



**MULTINATIONAL CORPORATE REBRANDING STRATEGIES  
IN DEVELOPING MARKETS: THE CASE OF  
TOTALENERGIES GHANA'S STRATEGIC REPOSITIONING**

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## DECLARATION

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.

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## CERTIFICATION BY SUPERVISOR

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

**DR. ALBERT ANANI-BOSSMAN    .....**    .....

Supervisor    Signature    Date

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## **DEDICATION**

To my father—my first teacher, my greatest cheerleader, my safe place. Losing you a year before I completed my undergraduate degree left a void I have never quite been able to fill. That day didn't feel like a celebration without you there, and for a long time, I struggled to find joy in milestones you couldn't witness.

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## ABSTRACT

This study examines the communication strategies employed by TotalEnergies during its rebranding in Ghana, the key messages conveyed, and the challenges encountered. Using qualitative research methods, particularly interviews with key stakeholders and content analysis of publicly available information, the study explores how TotalEnergies navigated the transition from its former identity to a more sustainability-driven brand within a culturally diverse and dynamic market.

Findings reveal that TotalEnergies utilized an integrated marketing communications (IMC) approach, leveraging multiple platforms such as traditional media, digital channels, and direct stakeholder engagements to disseminate its rebranding message. The study also identifies the primary messages communicated, including the company's commitment to renewable energy, sustainability, and innovation. However, challenges emerged, particularly in the public's interpretation of the brand's new visual identity, as the multi-colored logo led to unintended associations. Additionally, skepticism regarding the true impact of the rebranding, complicated the communication process.

To counter these challenges, TotalEnergies implemented social proof strategies, such as the establishment of solar-powered service stations and electric vehicle charging points, to reinforce its sustainability narrative. The study connects these findings to existing literature on corporate rebranding and IMC, emphasizing the importance of aligning brand messaging with tangible actions to gain consumer trust.

The research contributes to the broader discourse on multinational rebranding efforts in Africa, providing insights into how global corporations can successfully localize their communication strategies. It highlights the significance of clear messaging, proactive stakeholder engagement, and context-sensitive brand positioning. Limitations of the study include its reliance on qualitative data, which, while rich in insight, may benefit from complementary quantitative analysis in future research. Recommendations include further studies on a mixed-method approach as well as a comparative analysis of rebranding strategies in other African markets.

Ultimately, this study underscores the complexities of corporate rebranding in culturally distinct markets and offers practical lessons for multinational corporations navigating similar transitions.

**Keywords:** Corporate Rebranding, Integrated Marketing Communications, TotalEnergies, Ghana, Sustainability, Brand Perception, Multinational Rebranding.

## Table of Contents

DECLARATION .....	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT .....	iii
DEDICATION.....	iv
ABSTRACT.....	v
CHAPTER ONE .....	1
INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1. Background of the Study .....	1
1.2. Problem Statement .....	5
1.3. Research Objectives .....	7
1.4. Research Questions .....	7
1.5. Significance of the Study.....	7
1.6. Scope and Limitations of the Study .....	9
1.7. Organization of the Study.....	10
1.8. Chapter Summary.....	11
CHAPTER TWO .....	12
LITERATURE REVIEW .....	12
2. Introduction.....	12
2.1. Theoretical Frameworks .....	12
2.1.1. Corporate Rebranding Theory.....	12
2.1.2. Integrated Marketing Communications Theory .....	14
2.2. Conceptual Review.....	16
2.2.1. Corporate Rebranding.....	16
2.3. Rebranding within a Global Context .....	22
2.4. Rebranding in Africa .....	27
2.5. Rebranding in Ghana .....	30
2.5.1. Corporate Rebranding in Ghana’s Energy Sector .....	31
2.6. Gap in the Literature.....	32
2.7. Chapter Summary .....	34
CHAPTER THREE.....	35
METHODOLOGY .....	35
3.1. Introduction.....	35

3.2. Research Approach and Design .....	35
3.3. Study Population .....	36
3.4. Sampling Techniques and Sample Size .....	37
3.5. Data Collection Methods and Instruments.....	38
3.6. Data Analysis .....	40
3.7. Ethical Considerations .....	41
3.8. Chapter Summary .....	42
CHAPTER FOUR.....	43
RESULTS AND DATA ANALYSIS .....	43
Introduction.....	43
4.2. Description of Themes .....	45
4.2.1. Communication Channels and Strategies .....	45
4.2.2. Stakeholder Engagement .....	49
4.2.3. Core Messaging and Narrative.....	53
4.2.4. Cultural and Local Adaptation.....	56
4.2.5. Challenges and Solutions.....	58
4.3. Content Analysis .....	62
4.3.1. Communication Channels and Strategies .....	62
4.3.2. Key Messages .....	65
4.3.3. Challenge Indicators.....	67
4.4. Chapter Summary.....	68
CHAPTER FIVE.....	69
DISCUSSION OF KEY FINDINGS .....	69
Introduction.....	69
5.1. Research Question 1: .....	69
5.2. Research Question 2: .....	71
5.3. Research Question 3: .....	73
5.4. Implications and Significance of Findings.....	76
5.5. Conclusions .....	81
5.7. Limitations and Directions for Future Research .....	83
REFERENCES .....	86
APPENDICES .....	96

APPENDIX 1.....	96
APPENDIX 2.....	98

**LIST OF TABLES**

Table 4.0 Demography of Participants ..... 44

Table 4.1 TotalEnergies Ghana Key Messages During Rebranding ..... 66

# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. Background of the Study

In today's highly competitive business environment, multinational companies engage in rebranding as a strategic tool to enhance brand relevance, capture new market opportunities, and signal shifts in their corporate values or operational focus. As markets evolve and consumer expectations shift, rebranding allows companies to remain competitive and aligned with both local and global audiences (Kapferer, 2012). Corporate rebranding is a strategic shift in a company's image that involves changes to its visual identity, core brand message, or business model. The reasons for corporate rebranding stem from internal factors like mergers and acquisitions, structural changes, or outdated images, as well as external factors such as marketplace dynamics, competitive landscapes, and public perceptions (Tevi and Otubanjo, 2013). Rebranding goes beyond superficial changes in brand logos and slogans; it often represents a deeper transformation aimed at realigning a company's brand identity with its strategic objectives and the values of its stakeholders (Muzellec and Lambkin, 2006). This is particularly relevant for multinational corporations, whose identities must resonate across diverse cultures and regulatory environments.

In the context of increasing global competition, multinational corporations employ rebranding to differentiate themselves from competitors, allowing them to capture market share and connect more deeply with consumers. For instance, Unilever's rebranding of its food and beverage products to emphasize health and wellness has allowed the company to resonate with health-conscious consumers worldwide (Unilever, n.d.). Such rebranding efforts not only improve

competitive positioning but also foster customer trust, as companies align their brand messages with broader cultural and ethical trends, thus creating a meaningful impact across varied markets (Kapferer, 2012). When brands evolve to reflect shifting social values, like sustainability and corporate responsibility, they are more likely to remain relevant in the eyes of consumers.

Additionally, rebranding also enables multinational companies to navigate and adjust to cultural differences across regions. When entering or re-establishing themselves in new markets, companies must consider local values, traditions, and consumer preferences to ensure their brand is well-received. According to Ghauri and Cateora (2010), adapting brand identities to local markets allows multinational companies to foster loyalty and trust among consumers, which is crucial for long-term success. This is particularly important for companies in highly regulated industries, where alignment with local values and regulations can be key to maintaining credibility and operating successfully.

The energy sector plays a central role in shaping business strategy due to its highly significant impact on economic growth, geopolitics, sustainability efforts, and technological advancement. Energy companies are not only major players in powering economies but also central to the shift towards decarbonization, which is reshaping business strategies worldwide (Thompson, 2023; IRENA, 2023). As the world continues to experience varying degrees of climate change, nations across the globe have committed to phasing away from fossil fuels, echoing the UN's Sustainable Development Goal seven (7) for affordable and clean energy by 2030. The energy sector has been documented as one of the top five (5) industries that contributes significantly to the world's Green House Gases (GHG) (Lamb, et al., 2021). Global GHG emissions reached a record high in 2018, at 58 gigatonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent (GtCO<sub>2</sub>eq). The largest contributor, being the energy sector

was responsible for 34% of total emissions (Lamb, et al., 2021). In a span of two years however, GHG emissions from the global extractive industry reached 7.7 billion tons of CO2 equivalents (CO2e), which accounted for 15% of worldwide human-caused GHG emissions (Zheng, et al., 2023). This reality has necessitated prompt action from global leaders to act with urgency to set up policies and regulatory frameworks that align with attaining carbon neutrality.

The energy sector's impact on strategic planning has also increased with recent climate policies like the Paris Agreement, which calls for a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions and has prompted energy multinationals to pursue cleaner energy sources. Globally, oil and gas companies are pivoting towards renewables, a shift marked by rebranding efforts and corporate restructuring. According to the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA), this transition requires not only technological innovation but also brand repositioning, as companies seek to be seen as responsible energy providers (IRENA, 2023).

Energy markets also intersect with consumer sentiment, which increasingly favors sustainability. Recent studies demonstrate that consumers prefer brands that are perceived as environmentally conscious, pushing energy companies to reframe their identities and narratives to appeal to this evolving market segment (Neumann, Martinez and Martinez, 2020). The economic significance of energy markets, therefore, extends beyond profit margins, as these companies' reputations increasingly depend on their ability to adapt to a low-carbon economy. For multinational corporations, rebranding is especially critical as it enables them to adapt to new market realities and evolving global trends. British Petroleum's 2000 rebranding to "Beyond Petroleum" marked a significant shift, one that redefined the company's identity and communicated a commitment to renewable energy sources, reflecting broader trends in the industry (Balmer, 2001). Moreover,

research shows that firms adopting sustainable strategies are increasingly seen as lower-risk investments, boosting their appeal to both shareholders and consumers (Eccles and Klimenko, 2019).

As part of the broader global energy transition effort, Total Petroleum, the French multinational energy and petroleum company, rebranded in 2021 to TotalEnergies to signal the company's alignment and commitment towards achieving carbon neutrality by 2050 at the latest (TotalEnergies, n.d.). According to Patrick Pouyanné, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, the company's ambition is "to be a world-class player in the energy transition" (TotalEnergies, 2021). This ambition is reflected in the company's global rebranding strategy, which emphasizes sustainability and a shift towards cleaner energy sources. TotalEnergies is recognized as one of the world's major players in the petroleum industry which include Exxon Mobil, Saudi Aramco, Shell, and PetroChina.

TotalEnergies Ghana is a subsidiary of TotalEnergies, operating 263 service stations in the Ghanaian energy sector. The company is involved in various aspects of the energy industry, including exploration, production, refining, distribution, and marketing of petroleum and related products (Amoako et al., 2017). TotalEnergies Ghana plays a significant role in meeting Ghana's energy needs, providing fuel solutions to industries, businesses, and consumers across the country.

Overall, TotalEnergies' rebranding reflects its strategy to diversify its energy mix by investing heavily in renewable energy sources such as solar and wind, while also improving energy efficiency and reducing its carbon footprint in an effort to become a world class player in the energy transition. For a multinational oil giant like Total, this rebranding impacted over 16,000 service stations across 70 countries, spanning diverse cultures. Effectively communicating the

rationale for this change across international markets requires significant investment to ensure consistency in the new brand identity and to prevent the dilution of the core brand message.

## **1.2. Problem Statement**

Internationalization and global rebranding best practices emphasize the need for companies to adapt their strategies to local markets while maintaining consistency in their core brand message (Johansson and Ronkainen, 2005). Yet, this is not always the case. The challenge of rebranding for multinational companies within the energy sector presents a multifaceted set of difficulties that companies often struggle to navigate effectively. For such companies, global rebranding initiatives often involve reshaping corporate identities to reflect a shift toward sustainable energy while addressing environmental and social expectations from consumers, regulators, and investors.

This realignment demands significant resources and strategic oversight, given the high level of public scrutiny on energy companies amid the climate crisis and the ongoing transition to renewable energy sources (Lüdeke-Freund et al., 2017). Furthermore, in multinational rebranding efforts within developing markets, companies may need to adjust their strategies to address unique market dynamics, such as infrastructure constraints, diverse market segments, unbranded competition, and complex sociopolitical environments (Sheth, 2011).

Another potential risk is that rebranding within the energy sector is often met with skepticism, as stakeholders may view it as “greenwashing” unless the company demonstrates genuine operational changes to back the new identity. Research indicates that consumer trust in energy companies remains tenuous, often requiring companies to make substantial, transparent investments in cleaner technologies to substantiate their rebranding messages (Delmas and Burbano, 2011).

As one of the leading players in Ghana's petroleum market, TotalEnergies is not only a significant provider of energy but also a key influencer in shaping the discourse around the energy transition in the country. This means not only conveying a commitment to sustainability but also ensuring that this message resonates with the specific needs and values of Ghanaian consumers. As a multinational energy company, TotalEnergies Ghana's rebranding strategies will also serve as a benchmark for other energy companies operating in Africa, particularly the West-African region in navigating the delicate balance of the western expectations and Africa's current reality when it comes to discussions on renewable energy sources.

Despite the importance of this issue, there is a significant gap in the literature that highlights the complexities of multinational rebranding in the energy sector, especially in developing countries like Ghana, where the journey to energy transition is still nascent and multifaceted. Existing research has focused largely on the technical and economic aspects of energy transition in Africa, with limited attention to the role of corporate communication and branding in shaping consumer perceptions and behaviors in this context.

Hence, this study seeks to fill this gap by examining how TotalEnergies communicated its new brand identity in Ghana and assessing the effectiveness of these efforts in reaching local customers. By doing so, the research will provide insights into the broader challenges and opportunities of implementing a global rebranding strategy in a culturally distinct and economically developing market.

### **1.3. Research Objectives**

The primary aim of the study is to understand the communication strategies that were deployed by TotalEnergies' in the Ghanaian market vis-à-vis its global communication strategy. To achieve that, the following objectives have been set to guide the study:

1. To explore the communication strategies used by TotalEnergies in Ghana during its rebranding.
2. To identify the key messages that were conveyed to Ghanaian customers during the rebranding
3. To identify the challenges faced by TotalEnergies in effectively communicating its new brand identity in Ghana.

### **1.4. Research Questions**

The following questions will be answered based on the study:

1. What communication strategies were employed by TotalEnergies in its rebranding in Ghana?
2. What were the key messages conveyed to Ghanaian customers?
3. What challenges were encountered in the communication process?

### **1.5. Significance of the Study**

This study adds critical insights to the body of knowledge on rebranding within the context of developing economies, a field where literature remains limited. In developing markets, where infrastructure, socio-economic conditions, and cultural norms vary widely, rebranding poses unique challenges and opportunities for multinational companies (MNCs). By examining the case of TotalEnergies' rebranding efforts in Ghana, this study sheds light on how global rebranding strategies are adapted to local markets. It also identifies the challenges MNCs face in aligning global brand identities with regional expectations and infrastructure limitations, contributing to

academic discussions on brand management and international marketing in emerging markets (Agyekum, Amjad, Mohsin, and Ansah, 2021; Sheth, 2011).

