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IMPACT OF CSR COMMUNICATION ON REPUTATION OF HIGHER EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS IN GHANA – A CASE OF ACCRA TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY

BY

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DECLARATION BY STUDENT

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

Emmanuel Tetteh-Opata Akoto MASPRM24033 .... 12/12/2025

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CERTIFICATION BY SUPERVISOR

This Dissertation/Thesis has been prepared and presented under my supervision according to the guidelines for supervision and förmatting of Dissertation/Thesis laid down by the University of

Media, Arts and Communication, UniMAC.

Rebecca Baah-Ofori (PhD) 12/12/25

Supervisor Signature Date

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated first to the Highest God, whose guidance and grace have carried me through every stage of this journey. I also dedicate this work to my mother and my entire family, who have stood by me with constant encouragement, support, and love.

I am truly grateful to all my lecturers for the knowledge and direction they have provided me along the way. My sincere appreciation goes especially to Dr. Rebecca Baah-Ofori, my thesis supervisor, whose patience, advice, and steady support helped me complete this project.

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the impact of corporate social responsibility (CSR) communication on the perceived reputation of Accra Technical University (ATU) from the perspective of key stakeholders of the university. The study adopted a convergent mixed-methods design, collecting quantitative data through structured questionnaires from 379 respondents, including students and alumni, and qualitative data through semi-structured interviews with three staff members of the ATU Public Relations Directorate. Quantitative findings were analyzed using descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and simple linear regression, while qualitative data were examined thematically with the help of NVivo 12. The results of the study indicate that stakeholders perceive ATU's CSR initiatives as authentic, socially impactful, and aligned with the university's mission, and that strategic communication significantly enhances the institution's reputation ($r = 0.854$, $p < 0.01$; $\beta = 0.836$, $R^2 = 0.730$). The study also observed that clarity, authenticity, multi-channel dissemination, and stakeholder-focused messaging are central to effective CSR communications. The findings of the study contribute practically to maintaining strategic and audience-specific CSR communication that helps to build institutional credibility and reputation. The study recommends that ATU enhance the regularity of CSR communications, leverage digital platforms for broader engagement, and maintain centralized quality control to ensure message consistency and authenticity. These insights offer guidance for higher education institutions seeking to strengthen reputation through strategic CSR communication.

Keywords: Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), CSR Communication, Institutional Reputation, Higher Education, Stakeholder Perception, Convergent Mixed-Methods, Accra Technical University

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) has become an important topic of discussion and investigation among academic scholars and organizations due to its potential impact of influencing corporate reputation and subsequently overall organizational performance (Ajayi & Mmutle, 2021). Since stakeholders are now more interested in how organizations affect society and the environment, the social and environmental crises that many organizations have faced over the past three decades have also reinforced the significance of corporate social responsibility. Stakeholders' assessment of organizations as "good" or "bad" is influenced by these effects on society that the organization has on the environment, which in turn determines which organizations they choose to affiliate with or disassociate from. As a result, companies are spending more money on CSR initiatives in an attempt to improve stakeholder perception. This is frequently accomplished by communicating CSR initiatives in a coordinated manner in an effort to win over stakeholders and improve the company's reputation by projecting a favourable image.

Evidence from existing literature has shown a strong link between corporate social responsibility (CSR) and organizational reputation. Studies such as Kim (2019), Kim and Ferguson (2018), and Young et al. (2019) demonstrate that CSR initiatives—when effectively communicated—enhance stakeholders' trust and shape favourable perceptions of corporate character. How successfully an organization's CSR initiatives meet stakeholders' social and environmental expectations frequently determines its reputation (Fatma & Rahman, 2015; Huang et al., 2022). As a result, CSR has developed into a significant reputational advantage that may set businesses apart, especially in fiercely competitive markets. Therefore, an effective CSR strategy not only demonstrates moral dedication but also offers a clear edge in fostering enduring stakeholder loyalty.

However, CSR may only have a positive impact on stakeholders' perceptions of the company (business reputation) if they are initially aware of the organization's social responsibility initiatives. According to Kim and Ferguson (2018), effective communication is essential to raising stakeholders' awareness of and belief in CSR initiatives in order to achieve the intended company reputation. According to Jiang et al. (2022), CSR communication improves a company's reputation, increases staff dedication and customer happiness, and draws in overseas investment. Therefore, organizations must use effective communication methods and comprehend the meanings and interpretations stakeholders attach to the CSR activities and communication if they want CSR to contribute to a positive reputation (Ajayi and Mmutle (2021).

Strategic communication of CSR efforts has become a critical instrument for establishing legitimacy, trust, and stakeholder engagements as firms realize the need of aligning their values with social expectations (Kim & Ferguson, 2018; Lang & Ivanova-Gongne, 2019). This study examines the relationship between organizational reputation and strategic CSR communication, concentrating on higher education institutions (HEIs), which are in a unique position to produce knowledge and serve as social actors (Varghese, 2022; Diehl et al., 2018). This study is relevant both academically and practically because it has the ability to bridge a significant gap between CSR theory and communication practices in the educational field (Harrison, 2019; Vito, 2025). In a time when the public, regulators, and students are all scrutinizing colleges more and more, reputation has emerged as a crucial factor in determining institutional success (Sarstedt & Schloderer, 2010; Fombrun & van Riel, 1997). A approach for HEIs to show accountability, build stakeholder confidence, and stand out in a more competitive market is through strategic CSR communication (Xu, 2022; Abukari et al., 2021). This study adds to the growing body of knowledge on corporate social responsibility (CSR) communication from an academic perspective by placing it in the context of mission-driven institutions (Freeman et al., 2018; Ekpebu, 2024). For university administrators, communication strategists, and legislators looking to improve institutional credibility and stakeholder alignment, it offers useful ideas that may be put into practice (Kim, 2019; Quartey & Quartey, 2015).

Sarstedt and Schloderer (2010) conceptualize reputation as a collective assessment of a firm’s past actions and future prospects, shaped by stakeholder perceptions. Kim (2019) and Kim & Ferguson (2018) emphasize that effective CSR communication, marked by transparency, informativeness, and relevance may enhances CSR knowledge, trust, and ultimately, reputation. In the non-profit and educational sectors, Sarstedt and Schloderer (2010) propose a dual-dimensional model of reputation (affective and cognitive), while Vito (2025) highlights the need for stakeholder-specific measurement tools. Studies by Abukari et al. (2021) and Ekpebu (2024) further underscore the role of digital platforms and dialogic communication in shaping e-reputation. However, as Tetrevova et al. (2021) and Varghese (2022) note, CSR communication in HEIs remains underdeveloped, often lacking strategic coherence and stakeholder engagement.

Despite these contributions, several gaps persist. First, much of the existing research focuses on corporate or Western contexts, with limited attention to CSR communication in African or educational settings. Second, while the literature acknowledges the importance of communication tone, transparency, and stakeholder alignment, few studies empirically examine how these elements interact to influence reputation in HEIs. Third, there is a lack of context-specific models that integrate stakeholder theory, signaling theory, and CSR communication frameworks to explain reputation formation in non-profit institutions. This study addresses these gaps by investigating how strategic CSR communication—defined by clarity, consistency, and stakeholder relevance—affects organizational reputation in a Ghanaian higher education institution. It contributes a localized, theory-informed perspective that enhances both scholarly understanding and institutional practice.

The study is carried out in a public higher education institution in Ghana, where corporate social responsibility (CSR) is becoming more widely accepted as a means of fostering stakeholder trust, institutional branding, and community engagement. But in this setting, CSR communication frequently stays unstructured, disjointed, or unduly charitable, with no strategic alignment with institutional objectives.

1.2 Problem Statement

Even though corporate social responsibility (CSR) is becoming more widely acknowledged as a strategic tool for strengthening stakeholder trust and the credibility of an organization, little is known about how strategic CSR communication affects an organization's reputation in higher education institutions (HEIs). There is little empirical data on how these dynamics operate among non-profit, mission-driven organizations like universities, despite a wealth of research confirming that effective CSR communication—which is defined by transparency, informativeness, and stakeholder relevance—positively influences corporate reputation in for-profit sectors (Kim, 2019; Kim & Ferguson, 2018; Huang et al., 2022). In African contexts, where CSR initiatives in HEIs are frequently informal, charitable, and inadequately incorporated into institutional strategy, this disparity is especially noticeable (Abugre & Nyuur, 2015; Varghese, 2022).

Theoretically, there are still concerns on how the frameworks of CSR communication, signaling theory, and stakeholder theory interact to explain reputation building in educational environments. Few studies have combined these viewpoints to create a cohesive model that applies to HEIs, even though signaling theory emphasizes the role of communication in reducing information asymmetry (Connelly et al., 2011; Reutzel et al., 2024) and stakeholder theory stresses the significance of meeting diverse stakeholder expectations (Freeman et al., 2018; Mahajan et al., 2023). Furthermore, current research frequently ignores the role that stakeholder participation, communication channel, and tone play in modulating the relationship between CSR and reputation, especially in culturally complex contexts like Ghana (Abukari et al., 2021; Ekpebu, 2024).

As HEIs increasingly deal with criticism on their reputations from the public, regulators, and students, the absence of focused and, theory-informed research creates a key gap. Universities run the risk of insufficient use of CSR as a means for distinction, trust-building, and long-term sustainability if they do not have a comprehensive knowledge of how strategic CSR communication affects stakeholder views and institutional reputation. In addition to promoting scholarly debate, closing this gap will help shape effective communication tactics that support institutional missions and stakeholder expectations.

Therefore, this study seeks to investigate the impact of strategic CSR communication on organizational reputation within a Ghanaian higher educational institution. By integrating stakeholder and signaling theories with CSR communication models, the study aims to develop a context-specific framework that explains how message clarity, transparency, and stakeholder engagement shape reputational outcomes. The findings will contribute to both theory and practice by offering actionable insights for HEIs seeking to enhance their reputational capital through purposeful and culturally resonant CSR communication.

1.3 Research Objectives

1.3.1 Main Objective/aim of the Study

The aim of this study is to examine how strategic communication of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives influences the institutional reputation of higher education institutions, with a focus on stakeholder perceptions and communication practices at Accra Technical University.

1.3.2 Specific Objectives

Specifically, the study aims to:

1. Analyze the strategies and channels used by Accra Technical University (ATU) communicate their CSR activities to stakeholders at
2. Assess the perceptions of key stakeholders regarding the CSR initiatives Communicated by ATU.
3. Investigate the relationship between the strategic communication of CSR and the perceived reputation of ATU.

1.4 Research Questions

1. What communication strategies and channels does ATU use to convey their CSR activities to internal and external stakeholders?
2. How do key stakeholder groups perceive and evaluate the CSR initiatives communicated by ATU?
3. What is the relationship between the strategic communication of CSR activities and the perceived institutional reputation of ATU?

1.5 Significance of the Study

The study's findings deepen the current understanding about how strategic CSR communication shapes stakeholder perceptions and contribute to the reputation of higher educational institutions (HEIs), particularly within the Ghanaian context. Through the provision of a context-specific framework that combines theoretical lenses like stakeholder theory and signaling theory with CSR communication qualities like message clarity, transparency, and stakeholder relevance, it advances the body of literature. This research closes a gap by examining how mission-driven, non-profit organizations might use CSR communication as a mechanism for institutional legitimacy and reputational capital, rather than just as a public relations tool, in contrast to earlier studies that mostly concentrate on for-profit firms.

The study offers evidence-based insights that help drive CSR policies and communication standards in higher education from a policy standpoint. The results could be used by regulators and education officials to push for more organized and open CSR disclosure procedures in HEIs, which would increase public confidence and accountability.
The report also provides advice to communication specialists and university administrators on

how to develop successful CSR plans that complement institutional principles and stakeholder expectations. It emphasizes how crucial stakeholder participation and consistent, culturally relevant messaging are to enhancing institutional identity and reputation.

1.6 Scope of the Study

This study investigates the impact of strategic Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) communication on the reputation of higher education institutions, with a specific focus on Accra Technical University (ATU). The scope of the study is defined in terms of both geographical and data parameters.

Additionally, the research is geographically limited to Accra, Ghana, and specifically centers on Accra Technical University. ATU has been selected as the focal institution due to its strategic role in Ghana’s technical and vocational education sector. As a prominent public technical university, ATU has increasingly engaged in community development initiatives, sustainability programs, and stakeholder-oriented communication. Its diverse stakeholder groups and urban setting provide a suitable environment for examining how CSR activities are communicated and how these communications influence institutional reputation.

Furthermore, the study covers CSR communication activities undertaken by ATU between 2020 and 2024, a period during which the university has made notable efforts to enhance visibility, stakeholder engagement, and institutional branding. The research utilizes both primary and secondary data sources:

- Primary data were collected through surveys and semi-structured interviews with key internal and external stakeholders, including students, faculty members, administrative staff, and selected community partners.

- Secondary data involved a content analysis of official institutional documents such as annual reports, strategic plans, press releases, and CSR-related publications. Additionally, the university’s digital and social media communication channels were analyzed to assess how CSR initiatives are strategically presented to the public.

