Constructivism would support this study's effort to comprehend how Ghanaian SMEs formulate their conceptions of business

strategy, corporate social responsibility, and acceptance of CSR initiatives. It recognises the subjectivity of reality and how the environment shapes it.

Target Population: The population of a study is seen as “a group or class of subjects, variables, concepts, or phenomena” Wimmer and Dominick (2011, p. 87). Considering the broad nature of SMEs in Ghana, the complexities involved and time constraints, the study cannot look at interviewing all SMEs in Ghana. As a result, the research will be based in Tema with the employees of Dutylex Company Limited as the population.

. Sample and Sampling Technique: A sample is a subset of a population that is representative of the population as a whole, according to Wimmer and Dominick (2003). Furthermore, samples are the units selected from the population to participate in the study, according to Spata (2003). We will employ the purposeful sampling technique. This enables the selection of participants with specialised knowledge on the subject of interest. This includes business executives, coordinators of CSR initiatives, and owners or managers of SMEs. - *Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods* (Patton, 2002). Purposive sampling, according to Patton, enables researchers to choose "information-rich cases" that offer profound insights into the subject under investigation. He points out that choosing participants who are particularly informed about the research topic is made easier with the help of purposive sampling.

Data Collection

In-depth interviews with stakeholders to gather detailed insights will be used for data collection. Moral, ethical, confidentiality and anonymity issues will be considered in the process of collecting data for the study, (Creswell , 2014). Creswell highlights the importance of protecting participants by guaranteeing their privacy and confidentiality and by resolving any ethical issues that might come up throughout the data collection procedure. Data Analysis software like Nvivo or SPSS backed by manual coding techniques when indispensable will be used for analysis.

The assumption of this qualitative research method is Constructivist Ontology. This assumption posits that reality is socially constructed and subjective. Jean Piaget (1896–1980) people actively create knowledge through their interactions, experiences, and interpretations. Qualitative research aims to understand participants’ perspectives and how they construct their social world. (Denzin & Lincoln ,2011). Denzin and Lincoln emphasise the examination of people's views and point out that qualitative research focuses on how people comprehend and make sense of their experiences within social situations.

Epistemology is subjectivist, that is, knowledge is gained through subjective experiences and insights. Researchers seek to understand phenomena from the participant’s point of view. Some literature or articles on our subject matter that were based on subjectivist Epistemology are:

- “The Implications of Dependency” (Sarpong, 2021). The study explores how excessive demands on firms by community members and other stakeholders in Ghana create challenges for CSR implementation, and
- “Mechanisms and Initiatives of CSR” (Marfo, 2024) This research examines the effects of CSR behaviours, mechanisms, and initiatives on the environment of mining companies in Ghana, using a co-integration approach.

Feasibility of the Study

Conducting a qualitative study on corporate strategy, CSR programmes, and SMEs’ acceptance of CSR programmes in Ghana is quite feasible and can provide valuable insights into the complex dynamics of CSR in an emerging economy.

Ghana presents a unique context for CSR research due to its growing economy and the increasing importance of CSR in its corporate sector. The country’s focus on sustainable development and the active role of SMEs in its economy makes it a suitable setting for

exploring CSR practices. Qualitative data on CSR practices can be obtained through various methods such as interviews, focus groups, and case studies.

Research Ethics

Informed Consent: Participants will be fully informed about the purpose, methods, and potential impacts of the research. They must voluntarily agree to participate without any coercion.

Confidentiality and Privacy: As a researcher, I will protect the confidentiality of the participants' information. This includes securing data and ensuring that private information is not disclosed without consent.

1.8 Organisation of the Study

This study is organized into five chapters that together build a comprehensive narrative of the research.

It begins with an introductory chapter that details the issue statement, outlines the context of the study, and presents the research questions and objectives. This chapter establishes the basis for the rest of the work. The significance of the study is also emphasised in this chapter, as well as the scope of the investigation. The second chapter, which is the next one, is where the theoretical framework that underpins the research is established. It also provides a comprehensive review of relevant literature and works that are related to the research. The methodology that was utilised in the research is discussed in the third chapter. This includes the methods that were utilised for the selection of samples as well as the procedures that were utilised for the analysis of the data. An in-depth discussion of the findings is included in the fourth chapter, which contains a detailed analysis of the data. The fifth chapter, which serves as the study's conclusion, provides a concise summary of the most important findings and wraps up the insights that were derived from the research.

1.9 Chapter Summary

Chapter One presents an introduction to the whole study by laying a strong groundwork for the research. The problem statement that guides the study is well stated in this first chapter, which also provides the background and context that inspired the research work. It provides a roadmap for the goals of the study by outlining the research questions and objectives in detail. The chapter also outlines the scope of the study, explains its possible influence and contribution to the field, and emphasises the importance of the research. All things considered, Chapter One provides the fundamental background and justification for the entire research.

After laying the groundwork, the discussion logically moves on to Chapter Two, which delves further into the study's theoretical framework. This chapter examines a range of pertinent literature and related works in addition to exploring the theories that underpin the research. The reader's comprehension of the study's background is strengthened by this shift, which also establishes the framework for the methodological and analytical considerations that will follow in Chapter Three.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.0 Introduction

This chapter presents a review of some existing literature on the subject matter especially ones that deal with Corporate Social Responsibility initiatives and implementation by SMEs. More light will be thrown on the subject matter thus knowing the level of research and knowledge of the academic positions on the subject matter. So in effect the recent literature relating to CSR and SMEs has been reviewed to give us more knowledge on our subject matter and on the matter.

The chapter also deals with both the conceptual and theoretical frameworks that underpin this work.

2.1 Conceptual Framework

The relationship between corporate strategy, CSR activities, and their adoption by small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs) can be examined in an organised manner with the help of this conceptual framework. The framework offers a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics between corporate strategy and CSR adoption by highlighting important structures, their linkages, and the underlying ideas.

Key Components of the Framework

a. Corporate Strategy can be defined in our context as the long-term strategy and course that a company takes to accomplish its objectives while maintaining sustainability and competitiveness. Some of the components of the corporate strategy are:

- **Strategic Objectives:** This incorporates the economic, environmental, and social goals that are integrated into the strategic plan.

- **Resource Allocation:** This refers to the financial, human, and technological resources that are allocated to the strategic objectives including the CSR initiatives.
- **Innovation in CSR:** Development of creative and impactful programmes to meet Stakeholders' interests including CSR initiatives.
- **Theoretical Basis:** The theories employed in this work are Stakeholder Theory and Resource-Based View (RBV)

b. CSR Programmes. This refers to the CSR initiatives undertaken by organizations to address social, environmental, and economic issues.

Characteristics:

- Alignment with stakeholders' needs.
- Measurable impact and sustainability.
- Integration with core business processes.

Theoretical Basis: Stakeholder Theory

c. SME Perception of CSR This relates to how SMEs view the necessity, worth, and viability of carrying out CSR initiatives.

- **Determinants:**
- Awareness: Knowledge about CSR benefits and relevance.
- Cost-Benefit Analysis: Weighing potential benefits against perceived costs.
- Social Influence: Influence of networks, partnerships, and larger corporations.
- Regulatory Compliance: Perception of CSR as a legal or moral obligation.

d. CSR Acceptance by SMEs This refers to the extent to which SMEs are willing to adopt and participate in CSR initiatives.

Factors Influencing Acceptance:

- **Financial Capacity:** Availability of resources to invest in CSR.
- **Strategic Alignment:** CSR's fit with SMEs' business goals.
- **External Pressures:** Influence from government policies, customers, or industry norms.
- **Perceived Value:** Direct and indirect benefits of CSR for the SME.

e. Moderating Factors

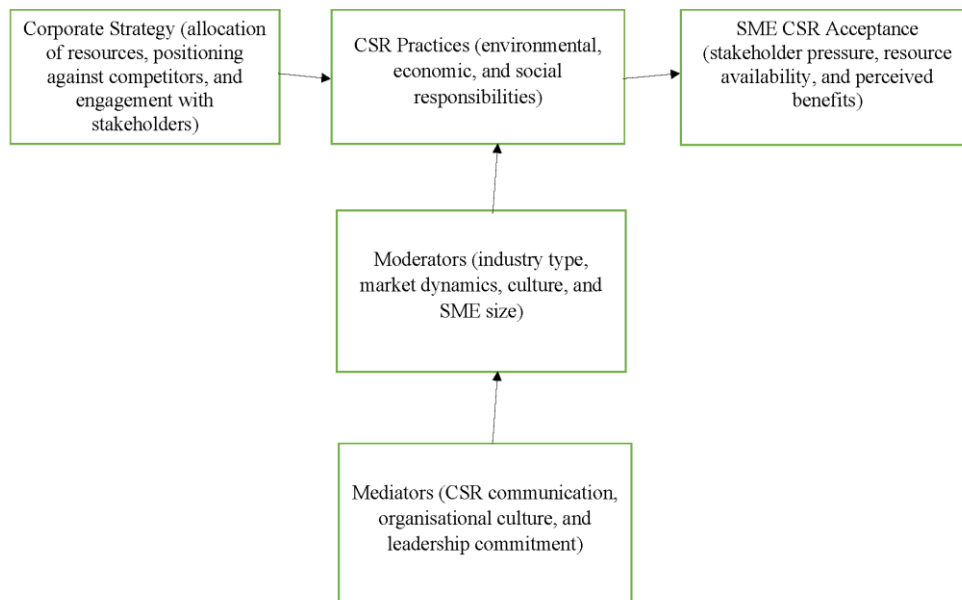
- **Industry Characteristics:**
 - Sector-specific norms and standards.
 - Competitive pressures.
- **Geographic and Cultural Context:**
 - Regional norms and expectations regarding CSR.
- **Regulatory Environment:**
 - Presence or absence of CSR-related regulations and incentives.

f. Outcomes

- **Enhanced SME Participation:**
 - Increased engagement in CSR activities by SMEs.
- **Improved Corporate-SME Relationships:**
 - Better collaboration between larger corporations and SMEs.
- **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):**
 - Contribution to local and global sustainability goals.