Furthermore, this study explores the complexities of brand equity transfer during rebranding, especially relevant when a global brand's message, such as sustainability or energy transition, may be perceived differently depending on the market. This underscores the need for nuanced, culturally sensitive rebranding approaches that maintain corporate integrity while resonating with local audiences (Azizo, 2019). These insights are valuable for advancing theory on international brand positioning and identity formation in economically diverse regions, enhancing the literature on cross-cultural marketing and the impact of socio-political contexts on corporate image management (Onkvisit and Shaw, 1987).

From a practical standpoint, the findings of this study provide actionable insights for multinational organizations, especially those in the energy sector, that seek to rebrand in culturally diverse and infrastructure-limited markets. Companies like TotalEnergies can benefit from understanding how to balance a global brand identity with the socio-economic and cultural demands of local markets.. This study highlights the importance of using strategic communication to address stakeholders' concerns, foster employee buy-in, and adapt to local regulatory environments—all critical elements in ensuring rebranding success.

In the context of Ghana, TotalEnergies, as a major player in Ghana's petroleum market, and as such plays a crucial role in the country's energy landscape. Understanding the implementation of TotalEnergies Ghana's rebranding strategies is crucial for evaluating global rebranding efforts in developing markets. Specifically, this study's insights can guide other multinational companies on

how to strategically frame and deliver their rebranding messages in ways that resonate with local consumers and address Ghana's energy sector challenges. Research shows that rebranding efforts that incorporate local partnerships and demonstrate a tangible commitment to sustainable practices are more likely to succeed in building consumer trust and brand loyalty (Afful-Dadzie, Mallet and Afful-Dadzie, 2020).

### **1.6. Scope and Limitations of the Study**

This study focuses on the rebranding of TotalEnergies in Ghana, with particular emphasis on the communication strategies deployed during the process. The scope is geographically limited to Accra. The study will involve in-depth qualitative research, including interviews with personnel from the marketing department at the TotalEnergies head office in Accra and selected branches. These interviews aim to gain insights into the strategic decisions made during the rebranding process, the communication tools used, and the challenges faced in conveying the new brand identity to the Ghanaian market.

In addition to corporate perspectives, the study will also gather information through the content analysis of the company's campaign messages. This will include an in-depth analysis of publicly available information on the promotional materials and channels used during the rebranding, including traditional and new media channels. This two-pronged approach—analyzing both the corporate perspectives and content analysis—will provide a comprehensive understanding of the TotalEnergies' rebranding communication in Ghana. It will also help to assess the extent to which TotalEnergies adapted or maintained its global brand message to fit the cultural and economic context of Ghana. Additionally, the findings will be relevant for multinational corporations looking to execute rebranding strategies in culturally diverse and emerging markets like Ghana.

The study however faces some possible limitations. Access to data may be restricted due to the proprietary nature of some corporate materials, potentially limiting the depth of analysis. Additionally, the study's findings may be influenced by the sample size and diversity. If the sample is not representative of the broader Ghanaian population, the findings may not fully capture the diversity of views within the market. These limitations highlight potential challenges in understanding the full impact and effectiveness of TotalEnergies' rebranding communication strategy in Ghana.

### **1.7. Organization of the Study**

The study will be organized to provide a clear and coherent progression of research, beginning with an introduction that outlines the research objectives, significance, and context. Following this, there will be an in-depth literature review on corporate rebranding, global and international rebranding, change communications and management and identified gaps that the study aims to address. The Methodology of the study will then describe the approach, sampling strategy, data collection methods, instruments and analysis techniques employed. Findings from the qualitative interviews and content analysis will be presented, followed by a discussion section that interprets these findings in relation to the research objectives and theoretical frameworks, while also acknowledging any limitations encountered during the study. Finally, the conclusion will summarize key findings, reiterate the study's significance, and propose recommendations for future research and practical applications.

## **1.8. Chapter Summary**

This chapter has provided a comprehensive overview of the study, focusing on TotalEnergies' rebranding in Ghana. The background highlighted the global shift towards sustainability and TotalEnergies' strategic rebranding efforts. The problem statement identified the challenge of effectively communicating this rebranding in a culturally distinct market like Ghana. The research objectives and questions aim to explore the communication strategies used by TotalEnergies and the perceptions of Ghanaian customers. This chapter also highlighted the study's significance by identifying its potential to inform future rebranding efforts in emerging markets by other multinational companies in the energy sector. It also explains the limitations of the study including potential restrictions in data access and challenges in ensuring a representative sample and finally, the chapter details the organization of the study.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2. Introduction**

This chapter will explore in detail, the relevant theories that underpin the study. Also included in this chapter will be a review of key concepts relevant to the subject matter to provide a backdrop for the study. The literature review will comprehensively cover extant literature on corporate rebranding from both a global and local perspective. Lastly, the gap in the literature will be highlighted, providing context for the research objectives thus justifying the timely relevance of this study.

#### **2.1. Theoretical Frameworks**

This section explores theories associated with the research topic to ascertain their importance to the study. The study delves into two major theories: Corporate Rebranding theory and Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC) theory.

##### **2.1.1. Corporate Rebranding Theory**

Corporate rebranding theory explores the processes and strategies that organizations undertake to change or revitalize their brand identity, often in response to market dynamics, mergers, acquisitions, or shifts in organizational strategy (Goi and Goi, 2011). Rebranding usually involves modifications to a company's name, logo, mission, values, and overall market positioning, aiming to create a refreshed image that resonates with stakeholders (Joseph, et al., 2020).

The idea of corporate rebranding has evolved significantly over time. Early branding literature primarily focused on product branding, but as organizations grew more complex and globalized,

the need for a more nuanced understanding of corporate branding emerged. The foundation of corporate rebranding theory can be traced back to studies on corporate identity and organizational behavior in the 1980s and 1990s, which highlighted the importance of aligning internal and external perceptions of the brand (Balmer, 1995). These early works laid the groundwork for understanding the intricate relationship between a corporation's identity, its culture, and its communication strategies.

A key study by Muzellec and Lambkin (2006), which defines rebranding as “the creation of a new name, term, symbol, design, or combination thereof for an established brand with the intention of developing a differentiated (new) position in the mind of stakeholders and competitors” further advanced the theory of corporate rebranding. This definition emphasizes the strategic nature of rebranding and its role in distinguishing a company in a competitive market. Their research also highlighted the challenges of rebranding, particularly the risks of losing brand equity and alienating existing customers.

Other supporting studies have expanded on this definition, emphasizing the importance of stakeholder communication in the rebranding process. Keller (2009) highlights that effective communication is crucial for maintaining brand equity during rebranding, as it helps to manage stakeholder expectations and reduce resistance to change (The Evolution of Integrated Marketing Communications ).

Furthermore, corporate rebranding theory, as proposed by Merrilees and Miller (2008), provides a comprehensive framework for understanding the process and principles of corporate rebranding. This theory posits that successful rebranding is not just about changing a logo or slogan, but rather involves a holistic transformation of the organization's brand identity. According to the authors,

successful corporate rebranding is built upon six key principles including brand re-visioning, brand orientation, internal branding, stakeholder communication, integrated marketing communications and brand strategy implementation. The researchers argue that successful rebranding requires a clear understanding of the brand's core values and a consistent message that resonates with both internal and external audiences.

Some scholars also argue that rebranding can be risky, particularly when done in isolation and without substantial changes within the organization. Stuart and Muzellec (2004) indicate that rebranding efforts oftentimes fail because they are considered to be superficial, especially when the underlying products, services, or corporate culture remain unchanged. They argued that rebranding should be driven by real organizational transformation rather than cosmetic changes.

In the context of TotalEnergies' rebranding in Ghana, this theory offers a promising framework for analysis. The theory's emphasis on brand re-visioning aligns well with TotalEnergies' shift towards cleaner energy sources, while its focus on stakeholder coordination is particularly pertinent in the complex Ghanaian market environment. Additionally, the theory's emphasis on internal branding and integrated marketing communications will help to explain how the company was able to share or communicate its new brand identity with both employees and customers in Ghana.

### **2.1.2. Integrated Marketing Communications Theory**

The Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC) theory, developed by Don E. Schultz and Philip J. Kitchen in the late 1990s and early 2000s, changed the way organizations think about marketing and communication. Instead of treating advertising, public relations, direct marketing, social media, and other forms of communication as separate activities, IMC theory suggests that they should all work together seamlessly.

Schultz and Kitchen (2000) define IMC as both a concept and a process. As a concept, it's the idea of communicating with one voice, one look, and one message. As a process, it involves carefully coordinating all message elements to create synergistic effects. This definition emphasizes that IMC is not just about tactical coordination but a strategic business process that requires organizations to rethink their entire approach to communication (Communicating globally: An Integrated Marketing Approach.)

IMC theory also draws support from various complementary theories and studies. For instance, Petty and Cacioppo's (1986) Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) of persuasion aligns with IMC's emphasis on understanding and targeting consumer information processing. Similarly, Keller's (1993) Customer-Based Brand Equity model supports IMC's focus on creating consistent brand messages across all touchpoints.

With regards to TotalEnergies' rebranding efforts in Ghana, IMC theory is pertinent. The theory stresses the importance of keeping a consistent message across all channels, which is crucial when introducing a new brand identity in a complex market. It also helps to explain how TotalEnergies managed its communication efforts, from advertising, public relations, internal communications and social media, to ensure that the message about its rebranding and focus on cleaner energy was clear and unified.

Lastly, this theory is especially relevant in Ghana because it highlights communicating with specific groups. Due to the industry it operates in, TotalEnergies has multiple stakeholders. According to the company's official website, its stakeholders are categorized into three broad groups; the **economic sphere** (employees and their representatives, investors, shareholders, rating

agencies, customers, suppliers and contractors) **civil societies** (professional associations, NGOs, academics, media, neighboring and local communities) and **public authorities** (host countries, authorities and local, regional administrations) (TotalEnergies, 2023). Thus, in communicating with such a diverse group the theory can help us understand how the company customized its messages for each group while maintaining a consistent brand image overall.

## **2.2. Conceptual Review**

A conceptual review provides a theoretical foundation for understanding key constructs relevant to a study. It synthesizes existing literature, frameworks, and models to establish a scholarly context for the research. In the case of this study on TotalEnergies' rebranding in Ghana, the conceptual review explores theories of Corporate Rebranding and Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC)—two critical lenses through which the communication process is analyzed.

### **2.2.1. Corporate Rebranding**

Corporate rebranding is a complex process that involves changing a company's brand identity. Corporate rebranding can be defined as "the practice of building anew a name representative of a differentiated position in the mind frame of stakeholders and a distinctive identity from competitors" (Muzellec and Lambkin, 2006). This transformation often involves modifications to the brand name, logo, tagline, values, and communication strategies. The goal is to reposition the brand to align with new organizational objectives, audience expectations, or market trends, ensuring relevance and competitiveness. Miller et al. (2014) propose that corporate rebranding is not a single, standalone event but a process which mainly consists of three main stages: brand re-  
visioning, brand strategy, and brand implementation. The authors emphasize that successful

rebranding requires careful management of both internal and external stakeholders throughout these stages.

Corporate rebranding is typically driven by significant organizational changes, such as mergers, acquisitions, or diversification into new markets (Merrilees and Miller, 2008). Other triggers include shifts in consumer behavior, advancements in technology, or changes in regulatory frameworks (Gotsi and Andriopoulos, 2007). For instance, energy companies like TotalEnergies have adopted rebranding strategies to reflect their transition towards renewable energy and sustainability in response to the global energy transition. As with any business undertaking, there are associated risks that firms need to be cognizant of. Gotsi and Andriopoulos (2007) highlight the risks that often associated with corporate rebranding which include the potential loss of brand equity and stakeholder confusion. They argue that successful rebranding requires a balance between signaling change and maintaining continuity with the existing brand.

Effective corporate rebranding strategies are rooted in a clear understanding of the brand's essence and how it resonates with stakeholders. Kapferer's (2008) Brand Identity Prism highlights the importance of defining facets such as personality, values, and relationships to ensure alignment between the internal culture and external perception. The success of corporate rebranding is evaluated through changes in brand perception, market share, and financial performance. Tools such as customer surveys, brand audits, and competitive analysis help assess the effectiveness of rebranding initiatives. Balmer (2012) highlights that successful rebranding not only revitalizes a brand but also strengthens its competitive position and long-term sustainability.

### **Integrated Marketing Communications in Rebranding**

Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC) plays a crucial role in corporate rebranding by ensuring that all communication efforts convey a cohesive and unified message to stakeholders. Rebranding involves substantial changes to a brand's identity, often requiring adjustments to name, logo, values, or positioning. Luxton et al. (2017) define IMC capability as "an organization's capacity to strategically manage brand communication programs, foster supportive brand attitudes, and build brand equity and performance." IMC becomes essential during this process as it aligns these changes with the organization's communication strategies to maintain brand equity and stakeholder trust.

As a strategic approach, IMC integrates various communication tools, channels, and messages to deliver a seamless brand experience. It emphasizes the consistency and coherence of messaging across advertising, public relations, digital media, and direct marketing. This consistency is particularly crucial in rebranding to avoid confusion and reinforce the new brand identity (Kitchen & Burgmann, 2015). The synergy provided by IMC enhances the brand's ability to communicate its repositioning effectively.

In the context of rebranding, Daly and Moloney (2004) propose a three-stage model for rebranding communication: analysis and planning, preparation, implementation, and evaluation. They emphasize the importance of a structured approach to rebranding communication. IMC facilitates the dissemination of consistent messages to inform stakeholders about the rationale for rebranding. Effective storytelling is often employed to connect the new brand identity to its historical values, thereby promoting familiarity and acceptance. Schultz et al. (2013) argue that such strategies are critical in reducing uncertainty and gaining public support during transitions.

One of the challenges during rebranding is retaining loyal customers while attracting new ones. Keller (2016) emphasizes the role of IMC in maintaining brand equity through consistent messaging. This involves reinforcing core brand values while effectively communicating the new brand's essence, ensuring continuity and minimizing customer attrition. Kitchen and Burgmann (2015) also highlight the challenges of implementing IMC in multinational corporations, including cultural differences and varying levels of market development. This is particularly relevant for TotalEnergies' rebranding efforts in Ghana.

### **Role of Strategic Communications in Rebranding**

To effectively rebrand, companies must strategically use communication to secure both internal and external buy-in. Azizo (2019) emphasizes that obtaining employee support is crucial during rebranding, as employees play a key role in authentically representing the brand to customers. Effective internal communications help employees' transition and adapt to the new brand identity, thereby aligning their behavior and outlook with the company's redefined goals. This alignment is essential because employees serve as the front-line representatives of the brand and directly influence customer perceptions.