1.7 Organization of Chapters

There are five chapters in this work. The study's background, problem description, goal, research questions, significance, scope, and organization are all included in the first chapter. The literature pertinent to the subject was reviewed in Chapter 2. The study's methodology was covered in Chapter 3. This includes the study's demographic, data source, sampling strategy and sample size, data gathering tools, research design, and research analysis. The data analysis and presentation of the study's conclusions were the main topics of Chapter 4. It involved using the proper statistical techniques to examine the information obtained from the study's participants. This chapter discusses the study's findings. The summary of findings, conclusion, and recommendations were finally included in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

1.0 Introduction

The purpose of this study is to examine how organizations communicate their corporate social responsibility initiatives and how this affects their institutional reputation. This section presents literature review, including a comprehensive analysis of existing scholarly work related to the topic. This chapter synthesizes recent studies that covers the types of corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives, considering non-profit organizations. In addition, the communication strategies that organizations adopt to communicate their CSR efforts and subsequently how these strategies influence institutional reputation among stakeholders. Crucially this section also discusses the theoretical foundations of the study which guides the interpretation of the study's findings and serves as a basis to construct a framework that helps to identify the main constructs of the study for analysis.

2.1 Definition and evolution of CSR

The commitment of businesses to support sustainable economic development by collaborating with workers, their families, the local community, and society at large to enhance quality of life is known as corporate social responsibility, or CSR. Globally, corporate social responsibility (CSR) has changed from a voluntary, charitable focus to a more strategic strategy that is incorporated into core business operations and emphasizes stakeholder participation, ethical behavior, and long-term value development.

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has experienced deep evolution over the last century as it has transformed through its evolution as a good will gesture to a critical component of the corporate governance functions and stakeholder relations. CSR originated globally in the mid 20th century in reaction to the increased societal demand that corporations also bear responsibility to create positive social and ecological impacts in addition to the profit maximization. The concept of CSR had its early roots in definitions like that of Bowen (1953), whose technical term to describe the businessman as having social responsibilities added some credibility to the idea. This was narrowed down further by the influential four-part model developed by Carroll (1991) that subdivided CSR into economic responsibilities, legal responsibilities, ethical responsibilities and philanthropic responsibilities. Over the years, CSR has been made more institutionalized in various frameworks used globally which focus on sustainability, transparency, stakeholder-inclusiveness, including the United Nations Global Compact, the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) and ISO 26000 (CSR Education, 2024). CSR has ceased to be simply goodwill in the developed economies to a strategic device of risk management, brand differentiation, creation of long-term value.

On the contrary, CSR has had a different history in Africa where developments have been influenced by historical, political and socio-economic realities. Researchers contend that many of the CSR activities in Africa betray a history of colonial-period paternalism as may be witnessed in resource-intensive sectors such as mining and oil production (Dauda et al., 2019). As a tool of community relations, CSR has historically been the vehicle through which these industries have attempted to defuse conflict without attempting to address the underlying structural inequalities that underlie local grievance. This has made CSR in Africa often accused of being reactive, fragmented and without any long-term developmental implications (Amaeshi et al., 2006). However, literature on the rise of more locally contextual and participatory CSR approaches on the continent is increasingly emerging. These provide decentralized focus (local participation), indigenous knowledge systems along with coordination of models to national development priorities (Visser, 2006). The African Development Bank and the African Union have also been instrumental in the discussion of CSR as a driver of sustainable development through their strategies on inclusive growth Agenda 2063 of the African Union.

In the Ghanaian context, CSR has been taking quite a hold both in the academic as well as in corporate worlds. But the way it is implemented is rather philanthropical, as companies prioritize easily observed projects in the community, including school donations, health outreach initiatives, and infrastructural development (Peprah et al., 2019). Although it is a good technique, this method cannot be integrated into fundamental business strategies and sustainability indicators. According to Abugre and Nyuur (2015), one of the major reasons why CSR has been adopted by many Ghanaian firms, especially in the banking sector, telecommunications and extractive industries is as a reputational tool that ensures that goodwill is built and perception of stakeholders is controlled. It is more skewered towards short term visibility as opposed to long done and CSR reporting is usually small or fragmented.

These handicaps notwithstanding, recent literature points to a slow transition of more strategic and stakeholder-informed CSR practices in Ghana. Asiedu et al. (2023) point out the growing importance of global CSR standards and the presence of multinational companies that have the role of bringing an organized structure of CSR. Nevertheless, these global models tend to get localized to accommodate local cultural practices and the requirements of local groups of stakeholders which exemplifies a global-local CSR logic hybridization (Quartey & Quartey, 2015). An example of such is when international firms may embrace GRI based reporting, it is common to have such accompanied with community engagement practices built on Ghanaian principles of reciprocity and communalism. The implied localization process should also highlight that CSR should not be treated as a generic model, but as a dynamic construct that is defined by both socio-cultural and institutional environments.

2.2 Types of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)

Environmental Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) refers to a company's voluntary commitment to minimize its ecological footprint and promote environmental sustainability through its operations, products, and stakeholder engagement. It encompasses a wide range of practices, including pollution control, energy efficiency, waste reduction, sustainable sourcing, and investment in green technologies. As a core dimension of CSR, environmental responsibility reflects the growing expectation that corporations should not only comply with environmental regulations but also proactively contribute to the preservation of natural ecosystems and the mitigation of climate change.

Conceptually, environmental CSR is grounded in stakeholder theory and legitimacy theory. Stakeholder theory posits that firms must address the environmental concerns of various stakeholder groups—including customers, employees, regulators, and communities—to maintain legitimacy and long-term viability (Huang et al., 2018). Legitimacy theory further suggests that environmentally responsible behavior enhances a firm's social license to operate by aligning corporate actions with societal norms and expectations (Young et al., 2019). These theoretical perspectives underscore the strategic importance of environmental CSR as both a moral obligation and a reputational asset.

Empirical research has increasingly demonstrated the positive outcomes associated with environmental CSR. Asiedu et al. (2023), in a study of Ghanaian firms, found that environmental CSR practices significantly enhance corporate social performance, particularly when mediated by green innovation and corporate image. Their findings suggest that firms that invest in eco-friendly technologies and communicate their environmental efforts effectively are more likely to gain stakeholder trust and competitive advantage. Similarly, Huang et al. (2018) argue that the effectiveness of environmental CSR depends on a firm's corporate competence—

that is, its ability to integrate environmental goals into core business strategies. Firms with high competence are better positioned to translate environmental initiatives into tangible performance outcomes.

From a consumer perspective, environmental CSR has been shown to influence brand perception and purchase intentions. Fatma and Rahman (2015) highlight that environmentally conscious consumers are more likely to support companies that demonstrate genuine ecological responsibility. However, they also caution that superficial or inconsistent environmental claims can lead to skepticism and reputational damage. This aligns with Jin and Lee's (2019) findings on the "halo effect" of CSR, where positive environmental actions can enhance overall brand image, but may also amplify the negative impact of unrelated corporate missteps if stakeholders perceive a disconnect between CSR messaging and actual behavior.

In the broader sustainability discourse, environmental CSR is increasingly viewed as a strategic imperative rather than a peripheral activity. Companies are adopting environmental management systems (e.g., ISO 14001), engaging in green supply chain practices, and forming cross-sector partnerships to address complex environmental challenges (Pathania & Rastogi, 2024). In Ghana, the rise of environmental CSR is partly driven by regulatory pressures, stakeholder activism, and the influence of multinational corporations that bring global sustainability standards into local markets (Dzage et al., 2024). However, challenges such as limited institutional capacity, weak enforcement mechanisms, and short-term business priorities continue to hinder the full integration of environmental CSR into corporate strategy.

Ethical responsibility within the framework of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) refers to a company's obligation to conduct its operations in a morally sound and socially just manner, beyond mere compliance with legal requirements. It encompasses principles such as fairness, integrity, transparency, respect for human rights, and the promotion of ethical labor practices. Ethical CSR is rooted in normative ethics and stakeholder theory, which posit that businesses have a duty to consider the interests and well-being of all stakeholders not just shareholders—in their decision-making processes (Freeman, 1984; Carroll, 1991).

Conceptually, ethical CSR is distinguished from philanthropic or legal responsibilities by its emphasis on doing what is right, just, and fair, even in the absence of regulatory pressure. It includes practices such as ensuring non-discriminatory hiring, providing safe working conditions, avoiding exploitative supply chains, and engaging in honest marketing and communication. According to Lahkar and Gujral (2023), embedding ethical practices into CSR strategies is essential for fostering sustainable corporate behavior and building long-term stakeholder trust. Their study emphasizes that ethical responsibility is not merely a moral ideal but a strategic imperative that influences organizational culture, employee engagement, and public legitimacy.

Empirical research supports the view that ethical CSR enhances corporate reputation and stakeholder loyalty. For instance, Huang et al. (2018) found that ethical CSR initiatives—such as fair labor practices and anti-corruption policies—positively influence consumer perceptions, especially when aligned with a company's core competencies and values. Similarly, Fatma and Rahman (2015) argue that ethical responsibility is a key driver of consumer trust and brand credibility, particularly in markets where stakeholders are increasingly attuned to issues of social justice and corporate accountability. Their review highlights that ethical CSR is most effective when it is perceived as authentic and consistent across all levels of the organization.

In the African context, ethical CSR has gained prominence as businesses navigate complex socio-political environments marked by inequality, governance challenges, and evolving stakeholder expectations. Asiedu et al. (2023) note that in Ghana, ethical responsibility is increasingly being integrated into CSR frameworks, particularly in sectors such as banking, telecommunications, and extractives, where public scrutiny and regulatory oversight are intensifying. However, challenges persist, including weak enforcement of labor standards, limited transparency in procurement processes, and cultural norms that may conflict with global ethical benchmarks. These contextual factors necessitate a localized approach to ethical CSR one that balances global standards with indigenous values and stakeholder realities.

Moreover, ethical CSR is closely linked to corporate governance and organizational ethics, as it requires firms to institutionalize ethical decision-making processes and accountability mechanisms. This includes establishing ethics committees, adopting codes of conduct, and training employees on ethical behavior. According to the Journal of Business Ethics, ethical CSR implementation is most successful when it is championed by top leadership and embedded into the organizational DNA through clear policies, incentives, and performance metrics.

Philanthropic responsibility represents the voluntary and discretionary dimension of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), wherein organizations contribute to societal well-being through charitable donations, community development initiatives, and support for social causes. Unlike legal or ethical responsibilities, philanthropic CSR is not mandated by law or moral obligation but is driven by a company's desire to be a good corporate citizen. It reflects a commitment to improving the quality of life in communities where businesses operate, often through investments in education, healthcare, sports, arts, and disaster relief (Carroll, 1991; Fatma & Rahman, 2015).

Conceptually, philanthropic CSR is rooted in corporate citizenship theory, which views businesses as integral members of society with a duty to contribute to the common good. It also aligns with stakeholder theory, as philanthropic initiatives often aim to build goodwill and strengthen relationships with key stakeholder groups, including local communities, civil society organizations, and government agencies. According to Huang et al. (2018), philanthropic CSR can enhance corporate image and stakeholder loyalty, particularly when it is perceived as authentic and aligned with the company's values.

Empirical studies have shown that philanthropic CSR can positively influence consumer attitudes, brand perception, and behavioral intentions. For instance, Jin and Lee (2019) found that philanthropic activities generate a "halo effect," whereby positive perceptions of a company's charitable efforts spill over into broader evaluations of its trustworthiness and social value. However, this effect is contingent on the perceived sincerity of the initiative. When stakeholders suspect that philanthropy is used merely as a reputational tool, it can backfire and lead to skepticism (Fatma & Rahman, 2015). This underscores the importance of transparency and consistency in philanthropic messaging.

In the African context, philanthropic CSR has historically been the most visible and widely practiced form of corporate responsibility. As Dauda et al. (2019) and Visser (2006) note, many African companies—particularly in extractive and financial sectors—engage in community giving as a way to manage stakeholder expectations and maintain social license to operate. In Ghana, philanthropic CSR is often expressed through donations to schools, hospitals, and religious institutions, as well as sponsorship of local festivals and infrastructure projects (Abugre & Nyuur, 2015). While these initiatives are generally well-received, scholars such as Asiedu et al. (2023) argue that they tend to be ad hoc and lack integration with broader sustainability strategies.

Recent research in Ghana also highlights the evolving role of philanthropic CSR in shaping local awareness and corporate transparency. Karikari and Liu (2024) found that philanthropic initiatives by multinational firms operating in Ghana significantly enhance local CSR awareness, particularly when accompanied by transparent communication. Their study revealed that corporate transparency mediates the relationship between philanthropic CSR and stakeholder engagement, suggesting that openness about motives and outcomes is critical to maximizing impact.

Despite its limitations, philanthropic CSR remains a powerful tool for building community trust and reinforcing corporate legitimacy, especially in emerging economies where public expectations of corporate involvement in social development are high. However, scholars increasingly advocate for a shift from transactional giving to transformational partnerships, where companies co-create value with communities through long-term, participatory initiatives (Hwang et al., 2020). This approach not only enhances the developmental impact of CSR but also aligns philanthropic efforts with strategic business objectives.

Economic responsibility represents the foundational layer of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), emphasizing a company's obligation to be financially viable, efficient, and profitable while simultaneously contributing to societal well-being. As articulated in Carroll's (1991) CSR pyramid, economic responsibility is the bedrock upon which legal, ethical, and philanthropic responsibilities are built. It reflects the expectation that businesses should generate sustainable economic value not only for shareholders but also for a broader set of stakeholders including employees, customers, suppliers, and communities through ethical and socially conscious practices.

Stakeholder theory (Freeman, 1984), which holds that long-term company success depends on balancing the interests of all stakeholders rather than merely maximizing shareholder returns, is conceptually closely related to economic CSR. Additionally, it is consistent with shared value theory (Porter & Kramer, 2011), which contends that businesses can improve social and economic circumstances in the areas in which they operate while also increasing their competitiveness. This perspective reframes economic responsibility as a strategic opportunity rather than a trade-off between profit and purpose.