Figure 2.1 Conceptual Framework Diagram

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework: Corporate Plan, CSR and Acceptance by SMEs



Source: Author's Construct, 2024

The above conceptual framework diagram shows how corporate strategy, CSR initiatives, and SMEs' acceptance of them are related:

1. **Corporate Strategy** drives the development and execution of CSR Programs.
2. **CSR Programmes** influence SME Perception, moderated by factors such as industry characteristics, cultural context, and regulations.
3. **SME Perception of CSR** determines the level of **CSR Acceptance**.
4. **CSR Acceptance by SMEs** leads to desired outcomes, such as enhanced participation and alignment with sustainability goals.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

The two theories that have been used in this research work are Stakeholder theory and Resource Base theory.

2.2.1 Stakeholder Theory

The traditional perception about the objective of any business or organisation that was pioneered by economist Milton Friedman, in his seminal article *"The Social Responsibility of Business Is to Increase Its Profits"*, published in The New York Times Magazine, on September 13, 1970, was to increase the wealth of their shareholders, or the people who control the company's shares. Emanating from this perspective, the firm's decisions and activities are primarily motivated by its bottom line and come at the expense of other interests, like the interests of society. This is the underlying assumption of the Shareholder Theory is now outdated. From the shareholder theory perspective, Jensen & Meckling (1976) and Barney (1991) company executives have a duty to maximise shareholder value since they work for the shareholders.

This conventional understanding of the corporation is contradicted by the Stakeholder Theory, Freeman (2002, 2010) Some of the other proponents of the Stakeholder Theory are Bansal Tima, (2020), Archie and Buchholtz (2018), Crane, Matten & Glozer (2019), Harrison & Barney (2018), Cavagnaro & Curiel George (2018), Sharma (2017).

The primary recommendation of the stakeholder theory is that businesses should prioritise serving a wider range of interests rather than merely increasing shareholder wealth (Freeman, 2002) argued that rather than concentrating only on maximising profits for shareholders, firms should create value for all stakeholders, including communities, suppliers, employees, and customers.

Barney & Harrison (2020) submitted that Stakeholder Theory helps in creating value and competitive advantage. Barney emphasises how involving stakeholders, including workers, clients, vendors, and communities, should result in long-term competitive benefits.

It is in line with this modern thinking (Stakeholder Theory) that SMEs may implement CSR initiatives to satisfy the demands of various stakeholder groups, such as the community, suppliers, customers, and employees.

The Relevance of Stakeholder Theory to This Study

Stakeholder Theory is essential to any study on corporate strategy, CSR programmes, and their acceptability by SMEs in Ghana. It is particularly important when it comes to CSR integration, where the objective is to reconcile social, economic, and environmental obligations. Stakeholder Theory moves the emphasis from a shareholder-centric model to one that takes into account the interests of all parties impacted by an organization's actions,

The significance of comprehending and attending to the demands of various stakeholders, including workers, clients, suppliers, local communities, and regulatory agencies, is very well demanded by the application of Stakeholder Theory in the context of SMEs in Ghana. The success of SMEs is largely dependent on their interactions with stakeholders because they frequently operate in tight-knit communities. By utilising the stakeholder theory perspective, the research can explore the following:

- **Strategic Alignment:** How SMEs match their strategic objectives with their CSR initiatives to satisfy stakeholders.
- **Resource Optimisation:** The effective utilisation of SMEs' limited resources by attending to stakeholder needs.
- **Trust and Reputation:** Stakeholder engagement has a crucial role in SMEs' increasing reputation and fostering trust, both of which can increase the adoption of CSR efforts.

- **Conflict Resolution:** Methods for balancing and managing divergent stakeholder interests, which is a frequent obstacle for SMEs implementing CSR.

Through the integration of Stakeholder Theory, the study offers a paradigm for comprehending how stakeholder interactions impact the planning, execution, and success of corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives inside Ghanaian SME business/strategic plans.

Critique of Stakeholder Theory

Lack of Clear Prioritization among Stakeholders: One of the main criticisms of Stakeholder Theory is the lack of clear prioritization among stakeholders. Stakeholder Analysis is not an easy job, more so for SMEs. The inability of stakeholder theory to provide direction on how to prioritise stakeholder interests, particularly when those interests conflict, is one of its main complaints. For instance, the objectives of shareholders (maximising profits) may conflict with those of the community (social contributions), the environment (sustainable practices), or the workforce (better salaries). This situation is well articulated by Jensen (2002), Parmar, Freeman, et al,(2010).

This ambiguity may cause inconsistencies in the application of stakeholder principles or decision paralysis, particularly when trade-offs are required. The lack of a hierarchy or prioritisation framework, according to critics, may make stakeholder theory inapplicable in actual corporate contexts. This lack of a prioritisation scheme for stakeholder demands or interests is also spoken of by Harrison & Wicks (2013).

2.2.2 Resource-Based View Theory

The resource-based theory's central tenet is that a firm's capacity and resources determine its competitive advantage (Wernerfelt, 1984; Conner, 1991; Peteraf, 1993).

The RBV urges organisations to discover a "strategic fit" between their internal resources and competencies and the external environment in which they conduct business, as opposed to a

positioning perspective of strategy that looks only outward. Resource-Based View (Theory) postulates that businesses can gain a competitive edge by making efficient use of their resources. This idea explains the goal of investigating how CSR helps SMEs get a competitive edge. Some of the current or modern proponents of RBV are Barney (2021) and Miller & Breton-Miller (2021). These two scholars suggest that communities, in which businesses operate, might also be regarded as strategic resources, thereby enriching stakeholder features of the RBV. (Journal of Management 2021).

The Relevance of Resource-Based View Theory to This Study

The internal resources and competencies of a company are important factors that determine its competitive advantage. This is the viewpoint of Resource-Based View (RBV) Theory, (Barney, 1991). Thus, using RBV to carry out a study on the topic of Corporate Strategy, CSR Initiatives, and SME Acceptance in Ghana, brings a number of important insights into focus:

- **Leveraging Unique Resources:** RBV emphasises that in order for SMEs to successfully include CSR into their business strategy, they must identify and make use of distinctive, valuable, and non-imitable resources (such as skilled workers, localised expertise, and social networks).
- **Resource Constraints and CSR:** By maximising their current skills and establishing partnerships to share resources, SMEs can get over resource constraints, which are frequently mentioned as obstacles to the adoption of CSR.
- **Strategy and CSR Alignment:** RBV emphasises how crucial it is to match CSR programmes with SMEs' core strengths in order to improve societal impact, boost competitive advantage, and fortify stakeholder relationships.
- **Innovation and Sustainability:** From a RBV perspective SMEs can attain long-term sustainability by including CSR in their strategic or long-term plan, encouraging innovation, and attending to the particular socioeconomic needs of their communities.

Through an emphasis on internal strengths and capacities, and when very necessary partnership for resource sharing RBV offers a framework for comprehending how SMEs in Ghana may strategically implement and reap the benefits of corporate social responsibility initiatives, even in the face of inadequate funding, eventually promoting social and economic advancement.

Critique of Resource-Based View Theory

Limited Practical Applicability: One of the main criticisms of Resource-Based Theory is its limited practical applicability.

RBV has drawn criticism for not offering managers practical advice. Finding special resources and competencies can be challenging and expensive, particularly for small businesses or those operating in regions with limited resources.

For businesses seeking to gain a competitive edge, RBV provides only a few concrete measures because it doesn't often specify how they should create or obtain these special resources.

Some of the leading critics of the RBV are Kraaijenbrink, Spender, & Groen (2010). Among other criticisms, these authors point out that RBV lacks practical methods for identifying and developing resources. They further draw attention to the limitations of its use for small enterprises (SMEs) with their limited funding. Other critics are Lockett, A., Thompson, S., & Morgenstern, U. (2009). The assumption made by RBV that all enterprises are capable of finding and developing unique resources is criticised in their research. That assumption, they argued may not be realistic for SMEs or businesses with limited resources.

2.3 Review of Literature

Several studies have been done on CSR and SMEs by various researchers. These include (Carter & Porter ,2022) Their mixed method work sought to establish the proposition that SMEs gain the most when CSR is included in their long-term strategic goals instead of being viewed as a stand-alone endeavour. (Sharma & Lewis, 2023) **did** some qualitative research involving semi-structured interviews with 50 SME managers from India and South Africa that

showed that SMEs that integrate CSR into their strategic management could enter new markets, enhance their reputation, and retain more employees. Yet other researchers on CSR and SMEs includes (El-Sayed & Martinez, 2023). In their case study they analysed the CSR practices of 10 SMEs across Europe and the Middle East. The study concluded that SMEs that incorporate corporate social responsibility (CSR) into their strategy planning are more robust to economic shocks and better positioned to draw in socially conscious clients. El-Sayed & Martinez further stressed that to ensure authenticity, it is crucial for businesses to match CSR programmes with the corporate vision and values.

This research work that I am carrying out is qualitative with Stakeholder Theory and Resource-Based View (Theory) as its theoretical underpinnings.

Some of the literature that has been reviewed for this work are as below:

The literature, "*The Role and Impact of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in Building Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) Brand Image in Ghana,*" by Elvis.B, Amoako .S, Amoako .K, Acheampong .K, and Attoh .A (2022), highlights the critical role of CSR in enhancing the brand image of SMEs in Ghana, advocating for more strategic engagement in socially responsible practices to foster brand loyalty and competitive advantage.

The article focused specifically on the context of Ghana, examining how CSR initiatives influence the brand image of SMEs operating within this country.

