



**CSR AS A REPUTATION SHIELD: EXAMINING THE INFLUENCE OF GNPC'S
SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY INITIATIVES ON BRAND REPUTATION.**

BY

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

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DEDICATION

I would want to express my gratitude to the divine being for bestowing upon me the gift of life, robust health, and the intellectual capacity necessary to embark upon this scholarly endeavour. I would like to extend my dedication of this effort to my family, since they have provided unwavering support and encouragement throughout the process.

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ABSTRACT

This research aimed to examine the influence of GNPC's Social Responsibility Initiatives on brand perception. A total of 14 individuals were interviewed. The specific objectives assessed the influence of CSR activities on the brand reputation of GNPC and the challenges faced by GNPC in implementing CSR initiatives. The study reveals that GNPC foundation CSR activities significantly improve its brand reputation by addressing societal needs and promoting sustainable development. These include community development, educational support, environmental conservation, health and well-being programs, and youth empowerment. However, challenges like resource constraints, organizational bureaucracy, and internal resistance to CSR activities can hinder their effectiveness and sustainability. External factors like regulatory and legal constraints, economic instability, and political interference also pose challenges. A strategic, inclusive, and well-resourced approach is needed to ensure these initiatives continue to produce meaningful impacts. Based on this, the study recommends Management of GNPC should enhance collaboration with local communities by involving them in the planning, execution, and monitoring of community development initiatives. This participatory approach will align CSR projects with community priorities, will further enhance GNPC's reputation trust and goodwill.

Table of Contents

DECLARATION	v
CERTIFICATION	iii
DEDICATION	iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	iii
ABSTRACT	iv
LIST OF TABLES	viii
CHAPTER ONE	1
1.0 Chapter overview	1
1.1 Background to the study	1
1.2 Problem statement	3
1.3 Research Objective	5
1.4 Research Question	5
1.5 Significance of the study	5
1.6 Organisation of the Study	6
1.8 Chapter Summary	6
CHAPTER TWO	7
LITERATURE REVIEW	7
2.0 Introduction	7
2.1 Conceptual framework	7
2.1.1 Concept of Corporate Social Responsibility	7
2.1.2 Brand Reputation	8
2.1.3 CSR Activities on Brand Reputation.	10
2.1.4 Challenges in Implementing CSR initiatives	12
2.2 Review of Related Literature	14
2.3 Theoretical Framework	17
2.3.1 Stakeholder theory	17
2.3.2 Signaling Theory	18
2.4 Chapter Summary	20
CHAPTER THREE	21
METHODOLOGY	21
3.0 Introduction	21

3.1 Research Design.....	21
3.2 Research Approach	21
3.3 Population	22
3.4 Sampling technique and sampling size	22
3.5 Data Collection	23
3.6 Data analysis	23
3.7 Ethical Considerations	24
CHAPTER FOUR.....	25
DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS.....	25
4.0 Introduction.....	25
4.1 Demographics of Participants	25
4.2 Presentation of Qualitative Analysis findings.....	28
4.2.1 Thematic Analysis on the impact of CSR Activities on Brand Reputation of GNPC	28
4.2.2 Thematic Analysis on the challenges GNPC faces in executing CSR initiatives.	36
Table 5: External Factors Posing Challenges to GNPC CSR Activities	40
4.3 Discussion of Results	44
CHAPTER FIVE	47
SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	47
5.0 Introduction.....	47
5.1 Summary of Findings.....	47
5.1.1 Analysis on Impact of CSR Activities on Brand Reputation of GNPC	47
5.1.2 The Challenges in Implementing CSR initiatives at GNPC.	48
5.2 Conclusion	48
5.3 Recommendations	50
5.4 Future Research	51
References.....	52
Appendix.....	59

LIST OF TABLES

Table 4.1 Demographics of Participants.....	26
Table 4.2. Perception of GNPC’s Brand.....	29
Table 4.3. Impact of CSR Activities on Brand Reputation of GNPC.....	32
Table 4.4. Internal challenges GNPC face in executing its CSR initiatives	37
Table 4.5: External Factors Posing Challenges to GNPC’s CSR Activities.....	40

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Chapter overview

This chapter offers a thorough examination of the study, encompassing the study's context, problem statement, objectives, and significance of the study.

1.1 Background to the study

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has become widely acknowledged as a successful and well-structured marketing tactic in recent times (Salifu, Saini, & Moyo, 2023). The increase in significance can be attributed to the rising customer demands for organisations to maintain social and ethical standards. While the ostensible aim of CSR initiatives is to benefit society and promote sustainability, businesses often employ these efforts to enhance their brand image and sway client purchase decisions. Organisations have recognised that participating in CSR activities not only improves how their brand is perceived but also produces favourable word-of-mouth, which greatly contributes to gaining a competitive edge (He & Lai, 2014; Vo et al., 2019).

On a global scale, the significance of CSR has increased as a result of rising consumer expectations, societal demands, legal pressures, and a greater recognition of CSR's impact on an organization's brand reputation. Carroll's definition of Corporate CSR encompasses the economic, legal, ethical, and charitable obligations that society demands from corporations at any given moment (Carroll 2016). CSR, as defined by the World Council for Sustainable Development, is the continuous commitment of businesses to maintain ethical standards and foster economic growth, while also improving the welfare of employees, their families, and the local community (Crane, Matten & Spence, 2013).

As consumers increasingly choose businesses that actively contribute to the betterment of society, companies are motivated to participate in CSR initiatives (Hughes 2016). Aligning with societal values contributes to cultivating a favourable brand image and enhancing consumer loyalty. CSR is essential for improving brand reputation and fostering consumer confidence (Khan & Fatma, 2023). CSR efforts are designed to shape favourable opinions among specific customers and act as an influential means of communication for establishing a strong brand image (Singh et al., 2014).

In modern society, consumers want both high-quality items at reasonable prices and for companies to demonstrate social responsibility. Thus, CSR has become a strategic marketing tool that allows companies to differentiate themselves from their competitors (Kuokkanen & Sun, 2020). Studies have shown that consumers' perceptions of a firm's corporate social responsibility (CSR) efforts significantly influence their likelihood to buy products or services from that company. When comparing similar products, consumers generally show a preference for brands that exhibit social responsibility, indicating that CSR plays a crucial role in consumer behaviour (Harjoto & Salas 2017; Kuokkanen & Sun 2020).

The impact of CSR on corporate outcomes has been thoroughly documented, especially regarding corporate reputation, consumer trust, repurchase intention, consumer loyalty, and perceptions of corporate success (Lee et al. 2020; Ramesh et al. 2019). Participating in socially responsible activities typically leads to positive outcomes for a company, enhancing its reputation and corporate image. CSR also contributes to improving brand reputation and exerting an impact on brand performance (Cowan & Guzman, 2020). Beyond its core mandate of exploring and managing Ghana's petroleum resources, GNPC has recognized the importance of contributing to the social and economic development of the communities it impacts. This recognition is institutionalized

through its Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives, which are coordinated by the GNPC Foundation. Established in 2017, the GNPC Foundation is the vehicle through which the corporation delivers on its social investment agenda, aiming to ensure that the benefits of Ghana's oil and gas resources are felt by all citizens, not just within the extractive communities.

The GNPC Foundation is organised based on three primary principles: education and training, economic empowerment, and environment and social amenities (Spillan, et al, 2017). The education and training pillar aims to enhance the availability of high-quality education throughout Ghana, by offering scholarships to numerous Ghanaian students. The economic empowerment pillar seeks to promote long-term development by enhancing skills and promoting entrepreneurship. One effort that supports this goal is the GNPC Skills Training Program, which provides vocational training to young individuals. The pillar of environment and social amenities focusses on enhancing the quality of life in communities by implementing projects such as the establishment of water and sanitation facilities, healthcare centres, and sports infrastructure. Within the education and training aspect, the GNPC Foundation has awarded scholarships to 7,800 students since 2018 (GNA, 2023). This study examines the impact of GNPC's corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives and how these efforts have affected the company's brand reputation.

1.2 Problem statement

Multiple studies thoroughly shown the substantial influence of CSR on brand reputation, especially in developed countries (Bello et al., 2021; Kim et al., 2019). In the Ghanaian context, the available research primarily consists of case studies focused on the telecommunications and banking sectors (Salifu, 2023). Extensive research has thoroughly examined the impact of CSR on brand perception, consistently demonstrating a significant correlation between CSR actions and

improved brand reputation. Nevertheless, there is a notable deficiency in the existing body of knowledge about the particular instance of the GNPC and the distinct consequences of its CSR endeavours on how its brand is perceived. Although numerous studies have concentrated on the CSR initiatives of private sector organisations, there has been a lack of comprehensive analysis of the public sector, specifically in relation to national oil firms such as GNPC. The disparity is especially noticeable in the Ghanaian setting, where the GNPC, via its Foundation, carries out major CSR initiatives that are crucial to both the corporation's public perception and its interaction with the affected communities. Although GNPC plays a significant role in Ghana's economy and society, there is a dearth of comprehensive research examining the impact of its CSR initiatives on its brand perception, particularly when compared to other public institutions.

