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FACULTY OF PUBLIC RELATIONS, MARKETING AND ADVERTISING

**AN ASSESSMENT OF THE INTERNAL COMMUNICATION PRACTICES OF
BEVERAGE COMPANIES: A CASE STUDY OF THE COCA-COLA BOTTLING
COMPANY OF GHANA LIMITED**

BY

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**A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE GHANA INSTITUTE OF JOURNALISM
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DECLARATION

I do hereby declare that this work presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of a Masters of Arts degree in Public Relations is the result of my own effort and that no part of it has been presented for any other degree or award elsewhere. Other people’s works which were cited as references have been duly acknowledged. I am responsible for any error that may be detected in this dissertation.

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SUPERVISOR'S DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this study was carried out under my supervision in line with the guidelines spelt out by the Ghana Institute of Journalism.

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my sister, Yaa Serwaa Obeng, for encouraging me to pursue this program against all the odds.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My greatest gratitude goes to the Almighty God for seeing me through this journey. I can also not forget my supervisor, Dr. Mrs. Mavis Essandoh, who was ever willing to right my wrongs, and spent each passing moment giving guidance and direction to make this work a success. I indeed owe it all to her.

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ABSTRACT

Internal communication has gained recognition in the business world over the last two decades (Verčič, Verčič, & Sriramesh, 2012). It improves business values by providing a means by which businesses can effectively communicate with their employees and vice versa. And as a result, instill a sense of belonging and social involvement (Helsby, 2009). This research seeks to examine internal communications from a Ghanaian perspective while drawing much experience from previous literature. It gives a new perspective by exploring internal communication practices of beverage companies by using The Coca-Cola Bottling Company of Ghana as a case study.

As a result of the outbreak of COVID-19 and the need to observe prevention protocols, data could not be collected from respondents as the company restricted access to its facility. The study however discussed a proposed qualitative research design for the work, made a fair critique or appreciation of research methods used by other researchers in relation to the topic and further discussed findings from existing literature.

Based on a thorough review of findings from previous works, it was anticipated that The Coca-Cola Bottling Company of Ghana Limited was likely to practice a system of internal communication that supported effective information dissemination and encouraged employee participation. It is believed that projected findings from this study will contribute significantly to the body of knowledge on internal communication in Ghana, especially in the beverage industry.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY AND CONTEXT

Communication is essential in every aspect of human life, be it personal, social or business (Pearce, 1989). In business, communication creates an opportunity for organizations to share information, ideas, concepts or product information with all stakeholders. Vital to the success of any enterprise is how it conducts its internal communication, as this dictates how the enterprise relates with its internal stakeholders (Driedonks, Gevers, & van Weele, 2014).

The extent of success or failure of any venture depends on the communication patterns it uses to relay information to employees, clients and investors (Argenti, 2006). Once internal communication is effectively executed, there are several ways in which the organization benefits: It aids in establishing better relationships with employees, fosters active employee participation, enhances quality feedback from employees, and encourages employees to devise new ideas for business growth (Aidoo, 2012; Chalmers, 2008; Chen & Hung-Baesecke, 2014; Men, 2014; Orsini, 2000).

This study, which will be carried out using qualitative techniques of data gathering, will focus on internal communication practices in the beverage industry, using The Coca-Cola Bottling Company of Ghana Limited as a case study. Data will be collected using interviews with both open and closed-ended questions. The study will examine the role of internal communication in the

company, tools used for the purpose, and barriers to internal communication at The Coca-Cola Bottling Company of Ghana Limited.

In theory, internal communication is the primary means by which a business communicates with its employees in a manner that ensures that the strategic goals of the business are designed and met (Orsini, 2000). Internal communication considers how an organization achieves its goals through training, workshops, seminars, discussions about market trends and a company's output (Smith & Mounter, 2008). More often, what is required of employees is usually spelt out in an employee manual with circulars, orders and notices reaffirming the goals and objectives of the organization. Usually, the direction and structure of internal communication in most corporate organizations usually stem from decisions made at board meetings (Chalmers, 2008).

Effective communication in a company aims at ensuring that employees adequately know their roles and responsibilities. In a study involving 260 United States (US) and 75 Canadian companies, Yates (2006) found that effective internal communication is a crucial indicator of an organization's financial performance; and communication effectiveness directly results in a 19.4% increase in market premium. These organizations are also 4.5 times more likely to attain highly engaged employees (Yates, 2006). On the contrary, subpar internal communication can be damaging to organizational effectiveness and internal relationships if employees do not receive information in a useful or digestible format (Dolphin, 2005).

Technology is continually evolving and changing the way people communicate (Anderson, 2010). One effective way of relaying information between and among company employees and also allowing people to share their opinions is by having a common chat software for all employees to

communicate in real-time (Anderson, 2010). Examples of such interactive software include: *Microsoft Teams, HipChat, Slack, Stride and Campfire*. Research indicates that 65% of people are visual learners and easily remember information in picture or video than in text (Chen & Sun, 2012). When done right, visual communication conveys information in a more appealing and easy-to-digest manner which in turn has more lasting impressions in the minds of the target audience (Argenti, 2006). To put this into perspective, mounting screens around the workplace where information is displayed in a very vivid, eye-catching, presentable and captivating manner, guarantees the effectiveness of information conveyed (Chen & Sun, 2012).

It has been said that open and honest feedback is the foundation of successful employee engagement (Mone, London, & Mone, 2018). Due to fear of isolation, job loss or other related factors, employees may be hesitant to share their genuine opinions about specific issues, or complaints about their job. However, by conducting surveys or complaint channels where authors remain anonymous, employees do not feel the need to hold back their opinions or sentiments (Dillman, 2011). According to Forbes (2016), The Coca-Cola Company uses spot surveys to gauge the knowledge of employees on the company's goals. The value of employees' opinions is as valuable as any other contributing factor to the business' success (Markos & Sridevi, 2010). As the people who create and materialize any conceptual idea/goal of the business, they have first-hand experience of the business and as such, their opinions are to be heavily considered (Toth, 2009).