Two main groups were involved in this work apart from the field interviewers, the Association of Ghana Industries (*AGI, Kumasi-Ashanti Region*) who supplied the documents containing the secondary data and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in the *Kumasi Metropolis* who granted permission to grant interviews that were to solicit further data about the actions of the plastic and rubber industry.

In this work (article) by Boateng Elvis et al (2022) the impact of CSR on SMEs was explored through some key roles, which include:

- **Enhancing Brand Image:** CSR initiatives positively contributed to the brand image of the SMEs by demonstrating a commitment to ethical practices, social responsibility, and community engagement. This differentiated SMEs in the competitive market.
- **Building Customer Loyalty:** Engaging in CSR helped SMEs foster trust and loyalty among customers. Consumers were more likely to support businesses that were perceived as socially responsible and committed to positive societal impact.
- **Community Relations:** CSR initiatives could strengthen relationships with the local community, enhancing goodwill and support. This led to increased customer patronage and community involvement.
- **Improving Stakeholder Engagement:** Effective CSR communication enhanced engagement with various stakeholders, including customers, employees, suppliers, and the community, leading to better collaboration and support.
- **Risk Management:** By adopting CSR practices, the SMEs mitigated the risks associated with negative public perceptions or regulatory pressures. A proactive approach to social responsibility helped manage potential crises.
- **Long-term Sustainability:** Engaging in CSR promoted sustainable business practices, which could lead to long-term viability and success for the SMEs. This focus on sustainability could also appeal to increasingly conscientious consumers.

In short, by Boateng Elvis et al (2022) argued that CSR played a crucial role in shaping the brand image of SMEs in Ghana that came under their study providing both reputational benefits and practical advantages in building relationships with stakeholders

Elvis Boateng et al realised that there were some key challenges the SMEs faced in communicating their CSR efforts and those were:

- **Limited Resources:** SMEs often have constrained budgets and staffing, which could hinder their ability to effectively promote and communicate their CSR initiatives.
- **Insufficient Expertise:** some SMEs lacked the necessary skills in public relations and marketing to craft compelling messages that could effectively convey their CSR efforts.
- **Measurement Difficulties:** SMEs often face challenges in measuring the impact of their CSR initiatives, making it hard to communicate tangible outcomes and value to stakeholders.
- **Stakeholder Engagement:** Engaging with stakeholders effectively can be difficult for SMEs, particularly in identifying the right channels and methods to reach their audience.

The article by Boateng Elvis et al (2022) advised that by overcoming those challenges listed above, SMEs could improve their CSR communication strategies, thus enhancing their brand image and stakeholder relationships.

The Research by Boateng Elvis et al on The Role and Impact of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in Building Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) Brand Image in Ghana came up with some data. On the perception of CSR held by firms, CSR positively impacted SMEs' brand image with nearly 87% of respondents. Similarly, 70% responded that the management of their SMEs is concerned with employees' needs and wants. Yet again, it was discovered that the provision of full and accurate information about the products to consumers is perceived as one of the practices of CSR. Concerning, the motives of CSR practices by SMEs, all the respondents (100%) agreed that their organizations practice

corporate social responsibility (CSR) to project the right corporate image; used as a marketing strategy, and to make employees happy and satisfied.

It was further identified that all the motives behind SMEs' practice of CSR have been admitted in this study by an average of approximately 82% of the respondents, except for community pressure which was declined by one-third of the respondents. The majority of (90%) respondents admitted the relevance of CSR as beneficial regarding increased attractiveness to potential recruits and enhancing the morale and retention of employees as well as saving costs and increasing efficiency at work. Data collected on the two variables: perception and benefits of CSR were first tested using cross-tabulation to establish if there exists any correlation. The two variables were found relational with a positive Pearson Correlation coefficient of 0.827 at a 95% confidence level.

The literature "*Business Strategy and Corporate Social Responsibility*" by Yi Lu, L. and Tian, G. (2018) explored the interconnectedness between business strategy and corporate social responsibility (CSR). The researchers' goal was to look into how business strategy affects CSR practices and how they are developed and applied in organisations. The authors (Yi Lu and Tian ,2018) contend that CSR initiatives ought to be integrated into core company plans in order to improve competitive advantage, enhance brand reputation, and guarantee long-term sustainability.

They emphasize the importance of interacting with stakeholders in order to successfully solve social requirements and at the same time match CSR initiatives with company goals.

The article offers practical insights for businesses on how to incorporate CSR into their strategic planning, positioning it as a fundamental aspect of business rather than a separate initiative.

The article did not focus on a specific geographic location for conducting research. Instead, it presented a conceptual analysis of the relationship between business strategy and CSR, applicable in various contexts and industries globally.

The key groups in this article were defenders, analysers, and prospectors. As stated by (Miles & Snow, 2003) business strategy typology for firms; prospectors and defenders sit at the endpoints of the business strategy continuum and they are systematically different along multiple dimensions, whereas analysers occupy the middle of the strategy continuum and exhibit characteristics of both prospectors and defenders (Miles & Snow, 2003). Specifically, prospectors persistently sought to exploit and identify new products and market opportunities through processes of innovation, and their competitiveness depended on firms' ability to pioneer products and/or market development. Defenders, on the other hand, focused on a narrow and limited product-market domain and their core competence depended on their ability to enhance production and administration efficiency. Analysers took prospective or defensive actions depending on their environmental settings and efficiency-innovation balance. They attempted to minimize the risk of low profitability and overextension of resources faced by prospectors and to maximize growth opportunities, which is ignored by defenders.

The research method employed was quantitative design. The study used an archival measure of the (Miles & Snow, 2003) business strategy typology developed by Bentley et al. (2013), which is a Discrete Strategy Composite Measure to proxy for a firm's business strategy. This Composite Measure Strategy is constructed from the following six firm attributes:

- (1) ratio of R&D expenses to sales,
- (2) ratio of employees to sales,
- (3) one-year percentage change in total sales,
- (4) ratio of SG&A expenses to sales,

(5) standard deviation of the total number of employees, and

(6) net property, plant, and equipment scaled by total assets.

The results suggested that the firm's business strategy has a significantly positive effect on its CSR performance. Since business strategy is chosen to influence a firm's manner from an early stage of its history (Miles and Snow 1978, 2003), their findings suggested that, before being affected by various temporal internal (e.g., corporate governance structures) or external factors (e.g., stakeholder pressure) as documented in prior studies, a firm's CSR performance, to some extent, is already shaped (encouraged or constrained) by the firm's business strategy chosen in the early history of its life. In other words, business strategy is an underlying determinant of CSR performance. In addition, their findings suggested that CSR is not merely a philanthropic activity of "doing good", it has a strong strategic aspect. It was also realised that firms have a propensity to be socially responsible and are more willing to conduct CSR if they stand to gain benefits from CSR engagement.

Furthermore, to the study, a company's business strategy might serve as a springboard for locating chances to develop pertinent, strategic CSR that fits with the company's competitive environment. Furthermore, their research offered investors a viewpoint when assessing a company's present and future CSR performance. For instance, a defender's consistent business approach unlike the prospector made it nearly impossible for it to perform better in CSR in the future. Thus, this might serve as an extra resource for investors' long-term investing choices.

The literature: (Bergman, 2017), aimed to explore how corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives affected the performance of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) over an extended period. The data for this study were collected through a longitudinal survey from SMEs that supply goods and services to the mining industry in Zambia.

The goal of the study was to determine whether CSR initiatives resulted in quantifiable gains in a range of business performance metrics. Financial performance, customer happiness,

employee engagement, and overall business sustainability were just a few of the performance criteria that the article sought to identify and examine as being impacted by CSR activities. The article also aimed to raise stakeholders' and business owners' knowledge of the possible advantages of corporate social responsibility (CSR), thus promoting a change to more ethical business practices that could result in long-term success.

The article was conducted in Zambia in 2017. The study focused specifically on small and medium enterprises (SMEs) within the country Zambia, examining the relationship between corporate social responsibility (CSR) practices and firm performance over a period in the Zambian context. The key groups used in the study were collected from 153 entrepreneurs in two surveys and changes in CSR and firm performance measures were analysed over a twelve (12) month period. The firms were selected based on the criteria of size: SMEs employing between 10 and 250 employees. The sample was drawn from databases of four large mining firms in Zambia (i.e., Mopani Mine, Lumwana Mine, Konkola Mine, and Kansanshi Mine) and had a population of 1200 registered local SMEs that met the selection criteria.

The longitudinal analysis of the association between CSR and the three indicators of firm performance (financial performance, corporate reputation and employee commitment) were conducted. The longitudinal analysis results reported in this study show that the two dimensions of CSR (social and environmental) significantly impact financial performance. However, the association between the two dimensions of CSR and the other two measures of firm performance (corporate reputation and employee commitment) only turned out to be partially significant. The study found that the relationship between CSR and financial performance is significant and fully supported. It was realised that the relationship between CSR and financial performance is significant and fully supported. The positive effect of CSR on financial performance is consistent with many studies conducted in the Western World, Asia, and other countries. Additionally, in the context of Zambia, Choongo et al. established that SMEs were motivated to engage in CSR for usually financial benefits.

Therefore, learning from this study (Bergman, M. M (2017) it is anticipated that participation in CSR initiatives, such as cutting back on water and energy use, would result in cost savings that would eventually enhance business performance.

There were various restrictions on this study. First, the study's sample was limited to one industry (trade and services), which might have limitations on how broadly these findings may be applied to other industries. These results should be confirmed in a cross-sectoral manner in future research.

Secondly, despite the fact that subjective and perceptual measurements were correlated with objective measures, they remain perceptual measures of financial performance since the SMEs lacked objective measures. That undermined, in a way, the scientific rigour of the work.