Moreover, the existing research on the relationship between CSR and brand reputation frequently emphasises CSR as an ancillary function of the organisation, rather than as an essential component of its structure. The GNPC Foundation is not merely a distinct entity that oversees CSR initiatives; rather, it is a critical operational unit of the corporation that is profoundly ingrained in the organisation. Current research has yet to investigate the distinctive scenario that is presented by the integration of CSR into public structure although the GNPC Foundation has made substantial investments in health, education, and economic empowerment, there is no clear evidence of a relationship between the firm's CSR initiatives and its impact on brand reputation based on Public institutions perspective. This study, therefore, aims to address this void by investigating the potential enhancement or protection of the brand perception of GNPC in the eyes of the public and stakeholders through the examination of how the GNPC Foundation's CSR initiatives, which are a core component of the corporation, function as a reputation shield.

1.3 Research Objective

The primary purpose of this research is to investigate the impact of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives on the brand reputation of the Ghana National Petroleum Corporation (GNPC).

The specific objectives of the study were to;

1. To assess the impact of GNPC's CSR Activities on Brand Reputation.
2. To Identify Challenges in Implementing CSR initiatives at GNPC.

1.4 Research Question

In order to accomplish the aim of the study, the study will examine;

1. What is the impact of CSR Activities on Brand Reputation of GNPC's
2. What are the challenges GNPC faces in executing CSR initiatives?

1.5 Significance of the study

Understanding how CSR activities affect brand perception is critical for organisations like GNPC because it influences strategic decision-making. Examining the results of GNPC's CSR efforts can provide practitioners with insights into effective techniques for improving brand impression, trust, and consumer loyalty. This knowledge guides the creation and implementation of future CSR plans, allowing businesses to connect their actions with stakeholder expectations and societal demands.

From a theoretical and scientific standpoint, this study adds to the expanding body of knowledge on CSR and brand reputation. It provides empirical data to support the concept that CSR has a beneficial impact on brand reputation, validating previous theories about CSR's involvement in corporate strategy while also opening up new possibilities for research.

Finally, from a policy standpoint, research on the influence of CSR on brand reputation informs the creation of regulatory frameworks and guidelines. Policymakers might use insights from the GNPC case study to build incentives that encourage corporations to embrace responsible business practices. Recognising the strong association between CSR and brand reputation allows policymakers to create a favourable climate for CSR projects by implementing supportive legislation and incentives.

1.6 Organisation of the Study

This study comprises five chapters. Chapter one provides an overview of the study's context, the problem being addressed, the objectives, the research questions, the importance, the extent of the investigation, and the structure of the document. Chapter two provides a comprehensive analysis of existing literature. An analysis of existing empirical and theoretical literature on Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) as a Reputation Shield. This study focusses on investigating the impact of GNPC's Social Responsibility Initiatives on the reputation of its brand. Chapter three discusses methodological tools and research design, which encompass data gathering, sampling, and analysis. Chapter four presents a thorough empirical analysis, interpretation, and discussion of the study's findings. Chapter five provides a concise overview of the study's main findings, draws logical deductions based on the results, and offers suggestions for future actions.

1.8 Chapter Summary

This chapter examines the impact of GNPC's Social Responsibility Initiatives on Brand Reputation and provides the background for the study. The text discusses the problem statement, study objectives, research questions, justification for the study, significance of the study, and scope of the investigation. The subsequent section will examine the literature review and theoretical framework of this study.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This section includes a thorough examination of current literature, based on discussion of the conceptual literature, an analysis of the theoretical framework, and a review of pertinent empirical studies.

2.1 Conceptual framework

2.1.1 Concept of Corporate Social Responsibility

CSR encompasses the ethical obligations of corporations to examine the broader impact of their actions on the community (Filatotchev & Nakajima, 2014). Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is a duty that both for-profit and not-for-profit organisations have towards their stakeholders, the natural environment, and society as a whole. It emphasises the need for these organisations to be accountable and transparent in their actions, encompassing social, ethical, environmental, and economic initiatives. These efforts are often voluntary and can occur within or outside of market and commercial transactions.

CSR is a non-mandatory initiative that goes beyond the legal obligations of a company. It encompasses various acts taken by corporations to benefit not just their shareholders, but also their customers, employees, suppliers, and communities. According to Carroll (2016), the CSR of a company is comprised of four types of social responsibility: economic, legal, ethical, and discretionary or philanthropic. The concept of incorporating ethical practices, as well as social, moral, philanthropic, and environmental duties, into the operations of a firm within the society it operates in (Okpara, & Idowu, 2013). The CSR concept, also known as corporate citizenship,

assesses the impact of business operations on many stakeholders including employees, suppliers, consumers, the local community, local, state, and federal governments, environmental groups, and other special interest groups.

CSR initiatives have been employed to tackle consumers' social problems, cultivate a favourable business reputation, and foster a positive rapport with consumers and other stakeholders. CSR, or corporate social responsibility, aids in understanding stakeholder expectations and enhances competitiveness, ensuring long-term stability and sustainable growth. Additionally, it fosters favourable conditions for social and economic development, generating both economic and social value (Paliwoda-Matiolanska, 2017). Incorporating CSR into the strategic planning of businesses can provide numerous advantages in terms of risk mitigation, cost reduction in capital acquisition, as well as fostering positive customer relations, effective human resource management, and fostering innovation potential (Stahl, Brewster, Collings, & Hajro, 2020). In addition to enhancing business image, business Social Responsibility (CSR) also plays a crucial role in fostering brand loyalty among consumers. Research has indicated that people are more inclined towards companies that demonstrate a higher level of social responsibility. This positive perception of the company's ethical practices has a direct impact on consumer behaviour and their propensity to acquire products from that brand (Irshad et al., 2020).

2.1.2 Brand Reputation.

Kotsi, Balakrishnan, Michael, and Ramsøy (2018) argue that a brand reflects the perception of a corporation by its stakeholders. According to Keller (2016), a brand is an entity that has generated a level of recognition and enhanced its standing within a specific market. Brand names and logos assist consumers in locating the desired product and provide them with an understanding of the brand's quality and characteristics, particularly when they make repeated purchases of the same

brand (Armstrong, Adam, Denize, & Kotler, 2014). A brand is the abstract notion of imbuing a thing with significance and generating consciousness among consumers. Branding is the method by which a brand is established in the consumer's consciousness. The objective of branding is to cultivate a base of devoted customers by delivering a product that fulfils the brand's expectations and commitments (Kotler & Keller, 2015). According to Doorley and Garcia (2015), brand reputation is formed through the communication and brand image that a firm shares with its audience.

Effective brand reputation management is essential for brands seeking to expand their business, as a favourable reputation fosters consumer loyalty and drives sales and growth. The citation for the source is Azham, Ahmad, and Delaila (2020). The decision-making process of consumers is influenced by brand reputation, since they frequently choose a brand that is renowned for fulfilling its promises. Companies frequently engage in collaborations with other esteemed brands, whether they be corporate entities or individuals, with the aim of enhancing their reputation (Mogaji, 2021). Shin, Amenuvor, Basilisco, and Owusu-Antwi (2019) argue that brand reputation is established gradually by consistently providing positive experiences with the company. This fosters trust and loyalty among stakeholders. An established brand reputation not only improves customer loyalty and attracts new customers but also offers a competitive edge in the industry. Therefore, organisations consider controlling brand reputation as a crucial responsibility since it has a direct impact on business outcomes, such as financial performance and market share. Extensive research has been conducted on the correlation between CSR and brand reputation, indicating that CSR programs have the potential to greatly improve brand reputation.

CSR initiatives, such as engaging with the community, promoting environmental sustainability, and practicing ethical business, enhance a company's brand image by aligning its values with those

of its stakeholders (Tourky, Kitchen, & Shaalan, 2020). Engaging in socially responsible behaviour enhances organisations' brand reputation by fostering trust and ethical perception (Vuong & Bui, 2023). Yet, the influence of CSR on the perception of a brand's reputation depends on the genuineness and efficacy of these endeavours. In order for CSR to have a meaningful impact on brand reputation, it is essential that it is fully included into the organization's central strategy, demonstrating a sincere dedication to social and environmental issues.