Employees are essential stakeholders who influence greatly corporate reputation (Woodruffe, 2006) and double as brand ambassadors (Dolphin, 2005). Open channels of dialogue where employees can give feedback on their job, share their problems, discuss how to improve work conditions and any other idea/opinion, aid effective internal communication (Smith & Mounter,

2008). These channels ensure the generation of brilliant ideas and helpful criticisms are not missed. These dialogues may be in the form of open forums organized within certain fixed time such as (weekly, monthly and quarterly bases). Designated channels for complaints, a whiteboard in the office or a cloud-based service can also function equally (Yates, 2006). Richards (2019) argues that corporations could establish a system of engaging employees to gather ongoing feedback about how messages can be communicated more effectively in the company.

According to Steve Soltis 2016, Group Director of Employee and Leadership Communication for The Coca-Cola Company, "A business cannot generate sustainable value and growth without employees understanding of where it is headed, why, what it is going to take to get there, and why each employee matters" (Forbes magazine, 2016). Even though a company's internal communication efforts are proprietary and often targets a limited audience, internal communication practices on the whole must be understood to see how organizations create a culture that sustains their business (Verghese, 2012).

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In an ever-changing business world where technology and people are always evolving, human response and engagement regularly change, and as such communication practices need to adhere to these changes (Markos & Sridevi, 2010). The major part of research conducted on internal communication were carried out in developed countries with a different setting, technology, culture and communication practices if compared to a developing country like Ghana. Therefore, findings from these previous studies may not be necessarily applicable to the Ghanaian setting. There's therefore the need to make this study more relevant and specific to Ghana.

This is an important study, due to the fact that, for internal communication practices to remain relevant and practical, there is always the need for more research in the field. Also, while several studies have previously been conducted to studying certain aspects of internal communication practices, this topic is under-researched in the research arena. It is therefore critical to cover more updated and insightful internal communication practices, particularly in the beverage industry.

1.3 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The general objective of this study is to assess the internal communication practices of beverage companies, particularly The Coca-Cola Bottling Company of Ghana Limited. However, the study will further aim at achieving the following specific objectives:

- To examine the role of internal communication at The Coca-Cola Bottling Company of Ghana Limited.
- To investigate the internal communication tools used at The Coca-Cola Bottling Company of Ghana Limited.
- To explore barriers to internal communication at The Coca-Cola Bottling Company of Ghana Limited.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The study seeks to answer the following research question as they will ultimately inform the extent to which data will be gathered.

- What is the role of internal communication at The Coca-Cola Bottling Company of Ghana Limited?
- What internal communication tools are used at The Coca-Cola Bottling Company of Ghana Limited?
- What barriers of internal communication exist at The Coca-Cola Bottling Company of Ghana Limited?

1.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

It is envisaged that findings from this study will provide an insightful perspective on internal communication practices and how they affect a company's growth and employee engagement. The data, interpretations and recommendations of the study will provide a different angle of information to both leadership and employees in the corporate world, especially among beverage companies. This is because the case study for this research, The Coca-Cola Bottling Company of Ghana Limited, is a giant in the beverage industry and can provide relevant information regarding the shortcomings of internal communications and how to improve them. Finally, the research will build upon available literature in communication and particularly internal communications in Ghana. Again, it is the contention of this research that, in the near future, start-ups and established companies could build their internal communication structure based on the findings and recommendations from this study.

1.6 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The research will primarily assess the internal communication practices of beverage companies using The Coca-Cola Bottling Company of Ghana Limited as case study. In this research, three main perspectives will be highlighted: the geographical, conceptual and time scope.

The geographical scope primarily focuses on the physical location where the research will take place. The location for this study will be The Coca-Cola Bottling Company of Ghana Limited situated at Spintex, Greater-Accra, Ghana. A sample of 100 participants who are employees of the company including its internal communication practitioners will be used for the study.

The time scope of the study highlights the time to which the proposed research would take place, and the duration it will take to collect data. In this study, a projected time of five months (April-August) will be used to complete the research.

1.7 RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

This is an important study since the beverage industry in any country is critical and a valued sector in the economy. Over the years, there has been a literature gap in internal communications in Ghana, and this research is needed to bridge such a gap. Thus, it intends to fill the gaps that time, technology and the ever-changing human behavior may have created over the decade, especially in the beverage sector in a developing economy like Ghana.

1.8 ORGANISATION OF THE STUDY

The research will be categorized into five (5) chapters. Chapter One will discuss the background of the study, statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, the significance of the study, limitations, delimitations and organization of the study. Chapter Two will cover literature review and the theoretical framework in which the study is situated. Chapter Three will focus on the methodology for the study. It will capture the research design, population, sample size, sampling procedure, research instrument, data collection procedure and data analysis of the study. This chapter will also discuss research designs used by other researchers as well as gaps identified in the use of the research methods. Projected findings for this study and a critique or appreciation of findings from studies carried out by other researchers will be covered in Chapter Four. Chapter Five will sum up the entire study with a summary of findings, conclusion and recommendations for future studies.

1.9 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter covered the background and context within which the study is situated, the problem statement which necessitated the study to be conducted, research objectives, research questions, rationale of the study, significance of the study and the scope of the study. The next chapter reviews existing literature relevant to the study by discussing underpinning theories, conceptual framework and previous studies conducted

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.0 INTRODUCTION

The literature review, which will be discussed along both theoretical and conceptual frameworks, will look at theories that underpin the study, and further review related studies already conducted by other researchers.

2.1 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

According to Grant & Osanloo (2014), theoretical framework is the "blueprint" for the entire research being conducted. It serves as the foundation upon which a research is carried out. Sinclair (2007) compares the theoretical framework to a map of a traveler. The map of the traveler guides his/her every move, so they don't deviate from their path (Krainovich-Miller, 2010).

2.1.1 Institutional Theory of Organizational Communication

This study will be underpinned by the *Institutional theory of organizational communication* which posits that individuals, as members of an organization, are associated, and have boundary-spanning interests which when in alignment with the company's goals, influence productivity within the organization (Lammers & Barbour, 2006). This theory seeks to offer an understanding of employee roles within an organization, and how internal communication culture and practices of the organization align with the individual. Organizational communication is important and

fundamental since it highlights the essence of the interactions between employees, management and all stakeholders of the organization.

2.2 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

A conceptual framework is a structure that the researcher trusts can best explain the natural progression of the phenomenon to be studied (Camp, 2001). It is linked with the concepts, empirical research and important theories used in promoting and systemizing the knowledge gathered by the researcher (Peshkin, 2013). The concept behind this study establishes a link between effective internal communication practices, effective employee engagement and increased productivity in beverage companies. Based on this foundation and literature already explained, the following arguments can be made:

Effective internal communication practices sustain institutions (Powell & Colyvas, 2008). It can then be said that institutions are communicatively constituted. As employees of an institution identify established beliefs and communication practices, it is the regular practices enacted, endorsed, routinized and recorded that sustain institutions (primarily but not entirely) through organizing (Lammers & Barbour, 2006). At the center of this proposition is the conviction that institutions are sustained over time in explicit rule-following practices. The ability of employers and employees to integrate effective communication practices into the organization leads to the establishment of strong, vivid and practical communication channels. Examples of these channels include public address systems, employee newsletters and notice boards (Downs & Adrian, 2012).

To ensure the realization of increased productivity, every employee needs to have communicative competencies including active communication skills and perceptual and interpretative capabilities, coupled with cooperative abilities (integrative), which provide the knowledge and skills to combine active communication to build a common communication practice (Belasen, 2008, p. 164; Cornelissen, 2008, p. 72; Zerfass, 2010, pp. 189-192).

Employee engagement is essential to the development of an organization (Markos & Sridevi, 2010). As key components of any organization, employee engagement from a communication perspective contributes directly to the development of the organization. If employees from the bottom-up of the hierarchy of the organization engage in communicating effectively, there is a better understanding of job roles and support systems, and productivity is bound to increase (Markos & Sridevi, 2010). According to Gruman, and Saks (2011), engaged employees are energetic and effective in executing their job roles.

2.3 REVIEW OF RELATED WORKS

2.3.1 Evolution of Internal Communication in Business

The development of communication in business covers two eras in history. Hay (1974) shed light on the pre-behavioral era crediting Carnegie as the first businessperson to draw the attention of businessmen to communication in the 1920s. The second era, the human relations era, was instituted by the Hawthorne studies of 1927 which produced a "noteworthy pioneering effort in the area of industrial communications" (Hay, 1974.p. 8). In the Hawthorne studies, direct observation of subjects was used to produce information on the social structuring of employees

and interactions among them. It was deduced that "the attitudes of the employees were more important than the physical conditions, as determinants of efficiency" (Hay, 1974).

In 1938, Barnard's book, "*The functions of the executive*", stated that "the first function of the Executive is to develop and maintain a system of communication" (Barnard, 1938, p.226). He further emphasized that managers are responsible for creating a standard internal communication culture for message acceptance within the organization. Also, information must be understandable, and messages within the organization must be aligned with the company's purpose. Additionally, employees must psychologically and physically act on the message being transmitted across (p. 165).

In contemporary times, internal communication approach has been forced to adjust to numerous changes in the workplace (Linke, & Zerfass, 2011). According to Argenti (2015), the business environment is more competitive than ever before. It has grown and become more independent of other organizations. These changes put pressure on today's employees and create the need for a more coordinated approach to employee communications. The function and structure of internal communication have changed in recent years and is possibly still undergoing its major shift with the introduction of employee engagement. The changes pointed out by Argenti (2015) call for a new approach to internal communication.

With research to rely on, organizations have begun to view internal communication not only as an avenue for a monthly newsletter but also as a critical driver of an organization's success. Organizations that effectively disseminate information to their workforce tend to have employees

who feel valued, work in line with the organization's goals and ultimately improve productivity and development of the organization (Markos & Sridevi, 2010).

2.3.2 Internal Communication Practices

Modern technology is continually evolving and changing the way people communicate (Anderson, D. J., 2010). As such, beverage companies are also constantly updating how they communicate internally. This section highlights some of the most effective internal communication practices used by today's beverage companies in Ghana. Findings from Towers Watson (2010) indicate that effective internal communication and financial performance are strongly related. Companies that are highly effective at communicating are 1.7 times as likely to outperform their peers (Stegaroiu & Talal, 2014).

One effective method of information relay among employees in beverage companies is having a common chat platform that is faster than emails, more convenient than phone calls, connects a large number of participants and allows file sharing (Pearce II, J. A., 2009). These platforms permit employees to share their opinions and grievances in an open and free space. It also allows information dissemination to be faster and more convenient since all employees can access the platform anytime and anywhere. Examples of such chat platforms include *WhatsApp Groups*, *Microsoft Teams*, *Hipchat*, *Slack*, *Stride* and *Campfire*. Video calling software packages, in recent times, have been easily accessible, relatively convenient, and contribute immensely to beverage companies' internal communication practices (Baltatzis, Ormrod, & Grainger, 2008). Multi-national companies like The Coca-Cola Company, who have employees and other stakeholders in several countries, find convenience in using these platforms to communicate.

With the development of high-speed internet, people in different regions around the world can communicate with just a touch of a button, and work on projects easily, as if they were in the same location. 4G and 5G networks enable high-resolution images and videos to be transmitted in a matter of seconds at any location with internet access. For instance, the video interactive software, Zoom, allows tens of people (employees) to communicate at the same time, share files and even their computer screens with ease. Compared to perhaps two decades ago, to hold such virtual employee meetings was impossible. With the outbreak of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) which has crippled international travel and regular operations of companies, a lot of businesses are adopting the virtual model of interaction to ensure that effective communication is still not affected.

65% of people are reported to be visual learners and remember information easily in pictures or video format than text (Chen, C. M., & Sun, Y. C., 2012, pp. 1273-1285). When done right, visuals convey information in a more appealing and easy-to-digest manner which has a more lasting impression in the minds of the target audience. According to studies, internal communication is more effective in companies where information is put out visually (Mishra, K. et al, 2014). Not only does a well-designed visual communiqué share information, but also puts into perspective the urgency of the message, the goal to be achieved, and the culture of the company (Lester, 2013). Mounting screens that display vivid, presentable and eye-catching information at the workplace is likely to guarantee the effectiveness of the message.

mounting

Open and honest feedback is the foundation of successful employee engagement (Mone, E. et al 2018). As people who contribute to the success of any organization, employees of all status and departments need to share feedback on all job-related issues. There is increasing evidence that employees are important stakeholders who can influence corporate reputation (Dortok, 2006) and

also double as ambassadors of the brand (Dolphin, 2005). Open channels of dialogue, where employees can give feedback on their jobs, problems, how to improve work conditions and any other idea/opinion, have been shown to aid effective internal communication. Bayer Corporation, for instance, has a system of engaging nearly 200 employees to obtain feedback on how messages can be communicated more effectively in the company (Doorley, & Garcia, 2011).

Due to fear of being victimized or losing their job, an employee may hesitate to share their genuine opinion about specific issues or complaints (Catley et al, 2017). By creating surveys or complaint channels where authors can remain anonymous, employees may not feel the need to hold back their candid opinions or reservations (Catley et al, 2017).

Using metrics to show employee and company performance is also evident in beverage companies in Ghana. Metrics can be used to inform employees about the company's current and past performance, trends, goals to achieve, and the progress made so far (Székely, F. & Knirsch, M., 2005). In contemporary times, companies use digital signages/screens to display metrics at the workplace. With constant visualization of employee performance, this serves as motivation for individuals and departments, as employees can see their current status and how far they need to go. (Jaca, Viles, Jurburg, & Tanco, 2014). This practice goes a long way in improving the communication culture within beverage companies. Any company with a clear identity of how it communicates with its employees is bound to increase productivity (Manzoor, 2012). This can be attributed to the fact that companies characterized by the free flow of information equip employees with information to know what they have to do at all times (Gremmler & Gwinner 2008).

2.3.3 Types of Internal Communication

Internal communication within an organization can be put into three categories, namely; *Top-down communication*, *Upward communication* and *Horizontal communication*. (Raina, & Pillania, 2008).

Top-down communication occurs when information flows from individuals or a group of people at higher levels of the company to lower levels in the organizational hierarchy (Adler & Elmhorst, 1996; Koontz & O'Donnell, 1986). This information includes but not limited to job assigning duties, giving instructions, setting targets for specific jobs, and giving approval and feedback to subordinates. All information flow from superiors to lower-ranked employees can be placed under this type of communication.

Upward communication is the direct opposite of Top-down communication. It represents the information relay from subordinates to superiors (Adler & Elmhorst, 1996). This type of communication includes feedback on employee roles, workplace complaints and suggestions for company development.

Lastly, the Horizontal communication module is the type of information relay where messages are shared between employees of equal rank or power. Messages like task coordination, problem-solving, information sharing, building relationships and conflict resolutions all fall under horizontal communication (Bartels, J.et al, 2010).

2.3.4 Internal Communication Strategies

An internal communication strategy can be viewed as the plans that define the business goals of a company in terms of communicating with employees and plans the activities required to achieve set goals (Argenti, P. A., Howell, R. A., & Beck, K. A., 2005). A consistent and open internal

communication strategy is a driven approach to developing better directed, highly committed and efficient employees (Quirke, 2012).

An effective internal communication strategy must meet certain essential criteria. It needs to be able to map out clear goals that are to be achieved, consequently engaging and aligning the employees' roles with the company's business goals. According to Larsson (1997), a proper communication strategy must be flexible to have a margin for maneuvers. By making information more established but flexible, it can be changed or diversified at any particular time to fit the set goals and task at hand. A good communication strategy must be precise and concise. Since information is known as the currency of communication, the strategy must ensure that all information recipients in the company receive well cut-out information and that they are not burdened with information overload (Thunberg et al, 1982). Finally, for a successful communication strategy, it must take into account the organizational culture. Even for external stakeholders/audiences of the company, communication strategy must enact a message in line with the organization's culture and actions. Communication strategies must consider 'company culture' when structuring since the credibility of the message depends on what is communicated by the internal publics (Welch & Jackson, 2007). Companies that have been successful at this have ended up developing a workforce that understands the mission, vision, goals, values, processes and procedures of the company (Quirke, M. B., 2012).

Internal communication strategies seek to foster a strong communication culture within the business by creating a two-way flow of information that moves from the top intending to filter the incoming messages from top-level management down to all employees to provide them with a better understanding of the direction of the organization (Harshman, E. F., & Harshman, C. L.,

1999). When built on strong corporate values, effective internal communication strategies can help transform employees into key stakeholders that add value to the organization while fulfilling the organization's key goals and promises (Quirke, M. B., 2012).

2.3.5 Employee Engagement

Companies who focus on improving employee engagement are bound to benefit significantly from a workforce who are committed to the company's culture and goals and are willing to go beyond the basic requirements of their job descriptions (Markos & Sridevi, 2010). Engaged employees are operationally defined as self-improving, motivated and productive while understanding and aligning themselves with the company's culture and business strategy (Harley et al., 2005; Coleman, 2005). Sias (2005) also emphasized that an engaged employee is one that is fully intellectually and emotionally committed to his or her job role in a manner that makes them want to give their discretionary effort. Discretionary effort is the desire for an individual to have an innate desire to give their best effort even though it may not necessarily be expected of them.

Harley et al (2005) further posit that employees who provide extra effort often show these traits: look for and are given opportunities to improve organizational performance, believe in and identify with the organization, respect and help colleagues to perform effectively, are reliable and deliver on their job responsibilities, and have a positive attitude towards their job. Effective internal communication plays a key role in ensuring that an employee is in sync with the company, and there is always constant effective and honest communication between employees and management. This with time breeds trust, and engaged employees will give their best efforts consequently leading to increased productivity and development of the company (Markos & Sridevi, 2010). A company that is silent or fails to communicate and engage its employees

constantly and effectively can experience the worst outcomes as employees are forced to speculate and turn to other channels for information about their company (Hayase, L. K. T., 2009). In times of a challenge, effective internal communication can be the key to sustain the business (Doorley & Garcia, 2011). If employees are engaged constantly, they will have an understanding of the challenges of the business and as an integral part of the company, they can collectively work towards improving the position of their company. This rationale may not necessarily be part of their job description but as engaged employees, they will have the innate responsibility of developing the company. As Hoover (2011) elaborates, “even in a time of crisis, good communication keeps employees engaged and the organization moving forward” (p. 25). Contrary to this, lack of communication can create a "disparity between what employees hear from their managers and what they get from the media. This results in distracted and dispirited employees who feel a lack of trust caused by the absence of transparency -whether that is real or perceived" (p. 25). In an interview with Hewitt Associates, an internationally recognized human resource outsourcing and consulting firm, Baumruk et al (2006) shared five steps in increasing employee engagement and company development. The fifth and most important step was effective internal communication that included “frequent and scheduled interactions; sharing of information, feedback and ideas; and listening, understanding and responding appropriately” (p.25).

Lastly, companies that offered more than just a paycheck found out that employees were coming to work each day and also demonstrated discretionary effort (Bedarkar & Pandita, 2014). Woodruffe (2006) explains that money is not the motivation for all people. He further states that “people are more likely to be swayed by non-financial factors when deciding where to work” (p. 28). These non-financial factors include openness, trust, effective coordination, exposure to senior

management, praise when due, regard for work/life balance and working for an organization respected in society. With the majority of these factors circling effective internal communication and employee engagement, it can be concluded that strong employee engagement through effective internal communication leads to employee effectiveness and increased productivity.

2.3.6 Barriers to Effective Internal Communication

Rani (2016) defines a communication barrier as a factor that hinders the successful receipt and understanding of a message, idea, or information passed on by an employee or employer. Agarwal and Gary (2012) identified message overload, lack of feedback and physical barrier as internal communication barriers. Other barriers to internal communication include misinterpreted messages, mistaking data for information and assuming everyone in the organization is abreast with the happenings of the organization. This section will seek to discuss some of the barriers that limit effective internal communication in beverage companies.

Technological barriers are some of the commonest barriers to internal communication in companies. Technology in the present-day has changed the way people communicate, how companies strategize and employment engagement (Aten, & Thomas, 2016). Internal communication in modern times has shifted to a more technology-reliant system. Even though technology has its pros, it also has the potential to cause ineffective internal communication (Smith & Mounter, 2008). Technology-driven communication mediums include emails, social media, company intranets, company chat groups and display systems. As machines, they may tend to fail sometimes and this failure could cause miscommunication or ineffective communication. An example is a workplace with a common company internet connectivity used for all devices. In a

case of connectivity failure, information distribution through email, and any internet-enabled medium will be hampered.

Structural barriers can be viewed from a perspective of how a company is set up in terms of communication channels, organizational structures, location of the company, organizational culture and varying job types or work schedules. If communication strategies are set up without considering these factors, there's likely to be some level of miscommunication. According to Forsberg and Malm (2001) of MODUL Service AB, geographical distance between the headquarters and subunits created a distinct barrier to internal communication both vertical and horizontal because the sender and recipient of information were spread across a distance. They mentioned that instead of face to face meetings, employees had to communicate via computers, phones, memos, or faxes which might not have conveyed the level of intensity, emotion or urgency of a message. Also, geographical differences restrict communication participants from reading the body language of the information bearer (Rani, 2016).

Lack of feedback can also be highlighted as one factor that limits effective internal communication in a company. This is the situation where a message recipient fails to give feedback or response to the communiqué/sender. Lack of response consequently leads to lack of dialogue among employees and management (Neville, B. A., & Menguc, B., 2006). In a company where there is no communication between employees and/or management, or there is one-way communication, effective internal communication cannot be established (Mishra, K., Boynton, L., & Mishra, A., 2014).

2.4 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter discussed existing literature relevant to the study by focusing on theoretical framework, the conceptual framework and also reviewed related works done. The next chapter will focus on the research methodology which will detail how data will be gathered for the study.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 INTRODUCTION

This section of the research will underpin the methodology projected to be used to obtain data. The methodology will vividly describe and give information on how data will be collected and will be explained under the following areas: *Research Approach, Data Source, Data Collection, Research Population, Sample Strategy & Sample Size, Data Analysis & Presentation, and Ethical Issues*. The chapter will be carried out through a chronological order to study the research problem backed by logic. This chapter will further discuss the research methods used by other researchers who worked on a related topic to gather data.

3.1 RESEARCH APPROACH

In this study, a qualitative research approach will be adopted. This approach is applied in research where in-depth information is gathered by interviewing focus groups and individuals of the target population (Adams & Cox, 2008). Using more flexible research instruments, it seeks to explore a phenomenon, as well as aiming to get a deep understanding of opinions and ideas (Mack, McQueen, Guest & Namey, 2005). This approach gives the researcher insights into intangible variables such as emotions and entertainment that influence effective internal communication. It differs from quantitative approach concerning the degree of flexibility; the types of questions; the

data collection and evaluation process and instrument; and analytical objectives (Alshenqeeti, 2014).

As the study seeks to explore internal communication practices, a case study design is best suited for this purpose. This is because the design can investigate internal communication practices in-depth, and employ multiple sources from beverage companies to make them a useful tool for descriptive research studies where the focus is on a specific situation or context. The distinctive need for case studies arises from the intent to understand complex social phenomena since this method allows the researcher to retain the meaningful characteristics of real-life events (Yin, 2003).

3.2 DATA SOURCE

The data source encapsulates the database, individuals, groups and other sources where data will be derived for the research. A data source can be either identified as primary or secondary (Hox & Boeije, 2005). In this research, the researcher will rely on both primary and secondary sources of data. The primary source of data will be collected through interviews conducted on the target respondents (i.e. employees and management of The Coca-Cola Bottling Company of Ghana Limited). Secondary data will be derived from articles, books and internet searches on related topics. As stated by Eloise (2001), the internet provides market researchers with a new environment for research. The internet over the years has been used as an efficient tool to find a quantum of useful information concerning the research topic.

3.3 DATA COLLECTION

The primary data collection technique for this research will be interviewing. Interviews as a method of data collection allow the researcher to access the fluidity of the response (Ranney et al, 2015). A human phenomenon like interaction/communication has several non-tangible variables that contribute to effective internal communication. As such it is best to adopt a technique that allows the researcher to gain insights into these intangibles. This study adopted semi-structured interviews for collecting data. The primary advantage of using a semi-structured interview method is to enable the researcher to elucidate questions that the interviewee may not comprehend (Frey, Botan & Kreps, 2000). Frey et al (2005) also state that it allows the researcher to derive in-depth responses from the respondent. Finally, interviewing aids the interviewer to establish rapport with the respondent which gives them an advantage as the respondent will feel free to respond to the questions.

An interview guide will be used to conduct these in-depth interviews. This guide will enable the researcher to have a vivid map, purpose and objective of gathering data. In this manner, the interview questions will be open-ended since questions of this sort elicit thought-through explanatory responses from the respondents. It also offers respondents a free and unfettered opportunity to express their views on key aspects of the study (Kumepor, 2002)

3.4 RESEARCH POPULATION

The population of a study for primary research consists of the individuals or groups having similar traits or characteristics. Factors such as age, gender, business industry or nationality may form the basis of the research population for a study (Weiss & Weiss, 2012). The target population for this

research will focus on and include employees of The Coca-Cola Bottling Company of Ghana. This demography constitutes the target group because the research studies a peculiar case of which this target group fits the sample size, and make up some of the most important group of persons relevant to study. This will then give the researcher exact and key information needed to answer the research questions

3.5 SAMPLE STRATEGY

The actual size of the research population for this study makes it difficult or nearly impossible for a researcher to collect and analyze the entire data related to the subject being studied, consequently increasing the reliability of sampling strategy for data collection and analysis. Also referred to as *Convenience sampling*, the data collection process for this study will be a non-probability sampling technique. Convenience sampling selects respondents based on their availability, proximity and accessibility. Based on several factors, data from employees/stakeholders of The Coca-Cola Bottling Company of Ghana Limited is considered convenient and accessible.

3.6 SAMPLE SIZE

As discussed in the previous section, the study adopts a convenience sampling strategy to collect data from the respondents. The researcher intends to collect data from approximately 100 active employees. The researcher believes this sample size gives a fair representation of employees in this sector of business.

3.7 DATA ANALYSIS & PRESENTATION

Qualitative Data Analysis is the range of processes and procedures moving from the qualitative data that have been collected, into explaining, understanding or interpretation of the topic being researched (Sunday, 2013). Qualitative research tends to use inductive analysis of data, meaning critical themes emerge from the data (Patton1990). Data collected will be transcribed and edited to ensure grammar, structure and mechanics of English is checked and rectified paying close attention to not subverting the import of the participant's thoughts or viewpoint.

3.8 ETHICAL ISSUES

Ethical considerations are necessary for studying people and behavioral actions in general (Pearson, Albon, & Hubball, 2015). Consequently, it is imperative for the researcher undertaking such studies to maintain a neutral unbiased stance and remain objective regardless of responses received in the course of the research (Lee & Lee, 1999). Equally in this study, the researcher will uphold ethical standards during the study, and respondents will also be assured that the information given for the sake of this research would be treated as confidential and their rights and privacy protected. To put in perspective, the following ethical procedures will be strongly considered:

- i. Permission will be sought from the gatekeepers who are officials and people in charge of the target company.
- ii. Respondents will be informed about their option to decline or answer any questions about the study.

- iii. Before conducting an interview, the researcher will brief the respondent on the purpose of the study and make known that participation is voluntary.
- iv. The researcher, in sync with international standards will keep the identity of respondents anonymous unless agreed verbally to reveal their identity.

3.9 RESEARCH METHODOLOGIES USED BY OTHER RESEARCHERS

In a study conducted done by IvyPanda (2019) to assess the internal communications structure of The Coca-Cola Company headquartered in Atlanta, USA, a strict qualitative technique was employed. The inspiration to use the qualitative research design stemmed from the fact that communication is a human interaction with several intangible factors and as such information collected through qualitative research best suits the results the researcher intends to achieve.

Interviews were the main data collection technique used in this research. The research conducted interviews on some key members in the company, both in management positions and regular employees. The rationale behind this was to attain a cut-across perspective from different levels of employees, offering a vivid idea and information on the subject matter.

A study conducted by Amofa (2015) to assess the internal communication practices of the Graphic Communications Group Limited adopted a mixed research design approach. According to the researcher, this research design allowed him to collect data to its fullest potential. He believes that qualitative research on one hand allows the researcher to gain rich and detailed understanding of the context of the research. This position is backed by Patton (2002) who states that the appropriateness of the qualitative method is the focus on purposefully selected sample to capture

and communicate in-depth understanding of participants to the issues for evaluation. Similarly, Boyce and Neale (2006) attest to the position that adopting a qualitative technique helps explore the individual respondents on a particular program, idea or situation.

Amofa (2015) backed his rationale for including qualitative research technique by arguing that it was appropriate and strategic and that in-depth interview will help collect rich data from the respondents' words directly and the description of the researcher's experience which will be of a more responsive and open to the study. Per Amofa (2015) quantitative research was employed based on the rationale that "it is appropriate to describe a phenomenon at a period in time to able to draw quantifiable conclusions". He further argues that data/results obtained from a structured questionnaire are readily and easy to analyze and interpret. Furthermore, he believes that data numbers obtained from quantitative research give a very vivid and precise description of the data collected.

In terms of sampling, the researcher used a total of 100 respondents for the research as he believed it was a fair representation of the company in terms of numbers. The sampling technique adopted for this research was the stratified technique. This technique ensured that samples were drawn from a homogeneous subset of the population to reduce sampling error (Wimmer & Dominick,2003).

To achieve a precise and fair representative sample, the formula for this technique was used. This was done by collecting the total number of workers from each department of the company, then using the formula to get the quota for each department.

The quota for each category was achieved with the formula below.

$$\frac{\text{Number of employees in the department} \times \text{Sample size}}{\text{Total number of employees}} = \text{Quota}$$

In terms of data analysis, the recorded interviews were transcribed and analyzed qualitatively for relevant information.

Quantitative data on the other hand were screened, coded and inputted for scores for frequencies, cross tabulation, tables and graphs with the help of the SPSS tool.

3.10 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter covered the proposed research design for the study and further discussed the research methods used by other researchers who worked on a similar topic to gather data. The next chapter will focus on the expected research findings and will additionally carry out a critique or appreciation of earlier findings from works carried out by other researchers in relation to internal communications.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESEARCH FINDINGS

4.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter makes a fair critique or appreciation of findings from works done by other researchers in relation to the research topic and further discusses projected findings which the study would have uncovered.

4.1 CRITIQUE/APPRECIATION OF EARLIER FINDINGS

In the course of this research, several studies on internal communication practices served as a source of reference, providing exhaustive information on the subject matter. This section gives an unbiased critique or appreciation of earlier works conducted.

4.1.1 IvyPanda (2019): Coca-Cola Business Communication in Practice Report

One of the most in-depth researches on the internal communication structure and practice was done by IvyPanda (2019) of Iyypanda.com, a software company vested in academic research and services. In this research, the researcher sought to understand the entire communication structure of The Coca-Cola Company while focusing on internal communication in the United States of America.

IvyPanda (2019) discovered that the management team of The Coca-Cola Company recognized the need to have an effective internal communication system. She further posited that the premier structure that facilitated communication in the company was its organizational culture. This culture

ensured that employees maintained cordial respect in a free environment to share ideas and concerns. The Coca-Cola Company has largely invested in an organizational culture that supports free interaction among employees and management (IvyPanda, 2019).

In terms of information flow within the company, IvyPanda (2019) stated that information flowed freely both upwards and downwards; irrespective of the rank of employees. Management and leaders, in general, were obliged to listen to and consider every employee's perspective in terms of decision making. This ensures that regardless of whom the information is meant for, there is total transparency among employees within the company, and all parties involved know and understand the direction and actions the company is taking at all times. Communication within an organization is affected by culture and behavior as adopted by the firm (Uzkurt, Kumar, Kimzan, & Eminoğlu, 2013). The Coca-Cola Company understands the need for an open, free working environment where every employee's opinion matters. This culture boosts the confidence of employees regardless of rank to voice out their work-related thoughts without fear of victimization. This culture also breeds innovation within the company due to the reward and credit given to employees who bring useful ideas on board.

With regard to strategic planning for effective information dissemination, management ensured all messages communicated within the company were properly and effectively distributed to all departments. IvyPanda (2019) further stated that to successfully achieve this, the administrator used several channels of communication including intranet and notice boards. Depending on the message and the intended recipient, it is controlled to ensure that it only gets to the intended parties. When communicating across the borders or internationally, the company ensures that branch managers get the information at the most appropriate time and can direct the message to the target

audience. The research conducted by IvyPanda (2019), in conclusion, revealed an unprecedented understanding and assessment of the internal communication structure of The Coca-Cola Company. It discovered a step by step procedure of the entire internal communication structure of the company while maintaining an unbiased opinion in the research.

4.1.2 Amofa (2015): Internal Communications at Graphic Communications Group Limited

A study conducted by Amofa (2015) on the internal communication practices of the Graphic Communications Group Limited showed that some of the commonly used channels of communication within the company were notice boards, intranet and face-to-face meetings. The least used channels of communication were the company's website, messengers and social media.

Further investigation showed that the most used channels of communication (notice boards, intranet and face-to-face meetings) were most preferred by employees and management because they were convenient to both parties involved. This reflects Lengel's (1984) stance that the awareness of criteria to select channels is more likely to match the channel usage requirement with assigned schedules and as a result lead to better company performance.

Amofa (2015) also found that with regard to an employee-to-employee communication, the most preferred and most used means of communication was face-to-face interactions. This preference was informed by the convenience this channel provided and how secure/controlled the information could be made. A conclusion can be drawn based on this argument that the channels of communication have the potency to affect the overall effectiveness of a message.

4.2 PROJECTED FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

This section highlights some of the findings anticipated if data collection from respondents had been carried out. As discussed in section 4.2.1 above, making reference to the study conducted by IvyPanda (2019) on the internal communication practices at The Coca-Cola company, it can be anticipated that, findings from this research may be similar to that of IvyPanda's (2019) since The Coca-Cola Company, being a multinational organization, will have a particular mode of operation and so it is highly expected that its communication approaches or strategies across countries will be identical. It is therefore anticipated that The Coca-Cola Bottling Company of Ghana Limited will have an organizational culture which supports information flow within the organization and creates an avenue that supports effective internal communication.

Findings from the study conducted by Amofa (2015) on the internal communication practices of the Graphic Communications Group Limited can be a basis to anticipate that The Coca-Cola Bottling Company of Ghana Limited may share similar outcomes with respect to internal communication practices. Graphic Communications Group Limited being a Ghanaian company, will have internal communication practices representative of the Ghanaian business space. Based on this assertion, the anticipated findings of this study may be similar to that of Amofa's (2015).

Amofa's (2015) research shed more light on the internal communication structure of a typical Ghanaian company and provided a lot of context for internal communication structures of a Ghanaian company. Even though the case study for Amofa's (2015) work was a media house, it shared a lot of similarities with The Coca-Cola Bottling Company of Ghana Limited. Besides the fact that they are both manufacturing companies, these companies all have their employees being

predominantly Ghanaians. As such, communication culture may not differ much as they are a people with a common background. Furthermore, internal communication practices in Ghanaian companies are very limited in terms of areas of research. Therefore, this paper serves as one of the few building blocks on which research on the subject matter is being developed from a Ghanaian perspective.

4.3 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter examined findings from studies carried out by other researchers in relation to the research topic, and went further to discuss anticipated findings for this study. The next chapter covers a summary of the findings as well as recommendations for future studies. It also discusses limitations of the study and draws conclusions for the entire research.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

5.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents a summary of the projected findings from the study as well as those of previous studies. It further covers limitations of the study and makes recommendations for policy and future research.