The literature: Kot & Ślusarczyk (2021). This work aimed at systematically identifying and categorizing the barriers that small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in a developing economy face when attempting to implement corporate social responsibility (CSR) practices. The study aimed at collecting qualitative data that represented the viewpoints of several stakeholders, such as SME owners, employees, and industry experts, by using a thematic analysis technique. Through their experiences and viewpoints on CSR, this approach sought to extract significant themes and insights. The senior management of several SMEs in Pakistan provided the study's data, which were then subjected to thematic analysis to identify the dominant themes.

The study used a semi-structured interview approach, which is a tool/instrument of qualitative design, to look at the management perceptions of key barriers to CSR practices in the SME sector of Pakistan, as the study aimed to answer the “why part” of a question for which an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon was required, rather than the “what part,”. Therefore, the semi-structured interview approach best served the purpose. Specifically, this approach allowed the researcher to quickly assess and analyse the information provided and allowed flexibility in the questioning as needed. It was also appropriate for gathering the respondent’s

views on reasons for specific behaviours and assisted in obtaining more information. The authors included the senior management of an SME for an in-depth interview, as the senior management was better qualified to respond to the survey questions and had better knowledge of the policy-related issues of their SME. This data collection approach is in line with the guidelines of Bailey and Peck (2016), that stated that for in-depth semi-structured interviews, it is desirable to approach those respondents who have better knowledge of the phenomenon under question. The authors recorded each interview (audio-recorded only) to use as a reference during the data analysis stage. For the sake of anonymity, the authors used a code of A, B, C, and so on for each interview, rather than using the actual identification. Overall, the data were collected from 14 SMEs with a total of 22 interviews.

The authors analysed the data from interviews using thematic analysis, a process of identifying, analysing, and sequentially relocating the repeated patterns in the entire database. Overall, the thematic analysis was carried out in three stages: (a) the first-order themes, (b) the second-order themes, and (c) the third-order themes. Usually, in the first stage (first-order themes), the descriptive codes are recorded. These descriptive codes are then combined in different but closely related categories (second-order themes). Lastly, these categorized themes are linked with a theoretical dimension. An example of the first order theme (We face financial issues for CSR) second theme would be (finance, money, economic) and third theme (lack of finance). A total of six patterns of themes emerged from the thematic analysis, which included lack of finances, lack of CSR knowledge, lack of regulatory framework, lack of top management commitment, lack of strategic planning for CSR, and complexity in implementing a CSR plan.

The goal of the study was to investigate the barriers to corporate social responsibility in Pakistan's SME sector. The study emphasised several hurdles and their ranks in order to break them down for successful CSR implementation. Pakistani SMEs would have to redefine environmental initiatives and CSR orientation. Furthermore, legislators should be aware that sustainability is a good trade-off for all, regardless of a company's size or the industry in which

it works. It is unrealistic to anticipate that the country's climate will improve in the future unless or until a proactive approach to sustainable business practices is adopted. The policies on the part of the government should facilitate a sustainable business environment by providing easy-to-pay loans, relief in taxes, and a special subsidy on the purchase of eco-friendly plants and equipment. It was the hope of these researchers that their study will significantly impact the industry and government agencies to work on the stated barriers so as to have a better and sustainable future for all.

The literature: (*Bahta, & Bikanyi, 2020*). The study aimed to explore how corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives impact the financial performance of small and medium enterprises (SMEs). The main objective of the study was to determine whether CSR efforts and financial results were correlated in any quantifiable way. Analysing the role that company reputation plays in mediating the link between CSR and financial performance was a major area of emphasis. The purpose of the study was to ascertain whether a solid reputation via CSR involvement—is a crucial component that affects corporate financial success.

The study aspires to promote the importance of CSR not only as a moral or ethical obligation but also as a strategic business practice that can lead to sustainable financial success. By emphasizing the positive outcomes of CSR, the research aimed to motivate more SMEs to engage in socially responsible activities. Empirical research was carried out, and data were gathered using a questionnaire from 402 owners/managers of SMEs in Eritrea, a country in East Africa.

One of the intangibles but invaluable corporate resources is business reputation, which is a fundamental element that associates CSR with financial performance (Saeidi et al., 2015; Surroca et al., 2010). The mechanism of CSR actions affecting business performance by influencing interest groups and improving business reputation is supported by the stakeholder theory (Clarkson, 1995; Mitchell et al., 1997; Polonsky et al., 2005). Stakeholders decide the

allocation of their resources based on the evaluation of the firm with respect to its reputation as connected to its CSR activities and ultimately influence company performance (Donaldson & Preston, 1995). CSR improves financial performance by influencing interest groups' perceptions positively. These interest groups' positive perceptions attained through the demonstration of CSR could enhance corporate reputation. An increase in reputation generates socially complicated and unique resources that are dependent on time. Such resources result in the superior performance of the organisation (Barney, 1991). Hence, the mediating effect of firm reputation on CSR and performance association is legitimate from a theoretical perspective and has been confirmed by empirical studies (Galbreath & Shum, 2012; Saeidi et al., 2015).

In the study, Bahta D, Yun J, Islam M R, & Bikanyi J K (2020) aimed to examine the relationship between CSR and SME performance, with firm reputation as a mediating factor. A systematically organised and standardised approach was considered in this study as it is vital in obtaining data on this subject within a short period of time from a large group (Saunders et al., 2012). The target population comprised SMEs from diverse sectors in the capital city Asmara, where most of the SMEs recorded in the Trade and Industry Office were located (MTI, 2018). A cross-sectional study was carried out and a standardised survey was disseminated to managers of manufacturing and service SMEs. The research made use of a 1-5 Likert scale was used to score the SME performance (ranging from extremely unsuccessful; 1 to extremely successful; 5). Based on previous studies, the subjective approach to measuring SMEs' financial performance was adopted in the study (Man, 2002; Sweeney, 2009).

The results of the study found out that the existence of a significant association between CSR and SME performance. This implied that the progression of socially responsible actions strengthens performance and offers ample benefits for business. It is thus expected that the involvement in CSR activities such as the wise usage of water and energy can enable cost savings, and eventually improve the firm's financial performance. The results of this study

showed that CSR practices have a definite significant association with SME reputation. This suggests that the participation of SMEs in CSR practices was related to better enterprise reputation. Research has also established a definite relationship between CSR and business reputation in SMEs. Turban and Greening (1997), CSR practices in SMEs contribute towards building a better image and strong marketing position, which consequently brings a competitive advantage. Thus, business firms should develop CSR practices that benefit the public, protect the environment, and improve the living conditions of their workers and communicate their CSR practices to interest groups. This will allow their customers to select their products or services rather than their competitors' products and services. At the same time, they enhance not only their business results, but also their reputation. The findings of this study also show a definite significant connection between SMEs' reputation and performance. This implies that better SME reputation leads to enhanced financial performance. Firms with a greater rank of reputation exceed those with a low rank of reputation (Chung, Schneeweis, & Eneroth, 1999). This is consistent with the resource-based hypothesis, which holds that an organization's reputation can give it a competitive edge by influencing interest groups to view the company favourably and be more inclined to sign into contracts with it (Deephouse, 2000). Businesses were thus encouraged to work harder to enhance their reputation through corporate social responsibility (CSR), which supports the social and economic advancement of local communities, as it is a resource that provides a competitive edge.

Chapter Summary

Though much research work has been done in the area of Corporate Social Responsibility in Asia and the Western World at large in the context of Africa and Ghana in particular, it appears that not so much research has been done. There is a wide gap in existing literature when it comes to incorporating Corporate Strategy into the equation of CSR programmes and their acceptance by Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in Ghana. It is this research gap that this work is attempting to help in narrowing.

The next chapter deals with the research methodology, which includes the research design, population, sample size and method of data collection.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter summarizes the population, sample size, sampling procedure, instruments, data sources, and data collection method and highlights the research methodology and theoretical framework that supported the work.

3.1 Chapter Overview

This chapter deals with the research methodology for this study. It incorporates elements like research design, sample size, target population and data collection.

3.2 General Definitions of Research Methodology

- Research methodology is a set of procedures or strategies used by researchers to collect, analyse, and interpret data (Creswell 2014). Creswell highlights how crucial it is to select a methodology that complements the goals and research questions. He divides approaches into three categories: mixed, qualitative, and quantitative. Each has its own procedures and goals.
- Research methodology refers to the systematic approach used to solve a research problem, encompassing the methods, techniques, and tools employed (Kothari 2004).

Kothari point out the value of a methodical strategy that entails identifying the research topic, developing hypotheses, gathering information, and evaluating the findings. He emphasizes how methodology ensures the reliability and validity of study findings.

3.3 Research Methods Used in Previous Studies

- "Unleashing the Barriers to CSR Implementation in the SME Sector of a Developing Economy: A Thematic Analysis Approach" by (Kot & Ślusarczyk, 2021) used a semi-structured interview approach, which is a subject of qualitative design. They looked at the management perceptions of key barriers to CSR practices in the SME sector of Pakistan. The study aimed to answer the “why part” of a question, rather than the “what part,” for which an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon was required. The participants included the senior management of an SME for an in-depth interview, as the senior management was better qualified to respond to the survey questions and had better knowledge of the policy-related issues of their SME. Both qualitative research techniques and semi-structured interviews place a strong emphasis on deciphering the significance of social phenomena, actions, or experiences. Exploring how people interpret their surroundings is the goal of qualitative research, and the semi-structured interview is a tool used to extract these individual interpretations and insights. The interviewer's abilities have a major role in the semi-structured interview's success. Interviewers with less experience may find it difficult to establish rapport or may pass up chances to probe further, which could result in missed or superficial insights.
- "A Longitudinal Study of the Impact of Corporate Social Responsibility on Firm Performance in SMEs in Zambia" by Bergman, M.M (2017) used a longitudinal survey from SMEs that supply goods and services to the mining industry in Zambia. The first

fieldwork was done in 2013, while the second survey was carried out on the same sample 12 months later, in 2014. The key groups used in the study were collected from 153 entrepreneurs in two surveys and changes in CSR and firm performance measures were analysed over a 12-month period. The firms were selected based on the criterion of size: SMEs employing between 10 and 250 employees. Longitudinal surveys typically collect quantitative data (e.g., numerical scales, and survey responses) that can be analysed statistically. The data collected is often structured and designed for comparison over time. For example, a longitudinal survey might track participants' health metrics over five years or their attitudes toward a particular topic. In contrast, qualitative research places more emphasis on non-numerical data, such as descriptions, narratives, and words. Open-ended data gathering techniques including focus groups, interviews, and participant observation are frequently used to understand participants' viewpoints, feelings, and experiences thoroughly.