2.1.3 CSR Activities on Brand Reputation.

The role of CSR activities support companies in developing and building their long-term brand reputations results in the following impact on organizations as discussed below;

- 1. Positive reputation and brand awareness:** CSR has a significant impact on a company's corporate reputation. When a corporation participates in CSR initiatives that are in line with societal values and expectations, it establishes a favourable reputation and increases brand awareness (Carlini & Grace, 2021). Consequently, this relates to the concept of brand equity, which pertains to the value and influence of a brand name in the perceptions of customers. A well-implemented CSR strategy can greatly enhance customer-based brand equity by linking the brand with favourable social and environmental results.
- 2. Building Trust and Credibility:** CSR initiatives are essential for the establishment of trust and credibility, which are the fundamental components of a robust brand reputation. By participating in socially responsible practices, organisations communicate to their constituents that they are dedicated to ethical conduct and the well-being of society. This establishes goodwill during periods of crisis. Consumer trust is an essential element of brand image and brand management, and CSR activities, particularly in conjunction with exceptional product or service quality, contribute to the development of consumer trust by

presenting socially responsible companies as more ethical and transparent (Abd-El-Salam, 2020). In turn, trust fosters long-term, positive relationships and increased consumer satisfaction.

- 3. Enhancing Customer and brand Loyalty:** Brand reputation is directly influenced by consumer loyalty, which is significantly influenced by CSR initiatives. Customers today are increasingly socially conscious and prefer to associate with brands that cultivate a sense of connection and loyalty among consumers, particularly when this commitment is consistent with the organization's broader brand values. This sentiment frequently resonates with the organization's target audience (Carlini, & Grace, 2021). Additionally, consumers who perceive a brand as socially responsible are more inclined to demonstrate brand loyalty by making subsequent purchases and even advocating for the brand. Companies' long-term brand reputations are bolstered by CSR initiatives. Consequently, consumer awareness of corporate CSR programs may have a substantial impact on brand value (Kádeková, Savov, Košičiarová, & Valaskova, 2020).
- 4. Differentiation in Competitive Markets:** CSR initiatives can be a critical differentiator in highly competitive markets, enabling companies to establish a distinctive brand identity and distinguish themselves. Companies that effectively incorporate CSR into their business strategy can distinguish themselves from their competitors by demonstrating their dedication to social and environmental causes (Schaltegger, & Burritt, 2018).. Shah and Khan (2020) contend that corporate social responsibility (CSR) can generate a competitive advantage that not only enhances the company's brand reputation in competitive markets but also benefits the organisation.

- 5. Mitigating Reputational Risks:** CSR activities can act as a buffer against reputational risks, protecting the brand during periods of negative publicity. When a company is involved in socially responsible activities, it can draw on its positive reputation to mitigate the impact of adverse events. Companies with strong CSR reputations are more likely to maintain stakeholder support during crises, as stakeholders are more willing to forgive companies they perceive as socially responsible (Smith, & Rhiney, 2020).

2.1.4 Challenges in Implementing CSR initiatives

Challenges of implementing social responsibility are multifaceted and can be daunting for organizations seeking to make a positive impact on society and the environment due to the following;

- 1. Lack of Clear Strategic Alignment:** An important obstacle that organisations have when adopting CSR efforts is the absence of consistency between CSR operations and the overarching business plan. The absence of transparency has a detrimental effect on the establishment of trust between firms and local communities, which is a crucial element for the success of any corporate social responsibility (CSR) project at the local level. When corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities are regarded as distinct from the fundamental operations of a business, they frequently fall short of attaining their desired effect (Armstrong & Green, 2013). In the absence of this integration, corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives can become fragmented, resulting in ineffective allocation of resources and restricted long-term advantages.
- 2. Cost and Resource Constraints:** Engaging in social responsibility necessitates significant allocations of time, financial resources, and other assets. A significant barrier to conducting CSR efforts is the constraint of resources. CSR can be perceived as a supplementary

expense or encumbrance that diverts resources from your primary business operations. Disparity can result in inconsistent or superficial corporate social responsibility (CSR) efforts, where corporations may only participate in CSR activities that necessitate low investment, rather than those that have the potential to generate substantial beneficial effects (Barnett, 2019).

3. **Stakeholder Misalignment:** Opposition to the implementation of social responsibility is particularly prevalent in organisations that prioritise profits. Aligning with the greater good is difficult due to the fact that certain stakeholders prioritise short-term profits over societal benefits. Balancing the requirements and expectations of a variety of stakeholders, such as employees, customers, shareholders, and the community, is frequently necessary for CSR initiatives. Nevertheless, it can be difficult to reconcile these disparate interests. Organisations may encounter challenges in executing CSR initiatives that satisfy all stakeholders due to the tension and conflict that can result from the varying priorities of stakeholders (Siltaloppi, Rajala, & Hietala, 2021).
4. **Lack of Community Participation in CSR Activities:** Companies that implement corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives can enhance investor relations, increase brand recognition, and benefit society. Nevertheless, there is a dearth of interest from the local community in engaging in and contributing to the corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives of companies. This is primarily attributable to the fact that the local communities are not well-informed about CSR initiatives, as there have been no significant efforts to raise awareness of CSR and instill confidence in the local community regarding such initiatives. The situation is further exacerbated by a lack of communication between the company and the community at the grassroots level.

5. **Regulatory and Compliance Pressures:** Ultimately, organisations are required to negotiate a multifaceted array of regulatory obligations and compliance standards that are pertinent to corporate social responsibility. These regulations can be subject to significant variation across various jurisdictions, which presents additional obstacles for organisations, particularly those that operate internationally (Matten & Moon, 2008). Compliance with these regulations frequently necessitates substantial investments in compliance systems and procedures, which can divert resources from the actual execution of corporate social responsibility initiatives. Additionally, the apprehension of non-compliance penalties may induce organisations to prioritise regulatory compliance over the more comprehensive objectives of corporate social responsibility.

2.2 Review of Related Literature

The existing research on the impact of corporate social responsibility (CSR) on several brand-related results consistently demonstrates that CSR activities have a positive influence on brand equity, brand image, and consumer behaviour. However, the specific processes and circumstances through which this influence occurs may differ. Araújo, Pereira, and Santos (2023) conducted a study within the pandemic to investigate the influence of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) on brand image, brand equity, and consumer happiness. The researchers employed a Structural Equation Model, namely Smart PLS, to examine the relationship between CSR initiatives and consumer satisfaction. Their findings indicate that CSR initiatives have an indirect positive effect on consumer satisfaction by enhancing brand image and brand equity. Notably, the study also found that CSR had a stronger influence on brand image for men and for consumers who frequently buy the brand. However, no direct effects on consumer satisfaction were detected.

In their study, Khan and Fatma (2023) investigated Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in the Indian banking industry. They specifically examined the impact of consumer perceptions of CSR on brand image, brand trust, and word of mouth. The study utilised a non-random sampling technique, resulting in the acquisition of 328 valid responses. Their research demonstrates that corporate social responsibility (CSR) has a favourable impact on brand trust. This, in turn, partially influences the relationship between CSR and both brand image and customer word of mouth. This study highlights the significance of brand trust as an intermediary in the influence of CSR on marketing results.

Wang, Liao, Wu, and Le (2021) investigated the impact of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) on customers' inclination to make purchases in the cosmetics sector. The study utilises a quantitative methodology to gather data from clients who make purchases of cosmetics through an online survey. The PLS-SEM program is employed to analyse the data derived from the 380 replies. Their study showed that the way consumers perceive a company's corporate social responsibility (CSR) efforts can positively influence their desire to purchase the company's products. This influence is mediated by the factors of brand equity, brand credibility, and brand repute. This study indicates that incorporating corporate social responsibility (CSR) into business practices is advantageous for the growth of the company, since it has a positive impact on important brand characteristics that influence consumer behaviour.

In their study, Mahmood and Bashir (2020) examined how corporate social responsibility (CSR) contributes to the conversion of brand reputation into brand equity in the fast-food sector. A survey was conducted including a sample size of 420 consumers and staff of international fast-food restaurants in Pakistan. The participants had different demographical profiles. Their research found that corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities greatly strengthen the ability of brand

reputation to predict brand equity, especially when CSR initiatives prioritise ethics, economics, and charity. This suggests that CSR not only strengthens brand equity but also expedites its growth from brand repute.

In their study, Lho, Park, and Yu (2019) examined the consequences of corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives in the hotel sector, specifically focussing on how these programs influence the perception of brand image, brand prestige, and consumer behavioural intentions. 332 questionnaires were utilised to evaluate the hypothesis. Their research revealed that the majority of corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives have a favourable impact on brand image and customer intentions. The study also identified brand prestige as a crucial mediator in this relationship. This supports the idea that corporate social responsibility (CSR) can enhance a brand's reputation and impact customer behaviour.

Finally, the purpose of Hafez's (2018) study is to assess the influence of business Social Responsibility (CSR) on Business Ethics (BE) and to determine the moderating effect of business image and brand awareness. The stated hypotheses were tested using structural equation modelling on a sample of 200 clients from both public and private banks in Bangladesh. The study findings indicate that CSR has a noteworthy and direct impact on the corporate image, brand awareness, and business excellence. The findings further validate that the business image and brand awareness act as partial mediators in the association between CSR and BE.