Azizo's (2019) findings resonate with those of Hatch and Schultz (2003), who argue that rebranding should start internally. For successful brand alignment, employees need to understand, embody, and support the brand's new values. This internal alignment is key to reducing potential resistance, creating brand ambassadors, and fostering unity within the organization, especially during transitions that involve substantial shifts in brand positioning. Strategic communication facilitates this process by consistently reinforcing the rebrand's goals and engaging employees in its vision, thus minimizing disruptions during the rebrand process.

Azizo's (2019) insights, coupled with Gotsi and Andriopoulos (2007) highlight the complexity of rebranding, particularly in ensuring that employees' perceptions align with the new brand. By addressing employee concerns and fostering open communication channels, companies can help create a cohesive, unified internal culture. This internal coherence supports external brand communications by ensuring that the brand promise is fulfilled at every level. Together, these findings underscore that strategic communication serves not just as a tool for stakeholder management but as a fundamental component of organizational change management during rebranding.

Thus, the emphasis on internal buy-in before external rollout aligns well with the broader literature on corporate rebranding as an ongoing, multidimensional process. Thus, internal communication strategies, combined with localized external strategies build a holistic framework that supports the rebranding effort's overall success (Steenkamp, 2014).

### **Stakeholder Management in Rebranding**

Effective stakeholder communication is vital during rebranding to ensure that all parties understand and support the new brand direction. For TotalEnergies, this concept is particularly important in Ghana, where the company was likely to address the concerns and expectations of diverse groups. Merrilees and Miller (2008) emphasize the importance of engaging both internal and external stakeholders throughout the rebranding process.

Freeman's (1984) Stakeholder Theory also provides a foundational understanding of the importance of managing relationships with all stakeholders, particularly during periods of change

like rebranding. Additionally, Zhao et al. (2020) highlight the role of employee buy-in in successful corporate rebranding. They argue that employees' understanding and support of the new brand identity are crucial for consistent brand delivery. For multinational corporations operating in developing markets, Gupta and Malhotra (2013) stress the importance of considering local stakeholders' perspectives and adapting rebranding strategies accordingly.

### **Rebranding in Developing Markets**

Emerging markets present unique challenges and opportunities for multinational companies. This requires such companies to adapt their branding strategies to the specific characteristics of emerging markets, including infrastructure limitations, market heterogeneity, unbranded competition and sociopolitical governance (Sheth, 2011). Sheth, (2011) also makes the point that emerging markets often face persistent resource shortages in production, trade, and consumption. For instance, frequent power outages, inconsistent access to raw materials, and a lack of skilled labor often lead to unpredictable and inefficient production. This inconsistency makes it difficult to achieve economies of scale.

### **Greenwashing**

Greenwashing is considered to be a deceptive marketing practice where companies present themselves as more environmentally friendly than they actually are. The term can be defined as "the intersection of two firm behaviors: poor environmental performance and positive communication about environmental performance" (Delmas and Burbano, 2011). This definition suggests discrepancies between a company's actions and its communications.

Lyon and Montgomery (2015) expand on this concept by identifying other forms of greenwashing including selective disclosure, empty green claims, dubious certifications and hidden trade-offs. Additionally, within the context of corporate rebranding, Nyilasy et al. (2014) argue that greenwashing can be particularly damaging. They found that when consumers perceive discrepancies between a company's environmental claims and its actual practices, it often leads to negative brand attitudes and reduced purchase intentions. De Jong et al. (2020) goes a step further to introduce the concept of "greenwashing fatigue," which suggests that as consumers become more aware of greenwashing practices and marketing tactics, they may become increasingly skeptical of all environmental claims, including the genuine ones.

### **2.3. Rebranding within a Global Context**

Rebranding has emerged as a critical strategy for businesses seeking to realign themselves with market trends, shifts in consumer behavior, and strategic corporate goals. As a result, this phenomenon has been widely studied, with research exploring the impact of rebranding on economic outcomes, customer loyalty, employee engagement, and consumer purchase intentions.

#### **Customer Loyalty**

The impact of rebranding on customer loyalty has been a key focus of several empirical studies. Muzellec and Lambkin (2006) conducted a comprehensive mixed-method study combining quantitative surveys with 166 rebranded companies and qualitative case studies of four major company rebrands. Their research methodology allowed for both broad insights across industries and deep dives into specific rebranding processes. The study revealed that successful rebranding could enhance customer loyalty by up to 20% when aligned with improved product quality or service delivery. Their finding underscores the importance of ensuring that rebranding efforts are

not just surface level but reflect genuine improvements in a company's offerings. The researchers emphasized that companies should view rebranding as an opportunity to reassess and enhance their value proposition to customers.

However, rebranding is not without risks, as demonstrated by Collange (2015). A quantitative study including 320 participants, compared consumer reactions to various degrees of brand name changes. This allowed for controlled comparisons of different rebranding approaches. The study found that three variables including (1) proximity between the new brand name and the service, (2) distinction between the old brand and new brand names and (3) connection to the service place accounted for the change in customer attitudes toward the service after its rebranding. This finding emphasizes the critical role of clear and extensive communication when implementing significant brand changes.

A more recent study by Pushpalatha (2022), offers a comprehensive examination of how corporate rebranding impacts customer satisfaction and loyalty. The key findings of the paper reveal that rebranding can have a mixed impact on customer loyalty and satisfaction, depending on the execution and communication strategy. According to the study, a positive brand helps customers better understand products, reduce their perceived risk when buying services, and contributes to a company's long-term success. Businesses can therefore choose between partial rebranding which include small changes like logo updates or complete rebranding which require more significant transformations.

The study further indicates that corporate rebranding does not have a direct impact on customer loyalty, but it can influence it indirectly through improvements in brand image, customer

satisfaction, or brand equity. Conversely, service quality has a direct positive effect on customer loyalty thus companies need not spend excessive amounts of money on rebranding to influence customer service quality or satisfaction, as it may not yield the desired results (Pushpalatha, 2022).

Moreover, the challenges of rebranding for multinational companies are best elaborated by Gotsi and Andriopoulos (2007). Their exploratory qualitative study interviewed 14 executives involved in the corporate rebranding of a leading telecommunications firm which provided insights into the complexities of corporate rebranding efforts. The researchers exposed four key pitfalls in corporate rebranding including disconnecting with the core; stakeholder myopia; emphasis on labels, not meanings; one company, one voice: the challenge of multiple identities. This study underscores the importance of maintaining brand consistency across diverse international markets.

### **Economic Outcomes**

Rebranding, from a marketing perspective is often considered a fresh start for many organizations. And this fresh start, provides these companies with goodwill, enhancing their market positioning and potentially leading to financial gains. A significant study examined the stock market reactions to rebranding announcements of 215 publicly traded companies across 101 industries. The study found that rebranding announcements generally lead to positive abnormal returns especially when the rebranding involves a major identity change (Zhao, et al., 2018). Zhao, et al., (2018) argue that rebranding, which involves abandoning an existing identity and promoting a new one, carries significant risks. Therefore, companies will not risk sending false rebranding messages which can potentially confuse stakeholders and damage a company's reputation.

This study also suggests that investors often view rebranding as a positive strategic move. Furthermore, rebranding has been shown to affect long-term economic performance when it is integrated into broader corporate strategies involving operational changes, as highlighted by Abraham-Dukuma (2021) in the context of energy companies transitioning from fossil fuels to renewables.

Corporate rebranding announcements also provide analysts with valuable, forecasting information about the company's future financial performance, particularly in terms of reduced volatility in future sales (Verma, 2023). In a study using a sample of 102 rebranding announcements made by U.S public firms from 2008-2018, the paper reports that rebranding announcements indeed has an impact on the informativeness of company stock prices. These findings support the argument that rebranding announcements have substantial implications for how a company's financial future is perceived and analyzed by market professionals.

Thus, the collective findings from Zhao, et al., (2018); Verma's (2023) studies support the signaling theory which estimates that rebranding announcement shares important information about the firm's future which is considered valuable by the lenders, and they incorporate this information to make assessments about a firm's future risk and abilities to honor debt obligations.

### **Employee Engagement**

The impact of rebranding on employee engagement is another crucial area of research. Merrilees and Miller (2008) outlined six principles for successful rebranding. Among these principles was stakeholder engagement, especially with regards to employees. The researchers emphasized the

need for companies to communicate their rebranding efforts to employees in order for them to understand, trust and represents the brand in their everyday work. Hence "stakeholder buy-in"—is essential for rebranding to work effectively. The paper also indicates that leaders play a significant role in making sure employees adopt and embody the new brand. If employees don't embrace the brand, the rebranding effort might face resistance, making internal support crucial for the success of corporate rebranding efforts.

Furthermore, internal branding as suggested by Punjaisri and Wilson (2011) is another critical success factor during rebranding processes. Their case study of a multinational hotel chain's rebranding involved surveys of 680 customer-facing employees and interviews with 30 managers. This mixed method approach provided a comprehensive view of how internal branding efforts impact employee attitudes and behaviors during rebranding. The researchers found that effective internal branding during rebranding helps employees connect emotionally with the brand, therefore stimulating brand-supportive behaviors like loyalty and performance. Employees' sense of belonging to the brand, or brand identification, was most influenced by internal branding. This connection also positively impacted employees' performance in delivering the brand's promise. So then, internal communication and training during rebranding remains crucial for ensuring employee buy-in and commitment to the new brand identity.

A more recent study by Joseph, et al., (2020) also highlights the fact that the corporate rebranding process brand involves stages such as revising the vision and values and effectively communicating these changes to employees. Employees respond well to these changes because of leadership's collaborative approach, which ensures that staff feel involved and committed. More importantly, employees' identification with the brand—how much they felt connected to it—plays

a major role in their positive response to the rebranding. Their findings show that in spite of existing employee challenges and concerns, the consistency of internal communication from leadership helped maintain their commitment to the brand. This assertion aligns with previous studies that show that when employees have a strong sense of belonging and are engaged emotionally and behaviorally, they are more likely to embrace the brand changes.

In assessing the risk factors leading to the failure of corporate rebranding efforts, due to poor strategic decisions by two Swedish firms, the lack of support from stakeholders or perceived misalignment resulted in the loss of key clients and customers (Kjellin, 2019). Another contributing factor was the lack of internal branding and communication which led to a disconnect between the firms and their stakeholders. In addition to this, in both cases the companies encountered issues stemming from inappropriate naming strategies and unclear brand visions. That is to say that the names selected for rebranding purposes did not resonate well with their stakeholders, leading to customer loss for the construction firm and a loss of brand recognition for the engineering firm. The engineering firm, in particular, struggled with an unclear brand vision, which consequently caused a series of inconsistent actions following the rebranding. Without a clear strategy, employees were unsure of how to align with the brand's values and support its development.

#### **2.4. Rebranding in Africa**

Corporate rebranding in Africa has been a subject of growing interest among researchers and practitioners due to the continent's rapidly evolving business landscape. The literature in this area focuses on various aspects of rebranding, including its impact on consumer perceptions, employee engagement, brand equity, organizational performance and cultural considerations. There are a

few notable examples of multinational companies on the continent that have rebranded over the last five years. For instance, in 2020, Barclays Africa rebranded to Absa Group Limited across its African operations, marking a significant shift in the banking sector. South African multinational mobile telecommunications company, MTN also underwent a brand refresh in February 2022, modifying its logo and visual identity across its African markets. Similarly, Safaricom, Kenya's largest telecom provider underwent a brand refresh in 2021, updating its logo and introducing a new tagline.

As established from previous studies, corporate rebranding can positively impact employee engagement levels when executed in conjunction with other factors such as cultural and organizational changes (Xaba, 2015). In his paper, Xaba (2015) focused on the professional services industry in South Africa, examining how corporate rebranding influences employee engagement. The study sought to address an often-overlooked aspects of rebranding: its internal effects on an organization. The paper also highlights the importance of considering how rebranding efforts impact the workforce. Employee engagement is crucial for the success of any rebranding initiative, as employees are often the primary touchpoints between a company and its customers.

Building on this internal perspective, Nana, et al., (2019) further broadens the scope to examine the impact of corporate rebranding on brand equity and firm performance of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) in South Africa. As competitor landscapes and market dynamics change, most companies will occasionally undergo a rebrand to reposition themselves. The authors argue that rebranding, particularly through franchising has no bearing on brand equity and may rather pose significant risk for businesses if not carefully managed. The study also indicates that

organizational performance is enhanced only when there exists a positive relationship between brand equity and customer experience. (Nana, Tobias, Chiliya, & Tafadzwa, 2019)

In a more recent study by Worimegbe & Ifedayo (2020), the researchers explore the relationship between corporate rebranding and customer retention at 9Mobile, a telecommunications company in Nigeria. This research adds to the existing literature that address key business concerns of maintaining customer retention post rebranding efforts. The study proves that while corporate rebranding elements are important in retaining customers in an organization, it is also crucial for the customers to remain the focal point in these organizational decisions. The researchers are of the view that a firm's customer base can grow and be maintained as long as they are not losing them and that rebranding and repositioning with this end goal in mind helps to achieve that objective (Worimegbe & Ifedayo, 2020).

A similar study of commercial banks that rebranded in Kenya cemented the notion that strategic rebranding such as brand identity and brand personality have a strong positive and significant influence on performance sustainability of these banks. (Mola & Antony, 2022). Their study introduces the concept of performance sustainability in relation to strategic rebranding. This research is particularly timely, as it considers how rebranding efforts can contribute to long-term business sustainability, which remains a growing concern in the current business climate.

Collectively, these studies paint a comprehensive picture of corporate rebranding's multifaceted effects. They demonstrate that successful rebranding is not merely about changing logos or slogans, but rather a complex process that impacts various stakeholders and aspects of a business. From employee engagement and customer perceptions to financial performance and long-term sustainability, the effects of rebranding are far-reaching and interconnected.

## 2.5. Rebranding in Ghana

Narrowing the focus of corporate rebranding in Ghana, the most recent, nationwide corporate rebranding exercise was led by Telecel Ghana (formerly known as Vodafone Ghana). The reason for the rebrand was primarily due to Telecel's acquisition of a 70% majority stake in Vodafone Ghana (Telecel Group, 2024). After a month-long sensitization campaign, Vodafone officially transitioned to the new brand name in February 2024. Vodafone's latest rebrand adds to the growing list of companies across various industries that have undergone a brand refresh or brand identity change in the last five years. Examples of such companies include MTN, Absa (formerly Barclays) AirtelTigo, FirstBank of Nigeria (now FirstBank).

**A notable case on the subject matter** is that of the Ghana Revenue Authority's (GRA) corporate rebranding. Sunkwa (2015) investigated the internal communication strategies used by the GRA to facilitate employee buy-in during the rebranding process. The study, utilized both quantitative and qualitative methods through interviews and questionnaires with key management personnel and employees respectively. The focus was on understanding how internal communication strategies were used. The study revealed that internal communication channels such as meetings, newsletters, emails and memos were the most utilized platforms by management in communicating to staff.

Furthermore, **Yeboah and Addaney (2016)** analyzed the performance metrics of the Agricultural Development Bank (ADB) pre- and post-rebranding to determine the effects on performance. According to the paper, though customer perception on a firm's brand image post rebranding is more likely to be positive, it calls into question the quality of the services the company offers. This is due to the fact that customers expect improved services whenever an organization rebrands.

These findings are consistent with other studies that support the assertion that surface level rebranding without organizational change and improvement in product or services waters down the impact that rebranding provides. (Yeboah & Addaney, 2016)

Yalley (2021) also examined voters' cognitive response to Ghana's Electoral Commission (EC) 2017 logo rebrand. The research reported that higher brand involvement led to a more positive perception of the logo change, which is consistent with cognitive consistency theories. Moreover, voters who were already familiar with the logo change were more likely to evaluate it positively. Interestingly, the study contradicts previous research which suggest that higher brand involvement might result in a negative perception of logo changes, viewing them as a threat to one's self-image. Thus, positive evaluations of logo change can be linked to favorable attitudes toward the new logo and increased support (Yalley, 2021).

### **2.5.1. Corporate Rebranding in Ghana's Energy Sector**

Corporate rebranding in Ghana's oil and gas industry has been quite rare over the past decade, with only a few notable cases of companies changing their branding. Ghana Oil Company (GOIL) set the pace back in 2012 when it rebranded, aiming to modernize its image. Since then, there have been four major rebranding efforts in the sector.

In 2021, Total Petroleum Ghana rebranded as TotalEnergies, aligning with its parent company's new identity and renewed focus on more sustainable energy solutions. In 2023, Pecan Energies, formerly Aker Energy, also rebranded to reflect changes in its operational focus which seeks to achieve prosperity for the African continent in a sustainable manner amidst the energy transition. (Pecan Energies, n.d.)

Furthermore, the National Petroleum Authority (NPA), Ghana's oil and gas regulator refreshed its brand in 2023, with a new look designed to reflect its evolving role in the energy sector (Energy News Africa, 2023). In August 2024, Petrosol Ghana also rebranded in celebration of its 10th anniversary, marking its growth and presence in the industry (Energy News Africa, 2024). These examples of corporate rebranding reflect the sector's slow but steady evolution toward embracing modernization, enhancing their market presence, and aligning with sustainability goals.

## **2.6. Gap in the Literature**

Extant literature on corporate rebranding in Ghana's energy sector is notably sparse, which is most likely due to the fact that companies in this industry seldom undergo significant brand changes. When considering multinational companies that have undergone rebranding due to the global energy transition, the research becomes even more limited. Current literature seek to measure the populations' awareness of the energy transition (Adjakloe, et al., 2021) address the broader challenges and concerns Ghana faces (Afful-Dadzie, Mallett, & Afful-Dadzie, 2020) and propose pathways on how Ghana should navigate this shift, (Francis et al., 2022).

As mentioned earlier, Ghana has launched a National Energy Transition Framework (NETF) to outline a roadmap for the country's journey towards net zero emissions by 2070. Sefa-Nyarko (2024) explores the complexities that arise in implementing a just and equitable energy transition, particularly in the context of international relations and domestic aspirations. The study identifies a critical tension between Ghana's domestic goals for energy security, economic development, and sustainable energy, and the perceived mistrust towards international actors driving the global

energy transition. The author is of the view that while the NETF is a step in the right direction, its execution is hindered by skepticism towards international partners and concerns over equitable treatment. These challenges raise questions about how the benefits and burdens of transitioning to renewable energy sources are distributed within the country (Sefa-Nyarko, 2024).

Sefa-Nyarko's analysis of Ghana's NETF provides an important context for understanding the landscape in which corporate rebranding and its communication in the energy sector occurs. The study underscores the importance of considering historical, economic, and social factors in crafting rebranding strategies. For multinational energy companies operating in Ghana, effective rebranding likely requires a nuanced approach that balances global sustainability trends with local development priorities, acknowledges historical mistrust in international mechanisms, and aligns with Ghana's unique vision of a just and equitable energy transition.

To conclude, while studies have examined broader policy frameworks and energy transition challenges in Ghana, there is a notable absence of research specifically addressing how multinational energy companies navigate rebranding within this complex environment. This gap is particularly pronounced in the context of Ghana's energy sector, where the relationship between global sustainability trends and local development priorities appear to be diametrically opposed.

Therefore, exploring TotalEnergies' rebranding strategies presents a prime opportunity to fill a clear gap in the current body of literature on corporate rebranding strategies within Ghana's energy sector, which offers a rich case study that not only illustrates a corporate identity overhaul but also reflects broader global energy transition narratives. This research will provide valuable insights

into how multinational energy corporations communicate complex changes, such as sustainability initiatives, to local markets and will also provide a framework for other energy companies that may face similar rebranding challenges, adding much-needed depth to the discussion of corporate.

## **2.7. Chapter Summary**

This chapter led with the two fundamental theories that underpin this research study namely the corporate rebranding theory and the integrated marketing communications theory. Corporate rebranding theory explains the complex process through which organizations make modifications to their brand identities in trying to reposition themselves in the market relative to the competition. The integrated marketing communications theory also looks at the ways in which brands communicate their messages in a consistent way across various stakeholders especially in times of change.

This chapter provided an in-depth analysis of extant literature on global rebranding efforts, case studies of two energy companies that rebranded on account of the energy transition, rebranding in Africa and finally an overview of rebranding in Ghana and its energy sector. This chapter also identified the absence of literature on rebranding of multinational companies in Ghana's energy sector which presents an opportunity for research that could inform both corporate practice and policy formulation in the context of the global energy transitions in developing countries.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1. Introduction**

This chapter outlines the research design, data collection methods, population, sampling techniques, and data analysis procedures employed in this study. The aim is to explore TotalEnergies' rebranding strategies in Ghana using a qualitative research design through interviews and content analysis.

#### **3.2. Research Approach and Design**

For the purposes of this study, a qualitative research approach, focusing on understanding the experiences, motivations, and opinions of key stakeholders in TotalEnergies Ghana's execution of its rebranding process nationwide. Qualitative research is concerned about understanding how people live and interpret their experiences, how these experiences help shape their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences (Merriam and Tisdell, 2015). Qualitative research often employs interviews to gain detailed insights into participants' thoughts and behaviors, particularly when little is known about the research topic.

An exploratory design was chosen because it allows for an in-depth exploration of subjective experiences, which is essential for understanding the intricate processes and dynamics of corporate rebranding. This choice is well supported by Creswell and Poth (2018), who argue that qualitative research is appropriate when exploring complex phenomena that require in-depth understanding. The case study approach, as advocated by Yin (2018), allows for a comprehensive examination of contemporary events within a real-world context, making it particularly suitable for investigating

corporate rebranding strategies. Furthermore, the research adopts an interpretivist paradigm, acknowledging that the understanding of TotalEnergies Ghana's rebranding strategies and its implications are socially constructed and influenced by various stakeholders' perspectives. This approach aligns with the assertion that qualitative research allows for the exploration of how social experiences are created and given meaning (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011). This approach is also useful in uncovering how the company's rebranding messages were communicated and how they aligned with global and local perspectives.

### **3.3. Study Population**

The population for this study comprises employees of TotalEnergies in Ghana who were directly involved in the company's rebranding process. This includes individuals responsible for implementing and managing the rebranding strategies at both corporate and operational levels. The selection of these participants aims to capture a comprehensive understanding of the rebranding journey, from strategic planning to grassroots implementation.

TotalEnergies Ghana has a well-established presence in Ghana with over 262 service stations in nationwide (TotalEnergies, n.d.). Thus, in addition to corporate-level staff, station managers – also known as “dealers” who participated in the rebranding process at the station level form a critical component of the study population. These dealers are uniquely positioned to provide insights into how the rebranding was operationalized across various locations, including the adaptations – if any – made to align with local market characteristics and customer expectations.

### **3.4. Sampling Techniques and Sample Size**

Sampling is the process of selecting a subset of individuals or items from a larger population to represent the whole population in a study (Creswell and Poth, 2018). It allows researchers to gather data more efficiently and cost-effectively without compromising the validity of the study. For this research, the population includes TotalEnergies staff directly involved in the rebranding process and branch managers responsible for local-level implementation. Sampling ensures that the selected participants provide diverse and meaningful insights.

Sampling methods are broadly categorized into probability sampling and non-probability sampling. Probability sampling involves random selection, ensuring that each member of the population has an equal chance of being included. Examples include simple random sampling, stratified sampling, and systematic sampling. Non-Probability sampling on the other hand involves deliberate selection of participants based on specific criteria. Types include convenience sampling, quota sampling, and purposive sampling (Patton, 2015).

For this study, purposive sampling, a type of non-probability sampling, will be employed. This method is suitable for qualitative research because it focuses on obtaining in-depth insights from participants who have direct experience or knowledge of the subject under study (Etikan, et al., 2016). Purposive sampling is appropriate when specific characteristics or expertise are needed from participants to achieve the research objectives (Berg, 2009). Thus, this sampling method ensures that the participants can provide valuable, context-specific data relevant to the research questions.

Sample size refers to the number of participants included in the study. For this study, a sample size of seven participants (7) has been determined. This sample size includes five (5) staff from the

marketing and communications department of the TotalEnergies head office located at Liberia Road, Accra. In addition to this are 2 dealers from the 37 Hospital and Liberia Road service stations. The choice of this sample aligns with qualitative research guidelines which suggest that a sample size of six to twelve (6-12) participants can be adequate for qualitative research involving interviews, provided that they offer a diverse range of insights and sufficient saturation of themes (Guest, et al., 2006). Additionally, the chosen sample size aligns with the principle of data saturation, which occurs when no new themes or insights emerge from the data (Fusch and Ness, 2015).

Furthermore, Malterud et al. (2016) introduced the concept of "information power," suggesting that when participants have high expertise and the study has a focused scope, smaller sample sizes can provide sufficient data. Thus, the selected sample size is further justified by the narrow, specific focus of the study, the high level of expertise of the selected participants, the use of purposive sampling to ensure information-rich cases and the complementary use of content analysis alongside interviews.

### **3.5. Data Collection Methods and Instruments**

The primary data collection methods employed for this study are semi-structured interviews and content analysis of publicly available information. Semi-structured interviews were chosen due to their flexibility, allowing the researcher to probe deeper into issues while keeping a consistent structure across participants (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009). The research instrument's adaptability and ability to elicit thoughtful, nuanced replies from participants made it the most preferable choice for the study. It allowed participants to freely share their ideas and experiences in their own words.

This method was used to explore the thoughts, experiences, opinions and motivations of the selected individuals and to gather rich insights into the research study. The interviews focused on the communication strategies employed during the rebranding process, the messages conveyed and the challenges that the company faced, both internally and externally during the rebranding.

A semi-structured interview guide was used as the main instrument for data collection. This guide included open-ended questions designed to elicit detailed responses about the rebranding process, motivations, strategies, stakeholder engagement and the communication strategies used. The interview questions were aligned with the research objectives, allowing for flexibility to probe deeper into topics raised by participants. The interviews were also recorded with the permission of the participants, and extensive notes were taken during each interview to ensure accuracy in capturing the responses.

The second method employed by the study is a content analysis of external communication materials related to the rebranding. Content analysis, as described by Krippendorff (2018), enables systematic examination of communication artifacts, providing insights into both explicit and implicit meanings. Hsieh and Shannon, (2005) also define content analysis as “a research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns.” The goal of the analysis is to identify the central messages communicated during the rebranding, examine the alignment between the local messaging in Ghana and TotalEnergies' global rebranding narrative and assess the adaptations made to resonate with the Ghanaian audience. The materials analyzed included website content, press releases, annual reports, social media content (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, YouTube), media coverage, advertisements, and newspapers

### **3.6. Data Analysis**

To analyze the interview data, each interview will be transcribed and responses will be systematically coded. Coding is an essential first step in thematic analysis, where labels or "codes" are assigned to data segments to capture distinct ideas or patterns (Saldaña, 2021). Initially, open coding will be employed to identify broad categories, followed by axial coding to refine these categories and link them to specific subthemes. This process enables the identification of recurring themes and provides insight into patterns within the data (Braun and Clarke, 2006). After coding, patterns within responses will be identified to create thematic networks that highlight connections between codes. The goal is to explore recurring messages and perceptions regarding the rebranding process, with a focus on themes such as brand loyalty, cultural resonance, and perceived authenticity (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

Given the objectives and data sources, thematic analysis is the most appropriate analysis technique for this study. Thematic analysis is widely used in qualitative research to identify and analyze patterns within data, making it ideal for examining both the interview and content analysis data (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis is flexible and provides a structured yet adaptable approach, suitable for both the open-ended nature of interview responses and the structured examination of content from corporate communications. It allows for a deep dive into subjective experiences and meanings as they relate to TotalEnergies Ghana's rebranding efforts, enabling a more comprehensive understanding of how the rebranding aligns with local and global narratives.

The second data analysis method is content analysis, which will focus on the publicly available materials produced by TotalEnergies Ghana during the rebranding efforts. A coding framework

will be developed based on the research objectives and the theoretical context of corporate rebranding. Codes may include references to sustainability, energy transition, cultural adaptation, local partnerships, and audience engagement. By applying these codes across different materials, occurrence and emphasis of these themes can be tracked systematically. The primary aim of the content analysis is to identify how well TotalEnergies Ghana's local messaging aligns with its global narrative on sustainability and energy transition. In addition, the analysis will examine how these messages are adapted to suit the Ghanaian audience. This approach enables the study to assess the effectiveness of TotalEnergies Ghana's communication strategy by evaluating the clarity, relevance, and resonance of its rebranding messages.

### **3.7. Ethical Considerations**

Conducting research involving interviews requires strict adherence to ethical standards to ensure participant welfare, maintain data integrity, and uphold the credibility of findings. This chapter outlines the ethical considerations guiding this study, particularly regarding informed consent, confidentiality, data protection, and compliance with institutional and national guidelines. Informed consent is fundamental to ethical research, requiring that participants are fully informed about the study's objectives, methods, risks, and benefits before agreeing to participate (Bryman, 2016). This study ensures participants' rights to autonomy and choice by providing clear information about the research goals, the voluntary nature of participation, and the right to withdraw at any time.

In addition, before commencing data collection, ethical approval was obtained from the University of Media, Arts and Communication (UNIMAC), in line with ethical protocols designed to protect participants and ensure research integrity (American Psychological Association, 2017). This

approval process adheres to established standards, underscoring the importance of ethical oversight in maintaining the credibility and ethical rigor of the study.

Finally, the study commits to transparency and honest reporting, reflecting findings accurately and avoiding data manipulation or bias. In line with ethical standards for qualitative research, all aspects of the research process, from data collection to analysis, will be clearly documented and reported to uphold the study's credibility and integrity (Flick, 2022).

### **3.8. Chapter Summary**

This chapter presents the study's research methodology, focusing on a qualitative approach. The population consists of TotalEnergies' Public Relations and Marketing departments in Ghana, with a purposive sample of eight participants selected, including key informants from the headquarters and branch managers. Semi-structured interviews were conducted, supported by a content analysis of various company communications. Thematic analysis was chosen to identify recurring themes and insights, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of rebranding strategies. Ethical standards were observed, including obtaining UniMac's approval and maintaining participant confidentiality to safeguard the research's integrity.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **RESULTS AND DATA ANALYSIS**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter presents the findings and analysis from interviews conducted with TotalEnergies Ghana staff and station managers (dealers) on the company's rebranding process. Responses were analyzed using manual thematic analysis, which enabled the categorization of data into key themes reflecting communication strategies, challenges, and evaluations. The findings are organized based on the research objectives, providing insights into how rebranding efforts were communicated and adapted for the Ghanaian context. Direct excerpts from participants are included to support the identified themes and offer rich, context-specific insights.

#### **4.1. Background of Interview Participants**

This study engaged eight participants, carefully selected to provide varied perspectives on the subject under study. This section presents the background characteristics of the respondents who participated in the interviews. Their gender, job titles, and locations are summarized in Table 4.0. Of the seven participants, males comprised 71.43% of the sample, while females accounted for 28.57%. This gender representation reflects the workforce demographics relevant to the context of the study.

Participants' professional roles spanned a range of key positions, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of the topic from different functional perspectives. These roles included Communications Manager, Retail Network Manager, Digital Communications Officer, Marketing Officer, and the Network Area Manager, each constituting 14.3 % of the participant pool.

Additionally, Station Managers, also known as Dealers, who play a critical role in operational and customer-facing activities, accounted for 28.5% of the participants.

Geographically, the participants were primarily located at TotalEnergies House, along the Liberia Road, which represented approximately 80% of the interview pool. This includes the dealer at the TotalEnergies station in the same building as the Head Office. The remaining participant was selected from 37 Hospital Road. This geographical spread, underscores the concentration of relevant professionals in central operational zones while also including perspectives from less dominant locations. Thus, this balanced representation of gender, professional roles, and locations contributed to the depth and richness of the qualitative data, ensuring that diverse experiences and insights were captured for analysis.

**Table 4.0 Demography of Participants**

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage %</b>
<b><i>Gender</i></b>		
Male	5	71.43%
Female	2	28.57%
<b>Total</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b><i>Job Title</i></b>		
Communications Manager	1	14.3%
Retail Network Manager	1	14.3%
Digital Communications Officer	1	14.3%
Marketing Officer	1	14.3%
Network Area Manager	1	14.3%
Dealer	2	28.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b><i>Locations</i></b>		
Liberia Road	6	85.71%
37 Hospital Road	1	14.29%
<b>Total</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Source: Author (2024)**

## **4.2. Description of Themes**

This theme encapsulates the methods and tools utilized to convey the rebranding messages to various audiences in Ghana. It highlights the primary channels, such as traditional media (radio, and newspapers), digital platforms (social media, websites, and email), and in-person engagements. The data revealed how TotalEnergies strategically adapted its communication approach from previous practices, leveraging innovative methods like interactive social media campaigns to engage tech-savvy audiences.

### **4.2.1. Communication Channels and Strategies**

The responses from participants reveal a strategic blend of communication channels employed to ensure TotalEnergies' rebranding messages reached diverse audiences in Ghana. A mix of Above-the-Line (ATL) and Below-the-Line (BTL) strategies was implemented, each carefully tailored to maximize impact across different stakeholder groups and communication goals. A consistent theme across the responses was the reliance on digital platforms, particularly social media and the company website, as core channels for the rebranding campaign. Participant 1 emphasized the role of digital media, stating:

“So, we did ATL and BTL. ATL we did digital. I don't think we did billboards at the time, but we did digital, so social media, and then the website. And then BTL, of course we changed the fascia and the totems at the stations to reflect the new identity and we also did some promotions and activations with the brand ambassador just to hammer the fact that we are no longer Total but TotalEnergies. Then on the website, of course, you'd have the visuals, like videos of the energy transition as well. I think it's been taken down now. Also, with the annual reports, we had a lot of advertisements in the annual report booklet that spoke about the transition as well”.

This indicates a focus on leveraging visually engaging content to communicate the company's shift toward sustainability and innovation.

Participant 3 further corroborated this by noting, "We used mostly social media platforms, the company website. We also did some digital advertising." The inclusion of digital advertising alongside organic content suggests a deliberate strategy to enhance visibility and target specific demographics effectively. The integration of blog posts on the website, as mentioned by Participant 4, "For the website there was a blog post explaining the change with the visuals of the new logo design" provided in-depth explanations and showcased the new logo design, offering audiences a comprehensive understanding of the rebranding. Participants 6 also reiterated the use of social media and printed flyers as communication channels while participant 7 stressed on the importance of face-to-face engagement with customers during the rebranding campaign.

While digital channels played a significant role in the rebranding, traditional media remained pivotal, particularly for reaching broader and less digitally connected audiences. Participant 4 highlighted this, stating:

"The rebranding campaign used a mix of channels, but we relied on traditional media like radio and newspaper because it has the widest reach. We also run some digital ads especially on social media. For the website there was a blog post explaining the change with the visuals of the new logo design. We also had a few lorry park activations with the company's brand ambassador to engage our commercial drivers."

The use of radio, as reiterated by Participant 2, was particularly significant in engaging rural and older demographics, who are more likely to rely on this medium for information. BTL strategies played an essential role in creating localized and experiential touchpoints with stakeholders. As

Participant 1 noted, this demonstrates how the rebranding effort was extended to physical spaces, ensuring alignment between the brand’s visual identity and customer touchpoints. Additionally, as mentioned by Participant 4, the brand activations provided opportunities for direct interactions with key stakeholder groups, ensuring the rebranding messages were not only communicated but also understood and embraced by these audiences. Participant 5 also noted the use of social media in communicating with customers and WhatsApp for internal communications among staff members, stating:

“We have social media platforms, so we used Instagram, we have Facebook. Also, we did some communication at the head office on our WhatsApp platforms. We sent some flyers that staff could share, use it as your status and we gave to the dealers as well.”

The responses also highlight the importance of internal communication and partner engagement during the rebranding process. Participant 2 explained, “The first was memos to our partners,” emphasizing the need to keep key internal and external stakeholders informed and aligned with the company’s objectives. This approach ensured consistency in messaging and built trust among partners, an essential aspect of any rebranding effort. Participant 1’s mention of advertisements in the company’s annual report as a communication channel “We had a lot of advertisements in the annual report booklet that spoke about the transition as well” further demonstrates how corporate publications were leveraged to reinforce the rebranding narrative.

The communication approach during the TotalEnergies rebranding campaign diverged from previous corporate communication efforts in notable ways, as described by the interview participants. These changes reflect a shift in priorities, tools, and the overall strategy to address the unique challenges posed by the rebranding.

Participant 1 highlighted the extended duration and customer-centric nature of the campaign compared to previous efforts: "It spanned a longer period of time, and it was more focused on the customer." This shift in focus was necessitated by the simultaneous changes to the logo and name, which required significant effort to educate the audience. As Participant 1 further explained,

"The last time the name changed was when we were moving from TotalFinaElf to Total...So, the approach was more to reach the customers, because now the logo was changing, the name was changing so people needed to understand that it wasn't two different companies. It was the same company - just rebranding for a particular purpose."

The incorporation of digital tools marked a significant strategy in the communication approach. However, traditional media such as radio and newspapers remained integral to the strategy, aligning with past approaches to ensure broad coverage. This reliance on digital platforms allowed for real-time engagement and personalized communication, as supported by the use of data analytics. As Participant 3 noted:

"There was a greater emphasis on social media and websites to reach audiences instantly and interactively. We also focused on engagement and dialogue, using social media, and live events to encourage audience interaction and pre-planned campaigns."

Despite these changes, not all participants perceived the approach as fundamentally different. Participant 2 stated simply, "It was not different. It was the same approach." This view suggests that while new tools and strategies were introduced, the overarching framework of corporate communication may have retained familiar elements. Ultimately, the need to align the audience's understanding of the rebranding as a continuation of the company's legacy rather than a complete departure guided the strategy. Both Participant 1 and Participant 4 emphasized this, with the latter

noting, "It was also customer-focused because we needed them to understand that it was the same company, just a different name representing an expanding business model."

#### **4.2.2. Stakeholder Engagement**

Engaging diverse stakeholder groups was a key component of the communication strategy for TotalEnergies' rebranding in Ghana. This theme examined how TotalEnergies engaged diverse stakeholder groups, including customers, employees, business partners and industry regulators, during the rebranding process. Participants highlighted the importance of fostering stakeholder buy-in through open dialogue, consistent communication, and participatory initiatives. The engagement strategies ranged from internal communications to targeted community forums and local media channels. Participants described a range of methods used to ensure all stakeholders were informed and aligned with the new brand identity.

Business partners and investors were engaged through formal presentations and meetings to align their understanding of the rebranding's impact. Participant 4 stated, "We had presentations for our business partners on how the rebranding would affect operations." Similarly, Participant 2 shared, "For our partners, we had group meetings to explain why they changed." Investor relations were further strengthened through annual general meetings and investor calls, as noted by Participant 3, "For our partners and investors, we met them through our annual general meetings and investor calls."

Customer engagement efforts targeted both commercial and private customers through BTL activations as Participant 1 explained:

"With the BTL activations, because those were mostly done at the station level, we engaged customers there. We also did lorry park activations to reach out to the drivers, just to let them be aware of the new brand identity."

This approach ensured that private customers were informed at service stations, while commercial drivers were reached at lorry parks. Station staff were also trained to handle customer inquiries, as Participant 1 added: "When people ask questions about it, then the station staff are on hand to explain the rebranding or why we are now TotalEnergies." Promotions and informational campaigns were another avenue of customer engagement. Participant 4 noted, "For our customers, we engaged them through promotions and informational campaigns at service stations, and as I mentioned, there were some activations at the lorry parks for our commercial trotto drivers."

Radio and live mentions contributed significantly in reaching the general public. As Participant 2 described these efforts, "For the wider populace, we explained it through radio advertisements and then LPMs (live per mentions)." Similarly, Participant 3 highlighted the role of social media outreach and frequently asked questions (FAQs), alongside traditional media, emphasizing,

"We first of all hosted workshops and training sessions for employees and business partners. Then we shared internal branding guides, FAQs, and rebranding toolkits. We then had to update the logos, signage, and branding materials at service stations, offices, and partner locations. Then came the roll out of new promotional materials featuring the TotalEnergies brand. After that we hosted an official launch event or press conference to announce the rebranding, highlight the focus on sustainability and renewable energy to align with the new brand values. There were meetings with regulators, business partners, and local communities to explain the rebranding. We also enhanced our service quality at stations to reflect the brand's renewed commitment to excellence. After all

this, we had to monitor customer feedback through surveys and social media. And then finally celebrate milestones and success stories under the new brand.”

Participant 5 shared detailed insights into how the company tailored its approach to different stakeholder groups, such as trotro (shared public transport) drivers, station dealers, and the general public, to ensure the message of the transition was effectively communicated and well-received. The company established direct connections with trotro stations, engaging drivers through activities and promotional events. These sessions were used to inform them about the rebranding and its implications.

"For instance, some of the stations, we have some trotro stations we have some alliance with. So for us, some of the trotro stations, we went there actually, and had a chit chat with them, and do some activities at the station." (Participant 5)

Specific locations like Kaneshie and 37 were mentioned as venues for these engagements, where drivers were informed about the new brand, the products, and the services offered. Participant 5 further elaborated: "We did one. I remember at Kaneshie, and a few of the stations, I think 37 as well... we did some sort of promo engagement with them. We let them tell us their challenges." Dealers were also engaged through organized meetings where the new brand identity and strategic direction were communicated. To foster alignment and support, the company provided branded materials and explained the broader energy transition:

"With the dealers, as I said, we called a meeting, communicated with them... we gave out T-shirts both for the station, and then the trotro drivers, communicating the new brand and then explaining to them why we are going that way."

The effort also included sensitization activities, ensuring dealers were gradually introduced to the concept of moving from traditional fuels to renewable energy sources: "The good thing is that before that, we had already tried sensitizing them that we are moving from Total to TotalEnergies because we are moving gradually from fuel into other energies."

Additionally, TotalEnergies reinforced its rebranding message by showcasing its commitment to sustainable energy solutions. One such initiative involved introducing electric vehicle (EV) technology:

"We had already started with doing something with EV at the liberation Total... we did a major sort of rebranding exercise with our Chairman, who came into the country, and then we used it to outdoor EV." (Participant 5)

The broader goal was to illustrate the shift from fossil fuels to more sustainable energy sources, while acknowledging the unique challenges of Africa's energy transition compared to more advanced markets like France:

"The whole idea is you are moving from one source of energy to another, better source of energy which is sustainable... It might take longer for Africa, because when you go to other affiliates, especially for instance, France Paris, they are far gone." (Participant 5)

On the other hand, Participant 7 acknowledged the challenges of engaging with private stakeholders, stating, "To be very honest, it is not easy getting the private ones involved." However, due to the established rapport between the trotro drivers and the dealers, meeting them at their loading points and explaining the direction of the company's rebranding efforts was a crucial success factor. This allowed for direct communication and clarification of any

misconceptions. As Participant 7 explained, "We just get to their point of loading, to their various stations and try to communicate to them the direction to which the company wants to go."

For individual stakeholders, Participant 7 described a more tailored approach, emphasizing the importance of understanding public awareness. The company actively sought feedback from individuals regarding their familiarity with the rebranding. Some people were aware of the transition, while others had not heard about it. Participant 7 elaborated, "Some will say, no, I have not heard it. Some will say, oh I have heard it in the media. What is it? Then we take the opportunity to explain."

#### **4.2.3. Core Messaging and Narrative**

The rebranding from Total to TotalEnergies in Ghana emphasized key messages centered on the company's transition from a petroleum-focused company to a multi-energy player, underpinned by commitments to sustainability, customer focus, and future-oriented goals. Participants emphasized that the core messages revolved around sustainability, innovation, and commitment to clean energy. The overarching message was the company's shift to a broader energy scope. Participant 2 describes the key message as "moving from a petroleum company to an energy company." This is re-echoed by Participant 1, who explained,

"TotalEnergies does not want to be recognized only as an oil and gas major. We wanted to be seen as a multi-energy player, and so incorporating the different energies that we have started looking into, and the ones we are looking to go into, into the future."

This transformation was visually represented through the new logo design, described as a "*continuous graphic*," with colors transitioning to signify the gradual nature of energy transition. Participant 4 echoed this focus, stating, "We basically communicated the company's global vision

of becoming a multi-energy company, offering cleaner, more sustainable energy and a diverse energy mix including solar, natural gas and others."

Another significant message revolved around the company's commitment to sustainability. Participant 3 highlighted this, stating, "We highlighted that the shift aligns with global energy transitions and the need for cleaner, more sustainable energy sources. We explained that TotalEnergies is committed to reducing its carbon footprint and contributing to a net-zero carbon future by 2050." Participant 4 reinforced this by linking the company's future-focused goals to environmental benefits. "We communicated that this was an investment in the future of both Ghana and for the betterment of the environment." TotalEnergies also made it clear that the transition did not mean abandoning traditional energy sources.

As Participant 1 emphasized, "We're not going to totally cut off our traditional energy sources, which is oil and gas, but we are putting up a transition plan where now the mix would differ." This reassured stakeholder of the company's gradual and balanced approach to the energy shift. Additionally, Participants emphasized that customers remained central to the company's operations. Participant 3 explained: "We then reaffirmed our commitment to customers who remain at the heart of TotalEnergies' operations through enhanced services, sustainable products, and a stronger focus on meeting their evolving needs."

The transition from Total to TotalEnergies was explained through a combination of visual identity changes, alignment with global sustainability goals, and the expansion into diverse energy solutions. The messaging emphasized a strategic shift while maintaining a connection to the company's legacy. Participant 3 highlighted the company's strategic pivot:

"The rebranding was part of a broader strategic shift where TotalEnergies moved beyond its traditional focus on oil and gas to encompass a diverse range of energy solutions, including renewables such as solar, wind, and biofuels."

The name "TotalEnergies" was chosen to encapsulate this transformation: "The name change was essential to reflect the company's expanded scope, which includes providing energy in all forms—oil, natural gas, electricity, renewables, and hydrogen—under a single, unified brand." Participant 1 explained the need for an identity shift to communicate this change:

"People know you for a certain thing, but now you're shifting to other things. So, you need to have an identity that shows that you're shifting to other things in addition to what you've been traditionally known as. Hence, the colors, the icons, the change of the logo, the change of the tagline."

The rebranding therefore, was linked to the company's commitment to global sustainability efforts. "It was explained that by the conventions and then the signing on the world's sustainability goals that we signed up to, we needed to help reduce the fossil fuel emissions in the country to be able to achieve the 2030 goals as agreed", *Participant 2 noted*. Participant 4 also used a metaphor to explain the transition: "We compared it to a household expanding to accommodate a growing family—our services were expanding to meet diverse energy needs and it is critical that this happens now and quickly. The addition of "Energies" to the name symbolized the company's broadened portfolio: "The 'Energies' added to the name just represented the different energy forms we now offer aside the fossil fuels" as described by Participant 4.

Participant 5 re-emphasized the central theme of transitioning from "Total to TotalEnergies," emphasizing the move from conventional fuels to diverse energy sources. The rebranding effort

was visually reinforced through changes in corporate branding materials such as email signatures and station redesigns. According to Participant 5, “we are moving from the usual fuel to other sources of energies,” and this message was integrated into various aspects of corporate identity, including standardized email signatures featuring the new logo. They noted that rebranding involved logistical complexities, such as importing or fabricating materials to align stations with the updated brand identity, reflecting the tangible elements of the transition.

Participant 6 also focused on the expanded scope of the business, emphasizing that TotalEnergies was no longer solely associated with fuel but had diversified into solar, electricity, and other energy mixes. They explained, “We wanted to tell the Ghanaians that it's not only the fuel we produce and sell, we now have solar, electricity and other energy mixes. It's a lot.” This messaging sought to highlight TotalEnergies' commitment to innovation and its positioning as a leader in the energy transition.

Participant 7 added another layer to the communication narrative by linking the company's rebranding to the broader global issue of climate change. They stated that the primary message was about “global warming and us trying to protect the future from that.” This perspective aligns the rebranding with global sustainability goals, presenting TotalEnergies as a forward-thinking company addressing environmental challenges.

#### **4.2.4. Cultural and Local Adaptation**

The inclusion of cultural or local elements in the messaging for the TotalEnergies rebranding varied, with a limited emphasis on local adaptation and cultural integration. Participants highlighted the challenges of incorporating cultural elements in a global campaign. Participant 1 noted that local adaptations were limited to language use in specific settings:

"For Ghana? Not really, probably when we are communicating at maybe a station level, the adoption of local languages. But no, there was no cultural identity that was used because, I mean, it's a global company, they cannot really incorporate every culture into it "

Participant 4 similarly emphasized reliance on global directives: "Not really. You know, like I said, the orders came from above so we went with the materials that were sent to us from HQ."

Participant 5 highlighted the global-to-local nature of the rebranding strategy, noting that while the overarching design and messaging were dictated by the global headquarters, local teams adapted the content to align with the Ghanaian context mostly at the station levels. They emphasized the use of multiple languages to engage diverse stakeholders:

"When we do communication, we don't do it in one language, that's our norm. We usually will do English, we do Twi, we do Pidgin, Ewe, Ga, Hausa, depending on the client base we want to touch with."

Participant 5 also explained that while there was flexibility in localizing the messaging, the final communication materials required global approval to maintain consistency:

"Whatever the main goal is comes from the global HQ... you just play along with it your own way, but it should be the same, and then you send to them, and once approved, it's uploaded."

Participant 6 also emphasized the role of the Akan language, specifically Twi, in reaching local audiences. They noted that Twi was a primary medium of communication, especially in engaging the trotro drivers and passengers, a key stakeholder group. Additionally, Participant 6 highlighted the use of the "Troxi Card" as a culturally and contextually relevant promotional tool targeting the trotro drivers: "We mostly used Akan – Twi in communicating. Yes, and during that time, we were having the Troxi card... you put your money on it, you get discounts on it. That one too, it helped."

This initiative demonstrated how integrating local practices and tools into the rebranding strategy enhanced engagement and fostered customer loyalty. Participant 7 also acknowledged the significance of tailoring communication based on the audience, particularly through language adaptation: “Local elements, I can say local language. And that one, it depends on who you are speaking to.” Their responses reinforced the idea that audience-specific approaches were critical in effectively conveying the rebranding message, ensuring that it was accessible and relatable to different groups.

However, Participant 3 suggested a broader approach which emphasized the company's contributions to community development in Ghana:

"We emphasized the company's role in building a sustainable energy future that benefits everyone, reinforcing the idea of 'energy for all' and collective advancement." (Participant 3)

Participant 3 also pointed to campaigns that showcased investment in local initiatives: "The campaigns emphasized investments in community projects, such as educational programs and infrastructure improvements, showcasing the company's role in supporting Ghana's progress."

#### **4.2.5. Challenges and Solutions**

The implementation of TotalEnergies' communication strategy in Ghana encountered various challenges, ranging from misconceptions about the rebranding elements to audience skepticism and logistical hurdles. Several participants highlighted confusion about the new logo's colors, which bore resemblance to the rainbow and were misunderstood by some audiences as alignment with the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer (LGBTQ) community:

"Unfortunately, around the time that the rebranding was started, I think one of the countries had just brought out a law for LGBTQ, and you know, they have the rainbow colors... the choice of colors just happened to coincide with that." – Participant 1

"The main obstacle was the colors. People were confusing the colors to be something different from what we wanted to put across." – Participant 2

"Personally, I think there was some confusion around the logo and what it represented... we had to make a conscious effort to distance ourselves from all that talk and clear the air on what our colors and symbols meant." – Participant 4

"So let me be frank with you initially, because of the colors – you know – the LGBTQ, we ourselves, had to ask questions as staff. Even as staff, when communicating to our family, people were raising questions. Are you sure it's not because you want to align with this thing? So we had to understand ourselves, that is because all the energies we talked about has this kind of colors." – Participant 5

Participant 5 also described the challenge of engaging trotro drivers, a critical stakeholder group, due to their time-sensitive schedules. Drivers often had limited time to listen to communication efforts at their stations, as they prioritized loading and continuing their trips: "The trotro drivers, it's not easy to get their time... once it's time for him to load, he's not going to listen to what we are saying."

To address this, the company relied on partnerships with unions and utilized local radio stations frequently listened to by drivers: "We know they listen to the local ones, so whatever communication we are sending, we make sure those radio stations are involved. Once they are

playing their radio while driving, they hear what we are talking about.” This approach allowed the company to reach drivers indirectly while respecting their time constraints.

Participants also mentioned doubts among customers and stakeholders regarding the necessity or implications of the rebranding. Participant 3 expressed the view that the transition itself, from Total to TotalEnergies was met with skepticism by some customers and stakeholders who were uncertain about the implications of the rebranding. This view was re-echoed by Participant 4 who pointed out that there were some customers who thought the company had been acquired by another company and were therefore expressed their worry and concerns over price increments and product quality.

Participant 3 described challenges in conveying the energy transition narrative describing the limited understanding of Ghanaians of concepts like renewable energy and sustainability, which made it difficult to effectively communicate the energy transition narrative. They further noted that coordinating with multiple stakeholders, including government agencies, local partners, and community leaders, sometimes resulted in delays or conflicting priorities. In addition, Participant 3 was of the view that some competing energy brands in Ghana were also communicating their sustainability efforts, therefore creating a crowded messaging space.

Participant 6 noted the financial and logistical challenges of rebranding, especially during the physical transformation of service stations. The rebranding required work on-site while the stations remained operational, which posed difficulties for both contractors and station staff:

“They were working and we were selling at the same time so the sales went a little bit down... At times you even have to stop sales. They work, then you shift to this side. Shift to that side.”

Despite these challenges, participant 6 acknowledged the contractors' commitment to safety and efficiency: "Safety is very key to them... they were very careful, which is very good. But it wasn't easy."

Another issue identified by Participant 7 was communication-related challenges, including a lack of awareness and skepticism among some stakeholders about the rebranding objectives. Many stakeholders had not heard about the rebranding, while others doubted the feasibility of transitioning from carbon products to renewable energy solutions:

"Some tend not to even have heard of what we are even trying to do. And some even probably doubting as to whether we can come up with this whole idea of rebranding by taking them from the carbon products and emissions to the renewable energies."

Therefore, to build trust and demonstrate the company's commitment to renewable energy, TotalEnergies introduced tangible initiatives like electric vehicle chargers and solarized service stations. Participant 1 also reechoed how the company invested in the solar panels and the electric vehicle charging stations as tangible proof of its commitment towards renewables to manage customer doubt.

"And luckily for some of the stations that are solarized, the solar panels are on a platform that you can see, so they can see it, and they may understand that this is what we are doing, or this is where we are heading to." – Participant 1

"Like the EV charging stations, there's nobody in Ghana who had it so we were able to install one for them to be able to see that if you have electric vehicles, you can charge them at TotalEnergies stations which is a different offering than what was on the market." – Participant 2.

“We even launched an electric charging point at one of our service stations to encourage people to buy EVs if they have the option to do so because they now had somewhere they could charge it.”

– Participant 4

### **4.3. Content Analysis**

In addition to the interview with corporate staff at the TotalEnergies Head Office and dealers at the stations, a detailed content analysis of publicly available information from the company’s website and social media platforms was conducted. The content analyzed in this study was coded across multiple categories to evaluate the communication strategies, channels, and key messages employed during TotalEnergies’ rebranding efforts in Ghana.

Posts were examined for their alignment with predefined coding frameworks, including categories such as corporate announcements, educational content, promotional material, and stakeholder engagement. The analysis aimed to explore how the company communicated the transition from Total to TotalEnergies, a change that emphasized sustainability, renewable energy, and their broader energy portfolio.

#### **4.3.1. Communication Channels and Strategies**

The rebranding was first announced on May 28, 2021, through a corporate press release on the company’s website. The release not only explained the rationale for the name change but also introduced the new visual identity, anchoring the company's strategic transformation in its communication. The clear and direct nature of this announcement highlights the importance of transparent communication during rebranding. By outlining its goals to become a "broad energy company," TotalEnergies provided stakeholders with a compelling vision of its future. However,

the challenge lay in translating this global narrative into localized communications that resonated with diverse markets, including Ghana. While the global press release set a strong foundation, the subsequent rollout in Ghana showed uneven alignment with this strategy.

The communication channels utilized by TotalEnergies Ghana for its rebranding campaign reflected a strategic blend of traditional, digital, and community-specific approaches to effectively reach diverse audiences. Interviews revealed that the company leveraged traditional media channels such as radio and newspapers to expand its reach, particularly focusing on local and Twi-speaking radio stations to better connect with trotro drivers, a key audience segment. This choice highlighted the company's understanding of the cultural and linguistic preferences of its target demographic, ensuring the message was accessible and relatable. However, there was no explicit mention of the use of television beyond this targeted radio strategy, suggesting a more selective approach to traditional media channels.

The communication strategies employed in the rebranding efforts of TotalEnergies Ghana also showcased a combination of educational, promotional, and engagement-focused approaches designed to inform, connect with, and involve their target audiences. A key aspect of these strategies was the use of explainer videos on renewable energy, decarbonization, solar energy, and the company's commitment to achieving net zero emissions by 2050. These videos, shared on digital platforms like Instagram, Facebook, and X (formerly Twitter), served to educate audiences on the company's energy transition focus while aligning with its global sustainability goals. By leveraging visually engaging content, TotalEnergies sought to communicate complex concepts in a digestible format, targeting both existing and potential stakeholders interested in cleaner energy solutions.

Additionally, the company utilized promotional strategies to emphasize customer appreciation and encourage eco-friendly behavior. Campaigns like #EcoTips and #EcoGesture, launched in February 2022, focused on energy conservation practices that could benefit customers while reinforcing the brand's sustainability message. These initiatives demonstrated a dual approach: fostering positive relationships with customers and advancing TotalEnergies' reputation as a socially responsible and environmentally conscious brand.

TotalEnergies also prioritized stakeholder engagement through high-impact events. The launch of an electric vehicle (EV) charging station highlighted the company's role in supporting innovative, renewable energy solutions in Ghana's transportation sector. Furthermore, the rebranding campaign launch at the Kaneshie lorry station exemplified TotalEnergies' efforts to connect and strengthen existing relationships with its commercial drivers and the local communities. The inclusion of native languages such as Ga and Akan Twi in the campaign showcased a deliberate attempt to resonate with diverse audiences, enhancing the cultural relevance of their messaging. This community-focused strategy not only strengthened local engagement but also demonstrated a commitment to bridging the gap between the company's global rebranding goals and the unique needs of the Ghanaian market.

In terms of digital platforms, TotalEnergies actively engaged audiences on Facebook, Instagram, and X (formerly Twitter). These platforms served as vital tools for sharing videos, posts, and customer-centric campaigns, with content such as explainer videos on renewable energy and decarbonization, and posts promoting energy conservation under hashtags like #EcoTips and #EcoGesture across platforms. The interactive and visual nature of these platforms allowed the company to not only inform but also directly engage with its audience, amplifying its sustainability

message and fostering customer appreciation. Furthermore, direct customer communication played a pivotal role in reinforcing the company's commitment to its stakeholders. Campaigns that highlighted customer appreciation and provided practical energy conservation tips served to strengthen relationships with customers, positioning the company as both responsive and attentive to their needs.

Community outreach was a standout element of the campaign, as evidenced by events like the Kaneshie lorry station rebranding launch. This event exemplified TotalEnergies' effort to use community-specific messaging, incorporating native languages such as Ga and Akan Twi to resonate with local audiences. The integration of culturally relevant communication at such events underscored the company's dedication to bridging the gap between its global brand narrative and the distinct needs of the Ghanaian market.

#### **4.3.2. Key Messages**

A central theme of the campaign was the energy transition, emphasizing sustainability and alignment with corporate goals, such as achieving net zero by 2050. Educational content played a significant role, with campaigns and posts highlighting renewable energy, decarbonization, and the shift to cleaner energy sources. These messages reflected the company's commitment to combating climate change and promoting a sustainable future. The introduction of new services, such as EV charging stations, and new and enhanced product packaging for their lubricants reinforced these messages, showcasing TotalEnergies' efforts to support renewable energy initiatives in the transportation sector.

Efforts were also made to repurpose global content for the local audience. Explainer videos promoting renewable energy and sustainability goals were shared widely, aligning Ghana's

narrative with the overarching global vision. However, some gaps were observed in cultural adaptation, as the videos often lacked translations into Ghanaian languages, which limited accessibility for certain segments of the population. Additionally, customer-oriented messages were also prominent, with campaigns such as energy conservation tips aimed at promoting cost-effective and eco-friendly practices. These initiatives not only aligned with sustainability goals but also demonstrated direct benefits to customers, strengthening engagement and trust.

**Table 4.1 TotalEnergies Ghana Key Messages During Rebranding**

	<b>Energy Transition Focus</b>	<b>Product Improvements</b>	<b>Sustainability Commitments</b>	<b>Global-Local Connection</b>	<b>Customer Benefits</b>
<b>TE Ghana Instagram Posts Examples</b>	We are driving our energy transition by changing the way we produce energy and investing in renewables. That's why we've changed our name to TotalEnergies. #TotalEnergies	Product packaging is a reflection of the content and the brand as a whole. We are stepping into a new direction. New colour, new label, new cap and new design. #PURE #quartz #new #lubricants #engineoil #quartzlubricants #totalenergieslubricants	TotalEnergies aims to be one of the world's Top 5 renewable energy companies within the next 10 years. This represents \$60 billion in funding for renewable projects Solar, Wind Biomass Hydrogen	We've teamed up with Winch Energy to give African off-grid villages access to electricity. Here's how	Did you know that a 3mm layer of frost in your freezer can increase your energy consumption by 30%? That's why it's important to defrost your freezer and implement some of our ecotips. #Ecotips #TotalEnergiesAfrica

**Source: Author (2024)**

Overall, TotalEnergies Ghana's rebranding messages were a mix of global sustainability priorities, customer-focused campaigns, and attempts to integrate local relevance. These key messages reinforced the company's commitment to energy transition, environmental responsibility, and fostering a deeper connection with its customers in Ghana.

### **4.3.3. Challenge Indicators**

The analysis of challenge indicators in TotalEnergies' rebranding efforts highlights several strengths and weaknesses in the communication strategy. While the global message of sustainability and energy transition was clear and consistent, certain gaps in timing and localization affected the seamless rollout. A significant issue was the misalignment in timelines, as the company began using the new brand name and identity months before an official announcement was made in Ghana. This delayed local announcement was due to regulatory requirements as the company had to officially register and gazette the new brand name as confirmed by in the interview with Participant 2.

A key limitation was the inadequate localization of content. While global videos and other materials were shared on digital platforms, they were not adapted to include Ghanaian languages such as Akan Twi, Ga, Hausa, Ewe etc. However, some outreach efforts, such as the lorry park activations, incorporated culturally relevant messaging, including the use of native languages, demonstrating the potential for more effective localized communication. Despite these efforts, the lack of widespread adaptation of global content, such as subtitles or voiceovers in Ghanaian languages, left room for improvement.

The analysis also revealed no significant evidence of public resistance or negative feedback regarding the rebranding initiative. Posts such as those announcing the EV charging station launch received positive engagement, including favorable comments from followers. This indicates that the audience generally supported the initiatives tied to the rebranding, particularly those aligned with sustainability and innovation.

#### **4.4. Chapter Summary**

This chapter analyzes the findings from interviews and content analysis of TotalEnergies staff and publicly available digital content respectively, providing a comprehensive evaluation of the company's rebranding strategy in Ghana. The interviews highlighted the communication channels and strategies for the campaign, the core messages that were emphasized and the challenges that were encountered during the rebranding exercise in Ghana. The content analysis also suggests some delays in the local rollout and inconsistencies in digital messaging, though positive engagement, especially for initiatives like the EV charging station launch, showed some success.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **DISCUSSION OF KEY FINDINGS**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter presents a comprehensive discussion of the study's findings in relation to existing literature, theoretical frameworks, and the broader implications of TotalEnergies' rebranding communication strategy in Ghana. The chapter is structured into key sections, including an analysis of the results, comparisons with prior studies, the significance of the findings for corporate rebranding and integrated marketing communication (IMC), and the limitations of the study. The discussion aims to interpret how TotalEnergies' communication strategies—ranging from traditional media to digital engagement—align with established theories on corporate rebranding and stakeholder engagement. By juxtaposing the study's findings with scholarly perspectives, the chapter seeks to assess TotalEnergies' approach in ensuring brand continuity while signaling a transformation in its business model.

#### **5.1. Research Question 1:**

**What communication strategies were employed by TotalEnergies in its rebranding in Ghana?**

To answer this research question, an analysis of interview data revealed that TotalEnergies utilized an Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC) approach, combining Above-the-Line (ATL) and Below-the-Line (BTL) strategies to ensure a cohesive and comprehensive outreach. This included traditional media such as radio and newspapers, alongside digital platforms like social media and the company's official website, allowing for both broad and interactive engagement.

According to Keller (2001), IMC emphasizes the importance of aligning diverse communication channels to deliver a clear and cohesive message, a principle evident in TotalEnergies' mix of ATL and BTL strategies. The integration of digital platforms, including social media and websites, reflects the growing importance of interactive and personalized communication in rebranding efforts, as suggested by Mangold and Faulds (2009), who argue that digital media fosters dialogue and engagement with tech-savvy audiences.

Corporate rebranding theory underscores the role of strategic communication in managing stakeholder perceptions and reinforcing brand identity (Muzellec et al., 2003). TotalEnergies' use of radio, newspapers, and in-person engagements addressed audience diversity, ensuring that both urban and rural stakeholders were included. This aligns with the work of Lomax and Mador (2006), who highlight the need for inclusivity in rebranding communication to build trust and minimize confusion. The reliance on traditional media for broader reach and digital tools for real-time engagement reflects a dual focus on accessibility and modernity, a strategy supported by Al-Quran (2022), who emphasize the value of tailoring channels to audience preferences.

Moreover, the emphasis on internal communication and partner engagement, such as memos, WhatsApp messages, and branded visuals, aligns with Hatch and Schultz's (2003) framework, which highlights internal alignment as a critical component of successful rebranding. TotalEnergies' efforts to align its visual identity and messaging across all touchpoints, including physical spaces, digital platforms, and corporate publications, email sign offs, reflect best practices in creating consistency, as noted by Melewar and Saunders (1998).

The campaign's customer-centric approach, described by participants as an effort to educate audiences about the logo and name change, mirrors Ghodeswar's (2008) observation that

rebranding must prioritize audience understanding to ensure brand continuity. Additionally, the use of local activations and cultural elements in outreach activities further supports the position made by Alon, et al. (2020), who argue that culturally relevant communication enhances stakeholder resonance in global marketing best practices.

## **5.2. Research Question 2:**

### **What were the key messages conveyed to Ghanaian customers?**

Findings from the interviews revealed three central messages emphasized by TotalEnergies during its rebranding. The company prioritized the message of its transition to a multi-energy company, the importance of sustainability and environmental responsibility, and a reassurance of trust and continuity in the quality of its services. These messages were strategically communicated through an integrated mix of communication channels, including digital platforms, stakeholder engagements, and traditional media. This cohesive messaging reflects the company's efforts to align its global rebranding objectives with local market needs and expectations.

The emphasis on TotalEnergies' transition to a multi-energy company underpinned the rebranding process. This message highlighted the company's diversification beyond traditional fuel sources (fossil fuels) to include renewable energy sources, natural gas, and electricity solutions. Theoretically, this aligns with Cornelissen's (2020) strategic corporate communication framework, which underscores the role of messaging in reshaping stakeholder perceptions during organizational transformation. Additionally, it supports Melewar et al.'s (2017) findings that rebranding strategies require a clear articulation of a company's evolved purpose to maintain credibility among stakeholders. TotalEnergies' focus on becoming a multi-energy company was

reinforced through local media advertising campaigns, helping bridge the global rebranding agenda with the specific energy needs of the Ghanaian market.

The second key message emphasized sustainability and environmental responsibility, showcasing TotalEnergies' commitment to reducing carbon emissions and supporting renewable energy development. This aspect of the rebranding effort reflects the tenets of Kemper and Ballentine's (2019) green branding theory, which highlights how sustainability messaging can enhance a company's legitimacy in the eyes of environmentally conscious consumers. Moreover, Kapferer's (2012) work on brand identity suggests that positioning sustainability as a core brand pillar signals a forward-looking approach that resonates with global and local trends. In Ghana, where conversations about climate change and energy transitions are gaining traction, the inclusion of sustainability as a core message is timely as it taps into emerging public awareness and positions the company as a partner in the nation's energy transition. By leveraging such narratives, the company aligns itself with broader sustainability goals while addressing concerns specific to its host communities.

The final core message conveyed during the rebranding was one of trust and continuity in service delivery. Interview findings highlighted that TotalEnergies reassured its Ghanaian customers that its rebranding did not signify a departure from the reliability, quality, and value they had come to expect. This aligns with Stuart and Kerr's (1999) findings, which argue that successful corporate rebranding requires maintaining an emotional connection with stakeholders by reinforcing pre-existing trust. Additionally, Gotsi and Andriopoulos (2007) emphasize the importance of consistency in brand messaging to prevent confusion during rebranding transitions. By grounding its messaging in trust and continuity, TotalEnergies mitigated potential skepticism among

Ghanaian customers while creating a smooth narrative that integrated its past achievements with its future aspirations.

Other extant literature, such as Kavaratzis and Hatch's (2013) framework on place and corporate branding emphasizes the importance of contextualizing global brand messaging to suit local realities. TotalEnergies' rebranding effort leveraged this principle by integrating global priorities, such as sustainability and energy diversification, with the specific needs and preferences of the Ghanaian market. Furthermore, empirical studies, such as those by de Chernatony and Segal-Horn (2003), highlight the importance of engaging stakeholders through clear, purpose-driven messages. TotalEnergies' ability to consistently communicate its new identity across multiple touchpoints in Ghana exemplifies this best practice.

### **5.3. Research Question 3:**

#### **What challenges were encountered in the communication process?**

The rebranding of TotalEnergies in Ghana encountered several communication challenges, shaped by cultural perceptions, logistical constraints, and industry competition. While the company's global strategy sought to position itself as a leader in sustainability and renewable energy, its messaging faced obstacles in the local market. These challenges illustrate the complexities of multinational corporate rebranding efforts with the local realities of its host markets.

One of the most significant challenges was the public perception of the company's new logo colors. Several participants noted that the rainbow-like color scheme led to unintended associations with LGBTQ+ advocacy, which became particularly sensitive in Ghana, given the prevailing cultural and political discourse on LGBTQ+ rights. Although this association was not widespread, it

nonetheless created uncertainty among some customers and employees. This aligns with findings by Balmer and Podnar (2021), who argue that rebranding elements, including visual identity, must be carefully considered within local socio-political contexts to avoid unintended connotations. Participant responses further indicated that TotalEnergies worked to clarify the meaning behind its colors, explaining that they represented elements of nature and energy rather than a political statement. This highlights the importance of proactive brand messaging to counteract misinterpretations, a strategy also emphasized by Kapferer (2012) in discussions on brand identity management.

A second major challenge was the limited public understanding of renewable energy concepts. As noted by Participant 3, many Ghanaian consumers were unfamiliar with sustainability narratives, making it difficult for TotalEnergies to effectively communicate its transition from fossil fuels to a broader energy mix. Studies by Chauhan and Goyal (2024) confirm that in emerging markets, consumer education is often necessary before sustainability-oriented messaging can resonate effectively. Skepticism toward the rebranding also stemmed from doubts about its substantive impact. Some stakeholders viewed the transition from "Total" to "TotalEnergies" as largely cosmetic rather than a genuine shift in corporate strategy. This reaction reflects broader concerns in the literature about "greenwashing" in corporate rebranding, where sustainability claims are met with skepticism if they are not accompanied by clear, tangible actions (Torelli, Balluchi, and Lazzini, 2020). To counter this skepticism, TotalEnergies employed a strategy rooted in social proof—a psychological and marketing principle that suggests people are more likely to believe and adopt behaviors when they see others doing the same (Cialdini, 2007). Social proof in corporate sustainability efforts manifests through visible, real-world implementations that demonstrate a company's commitment beyond rhetoric (Dangelico and Vocalelli, 2017).

One of the most visible ways TotalEnergies reinforced its sustainability agenda was through the solarization of its fuel stations. The company installed solar panels at several service stations across Ghana, visibly signaling its commitment to renewable energy. This move aligns with literature on experiential sustainability branding, where consumers are more likely to trust a brand's green credentials when they can see and interact with tangible sustainability initiatives (Dettori 2019).

Studies show that visible renewable energy installations in commercial spaces significantly increase consumer trust in a company's sustainability claims. For instance, research by Van der Werff, Steg, and Keizer (2013) found that businesses implementing solar energy and other green initiatives on-site were perceived as more credible in their sustainability efforts compared to those that merely communicated sustainability goals through advertising.

Another strategic move was the introduction of an electric vehicle (EV) charging station at selected locations. In Ghana, where EV adoption remains low, this move signaled an early investment in the country's clean energy future. This initiative aligns with literature on proactive sustainability signaling, where companies invest in infrastructure ahead of market demand to establish themselves as thought leaders in the transition to clean energy (Lash and Wellington, 2007). Additionally, the presence of an EV charging station serves as a physical commitment to energy transition, reinforcing TotalEnergies' positioning as more than just a petroleum company. According to research by Moser (2016), physical and infrastructure investments in sustainability are critical in persuading skeptical consumers, as they provide proof of action rather than just communication.

TotalEnergies also faced logistical constraints in effectively engaging all customer segments, particularly informal sector workers such as trotro drivers. Participant 5 highlighted the difficulty

in capturing their attention due to their fast-paced work schedules. To address this, TotalEnergies collaborated with transport unions and leveraged popular local radio stations. This approach aligns with Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC) principles, which advocate for the use of multiple, audience-specific channels to maximize message reach (Kliatchko, 2008). Moreover, the challenge of reaching mobile and informal workers underscores the limitations of traditional corporate communication strategies in markets with high levels of informality. Scholars such as De Mooij (2021) emphasize that multinational companies in such environments must adopt hyper-localized outreach methods, including interpersonal engagement through trusted community networks, which in the case of TotalEnergies were the unions for the dealers (station managers) who had good working relationships with the trotro drivers and thus were able to engage them directly and effectively.

Another challenge identified was the crowded communication space. As Participant 3 pointed out, competing energy brands in Ghana were also promoting their sustainability initiatives, making it difficult for TotalEnergies to differentiate itself. In highly competitive markets, brand messages risk getting lost in a sea of similar claims, a challenge documented by Keller (2001), who notes that differentiation is a key factor in rebranding success. Additionally, as Participant 4 mentioned, some customers misinterpreted the rebranding as an acquisition rather than a strategic shift. This caused concerns about potential price increases or product quality changes. In response, TotalEnergies had to reinforce its brand narrative through direct engagement and clear messaging.

#### **5.4. Implications and Significance of Findings**

The findings of this study on TotalEnergies' rebranding in Ghana hold significant implications for corporate sustainability strategy, brand perception, stakeholder engagement, and energy transition

discourse in emerging markets. These implications extend beyond TotalEnergies to multinational corporations (MNCs) undergoing similar transitions, particularly in sectors historically associated with environmental degradation. The research highlights the necessity of tangible sustainability initiatives, localized communication strategies, and the interplay between consumer perception and corporate credibility.

### **Corporate Sustainability and Green Marketing**

One of the key implications of this study is the reinforcement of experiential sustainability branding as a critical strategy in mitigating skepticism toward corporate sustainability claims. Research shows that mere communication of sustainability efforts without visible proof often leads to consumer distrust (Torelli, Balluchi, and Lazzini, 2020). TotalEnergies' investment in solarized stations and electric vehicle (EV) charging infrastructure aligns with proactive sustainability signaling (Lash and Wellington, 2007), demonstrating that companies must move beyond rhetorical commitments to measurable and observable initiatives. (Delmas and Burbano 2011)

From a green marketing perspective, these findings underscore that corporate credibility in sustainability relies on the alignment between claims and action. Studies have found that firms engaging in “greenwashing”—the act of exaggerating or falsely advertising sustainability efforts—face significant reputational risks and consumer backlash (Delmas and Burbano, 2011). The case of TotalEnergies suggests that brands must integrate sustainability into core business operations rather than as an ancillary corporate social responsibility (CSR) activity.

## **Stakeholder Perception and Consumer Trust**

The study also highlights the crucial role of social proof in shaping stakeholder perception of sustainability commitments. TotalEnergies' visible sustainability investments contributed to consumer trust, reinforcing findings from social psychology that people are more likely to believe in and adopt behaviors when they see real-world examples (Cialdini, 2007). This insight is particularly relevant for companies operating in markets where sustainability literacy is still developing. Research suggests that in emerging economies like Ghana, consumer skepticism toward corporate sustainability claims is often higher due to limited regulatory enforcement and past experiences with superficial CSR initiatives (Mzembe and Downs 2014). By visibly implementing green infrastructure, TotalEnergies was able to address information asymmetry and establish legitimacy.

The broader implication is that corporations seeking to drive behavioral change must prioritize experiential marketing—offering direct interaction with sustainability initiatives. For instance, studies have shown that when consumers can physically experience green initiatives (such as seeing solar panels on buildings or using electric vehicle charging stations), they are more likely to engage with and believe in the brand's sustainability commitment (White, Habib and Hardisty 2019).

## **Policy and Regulatory Considerations**

The study's findings also carry regulatory and policy implications for both governments and multinational corporations. The fact that TotalEnergies voluntarily invested in solarized stations and EV charging infrastructure demonstrates that businesses can drive sustainability transitions

even in the absence of strict regulatory mandates. However, for widespread industry adoption, government incentives, subsidies, and clear sustainability policies are essential.

Research on corporate sustainability suggests that public-private partnerships (PPPs) are critical in scaling green energy adoption (Wijen 2014). Governments in emerging markets can leverage findings from TotalEnergies' experience to develop policies that encourage similar investments from other companies. For example, tax incentives for businesses investing in green infrastructure have been shown to accelerate renewable energy adoption in other markets (Chassagnon and Haned 2015). Additionally, these findings align with institutional theory, which argues that companies adapt their strategies based on societal norms, regulatory pressures, and market expectations (DiMaggio and Powell 1983). As sustainability becomes a market differentiator, companies like TotalEnergies are likely to continue investing in green initiatives as part of long-term strategic positioning rather than short-term compliance.

### **Energy Transition in Emerging Markets**

Another critical implication of this study is its contribution to the ongoing discourse on energy transition in developing economies. Ghana, like many African nations, faces the challenge of balancing fossil fuel dependence with the need for sustainable energy solutions. The case of TotalEnergies demonstrates that multinational energy companies can play a transformative role by investing in renewable energy infrastructure even within traditional oil and gas operations. This aligns with research on hybrid business models in sustainability, which suggests that companies can gradually transition to renewable energy while maintaining profitability (Bocken, et al. 2014). By incorporating solar energy into its fuel stations and introducing EV charging points,

TotalEnergies has positioned itself at the intersection of traditional energy and the green transition, reflecting a practical, stepwise approach to decarbonization.

Moreover, this study highlights the importance of market preparedness for energy transition. While TotalEnergies' EV charging stations represent a future-focused investment, current electric vehicle adoption in Ghana remains low. This raises the issue of whether corporate sustainability investments should be demand-driven or supply-driven—a debate in energy transition literature (Kim and Yoo 2021). The implication is that companies must balance proactive sustainability investments with market readiness to avoid premature investments that may not yield immediate returns.

### **Strategic Branding and Competitive Advantage**

Finally, the study underscores the branding and competitive advantages of sustainability-led corporate transformations. TotalEnergies' visible commitment to green initiatives differentiates it from competitors in the Ghanaian market, reinforcing literature on sustainable brand positioning (Kumar and Christodouloupoulou 2014). In an industry traditionally associated with environmental harm, the ability to communicate a credible sustainability narrative has become a key competitive advantage. Research indicates that companies that successfully integrate sustainability into brand identity not only enhance customer loyalty but also attract impact-driven investors (Eccles, Ioannou and Serafeim 2014).

The findings further align with Corporate Reputation theory, which emphasizes that brands perceived as sustainability leaders gain higher consumer trust and long-term stakeholder engagement (Luo and Bhattacharya 2006). This suggests that beyond regulatory compliance,

sustainability investments contribute to brand equity and financial performance, reinforcing the business case for corporate sustainability transitions.

## **5.5. Conclusions**

TotalEnergies' rebranding initiative in Ghana underscores the complexities of corporate sustainability communication in an emerging market. While the company successfully leveraged tangible initiatives such as solarized stations and electric vehicle (EV) charging points to reinforce its commitment to sustainable energy, it also encountered some challenges in stakeholder engagement and public perception. The rebranding effort was met with initial skepticism, particularly regarding the meaning behind the company's new visual identity and the authenticity of its sustainability commitments.

The company's rebranding communication faced initial hurdles due to public misinterpretation of its new visual identity. The multi-colored logo, reminiscent of the LGBTQ+ pride flag, sparked unintended associations among certain consumer groups, requiring strategic clarification. This highlights the need for companies to anticipate potential cultural interpretations of branding elements when entering diverse markets (Delmas and Burbano, 2011). These challenges also reflect broader issues in corporate rebranding and integrated marketing communications, emphasizing the importance of strategic stakeholder engagement, transparency, and localized messaging.

One of the most notable findings from this study is the effectiveness of tangible actions in enhancing credibility. Research suggests that sustainability claims are often met with skepticism unless backed by visible, real-world initiatives (Bocken et al., 2014). Therefore, TotalEnergies'

investment in solar-powered service stations and EV infrastructure provided concrete evidence of its commitment to the energy transition, aligning with literature that highlights the importance of social proof in corporate sustainability efforts (Cialdini, 2009).

The study also revealed the necessity of a multi-channel approach in integrated marketing communications. TotalEnergies employed both traditional and digital media to reach a broad audience, reflecting best practices in corporate communication strategies (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983). However, engaging specific customer segments, such as commercial drivers, proved challenging due to logistical constraints. The company addressed this by using radio stations popular among transport operators, demonstrating the importance of channel selection in targeted communication (White, Habib, and Hardisty, 2019).

## **5.6. Recommendations**

To build on these findings, several recommendations can be made. First, TotalEnergies should enhance transparency by regularly publishing detailed sustainability reports. Transparent reporting has been shown to build trust and credibility in corporate sustainability initiatives (Delmas and Burbano, 2011). Second, fostering inclusive stakeholder engagement is critical. By involving key stakeholders—such as government agencies, community leaders, and employees—in the planning and implementation of sustainability projects, the company can improve acceptance and minimize resistance.

Additionally, TotalEnergies should continue leveraging tangible initiatives in its communication strategy. Showcasing real-world sustainability projects, such as the expansion of solarized stations and EV charging networks, can further solidify its brand identity and counter skepticism. This

approach aligns with literature emphasizing the role of demonstrable actions in overcoming greenwashing concerns (Bocken et al., 2014). Furthermore, adapting messaging to local cultural contexts can enhance consumer engagement. Understanding how different segments of the Ghanaian market perceive sustainability and the energy transition can inform more effective branding and outreach strategies (White et al., 2019).

Finally, implementing mechanisms to monitor public perception in real time can improve the responsiveness of communication strategies. Regular surveys, social media sentiment analysis, and focus group discussions can provide insights into how customers and stakeholders perceive the company's sustainability efforts, allowing for timely adjustments to messaging and strategy (Cialdini, 2009).

In conclusion, TotalEnergies' rebranding effort in Ghana highlights both the opportunities and challenges of corporate sustainability communication. While tangible initiatives have proven effective in enhancing credibility, strategic messaging and stakeholder engagement remain crucial for long-term success. By prioritizing transparency, leveraging social proof, and tailoring communication to local contexts, TotalEnergies can strengthen its position as a leader in sustainable energy while reinforcing trust among Ghanaian consumers.

### **5.7. Limitations and Directions for Future Research**

While this study provides valuable insights into the communication challenges and strategies employed in TotalEnergies' rebranding in Ghana, it is not without limitations. These limitations highlight areas where further research could provide a more comprehensive understanding of corporate rebranding, stakeholder engagement, and sustainability communication in emerging markets.

One key limitation of this study is its reliance on qualitative data from a relatively small sample of participants. While in-depth interviews offer rich, nuanced perspectives, they do not allow for broad generalizability. The findings may not fully capture the diversity of opinions across all customer segments, particularly those in rural areas or outside the primary marketing reach of TotalEnergies. Future research could address this by employing mixed methods, combining qualitative insights with quantitative surveys that encompass a larger and more representative sample (Creswell and Clark 2017). Further studies could employ large-scale surveys and sentiment analysis of social media discussions to measure public perception of TotalEnergies' rebranding efforts. This would provide statistical validation of the qualitative findings presented here.

Another limitation is the study's focus on a single case—TotalEnergies in Ghana. While this case provides meaningful insights into rebranding in an African context, the findings may not be directly applicable to other multinational corporations undergoing similar transitions in different cultural or economic environments. Comparative studies across multiple companies or regions could provide a broader understanding of how rebranding strategies vary across different markets (Yin 2009). Research comparing TotalEnergies' approach with that of other multinational energy firms in Africa, Asia, and Latin America could highlight best practices and contextual differences in rebranding communication strategies.

Finally, this study primarily considers the perspectives of internal stakeholders and company representatives. While their insights are valuable, they may not fully reflect the perceptions of external stakeholders, including customers, government regulators, and competitors. Future

research should incorporate a more diverse range of stakeholders, possibly through consumer perception studies, sentiment analysis of public discourse, and engagement with policymakers to understand regulatory impacts (Bryman 2016).

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# APPENDICES

## APPENDIX 1

### INTERVIEW GUIDE

#### General Background Information

1. What is your current role within TotalEnergies?
2. How long have you been in this position?
3. Which office/location of TotalEnergies do you work from?
4. What are your primary responsibilities, particularly regarding brand communication or customer engagement?
5. Were you involved in the TotalEnergies rebranding exercise in Ghana?
6. At which stage of the rebranding process did you become involved (e.g., planning, execution, evaluation)?

#### Assessing the Communication Strategies Used in the Rebranding Process

1. Which communication channels were primarily used to reach your target audience in Ghana?
2. How did the communication approach differ from previous corporate communications?
3. How did you engage different stakeholder groups in your communication efforts?
4. What were the main phases of TotalEnergies' rebranding rollout in Ghana?
5. How did the company leverage digital platforms or social media during the rebranding?
6. Was the rebranding strategy implemented in Ghana developed locally, or was it based on a broader global strategy designed by TotalEnergies' headquarters?
7. How were the strategies adapted for the Ghanaian market?
8. Can you describe any unique elements in the rebranding strategy specific to Ghana that differ from other markets?

#### Exploring the Key Messages Communicated During the Rebrand

1. What were the core messages emphasized during the rebranding?
2. How did these messages align with Ghanaian cultural values?
3. How was the company's transition from Total to TotalEnergies explained?
4. What promises or commitments were made to customers?
5. Were there any specific cultural or local elements included in the messaging?
6. How was the energy transition narrative communicated to the Ghanaian audience?

#### Identifying the Challenges Encountered During the Rebranding

1. What were the main obstacles in implementing the communication strategy in Ghana?
2. How were these challenges addressed?
3. Were there any cultural or language barriers that affected message reception?
4. How did TotalEnergies manage customer expectations or concerns during this transition?
5. Were there any unexpected issues that arose during the rebranding process?
6. What lessons were learned from the challenges faced?

#### Evaluations and Reflections:

1. Looking back, what do you think worked particularly well in your communication strategy?

2. What improvements could be made if the company were to undertake a similar initiative?

**Closing statement:**

1. Is there anything else you'd like to add about the rebranding process or communication strategies?
2. Do you have any recommendations for future rebranding efforts in similar markets?

## APPENDIX 2

### CODING INSTRUMENT

#### Communication Strategy Coding

Code	Description	Code Presence (0/1)	Context Notes
CS1	Corporate Announcement		
CS2	Educational Content		
CS3	Promotional Material		
CS4	Stakeholder Engagement		

#### Communication Channel Coding

Code	Description	Code Presence (0/1)	Context Notes
CH1	Traditional Media		
CH2	Digital Platforms		
CH3	Direct Customer Communication		
CH4	Community Outreach		

#### Key Message Coding

Code	Description	Code Presence (0/1)	Context Notes
BI1	New Visual Identity		
BI2	Corporate Values		
BI3	Energy Transition Focus		
BI4	Global-Local Connection		
CV1	Product/Service Improvements		
CV2	Customer Benefits		
CV3	Sustainability Commitments		
CV4	Local Market Relevance		

#### Challenge Indicators Coding

Code	Description	Code Presence (0/1)	Context Notes
CI1	Message Clarity		
CI2	Cultural Adaptation		
CI3	Stakeholder Resistance		

<b>CI4</b>	Implementation Problems		
<b>RT1</b>	Positive Feedback		
<b>RT2</b>	Negative Feedback		
<b>RT3</b>	Misunderstandings		
<b>RT4</b>	Adaptation Required		