One of the key challenges of longitudinal surveys is attrition; the loss of participants over time. As surveys extend over several waves of data collection, some participants may drop out, potentially leading to biases in the results or diminishing the sample's representativeness.

- "How Does CSR Enhance the Financial Performance of SMEs? The Mediating Role of Firm Reputation" by (Islam, & Bikanyi, 2020). This was an empirical research and data were gathered using a questionnaire from 402 owners/managers of SMEs in Eritrea, a country in East Africa. It was both qualitative and empirical studying real-world phenomena. While empirical research generally aims to understand phenomena by gathering data from observations, experiments, or real-world occurrences, qualitative research frequently explores experiences, emotions, and social processes in natural settings. Subjective experiences, meanings, and interpretations are frequently left out of empirical research, which largely concentrates on data that can be observed

or measured. This is a drawback when researching difficult-to-quantify variables like emotions, values, and beliefs.

3.4 Proposed Methodology for this Study and The Justification

The qualitative method is the general strategy used in this investigation. Exploratory research is the approach that is being employed to gain a deeper comprehension of the poorly understood research subject. The study employs qualitative research techniques like observational studies, focus groups, and in-depth interviews. The why and how of human behaviours, interactions, and actions in their natural environments can be better understood with the use of qualitative study. Theory development, policy, and practice can be informed by the profound insights it offers into people's motives, thoughts, feelings, and experiences. (Creswell & Poth 2018) .

Qualitative research methodology also provides flexibility in research design and data collection. Researchers can adjust their approach as the study progresses, allowing for an exploratory and responsive inquiry into the research problem, (Denzin & Lincoln 2021). In a new field, exploratory research might help uncover new issues, queries, or areas of interest. It enables academics to investigate irregularities and create research questions for a more thorough or further examination at a later time, Stebbins, R. A. (2018).

The likely disadvantage of the qualitative research method is its subjective nature, which may lead to researcher bias. The interpretation of data could be influenced by the researcher's perspectives, beliefs, and assumptions, potentially compromising objectivity (Guba & Lincoln 2021).

3.5 Research Design

As stated earlier, the overall approach taken in this study is the qualitative method. The research strategy being employed is the exploratory research path which would help us to get a better understanding of the poorly understood research subject or topic. Qualitative research methods such as focus groups, observational studies and especially in-depth interviews, would be used.

The dominant philosophical theory is constructivism. Constructivism's main proponents, such as Jean Piaget (1896–1980), contend that humans actively generate knowledge by their interactions, experiences, and interpretations. The study's attempt to understand how Ghanaian SMEs develop their ideas of business strategy, corporate social responsibility, and acceptance of CSR efforts would be aided by constructivism. It acknowledges that reality is subjective and surroundings in context influence it, (Creswell , 2018).

3.6 Target Population

(Wimmer & Dominick ,2011) define the population of a study as "a group or class of subjects, variables, concepts, or phenomena" The study cannot look at interviewing all SMEs in Ghana due to the wide range of SMEs in Ghana, the complexity involved, and time constraints. The researcher set up three criteria that should be basic to the company that would, be selected for the study;

- The company should be carrying out CRS initiatives
- The company should have a corporate plan
- Lastly, but not the least, the proximity of the company to the researcher to limit the financial cost of the non-funded research and also to help meet the time limit is important.

The selection of the employees of Dutylex Company Limited in the Greater Accra Region and the Tema metropolis as our population for this study is therefore appropriate.

3.7 Sample and Sampling Technique

Etikan and Musa (2016) define a sample as a subset of a population that is representative of the population as a whole. Additionally, Taherdoost, (2016) define samples as the units chosen from the population to take part in the study. The technique of deliberate sampling would be utilised. This makes it possible to choose individuals who are knowledgeable about the topic at hand. Business leaders, CSR initiative coordinators, and SMEs owners or managers fall

under this category. Patton is of the position that purposeful selection allows researchers to select "information-rich cases" that provide deep insights into the topic being studied. He notes that it is simpler to select participants who are especially knowledgeable about the research issue with the assistance of purposive sampling. The study would involve 20 persons, selected employees of Dutylex Company Limited in *Tema*.

3.8 Data Collection

Data would be gathered through in-depth interviews with stakeholders to provide comprehensive insights. When gathering data for the study, moral, ethical, secrecy, and anonymity concerns would be seriously taken into account. In his work "Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches" (Creswell, 2014). Creswell emphasises how crucial it is to safeguard participants by ensuring their privacy and confidentiality and by addressing any ethical concerns that may arise during the data collection process.

The Data collected will be analysed to bring out the necessary findings of the research work. This qualitative research approach is predicated on constructivist ontology; Creswell, J. W. (2013), and this ontology is based on the presumption that reality is subjective and socially produced. People actively generate knowledge through their interactions, experiences, and interpretations (Piaget 1896–1980). The goal of qualitative research is to comprehend the viewpoints of participants and how they create their social environment. In *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research* (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011) Denzin and Lincoln stress the importance of examining people's perspectives and note that qualitative research focuses on how people understand and interpret their experiences in social contexts.

Epistemology is subjectivist, that is, knowledge is gained through subjective experiences and insights Berglund, K. (2018). In the words researchers seek to understand phenomena from the participant's point of view

3.9 Research Ethics

Informed Consent: Participants would be fully informed about the purpose, methods, and potential impacts of the research (Israel & Hay, 2020). They must voluntarily agree to participate without any coercion.

Confidentiality and Privacy

As a researcher, I would protect the confidentiality of the participants' information. This includes securing data and ensuring that private information is not disclosed without the owner's consent. The identities of the respondents are not to be revealed in the reports from the work. They are treated as anonymous.

3.10 Chapter Summary

The research design, sample, and sampling technique or procedure are all explained in this chapter. It goes into additional information about the data collection and analysis process. The chapter also discussed other aspects of research that were taken into account in the study, including ethical, confidentiality, and anonymity concerns.

Having examined the elements of the research technique/method, the subsequent chapter will address the data analysis and findings of the study.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of the study, derived from an analysis of data collected through interviews conducted with key stakeholders. The analysis explores the integration of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) into the strategic framework of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in Ghana, focusing on motivations, challenges, and the competitive

advantages of CSR. Key themes identified during the analysis are discussed with the research objectives and the theoretical frameworks underpinning the study.

4.1 Data Analysis

This section presents the analysis of data collected from respondents to address the research objectives. The study focuses on key themes such as integrating CSR into corporate strategy, the specific initiatives undertaken, motivations, challenges, and the impact of CSR on competitiveness.

4.1.2 Awareness, Perception, and Integration of CSR

Respondents generally demonstrated a strong understanding of CSR, with most recognizing it as a critical aspect of business operations. Respondent 1 stated, "We actively engage with internal and external stakeholders to ensure that our CSR initiatives align with their needs." Similarly, Respondent 7 emphasized that "CSR is not just a stand-alone activity but is embedded in our daily operations." These views highlight the perspective that CSR should be an ongoing, integrated effort rather than a one-time project.

The importance of integrating CSR into the strategic plan was echoed by multiple respondents. For instance, Respondent 3 noted that "By embedding CSR programs into the strategic plan, we ensure sustainability and long-term impact." This aligns with Respondent 9's statement: "CSR is not a stand-alone project. Our daily operations are shaped by responsible business practices." The consensus among respondents suggests that CSR is increasingly seen as a core business function rather than a supplementary initiative.

However, some respondents highlighted the challenges small and medium enterprises (SMEs) face in adopting CSR. Respondent 5 mentioned that "Many SMEs recognize that embracing sustainability practices can drive long-term growth, but they lack the financial resources to implement extensive CSR initiatives." This aligns with Respondent 6's observation that "SMEs

have deep connections to the community, but they often struggle to formalize their CSR efforts due to limited budgets and resources."

4.2.2 Motivations and Challenges in Adopting CSR

Respondents cited various motivations for implementing CSR initiatives. Respondent 2 stated, "CSR programs are an important part of our corporate culture, helping us build strong relationships with customers and employees." Likewise, Respondent 8 highlighted that "CSR is a driver for long-term business success, as it helps us meet stakeholder expectations and regulatory requirements."

Despite these motivations, several respondents identified challenges that hinder the adoption of CSR. Respondent 10 mentioned that "One of the main challenges is ensuring that we have adequate financial and human resources to implement and sustain CSR programs." This concern was supported by Respondent 14, who stated, "Navigating regulatory requirements and stakeholder expectations can be complex, making CSR implementation difficult for many companies."

External pressures also play a role in shaping CSR strategies. Respondent 4 emphasized that "External partners, including NGOs, government agencies, and customers, influence our CSR decisions by setting expectations for responsible business practices." Similarly, Respondent 16 pointed out that "Public opinion and media coverage can also influence how businesses prioritize CSR." These responses suggest that businesses not only adopt CSR due to internal motivations but also respond to external expectations and pressures.