Overall, these studies demonstrate the various advantages of corporate social responsibility (CSR), highlighting its ability to improve brand value, reputation, and consumer attitudes.

2.3 Theoretical Framework

2.3.1 Stakeholder theory

Stakeholder theory, within the context of CSR, posits that firms have social obligations that necessitate them to take into account the concerns of all individuals impacted by their activities. The stakeholder theory is a conceptual framework that highlights the interconnectedness between a business and its diverse stakeholders. The stakeholder theory posits that management should not only prioritise the concerns of shareholders in the decision-making process, but also take into account the interests of other stakeholders (Freeman, 1984). A firm's stakeholders encompass several entities such as employees, suppliers, consumers, investors, and governments. However, stakeholders can be roughly described as any organisation or individual who has the ability to influence or is impacted by the firm's goals and objectives (Freeman, 1984). Helmig et al. (2016) categorise stakeholders into primary and secondary stakeholder categories. Primary stakeholders, such as shareholders and investors, employees, customers, and the government, directly influence the company and are crucial for its survival. On the other hand, secondary stakeholders, such as the media, competition, and trade associations, have an indirect influence on the company and are not necessary for its survival (Helmig et al., 2016).

The stakeholder theory emphasises the importance of an organisation generating value for all of its stakeholders, who are impacted by its business activities and decisions, rather to solely focussing on its shareholders. The notion discusses the importance of managers being accountable to the different stakeholders for protecting their interests. The effectiveness of a business can be evaluated from three perspectives: the influence of stakeholders on the firm's operations, the impact of interconnections on key stakeholders and the organisation, and how the viewpoints of

key stakeholders affect the success of the firm's strategic measures (Bonnafous-Boucher & Rendtorff, 2016).

To address the obstacles associated with implementing CSR efforts, it is beneficial to link the notion with stakeholder theory. This approach allows leaders to take a more practical approach by considering the interests of all stakeholders and organising their activities appropriately. The stakeholder theory focusses on addressing the problem of insufficient recognition of the advantages of corporate social responsibility (CSR) (Harrison, et al., 2019). Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) that is in line with stakeholder theory yields the greatest advantages in terms of societal progress, as well as fostering a motivated workforce, enhancing corporate branding, increasing sales and profitability, and satisfying customers, among other benefits (Nikolova & Arsić, 2017). Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is a crucial aspect of corporate responsibility that requires the involvement of multiple stakeholders to ensure its effective execution. GNPC, through the GNPC Foundation, implements CSR activities to address the problems of many stakeholders such as local communities, employees, and the government. By participating in corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives that provide advantages to these specific groups, such as offering educational scholarships, supporting environmental projects, and contributing to infrastructure development.

2.3.2 Signaling Theory

Signalling Theory examines how organisations convey their quality and goals to stakeholders through their activities (Spence, 1973). Signalling Theory offers a robust framework for comprehending the transmission of information in settings where not all parties possess equal access to that information. Signalling Theory examines circumstances where there is an unequal distribution of knowledge between two individuals. In these situations, one person (known as the

sender) must determine what information to communicate to the other person (known as the receiver). This theory was first proposed by Spence in 1973 and further developed by Drover et al. in 2018.

Signalling theory is a valuable tool for explaining behaviour in situations where two parties, whether they be individuals or organisations, possess varying levels of information. Usually, in a communication scenario, one party, known as the sender, is responsible for deciding if and how to provide information, while the other party, known as the receiver, must decide how to understand the message being conveyed. Signalling Theory, a concept derived from economics and information asymmetry, elucidates how organisations communicate their quality, objectives, and values to stakeholders via different signals (Spence, 1973). When there is a disparity in knowledge between an organisation and its stakeholders, such as investors, consumers, or the general public, corporations employ signals to bridge this gap and diminish ambiguity. These signals are indicators or qualities that convey the company's dependability, moral principles, or commitment to social responsibility. Within the realm of corporate social responsibility (CSR), a company's engagement in socially responsible endeavours acts as a potent indication to external parties, showcasing its dedication to ethical conduct and enduring viability. The process of signalling is vital for establishing trust and credibility, both of which are integral aspects of brand reputation. Signalling Theory emphasises the significance of maintaining consistency and coherence in corporate social responsibility (CSR) efforts in order to effectively improve brand perception.

The applicability of Signalling Theory to CSR as a means of protecting reputation is especially apparent in businesses characterised by high levels of public scrutiny, such as the oil and gas sector. GNPC, the Ghana National Petroleum Corporation, participates in CSR initiatives through the GNPC Foundation. This not only fulfils its social responsibilities but also serves as a strategic

demonstration of its dedication to corporate citizenship. Through its investments in education, environmental sustainability, and community development, GNPC effectively communicates to its stakeholders that it prioritises not only financial gain, but also the welfare of the communities it operates in and the overall social benefit. This is particularly crucial in a sector frequently linked to environmental and social disputes. Connelly et al. (2011) argue that for signals to be effective, they need to be both easily noticeable and difficult to replicate, so that stakeholders view them as trustworthy. The consistent and visible corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives of GNPC act as clear indicators, strengthening its reputation as a responsible and reliable organisation. CSR activities function as an indication of GNPC's dedication to ethical practices and social responsibility. By allocating resources towards community development and environmental sustainability, GNPC demonstrates to its stakeholders that it is a conscientious corporate entity, thereby improving its brand image. This idea is especially applicable when considering the highly competitive nature of the oil and gas business, where corporations must distinguish themselves based on non-financial measures such as corporate social responsibility (CSR). By properly communicating its corporate social responsibility (CSR) obligations, GNPC can improve its brand and achieve a competitive advantage.

2.4 Chapter Summary

This chapter presented a summary of the current literature that is important to the inquiry, analysed the concepts that serve as the theoretical basis for the study, and evaluated past investigations while exploring the various themes investigated in the study.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

The study's research methodology encompassed various aspects, including the research design and approach, the target research population, the determination of sample size, the sampling method, the methods for data collecting and analysis, and ethical issues.

3.1 Research Design

According to Ghauri, Grønhaug, and Strange (2020), a well-considered research design is fundamental in maintaining the integrity of the study, guiding the selection of appropriate data sources, and ensuring that the analysis is robust and relevant to the research goals. In the context of examining the influence of GNPC's Social Responsibility Initiatives on Brand Perception, an exploratory research approach is particularly suitable. Exploratory research is designed to investigate new or unclear areas where the researcher seeks to understand underlying patterns, relationships, or phenomena. This approach is ideal for the GNPC case because it allows for an in-depth exploration of how these social initiatives might affect public perception of the brand, especially in areas where previous research may be limited or non-existent. By using an exploratory design, the researcher can gather qualitative insights, identify key themes, and build a foundation for more conclusive future studies.

3.2 Research Approach

The three primary methodologies identified within the existing body of research are quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods (Creswell, 2014). Qualitative research, on the other hand, emphasizes understanding phenomena through detailed, contextual analysis of non-numerical

data, such as interviews, observations, and textual analysis. For the study examining the influence of GNPC's Social Responsibility Initiatives on Brand Perception, a qualitative approach is particularly fitting. The use of interviews provided an in-depth exploration of how GNPC's initiatives are perceived by various stakeholders who benefit from GNPC CSR activities, capturing the nuances of their experiences, opinions, and attitudes. By focusing on qualitative data, the study can uncover underlying themes and patterns that contribute to a deeper understanding of the relationship between GNPC's initiatives and public perception.

3.3 Population

The population of a study encompasses the complete set of individuals or entities that the research endeavours to examine. This study focused on key stakeholder organizations who benefit from GNPC CSR activities. The population being studied consisted of 20 respondents. The selection of these respondents was based on the importance of their experiences in comprehending the GNPC's Social Responsibility Initiatives about Brand Perception. The study attempted to collect pertinent and reliable data to satisfy its research aims by specifically targeting this population.

3.4 Sampling technique and sampling size

A sample is a selected subset of a population that aims to reflect the complete community (Saunders & Townsend, 2018). Purposive sampling method, a non-probability sampling technique, was used to select respondents who have substantial knowledge or experience related to the issue under investigation. This approach is particularly useful in qualitative research, where the goal is to gain deep, contextual understanding rather than to generalize findings to a broader population. By selecting individuals who are well-informed and closely connected to the issue, the researcher can gather more meaningful data, which in turn enhances the depth and validity of the study's findings. This targeted approach allows the researcher to explore the complexities of brand

perception in a focused manner, ensuring that the data collected is rich and relevant to the research objectives. The sample size was based on 15 participants for the study, which it has previously been recommended that qualitative studies require a minimum sample size of at least 12 to reach data saturation (Clarke & Braun, 2013; Fugard & Potts, 2014; Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006). Therefore, a sample of 15 was deemed sufficient for the qualitative analysis and scale of this study.

3.5 Data Collection

The study utilised data from primary sources. The research effectively obtained information from participants using interview guide, as it is a rapid and direct method for data collection. The face-to-face interviews were conducted using semi-structured or open-ended interview guides, allowing for flexibility in exploring different themes and allowing participants to provide detailed responses based on their own perspectives and experiences (Creswell, 2013).

3.6 Data analysis

The data analysis in this study employed a thematic analysis methodology, a qualitative approach that involves identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns or themes within the data. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), thematic analysis is a flexible and accessible method for examining qualitative data, allowing the researcher to code and categorize the data systematically. By transcribing interviews or focus group discussions, the researcher can meticulously review the data, assigning codes to segments of text that reflect particular ideas or concepts. To enhance the efficiency and rigor of the analysis, the NVivo program – a qualitative data analysis software that aids in the systematic management and organization of large volumes of data – was utilised to code data efficiently, link codes to themes, and visualize relationships between different themes, thus facilitating a deeper understanding of the data. These codes are then grouped into broader themes that capture the essence of the data, offering insights into the research question. Thematic analysis

is particularly valuable for exploring complex, nuanced issues, as it allows the researcher to uncover underlying meanings and relationships within the data.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

Ensuring ethical considerations is paramount in this research. Participants will be provided with detailed information about the study's goals, procedures, and their right to withdraw at any time without experiencing any negative repercussions (Orb, Eisenhauer, & Wynaden, 2001). After providing the relevant information, consent was obtained. To protect confidentiality, data will be anonymised and all records will be securely preserved. The study adhered to ethical standards to ensure the preservation of participants' dignity and privacy.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.0 Introduction

This chapter analyses the data collected from participants, focussing on the impact of GNPC's Social Responsibility Initiatives on Brand Perception. The findings from the interviews are highlighted, with the study's objectives functioning as the primary themes for analysis. Each aim is further analysed through sub-themes, providing a comprehensive evaluation of the data.

4.1 Demographics of Participants

This section specifically analyses the various demographic groups interviewed during the survey. When analysing these individuals, it is essential to evaluate factors such as gender, educational attainment, tenure at GNPC Foundation, and their roles and engagement in GNPC's CSR initiatives. An examination of the participants' demographic profiles provides significant insights on their ability to understand the many perspectives addressed in the study, as highlighted by Perez and Bosque (2013). Demographic data is crucial in research studies for various reasons. It assists in defining the characteristics of the sample, so providing a context for understanding the results.

Table 4.1 Demographics of Participants

	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	9	64.3
Female	5	35.7
Educational level		
HND/Degree	7	50.0
MSc/MBA/MPhil	4	28.6

Professional/Technical	2	14.3
Prof/Dr.	0	0.0
Other	1	7.1
Years of experience in GNPC Foundation		
Less than 1 year	1	7.1
1-2years	4	28.6
3-5 years	4	28.6
6-10 years	3	21.4
More than 10 years	2	14.3
Areas of benefit with GNPC's CSR activities		
Community Development	1	7.1
Environmental Sustainability	2	14.3
Educational and training	5	35.7
Economic Empowerment	3	21.4
Health Care Improvement	3	21.4
TOTAL	14	100

Source: Field Data Survey, (2024)

The study's findings provide a detailed overview of participant demographics, including gender, educational credentials, years of experience, and areas of benefit related to GNPC's CSR initiatives.

4.1.1 Gender Distribution

The gender distribution reveals a participants predominantly comprising males, with 64.3% (9 individuals) identifying as male and 35.7% (5 individuals) identifying as female. The relatively low percentage of female participants may reflect broader trends that affect gender equity in organizational structures.

4.1.2 Educational Level

In terms of educational qualifications, the workforce's maximum level of attainment is represented by the 50% of participants (7 individuals) who possess HND or Degree qualifications. This is followed by MSc/MBA/MPhil holders at 28.6% (4 individuals), and Professional/Technical certifications at 14.3% (2 individuals). Furthermore, the "Other" category is occupied by 7.1% of the workforce, which indicates that the academic background of the employees is relatively equitable. It is intriguing that none of the participants (0.0%) possessed a doctoral or professorial degree, indicating that the highest academic echelon was not adequately represented.

4.1.3 Years of Experience

The study identifies an even distribution of employees with 1-2 years and 3-5 years of experience, each comprising 28.6% (4 individuals), after analysing the years of experience working with GNPC Foundation. This implies that a substantial number of employees who are relatively new to the organisation are able to contribute new perspectives. A firm foundation of expertise is provided by the 21.4% (3 individuals) of employees with 6-10 years of experience. In contrast, the smallest segments are those with more than 10 years of experience (14.3%, 2 individuals) and less than 1 year (7.1%, 1 individual), which suggests a limited number of both highly seasoned professionals and very recent recruits.

4.1.4 Areas of Benefit with GNPC's CSR Activities

The distribution of benefits from GNPC's CSR activities indicates that Educational and Training is the most impactful area, benefiting 35.7% (5 individuals). This highlights the organization's focus on skill development and education. Economic empowerment and health care improvement are closely aligned, each affecting 21.4% (3 individuals). Environmental Sustainability has a benefit of 14.3% (2 individuals), whereas Community Development is at 7.1% (1 individual). The

findings reveal a varied yet imbalanced emphasis on CSR activities, with education being the primary focus.

4.2 Presentation of Qualitative Analysis findings

The research objectives and interview guide served as the criteria for conducting the interviews. To perform a comprehensive analysis of the data, the interviews were initially coded, systematically categorising and deconstructing them into identifiable patterns. Thematic explanations were subsequently delineated and further categorised through the application of textual codes. The identified themes were employed to analyse the interview data, enabling a thorough examination of the perspectives and experiences of the participants. The study analysed the influence of CSR activities on the brand reputation of GNPC and the challenges the organisation encounters in implementing CSR initiatives.

4.2.1 Thematic Analysis on the impact of CSR Activities on Brand Reputation of GNPC

The study examines the influence of GNPC's CSR activities on its brand reputation, providing a thorough analysis of how these initiatives affect public perception. Thematic analysis revealed key themes that illustrate the various domains of GNPC's CSR focus, encompassing Community Development, Educational Support, Environmental Conservation, Health and Well-being, and Youth Empowerment and Skills Development. Each theme encapsulates a distinct aspect of GNPC's initiatives and underscores its influence on fostering trust, goodwill, and enhanced stakeholder relationships. The thematic insights demonstrate the influence of GNPC's diverse CSR activities on its reputation as an innovative and socially responsible organisation.

Table 4.2. Perception of GNPC’s Brand

Theme	Explanation	Sub-Themes
Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)	Participants discuss engagement in CSR initiatives bolster GNPC’s image as a socially responsible entity contributing positively to communities.	- Investments in education and healthcare - Environmental sustainability projects
Brand Visibility and Awareness	Participants explain the extent to which the public is familiar with GNPC’s activities and its contributions affects brand perception.	- Media coverage of GNPC’s projects - Public awareness campaigns
Perceived Efficiency and Effectiveness	Participants views on GNPC’s efficiency in managing resources and delivering results on its reputation.	- Effective resource utilization - Outcomes of oil and gas initiatives
Cultural and National Identity	GNPC is often seen as a representation of Ghana's national pride and cultural identity, given its role in managing natural resources.	- Contribution to national development - Representation of Ghana’s interests globally

Source: Field Data Survey, (2024)

Theme 1: Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)

Participants highlighted that GNPC’s involvement in CSR initiatives greatly improves its standing as a socially responsible organisation. Investments in education and healthcare were emphasised as significant areas where GNPC has made a positive impact.

One participant noted, *"GNPC's scholarships have assisted numerous students, including myself, in pursuing higher education, fostering a lasting legacy of empowerment."*

The development of healthcare facilities and the supply of medical resources in underserved regions exemplify GNPC's dedication to enhancing community well-being. Environmental sustainability projects received commendation, with participants highlighting tree-planting initiatives and eco-friendly practices as evidence of GNPC's commitment to environmental preservation.

Another participant remarked, *"Their environmental initiatives demonstrate a commitment that extends beyond profits, reflecting a genuine concern for the planet and future generations."*

These activities establish GNPC as an entity that prioritises long-term community development and social responsibility.

Theme 2: Brand Visibility and Awareness

The visibility of the brand and public awareness were considered essential in influencing perceptions of GNPC. Participants observed that media coverage of GNPC's projects is crucial in enhancing its reputation. Televised reports on GNPC-funded infrastructure developments and educational support foster favourable perceptions within the general public.

One interviewee remarked, *"Whenever GNPC inaugurates a school or hospital, the media coverage highlights their contributions to society."*

Public awareness campaigns, including radio discussions and community outreach programs, reinforce this perception. Some participants identified gaps in visibility, indicating that GNPC could enhance its use of social media platforms to engage a younger demographic more effectively.

One participant noted, *"They are doing commendable work, but their online presence could be significantly improved; many of us only learn about their projects through traditional media."*

This highlights the significance of updating communication strategies to improve brand awareness.

Theme 3: Perceived Efficiency and Effectiveness

The efficiency of GNPC in managing resources and delivering results was often highlighted as a key factor impacting its reputation. Participants commended GNPC for its capacity to convert oil and gas revenue into concrete advantages for communities, viewing it as a demonstration of efficient resource management.

A participant noted, *"GNPC's funding of national development projects illustrates their capacity to optimise the benefits derived from natural resources."*

The results of oil and gas initiatives, such as job creation and infrastructure enhancements, were emphasised as indicators of the organization's effectiveness. Some participants expressed concerns regarding transparency and accountability, indicating that enhanced reporting on project expenditures and outcomes could foster greater trust.

An individual stated, *"Although GNPC accomplishes much, increased transparency in fund allocation would enhance public trust in their effectiveness."*

This highlights the necessity for transparent communication regarding the organization's operations and impacts to enhance its reputation.

Theme 4: Cultural and National Identity

Participants widely acknowledged GNPC's role as a representation of Ghana's national pride and cultural identity. The corporation was widely regarded as a representation of Ghana's ambitions to effectively utilise its natural resources for the benefit of all.

One participant remarked, *"GNPC transcends being merely a company; it embodies Ghana's potential and our capacity to compete on a global scale."*

Efforts towards national development, including infrastructure initiatives and economic empowerment programs, were recognised as being in harmony with the overarching objective of nation-building. Furthermore, GNPC's representation of Ghana on international platforms elevates its status as a guardian of the nation's interests.

Another participant remarked, *"Whenever GNPC engages in global forums, it seems as though Ghana has a seat at the table."*

The dual role of GNPC as both a business entity and a cultural ambassador highlights its distinctive position within Ghana's socio-economic landscape. Participants underscored the importance of GNPC maintaining a focus on initiatives that resonate with national values and effectively address the urgent needs of its citizens.

Table 4.3 Impact of CSR Activities on Brand Reputation of GNPC

Theme	Explanation	Sub-Themes
Community Development	Participants discuss GNPC's CSR initiatives focused on how community facilities have enhanced the brand's image as a socially responsible organization.	- Infrastructure projects - Support for local economic activities

Educational Support	Participants discuss GNPC’s scholarship programs have elevated its reputation as a promoter of education.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Scholarships for students - Sponsorship of educational programs
Environmental Conservation	Participants discuss Activities aimed at environmental sustainability, have positioned GNPC as an environmentally conscious brand.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reforestation projects - Partnerships for sustainable development
Health and Well-being	Participants explain CSR initiatives targeting health improvement on GNPC’s reputation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Hospital renovations and equipment provision - Medical outreach and screenings
Youth Empowerment and Skills Development	Participants expressed Programs aimed at developing skills and empowering youth have built GNPC's image.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Support for entrepreneurship - Sports sponsorships to encourage youth engagement

Source: Field Data Survey, (2024)

Theme 1: Community Development

Participants highlighted the considerable influence of GNPC’s community development initiatives on its brand reputation. Infrastructure projects, including the development of schools, roads, and

community centres, were often highlighted as demonstrations of GNPC's dedication to societal well-being.

One participant remarked, *"The school established by GNPC in our community is more than just a structure; it represents hope and opportunity for future generations."*

Assistance for local economic initiatives, including financial support for small-scale farmers and artisans, enhances GNPC's reputation as a socially responsible organisation.

One interviewee stated, *"The support from GNPC for our cooperative has significantly enhanced the livelihoods of many families, leading to a high level of respect for the organisation within our community."*

These actions illustrate GNPC's capacity to respond to urgent community needs, thus cultivating goodwill and trust among stakeholders.

Theme 2: Educational Support

Participants praised GNPC's scholarship programs as a fundamental aspect of its corporate social responsibility initiatives and a significant factor in enhancing its brand image. Scholarships granted to students across different educational levels are recognised as transformative opportunities.

One participant stated, *"Thanks to GNPC's scholarship, I was able to complete my university education, which would have been impossible otherwise."*

The sponsorship of educational programs, including science fairs and teacher training workshops, highlights GNPC's commitment to advancing education. Participants observed that these initiatives establish GNPC as an innovative organisation committed to national development.

A respondent stated, *"By prioritising education, GNPC is ensuring a prosperous future for Ghana, which greatly enhances its reputation."*

These initiatives not only improve the brand's visibility but also align closely with the values and aspirations of the public.

Theme 3: Environmental Conservation

GNPC's environmental conservation initiatives have significantly enhanced its standing as a brand committed to environmental responsibility.

Reforestation projects, including tree planting in deforested regions, were emphasised as essential initiatives. *"The tree planting initiative by GNPC in our district has rejuvenated degraded lands and motivated other organisations to take similar actions,"* stated one participant.

Collaborations with NGOs for sustainable development initiatives enhance this perception, showcasing GNPC's dedication to tackling global environmental issues.

Participants regarded these initiatives as a demonstration of GNPC's commitment to sustainable development goals, with one remarking, *"Their environmental projects indicate a concern for future generations, which is praiseworthy."*

These activities bolster GNPC's credibility and appeal as a responsible corporate organisation.

Theme 4: Health and Well-being

Participants expressed strong appreciation for GNPC's CSR initiatives focused on health improvement, highlighting their significance to the organization's reputation. The renovation of hospitals and the provision of medical equipment received notable appreciation, with one participant remarking, *"The refurbished hospital funded by GNPC in our area has enhanced healthcare delivery and saved lives."*

Medical outreach initiatives, such as health screenings and vaccination campaigns, enhance this perception significantly.

Another interviewee stated, *"GNPC's free medical screening was instrumental in saving my mother's life; it's difficult to overlook a company that demonstrates such a profound commitment to our health."*

These initiatives reflect GNPC's commitment to enhancing the quality of life, reinforcing its reputation as a caring and community-oriented organisation.

Theme 5: Youth Empowerment and Skills Development

Youth-focused programs were identified as a key pillar of GNPC's CSR efforts, significantly enhancing its appeal among younger demographics. Support for entrepreneurship, such as providing seed funding and mentorship, was praised as a means of addressing unemployment and fostering innovation.

One participant noted, *"GNPC's entrepreneurship program gave me the confidence and resources to start my own business."* Sponsorship of sports and cultural events was also highlighted as a valuable contribution to youth engagement.

Another interviewee commented, *"GNPC's support for youth sports tournaments brings communities together and inspires young people to chase their dreams."*

These initiatives position GNPC as a progressive and inclusive organization dedicated to nurturing the next generation, further solidifying its reputation as a responsible and impactful corporate entity.

4.2.2 Thematic Analysis on the challenges GNPC faces in executing CSR initiatives.

Secondly, thematic analysis of on the challenges GNPC faces in executing CSR initiatives focused on internal challenges and external factors that challenge GNPC's ability to execute effective CSR initiatives. The key internal challenges GNPC encounters in its CSR planning and execution, highlighting critical issues such as resource limitations, bureaucratic delays, and organizational

misalignment. While external factors, emphasize the interplay between regulatory, economic, social, and political dynamics.

Table 4.4 Internal challenges does GNPC face in planning and executing its CSR initiatives.

Theme	Explanation	Sub-Themes
Resource Constraints	Participants explain Limited financial, human, and technical resources hinder the effective planning and execution of CSR projects.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Insufficient budget allocation for CSR - Lack of modern tools for project management
Organizational Bureaucracy	Participants explain Lengthy internal decision-making slow down CSR implementation, leading to delays and inefficiencies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Multiple approval layers - Time-consuming procedures
Misalignment of Goals	Participants discuss Discrepancies between the organization’s strategic objectives and CSR goals weaken the impact of CSR activities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lack of a unified CSR strategy - Miscommunication of objectives
Monitoring and Evaluation Challenges	Participants explain difficulties in tracking and assessing the success and impact of CSR projects make it hard to demonstrate effectiveness and improve future initiatives.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Limited data collection mechanisms - Insufficient feedback loops
Internal Resistance to Change	Participants explain Resistance from employees and management due to lack of awareness or buy-in for CSR initiatives hampers innovation and collaboration in CSR planning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Perception of CSR as secondary to core business - Lack of incentives for CSR participation

Source: Field Data Survey, (2024)

Theme 1: Resource Constraints

Participants emphasised that resource limitations, especially in terms of financial, human, and technical assets, considerably affect GNPC's capacity to plan and implement CSR initiatives successfully. The identification of insufficient budget allocation for CSR projects was recognised as a significant barrier.

One participant noted, *"While GNPC has set ambitious CSR objectives, the budgets allocated frequently do not meet the requirements necessary to achieve a significant impact."*

The absence of contemporary tools and systems for project management impedes efficiency and scalability. *One participant observed, "We frequently depend on outdated methods to monitor CSR projects, which hinders progress and diminishes effectiveness."*

It is crucial to address these resource gaps to ensure that CSR activities are implemented effectively and meet their intended objectives.

Theme 2: Organizational Bureaucracy

Prolonged internal decision-making processes and excessive bureaucracy were recognised as major challenges. Participants indicated that the numerous layers of approval necessary for CSR projects frequently result in delays and inefficiencies.

One participant noted, *"By the time a project proposal receives approval, the circumstances on the ground may have evolved, rendering the intervention less pertinent."*

Lengthy procedures contribute to these delays, causing frustration among employees and stakeholders. One interviewee noted, *"The bureaucratic processes within the organisation hinder our ability to respond swiftly to urgent community needs."*

Improving decision-making processes and minimising unnecessary procedural obstacles could greatly strengthen GNPC's capacity to implement timely and effective CSR initiatives.

Theme 3: Misalignment of Goals

The inconsistencies between GNPC's strategic objectives and its CSR goals were identified as a significant barrier to the effectiveness of CSR initiatives. Participants observed that the lack of a cohesive CSR strategy results in disjointed and occasionally contradictory initiatives.

A participant remarked, *"Various departments maintain distinct CSR priorities, which frequently do not correspond with the organization's overarching mission."*

The miscommunication of objectives exacerbates this issue, leading to confusion and inefficiencies. Another participant noted, *"We occasionally discover too late that a project does not align with the company's broader objectives, resulting in wasted resources."*

Creating a unified and clearly articulated CSR strategy would enable GNPC to align its activities with its organisational goals, thereby enhancing the effectiveness of its initiatives.

Theme 4: Monitoring and Evaluation Challenges

Challenges in monitoring and evaluating CSR projects were frequently mentioned by participants as a barrier to demonstrating the effectiveness and learning from past initiatives. Limited data collection mechanisms make it difficult to track progress or measure the impact of CSR projects.

One participant explained, *"Without proper monitoring tools, we cannot accurately assess whether our efforts are making a difference."*

Insufficient feedback loops further hamper the ability to refine and improve future initiatives.

Another participant added, *"We rarely receive feedback from the communities we serve, which makes it hard to understand their real needs and how well we are meeting them."*

Establishing robust monitoring and evaluation systems would enable GNPC to identify successful approaches, address gaps, and build credibility through transparent reporting.

Theme 5: Internal Resistance to Change

Resistance from employees and management was cited as another critical challenge hindering the planning and execution of CSR initiatives. Participants explained that some employees perceive CSR as secondary to the organization's core business activities, resulting in low engagement and support.

One participant remarked, *"There is a general belief that CSR is a distraction from our main responsibilities, which makes it difficult to get buy-in from key stakeholders."* The lack of incentives for participating in CSR activities further discourages collaboration and innovation.

For example, another interviewee noted, *"Without recognition or rewards, employees feel little motivation to go the extra mile for CSR projects."*

Raising awareness about the strategic importance of CSR and introducing incentives could foster a more supportive internal culture, enabling GNPC to achieve its CSR objectives more effectively.

Table 5: External Factors Posing Challenges to GNPC CSR Activities

Theme	Explanation	Sub-Themes
Regulatory and Legal Constraints	Participants explain Complex regulatory requirements and legal frameworks create barriers for the timely and efficient implementation of CSR activities.	- Stringent compliance requirements - Bureaucratic delays in approvals

Economic Instability	Participants discuss fluctuations in the economy, limit GNPC’s ability to allocate sufficient funds for CSR initiatives.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Budgetary constraints due to economic downturns - Uncertain funding availability
Community Expectations	Participants explain High and diverse expectations from local communities lead to difficulties in meeting demands and managing relationships effectively.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Varied community needs - Conflicting demands from stakeholders
Political Interference	Participants explain Political influences and lobbying can disrupt CSR priorities, resulting in projects being misaligned with organizational goals or community needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Influence of political agendas - Allocation of resources based on political bias
Social and Cultural Barriers	Concerns in social norms, and community dynamics complicate the design and execution of CSR activities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Resistance to externally driven initiatives - Limited community participation

Source: Field Data Survey, (2024)

Theme 1: Regulatory and Legal Constraints

Participants noted that complex regulatory requirements and legal frameworks present significant hurdles to the timely and efficient execution of GNPC's CSR activities. Stringent compliance requirements, such as obtaining permits and adhering to environmental and operational standards, often delay project initiation.

One participant remarked, *"We spend so much time meeting regulatory conditions that some projects lose their relevance by the time they are approved."* Bureaucratic delays in approvals further exacerbate these challenges, particularly when engaging with multiple government agencies.

Another interviewee explained, *"Sometimes the overlapping responsibilities of regulatory bodies make it hard to determine who to approach for approvals, causing unnecessary setbacks."* Streamlining regulatory processes and fostering collaboration between GNPC and regulators could help address these issues.

Theme 2: Economic Instability

Economic fluctuations significantly impact GNPC's ability to allocate sufficient funds for CSR initiatives. Participants highlighted that during periods of economic downturn, budgetary constraints often lead to the postponement or downsizing of CSR projects.

One participant shared, *"In times of financial uncertainty, CSR budgets are the first to be cut, making it difficult to sustain long-term projects."* Uncertain funding availability further compounds this issue, with participants noting the challenges of planning multi-year initiatives in an unpredictable economic climate.

For example, one respondent mentioned, *"The lack of financial predictability forces us to focus on short-term projects rather than impactful, sustainable ones."* Ensuring more stable funding mechanisms and diversifying revenue streams could help mitigate these challenges.

Theme 3: Community Expectations

High and diverse community expectations pose another significant challenge to GNPC's CSR efforts. Participants explained that the varied needs of local communities make it difficult to design projects that satisfy everyone.

One interviewee stated, *"Every community has unique demands, and trying to address all of them often spreads our resources too thin."* Conflicting demands from stakeholders further complicate the situation, with some groups vying for more attention or resources than others.

Another participant commented, *"Balancing the competing interests of communities and other stakeholders can be incredibly challenging."* Effective stakeholder engagement and prioritization mechanisms are essential for managing these expectations and ensuring equitable resource distribution.

Theme 4: Political Interference

Political influences and lobbying have been recognised as significant external factors affecting GNPC's CSR priorities. Participants observed that political agendas frequently influence the distribution of resources, shifting focus away from initiatives that are in line with organisational objectives or community requirements.

One participant noted, *"There are occasions when projects receive priority not due to their urgency, but rather as a result of political pressure."* The allocation of resources influenced by political bias compromises the effectiveness and equity of CSR initiatives.

Another respondent stated, *"Political interference occasionally compels us to discontinue projects that could have had a more significant impact, which undermines the credibility of our CSR programs."* Enhancing the transparency and insulation of the CSR decision-making process may assist GNPC in sustaining its focus on core objectives.

Theme 5: Social and Cultural Barriers

The design and execution of GNPC's CSR initiatives are frequently complicated by social norms and community dynamics. Participants indicated experiencing opposition to externally initiated projects, especially in communities that favour localised solutions.

One participant observed, *"Communities can be reluctant to embrace our initiatives, perceiving them as imposed rather than collaborative."* Insufficient community involvement in the planning process reduces the significance and effectiveness of CSR initiatives.

Another interviewee noted, *"When the community is not engaged in the decision-making process, the projects frequently fail to meet their actual needs."*

Enhancing relationships with local stakeholders and promoting community engagement in project planning and execution may assist in addressing these challenges.

4.3 Discussion of Results

The research examined the influence of CSR activities on the brand reputation of GNPC. The findings indicated that GNPC's CSR activities significantly enhance its brand reputation by contributing to community development, providing educational support, promoting environmental

conservation, implementing health and well-being programs, and empowering youth. These initiatives build trust among stakeholders, establish GNPC as a socially responsible and progressive organisation, and enhance its attractiveness to a wide range of demographics. Empirical studies substantiate these findings; for example, Carroll and Shabana (2010) highlight that CSR initiatives have a direct impact on corporate reputation by cultivating goodwill and enhancing stakeholder trust. A study conducted by Fatma, Rahman, and Khan (2015) emphasises the positive impact of well-structured CSR programs on brand equity and stakeholder relationships. However, differing viewpoints, such as those presented by Barnett (2007), warn that misaligned or inadequately executed CSR activities may result in scepticism and harm brand reputation. The findings highlight the significance of alignment, effective communication, and stakeholder engagement in enhancing the impact of CSR on brand reputation.

The second objective of this study analysed the challenges associated with executing CSR initiatives at GNPC. The research highlighted significant internal and external obstacles impacting GNPC's capacity to implement its CSR initiatives successfully. Internally, limitations in resources, organisational red tape, and opposition to CSR were significant challenges, while externally, regulatory complexities, economic volatility, elevated community expectations, and sociocultural barriers presented considerable obstacles. The findings are consistent with the research conducted by Visser (2008), which emphasised that resource limitations and regulatory barriers frequently hinder CSR implementation in developing countries. Amaeshi et al. (2006) identified that community expectations and sociocultural dynamics frequently complicate CSR efforts, necessitating customised approaches. In contrast, Porter and Kramer (2011) contend that aligning CSR with core business strategies can effectively address numerous challenges, highlighting the

importance of integration and strategic focus. This underscores the necessity of tackling GNPC's identified obstacles to improve the effectiveness and longevity of its CSR initiatives.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

This chapter examines the findings of the study and presents conclusions derived from the analysis in relation to the study's objectives. The study provides recommendations for additional research focused on assessing the impact of GNPC's Social Responsibility Initiatives on Brand Reputation.

5.1 Summary of Findings

The following important conclusions were drawn from the studies conducted:

5.1.1 Analysis on Impact of CSR Activities on Brand Reputation of GNPC

The research underscores the significant impact of GNPC's CSR initiatives on its brand reputation across five essential domains. Community development initiatives, including the construction of schools and the support of local economies, cultivate goodwill and trust by responding to societal needs. Providing educational support through scholarships and program sponsorship enhances GNPC's reputation as a champion of opportunities and national development. Efforts in environmental conservation, such as reforestation and sustainable partnerships, bolster its standing as a brand committed to environmental responsibility. Health and well-being initiatives, including hospital renovations and medical outreach, establish GNPC as an organisation dedicated to enhancing lives with compassion. Finally, the Youth Empowerment and Skills Development programs, which encompass entrepreneurship support and sports sponsorship, strongly connect with younger demographics, reinforcing GNPC's reputation as an innovative and socially responsible organisation.

5.1.2 The Challenges in Implementing CSR initiatives at GNPC.

The research on the challenges faced in implementing GNPC's CSR initiatives highlighted notable internal and external obstacles. Resource constraints, such as limited budgets and outdated tools, impede the effective planning and implementation of CSR projects. Organisational bureaucracy, characterised by extended approval processes, results in delays, while misaligned objectives and ineffective communication between departments contribute to fragmented initiatives. The challenges associated with monitoring and evaluation hinder the capacity to effectively track project success and enhance strategies. Furthermore, internal resistance to CSR initiatives, stemming from the view that they are subordinate to primary business objectives and the absence of incentives, diminishes employee engagement. External factors such as regulatory and legal constraints, along with stringent compliance requirements and bureaucratic delays, hinder project execution. Economic instability restricts funding, especially during downturns, compelling GNPC to focus on short-term initiatives. Community expectations are high, and conflicting demands from stakeholders are placing a strain on resources, while political interference is redirecting projects away from organisational priorities. The presence of social and cultural barriers, particularly resistance to externally driven initiatives, underscores the necessity for enhanced community engagement. It is essential to tackle these challenges in order to improve the effectiveness and impact of GNPC's CSR activities.

5.2 Conclusion

This research aimed to examine the influence of GNPC's Social Responsibility Initiatives on brand perception. A total of 14 individuals were interviewed. The specific objectives assessed the influence of CSR activities on the brand reputation of GNPC and the challenges faced by GNPC in implementing CSR initiatives.

The study concludes that GNPC's CSR activities play a crucial role in enhancing its brand reputation by effectively addressing essential societal needs and fostering sustainable development across five key areas. Community development initiatives have garnered GNPC goodwill and trust through the enhancement of infrastructure and the support of local economies. The initiatives for educational support, including scholarships and sponsorships, underscore GNPC's commitment to enhancing opportunities and promoting national development. Environmental conservation initiatives enhance the organization's reputation as a responsible corporate entity, while health and well-being programs highlight its dedication to improving lives. Youth empowerment and skills development initiatives enhance GNPC's standing as a forward-thinking and socially responsible entity committed to future investments. These initiatives collectively foster a favourable brand perception, reinforce stakeholder relationships, and elevate GNPC's public standing.

Nevertheless, the study highlights significant challenges in implementing CSR initiatives, which may compromise their effectiveness and sustainability if not properly addressed. Resource constraints, organisational bureaucracy, misaligned goals, and resistance to CSR activities internally impede efficient planning and execution. Challenges in monitoring and evaluation hinder the capacity to track progress and assess impact. External factors such as regulatory and legal constraints, economic instability, and political interference hinder project timelines and resource allocation. Furthermore, elevated community expectations, divergent stakeholder demands, and social and cultural obstacles complicate engagement and the fair distribution of resources. These challenges require a strategic, inclusive, and well-resourced approach to ensure GNPC's CSR initiatives continue to produce meaningful and sustainable impacts, while also enhancing its brand reputation.

5.3 Recommendations

Based on the study findings, the following detailed recommendations are proposed:

1. **Strengthening Community Development:** Management of GNPC should enhance collaboration with local communities by involving them in the planning, execution, and monitoring of community development initiatives. This participatory approach will align CSR projects with community priorities, fostering greater trust and goodwill. Establishing partnerships with local governments and non-profits can amplify resources and improve the sustainability of community development efforts.
2. **Educational Support:** Management of GNPC should expand its scholarship programs and educational sponsorships to reach underserved regions while ensuring transparency and equity in beneficiary selection. Investing in technology-driven educational initiatives, such as e-learning platforms or digital libraries, can further position GNPC as a forward-looking promoter of national development in education.
3. **Environmental Conservation:** To strengthen its reputation as an environmentally conscious brand, Management of GNPC should adopt and publicize measurable goals for its environmental conservation efforts. Partnering with environmental organizations for large-scale projects, such as renewable energy adoption or advanced waste management systems, can enhance the visibility and impact of these initiatives. Regular impact assessments and public reporting will reinforce credibility.
4. **Health and Well-being:** Management of GNPC should prioritize high-impact health projects such as funding for major disease prevention programs or constructing healthcare facilities in remote areas. Collaborations with health sector stakeholders, including the Ministry of Health and international organizations, can improve the scale and reach of these

initiatives. Integrating robust monitoring systems to measure health outcomes will ensure continuous improvement.

5. **Youth Empowerment and Skills Development:** Management of GNPC should focus on long-term youth empowerment by introducing vocational training centers and mentorship programs in partnership with industry leaders. Providing seed funding for young entrepreneurs and fostering partnerships with sports academies can diversify GNPC's reach to youth demographics. Tracking the career progression of beneficiaries and sharing success stories will further enhance GNPC's image as a driver of youth development.

5.4 Future Research

Future research on the impact of GNPC's CSR activities on brand reputation could investigate the long-term effects of these initiatives on stakeholder perceptions and organisational performance. Research could focus on examining the influence of community feedback and engagement in maintaining the beneficial effects of CSR initiatives. Conducting comparative research between GNPC and other similar public organisations may yield valuable insights into best practices and innovative strategies for implementing corporate social responsibility. Furthermore, additional research could explore the relationship between GNPC's CSR activities and various factors, including corporate governance, to determine strategies for addressing challenges and improving the overall effectiveness of CSR initiatives.

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Appendix

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Introduction

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview. The purpose of this interview is to gain insights into the topic “CSR as a Reputation Shield: Examining the influence of GNPC's Social Responsibility Initiatives on Brand Perception”. Please be assured that the information you provide will be used solely for academic purposes and will be treated with the utmost confidentiality.

SECTION A: RESPONDENT PROFILE

1. Sex of Respondent:
2. Educational Level:
3. Years of Working in GNPC Foundation:
4. Can you state the areas of benefit with GNPC’s CSR activities?
5. How long have you been associated with GNPC, and what has been your experience with their CSR initiatives?

Section 1: Impact of CSR Activities on Brand Reputation of GNPC

6. How would you describe the general public’s perception of GNPC’s brand?
7. In your opinion, how have GNPC’s CSR activities impacted public reputation of the brand?
8. Can you highlight specific CSR initiatives that you believe have had the most significant impact on GNPC’s brand reputation?
9. How do you think these initiatives align with the core values of GNPC?
10. Do you assess the impact of your CSR activities on the intended beneficiaries?

11. Do you conduct regular research and opinion analysis of the perceptions of various stakeholders of the GNPC foundation?
12. Can you share any specific metrics or feedback that illustrate the impact of CSR on the brand's reputation?

Section 2: Challenges in Executing CSR Initiatives

13. What internal challenges does GNPC face in planning and executing its CSR initiatives?
14. What external factors (e.g., regulatory, economic, social) pose challenges to GNPC's CSR activities?
15. How do these challenges impact the execution and perceived effectiveness of CSR initiatives?
16. How does GNPC address these challenges to ensure successful implementation?

Conclusion

Is there anything else you would like to add or discuss that we haven't covered?

Thank the interviewee for their time and valuable insights.

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