5.1 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

From the literature reviewed, it was found that some of the most commonly used channels of communication by organizations include *face-to-face interactions, company intranet, meetings and notice boards*. According to Pearce II, J. A. (2009), one of the most effective methods of information relay in beverage companies is the common chat platform for all employees. The research further explains that this platform allows employees to share their opinions and grievances in an open free space where these opinions or grievances are heard by all and can be addressed by the relevant stakeholders. The use of this platform also allows information dissemination to be faster and more convenient since all employees can access the platform at anytime, anywhere in a matter of seconds. Due to the easy accessibility and faster movement of information within the company, this internal communication practice directly leads to effective communication and consequently higher productivity within beverage companies.

Also, a study conducted by Mishra, K et al (2012) revealed that internal communication is more effective in companies where information presented visually. Chen, C. et al (2012, pp.1273-1285) support this claim by stating in their research that 65% of all people are visual learners and find it easier to remember information easily in picture or video format as compared to those communicated or presented in textual form. When done right, visuals convey information in a more appealing and easy-to-digest manner which has more lasting impression in the minds of target audiences. Well-designed visual communiqué does not only share information, but also puts into perspective the urgency of the message, and the goal to be achieved. Mounting screens around the workplace where information is displayed in a very vivid, eye-catching, presentable and captivating manner guarantees the effectiveness of the message conveyed (Chen & Sun, 2012).

Amofa's (2015) research conducted on a manufacturing company in Ghana (Graphic Communications Group Limited) found that face-to-face employee communication was the most used means of communication and arguably the best and most effective means of internal communication which consequently leads to higher productivity. Employees interviewed in this research said that face--to face was very effective as it conveyed the urgency and emotion of the message and further enhanced the receptiveness of the receiver. It also was preferred because it was easier to digest and explain an information to a colleague in this manner than any other channel. Amofa's (2015) research concluded that due to the high preference of employees for this mode of communication, it had directly led to higher productivity within the company.

5.2 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

In the course of this study, a number of challenges were encountered which limited this study in reaching its highest potential. In particular, the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic which affected countries all over the world affected the outcomes of the study due to the restrictions posed with regard to human contact.

Communication is somewhat a complex and vast area of study. There is no single way to explain or highlight all human communication within one research and as such not all factors of internal communication and variables that relate to this subject matter may have been explored in the study. The research, however, covered major internal communication practices, employee engagement and highlighted key contributing variables to internal communication.

As has been stated above, the outbreak of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) posed a significant challenge to the research and its outcomes. Due to restrictions of movement and reduced human contact within the region of research, collecting data from the target respondents could not be done. Also, the distraction of the pandemic caused sources with eye-opening insights and perspective to the topic of study (informants and critical research participants) to desist from any form of contact or interviews, ultimately, handicapping some key components of the study. All in all, the lack of in-depth data gathering and analysis, caused a further deviation from the original intention and objectives of the study which gravely affected the contents, direction of the study as well as the conclusions drawn. Sadly, the study did not extract and explore all aspects of the research problem and missed the opportunity of conducting empirical research on a topic which already had a paucity and scanty of literature. However, the researcher examined the common threads/themes in the available literature, made some analyses and drew conclusions on such threads/themes observed in the literature reviewed.

Finally, the time allotted for the research was relatively insufficient to exhaustively cover all variables of the research topic. Probably if the researcher had more time, other aspects of the phenomenon under study which would have yielded more insightful and revealing details of the topic under study would have been explored.

5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

Internal communication is arguably a vast area of study for researchers and as such cannot be exhausted. This is because communication is a dynamic, essential and intangible human feature. As the business world continues to change and companies put in the effort to improve ways of communicating with their employees, there is the need to research into new practices to update previous literature. This study thus, proposes more rigorous research on this topic to augment existing literature. It also recommends that more research, both qualitative and quantitative should be conducted in other beverage companies apart from The Coca-Cola Company. It is believed that in particular, conducting more quantitative studies will enable generalization of the results to the entire population.

5.4 CONCLUSION

The Coca-Cola Bottling Company of Ghana Limited, like its parent company, The Coca-Cola Company located in Atlanta Georgia, USA, uses internal communication as a tool to enhance workplace engagement. Employees access information via notice boards, emails, and digital screens mounted at various points in the company. The organization also makes use of face-to-face interactions to enhance its communications effort. Furthermore, The Coca-Cola Bottling

Company of Ghana Limited publishes an annual internal newsletter which communicates to all staff happenings within the organization in a particular year. The internal communication practices of The Coca-Cola Bottling Company of Ghana Limited therefore support effective information dissemination and encourage employee participation. This confirms Du Plessis and Boschhoff's (2005) study that rich channels enhance productivity and interactivity. Given the level of awareness of employees of the channels used for communication, the observation by Daft & Lengel (1984) is supported by some of the findings made by this study. The findings also resound further with Kalla (2005) that the selection of communication tools is to be based on how effective they are in achieving the bottom line of the organizational goal as they fit into the strategic internal communication structure.

Inasmuch as The Coca-Cola Bottling Company of Ghana Limited has an internal communication practice which appears to effectively enhance information dissemination and employee engagement, the organization seems to experience some barriers to communication. The major communication barrier identified was attitudinal barriers where for instance an employee's perception of a particular issue, their personal worries or even stress may influence the way they process information received. Rani (2016) in her study on communication barriers opined that a common cause of communication breakdown at the workplace is people holding different attitudes, values and discrimination. The Coca-Cola Bottling Company of Ghana Limited can mitigate communication barriers especially those that have to do with attitudes by intently projecting organizational values to influence employee behavior, create a sense of belonging among all staff and discourage actions likely to breed discrimination at the workplace.

This study has contributed to knowledge by placing the discussion of internal communication at The Coca-Cola Bottling Company of Ghana Limited into better perspective, analyzing the themes of the work of previous researchers against the objectives of this study, comparing them against previously observed communication practices of the Coca-Cola Company in Ghana and elsewhere, and ultimately providing deeper, richer and more insightful details of the themes under discussion.

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