Another significant challenge mentioned by multiple respondents was measuring the impact of CSR initiatives. One respondent stated, "Demonstrating the tangible impact of CSR programs can be difficult, especially when results are long-term and not immediately visible." This aligns with Respondent 18's view that "CSR initiatives should have measurable outcomes to justify continued investment and ensure accountability."

4.2.3 Competitive Advantage of CSR

Many respondents recognized CSR as a key driver of competitive advantage. Respondent 11 noted, "Our commitment to CSR has helped strengthen trust with our customers and differentiate us from competitors." Similarly, Respondent 17 stated, "In an increasingly crowded market, CSR has provided us with a unique value proposition and strengthened our brand reputation." These statements illustrate that businesses view CSR as a strategic tool to enhance their market position.

Additionally, respondents highlighted the positive impact of CSR on reputation and employee engagement. Respondent 20 pointed out that "CSR initiatives have contributed to improved brand perception and customer loyalty." This view was reinforced by Respondent 14, who mentioned "Our CSR efforts have allowed us to become a more trusted and respected company in our industry."

Employee engagement was another area where CSR was seen as beneficial. Respondent 6 stated, "By implementing CSR initiatives, we have shown our employees that we are committed to ethical business practices, which has improved morale and retention." Similarly, Respondent 8 emphasized that "Through our CSR initiatives, we engage with the community and our employees, fostering a sense of shared purpose and commitment."

4.2 Findings and Discussion

This section examines the study's findings with the objectives outlined in Chapter One. The discussion delves into how businesses define and integrate CSR into their corporate strategies, the specific initiatives undertaken, the motivations and challenges faced, and the impact of CSR on competitiveness. Aligning the results with the study's objectives, this discussion highlights the practical and strategic implications of CSR adoption while contextualizing the findings within the broader literature and theoretical frameworks.

Objective 1

To assess the current state of CSR integration into the strategic planning of SMEs in Ghana by identifying the extent to which CSR is embedded in their corporate policies and practices.

AWARENESS, PERCEPTION AND INTEGRATION OF CSR IN DUTYLEX

- The level to which the incorporation of CSR programmes aids in the implementation of a strategic plan

P1: Incorporating CSR into the strategic plan ensures that top-level management takes ownership of these initiatives. This leadership commitment is vital for resource allocation, guiding the direction of CSR efforts, and fostering a culture where CSR is seen as a shared responsibility across the organization

P2: By embedding CSR programs into the strategic plan, we ensure that our social and environmental initiatives are directly aligned with our long-term business goals. This alignment helps prioritize initiatives that can deliver both societal value and business success, such as improving operational efficiency through sustainability practices or enhancing our brand reputation by supporting local communities

P3: Although including CSR in the strategic plan gives it direction, it is not necessarily sufficient to guarantee its execution. External elements like shareholder interests and market conditions are also quite important.

P4: By securing the required resources and coordinating them with the company's primary goals, the strategic plan's inclusion of CSR initiatives greatly enhances their execution.

P5: Successful implementation of the strategic plan is not ensured by merely including CSR. Implementation frequently rely more on departmental collaboration, leadership commitment, and company culture.

P6: While it makes sense in theory to include CSR in the strategic plan, real-world obstacles like conflicting objectives and a lack of experience may prevent it from being fully implemented.

P7: By prioritizing initiatives and guaranteeing that leadership gives them enough attention and dedication, CSR integrated into the strategy promotes successful execution.

P8: Although while CSR initiatives are a component of the strategic plan, they are frequently viewed as secondary objectives, which has little effect on their actual execution.

P9: The degree to which the company's leadership successfully integrates CSR initiatives with their other objectives will determine the impact of the strategy's inclusion. Implementation efforts may be jeopardized if integration is lacking.

P10: Complete integration of CSR into the strategic plan guarantees alignment with long-term objectives and promotes a sustainable implementation strategy that extends beyond short-term projects.

The findings of this study found out that while CSR is integrated into the strategic planning of SMEs in Ghana, its depth and focus vary significantly. The participants indicated that stakeholder relationships and long-term business goals are the primary pathways for integrating CSR. This aligns with the observations of Amoako et al. (2022), who argue that SMEs in emerging markets are increasingly embedding CSR into their core strategies to address stakeholder needs and align with sustainability goals. Similarly, Nguyen-Viet (2023) highlights the growing trend of integrating CSR into brand-building efforts, particularly in SMEs, to enhance customer-based brand equity. These studies support the findings that CSR is seen not as a standalone initiative but as a critical component of broader strategic objectives.

However, the study also found variability in the extent of integration, with some SMEs primarily focusing on short-term, externally-driven CSR activities rather than deeply embedding CSR into their operational and strategic frameworks. This is consistent with Trivedi et al. (2020), who argue that SMEs often face resource constraints and lack structured policies, which limits their ability to fully integrate CSR. They suggest that CSR in SMEs often remains reactive, shaped by external pressures rather than proactive strategic alignment.

On the contrary, Pomeroy (2019) disagrees with the notion of limited integration, suggesting that even resource-constrained SMEs can effectively incorporate CSR into strategic planning through partnerships and innovative approaches. He emphasizes that SMEs in resource-limited contexts are uniquely positioned to leverage community relationships and localized CSR practices, which align with long-term goals.

Overall, the findings highlight a nuanced understanding of CSR integration in Ghanaian SMEs, reflecting both strategic alignment and operational challenges. While many SMEs recognize the importance of embedding CSR into their policies and practices, constraints such as resource limitations and external pressures hinder full integration. This underscores the need for tailored frameworks and support mechanisms to enable SMEs to transition from reactive to proactive CSR strategies.

Objective 2

To examine the motivations and challenges faced by Ghanaian SMEs in adopting CSR programmes, including resource limitations, cultural factors, and market conditions

MOTIVATIONS AND CHALLENGES IN ADOPTING CSR IN DUTYLEX

- What challenges does the company face in implementing the CSR programmes

P1: One of the main challenges is ensuring that we have enough financial and human resources dedicated to our CSR initiatives. Balancing CSR with other business priorities can sometimes mean that CSR programs don't receive the full attention or funding they need to scale or reach their full potential. Although we are committed to investing in CSR, the availability of additional resources could accelerate our efforts

P2: Managing stakeholder expectations can be complex, especially when we have a diverse group of stakeholders with different priorities. Customers, employees, investors, and communities all have different views on what constitutes successful CSR, and meeting these expectations consistently can be challenging. Ensuring clear communication and alignment on what our CSR goals are, and how they will be achieved, is an ongoing effort

P3: The struggle to devote enough financial and human resources to CSR initiatives, which hinders their capacity to carry them out successfully.

P4: Employee resistance or disinterest during implementation may result from some staff members' incomplete understanding of or support for CSR activities.

P5: CSR initiatives may conflict with other corporate goals, such maximizing profits, creating conflict about how much funding or attention CSR should get.

P6: CSR initiatives may not have the required authority and direction without strong leadership support, making it challenging to implement them at all organizational levels.

P7: The social, environmental, and financial effects of corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives are frequently hard for the business to quantify, which makes it challenging to assess their effectiveness or defend additional funding.

P8: It can be difficult to balance the many expectations of stakeholders (such as investors, consumers, and communities), as each group may have different ideas about what CSR should accomplish.

P9: Cultural differences can make it difficult for multinational corporations to implement CSR programs, which can result in a range of responses or mismatched strategies.

P10: Prioritizing short-term profitability may find it challenging to fund long-term CSR projects that don't yield profits right away.

The findings indicate that Ghanaian SMEs are primarily motivated by enhancing corporate image and building stakeholder relationships, with profitability as a secondary consideration. Challenges such as resource constraints, stakeholder management, and the difficulty of measuring CSR impacts were prominently highlighted. These findings align with the work of Amoako et al. (2022), who identify corporate reputation as a critical driver of CSR adoption in emerging markets. They argue that SMEs view CSR as a means to build trust and legitimacy in the eyes of stakeholders, which is essential for sustaining market competitiveness. Similarly, Nguyen-Viet (2023) emphasizes the role of stakeholder relationships in driving CSR initiatives, particularly in environments where consumer awareness of ethical practices is increasing.

However, the study also found that resource limitations significantly hinder CSR adoption. This observation is consistent with the findings of Trivedi et al. (2020), who note that financial and human capital constraints are among the most pressing barriers for SMEs globally. They argued that without adequate resources, SMEs struggle to implement CSR programs effectively, often resorting to symbolic rather than substantive actions.

Contrary to these findings, Bolton et al. (2022) suggest that resource limitations are not insurmountable. They argue that SMEs can overcome such challenges by leveraging partnerships, innovative practices, and collaborative networks. Their study highlights cases where SMEs have successfully adopted CSR by focusing on cost-effective, community-driven initiatives that align with their strategic goals.

Cultural factors also play a nuanced role in shaping motivations and challenges. Pomeroy (2019) contends that cultural norms and societal expectations in emerging markets like Ghana often encourage community-oriented CSR practices, which can either support or constrain SMEs depending on how these practices align with business objectives. While cultural alignment can enhance the relevance of CSR initiatives, it may also create pressures for SMEs to prioritize less strategic, ad hoc community interventions.

These findings depict that, Ghanaian SMEs demonstrate strong motivations to adopt CSR, particularly for reputation and stakeholder engagement, they face significant challenges related to resources, stakeholder management, and cultural expectations. Addressing these barriers requires tailored strategies, including partnerships, capacity-building initiatives, and frameworks to help SMEs align CSR efforts with long-term strategic objectives.

