

UNIVERSITY OF MEDIA, ARTS AND COMMUNICATION



**CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY COMMUNICATION AS A
STRATEGIC TOOL FOR BRAND POSITIONING IN PUBLIC SERVICE
MEDIA: EVIDENCE FROM GHANA BROADCASTING CORPORATION**

BY

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DECLARATION

Candidate's Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of my own original research and that no part of it has been presented for another degree in this university or elsewhere.


Candidate's Signature:


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Supervisor's Declaration

I hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of the thesis were supervised in accordance with the guidelines on supervision of thesis laid down by the University of Media and Communication Studies.

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ABSTRACT

Background

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has evolved into a strategic branding tool, particularly in the media industry where credibility is paramount. Despite growing CSR adoption among Ghanaian media organizations, empirical understanding of how these initiatives are communicated and their impact on brand outcomes remains limited.

Aim

This study examined how CSR communication by the Ghana Broadcasting Corporation (GBC) influences its brand positioning through perceived legitimacy, brand trust, and brand image.

Methodology

Grounded in Legitimacy Theory, the research employed a quantitative cross-sectional design with 411 respondents from Greater Accra Region recruited through convenience sampling via online survey. Data analysis employed descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, multiple regression, and mediation analysis using SPSS version 26.

Results

GBC's CSR communication was infrequent, with 47.2% of respondents rarely encountering it. Facebook (44.0%) and X/Twitter (30.2%) were dominant channels, while public health campaigns (45.2%) and education initiatives (30.4%) constituted primary themes. Audience perceptions were moderate across all constructs (mean scores: 3.04–3.49). Brand trust scored highest ($M = 3.49$), while CSR communication scored lowest ($M = 3.04$). Regression analysis showed CSR communication significantly predicted brand positioning ($B = 0.587$, $\beta = 0.721$, $p < .001$), explaining 61% of variance. However, perceived legitimacy, trust, and brand image did not significantly mediate this relationship, indicating a direct rather than indirect influence.

Conclusions

While CSR communication powerfully influences brand positioning, its effectiveness is constrained by limited frequency, inconsistent messaging, and insufficient demonstration of tangible impact. High prevalence of neutral responses indicates audience uncertainty, suggesting GBC's CSR efforts are visible but unconvincing. To leverage CSR's strategic potential, GBC must institutionalize consistent, transparent, outcome-oriented reporting that demonstrates measurable social impact aligned with community values.

Contributions and Recommendations

This study contributes empirical insights on CSR communication in African public service media. Recommendations include establishing formal CSR reporting frameworks, integrating CSR narratives into mainstream programming, enhancing digital engagement strategies, and developing regulatory guidelines for transparency and accountability in public broadcasting.

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my husband, Richard Ofori Appiah whose wisdom and guidance continue to inspire my journey, and to my children, whose unwavering support, encouragement, and patience sustained me throughout this academic pursuit. To my family and loved ones who have stood by me in countless ways, this achievement is as much yours as it is mine.

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List of Abbreviations

CSR:	Corporate Social Responsibility
GBC:	Ghana Broadcasting Corporation
SPSS:	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
IV:	Independent Variable
DV:	Dependent Variable
NMC:	National Media Commission

1.0 CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

1.2 Problem Statement

Extensive academic and industry literature affirms that effective CSR communication can positively influence Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has transitioned from a voluntary philanthropic initiative into a critical component of strategic business operations across industries. Traditionally associated with sectors like manufacturing, extractive, and finance, CSR has recently gained prominence in sectors where public perception and stakeholder engagement are central, such as the media industry. Globally, leading media organizations like the BBC, CNN, and Al Jazeera have integrated CSR into their operations, recognizing its potential as a tool for strategic brand differentiation, enhanced public trust, and long-term stakeholder loyalty (Jain et al., 2021).

The increasing demand for corporate transparency, ethical conduct, and social impact has made CSR an important metric by which the public evaluates organizational legitimacy. In the media landscape, where trust, objectivity, and credibility are core to audience engagement, CSR initiatives not only fulfill moral obligations but also reinforce the media organization's brand identity. In this context, CSR communication has evolved into a strategic function, deliberately curated and disseminated through various channels to

reflect a company's commitment to societal good while simultaneously enhancing its corporate image (Ahn et al., 2018).

In Ghana, the media sector has undergone a profound transformation in recent decades, fueled by democratic reforms, liberalization of the airwaves, increased access to digital technology, and growing public expectations. These developments have positioned media institutions such as the Ghana Broadcasting Corporation (GBC), Citi FM, and Graphic Communications Group as influential stakeholders in national development. In response, many have adopted CSR practices aimed at contributing to sectors such as education, healthcare, environmental protection, youth empowerment, and public welfare.

However, unlike traditional firms that rely on the media to publicize their CSR efforts, media organizations occupy a dual role: they are both disseminators and originators of CSR. This dual role introduces complex communication dynamics. On one hand, media firms can leverage their platforms to amplify social campaigns, influence national discourse, and enhance their social relevance. On the other hand, they must carefully manage the tension between self-promotion and journalistic integrity. CSR messages perceived as insincere, over-commercialized, or inconsistent with a media house's editorial voice may backfire, inviting criticism and diminishing credibility (Appiah et al., 2020).

Moreover, in Ghana's culturally rich and communally oriented society, CSR efforts that align with national development goals and resonate with community values tend to garner greater public approval. Initiatives perceived as elitist or disconnected from grassroots needs may fail to achieve their objectives. As such, media firms must not only design

relevant CSR programs but also communicate them in culturally appropriate and context-sensitive ways.

stakeholder perceptions, enhance corporate image, and drive consumer loyalty. However, much of this work has been centered on sectors such as manufacturing, banking, and multinational corporations, with relatively limited attention given to media firms, especially in Sub-Saharan Africa.

While there is evidence that Ghanaian media firms are actively involved in CSR, there remains a dearth of empirical understanding concerning how these activities are communicated and integrated into broader brand strategies. Media firms such as GBC often execute community development programs, health education campaigns, or youth empowerment initiatives. However, many of these efforts are sporadic and lack structured communication frameworks, measurable outcomes, and audience feedback mechanisms (Agyemang & Ansong, 2017).

Moreover, the competitive and fragmented nature of Ghana's media environment has compelled organizations to adopt various branding strategies to retain audience loyalty and advertising revenue (Karikari, 2020; Tettey & Puplampu, 2021). CSR communication represents a potentially powerful yet underutilized strategy. Unlike traditional companies, media firms must balance self-promotion with the public's expectation of neutrality and social responsibility (Asante & Agyekum, 2022). Inconsistent, vague, or overly promotional CSR messages may be perceived as disingenuous or self-serving, thus undermining their intended purpose (Sarpong & Frempong, 2019).

Additionally, the media sector's credibility is tied closely to its perceived impartiality and integrity. Overemphasis on CSR narratives without evidence of impact or community alignment could invite criticism or public skepticism (Ofori & Anlesinya, 2020). This issue is compounded by the proliferation of digital platforms where misinformation and public sentiment can spread rapidly (Obeng & Adu-Kumi, 2021).

Furthermore, Ghana's unique sociocultural context emphasizes values such as communalism, reciprocity, and moral obligation. Therefore, CSR messages that fail to align with these cultural expectations risk being ineffective (Mensah & Frempong, 2018). There is thus a pressing need to investigate how Ghanaian media organizations tailor CSR communication to resonate with local values while maintaining global branding standards.

This study responds to these gaps by evaluating the CSR communication strategies employed by the Ghana Broadcasting Corporation and assessing their effectiveness in shaping brand identity, trust, and loyalty among consumers.

1.3 Aim and Objectives of the Study

1.3.a Aim:

To evaluate how CSR communication by the Ghana Broadcasting Corporation contributes to its brand positioning through perceived legitimacy, brand trust, and brand image.

1.3.b. Research Objectives:

- To examine the frequency and nature of CSR communication by GBC.
- To assess audience perceptions of the legitimacy of GBC's CSR initiatives as well as its brand trust, image and positioning.
- To examine the relationship between GCB's CSR communication and its brand positioning.
- To examine whether perceived legitimacy, trust, and brand image mediated the relationship between GCB's CSR communication and its brand positioning.

1.4 Research Questions

- What is the frequency and nature of CSR initiatives communication by GBC?
- How do audiences rate the communication, perceived legitimacy, brand trust, image and positioning of GBC's CSR initiatives?
- Does GCB's CSR communication have influence on its brand positioning?
- Does GCB's audience's perceived legitimacy, trust, and image mediate the relationship between CSR communication and brand positioning?

1.5 Significance of the Study

This study contributes to literature on CSR communication as a strategic brand positioning tool sector and geographical context. It provides empirical insights into how CSR messages influence legitimacy, trust, image, and brand positioning within the Ghanaian media industry. The study offers valuable insights for media executives, brand managers, and communication strategists who seek to enhance organizational image through socially responsible messaging. The findings will inform CSR communication strategy

development and implementation among media practitioners, marketers, and policy stakeholders. Moreover, the findings can inform CSR policy development within media regulatory frameworks in Ghana.

1.6 Scope of the Study

The study is limited to Ghana Broadcasting Corporation in Ghana. It draws data solely from external consumers, assessing how CSR communication shapes audience perception and contributes to brand positioning outcomes within Ghana's unique media and cultural context. While the study draws from global literature, its primary focus is on CSR communication within the Ghanaian socio-cultural and media environment.