Recent research underscores the evolving nature of economic CSR from a narrow focus on profitability to a broader emphasis on inclusive growth, value creation, and sustainable development. Fatima and Elbanna (2022) argue that economic CSR is increasingly viewed as a strategic initiative, where firms integrate social and environmental considerations into their core business models to drive innovation, efficiency, and long-term resilience. Their systematic review of CSR implementation highlights that economic responsibility is no longer confined to financial performance metrics but includes responsible investment, fair pricing, and ethical supply chain management.

Empirical studies have also demonstrated a positive relationship between economic CSR and corporate performance. Young, Chung, and Cho (2019) found that firms engaging in economically responsible practices—such as fair wages, local sourcing, and inclusive employment—tend to experience enhanced financial performance and stakeholder loyalty. Their findings suggest that economic responsibility can serve as a competitive differentiator, particularly in industries where consumers and investors are increasingly attuned to social impact.

In the African context, economic CSR takes on added significance due to persistent challenges such as unemployment, income inequality, and limited access to basic services. Asiedu et al. (2023) emphasize that in Ghana, economic responsibility is often expressed through job creation, support for small and medium enterprises (SMEs), and infrastructure development. These initiatives not only fulfill business objectives but also contribute to national development goals. However, the authors caution that economic CSR must be embedded within a broader strategic framework to avoid being perceived as transactional or opportunistic.

Moreover, economic responsibility intersects with other CSR dimensions. For instance, investments in green innovation—a form of environmental CSR—can yield economic benefits through cost savings and market differentiation (Asiedu et al., 2023). Similarly, ethical labor practices and transparent governance structures enhance economic performance by reducing reputational risk and improving stakeholder trust (Huang et al., 2018).

In summary, economic responsibility is a dynamic and integral component of CSR that extends beyond profitability to encompass sustainable value creation, stakeholder inclusiveness, and long-term societal impact. In emerging economies like Ghana, where businesses are increasingly expected to play a developmental role, economic CSR offers a pathway to align corporate success with national priorities. To be effective, however, it must be strategically integrated, transparently communicated, and responsive to the socio-economic realities of the local context.

2.3 CSR in the Higher Education Sector

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in the higher education sector has gained increasing attention as universities and colleges recognize their broader role in promoting sustainability, ethical values, and social well-being. Systematic reviews show a significant rise in research and disclosure of CSR activities by higher education institutions (HEIs), though many institutions still lag in fully integrating CSR into their core strategies and achieving sustainability goals (Varghese, 2022). CSR in this context often includes embedding sustainability and ethical principles into curricula, engaging in community service, promoting environmental stewardship, and fostering responsible leadership among students (Varghese, 2022; Diehl et al., 2018). Effective CSR initiatives in HEIs have been linked to positive outcomes such as enhanced student awareness, improved employee engagement and job satisfaction, and stronger institutional reputation (Harrison, 2019). Case studies from leading universities highlight the best practices in integrating CSR into teaching and operations but also reveal considerable variation in adoption and depth across institutions (Varghese, 2022). The alignment of CSR with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is increasingly emphasized, with HEIs encouraged to connect academic programs to real-world challenges and measure the impact of their CSR activities (Harrison, 2019). Despite progress, challenges remain in stakeholder engagement, consistent reporting, and embedding CSR as a core institutional value rather than a peripheral activity.

2.4 CSR Communication in Higher Education

CSR communication in higher education is increasingly recognized as essential for building institutional reputation, engaging stakeholders, and advancing sustainability goals. Systematic reviews reveal a significant rise in research and disclosure of CSR activities by higher education institutions (HEIs), yet many still lag in fully integrating and effectively communicating these efforts (Harrison, 2019). Effective CSR communication in HEIs involves not only publicizing social and environmental initiatives but also embedding CSR principles into curricula, digital platforms, and stakeholder engagement strategies (Joseph, et al., 2020). Studies highlight that clear and strategic communication of CSR enhances students' and employees' awareness, fosters positive attitudes, and can influence behaviors such as student word-of-mouth recommendations and employee engagement (Capriotti et al., 2021). The use of digital channels and integration of CSR topics into academic programs are seen as key to preparing students for future challenges and promoting responsible management (Chong & Wang, 2024). However, research also points to challenges, including inconsistent reporting, limited stakeholder awareness, and the need for more robust frameworks to measure and communicate CSR impact (Harrison, 2019). Additionally, the evolving nature of university-corporate partnerships requires careful communication to balance reputation-building with institutional autonomy.

2.5 Effective CSR Communication Expected by Stakeholders

According to Jiang et al. (2022) the success of CSR communication by organizations depends on how well they are able to align their communication efforts with stakeholder expectations, in terms of the message content and the channels of communication. Kim (2019) proposed a model for effective CSR communication with key dimensions including transparency, consistency, personal relevance, objectivity and non-promotional ability of the message and tone of CSR messages. This study adopts the framework proposed by Kim (2019) to assess how CSR communication affects how stakeholders of an organization perceive the organizational reputation for two reasons.

firstly, how stakeholders perceive the institution's CSR initiatives shapes their perceptions of the organization. Stakeholders are more inclined to support an institution's CSR initiatives and have a more positive opinion of it when they have a feeling of connection or shared identity with it (Liu et al., 2023). This includes students, professors, alumni, community members, etc. This demonstrates how stakeholder participation with CSR is influenced by public perception.

Secondly, research on strategic stakeholder communication in educational settings supports the elements of effective CSR communication that Kim (2019) highlighted, including informativeness, transparency, and consistency. When CSR communications are clear, trustworthy, and reciprocal, stakeholders are more likely to respond favourably, which promotes increased trust and deeper engagement which leads to positive perception of the organizational reputation (Salam et al., 2024).

additionally, previous studies have proposed an “inside-out” approach, which emphasizes involving internal stakeholders in CSR activities before communicating with external audiences (Jiang et al., 2022). This approach demonstrates the importance of demonstrating how CSR initiatives are relevant to various internal stakeholder groups and encouraging their involvement and support. Moreover, the use of factual, educational storytelling in CSR communication has been shown to enhance stakeholder engagement, build loyalty to the institution’s values, and increase the overall impact of CSR initiatives

2.6 Key Dimensions of Effective CSR Communication

In CSR communication, informativeness is the extent to which organizations give stakeholders precise, comprehensive, and verifiable information about their corporate responsibility initiatives. This consists of not only the extent and length of CSR initiatives—like sustained environmental programs or community investments—but also the justification for endorsing specific projects, the quantifiable results of these initiatives, and the support or collaborations with reliable third parties such as NGOs, regulatory agencies, or academic settings. Stakeholders' impressions of a company's basic motives are greatly improved by informativeness and a factual tone in CSR communications, according to Luo et al., (2023). This may strengthen organizational identification and enhances corporate reputation.

Kim and Ferguson (2018) further emphasize that informativeness is one of the six core dimensions of effective CSR communication, alongside transparency, personal relevance, tone, consistency, and third-party endorsement. According to their study findings, stakeholders are more inclined to believe and engage with CSR communications that contain a wealth of factual information, particularly when those communications are seen as genuine and consistent with the company's basic beliefs. Additionally, informativeness is essential for lowering scepticism and ambiguity, two key obstacles to stakeholders' acceptance of CSR claims. CSR communications that are too promotional or ambiguous might give rise to accusations of corporate hypocrisy or greenwashing (Lang & Ivanova-Gongne, 2019).

On the other hand, detailed disclosures that support the credibility of the organization's social commitments, like impact measures, timelines, and stakeholder testimonials, work as reliable signals (Capriotti et al., 2021). Research indicates that when stakeholders see a clear link between CSR messages and their own values, experiences, or community interests, they are more responsive to them in terms of personal relevance. Personal relevance, according to Kim and Ferguson (2018), improves message processing and persuasion, particularly when CSR activities tackle pressing social issues or regional concerns. This is consistent with Kleinert and Bafera (2022), who suggested that signals that are personally meaningful have a higher chance of resulting in a more robust and long-lasting shift in attitude. Informativeness is a strategic communication technique that goes beyond simply providing data. When paired with credibility and relevance, it may greatly increase stakeholder confidence, organizational identification, and eventually, corporate reputation

Other key dimensions include transparency and consistency, which are very foundational for effective CSR communication. These factors play a critical role in shaping stakeholder trust and perceptions of corporate sincerity (Kim & Ferguson, 2018).

Transparency describes the straightforward, impartial, and honest sharing of CSR-related data, including both achievements and setbacks. Transparent CSR communication recognizes obstacles, constraints, and opportunities for development rather than focusing solely on positive results. This transparency lowers stakeholder mistrust by promoting corporate responsibility and improving perceived authenticity (Lee & Chung, 2023; Elving, 2013). Probst (2022) asserts that customer views of CSR legitimacy, brand preference, and company reputation are greatly impacted by transparency, particularly when CSR messaging is disseminated via interactive platforms such as social media. Furthermore, transparency is consistent with the legitimacy theory, which holds that in order for an organization to remain legitimate in the eyes of stakeholders, its activities must be in line with social norms and expectations (Reid, Ringel, & Pendleton, 2024).

Conversely, consistency refers to the thematic and temporal coherence of corporate social responsibility communications. It involves keeping the messaging a business conveys across time and platforms in line with its declared principles and long-term CSR objectives. According to Kim and Ferguson (2018), regular communication strengthens the organization's overall mission and ethical position rather than just restating specifics of CSR initiatives. Lang and Ivanova-Gongne (2019) highlighted that by demonstrating strategic commitment as opposed to opportunistic behaviour, consistency boosts stakeholder confidence. According to Wagner et al. (2019), inconsistencies can damage confidence and give rise to accusations of hypocrisy. Examples of this include sudden changes in the focus of CSR or contradicting messages. CSR communications are effective, reliable indicators of a company's sincere commitment to social responsibility when they are clear and consistent. This builds stakeholder trust and improves the company's reputation.

Finally, stakeholders tend to prefer CSR messages that are factual and objective, rather than self-congratulatory or overly promotional. Research consistently shows that stakeholders of an organization may respond more favourably to CSR messages that are objective, balanced, and non-promotional, as opposed to those that appear self-serving or extremely strategic (Kim & Ferguson, 2018).

A self-serving tone in CSR communication can lead to attributional skepticism, in which stakeholders doubt the sincerity of the organization's intentions (Kim & Rim, 2019). This is especially troublesome in situations when corporate social responsibility (CSR) is viewed as a tool for enhancing one's reputation rather than as a sincere commitment to societal welfare. Kim & Rim (2019) highlight that when CSR messages are presented in a promotional manner, stakeholders are more likely to assume egoistic motivations, which can compromise the desired reputational benefits.

On the other hand, a neutral, fact-based tone that is marked by simple language, verifiable facts, and less persuasive content. However, some evidence in Ghanaian context has shown that CSR messaging that is emotionally compelling and positively framed is frequently well received in Ghana, particularly when it emphasizes its benefits to the community and is presented in narrative-rich formats (Abukari et al., 2021; Amo-Mensah, 2022; Nyame, 2024). Celebratory storytelling that demonstrates corporate generosity and social embeddedness is typically preferred by Ghanaian media and stakeholder cultures, which lessens the possibility that promotional tones may be perceived as self-serving. These results highlight how crucial it is to contextualize CSR communication tactics and match the tone of messages with regional cultural norms in order to increase participation, establish trust, and improve a company's reputation.

2.7 Corporate Reputation: Concept and Importance

Corporate reputation is widely recognized as a strategic intangible asset that significantly influences stakeholder behavior, competitive positioning, and long-term organizational success. Fombrun and van Riel (1997) define corporate reputation as a collective representation of a firm’s past actions and future prospects, shaped by the perceptions of multiple stakeholders. It reflects the degree of trust and credibility an organization commands in the marketplace. As noted by Lorena, Forcadell, and Aracil (2022), reputation serves as a buffer against crises, enhances stakeholder loyalty, and contributes to superior financial performance. In emerging markets such as Ghana, where institutional frameworks may be less robust, corporate reputation plays an even more critical role in securing stakeholder support and legitimacy (Abugre & Nyuur, 2015).

2.8 Definitions and Theoretical Perspectives on Corporate Reputation

The literature presents diverse definitions of corporate reputation, often shaped by disciplinary lenses such as strategic management, sociology, and communication studies. Fombrun (1996) and Freeman et al. (2018) emphasize that reputation is socially constructed and emerges from stakeholder interpretations of organizational behavior over time. Several theoretical frameworks have been employed to explain the formation and function of corporate reputation. Stakeholder theory (Freeman et al., 2018; Mahajan et al., 2023) posits that reputation is built through the organization's ability to meet the expectations of various stakeholder groups. Signaling theory (Connelly et al., 2011; Reutzel et al., 2024) suggests that firms use reputation as a signal of quality and reliability in environments characterized by information asymmetry. Social exchange theory (Cook et al., 2013) also contributes to understanding how reciprocal relationships between firms and stakeholders influence reputational outcomes. These perspectives collectively underscore that corporate reputation is not merely a reflection of internal performance, but a dynamic construct shaped by external perceptions and interactions.

2.9 Antecedents and Outcomes of Corporate Reputation

A wide range of antecedents influence corporate reputation, including CSR engagement, transparency, ethical behavior, and stakeholder communication. Studies by Anim and Cudjoe (2015) and Ayam et al. (2022) demonstrate that CSR awareness and socially responsible practices significantly enhance consumer trust and purchase intentions, thereby strengthening corporate reputation. Similarly, Huang et al. (2022) and Zhang and Ahmad (2021) highlight the role of environmental and ethical CSR in shaping positive stakeholder evaluations. On the outcomes side, a strong corporate reputation has been linked to increased customer loyalty, employee engagement, investor confidence, and improved financial performance (Young et al., 2019; Salam et al., 2024). Moreover, Jiang et al. (2022) emphasize that reputation mediates the relationship between CSR communication and employee engagement, suggesting that reputation is both a consequence and a conduit of stakeholder alignment.

2.10 The Role of Communication and Stakeholder Perceptions in Shaping Reputation

The building and sustaining of corporate reputation revolves around communication. According to Kim (2019) and Kim & Ferguson (2018), transparency, informativeness and relevance as the characteristics of CSR communication are the factors that increase the level of CSR knowledge, trust, and eventually, raises the level of corporate reputation of the stakeholders. The manner and the channel through which the communication occurs in addition to the contents also influence stakeholder perceptions. Xu (2022) and Ekpebu (2024) also note that the importance of social media in determining e-reputation and thus stakeholders has been increasing as it has led to more dialogic and interactive communications thus involving more stakeholders. In addition to it, stakeholder scrutiny, as Lorena et al. (2022) discuss, can be considered a reputational filter, inflating or reducing the value of corporate action under the impression of falsity. Abukari et al. (2021) and Quartey & Quartey (2015) highlight that the type of CSR communication, which is done through the stakeholders, especially being culturally sensitive and honest, is central to the creation of the sense of corporate legitimacy and trustworthiness.

2.11 Theoretical Framework

The stakeholder theory and the signaling theory were synthesized in order to better understand the impact of CSR communication strategies on corporate reputation. According to literature the stakeholder theory posits that the long-term viability of a company is necessarily linked to its ability to manage its dealings with its diverse stakeholders, from employees, customers, and investors to the general public (Freeman, 1984). These stakeholders have varying expectations regarding the social as well as environmental performance of a company, and hence effective communication of CSR efforts becomes the key to legitimacy, sustenance and support.

Evidence in literature has attributed the stakeholder theory to R. Edward Freeman, who articulated its core ideas in the 1980s most centrally through his work of 1984. The theory evolved over time, with significant contributions from a vast range of researchers, and has become a central paradigm in organizational management and business ethics research, tracing its beginnings back to debates and advances from the late 20th century forward (Mahajan et al., 2023; Mbithe et al., 2024; Lang & Ivanova-Gongne, 2019).

The fundamental purpose of the stakeholder theory is to redefine the organization the role and obligations of organizations by insisting that value creation and organizational purpose comes as a result of satisfying the interests of every stakeholder, rather than solely shareholders (McGahan, 2023). Freeman et al. (2018) agree that rather than viewing the company as a vehicle for maximizing shareholder profits, stakeholder theory contends that companies exist to meet the goals, interests, and needs of a broad range of groups impacted by or that can influence the company, such as employees, customers, suppliers, and communities. This approach addresses the ethical and pragmatic challenge of serving people fairly and efficiently, along with the moral boundaries of a firm's role beyond profit generation (McGahan, 2023). Stakeholder theory thus seeks to guide organizations in balancing and harmonizing diverse stakeholders' interests, building cooperation, and distributing value in terms created by the stakeholders themselves (Magill et al., 2015; McGahan, 2023). Lastly, the theory positions the organization as a mere end to an end where its survival and success depend on its capacity to create value to all stakeholders who are entitled (Bridoux & Stoelhorst, 2022; McGahan, 2023).

The stakeholder theory assumes that organizations are embedded in a network of relationships with various stakeholders, each of whom can affect or be affected by the firm's objectives and actions. Secondly, the interests of all legitimate stakeholders have intrinsic value, and no single group's interests should automatically take precedence (Mahajan et al., 2023; McGahan, 2023).

Firms have role-specific responsibilities toward non-shareholders, and these responsibilities may be both ethical and instrumental in nature (Kaler, 2003; Donaldson, 1999).

A number of studies have applied stakeholder theory to analyze strategic CSR communications, such as how organizations respond to and manage perceptions through strategic messages, especially during crisis. Abitbol and Lee (2017) likened CSR-dedicated Facebook pages, determining that message strategies integral to a firm's business and the use of interactive, dialogic communication are successful in engaging stakeholders, reflecting stakeholder theory's emphasis on two-way influence and relationship building. Shah and Guild (2022) analyzed how technology firms at different stages of evolution adopt stakeholder-oriented CSR communication strategies, prioritizing the importance of "jointness of interest" and collective positioning in stakeholder engagement. Lang and Ivanova-Gongne (2019) also illustrated how corporations design messages for different stakeholder groups as a way of enabling understanding and collaboration. Research has also explored the use of social media platforms like Instagram and Twitter, demonstrating that open, interactive communication can create trust and support for CSR initiatives among diverse stakeholders (Xu, 2022; Ekpebu, 2024).

In addition, signaling theory suggests that companies can effectively communicate their commitment to corporate social responsibility (CSR) through their communication strategies, especially when information asymmetry is present (Chong & Wang, 2024). Therefore, a company's CSR communication is a signal to its stakeholders that aims to clarify and influence opinions about its activities and beliefs. It is believed that by strategically communicating CSR actions, stakeholders' assessments of the company would be influenced, which will help to develop and improve the company's reputation.

Signaling theory was first developed by Spence in the 1970s (Reutzel, et al., 2024). The theory was primarily meant to address how parties with access to different information communicate in situations of information asymmetry. The typical parties to every communication are the sender and receiver. The sender decides whether to share a signal such as a credential, behaviour, or a public statement, in order to communicate qualities that may not directly visible. The receiver then interprets this signal to form judgments and make decisions, often in situations where they lack complete information (Reutzel, et al., 2024; Choudhury, 2024).

The main constructs of the signal theory include relationship between the signal itself, the sender, the receiver and the cost of sending the signal. Often, the credibility of a signal depends on its costliness; such that high quality senders can afford to send costly signals while low quality senders cannot afford to send costly signals (Connelly, et al., 2011; Reutzel, et al., 2024).

The signaling theory provides a clear framework for understanding how organizations reduce information asymmetry and build trust with stakeholders. The theory integrates well with complementary theories like impression management and attribution theory (Zerbini, 2017; Choudhury, 2024). Theory has also been used in emerging studies to model the relationship between communication by organizations and its effect on perceived reputation. For example, Jiang et al. (2022) applied CSR Communication–Reputation Model Based on Social Exchange and Signaling Theories which was proposed by Kim (2019) to explore the role of communication in CSR scholarship.

However, critics of the theory note that as signaling theory has been applied across diverse fields, its constructs have sometimes become ambiguous, and empirical studies may oversimplify the complexity of real-world signaling environments (Kleinert & Bafera, 2022; Connelly, et al., 2011). Additionally, the theory's emphasis on the cost and credibility of signals may not fully explain how people understand multiple signals at once or how the meaning of signals can change over time. Even with these limitations, signaling theory is still a useful framework for studying communication, especially in situations where trust and reputation are important.

Subsequently, the relevance of the stakeholder theory to studying how communication of corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives affects corporate reputation has been evidenced in research. These studies consistently found, in line with the stakeholder theory that transparent and strategic CSR communication enhances stakeholder trust, meets stakeholder expectations, and ultimately strengthens corporate reputation across industries (Kim, 2019; Lorena et al., 2022; Salam et al., 2024). Stakeholder theory is widely used to explain why companies place a high priority on CSR communication because it promotes long-term reputational benefits, aligns corporate operations with societal ideals, and helps establish positive relationships with important groups.

However, the explicit application of signaling theory is more limited but gaining attention in scholarly literature. Recent studies that incorporate signalling theory have demonstrated that stakeholder views and trust can be significantly influenced by the clarity and authenticity of CSR information provided, which in turn affects reputation (Lorena et al., 2022; Park et al., 2022; Liu, 2023). However, emerging studies highlights its value in understanding the mechanisms through which CSR communication shapes corporate reputation (Liu, 2023; Lorena et al., 2022).

In Ghana for example, Research on the communication of corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities has shown that companies are typically devoted to CSR and employ a range of channels, but their understanding tends to focus on philanthropy rather than more general strategic objectives (Ewusie & Diallo, 2011). Although it is not usually referred to as such, studies of Ghanaian banks and telecom firms demonstrate that CSR is communicated online, frequently employing impression management strategies to influence stakeholder perceptions. This is consistent with the ideas of signaling theory (Quartey & Quartey, 2015; Freeman & Dmytriyev, 2017). Asiedu et al. (2023) highlighted that signaling effects of CSR are particularly strong in Africa and other developing economies, especially where financial markets are weaker and information diffusion is limited, supporting the relevance of signaling theory in these areas. Other studies, notably based in African regions, including those focused on mining have discuss how CSR communication is used to manage community relations and corporate reputation, often as a response to historical, institutional pressures and in some cases governmental pressure (Freeman & Dmytriyev, 2017).

Even though studies that have been analyzed through the lens of signaling theory, available evidence is still limited in Ghana and Africa, the literature increasingly recognizes that CSR communication serves as a signal to stakeholders about firm values, capabilities, and intentions. In emerging economies, signaling theory has been used to demonstrate that CSR practices send positive signals to investors about a firm's capabilities, especially in environments with less developed capital markets and lower information diffusion (Asiedu et al., 2023). Additionally, research on social media communication found that CSR messages that are explicit and connected to broader social movements are more likely to resonate with the public, reinforcing the signaling effect of CSR communication (Quartey & Quartey, 2015; Freeman & Dmytriyev, 2017).

2.12 Empirical Review

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) communication has emerged as a vital area of study, contributing to corporate reputation, stakeholder engagement, and organizational identity. The following review is based on findings and insights from existing literature in order to identify research gaps and the significance of studying the impact of CSR communication on the reputation of institutions.

Ajayi and Mmutle (2021) analyzed CSR communication strategies in South African organizations, revealing a preference for informal communication methods over formal ones. Their findings emphasized the gap between theoretical ideals and practical implementation of CSR communication strategies, with a noted absence of stakeholder feedback. Similarly, Kim (2019a) explored the impact of CSR strategies—stakeholder information, response, and involvement—on corporate reputation, finding positive effects on stakeholder attitudes. However, both studies underlined the limitation of excluding direct stakeholder feedback, which is crucial for validating the effectiveness of CSR strategies and enhancing credibility.

Morsing and Spence (2019) highlighted the challenges SMEs face in aligning implicit CSR practices with explicit reporting requirements, identifying dilemmas such as authenticity commercialization and values control. They advocated for exploring digital CSR communication platforms to empower SMEs while maintaining authenticity. Chu et al. (2020) examined cross-cultural differences in consumer engagement with CSR communication on social media, finding stronger engagement in China compared to the U.S. due to peer communication and opinion leadership. However, this study overlooked the potential of emerging digital platforms, such as AI-driven tools, in enhancing CSR strategies.

Okazaki et al. (2020) investigated CSR-related tweets from major brands, identifying limited utilization of Twitter's interactive potential for two-way communication. Verk et al. (2021) conducted a comprehensive review of CSR communication's evolution, emphasizing its transition from reputation management to integral organizational identity. Both studies noted the underutilization of digital platforms in creating impactful CSR communication strategies.

Fusheini and Salia (2021) examined the role of CSR initiatives in improving student enrollment and performance in Ghana, concluding that these initiatives effectively address funding gaps but fail to explore psychological factors influencing student decisions. Similarly, Taamneh et al. (2022) linked CSR initiatives to improved university reputation in Jordan, emphasizing the need to assess how digital communication channels mediate stakeholder perceptions in highly connected environments.

2.13 Research Gaps and Future Directions

The gaps identified in existing research, as shown in table 1 include lack of incorporation of stakeholder feedback in data collection for analysis in various CSR studies, related to communication.

For example, Ajayi and Mmutle (2021) and Kim (2019a) highlight the need for stakeholder perspectives to validate and enhance CSR communication strategies.

Additionally, existing research lacks more insights into the role of emerging digital platforms. Studies like Morsing and Spence (2019) and Chu et al. (2020) overlook the integration of AI-driven tools and digital technologies to complement social media strategies.

Furthermore, there is lack of adequate evidence for Ghanaian organizations. Most studies have focused on developed countries. A few studies that focus on developing countries (Taamneh et al., 2022) are outside of sub-Saharan Africa. This limits the available knowledge that takes into consideration the cultural and social factors.

Table 1: Summary of Relevant related studies to Communication of CSR initiatives by organizations

Publication	method of analysis	What the study is about	Findings and conclusions	critique of the study	relevant gap	why fill the gap
Ajayi & Mmutle (2021)	qualitative content analysis	explore how the communication of corporate social responsibility (CSR) contributes towards a favorable corporate reputation	Companies used informal communication strategies over formal communication strategies, and there is a gap between theoretical ideals of CSR and its practical application	The study examined the practical aspect of CSR communication using a systematic analysis of actual communication. However, the study did not incorporate direct feedback from stakeholders.	The study focused only on controlled communication without focusing on the dynamic evolution of digital interactive communication platforms. Also, no stakeholder feedback	Adoption of digital channels by various stakeholders is rapidly increasing, however incorporating the feedback of stakeholders enhance the credibility of CSR strategies.
Kim, (2019)a	Participants were exposed to different CSR communication strategies, and their responses were measured across various dependent	investigates the effectiveness of three CSR communication strategies—stakeholder information, response, and involvement	communication strategies—stakeholder information, response, and involvement strategies positively influenced stakeholder	The use of a randomized experimental design enhances the reliability of the findings,	the study does not incorporate stakeholder feedback to validate the effectiveness of the proposed	stakeholder feedback would provide a more comprehensive understanding of how CSR strategies evolve

	variables, such as attitudes toward the company and purchase intent	strategies—on social media, factoring in corporate reputation	attitudes, and that corporate reputation significantly moderates the effectiveness of CSR communication strategies		strategies, a limitation also noted in similar research	and their sustained impact on corporate reputation
Morsing & Spence (2019)	qualitative approach, drawing on Foucault's governmentality framework and Communication Constitutes Organization (CCO) theory	examine the challenges faced by small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in navigating explicit and implicit CSR communication	SMEs face significant CSR Communication Dilemmas as they attempt to align their CSR practices with the explicit reporting requirements of larger firms	The study provides a novel perspective on CSR communication by focusing on SMEs, a group often overlooked in CSR research	lack of exploration of digital CSR communication platforms	Exploring digital CSR communication platforms can empower SMEs to maintain their authenticity while meeting explicit reporting demands
Kim, (2019)b	using quantitative methods, including regression analysis	The study investigates how different CSR communication strategies influence consumer attitudes and behaviors,	Informative CSR communication enhances consumers' CSR knowledge, which in turn	The study likely treats "CSR communication" as a unidimensional construct. However, CSR	There is a need to explore how different types, channels, and content of CSR communication	Identifying which communication approaches are most effective in increasing CSR

			strengthens corporate reputation	communication can take various forms	differentially influence consumer CSR knowledge, trust, and reputation	knowledge and fostering trust can help companies optimize their communication efforts
Anani-Bossman, (2021)	he study employs a qualitative research design, utilizing semi-structured interviews with PR practitioners from selected multinational organizations in Ghana	This study explores the role of public relations (PR) in managing corporate reputation within selected multinational organizations operating in Ghana, from the perspective of PR practitioners.	The strategic nature of PR ensures effective reputation-building efforts, particularly in non-Western cultural contexts.	Provides valuable insights into PR practices in a developing country context.	The study does not explore the impact of digital PR strategies, such as social media and online platforms, in corporate reputation management.	This gap is significant given the growing influence of digital communication in shaping public perceptions.
Fusheini & Salia, (2021)	The study employs a qualitative approach, using in-depth interviews and focus group discussions with	This study investigates corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives and their impact on student enrollment and	CSR initiatives have significantly contributed to increased student enrollment and improved academic	Highlights practical implications for policymakers and corporate institutions,	The study overlooks the psychological and decision-making processes through which CSR	This could help to account for other factors that affect student enrollment in a particular

	teachers, students, and school heads	academic performance Ghana	performance in beneficiary schools	Focuses on educational institutions	initiatives influence students' enrollment choices.	academic institution
Taamneh et al., (2022)	The study employs a quantitative approach, using survey data collected from university stakeholders,	investigate the impact of corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives on the reputation of universities in developing countries	The study found a positive relationship between CSR initiatives and university reputation in the Jordanian context	Provides empirical evidence linking CSR to university reputation, addressing a gap in higher education research.	The study fails to investigate how digital communication channels and social media mediate the relationship between CSR activities and reputation formation	In today's highly connected environment, the visibility and perception of CSR initiatives are significantly shaped by digital channels, particularly for younger stakeholders
Verk et al., (2021).	The researchers conducted a comprehensive literature review and analysis of scholarly publications on CSR communication	The study examines the discursive changes in the field of CSR communication over time,	The authors found that CSR communication has evolved from being primarily a reputation management tool to becoming an integral part of organizational	The study provides a comprehensive review of CSR communication's evolution	The study identifies but does not adequately address the gap between theoretical CSR communication models and their practical	Filling this gap is essential to understand how digital tools and platforms influence CSR communication's

			identity and stakeholder relationships		application in digital environments	evolution and effectiveness
Ellerup Nielsen & Thomsen, (2018)	The researchers conducted a systematic literature review of CSR communication studies,	explore corporate social responsibility (CSR) communication through the lens of legitimacy theory.	The study identifies four key communicative practices: seeking stakeholder knowledge, monitoring and controlling the environment, creating stakeholder value, and persuading stakeholders through rhetoric and CSR models.	Provides a comprehensive review of CSR communication literature, offering valuable insights into its role in legitimacy-building.	The review primarily synthesizes existing literature rather than offering new empirical insights	Research filling this gap would help organizations develop more authentic and resilient CSR communication strategies
Okazaki et al., (2020).	Examines CSR-related tweets from eight leading brands, analyzing the nature of interactions and engagement	This study investigates how corporations utilize Twitter for communicating their corporate social	Results showed that corporations tend to employ different communication approaches for various CSR domains	Provides valuable insights into the underutilization of social media's interactive potential	fails to adequately investigate the predictive relationship between message characteristics and	This knowledge would help companies move beyond simply broadcasting CSR information

		responsibility (CSR) initiatives		for CSR communication.	actual stakeholder outcomes beyond basic engagement metrics	to creating messages that genuinely resonate with stakeholders and achieve desired outcomes.
Chu et al., (2020).	The researchers developed and tested a structural equation model that examined relationships between CSR communication factors	examine how consumers engage with corporate social responsibility (CSR) communication on social media, comparing behaviors between China and the United States	The study found significant cross-cultural differences in how consumers engage with CSR content on social media	Provides valuable cross-cultural insights into CSR communication on social media.	The study does not address the role of emerging digital platforms beyond social media, such as AI-driven tools, in enhancing CSR communication	Filling this gap is essential to understand how advanced digital tools can complement social media strategie

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

The aim of this study is to examine how CSR communication influences organizational reputation, from the point of view of stakeholders of the organization. This chapter is the methodology section of the study and lists the population for the study (including the target and accessible population), the sampling strategy, the research design, the research methodology, the data collection tools, and the steps taken to gather the information needed to address the research questions. The instrumentation, data analysis plan are among the other topics covered.

3.1 Research Design

The overall strategy used by the researcher to find answers to the research questions and test the developed hypothesis is referred to as the research design (Harris, 2019). Rahi (2017) states that theoretical, methodological, and ethical factors pertinent to the study are taken into account when creating a research design. For data collection and analysis, this study used a convergent mixed method research design.

In mixed methods research, both quantitative and qualitative data are gathered and assessed, and at some point during the study, the two sets of results are integrated to derive conclusions from both kinds of data (Shan, 2022; Pregoner, 2024). In this study, the quantitative component included the use of a survey research design to collect numerical data from a large sample comprising students and alumni of Accra Technical University (ATU). Choosing a survey design enabled the researcher to quantify perceptions of the university's corporate social responsibility (CSR) communication strategies by ATU and their perceived influence on institutional reputation. The data collected provided suitable way to measure the extent and direction of these relationships across a broad population. Additionally, the qualitative component involved conducting semi-structured interviews with key personnel in the Public Relations Directorate of ATU. This aimed to provide deeper insights into the strategic intent, implementation processes, and challenges associated with CSR communication practices.

The study used a convergent mixed methods strategy, collecting and analyzing quantitative and qualitative data simultaneously before integrating them during interpretation. It is hoped that by integrating these data, a greater knowledge of the study issue would emerge, allowing for more complete responses to research questions, the identification of new research subjects, and the proposal of research design changes in the future (Shan, 2022).

3.2 Justification for using the Convergent Mixed Approach

The basis for using convergent mixed method is based on the fact that, convergent design happens when a researcher gathers, examines, and synthesizes data from both qualitative and quantitative sources in the same stage of the study process, then combines the two sets of findings into a comprehensive interpretation. This helped the researcher know the actual communication strategies used by the institution to communicate delicate CSR initiatives, the kind of image they seek to create and subsequently how internal and external stakeholders interpret these communication signals.

3.3 Population for the Study

Rahi (2017) described a study population as the total collection of elements, persons or objects about which a researcher wishes to make inference. The scope of this study strategically focuses on higher educational institutions. The population of this study consisted of students currently enrolled in various academic programs at ATU, at the time of this study and also alumni of the institution who are accessible to the researcher.

The alumni of ATU consisted of individuals who have previously completed their studies at Accra Technical University and maintain an ongoing association or sense of identity with the institution, often contributing to its reputation, networks, and community activities. Accordingly, this group includes the 1,020 alumni who are members of the official ATU alumni WhatsApp page.

The student population was made up of individuals who are currently enrolled in various academic programs at different levels at Accra Technical University. According to data from the Academic Affairs Directorate of Accra Technical University (2025), the total student population for the 2024/2025 academic year is 29,270. The student body is distributed across six faculties: the Faculty of Applied Arts, Faculty of Applied Sciences, Faculty of Built Environment, Faculty of Business, Faculty of Engineering, and the CTVET Certificate II (Pre-HND) program. A breakdown of the faculties by gender, as well as the total number of students in each faculty, is presented in Table 1. The inclusion of accessible alumni alongside the student population in the population allows for a more comprehensive representation of the university community, while still focusing on participants who are available and willing to respond during the study period

Additionally, for the qualitative component of the study, the focus was on employees at the Public Affairs Directorate of Accra Technical University. This group comprises four staff members: the Director of Public Affairs and three other communication and public relations practitioners.

Table 2: Student Population of ATU as at 2024/2025 Academic Year

S/N	PROGRAMMES	MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL
1	FACULTY OF APPLIED ARTS	1052	4295	5347
2	FACULTY OF APPLIED SCIENCE	4290	2064	6354
3	FACULTY OF BUILT ENVIRONMENT	2256	330	2586
4	FACULTY OF BUSINESS	3978	4159	8137
5	FACULTY OF ENGINEERING	5999	446	6445
6	CTVET CERTIFICATE II (PRE-HND)	244	157	401
	TOTAL	17819	11451	**29270**

Source: (Academic Affairs Directorate-ATU, 2025)

3.5 Sampling Techniques

Stratified sampling was adopted for this study to ensure that the selected participants adequately represented the key subgroups within the population. According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), stratified sampling involves dividing a population into distinct layers or strata and selecting participants from each stratum to enhance representativeness and reduce sampling bias. In line with this approach, the population of interest at Accra Technical University was grouped into three major categories: students of the institution, alumni, and staff members of the Public Relations Directorate. A proportional number of participants was then selected from each stratum to ensure fair representation. This method provided a more structured and systematic approach compared to convenience sampling and strengthened the accuracy and generalizability of the study's findings.

3.6 The Sample Size

The sample chosen of this study consists of 3 components: students, alumni and staff members of the public relations directorate.

The sample drawn from the population of students consists of 379 student respondents based on a total population of 29,270 students. The sample size was determined using the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) table which provides an estimate based on a specified margin of error. The Krejcie and Morgan table provides a convenient reference for determining the appropriate sample size based on the population size. After determining the overall sample size, proportionate stratified sampling was applied to ensure that each academic program was represented fairly, according to its population size. Proportions are calculated using:

$$n_h \frac{N_h}{N} \times n$$

Where:

N_h = population of each stratum

N = 29,270

N = 379

H = an index that refers to each individual stratum (group).

Under this approach, the sample for each stratum was computed based on the proportion of students in that stratum relative to the total population. This ensured that programs with larger student numbers contributed more respondents to the sample than smaller programs. The proportional allocations resulted in the following sample sizes: 69 respondents from the Faculty of Applied Arts, 83 from the Faculty of Applied Science, 33 from the Faculty of Built Environment, 106 from the Faculty of Business, 83 from the Faculty of Engineering, and 5 from the CTVET Certificate II (Pre-HND) program. Together, these add up to the required total of 379 respondents: as shown in table 2.

Secondly, in addition to the student population, the study included accessible alumni of Accra Technical University to ensure that their perspectives were represented. Similarly, the sample size for the alumni was determined using the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) sample size table, which provides that for a, the table suggests a sample size of 278 respondents based on a population of approximately 1,022 alumni.

Table 3: Proportional Sample Size for Each Stratum

Programme	Population (N_h)	Proportional Sample (rounded)
Faculty of Applied Arts	5,347	69
Faculty of Applied Science	6,354	83
Faculty of Built Environment	2,586	33
Faculty of Business	8,137	106
Faculty of Engineering	6,445	83
CTVET Certificate II (Pre-HND)	401	5
Total	**29,270**	**379**

Thirdly, for the qualitative component, the study selected 3 staff members from the Public Relations Directorate of ATU. These individuals are directly involved in designing and implementing CSR communication strategies. Their perspectives provided in-depth information to into the institution's communication practices, goals, and strategic intent.

In summary, the study targeted a total sample size of 660 respondents, including both quantitative component and qualitative component. A breakdown of the sample population and desired sample size is outlined in table 3.

Table 4: A total of 660 sample size was calculated based on the following

	Population Size	Sample size
Students	29,720	379
Alumni	1022	278
Staff members (public affairs directorate)	4	3
Total desired Sample size		**660**

3.7 Instrumentation

What is known as the instrumentation serves as the basis from which data were collected for the investigation. Clark and Watson (2019) asserted that instrumentation development requires a high degree of research expertise as the instrument must be reliable and valid. The following instruments were used to gather data for the study: questionnaires and semi-structured interviews.

3.8 Questionnaire as a Tool for Collecting Data

A structured questionnaire was employed to gather primary data from research participants in light of the data collection approach selected for this investigation. This entails using closed-ended question formats to collect accurate information on each person's understanding of CSR and how it influences their opinion of the company's reputation. The questionnaire was designed following acceptable scales used by previous studies to examine relationships between variables. The questionnaire items were measured using a 5-point Likert-type scale, capturing respondents' perceptions of CSR communication strategies and institutional reputation.

Questionnaires were administered to respondents after obtaining their informed consent to take part in the study. Structured questionnaires are a key tool for collecting primary data, and Cheung (2021) notes that they align closely with quantitative research methods and enable the researcher to remain focused on the study objectives. Accordingly, the questionnaire was designed in line with the research objectives established at the outset of the study.

The link to the questionnaire was shared with students through WhatsApp and other social media platforms to ensure wider reach and participation. For the alumni, the questionnaire link was posted on the official alumni WhatsApp page to enable voluntary participation. Before completing the questionnaire, both students and alumni were briefed on the purpose of the study and informed about what was expected of them.

3.9 Interview Guide as a Tool for Collecting Data

For the purpose of this study, semi-structured interview guide was used as the second instrument of data collection. Interviewing is defined by Knott et al. (2022) as a systematic methodical interaction between two or more people with the goal of helping a researcher gather important data for a systematic study of a certain topic. This covers not just the spoken exchanges but also observing and learning from the subjects, body language, mannerisms, and surroundings.

In-person interviews were conducted at the Accra Technical University public relations directorate. Specifically, 3 staff members who are directly involved in strategizing communication for the institution. The purpose of conducting the interview was to gather information about the specific communication strategies employed by the organization.

3.10 Data analysis and Choice of Tests

The main primary and secondary data that were received were analysed using a variety of mixed methods analytical techniques. A parallel mixed approach was applied.

3.10.1 Qualitative Data Analysis

Qualitative data ascertained through interviews of 3 staff of the public relations directorate of ATU was analysed using thematic analysis that sought to identify themes in the interview transcription. This involved initial coding using NVivo 12 software and thematic development, and finally presentation of findings based on the themes. Initial open coding involved quickly categorising the data (interview transcripts) into identified key ideas from responses. Further coding was performed using NVivo 12 using the direct words of participants as codes to ensure the research captured specific voice and intended meaning. Hence the codes were organized into broader themes. The aim is to synthesis information about the communication strategies and channels adopted by ATU to convey CSR communication to internal and external stakeholders

3.10.2 Quantitative Analysis

Advanced quantitative analysis techniques were used to model the relationship between the constructs of the study. This includes a quantitative descriptive analysis of the variables of the study. Initially, the responses are coded and entered into the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Data cleaning was also performed to identify and correct any missing values or inconsistencies. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the demographic characteristics of respondents and provide an overview of their perceptions. Measures such as frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations were presented in tables and charts.

To ensure validity and reliability, Cronbach's Alpha, and Skewness and Kurtosis values for all measurement items were computed and observed to be within the acceptable range. Subsequently, inferential statistical tests were used to examine the relationship between CSR communication strategies and institutional reputation. This included the use of Pearson's correlation analysis to measure the strength and direction of the linear relationship between CSR communication strategies and institutional reputation, while a simple linear regression model was developed to examine the predictive effect of CSR communication strategies on institutional reputation.

3.11 Ethical Considerations

Research questionnaires were employed to gather data from Accra Technical University students for the study. In order to conduct the study at the university, authorization and approval were obtained from the institution. Respondents' consent was then obtained before they were included as study participants. Regarding voluntary participation, as noted by Hasan et al. (2021), no participant was coerced into giving information they did not want to give because the respondents were free to participate in the study. The respondents were assured that the information they provided would be kept confidential and used solely for academic purposes, and they were instructed not to include their names on the questionnaire.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION OF RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.0 Introduction

The main aim of the study is to examine the Impact of CSR communication on reputation of Accra Technical University. This chapter of the study focuses on a presentation of the results of data analysis and discussions. It includes descriptive statistics on respondent background, summary statistics on each variable of the study, results of correlation and regression analysis and discussion of findings of the study. The results are analyzed and presented according to the objectives of the study

4.1 Presentation of Results (Students)

4.1.1 Response rate for Students

The study targeted a total of 379 students. Out of the total 379 participants contacted, 266 successfully completed and submitted the questionnaire, representing a response rate of 70.1%. Consequently, the analysis was based on 266 valid responses.

4.1.2 Respondent Background Information on Students

Age Distribution of Respondents Students

The results in Table 4 show that the majority of respondents (32.0%) were between the ages of 18 and 20 years, followed by those aged 21–23 years (30.1%) and 24–26 years (19.5%). Respondents aged 27 years and above constituted 18.4% of the total sample. This indicates that most participants were relatively young, reflecting the youthful demographic of students.

Table 5: Age Distribution of Respondents Students

	Frequency	Percent
18-20	85	32.0
21-23	80	30.1
24-26	52	19.5
27 and above	49	18.4
Total	266	100.0

Gender Distribution of students

The results in Table 5 show that the majority of respondents (52.3%) were male, followed by female respondents who constituted 47.7% of the total sample. This indicates that male participants formed the slightly larger proportion of the study population.

Table 6: Gender Distribution of Students

	Frequency	Percent
Female	127	47.7
Male	139	52.3
Total	266	100.0

Awareness of CSR Activity by students

The results in Table 6 show that the majority of respondents (35.7%) indicated that they were not aware of CSR activities, followed closely by those who were aware (35.0%) and those who were somewhat aware (29.3%). This indicates that awareness levels were fairly balanced, with a slightly higher proportion of participants lacking knowledge of CSR activities.by the Accra Technical University.

Table 7: Awareness of CSR Activity by Students

	Frequency	Percent
No I'm not aware	95	35.7
Somewhat aware	78	29.3
Yes I'm aware	93	35.0
Total	266	100.0

4.1.3 Analysis of Objectives based on Student Data

Objective 1: ***Strategies and Channels used by ATU to Communicate CSR activities to Stakeholders***

Table 8 displays the summary statistics of the communication strategies used by Accra Technical University (ATU) to communicate its CSR activities to stakeholders. As evidenced in the result, the mean and standard deviation for the communication strategy constructs range from M = 2.70 to 4.16; SD = 1.069 to 1.296, an indication of a generally high level of agreement on most items based on the five-point Likert scale used for the measurement. This suggests that respondents largely agreed that the university provides detailed information and clear explanations regarding its CSR initiatives, although relatively lower agreement was recorded for the consistency of CSR communication (M = 2.70).

Also, the normality of the responses was measured using skewness and kurtosis. The values for skewness and kurtosis between -2 and +2 are considered acceptable to prove normal univariate distribution (George & Mallery, 2010). Hair et al. (2010) and Byrne (2010) argued that data is normal if skewness is between -2 to +2 and kurtosis is between -7 to +7. As evidenced, all the items have estimated skewness and kurtosis within the recommended values of ±2.00 for skewness and ±7.00 for kurtosis as shown in Table 4.5.

The internal consistency of the responses was measured using the commonly used technique, the Cronbach's Alpha (α). George and Mallery (2010) indicated that a Cronbach's Alpha value of at least 0.70 is considered acceptable for reliability, and as evidenced in the result, all the items ranged from 0.918 to 0.931, an indication of a very high level of internal consistency, while the multiple square correlations among the items were also found to be high.

Table 8: Communication Strategies

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis	Cronbach's Alpha
My university provides detailed information about its CSR activities (e.g., purpose, beneficiaries, and outcomes).	4.03	1.296	-1.423	.863	.918
CSR messages from the university clearly explain the reasons behind its CSR initiatives.	4.16	1.071	-1.440	1.576	.918
The university communicates both successes and challenges of its CSR activities openly.	3.71	1.205	-.692	-.223	.920
The university communicates about its CSR initiatives regularly and consistently.	2.70	1.187	.197	-.982	.931
The tone of CSR communication is factual rather than overly promotional.	2.89	1.069	.006	-.736	.925

Table 9 presents the summary statistics of the communication channels used by Accra Technical University (ATU) to communicate its CSR activities to stakeholders. As evidenced in the result, the mean and standard deviation for the communication channel constructs range from M = 3.68 to 3.98; SD = 1.064 to 1.208, indicating a generally high level of agreement among respondents regarding the effectiveness of the channels used. This suggests that respondents largely agreed that social media, the university's website, printed materials, and word-of-mouth are actively used to disseminate information on CSR initiatives.

Also, the normality of the responses was measured using skewness and kurtosis. The values for skewness and kurtosis between -2 and +2 are considered acceptable to prove normal univariate distribution (George & Mallery, 2010). Hair et al. (2010) and Byrne (2010) argued that data is normal if skewness is between -2 to +2 and kurtosis is between -7 to +7. As evidenced, all the items have estimated skewness and kurtosis within the recommended values of ±2.00 for skewness and ±7.00 for kurtosis as shown in Table 4.6.

The internal consistency of the responses was measured using the Cronbach's Alpha (α). George and Mallery (2010) indicated that a Cronbach's Alpha value of at least 0.70 is considered acceptable for reliability, and as evidenced in the result, all the items ranged from 0.919 to 0.921, demonstrating a very high level of internal consistency, while the multiple square correlations among the items were also found to be high.

Table 9: Communication Channels

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis	Cronbach's Alpha
The university uses social media platforms (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, Instagram) to communicate its CSR initiatives.	3.93	1.104	-1.019	.591	.919
CSR information is available on the university's official website or online portals.	3.74	1.147	-.877	.106	.919
CSR activities are communicated through events, seminars, or student forums.	3.68	1.064	-.527	-.034	.921
Printed materials (e.g., newsletters, brochures, posters) are used to share CSR activities.	3.74	1.208	-.921	.068	.919
Word-of-mouth from staff and student associations is a common channel for CSR communication.	3.98	1.099	-1.056	.711	.921

Objective 2: ***Perceptions of key stakeholders regarding the CSR Initiatives communicated by ATU***

Table 10 displays the summary statistics of stakeholders' perceptions regarding the CSR efforts of Accra Technical University (ATU). As evidenced in the result, the mean and standard deviation for the perception constructs range from (M = 4.09 to 4.23; SD = 1.036 to 1.169), an indication of a high level of agreement based on the five-point Likert scale used for the measurement. This suggests that respondents generally perceive the university's CSR activities as genuine, socially impactful, and addressing relevant community and environmental issues.

Also, the normality of the responses was measured using skewness and kurtosis. As evidenced, all the items have estimated skewness and kurtosis within the recommended values of ±2.00 for skewness and ±7.00 for kurtosis as shown in Table 10. The internal consistency of the responses was measured using the commonly used technique, the Cronbach's Alpha (α), and as evidenced in the result, all the items ranged from 0.917 to 0.918, an indication of a very high level of internal consistency, while the multiple square correlations among the items were also found to be high.

Table 10: Perceptions of CSR Initiatives communicated by ATU

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis	Cronbach's Alpha
The university's CSR activities appear genuine and not just for publicity.	4.09	1.169	-1.464	1.322	.917
I believe the university is committed to social responsibility beyond academic duties.	4.23	1.044	-1.593	2.108	.918
The university's CSR efforts make a positive difference in the community.	4.11	1.163	-1.497	1.498	.918
CSR initiatives by the university address important social and environmental issues.	4.23	1.036	-1.571	2.115	.918

Objective 3: Investigate the relationship between the strategic communication of CSR and the perceived reputation of ATU

Table 11 displays the summary statistics of stakeholders' perceptions regarding the university's trustworthiness and reputation as influenced by its CSR efforts. As evidenced in the result, the mean and standard deviation for the perception constructs range from (M = 4.11 to 4.21; SD = 0.996 to 1.138), an indication of a high level of agreement based on the five-point Likert scale used for the measurement. Also, the normality of the responses was within the recommended values of ±2.00 for skewness and ±7.00 for kurtosis as shown in the table. The internal consistency of the responses measured using Cronbach's Alpha (α), ranged from 0.916 to 0.919, an indication of a very high level of internal consistency.

Table 11: relationship between the strategic communication of CSR and the perceived reputation of ATU – Students Data

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis	Cronbach's Alpha
The university is trustworthy because of its social responsibility efforts.	4.17	1.129	-1.548	1.679	.918
I believe the university acts ethically and responsibly.	4.21	1.091	-1.682	2.389	.919
The university is committed to addressing community and societal needs.	4.11	1.138	-1.447	1.349	.918
I am proud to be associated with the university because of its CSR initiatives.	4.21	.996	-1.596	2.545	.918
The university's CSR efforts strengthen its overall reputation compared to other institutions.	4.16	1.057	-1.661	2.464	.916

In order to further examine the effect of CSR communication on reputation of ATU according to data from students of ATU, a correlation and regression analysis was performed revealing the following insights.

Correlation Analysis

The Pearson correlation analysis (Table 12) reveals strong, positive relationships among stakeholders' perception of public relations (PR), the communication channels used by the university, and its perceived reputation. Specifically, the perception of PR was positively correlated with communication channels ($r = 0.740$, $p < 0.01$) and reputation ($r = 0.772$, $p < 0.01$). Similarly, communication channels showed a strong positive correlation with reputation ($r = 0.828$, $p < 0.01$).

Table 12: Correlations (Student data)

	perception_of_PR	communication_channels	reputation
perception_of_PR	1		
communication_channels	0.740**	1	
reputation	0.772**	0.828**	1

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Additionally, a multiple regression analysis was conducted to examine the effect of stakeholders' perception of PR and communication channels on the perceived reputation of the university. The model was statistically significant ($F(2, 263) = 378.691$, $p < 0.001$) and explained 74.2% of the variance in reputation ($R^2 = 0.742$), indicating a strong predictive power. Both perception of PR ($\beta = 0.352$, $t = 7.566$, $p < 0.001$) and communication channels ($\beta = 0.567$, $t = 12.185$, $p < 0.001$) were significant positive predictors of reputation. This implies that improvements in stakeholders' perception of PR and the effectiveness of communication channels are associated with higher perceptions of the university's reputation.

Table 13: Regression Coefficients Based on Students Responses

	R-square	Beta	t-statistic	*p*-value
(Constant)	0.742		4.429	0.000
perception_of_PR		0.352	7.566	0.000
communication_channels		0.567	12.185	0.000

a. Dependent Variable: reputation

b. Predictors: (Constant), communication_channels, perception_of_PR

Table 14: ANOVAa

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	130.237	2	65.119	378.691	.000[b]
	Residual	45.225	263	.172		
	Total	175.462	265			
a. Dependent Variable: reputation						
b. Predictors: (Constant), communication_channels, perception_of_PR						

4.2 Presentation of Results (Alumni)

4.2.1 Response Rate for Alumni data

4.2.2 Respondent Background Information on Alumni

Age Distribution of Respondents

The results in Table 15 show that the majority of respondents (38.1%) were aged 27 years and above, followed by those aged 24–26 years (32.5%) and 21–23 years (29.4%). Respondents aged 18–20 years constituted 0% of the total sample. This indicates that most participants were relatively mature, reflecting an older demographic among the alumni respondents.

Table 15: Age Distribution of Respondents (Alumni)

	Frequency	Percent
18-20	0	0%
21-23	47	29.4
24-26	52	32.5
27 and above	61	38.1
Total	160	100.0

Gender of Respondents

The results in Table 16 show that the majority of respondents (61.3%) were male, followed by female respondents who constituted 38.8% of the total sample. This indicates that male participants formed the larger proportion of the study population.

Table 16: Gender of Respondents

	Frequency	Percent
Female	62	38.8
Male	98	61.3
Total	160	100.0

Awareness of CSR Activity

The results in Table 17 show that the majority of respondents (52.5%) indicated that they were aware of CSR activities, followed by those who were not aware (25.0%) and those who were somewhat aware (22.5%). This indicates that more than half of the participants had knowledge of CSR activities by the Accra Technical University.

Table 17: Awareness of CSR Activity

	Frequency	Percent
No I'm not aware	40	25.0
Somewhat aware	36	22.5
Yes I'm aware	84	52.5
Total	160	100.0

4.2.3 Analysis of Objectives based on Alumni Data

Objective 1: ***Strategies and Channels used by ATU to Communicate CSR activities to Stakeholders***

Table 18 displays the summary statistics of stakeholders' perceptions regarding the strategies and channels used by ATU to communicate its CSR activities to stakeholders. As evidenced in the result, the mean and standard deviation for the perception constructs range from (M = 2.90 to 4.23; SD = 0.994 to 1.260), indicating varying levels of agreement based on the five-point Likert scale used for the measurement. The highest agreement was observed for the item on providing detailed information about CSR activities (M = 4.23, SD = 1.070), while the lowest agreement was for the item on regular and consistent communication (M = 2.90, SD = 1.260).

The normality of the responses was within the recommended values of ±2.00 for skewness and ±7.00 for kurtosis, as shown in the table. The internal consistency of the responses measured using Cronbach's Alpha (α) ranged from 0.930 to 0.942, indicating a very high level of internal consistency and suggesting that the items reliably captured stakeholders' perceptions of the university's CSR communication strategies and channels.

Table 18: Communication Strategies Based on Alumni Data

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis	Cronbach's Alpha
My university provides detailed information about its CSR activities (e.g., purpose, beneficiaries, and outcomes).	4.23	1.070	-1.585	1.975	.930
CSR messages from the university clearly explain the reasons behind its CSR initiatives.	4.19	.994	-1.294	1.324	.931
The university communicates both successes and challenges of its CSR activities openly.	3.96	1.045	-.861	.253	.931

The university communicates about its CSR initiatives regularly and consistently.	2.90	1.260	.114	-.971	.942
The tone of CSR communication is factual rather than overly promotional.	3.19	1.123	-.080	-.899	.936

Table 19 presents the summary statistics of stakeholders' perceptions regarding the communication channels used by ATU to share its CSR initiatives. As shown in the results, the mean and standard deviation for the perception constructs range from (M = 3.83 to 4.03; SD = 0.992 to 1.070), indicating a high level of agreement among respondents based on the five-point Likert scale. The highest agreement was observed for word-of-mouth from staff and student associations (M = 4.03, SD = 1.030), while the lowest agreement was for CSR information available on the university's official website or online portals (M = 3.83, SD = 0.992).

The normality of the responses was within the recommended values of ±2.00 for skewness and ±7.00 for kurtosis, as presented in the table. The internal consistency of the responses, measured using Cronbach's Alpha (α), ranged from 0.931 to 0.933, reflecting a very high level of internal consistency and indicating that the items reliably captured stakeholders' perceptions of the university's CSR communication channels.

Table 19: Communication Channels

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis	Cronbach's Alpha
The university uses social media platforms (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, Instagram) to communicate its CSR initiatives.	4.01	1.070	-1.086	.773	.933
CSR information is available on the university's official website or online portals.	3.83	.992	-.751	.238	.932
CSR activities are communicated through events, seminars, or student forums.	3.94	1.048	-.817	.297	.932
Printed materials (e.g., newsletters, brochures, posters) are used to share CSR activities.	3.93	1.088	-1.049	.546	.931
Word-of-mouth from staff and student associations is a common channel for CSR communication.	4.03	1.030	-1.041	.825	.932

Objective 2: ***Perceptions of key stakeholders regarding the CSR Communication byATU***

Table 20 presents the summary statistics of stakeholders' perceptions regarding the CSR communication of ATU. As shown in the results, the mean and standard deviation for the perception constructs range from (M = 4.18 to 4.26; SD = 0.921 to 1.064), indicating a high level of agreement among respondents based on the five-point Likert scale. The highest agreement was observed for the belief that the university is committed to social responsibility beyond academic duties (M = 4.26, SD = 0.921), while the lowest was for the perception that the university's CSR activities appear genuine and not just for publicity (M = 4.18, SD = 1.057).

The normality of the responses was within the recommended values of ±2.00 for skewness and ±7.00 for kurtosis. The internal consistency of the responses, measured using Cronbach's Alpha (α), ranged from 0.929 to 0.931, indicating a very high level of internal consistency and confirming that the items reliably captured stakeholders' perceptions of ATU's CSR communication.

Table 20: Perceptions of key stakeholders regarding the CSR Communication of ATU – According to Alumni Data

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis	Cronbach's Alpha
The university's CSR activities appear genuine and not just for publicity.	4.18	1.057	-1.469	1.633	.930
I believe the university is committed to social responsibility beyond academic duties.	4.26	.921	-1.427	2.030	.930
The university's CSR efforts make a positive difference in the community.	4.22	1.064	-1.510	1.686	.929
CSR initiatives by the university address important social and environmental issues.	4.23	1.011	-1.404	1.479	.931

Objective 3: ***Investigate the relationship between the strategic communication of CSR and the perceived reputation of ATU***

Table 21: relationship between the strategic communication of CSR and the perceived reputation of ATU – Alumni Data

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis	Cronbach's Alpha
The university is trustworthy because of its social responsibility efforts.	4.25	1.064	-1.658	2.219	.929
I believe the university acts ethically and responsibly.	4.14	1.126	-1.491	1.619	.933
The university is committed to addressing community and societal needs.	4.06	.976	-1.360	1.828	.930
I am proud to be associated with the university because of its CSR initiatives.	4.23	.931	-1.269	1.497	.930

The university's CSR efforts strengthen its overall reputation compared to other institutions.	4.16	1.075	-1.375	1.153	.930

The Pearson correlation analysis (Table 22) reveals strong, positive relationships among alumni perceptions of public relations (PR), the communication channels used by the university, and its perceived reputation. Specifically, perception of PR was positively correlated with communication channels ($r = 0.838, p < 0.01$) and reputation ($r = 0.871, p < 0.01$). Similarly, communication channels showed a strong positive correlation with reputation ($r = 0.821, p < 0.01$).

Table 22: Correlations (Alumni Data)

	communication_channels	perception_of_PR	reputation
communication_channels	1		
perception_of_PR	.838**	1	
reputation	.821**	.871**	1

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Additionally, a multiple regression analysis was conducted to examine the effect of alumni perception of PR and communication channels on the perceived reputation of the university as shown in table 23. The model was statistically significant and explained 78.6% of the variance in reputation ($R^2 = 0.786$), indicating strong predictive power. Both perception of PR ($\beta = 0.309, t = 4.572, p < 0.001$) and communication channels ($\beta = 0.612, t = 9.055, p < 0.001$) were significant positive predictors of reputation. This implies that higher alumni perception of PR and more effective communication channels are associated with increased perceptions of the university's reputation.

Table 23: Regression Coefficients Based on Alumni Responses

	R-square	Beta	t-statistic	*p*-value
(Constant)	.786		1.334	.184
perception_of_PR		.309	4.572	.000
communication_channels		.612	9.055	.000

a. Predictors: (Constant), perception_of_PR, communication_channels

Table 24: ANOVA[b]

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	85.513	2	42.757	288.716	.000[b]
	Residual	23.251	157	.148		
	Total	108.764	159			

a. Dependent Variable: reputation

b. Predictors: (Constant), perception_of_PR, communication_channels

4.3 Qualitative Analysis of Responses on Communication Strategies and Channels

The analysis of the responses from the Public Relations Department of ATU focused on three key perspectives: Two PR Practitioners, and the PR Assistant to understand how CSR communication is planned and the channels used to deliver messages. In order to achieve this the qualitative data was analyzed by first identifying key ideas from the interviews, grouping similar expressions under broader categories, and then developing themes related to communication strategies and the channels employed. The themes were developed using NVivo software for qualitative analysis.

4.3.1 Thematic Findings for Objective 1

Deliberate Planning and Coordination

One main theme observed across the 3 research participants interviewed showed that they deliberately plan and frame all communication processes instead of ad hoc.

Respondent 1: *"We usually start with a communication plan… identifying key messages, the target audience, and the most appropriate communication channels."*

Respondent 2: *"We operate within a structured communication framework that aligns with the university's broader strategic plan… timeline for pre-event, during-event, and post-event communication."*

Respondent 3*: "Once a CSR activity is confirmed… who needs to know, what message we want to share, and the best time and channel to use… pre-event… during… post-event communication."*

Clarity, Authenticity, Human Impact

According to respondents, messages that they design and disseminate to the public are designed to be clear, honest and relevant to the audience and sometimes they add elements of storytelling in order to convey the message efficiently. Some of the respondents noted that

Respondent 1: *"Transparency and authenticity are our guiding principles… focus on the people who are the targets of the end message......how they are impacted...rather than just the institution's achievements."*

Respondent 2: *"Truthfulness and simplicity… include visuals that capture and convey the mood of the event.…also present CSR not as charity but as partnership with the community"*

Use of multiple Channels

ATU deliberately uses multiple channels to communicate with its stakeholders. The institution consists of different groups of stakeholders including students, staff, alumni and the outside world. Hence different communication channels are strategized for different groups of people. For example, predominant channels mentioned include social media channels targeted at students, alumni and prospective students and the outside world. This channel also seeks to drive engagement, based on the responses. Additionally, the use of on-campus/internal noticeboard and digital newsletters is targeted at the students and staff of the university community. In some cases, a team is delegated to participate in community events, and media collaborations that are broadcast on TV and radio stations to directly communicate to a specific group of people or to drive engagement.

Respondent 1: "*Social media… are among our most active outlets… the official university website… press releases… events."*

Respondent 2: *"Website and press releases remain our formal communication platforms… we leverage social media… and radio/TV collaborations."*

Respondent 3: *"We use a mix of channels… social media… university website… emails, notice boards, and student forums… local radio stations or invite the media."*

Further probe into this issue also revealed a minor theme which is the effectiveness of the selected channel depends largely on the audience. For example, according to 1 respondent

"Social media has proven to be the most effective… for students… website and traditional media… for government and institutional partners."

Quality Control and Brand Consistency

Because ATU is a reputable educational institution, and the main focus of its strategic communication and CSR activities is to project a strong regional influence, credibility is protected through central review of all communication content that goes from the school to audience. This was also considered as a major theme in the interview.

Respondent 1: *"Every message… is vetted by the Public Affairs Directorate… use visuals—photos, short videos, infographics."*

Respondent 2: *"Before any communication goes out, it passes through the PR Directorate for review… photos, short videos, and testimonials."*

4.4 Discussion of the findings

4.4.1 Discussion of Findings based on Results from Students

Objective 1: ***Communication Strategies and Channels***

The findings show that respondents expressed high levels of agreement that the university provides detailed information about its CSR activities and also clearly explains the reasons behind these initiatives that they communicate across. These results indicate that ATU's communication is largely transparent, informative, and is in line with best practices in CSR disclosure. Prior studies, such as Abugre and Nyuur (2015) and Kim (2019), emphasize that clarity, openness, and detailed CSR messaging help build trust and enhance stakeholder understanding. However, lower mean values for the consistency of communication (M = 2.70) and the factual tone of messages (M = 2.89) are in line with challenges reported in the Ghanaian context, where institutions often engage in CSR but do not communicate consistently (Abugre & Nyuur, 2015).

In terms of communication channels used, the results also show that ATU uses a combination of channels to disseminate CSR information. The main channels through which respondents receive information about CSR from ATU as indicated in the responses include social media (M = 3.93) and word-of-mouth communication through staff and student associations (M = 3.98) are actively used. This is consistent with contemporary CSR communication trends, where digital platforms and interpersonal networks play central roles in stakeholder engagement (Chu & Chen, 2019; Okazaki et al., 2020). Moderate to high agreement was also recorded for the use of the university website (M = 3.74), printed materials (M = 3.74), and events or student forums (M = 3.68). These findings indicate that ATU uses a multiple channels to ensure that CSR information is accessible to different stakeholder groups.

Objective 2: ***Perception of CSR Initiatives as Communicated by ATU***

The findings on stakeholders' perceptions of ATU's CSR initiatives strongly align with both Stakeholder Theory and Signaling Theory. According to Stakeholder Theory (Freeman et al., 2018), organizations have a responsibility to meet the expectations of their stakeholders through actions that create social value. Subsequently the study observed high levels of agreement cross all measurement items that measure their level of perception of CSR initiatives as communicated by the institution. This aligns with studies such as Fatma and Rahman (2015) and Taamneh et al. (2022), who argue that when CSR initiatives resonate with stakeholder needs, trust and institutional reputation are strengthened.

Objective 3: ***Effect of CSR communication on perceived reputation of ATU***

The findings of this study indicate that the strategic communication of CSR plays a significant role in shaping stakeholders' perceptions of the university's reputation. Correlation analysis revealed strong positive relationships among stakeholders' perception of public relations (PR), communication channels, and the university's reputation. These results suggest that stakeholders who view the university's PR efforts positively are also likely to perceive its communication channels as effective, which in turn enhances their perception of the university's reputation. Multiple regression analysis further confirmed these findings indicating that improvements in stakeholders' perception of PR and the effectiveness of communication channels are strongly associated with higher perceived reputation. The results align with prior research indicating that transparent, consistent, and engaging CSR communication fosters stakeholder trust, pride, and institutional credibility (Abugre & Nyuur, 2015; Ajayi & Mmutle, 2021; Kim, 2019).

4.4.2 Discussion of Findings based on Results from Alumni

Objective 1: ***Strategies and Channels used by ATU to Communicate CSR Activities to Stakeholders***

The findings for this study objective based on data from alumni respondents shows similar trends to that of student respondents. There is relatively high levels of agreement for the following strategies for communicating CSR activities: provision of detailed information about its CSR activities and clearly explaining the reasons behind its initiatives. Similarly, consistency in communication also was observed to have low agreement among alumni respondents. However, regular and consistent communication received relatively lower agreement.

Objective 2: ***Perceptions of Key Stakeholders Regarding the CSR Communication of ATU***

Stakeholders' perceptions of ATU's CSR communication were largely positive, similar to findings from student data. Alumni also perceived the CSR activities as genuine and impactful ($M = 4.18$ to 4.22). These results suggest that stakeholders recognize the authenticity and social value of the university's CSR efforts, reflecting positively on ATU's ethical stance and community orientation.

Objective 3: ***Relationship Between Strategic CSR Communication and Perceived Reputation of ATU***

Correlation analysis revealed strong positive relationships among alumni perceptions of PR, communication channels, and the university's reputation while regression analysis further confirmed these relationships, showing that perception of PR ($\beta = 0.309$, $p < 0.001$) and communication channels ($\beta = 0.612$, $p < 0.001$) significantly predict reputation, explaining 78.6% of the variance ($R^2 = 0.786$).

4.4.3 Discussion of Findings based on Results from Staff Members of PR Directorate

The qualitative findings highlight major practices in ATU's CSR communication strategy. According to responses from interview with the staff members, their communication strategy focuses on deliberate planning and coordination, ensuring clarity and authenticity while keeping it very related to the needs of the audience. There are also the use of multiple channels and constant quality control and brand consistency in all communications put out by the institution.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

This chapter concludes the study by providing a summary of the key findings, conclusion of the study based on the key findings and recommendations – both practical recommendations and recommendations for future research.

5.1 Summary of key Findings

The study examined the strategies and channels used by Accra Technical University (ATU) to communicate its Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) activities, stakeholders' perceptions of these CSR initiatives, and the effect of strategic CSR communication on the institution's reputation. The key findings of the study include.

First, the study found that ATU employs deliberate and structured communication strategies to disseminate information about its CSR initiatives. Communication from the university is characterized by clarity, transparency, and authenticity, with an emphasis on community impact. In terms of communication channels, social media platforms such as Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter were identified as the most widely used and effective tools for reaching key stakeholder groups, particularly students and alumni. Additionally, traditional media, including printed materials, noticeboards, forums, and broadcast media are used.

Secondly, the study also found that respondents generally view ATU's CSR initiatives as authentic, relevant, and aligned with its mandate as an educational institution. Stakeholders believe that the university's CSR activities contribute meaningfully to addressing social, community, and environmental issues, and that communication surrounding these initiatives reflects honesty and transparency.

Furthermore, the study observed a strong and statistically significant positive relationship between strategic CSR communication and ATU's institutional reputation. Stakeholders who held favourable views of the university's CSR communication were more likely to perceive ATU as socially responsible and ethically committed to community development.

5.2 Conclusions

Based on the findings, the study concludes that ATU's approach to communicating CSR initiatives is intentional and strategically grounded, demonstrating clear efforts to engage stakeholders through transparent and community-oriented messaging. The use of both digital and traditional channels enhances the university's ability to reach diverse audiences effectively. The study also concludes that since the study observed a generally positive stakeholder perceptions, it suggests that ATU's CSR initiatives are viewed as authentic, socially impactful, and aligned with the institution's mission. This reinforces the idea that genuine commitment to social responsibility strengthens stakeholder trust and deepens institutional legitimacy.

Finally, the study concludes that strategic CSR communication significantly and positively influences the reputation of Accra Technical University.

Practical Recommendations

The study found that ATU uses clear, transparent, and planned strategies but lacks consistency in communication frequency. Hence, it is recommended that the university develop a structured CSR communication schedule to ensure regular updates across all platforms. This will improve message continuity and maintain active stakeholder awareness and engagement.

The study found that social media was the most effective channel, while traditional media remained relevant for certain groups. Hence, it is recommended that ATU strengthen its integrated communication approach by enhancing social media engagement while maintaining supportive traditional channels. This will aid in reaching a wider audience and improving overall awareness of CSR activities.

The study found that stakeholders view ATU's CSR initiatives as genuine and impactful but expressed a desire for more detailed and frequent updates. Hence, it is recommended that ATU adopt more comprehensive, data-supported storytelling in CSR communication. This will enhance transparency, reinforce authenticity, and strengthen positive stakeholder perceptions.

The study found a strong positive relationship between stakeholder perception of CSR communication and ATU's reputation. Hence, it is recommended that the university prioritize CSR communication as a core element of its strategic branding and public relations efforts. This will enhance institutional reputation and increase stakeholder trust and goodwill.

Suggestions For Future Research

The study recommends that future research expand beyond a single institution to examine CSR communication strategies and their impact on reputation across multiple universities in Ghana or the West African region. This would provide a comparative perspective and identify best practices applicable to higher education institutions more broadly.

Additionally, further studies can focus more on examining the mediating effect of digital channels in improving CSR communication and its associated effect on reputation.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A - **QUESTIONNAIRE**

I wish to introduce myself to you as Graduate student at the Ghana Institute University of Journalism Media Arts and Communication (UNIMAC) currently studying MSc strategic public relations. As part of the programme, I am required to write a thesis whose title is "Impact of CSR communication on reputation of higher educational institutions in Ghana – A case of Accra Technical University" Your organization has granted me permission to use it as one of my case study organizations. Consequently, sampled students, alumni and staff, of which you are a member, are required to fill in the questionnaire you have. I would be most grateful if you could please spare some few minutes of your precious time to answer all the questions before you. You are assured that all the data/information you provide would be treated with utmost confidentiality. I thank you in advance for your co-operation.

Section A: Demographic Information

Please tick (✓) the most appropriate response.

1. Age

☐ 18–20 ☐ 21–23 ☐ 24–26 ☐ 27 and above

2. Gender

☐ Male ☐ Female

3. Are you currently a student or Alumni or staff of the University

☐ Student ☐ Alumni ☐ Staff

4. Are you aware of any CSR Activities ATU?

☐ Yes, very aware ☐ Somewhat aware ☐ Not aware at all

Section B: Strategies and channels used by HEIs to communicate their CSR activities to stakeholders.

(Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements: 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree)

B1. Communication Strategies (Informativeness, Transparency, Consistency & Credibility**)**	1	2	3	4	5
My university provides detailed information about its CSR activities (e.g., purpose, beneficiaries, and outcomes).					
CSR messages from the university clearly explain the reasons behind its CSR initiatives.					
The university communicates both successes and challenges of its CSR activities openly.					
The university communicates about its CSR initiatives regularly and consistently.					
The tone of CSR communication is factual rather than overly promotional.					
B2. Communication Channels	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
The university uses social media platforms (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, Instagram) to communicate its CSR initiatives.					
CSR information is available on the university's official website or online portals.					
CSR activities are communicated through events, seminars, or student forums.					
Printed materials (e.g., newsletters, brochures, posters) are used to share CSR activities.					
Word-of-mouth from staff and student associations is a common channel for CSR communication.					

Section C: Stakeholder Perceptions Regarding CSR Efforts

(Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements: 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree)

	1	2	3	4	5
The university's CSR activities appear genuine and not just for publicity.					
I believe the university is committed to social responsibility beyond academic duties.					
The university's CSR efforts make a positive difference in the community.					
CSR initiatives by the university address important social and environmental issues.					
I trust the information provided by the university about its CSR activities.					

Section D: Perceived Institutional Reputation

(Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements: 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree)

	1	2	3	4	5
The university is trustworthy because of its social responsibility efforts.					
I believe the university acts ethically and responsibly.					
The university is committed to addressing community and societal needs.					
I am proud to be associated with the university because of its CSR initiatives.					
The university's CSR efforts strengthen its overall reputation compared to other institutions.					

Interview guide

Study topic: **Impact of CSR communication on reputation of higher educational institutions in Ghana – A case of Accra Technical University**

Introduction & Consent (5 minutes)

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview. The purpose of this interview is to gather your personal insights and experiences corporate social responsibility activities by Accra Technical University and how it affects your perception of the university's reputation.

Please note that your participation in this interview is completely voluntary, thus, you have the right to decline answering any questions. Your responses will be kept strictly confidential and used solely for purposes of this study only.

Nature of CSR Communication

1. What types of CSR activities does ATU usually communicate to stakeholders?
2. What does the university seek to achieve when communicating CSR initiatives?
   awareness
   reputation
   stakeholder engagement

CSR Communication Strategies

3. How does ATU plan or strategize the communication of its CSR activities?

4. What principles or approaches guide how CSR messages are crafted?

5. How do you ensure that CSR communication is clear, credible, and appealing to

CSR Communication Channels

6. Through which channels does ATU communicate its CSR initiatives?

social media

website

events,

student forums

7. Which of these channels do you consider most effective in reaching stakeholders? Why?

Evaluation and Improvement

8. How does the university assess whether its CSR communication strategies are effective?

9. What challenges do you face in communicating CSR activities?

10. What improvements or innovations would you suggest to enhance CSR communication at ATU?

APPENDIX B – APPROVAL DOCUMENTS

ACCRA TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY

P. O. Box GP 561, Accra Ghana. Tel: (+233) 302 689276
Website: www.atu.edu.gh E-mail: registrar@atu.edu.gh

DIRECTOR OF RESEARCH, INNOVATION, PUBLICATION & TECHNOLOGY TRANSFER

Our Ref:

Your Ref:

Date:

Our Ref: DRIPTT-IRB Akoto, 2025a **Date: 31st October, 2025**

Your Ref:

Akoto Emmanuel (MASPRM24033)
University of Media Arts and Communication (UniMAC)
Department of Public Relations
Accra, Ghana

Director, A. Affini
Kindly attend to the letter
leave as this
20/11/25

Dear Emmanuel,

APPROVAL OF RESEARCH ETHICS APPLICATION (RE #160-2025-DRIPTT)

The research ethics committee of Accra Technical University (ATU) is pleased to inform you that, following the review of your ethical clearance application, approval has been granted for you to conduct data collection at ATU as part of your research project, titled: ***"Impact of CSR Communication on Reputation of Higher Educational Institutions in Ghana (A Case of Accra Technical University"***. The research will be conducted under the supervision of **Dr. Rebecca Baah-Ofori (PhD).**

Your research has been assigned **Ethics ID: RE #160-2025-DRIPTT**. This clearance is valid from **31st October, 2025 to 30th October, 2026**. We kindly remind you to adhere to ATU's publication and authorship guidelines and to ensure that any resulting publications are submitted to reputable journals or conference proceedings recognised by the university.

We appreciate your cooperation in upholding these standards.

Yours faithfully,

DR. PETER NYANOR
Director – Directorate of Research, Innovation, Publication and Technology Transfer.

Cc: **Dr. Rebecca Baah-Ofori (PhD).**
DRIPTT-IRB File

ACCRA TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY
ACADEMIC AFFAIRS DIRECTORATE
2024/2025 ACADEMIC YEAR ALL REGISTERED STUDENTS AS AT 20-05-25
FIRST SEMESTER

FACULTIES BY GENDER

S/N	PROGRAMMES	MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL
1	FACULTY OF APPLIED ARTS	1052	4295	**5347**
2	FACULTY OF APPLIED SCIENCE	4290	2064	**6354**
4	FACULTY OF BUILT ENVIRONMENT	2256	330	**2586**
3	FACULTY OF BUSINESS	3978	4159	**8137**
5	FACULTY OF ENGINEERING	5999	446	**6445**
6	CTVET CERTIFICATE II (PRE-HND)	244	157	**401**
	TOTAL	**17819**	**11451**	**29270**