Objective 3

To explore the role of CSR in achieving competitive advantage for SMEs, considering how CSR initiatives can contribute to the enhancement of corporate reputation and stakeholder relationships

COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE OF CSR IN DUTYLEX

- Do you believe CSR initiatives have enhanced your stakeholder relationships

P1: We have gained our consumers' trust and loyalty because to our dedication to CSR. Customers are looking for brands that share their values more and more as they get more aware of social and environmental challenges. By adopting sustainable methods, giving back to the community, and upholding moral principles, we have improved our brand's reputation and established enduring bonds with clients who respect corporate social responsibility

P2: CSR initiatives have also contributed to improved employee engagement and job satisfaction. Employees feel more connected to the company when they see that we care about more than just profits and are actively involved in causes they care about, such as environmental sustainability or social justice. By creating a strong CSR culture, we have been able to attract and retain top talent, while fostering a sense of pride and purpose among our workforce

P3: Through the demonstration of our dedication to social responsibility, CSR efforts have significantly improved our connections with stakeholders, fostering loyalty and trust.

P4: Even though CSR programs have strengthened bonds between stakeholders, they frequently only have an impact on particular stakeholder groups—like consumers and local communities—rather than a wide spectrum of stakeholders.

P5: Despite their good intentions, CSR initiatives haven't had a significant impact on our relationships with stakeholders because they're frequently viewed as an advertising scheme or as superficial.

P6: Despite the implementation of CSR initiatives, we have not yet seen a clear improvement in stakeholder relationships, likely due to inconsistent execution and communication

P7: CSR initiatives have helped foster better relationships with stakeholders, but the effects are gradual and require continuous effort to maintain trust and engagement

P8: Our CSR efforts have enhanced customer relationships significantly, as consumers today increasingly value ethical practices and sustainability

P9: While CSR initiatives have improved some relationships, such as with employees, others, like investors, remain focused on profitability rather than social responsibility.

P10: CSR has enhanced our relationships with specific stakeholders, like local communities and NGOs, but has had little impact on other groups such as shareholders or suppliers

The findings indicate that CSR plays a significant role in providing Ghanaian SMEs with a competitive advantage by enhancing corporate reputation and fostering stakeholder relationships. **Customer loyalty** was identified as the most impactful benefit, followed by **brand differentiation** and **market trust**. These findings are supported by Nguyen-Viet (2023), who argues that CSR initiatives enhance brand equity, particularly in emerging

markets, by aligning with the values of socially conscious consumers. This alignment fosters loyalty and differentiation, giving SMEs a competitive edge. Similarly, Amoako et al. (2022) highlight that CSR contributes to stakeholder trust and satisfaction, both of which are essential for long-term business sustainability and competitiveness.

The study's findings also align with Bolton et al. (2022), who emphasize that CSR is increasingly becoming a strategic tool for creating competitive differentiation in crowded markets. They argue that businesses that proactively adopt CSR can position themselves as leaders in ethical practices, thereby attracting customers, investors, and business partners. This is particularly relevant for SMEs, which can leverage their agility to quickly adapt CSR initiatives to emerging market trends.

However, the study also found that the competitive benefits of CSR are not evenly distributed, with challenges such as resource constraints limiting the ability of some SMEs to fully capitalize on CSR-driven advantages. Trivedi et al. (2020) agree with this limitation, noting that while CSR can enhance competitiveness, SMEs often struggle to sustain such initiatives due to financial and operational constraints. They argue that without consistent investment and strategic alignment, the competitive advantages of CSR may remain underutilized.

On the contrary, Pomeroy (2019) highlights examples of SMEs that have successfully overcome these barriers by focusing on localized, community-driven CSR programs. He contends that SMEs can achieve significant reputational gains and stakeholder loyalty by adopting CSR initiatives that resonate with local values and address specific community needs, even with limited resources.

While CSR is widely recognized as a driver of competitive advantage, its effectiveness for Ghanaian SMEs depends on overcoming barriers such as resource constraints and aligning initiatives with market expectations. SMEs can create sustainable competitive advantages, even

in resource-constrained settings by leveraging CSR to build stakeholder trust, enhance reputation, and differentiate themselves.

4.3 Chapter Summary

Chapter Four presented a detailed analysis and discussion of the findings, focusing on the integration of CSR into the strategic planning of Ghanaian SMEs, the motivations and challenges faced, and the role of CSR in achieving competitive advantage. The analysis found out that while CSR is increasingly embedded into business strategies, its implementation is often influenced by stakeholder relationships and long-term business goals. Motivations for CSR adoption were largely driven by corporate image and stakeholder engagement, with resource constraints and difficulties in stakeholder management emerging as significant challenges. Furthermore, CSR was shown to enhance competitiveness primarily through customer loyalty, brand differentiation, and market trust. The discussion contextualized these findings within the existing literature, identifying both areas of agreement and divergence with recent studies.

The next chapter provides a comprehensive summary of the key findings from the study, highlighting the integration of CSR into the strategic planning of Ghanaian SMEs, the motivations and challenges faced in adopting CSR, and the role of CSR in achieving competitive advantage. The chapter will conclude with actionable recommendations to enhance CSR adoption and effectiveness within SMEs. Furthermore, the study's limitations are discussed in the next chapter, offering insights into constraints that may have influenced the findings. Finally, the chapter transitions to identify areas for future research, encouraging further exploration into the evolving dynamics of CSR within SMEs in emerging markets.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY OF MAJOR FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND CONCLUSION

5.0 Introduction

This chapter concludes the study by summarizing the key findings, drawing conclusions based on the research objectives, and providing actionable recommendations for enhancing CSR adoption among SMEs in Ghana. It also addresses the study's limitations and identifies areas for future research, offering insights into how CSR practices can be further explored and improved in emerging market contexts.

5.1 Summary of Key Findings

The study found that CSR is increasingly integrated into the strategic planning of Ghanaian SMEs, with a primary focus on stakeholder relationships and long-term business goals, although the extent of integration varies across businesses. The motivations driving CSR adoption are predominantly the enhancement of corporate image and stakeholder engagement, with long-term profitability playing a lesser role.

However, significant challenges hinder CSR implementation, with resource constraints, such as financial and human capital limitations, emerging as the most critical barrier. SMEs also face difficulties in managing diverse stakeholder expectations and measuring the tangible impacts of their CSR initiatives.

Despite these challenges, CSR contributes to competitive advantage by fostering customer loyalty, brand differentiation, and market trust. Overall, the findings highlight the strategic importance of CSR for Ghanaian SMEs while emphasizing the need for greater resource support and alignment with stakeholder expectations to maximize its impact.

5.2 How the Study Answered the Research Questions

This study addressed key questions regarding the integration, motivations, challenges, and impact of CSR programs in Ghanaian SMEs. The findings provide insights into each research question as outlined below;

Research Question 1: How are CSR programs integrated into the corporate strategies of SMEs in Ghana?

The study found that CSR is increasingly embedded into the strategic planning of SMEs, primarily through stakeholder relationships and long-term business goals. Many SMEs align their CSR initiatives with business objectives to enhance their social impact while maintaining financial sustainability. However, the level of integration varies, with some SMEs adopting a structured CSR approach, while others engage in ad-hoc initiatives influenced by external pressures. This aligns with the Stakeholder Theory, which emphasizes balancing business goals with stakeholder expectations (Amoako et al., 2022). Despite the growing recognition of CSR's strategic value, limited financial and human resources hinder full-scale integration, as noted by Trivedi et al. (2020).

Research Question 2: What motivates Ghanaian SMEs to adopt CSR programs, and what challenges do they encounter?

The study found that enhancing corporate image and fostering stakeholder relationships are the primary motivations for CSR adoption, while long-term profitability plays a secondary role. This supports the Legitimacy Theory, which suggests that businesses engage in CSR to maintain their social license to operate (Nguyen-Viet, 2023). However, significant challenges hinder CSR adoption, with resource constraints emerging as the most critical barrier. Many SMEs struggle with financial limitations, lack of expertise, and difficulties in managing diverse stakeholder expectations. Additionally, measuring the tangible impact of CSR initiatives remains a challenge. These findings align with Trivedi et al. (2020), who argue that while SMEs recognize the benefits of CSR, they cannot often sustain meaningful initiatives.

Research Question 3: In what ways can CSR programs contribute to competitive advantage and enhancement of corporate reputation and stakeholder relationships for SMEs in Ghana?

The study found that CSR significantly enhances competitive advantage by strengthening customer loyalty, brand differentiation, and market trust. SMEs that align their CSR initiatives with stakeholder needs gain a competitive edge, as customers increasingly favor businesses with strong ethical commitments. This finding supports the Resource-Based View (RBV), which highlights CSR as an intangible asset that enhances business performance (Bolton et al., 2022). However, while CSR has the potential to drive competitive advantage, SMEs with limited resources may struggle to fully capitalize on these benefits. Pomeroy (2019) argues that even resource-constrained SMEs can leverage localized, community-driven CSR programs to build strong stakeholder relationships and enhance brand reputation.

5.3 Limitations of the Study

While this study provides valuable insights into the integration of CSR by SMEs in Ghana, several limitations should be acknowledged. Firstly, the study relied on a relatively small sample size, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to all SMEs in Ghana (Qu, and Pei, 2024).

Secondly, the research adopted a cross-sectional design, capturing data at a single point in time, which restricts the ability to assess the long-term impacts and evolution of CSR practices (Taris et al, 2021). Thirdly, the focus on qualitative and descriptive analysis, while rich in detail, does not provide in-depth statistical validation of the relationships between variables. Additionally, the study's reliance on self-reported data from respondents may introduce biases, such as social desirability bias, where participants provide responses they perceive as favorable (Kunisch et al, 2018). Lastly, the study primarily examined the internal perspectives of SMEs and did not include extensive input from external stakeholders such as customers, communities, or regulators, which could provide a more holistic view of CSR's impact (Marques et al, 2020). These limitations highlight the need for further research to address these gaps and build on the findings of this study.

5.4 How the Study Has Contributed to Knowledge

This study makes significant contributions to the understanding of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives by Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in Ghana, enriching the existing body of knowledge in several key ways.