1.7 Organization of the Study

This study is organized into five chapters. Chapter One presents the introduction, background, research problem, objectives, and significance. Chapter Two provides a literature review covering key theories, global and local empirical studies, and conceptual models. Chapter Three details the research methodology. Chapter Four presents the data analysis and findings, and Chapter Five concludes with discussions, recommendations, and suggestions for future research.

2.0 CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter explores scholarly perspectives on CSR communication and its role in strategic brand positioning. It begins by conceptualizing CSR and then reviews communication strategies, theoretical underpinnings, and empirical studies relevant to both global and Ghanaian media contexts. The chapter concludes with a conceptual framework guiding this study.

2.2 Overview of the Ghana Broadcasting Corporation (GBC)

The Ghana Broadcasting Corporation (GBC) is the state-owned public broadcaster of Ghana. It was first established in 1935 as Station ZOY by the colonial administration and is considered the oldest broadcasting institution in Ghana (GBC, 2020). Following Ghana's independence in 1957, it was rebranded and became a key player in the nation's public communication system.

2.2.1 Mandate and Vision of the Ghana Broadcasting Corporation

GBC's statutory role is to inform, educate, and entertain the Ghanaian public, promoting national development, cultural heritage, and democratic values (National Media Commission, 2016). The broadcaster aims to be a first-class media institution, reflecting the country's diverse values and providing unbiased information to the public.

2.2.2 Services and Channels

2.2.2.1 Television

GBC operates several national and thematic television channels including:

- GTV (Ghana Television) – Its flagship channel, focused on general programming including news, current affairs, and cultural shows.
- GTV Sports+ – Dedicated to sports coverage.
- GTV Life – Focuses on religion, lifestyle, and social issues.
- GBC News – A 24-hour news channel.
- GTV Govern – Provides live coverage of parliamentary proceedings and government activities.

2.2.2.2 Radio

GBC also manages several radio stations:

- Uniiq FM – An English-language national radio station offering news, music, and talk shows.
- Radio Ghana – Broadcasting in multiple Ghanaian languages.
- Regional stations such as Volta Star (Ho), Radio Central (Cape Coast), and Garden City Radio (Kumasi), serving regional audiences with localized content (GBC, 2020).

2.2.3 Digital and Online Presence

GBC has expanded its digital footprint with online streaming via www.gbcghanaonline.com, social media platforms, and mobile apps, making its content more accessible to younger and diaspora audiences (GBC, 2022).

2.2.4 Funding and Governance

The corporation receives funding through:

- Government subventions
- TV license fees (currently suspended due to public and legal controversies)
- Commercial revenue from advertising and sponsorships

GBC is supervised by a Board of Directors appointed by the President of Ghana, in consultation with the Council of State, with the National Media Commission playing a role in oversight (NMC, 2016). However, critics argue that stronger measures are needed to guarantee editorial independence (FES Ghana, 2019).

2.2.5 Challenges and Reforms

GBC faces several challenges:

- Underfunding and obsolete equipment
- Growing competition from private and digital media outlets
- Concerns over political influence and declining public trust

Recent reforms have focused on digital migration, enhancing editorial standards, and reviewing its governance and funding models to make GBC a more independent public service broadcaster, akin to global models like the BBC (FES Ghana, 2019; Ministry of Information, 2021).

2.3 Conceptualizing Corporate Social Responsibility

CSR is broadly understood as a company's commitment to contribute to sustainable economic development while improving the quality of life for its workforce, communities, and the broader society. Carroll's (1991) model, which categorizes CSR into economic, legal, ethical, and philanthropic responsibilities, remains foundational. Recent perspectives emphasize CSR as a strategic tool for generating shared value and competitive advantage (Porter & Kramer, 2011).

In media organizations, CSR often extends beyond financial donations to include public education campaigns, investigative journalism on social issues, disaster response efforts, and the promotion of national values. This broader scope reflects the media's unique role as both a social watchdog and a corporate entity. As societal expectations increase, CSR has shifted from being optional to a necessary strategy for maintaining public relevance, particularly in the digital media age.

2.4 CSR Communication Strategies

CSR communication encompasses the methods by which firms inform stakeholders about their social initiatives. Du et al., (2015), argue that effective CSR messaging should be transparent, credible, and aligned with organizational values. Communication platforms

include corporate websites, press releases, multimedia campaigns, community events, and social media.

Authenticity is critical to effective CSR communication. Audiences are increasingly skeptical of messages that appear insincere or overly commercialized (Ahn et al., 2018). For media organizations, which are already custodians of public trust, the stakes are higher. Poorly communicated CSR can damage a brand's credibility. Conversely, storytelling, real-time stakeholder engagement, and measurable outcomes can enhance message resonance and reinforce brand positioning.

Digital transformation has further changed CSR communication dynamics. Social media platforms allow real-time interaction, enabling companies to engage stakeholders directly and responsively. Visual storytelling through video, infographics, and user-generated content can amplify message impact. However, these platforms also necessitate careful reputation management, as feedback, both positive and negative, is instant and widely visible.

2.5 Organizational Branding and CSR

Organizational branding refers to the strategic process through which an institution communicates its identity, values, and purpose to internal and external stakeholders. In the context of media organizations such as GBC, institutional branding encompasses both the content they produce and the values they promote through corporate initiatives. CSR communication plays a vital role in shaping and reinforcing this organizational branding. Effective CSR initiatives that align with the core mission of a media organization can

enhance public trust, promote transparency, and build emotional connections with audiences (Agyemang & Ansong, 2017; Mensah & Frempong, 2019).

For GBC, whose mandate includes public service broadcasting and national development, CSR activities provide a platform to demonstrate alignment with societal needs. These initiatives, when well communicated, contribute to brand authenticity and strengthen GBC's positioning as a socially responsible, community-oriented institution (Boateng & Abdulai, 2017). Institutional branding through CSR can also influence the internal culture by fostering pride and shared purpose among employees (Amoako, 2021). Thus, exploring the intersection of CSR communication and institutional branding was critical to understanding GBC's holistic brand strategy.

2.6 CSR as a Strategic Brand Positioning Tool

Brand positioning involves creating a distinct and favorable image of a brand in the minds of stakeholders. CSR contributes by associating the brand with socially desirable attributes such as empathy, integrity, and responsibility. Studies show that CSR-oriented brands are more likely to attract loyal consumers, command public trust, and foster advocacy (Lee & Shin, 2020).

When CSR is aligned with core brand values and communicated consistently, it helps form a compelling brand narrative. This is particularly important in media, where trust and credibility are intangible assets. Effective positioning through CSR can also mitigate reputational risk, differentiate brands, and enable long-term stakeholder relationships.

2.7 CSR in the Media Industry

Media organizations worldwide have increasingly embraced Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) as a means to demonstrate social commitment and enhance brand credibility. Unlike firms in manufacturing or finance, media houses possess the unique capacity to amplify their CSR initiatives through their own content platforms, enabling broader reach and influence (Sarikakis & Winter, 2017). CSR initiatives in the media industry typically encompass a wide array of activities, including but not limited to educational programming, environmental advocacy, health campaigns, disaster relief, and youth development projects.

Globally, organizations such as the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) have integrated CSR into public service mandates, promoting diversity, environmental sustainability, and media literacy (BBC Annual Report, 2022). Similarly, Al Jazeera's Public Liberties and Human Rights division reflects the network's commitment to global human rights, media freedom, and social justice reporting through dedicated content, advocacy programming, and partnerships with civil society (Al Jazeera Media Network, 2021). In parallel, CNN's Impact Your World platform enables viewers to engage directly with featured causes and non-profit organizations, highlighting participatory storytelling as a mechanism for social change (CNN, 2022).

In Africa, and particularly in Ghana, the trend is gradually gaining traction. The Ghana Broadcasting Corporation (GBC), for instance, has been involved in CSR initiatives such as public health education, national clean-up campaigns, road safety awareness, and electoral sensitization programs. These activities, while socially impactful, also serve to

reaffirm GBC's brand as a public service broadcaster committed to national development (Mensah & Frempong, 2019; Osei-Tutu & Anokye, 2021).

However, media CSR in Ghana remains largely undocumented in academic literature. Most available information is either anecdotal or presented in internal reports without systematic evaluation of the communication strategy or brand impact. This lack of formal analysis undermines the potential strategic value of CSR in Ghanaian media branding.

Research by Amoako and Dartey-Baah (2020), emphasizes that CSR communication in the Ghanaian media sector often lacks consistency, planning, and alignment with overarching corporate strategies. Moreover, initiatives are frequently reactive rather than proactive, with limited integration of stakeholder feedback or metrics for success. This situation reflects a broader challenge in Sub-Saharan Africa where CSR in media is still viewed as an ancillary activity rather than a strategic imperative. Other challenges include maintaining journalistic credibility while promoting self-initiated CSR. There is also limited evaluation of the impact of these CSR activities on brand outcomes. Addressing these challenges requires strategic alignment of CSR goals with brand identity and consistent stakeholder engagement.

Recent studies have advocated for the incorporation of digital media tools into CSR communication, especially in the wake of increasing internet penetration and mobile technology use in Ghana (Ofori & Anlesinya, 2020). Social media platforms offer an opportunity for interactive, real-time engagement with audiences, enabling media firms to not only share CSR content but also to gather audience responses and promote co-creation of impact.

Ultimately, CSR initiatives in the media must go beyond token gestures and be rooted in long-term partnerships with communities. When executed authentically and communicated effectively, such efforts can significantly enhance brand trust, deepen audience loyalty, and reinforce the media house's role as a socially responsible institution. Challenges include maintaining journalistic credibility while promoting self-initiated CSR. There is also limited evaluation of the impact of these CSR activities on brand outcomes. Addressing these challenges requires strategic alignment of CSR goals with brand identity and consistent stakeholder engagement.

2.8 Empirical Review

2.8.1 Global Empirical Insights

Numerous global studies underscore the positive impact of CSR communication on brand equity, consumer trust, and organizational reputation. For example, Du et al., (2010), emphasized that well-structured CSR messaging can significantly influence customer loyalty and purchase intentions when such messages are authentic, relevant, and emotionally resonant. Similarly, a study by Zhang & Swanson (2020) found that CSR transparency on digital platforms correlates positively with stakeholder trust and advocacy behavior across North American and European media firms.

Furthermore, research by Wirth et al., (2016), demonstrated that CSR communication embedded in storytelling and co-creation (involving users in shaping narratives) enhances engagement levels and brand recall. These studies suggest that CSR is not merely an add-

on activity but a strategic tool when properly integrated with brand messaging and supported by clear, consistent communication.

In the media industry specifically, Kim and Ferguson (2019) found that CSR initiatives that align with editorial missions, such as public education, health awareness, or sustainability journalism, tend to generate stronger audience loyalty and reinforce perceptions of media credibility. Recent trends, including multimedia engagement (videos, live streams, and interactive polls), have also been shown to increase CSR impact (Nguyen et al., 2021).

2.8.2 Ghanaian Context

In Ghana, the growing emphasis on ethical leadership and community development has increased attention on CSR in the media sector. Appiah et al., (2020) studied the CSR reporting habits of Ghanaian media firms and observed a tendency to prioritize coverage of external CSR (those of other firms) over internal initiatives. The lack of structured CSR communication strategies within media organizations themselves was identified as a gap.

Asamoah et al., (2019), explored CSR implementation in selected media organizations and found that while audience engagement was relatively high, there was little emphasis on monitoring and evaluation of CSR communication effectiveness. In a more recent study, Owusu-Antwi and Antwi (2022), highlighted the importance of aligning CSR content with local cultural values, noting that CSR initiatives anchored in communal themes (e.g., education, health, and local development) resonated better with Ghanaian audiences.

Additionally, Mensah and Frempong (2021), conducted a comparative study between private and public media CSR approaches in Ghana. They found that private media tended to align CSR initiatives more closely with branding objectives, while public media institutions emphasized state-mandated service missions. However, both groups lacked comprehensive feedback mechanisms or long-term impact evaluations.

These empirical insights reveal a growing but fragmented CSR landscape in Ghana's media industry, emphasizing the need for strategic communication frameworks and culturally contextualized branding efforts.

2.9 Theoretical Framework: Legitimacy Theory

This research is grounded in the Legitimacy Theory, which provides a useful perspective for understanding how public organizations like the Ghana Broadcasting Corporation (GBC) use Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) to align itself with public expectations. At its core, Legitimacy Theory proposes that an organization's long-term survival depends on society's perception that its actions are appropriate, desirable, and aligned with shared norms and values (Suchman, 1995, Tilling & Tilt, 2010). For media organizations, especially public broadcasters like GBC, legitimacy is not static; it must be constantly negotiated through consistent, transparent, and socially responsive communication. This aligns with the view of Deephouse et al. (2017), who argued that legitimacy is a dynamic resource influenced by external evaluations and internal strategic communication.

Maintaining legitimacy goes beyond fulfilling operational mandates. It involves actively demonstrating social responsibility in ways that reflect cultural, ethical, and developmental

priorities. For GBC, engaging in CSR initiatives such as public education campaigns or health advocacy can be seen as a strategic way to show alignment with national goals and community values.

Importantly, CSR is not just about doing good; it is also about being seen to be doing good in a way that feels credible and authentic to stakeholders. Research has shown that when CSR is integrated into organizational communication and aligned with core values, it contributes positively to how audiences perceive an institution (Lindgreen & Swaen, 2010). If done well, it enhances legitimacy. If done poorly or perceived as insincere, it can damage public trust (Michelon et al., 2015).

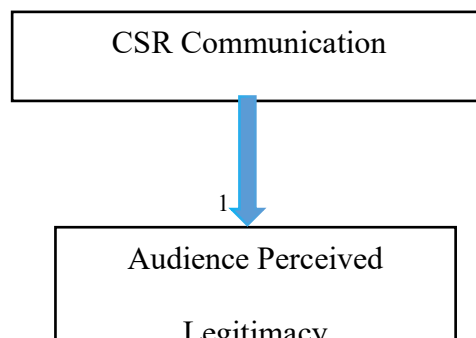
GBC's role as both a communicator and a corporate citizen places it in a unique position. Unlike private companies, it must carefully balance its CSR communication to maintain journalistic integrity while also promoting its contribution to society. Legitimacy Theory is therefore appropriate for this study as it supports the examination of how CSR initiatives and their communication impact GBC's public image, trustworthiness, loyalty and brand positioning.

2.10 Conceptual Framework

2.10.1 Introduction

The conceptual framework is grounded in the Legitimacy Theory and illustrates how CSR communication influences brand positioning through mediating constructs such as perceived legitimacy, brand trust, and brand image. The framework suggests that when CSR messages are transparent, consistent, and culturally relevant, they enhance perceptions of legitimacy. This perception includes the perceived authenticity, trustworthiness, and social resonance of CSR initiatives. Enhanced audience perception, in turn, boosts brand trust and strengthens brand image, reinforcing the organization's reputation for social responsibility. This in turn fosters trust in the organization, shapes a favorable brand image, and strengthens brand positioning. The framework also incorporates feedback loops, suggesting that improved brand positioning can lead to more receptive audiences and heightened responsiveness to future CSR communications. This cycle contributes to sustained brand equity and competitive advantage in the evolving Ghanaian media environment, particularly in the case of GBC, which operates in both traditional and digital platforms with diverse audience segments.

This is shown on figure 1.



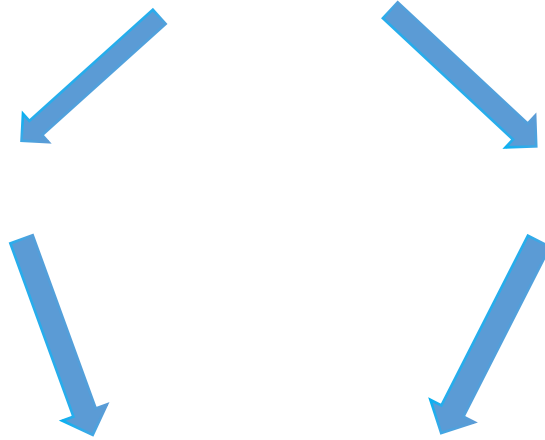


Fig. 2.a: Conceptual framework

2.10.2 Key Constructs

2.10.2.1 CSR Communication

This refers to how an organization plans, packages, and disseminates its CSR-related content (Du et al., 2015). Key elements include message clarity, consistency, transparency, frequency, and cultural relevance. Effective CSR communication avoids overly promotional language and focuses on authentic storytelling that demonstrates real impact and alignment with community needs.

2.10.2.2 Perceived Legitimacy

This reflects the extent to which stakeholders view the organization's CSR efforts as morally appropriate and aligned with societal expectations (Suchman, 1995; Reast et al., 2013). This includes stakeholders' interpretations of CSR messages, shaped by their personal values, prior experiences with the brand, and perceived sincerity of the initiatives. Components include perceived authenticity, emotional engagement, and cultural resonance (Reast et al., 2013). When CSR initiatives reflect local values and are seen as beneficial to the community, audience perception becomes more favorable.

2.10.2.3 Brand Trust

Involves the confidence stakeholders have in the reliability, transparency, and ethical standards of a brand (Martinez & Rodriguez-del-Bosque, 2013). Trust is a critical precursor to loyalty and sustained engagement. CSR activities that are transparent, consistently implemented, and positively received help build and reinforce this trust.

2.10.2.4 Brand Image

Refers to stakeholders' perception of the organization's identity, including its values and social contribution (Fatma et al., 2015). This involves the mental picture or reputation held by consumers about the organization. CSR communication contributes to this by associating the brand with values like trustworthiness, empathy, and social consciousness. A strong brand image rooted in genuine CSR can differentiate media organizations in crowded markets.

2.10.2.5 Brand Positioning

This refers to the unique place a brand occupies in the consumer's mind relative to competitors, influenced by associations of credibility, responsibility, and community relevance (Chandler & Werther, 2014). Brand positioning reflects how the brand is distinguished in the minds of consumers compared to competitors. CSR, when effectively communicated and aligned with brand values, can position a media firm as socially responsible, credible, and community-focused, thereby driving long-term loyalty and differentiation.

2.11 Summary

This chapter reviewed literature on the strategic use of CSR communication in brand positioning. It highlighted the theoretical basis, communication methods, empirical findings, and contextual factors relevant to Ghanaian media. The chapter underscores the need for strategic, audience-centered, and culturally resonant CSR communication in enhancing brand identity and stakeholder engagement. The next chapter will describe the research design and methodology employed in this study.

3.0 CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the research design, population, sampling techniques, data collection instrument, and analysis methods employed in the study. It presents a quantitative methodology designed to measure the relationship between CSR communication by the Ghana Broadcasting Corporation (GBC) and key brand-related outcomes such as perceived legitimacy, brand trust, brand image, and brand positioning.

3.2 Study Design

A quantitative, cross-sectional study design was adopted for this study, which aimed at collecting and analyzing data from a structured questionnaire. The descriptive component assessed how CSR communication was practiced and perceived by audiences, while the explanatory aspect investigated causal relationships among CSR communication, perceived legitimacy, brand trust, brand image, and brand positioning.

3.3 Study Population

The population for this study consisted of regular audience of the Ghana Broadcasting Corporation (GBC) who reside in the Greater Accra Region. GBC has a substantial audience base in Accra, which includes radio listeners, television viewers, and users of its online platforms. As at 29th June 2025, GBC had 106,000 followers on X and over 10,000

followers on Instagram. The Facebook page of GBC had the most followers, with over 470,000 people following and 137,000 likes (GBC, 2025).

3.4 Sample size and Sampling

3.4.1 Sample size

The sample size was determined using Cochran's formula (Cochran, 1977) for proportions:

$$n_0 = (Z^2 \times p \times q) / e^2$$

Where:

n_0 = required sample size

Z = Z-score (1.96 for 95% confidence level)

p = estimated proportion of the population with the attribute of interest (0.5 assumed for maximum variability)

$q = 1 - p = (0.5)$

e = desired margin of error (0.05)

$$n = (1.96^2 \times 0.5 \times 0.5) / (0.05^2) = 384.16$$

A ten percent attrition was calculated and added to the sample;

$$384.16 \times (10/100) = 38.416$$

Total sample size = $384.16 + 38.416 = 422.58$

Total sample size ≈ 423

This was in line with recommendations for online survey-based social research and allows sufficient statistical power for multivariate analyses (Bartlett et al., 2001).

3.4.2 Sampling technique

Convenience sampling technique was employed for this study. This method was appropriate due to the use of an online Google Form survey, which relied on voluntary participation from respondents with internet access within Accra.

3.5 Data Collection

3.5.1 Instrument for data collection

A structured questionnaire developed based on validated scales adapted from prior CSR and branding research was used as the primary data collection instrument. The questionnaire, made up of closed-ended items measured on a five-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree), consisted of six main sections:

- Demographic Information (age, gender, education, region, and media consumption habits)
- CSR Communication (Du et al., 2015)
- Perceived Legitimacy (Reast et al., 2013)
- Brand Trust (Martinez & Rodriguez-del-Bosque, 2013)

- Brand Image (Fatma et al., 2015)
- Brand Positioning (Chandler & Werther, 2014)

The introductory section of the survey included an informed consent statement outlining the study purpose, confidentiality assurance, and voluntary nature of participation.

3.5.2 Data Collection Procedure

Data was collected primarily through an online survey using Google Forms, which enables efficient distribution and accessibility across diverse respondents within the Greater Accra Region. This method provided a cost-effective, flexible, and efficient way of reaching a wide audience, particularly within the urban and semi-urban areas of the Greater Accra Region. Google Forms was selected due to its accessibility on mobile devices and compatibility with low-data internet use, making it suitable for respondents with varying levels of digital access. The survey link was distributed primarily through independent community WhatsApp groups, facebook pages and personal networks within Greater Accra.

The survey link was distributed online primarily through platforms, including independent community WhatsApp groups, facebook pages, X and personal networks. These platforms were selected for their widespread use and high engagement among Ghanaians in urban centers. The survey link was manually shared across multiple WhatsApp groups, and snowballing was encouraged by asking initial respondents to share the link with peers. The survey was active for a three-week period, during which periodic reminders were sent to encourage participation.

Before proceeding to answer the questions, respondents were required to check a box, indicating they were 18 years and had consumed GBC media within the past 6 months. Data collected was monitored in real-time to identify and exclude incomplete or duplicate responses before analysis.

3.5.3 Inclusion criteria

Respondents 18 years or older, who resided in Greater Accra and have had exposure to GBC media content in the past six months were included in the study.

3.7 Data Analysis

Data collected from the online survey was analyzed using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) version 26. Data was initially cleaned and screened to eliminate incomplete or duplicate responses and identify any outliers or inconsistencies. After cleaning, the valid dataset comprised responses from 411 participants, giving a response rate of 97.2%.

Descriptive statistics including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations were computed for the demographic characteristics of respondents and to summarize responses to key variables related to CSR communication, perceived legitimacy, brand trust, brand image, and brand positioning. Inferential statistical methods were also used to examine the relationships among the variables. Pearson Product-Moment Correlation analysis was used to assess the strength and direction of associations between CSR communication and the other constructs within the conceptual framework such as audience perception of legitimacy, brand image, trust and positioning.

A multiple linear regression analysis was employed to determine the extent to which CSR communication predicted the dependent variables such as trust, legitimacy, image and positioning. Each model assessed how CSR communication, as well as mediating variables such as legitimacy and trust, explained variations in brand positioning. Furthermore, mediation analysis was conducted using the SPSS PROCESS macro (version 4.0). This helped evaluate the indirect effects of CSR communication on brand positioning through perceived legitimacy, brand trust, and brand image. Bootstrapping with 5,000 resamples was used to generate bias-corrected confidence intervals. Mediation was deemed statistically significant if the 95% confidence intervals did not contain zero.

All statistical tests were conducted at a 95% confidence level ($\alpha = 0.05$) with a significance level set at $p < 0.05$, and the results were presented using tables and charts for clarity. Findings from the analysis were interpreted in relation to the study's research questions and objectives, providing evidence-based insights into the role of CSR communication in influencing brand positioning through legitimacy-related mechanisms.

3.9 Ethical Considerations

The study adhered to all ethical standards for research involving human participants. Participation in the survey was entirely voluntary, and informed consent was obtained from all respondents before they proceeded to complete the questionnaire. The introductory section of the online form clearly outlined the purpose of the study, the nature of participation, and the assurance of confidentiality and anonymity.

Respondents were informed that they could decline to answer any question or withdraw from the survey at any point before submission without any negative consequences. No personally identifiable information was collected, and all responses were securely stored and used strictly for academic and research purposes.

Ethical clearance for the study was obtained from the appropriate institutional review board that is the Ethics in Academic Research of UNIMAC before data collection commenced. All procedures followed were in accordance with established ethical guidelines for social research, ensuring that participants' rights, dignity, and privacy were fully respected throughout the research process.

3.10 Summary

This chapter outlines the methodological procedures for examining the impact of CSR communication on brand positioning. It details the research design, sampling technique, data collection instruments, analysis plan, and ethical safeguards that guided the empirical investigation.

4.0 CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter provides the core empirical findings for this study and provides a detailed analysis and discussion of their significance. The results derived from the data analysis conducted will be systematically presented based on the various objectives for the study. The chapter will provide answers to each of the research questions that guided this study. Following a clear presentation of the key findings for each objective, the discussion of the results then follows. The discussion interprets these findings in light of established literature and the study's conceptual framework, directly addressing the research objectives. Ultimately, this chapter acts as the critical link between the data analysis (Chapter Three) and the final recommendations and conclusions (Chapter Five).

4.2 Socio-demographic characteristics of the study participants

There were more (68.4%) males than females (31.6%) in the study with just a little under half (48.2%) of the participants falling within the age range of 35 to 44 years. Similar numbers were within 18 to 24 and greater than 44 years. A greater number (68.1%) of the participants were married. Half (50.9%) of the participants had tertiary education, while only five (5) (1.2%) participants did not have any formal education. These information are presented in table 1.

Table 4.a: Socio-demographic characteristics of the participants- Field Data

Mean age \pm SD (years) = 35.9 \pm 9.6

Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
	n	%
Gender		
Male	281	68.4
Female	130	31.6
Age Group (years)		
18–24	62	15.1
25–34	87	21.2
35–44	198	48.2
>44	64	15.6
Marital Status		
Married	280	68.1
Single	131	31.9
Highest Educational Level		
None	5	1.2
Primary	52	12.7
Secondary (JHS,SHS,Vocational)	98	23.8
Tertiary	209	50.9
Postgraduate	50	11.4

4.3 Frequency and Nature of CSR Communication by GBC

As shown in Table 2, nearly half of the respondents (47.2%) reported that they rarely encountered CSR communication from GBC, while 20.7% indicated that they sometimes did. Smaller proportions stated that they were exposed to such communication often (15.6%) or very often (7.0%), whereas 9.5% reported never encountering CSR communication by GBC. In terms of communication channels, online platforms were the dominant sources of exposure. Facebook accounted for the highest proportion (44.0%), followed by X (Twitter) at 30.2% and television at 23.8%. Very few respondents cited the GBC's official website (2.0%), while none mentioned radio as a channel of CSR communication. With regard to the nature of CSR initiatives communicated, public health campaigns were the most frequently recognized (45.2%), followed by education and youth development programs (30.4%). Environmental sustainability and clean-up initiatives (24.8%) and road safety and disaster response campaigns (15.6%) were also reported but to a lesser extent.

These findings suggest that while GBC's CSR communication is visible online, particularly on social media, its frequency is generally low and concentrated around specific thematic areas such as health and education.

Table 4.b: Participants perception on Frequency nature of CSR Communication by GBC- Field Data

Variable	Frequency n	Percentage %
Frequency of CSR communication		
Very Often	29	7.0
Often	64	15.6
Sometimes	85	20.7
Rarely	194	47.2
Never	39	9.5
Channels of Exposure		
Radio	0	0.0
TV	98	23.8
Online-Facebook	181	44.1
Online- X (Twitter)	124	30.2
Online- Website	8	1.9
Nature of CSR communication		
Public health campaigns	186	45.2
Education and youth development	125	30.4
Environmental sustainability and clean-up campaigns	102	24.8
Road safety and disaster response	64	15.6

4.4 Audience Perceptions of GBC's CSR Communication and Brand Attributes

The descriptive statistics for the constructs (CSR Communication, Legitimacy, Trust, Image, and Brand Positioning) within the conceptual framework, measured on a 5-point Likert scale are presented in table 3. The analysis of mean (M) and standard deviation (SD) scores provides insight into the central tendency and variability of responses for each measured item.

Audience perceptions of GBC's CSR communication strategies are moderate, with mean scores ranging from 2.91 to 3.16. The highest-rated item is the use of multiple platforms (M = 3.16, SD = 0.89), suggesting a recognized multi-channel approach. However, providing regular updates received the lowest score (M = 2.91, SD = 0.81), indicating that communication consistency is an area for improvement. The moderate standard deviations across items (0.81–1.10) show a fair level of consensus among respondents.

Respondents perceive GBC's CSR initiatives as moderately legitimate, with means between 3.15 and 3.31. The item stating "*GBC is socially responsible in the eyes of the public*" scored highest (M = 3.31, SD = 0.99), though the relatively high SD suggests varied opinions. CSR actions being seen as "appropriate and expected" (M = 3.19, SD = 0.72) and alignment with societal norms (M = 3.15, SD = 0.91) also scored moderately. These results indicate that GBC's CSR efforts are perceived as legitimate, although perceptions are not overwhelmingly strong.

Trust emerges as the strongest construct, with the highest individual item mean in the dataset. The statement "*I trust GBC to act in the best interest of society*" received a mean

of 3.70 (SD = 0.94), indicating a solid foundation of public trust. The other trust items also scored in the moderate to high range (M = 3.33 to 3.45), though the SD for "*GBC is a reliable and dependable brand*" (1.01) reflects some divergence in audience confidence.

Perceptions of GBC's brand image in relation to CSR are modestly positive, with means from 3.05 to 3.31. The belief that "*GBC's social initiatives enhance its image*" scored highest (M = 3.31, SD = 0.78). However, the lower score for being seen as a "*socially conscious organization*" (M = 3.05, SD = 0.99) suggests that CSR activities are not yet fully translating into a strong, socially-driven brand identity for a significant portion of the audience.

Scores for brand positioning are mixed. GBC is most strongly perceived as "*a responsible media brand*" (M = 3.46, SD = 0.87). However, the notion that it stands out due to its social commitment scored lower (M = 3.11, SD = 0.82), and the impact of CSR on overall brand perception was moderate (M = 3.22, SD = 0.82). This indicates that while responsibility is acknowledged, CSR is not a dominant or distinctive factor in GBC's overall market positioning for many respondents.

Overall, the pattern of means, predominantly clustered in the low-to-mid 3s, indicates a landscape of neutral to moderately positive perceptions. Trust is the most robust asset, while the communication process itself and its direct impact on image and distinct positioning show room for strategic enhancement. The variability in responses (SDs) highlights that perceptions are not uniform, suggesting that CSR communication resonates differently across GBC's audience segments.

Table 4.c: Mean scores for the components of each construct

Construct	Item	Mean (M)	SD
CSR Communication	GBC communicates its social initiatives clearly	3.07	1.10
	GBC provides regular updates on its CSR activities	2.91	0.81
	GBC uses multiple platforms to share CSR information	3.16	0.89
	GBC explains the impact of its CSR initiatives	3.01	0.82
Overall		3.04	0.11
Perceived Legitimacy	GBC's CSR actions are appropriate and expected	3.19	0.72
	GBC is socially responsible in the eyes of the public	3.31	0.99
	GBC aligns its CSR with societal norms and values	3.15	0.91
Overall		3.22	0.09
Trust	I trust GBC to act in the best interest of society	3.70	0.94
	GBC keeps its social promises	3.33	0.79
	GBC is a reliable and dependable brand	3.45	1.01
Overall		3.49	0.19
Image	GBC's social initiatives enhance its image	3.31	0.78
	GBC is seen as a socially conscious organization	3.05	0.99
	I have a positive image of GBC because of its CSR	3.08	0.77
Overall		3.15	0.15
Brand Positioning	GBC is positioned as a responsible media brand	3.46	0.87
	GBC stands out because of its social commitment	3.11	0.82
	GBC's CSR has improved how I perceive the brand	3.22	0.82
Overall		3.19	0.24

4.5 Relationship between GBC's CSR communication and its brand positioning

The regression model predicting brand positioning from CSR communication was statistically significant, (ANOVA test $F(1, 298) = 195.33, p < .001$), explaining approximately 61% of the variance in brand positioning scores within the population with the adjusted R^2 being 0.614 (Table 4a). CSR communication emerged as a moderate, statistically significant positive predictor ($B = 0.587, \beta = 0.721, p < .001$), indicating that for every one-unit increase in CSR communication ratings, brand positioning scores increased by approximately 0.59 units (Table 4b). The odds (β) of brand positioning score increasing with a one-unit increase in CSR communication rating was 0.72 (Table 4b).

Table 1.d: Model summary of the relationship between CSR communication and brand positioning

Model	R	R²	Model Summary Adjusted R²	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.800a	0.622	0.614	0.278

a. Predictors: (Constant), CSR communication

Table 4.e: Relationship between CSR Communication and Brand Positioning

Predictor	B	Std. Error	β	t	p-value	95% CI	
						Lower	Upper
constant	1.215	0.186		6.528	< 0.001	0.728	1.206
CSR Communication	0.587	0.042	0.721*	13.976	< 0.001	0.558	.641

*Indicates a significant path at $*p* < .05$.

4.6 Correlation of Brand Positioning and the other constructs

Table 5 presents the results when GBC's brand positioning was correlated with its brand image, trust, perceived legitimacy and communication of its CSR initiatives. Brand positioning correlated with all the constructs except brand trust ($p=0.289$). While a strong positive correlation existed between GBC's brand positioning and CSR communication, the correlation between brand positioning and perceived legitimacy (0.348) as well as brand image (0.212) were weak, though positive.

Table 4.f: Correlating GBC's brand positioning with the other constructs

Brand Positioning		
	R	p-value
CSR Communication	0.789 *	< 0.001
Legitimacy	0.348 *	< 0.001
Trust	0.028	0.289
Image	0.212 *	< 0.001

*Indicates a significant path at $p < .05$.

4.7 Mediation Analysis for CSR Communication on Brand Positioning

Mediation analyses were conducted to examine whether perceived legitimacy, trust, and brand image mediated the relationship between CSR communication and brand positioning. None of the three constructs emerged as significant mediators. While CSR communication significantly predicted legitimacy ($B = 0.401$, $p < 0.001$) and trust ($B = -0.146$, $p = 0.006$), only trust significantly predicted brand positioning ($B = 0.094$, $p < 0.001$). Legitimacy and brand image were not identified as significant predictors of positioning when controlling for CSR communication.

Table 4.g.: Mediation Analysis of CSR Communication on Brand Positioning via Proposed Mediators

Mediator	Path a		Path b		Direct Effect	Indirect Effect
	(IV → Mediator)	p-value	(Mediator → DV)	p-value		
Legitimacy	0.401*	< 0.001	0.028	0.263	0.571	0.011
Trust	-0.146*	0.006	0.094*	< 0.001	0.596	-0.014
Brand Image	0.242*	< 0.001	0.015	0.519	0.579	0.004

NB: IV = Independent Variable (CSR Communication); DV = Dependent Variable (Brand Positioning).

*Indicates a significant path at $p < .05$.

4.8 Discussion

4.8.1 Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Participants

The socio-demographic profile of respondents provides an important lens for interpreting the results. The study sample was predominantly male, with fewer female participants. Prior research suggests that men and women often differ in their CSR perceptions, with women tending to be more ethically sensitive and responsive to socially responsible communication (Martínez & Rodríguez del Bosque, 2016; Fatma & Rahman, 2016). The male dominance in the sample may therefore partly explain the moderate and often neutral responses observed, as men are generally found to exhibit lower emotional responsiveness to CSR campaigns compared to women (Wang et al., 2020).

Age distribution also shaped the findings, with nearly half of participants aged 35–44 years and the mean age at 35.9 years. Middle-aged adults typically balance work, family, and civic responsibilities, making them more likely to value CSR activities in areas such as health, education, and public safety (Khan et al., 2015). This age group's dominance may explain why GBC's education and health campaigns resonated most strongly. Younger audiences (18–24 years), who made up just 15.1% of respondents, are often more engaged with CSR content on digital platforms and expect interactive, innovative approaches (Nguyen et al., 2021). Their smaller representation may therefore have limited perspectives on how GBC's social media strategies influence CSR perceptions.

The majority of respondents were married, suggesting a sample with strong family and community ties. Studies show that marital status can influence social responsibility expectations, as married individuals often prioritize stability, safety, and community

development (Fatma et al., 2015). This may have contributed to the relatively higher support for GBC's health and education-related CSR initiatives.

Educational background further contextualizes the findings: over 62% of respondents had tertiary or postgraduate education. Higher educational attainment is linked with greater critical awareness of CSR initiatives and stronger demand for organizational transparency (Wang et al., 2020). This could explain the high number of neutral responses, as more educated participants may require clearer, more detailed reporting before making judgments on legitimacy, trust, or brand image. In Ghana, educated audiences are also more digitally active (Ofori & Anlesinya, 2020), which corresponds with the finding that CSR communication was most often encountered on online platforms.

In sum, the socio-demographic profile suggests that perceptions of GBC's CSR communication were shaped by a relatively educated, male, and middle-aged audience. These characteristics are consistent with urban media consumption patterns in Ghana and provide valuable context for understanding the study's broader findings.

4.8.2 Frequency and Nature of CSR Communication

The study revealed that GBC's CSR communications were modest in frequency, with nearly half of respondents reporting they rarely encountered them. CSR content was largely concentrated around health campaigns and education initiatives, while channels of exposure were dominated by social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter. This pattern reflects the Ghanaian corporate landscape, where CSR is often expressed in philanthropic and community-focused forms rather than through systematic, strategic communication (Abukari & Abdul-Hamid, 2018; Amo-Mensah & Tench, 2015). Globally, organizations increasingly use integrated, multi-channel CSR communication strategies to enhance visibility and stakeholder engagement (Zhang & Swanson, 2020).

Media companies in particular are leveraging storytelling and interactive platforms to amplify their social initiatives (Nguyen et al., 2021). Compared to these trends, GBC's CSR communication appears limited and underutilized.

From a practical perspective, GBC could benefit from institutionalizing CSR communication through annual reports, consistent social media campaigns, and broadcast segments dedicated to social impact. Policy makers and regulators might also encourage public broadcasters to disclose CSR activities more systematically, ensuring alignment with international norms for transparency (Kim & Ferguson, 2019).

4.8.3 Perceived Legitimacy

Audience perceptions of the legitimacy of GBC's CSR initiatives were generally moderate, reflecting cautious approval rather than strong endorsement. Respondents tended to agree that GBC's social actions were appropriate and that the organization could be regarded as socially responsible. However, this approval was not absolute. Perceptions of how well GBC's CSR initiatives align with broader societal norms and shared values were less consistent, and the relatively high variation in responses points to uncertainty and mixed interpretations among audience members.

These findings align with contemporary interpretations of Legitimacy Theory, which emphasize that organizational legitimacy is an ongoing, socially constructed process rather than a fixed status (Deegan, 2019; Cho, Michelon, & Patten, 2017). From this perspective, GBC appears to have attained a basic level of pragmatic legitimacy, being seen as "doing the right thing" in principle, but has not yet achieved strong moral legitimacy rooted in deep societal identification and value congruence. This pattern suggests that CSR activities alone are insufficient to secure legitimacy unless they are meaningfully connected to public expectations and convincingly communicated.

Recent CSR studies highlights that stakeholders increasingly evaluate legitimacy not on the presence of CSR initiatives, but on their perceived authenticity, consistency, and social impact (Mena, Suddaby, & Vaara, 2018; Bachmann & Ingenhoff, 2016). In GBC's case, the ambivalence expressed by respondents may signal doubts about whether CSR initiatives are sustained, impactful, or strategically embedded within the organization's public-service mandate. This supports findings by Lock and Seele (2016), who argue that symbolic CSR communication, where actions are visible but outcomes are unclear, often results in lukewarm legitimacy rather than strong public approval.

Within the Ghanaian context, these results mirror broader concerns raised by recent studies on CSR implementation in public and quasi-public institutions. Amoako and Dartey-Baah (2020) and Hinson, Amidu, and Osabutey (2018) note that CSR efforts in Ghana are frequently fragmented and insufficiently documented, leading stakeholders to question their depth and long-term value. For a national broadcaster such as GBC, whose mandate is rooted in public trust and national development, such ambiguity can be particularly consequential. Public broadcasters operate under an implicit social contract, and audiences may judge legitimacy more stringently due to expectations of accountability, fairness, and national relevance (Sarikakis & Winter, 2017).

The findings therefore suggest that while GBC's CSR initiatives contribute positively to its legitimacy, they have not fully translated into unquestioned societal approval. This gap underscores the importance of moving beyond activity-based CSR communication toward evidence-based legitimacy building. Studies show that transparent reporting, impact-focused narratives, and third-party validation significantly enhance stakeholder perceptions of legitimacy (Michelon, Pilonato, & Ricceri, 2020; Coombs & Holladay, 2018).

To strengthen perceived legitimacy, GBC should place greater emphasis on demonstrating measurable social outcomes rather than simply publicizing CSR activities. Communicating verifiable impact through community testimonials, independent assessments, or longitudinal reporting could help transform moderate legitimacy into stronger moral and cognitive legitimacy. At an institutional level, the development of formal CSR disclosure standards for public service media, aligned with national development priorities, could further reinforce legitimacy by embedding accountability within governance structures. Such an approach would not only enhance public confidence but also reaffirm GBC's role as a credible, socially responsible national institution.

4.8.4 Brand Trust

The findings indicate that CSR communication contributes positively to audience trust in GBC, though this trust remains cautious rather than absolute. Respondents generally perceived GBC as acting in the best interest of society and regarded the organization as reliable, suggesting that CSR initiatives serve as an important trust-building signal. However, the presence of a substantial proportion of neutral responses points to lingering hesitation among audience members, reflecting a trust relationship that is still developing.

Trust is widely recognized as a central outcome of CSR engagement, particularly in sectors where public credibility and ethical conduct are fundamental (Hu et al., 2020; Lee & Shin, 2020). In this study, increased awareness of GBC's CSR efforts appeared to correspond with higher confidence in the organization, reinforcing evidence that socially responsible organizations are more likely to be trusted by their stakeholders. This supports the argument that CSR functions as a reputational mechanism through

which organizations signal benevolence, integrity, and social concern to the public (Rim & Kim, 2016).

The importance of this finding is heightened within the Ghanaian media context, where public trust in state-owned media has been under increasing strain. Against this backdrop, the fact that CSR communication contributes even moderately to trust suggests that CSR may represent one of the few available pathways through which GBC can reinforce its moral credibility and re-establish relational trust with audiences. Against this backdrop, the fact that CSR communication contributes even moderately to trust suggests that CSR may represent one of the few available pathways through which GBC can reinforce its moral credibility and re-establish relational trust with audiences. However, the mixed nature of responses also suggests that CSR alone cannot offset broader institutional and perceptual challenges facing public media.

The hesitation reflected in audience responses is consistent with research cautioning that CSR communication perceived as insincere, exaggerated, or performative can weaken rather than strengthen trust (Ahn, Park, & Lee, 2018; Morsing & Spence, 2002). Stakeholders increasingly differentiate between genuine social engagement and what has been described as “aspirational talk,” where organizations emphasize intentions without demonstrating tangible outcomes (Amo-Mensah, 2022). In such cases, CSR may raise expectations that, if unmet, intensify skepticism and erode trust.

For GBC, these findings suggest that trust-building through CSR requires more than visibility. Transparency, accountability, and verification are critical. Communicating concrete outcomes, such as measurable social impact, community testimonials, or independent assessments, can help transform CSR from a symbolic gesture into a credible trust signal (Coombs & Holladay, 2018; Michelon, Pilonato, & Ricceri, 2020).

From a governance perspective, embedding CSR accountability within GBC's public service charter could further institutionalize trust by aligning social responsibility with regulatory oversight and performance evaluation.

4.8.5 Brand Image

The findings suggest that CSR communication contributes positively to GBC's brand image, although audience perceptions remain largely moderate and somewhat reserved. Respondents generally associated GBC with social responsibility and acknowledged that its CSR initiatives enhance the organization's image. However, this positive perception was not uniformly strong, with many responses reflecting neutrality rather than firm agreement. This indicates that while CSR efforts are visible and recognized, they have not yet translated into a consistently strong or distinctive brand image in the minds of the audience.

This pattern is consistent with contemporary branding and CSR literature, which consistently demonstrates that CSR contributes to corporate brand image by linking organizations with socially valued qualities such as integrity, ethical commitment, and concern for community well-being (Bachmann & Inghoff, 2016; Kodua et al., 2022). However, some studies also caution that the impact of CSR on brand image is rarely immediate or automatic. Rather, it depends heavily on the consistency of CSR engagement and the credibility of the messages communicated to stakeholders (Coombs & Holladay, 2018; Rim & Kim, 2016). The cautious positivity observed in this study reflects this dynamic, suggesting that GBC's CSR efforts are positively interpreted but not yet sufficiently strong or consistent to produce a clearly differentiated brand image.

From a media-sector perspective, the findings are consistent with evidence that CSR-driven initiatives enhance brand image when they are closely aligned with the

organization's public-service mission and embedded within core content rather than communicated as peripheral activities (Nguyen et al., 2021; Sarikakis & Winter, 2017). In broadcasting contexts, CSR initiatives that are integrated into programming, such as educational campaigns, community-focused documentaries, or development-oriented public messaging, are more likely to be perceived as authentic and brand-defining. Mohd Radzi et al. (2025) similarly demonstrate that CSR-based campaigns implemented by a public broadcaster improved brand image while simultaneously advancing public awareness, reinforcing the dual branding and social value of CSR in public media institutions.

The mixed and moderate perceptions identified in this study also mirror challenges documented within the Ghanaian media landscape. Mensah and Frempong (2021) observe that CSR initiatives in Ghana's media sector often lack long-term continuity and strategic positioning, which limits their ability to shape lasting brand perceptions. When CSR efforts are viewed as episodic rather than institutionalized, audiences may acknowledge their existence without fully integrating them into their overall brand evaluations. This is consistent with Morsing and Spence (2019), who argue that fragmented CSR communication weakens its image-building effectiveness and may even lead to stakeholder indifference.

Overall, the findings suggest that CSR communication contributes positively to GBC's brand image, but the influence remains moderate due to perceived limitations in strategic coherence and narrative integration. To enhance brand image more effectively, GBC should embed CSR storytelling within its mainstream broadcasting agenda, clearly linking social initiatives to national development goals and public interest values. By doing so, CSR can move from being a supportive branding signal to a core element of GBC's identity as a socially responsible public broadcaster. This approach

is likely to strengthen emotional connections with audiences and consolidate CSR as a defining dimension of the organization's brand image over time.

4.8.6 Brand Positioning

The findings from this study suggest that CSR communication plays a powerful and direct role in shaping GBC's brand positioning within the Ghanaian media landscape. Audience perceptions suggest that CSR initiatives contribute meaningfully to how GBC is positioned as a responsible media organization and influence how the broadcaster is comparatively evaluated. However, while CSR strengthens GBC's positioning, it does so primarily through the visibility and clarity of communication rather than through deeper perceptual or relational constructs.

The regression analysis provides robust empirical evidence that CSR communication is a strong predictor of brand positioning. The model demonstrates that variations in how audiences perceive GBC's CSR communication account for a substantial share of how the brand is positioned in their minds. This supports contemporary branding theory, which conceptualizes brand positioning as a function of communicated meaning rather than organizational activity alone (Keller, 2016; Urde & Koch, 2018). In this respect, CSR communication serves as a dominant strategic cue that frames GBC as a socially responsible public broadcaster.

The correlation findings reinforce this conclusion. Brand positioning exhibited a strong positive relationship with CSR communication, while its associations with perceived legitimacy and brand image were comparatively weak. Notably, brand positioning was not significantly associated with trust. This pattern suggests that positioning operates at a cognitive and symbolic level, shaped more by salient communication cues than by emotional or relational judgments. This aligns with signaling theory, which proposes that stakeholders rely on observable signals, such as structured CSR communication,

when forming brand-related evaluations in contexts of limited direct experience (Connelly et al., 2018; Spence, 2002).

In the context of public service broadcasting, this result is particularly significant. Public broadcasters are often positioned not through market competition but through symbolic alignment with national development goals and societal responsibility (Sarikakis & Winter, 2017; Moe & van den Bulck, 2023). The findings suggest that audiences may cognitively categorize GBC as a responsible media brand based on CSR messaging alone, even when perceptions of legitimacy, trust, and image remain moderate or unsettled. This explains why brand positioning is strongly linked to CSR communication but only weakly connected to broader attitudinal constructs.

The observed pattern also reflects structural realities in the Ghanaian media sector. Previous research indicates that CSR initiatives among Ghanaian media organizations are frequently visible but not always consistently integrated into long-term brand strategies (Mensah & Frempong, 2021; Amo-Mensah, 2022). As a result, CSR communication may successfully influence how organizations are symbolically positioned without necessarily transforming deeper audience beliefs or emotional attachment. For GBC, this implies that its CSR narrative is effective in framing its public identity but has not yet fully matured into a holistic brand-building mechanism. From a strategic standpoint, the findings highlight CSR communication as one of GBC's most influential tools for reinforcing its public service positioning. Nevertheless, an overreliance on communication without equal emphasis on demonstrable impact and accountability may limit the sustainability of this positioning (Coombs & Holladay, 2018; Michelon, Pilonato, & Ricceri, 2020). To strengthen and stabilize its positioning, GBC should integrate CSR narratives more deeply into its editorial mission, supported by consistent reporting of outcomes and stakeholder engagement.

In summary, CSR communication emerges as a central driver of brand positioning for GBC, exerting a strong and direct influence on how the broadcaster is strategically perceived. While this underscores the effectiveness of CSR messaging in shaping public identity, it also signals the need for stronger alignment between communicated responsibility and institutional practice. Achieving this alignment would enable GBC to translate symbolic positioning into a more credible and enduring public service brand identity.

4.8.7 Mediation Analysis: Legitimacy, Trust, and Image

The mediation analysis explored whether perceived legitimacy, trust, and brand image mediated the relationship between CSR communication and brand positioning. Contrary to the initial conceptual model, perceived legitimacy, trust, and brand image did not play substantial mediating roles. While CSR communication significantly predicted perceived legitimacy and image, legitimacy and brand image did not significantly predict brand positioning when controlling for CSR. The relationship between CSR communication and brand trust was unexpectedly negative, although trust itself positively predicted positioning.

This findings differ from those of several prior studies which reported that legitimacy and brand image often act as mediating pathways between CSR and brand outcomes (Fatma et al., 2015; Martínez & Rodríguez del Bosque, 2016). One possible explanation could be the high number of neutral responses observed in this study, which could suggest that audiences were not strongly persuaded about the depth of GBC's CSR initiatives. Without strong perceptions of legitimacy or image, these constructs are unlikely to channel the effects of CSR communication into positioning. Audiences are often skeptical of corporate motives for CSR; they may be uncertain whether GBC's initiatives are driven by a genuine concern for society (value-driven) or by a desire for

good publicity (egoistic-driven) (Ellen, Webb, & Mohr, 2006). This uncertainty leads to withheld judgment, resulting in neutral responses. As Kim (2019) argues, without clear, transparent communication that emphasizes tangible impact and authentic commitment, audiences may grant only tentative or pragmatic legitimacy, not deeper, moral legitimacy.

Trust, however, did display a modest effect, consistent with global findings that consumer trust is one of the most immediate outcomes of CSR communication (Hu et al., 2020; Lee & Shin, 2020). Trust operates as a relatively straightforward perception, that is to say, audiences may not need extensive evidence of impact to feel a degree of confidence in an organization's intentions. By contrast, legitimacy and image are more complex constructs that require consistency, long-term performance, and clear communication to be firmly established (Lock & Schulz-Knappe, 2019; Michelon et al., 2015). Therefore, it could be stated that GBC's current CSR efforts are sufficient to generate some trust, but insufficient to build deeper legitimacy or a strong brand image. Hence, CSR frameworks in public broadcasting should emphasize long-term consistency and evidence of outcomes, not just episodic initiatives. Doing so may strengthen the mediating role of legitimacy and brand image in future audience evaluations.

For GBC and similar organizations, the findings underscore the strategic value of direct, impactful CSR communication in influencing brand positioning. Transparent, consistent, and audience-relevant CSR storytelling, supported by demonstrable outcomes, appears to be key. However, the negative link between CSR communication and trust suggests the need for caution in message framing.

4.9 Conclusion of the Discussion

In summary, the findings present a complex picture. GBC possesses a powerful tool in CSR communication, as evidenced by its strong direct effect on brand positioning. Its audience is reachable via digital channels and maintains a baseline of trust. However, the potential of CSR to build deeper brand equity is undercut by communication that is too infrequent to be salient, and that fails to adequately demonstrate impact and authenticity to overcome audience skepticism and neutrality. The lack of mediation signifies that the current communication strategy may be effective at a superficial, symbolic level of positioning but is not fostering the deeper, belief-driven connections that transform legitimacy and trust into a definitive competitive advantage. GBC is being heard, but the message may not be resonating with the conviction required to fully reshape its brand image in the minds of its audience.

5.0 CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the summary, conclusions, limitations, and recommendations of the study. The research examined how corporate social responsibility (CSR) communication by the Ghana Broadcasting Corporation (GBC) influences perceptions of legitimacy, trust, and brand image, and how these constructs contribute to the corporation's brand positioning. It begins with a summary of the key findings derived from the data analysis presented in Chapter 4. The chapter then presents the overall conclusions of the study, directly answering the research questions and addressing the stated objectives. Finally, the chapter highlights limitations encountered, and makes recommendations for practice, policy, and future research.

5.2 Summary of Findings

The study investigated the relationship between CSR communication and brand positioning at GBC, with perceived legitimacy, brand trust, and brand image hypothesised as mediating variables. The analysis yielded several key findings:

- a. **CSR Communication Reach and Nature:** The frequency of GBC's CSR communication was found to be low, with a significant portion of the audience rarely or never encountering it. Communication was predominantly channeled through social media (Facebook and X/Twitter), with traditional platforms like radio and the corporate website being underutilized. Thematic content was largely concentrated on public health and education initiatives.

- b. **Audience Perceptions:** Mean scores for the core constructs revealed a landscape of moderate perceptions. While brand trust was rated highest, the scores for perceived legitimacy, brand image, and brand positioning were only moderately positive. A dominant pattern across all perceptual measures was a high degree of audience neutrality, indicating widespread uncertainty or withheld judgment.
- c. **Direct Relationship:** Regression analysis confirmed a robust, statistically significant, and positive direct relationship between CSR communication and brand positioning. CSR communication was identified as a powerful predictor, explaining a substantial proportion of the variance in brand positioning scores.
- d. **Mediating Effects:** Contrary to the conceptual framework, mediation analysis revealed that perceived legitimacy, brand trust, and brand image did not significantly mediate the relationship between CSR communication and brand positioning. This indicates that the influence of communication on positioning is direct and not dependent on these audience perceptions in this specific context.

5.3 Conclusions

In relation to the research objectives and questions, the following conclusions are drawn: Communication of Corporate Social Responsibility initiatives is an important driver of brand positioning for public broadcasters like GBC, but its potential is currently underutilized. The limited frequency and modest consistency of CSR communication restricted its ability to fully translate into stronger legitimacy, trust, and brand image. From a theoretical perspective, the findings provide a nuanced application of the Legitimacy Theory employed for this study. While the communication of CSR

initiatives helped GBC align with social expectations, the moderate perceptions suggest that legitimacy is fragile without long-term consistency, transparency, and demonstrable impact. Trust emerged as the most direct construct influenced by CSR, underscoring its role as an immediate perceptual outcome, whereas legitimacy and image require more evidence and sustained engagement to act as mediators.

Overall, the research demonstrates that CSR communication directly enhances brand positioning but struggles to leverage intermediary constructs effectively. This reflects broader challenges of CSR communication in Ghana, where initiatives are often philanthropic but not strategically integrated into organizational identity.

5.4 Implications of the Study

The findings of this study have several theoretical, practical, and policy-level implications for understanding CSR communication and its strategic relevance for brand positioning within public-service media organizations such as GBC.

Implications for Theory

The study provides empirical support for the core assumption in Legitimacy Theory that CSR communication can enhance organizational acceptance by aligning actions with societal expectations. However, the absence of significant mediating effects from perceived legitimacy, brand trust, and brand image challenges the assumption that these constructs always function as pathways through which CSR influences brand outcomes. This suggests that in contexts where communication is infrequent, inconsistent, or perceived as lacking demonstrable impact, legitimacy and image may not automatically translate into stronger brand positioning. The results therefore highlight the need for a more context-sensitive application of Legitimacy Theory in African media

environments, where public skepticism and neutrality may weaken the expected indirect effects of CSR.

Implications for Organizational Practice

For GBC, the findings underscore CSR communication as a powerful yet underutilized strategic tool. The strong direct influence of CSR communication on brand positioning indicates that even modest communication efforts can yield substantial positioning benefits. However, the high levels of audience neutrality highlight a gap between awareness and conviction. This implies that GBC's CSR communication must become more consistent, transparent, and outcome-oriented. Organizations cannot rely on symbolic announcements alone; instead, they must demonstrate tangible impact through data, storytelling, and follow-up reporting. Strengthening communication quality, not merely increasing frequency, could help convert neutral perceptions into positive evaluations of legitimacy, trust, and image.

Implications for Public Service Broadcasting

As a state-owned broadcaster, GBC carries a unique mandate to demonstrate social value. The findings imply that CSR communication is not simply a branding exercise but an accountability mechanism that can reinforce GBC's public-service identity. By institutionalizing CSR reporting and integrating it into mainstream programming, GBC could rebuild public confidence, reduce perceptions of political bias, and position itself as a development partner rather than merely a broadcaster. This is especially important in a competitive media landscape where public trust in state media continues to fluctuate.

Implications for Policy and Regulation

The results signal an opportunity for national regulators, particularly the National Media Commission, to establish clear CSR reporting guidelines for public-service media. Formal expectations around transparency, impact assessment, and multi-channel communication could help standardize CSR practices across the sector. Such policy interventions would not only strengthen public accountability but also ensure alignment with international shifts toward ESG reporting. A regulatory framework could also encourage GBC to develop a dedicated CSR strategy that supports long-term legitimacy rather than ad-hoc philanthropic initiatives.

Implications for Future CSR Strategy Development

Given that audience perceptions were predominantly neutral, the study implies that future CSR strategies should integrate audience engagement mechanisms. This includes participatory campaigns, community-driven content creation, and interactive platforms where audiences can monitor progress and outcomes. Enhancing two-way communication could shift CSR from a broadcasted activity to a collaborative effort, improving both legitimacy and brand connection.

5.5 Limitations of the Study

Whilst this study provides valuable insights, its findings must be interpreted considering the following limitations.

The study was conducted exclusively within the Accra Metropolitan Assembly. The media consumption habits and perceptions of audiences in other regions of Ghana may differ significantly, limiting the generalizability of the findings to the entire national audience. Also, the data represents a snapshot in time. A longitudinal study would be

required to understand how perceptions of GBC's CSR communication and brand positioning evolve. Again, the reliance on quantitative methods, while providing measurable data, limits the exploration of the underlying reasons for the neutral perceptions. Qualitative insights would be needed to fully understand the "why" behind the audience's skepticism and neutrality.

5.6 Recommendations

Based on the conclusions, the following recommendations are proposed:

5.6. a For Ghana Broadcasting Corporation (GBC): GBC could benefit from institutionalizing CSR communication through structured programs and regular reports. In addition, a shift from just announcing initiatives to proving their value using data, stories, and beneficiary testimonials could be of benefit.

5.6. b For Policymakers: Policy makers such as the National Media Commission could institutionalize CSR reporting by developing guidelines or frameworks for state-owned media to enhance transparency and align their public service mandate with measurable social impact.

5.6.c For Future Research: A qualitative study using interviews or focus groups to gain deeper insights into audience perceptions, especially to understand why there were greater proportions of neutrality in the responses. Additionally, a longitudinal study could be conducted on how changes in communication strategy affect audience perception over time, providing stronger evidence of causal relationships. Finally, it is recommended to expand the geographical scope of the study to other regions in Ghana for comparative analysis.

5.7 Summary

This chapter has presented the conclusions and recommendations of the study on CSR communication and brand positioning at GBC. The research successfully achieved its objectives, demonstrating a direct link between communication and positioning while revealing a critical gap in achieving deeper perceptual buy-in from the audience. The findings underscore that for GBC, strategic CSR communication is not merely about visibility but about building authenticity through evidence-based storytelling. By implementing the recommended strategies, GBC can transform its CSR efforts from a symbolic exercise into a core driver of sustainable brand equity, legitimacy, and public trust.

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APENDIX A

Informed Consent

I am Elizabeth Appiah, a final year MA Communication student at UNIMAC. I am working on the topic, 'Corporate social responsibility communication as a strategic tool for brand positioning in public service media: Evidence from Ghana Broadcasting Corporation'. I would like you to spend about 10mins of your precious time in responding to this questionnaire.

This study is aimed at examining how Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) communication influences brand positioning within the Ghanaian media landscape.

The questionnaire comprises six thematic sections:

1. Demographic Information – Captures background characteristics of respondents (age, gender, education, and media access mode).
2. CSR Communication – Measures the perceived clarity, frequency, and platform diversity of GBC's CSR messages.
3. Perceived Legitimacy – Assesses the extent to which respondents view GBC's actions as socially acceptable and aligned with community norms.
4. Brand Trust – Evaluates the degree of trust respondents place in GBC as a responsible media organization.
5. Brand Image – Captures audience impressions and mental associations with the GBC brand.
6. Brand Positioning – Measures the effectiveness of GBC's CSR efforts in shaping how the brand is perceived relative to competitors.

All items are measured on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree),

CONSENT

By continuing, you agree to participate voluntarily in this academic study. All responses are anonymous and confidential. You may exit the survey at any time without penalty.

I am really grateful for your time; Thank you.

Section A: Demographics

Gender

Options: Male, Female

Age Group

Options: 18–24, 25–34, 35–44, 45+

Highest Educational Level

Options: Senior High, Tertiary, Postgraduate

Main Media Access Mode for GBC

Options: Radio, TV, Online

Section B: CSR Communication

Question Type: Linear Scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neither Agree nor Disagree, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree)

- GBC communicates its social initiatives clearly.
- GBC provides regular updates on its CSR activities.
- GBC uses multiple platforms to share CSR information.
- GBC explains the impact of its CSR initiatives.

Perceived Legitimacy

Question Type: Linear Scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neither Agree nor Disagree, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree)

- GBC's CSR actions are appropriate and expected.
- GBC is socially responsible in the eyes of the public.
- GBC aligns its CSR with societal norms and values.

Brand Trust

Question Type: Linear Scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neither Agree nor Disagree, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree)

- I trust GBC to act in the best interest of society.
- GBC keeps its social promises.
- GBC is a reliable and dependable brand.

Brand Image

Question Type: Linear Scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neither Agree nor Disagree, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree)

- GBC's social initiatives enhance its image.
- GBC is seen as a socially conscious organization.
- I have a positive image of GBC because of its CSR.

Brand Positioning

Question Type: Linear Scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neither Agree nor Disagree, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree)

- GBC is positioned as a responsible media brand.
- GBC stands out because of its social commitment.
- GBC's CSR has improved how I perceive the brand.