Firstly, it provides empirical evidence on the extent to which CSR is integrated into the strategic planning of Ghanaian SMEs. By highlighting the prioritization of stakeholder relationships and long-term business goals, the study confirms the applicability of Stakeholder Theory in the Ghanaian SME context. This aligns with existing literature, such as Amoako et

al. (2022), while offering localized insights that deepen the understanding of CSR integration in emerging markets.

Secondly, the study sheds light on the unique motivations driving CSR adoption among Ghanaian SMEs, particularly the emphasis on enhancing corporate image and stakeholder engagement. These findings expand the discussion in previous studies (e.g., Nguyen-Viet, 2023), adding a perspective that emphasizes the strategic importance of reputation-building in resource-constrained environments.

The study also identifies key challenges that Ghanaian SMEs face in implementing CSR, such as resource limitations and difficulties in stakeholder management. The research contributes to a nuanced understanding of the constraints that shape CSR practices in SMEs. These insights complement the findings of Trivedi et al. (2020) while emphasizing the need for targeted interventions to support SMEs in overcoming these challenges.

Lastly, the study underscores the role of CSR in achieving competitive advantage, particularly through customer loyalty, brand differentiation, and market trust. The findings extend the Resource-Based View (RBV) to the Ghanaian SME landscape, demonstrating how CSR serves as a valuable intangible asset if linked with CSR initiatives to tangible business benefits.

5.5 Recommendations

This section presents recommendations based on the study's findings to enhance the adoption and impact of CSR initiatives among SMEs in Ghana. The recommendations address key areas such as policy frameworks and future research directions, aiming to mitigate challenges like resource constraints and stakeholder management while maximizing the strategic benefits of CSR.

5.5.1 Policy

To enhance the integration and effectiveness of CSR initiatives among SMEs in Ghana, policymakers should develop targeted frameworks and incentives. These may include tax breaks or grants for SMEs that actively engage in CSR programs, especially those addressing critical areas such as education, environmental conservation, and community development. Government and industry associations should also establish training programs to build SME capacity for designing and implementing CSR strategies.

Additionally, policies should encourage partnerships between SMEs, larger corporations, and non-governmental organizations to share resources and expertise, mitigating the resource constraints identified in this study. Regulatory bodies should also ensure that CSR guidelines are aligned with both local development needs and international standards to promote consistent and impactful practices.

5.5.2 Areas for Future Research

Future research should explore the long-term impacts of CSR initiatives on SME performance, focusing on quantitative metrics such as profitability, market share, and employee retention. Comparative studies across different industries in Ghana could provide deeper insights into sector-specific challenges and opportunities in CSR adoption.

Additionally, research into the role of digital technologies in enhancing the efficiency and outreach of CSR initiatives would be valuable, particularly for resource-constrained SMEs. Longitudinal studies could track the evolution of CSR practices among Ghanaian SMEs, providing a clearer understanding of trends and the sustainability of these efforts over time.

Finally, exploring the perspectives of external stakeholders, such as customers, communities, and regulatory bodies, could offer a holistic view of the impact and perception of CSR initiatives.

5.6 Conclusion

This study explored the integration of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) into the strategic planning of Ghanaian SMEs, their motivations and challenges, and the role of CSR in achieving competitive advantage. The study found that while CSR is increasingly recognized as a strategic tool, its implementation is often constrained by resource limitations and stakeholder management challenges. Motivated by corporate image enhancement and stakeholder engagement, SMEs in Ghana leverage CSR to build trust, differentiate their brands, and strengthen customer loyalty. Despite these efforts, the study underscores the need for targeted support mechanisms, such as capacity-building programs and collaborative partnerships, to overcome barriers and maximize CSR's impact. By addressing these gaps, SMEs can enhance their contributions to societal development while achieving sustainable business growth. This research adds to the growing body of knowledge on CSR in emerging markets, providing practical insights and a foundation for future studies.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Adjei, D. S. (2012). Micro, Small and Medium Scale Enterprises in Ghana: Challenges and Prospects. A Case Study of Sekondi Takoradi Metropolis. Unpublished Master's thesis, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology.
- Amoako, G. K., Dzogbenuku, R. K., Doe, J., & Adjaison, G. K. (2022). Green marketing and the SDGs: Emerging market perspective. *Marketing Intelligence & Planning*, 40(3), 310-327.
- Mensah, M. (2021). Corporate social responsibility in contemporary Ghana: A literature Review. *International Journal of Business and Management Review*, 9(5), 78-93.
- Bolton, R. N. (2022). The convergence of sustainability and marketing: Transforming marketing to respond to a new world. *Australasian Marketing Journal*, 30(2), 107-112.
- Branco, M. C., & Rodrigues, L. L. (2007). Positioning Stakeholder Theory within the Debate on Corporate Social Responsibility *EJBO Electronic Journal of Business Ethics and Organization Studies*, 12.

- Burke, L. A., & Logsdon, J. M. (1996). How Corporate Social Responsibility Pays Off. *Long Range Planning*, 29(4), 495–502.
- Cezarino, L. O., Liboni, L. B., Hunter, T., Pacheco, L. M., & Martins, F. P. (2022). Corporate social responsibility in emerging markets: Opportunities and challenges for sustainability integration. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 362, 132224.
- Clifton, D., & Amran, A. (2011). The Stakeholder Approach: A Sustainability Perspective, *Journal of Business Ethics*, 98(1), 121-136.
- Friedman, M. (1962). *Capitalism and Freedom*. University of Chicago Press.
- Khuong, M. N., Truong An, N. K., & Thanh Hang, T. T. (2021). Stakeholders and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programme as key sustainable development strategies to promote corporate reputation—evidence from vietnam. *Cogent Business & Management*, 8(1), 1917333.
- Kunisch, S., Menz, M., Bartunek, J. M., Cardinal, L. B., & Denyer, D. (2018). Feature topic at organizational research methods: How to conduct rigorous and impactful literature reviews. *Organizational Research Methods*, 21(3), 519-523.
- Le, T. T., Tran, P. Q., Lam, N. P., Tra, M. N. L., & Uyen, P. H. P. (2024). Corporate social responsibility, green innovation, environment strategy and corporate sustainable development. *Operations Management Research*, 17(1), 114-134.
- Marques, P., Bernardo, M., Presas, P., & Simon, A. (2020). Corporate social responsibility in a local subsidiary: internal and external stakeholders' power. *EuroMed Journal of Business*, 15(3), 377-393.
- Nguyen-Viet, B. (2023). The impact of green marketing mix elements on green customer-based brand equity in an emerging market. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Business Administration*, 15(1), 96-116.

- Oduro, S., Bruno, L., & Maccario, G. (2024). Corporate social responsibility (CSR) in SMEs: what we know, what we don't know, and what we should know. *Journal of Small Business & Entrepreneurship*, 36(2), 207-238.
- Opoku Marfo, E. (2024). Mechanisms and initiatives of corporate social responsibility behaviours in Ghana: a co-integration approach. *Cogent Business & Management*, 11(1), 2312580.
- Pomering, A. (2019). Marketing for sustainability: Extending the conceptualization of the marketing mix to drive value for individuals and society at large. *Australasian Marketing Journal*, 25(2), 157-165.
- Ratnawati, Soetjipto, B. E., Murwani, F. D., & Wahyono, H. (2018). The role of SMEs' innovation and learning orientation in mediating the effect of CSR programme on SMEs' performance and competitive advantage. *Global Business Review*, 19, S21-S38.
- Santos, M. (2011). CSR in SMEs: strategies, practices, motivations and obstacles. *Social Responsibility Journal*, 7(3), 490-508.
- Siregar, I. (2021). CSR-based corporate environmental policy implementation. *British Journal of Environmental Studies*, 1(1), 51-57.
- Stoian, C., & Gilman, M. (2017). Corporate social responsibility that "pays": A strategic approach to CSR for SMEs. *Journal of Small Business Management*, 55(1), 5-31.
- Taris, T. W., Kessler, S. R., & Kelloway, E. K. (2021). Strategies addressing the limitations of cross-sectional designs in occupational health psychology: What they are good for (and what not). *Work & Stress*, 35(1), 1-5.

APPENDIX 1

INTERVIEW GUIDE

TOPIC

CORPORATE STRATEGY, CSR PROGRAMMES AND THEIR ACCEPTANCE BY SMALL AND MEDIUM ENTERPRISES (SMEs) IN GHANA

Dear respondent, I am a researcher conducting research on the integration of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives into the corporate strategies of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) and their acceptability thereof in Ghana (the above subject- matter). Your participation is invaluable, and I assure you that all responses will be treated with the utmost confidentiality and used solely for research purposes. I greatly appreciate your honest and thoughtful input. Thank you.

SECTION A (AWARENESS, PERCEPTION AND INTEGRATION OF CSR IN DUTYLEX)

1. How does your organization define its CSR priorities within the strategic planning process?
2. How far does the incorporation of the CSR programmes into the strategic plan help in their implementation?
3. What specific CSR initiatives are included in your corporate policies and practices?
4. Do you believe that SMEs have a significant role in addressing societal and environmental issues?

SECTION B (MOTIVATIONS AND CHALLENGES IN ADOPTING CSR IN DUTYLEX)

- 1) What motivates your company to embark on CSR programmes and implement them successfully or otherwise?
- 2) What support or resources would help your organization enhance its CSR efforts?
- 3) What challenges does the company face in implementing the CSR programmes?
- 4) Do external pressures influence your CSR adoption decisions?

SECTION C (COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE OF CSR IN DUTYLEX)

1. How has CSR influenced your company's reputation within the industry?
2. Do you believe CSR initiatives have enhanced your stakeholder relationships?
3. How do you think your CSR programmes enhances your stakeholder relations and/or, your corporate reputation, and eventually give you competitive advantage?
4. Have you observed any measurable business benefits as a result of your CSR activities?

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME