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**EXPLORING THE EFFECT OF COMMUNITY RELATION ON BRAND
REPUTATION (A STUDY OF MTN-GHANA)**

BY

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SEPTEMBER, 2020.

DECLARATION

I do hereby declare that the work presented is the result of my own effort, original research and findings and that no part of it has been presented for another degree or diploma in this University or elsewhere. All references to other people’s work have been duly acknowledged. I am therefore responsible for any error that might be detected in this project work.

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SUPERVISOR'S DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the preparation of this long essay was supervised in accordance with the guidelines for the supervision of long essays as laid down by the Ghana Institute of Journalism.

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....., **SEPTEMBER, 2020**

DR. ALBERT ANANI-BOSSMAN

DEDICATION

This long essay is dedicated to my mother Mad. Victoria Laryea, who pushed all the necessary buttons in ensuring that we found the best things in life from sound education. Her persistent resolve to raise all her four children even in turbulent times with enormous sacrifices is the reason why I am here today and I am forever indebted to her.

I equally dedicate this work to my beautiful wife Mrs. Gwendy Aku Laryea, and our two kids Jared and Jedi for all the support. Their continuous help in keeping the home intact, to enable me study through the MA program is a blessing I do not take for granted.

And finally, I dedicate this work and program to the Almighty God for His direction and His help throughout my life within the Institution and also for inspiring confidence in me to go through this academic journey.

My commitment is to make all of you proud by leveraging the achievement of this great academic goal and continue to keep pushing to reach even higher heights in academia.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION	ii
SUPERVISOR'S DECLARATION	iii
DEDICATION	iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	v
ABSTRACT.....	viii
CHAPTER ONE	1
1.0 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND OF STUDY	1
1.1 STATEMENT OF RESEARCH PROBLEM	2
1.2 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES	4
1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS	4
1.4 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY	4
1.5 ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY	5
1.6 CHAPTER SUMMARY	5
CHAPTER TWO	6
LITERATURE REVIEW	6
2.0 INTRODUCTION.....	6
2.1 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK	6
2.1.1 Stakeholder Theory.....	6
2.1.2 The Excellence Theory	9
2.2 DISCUSSION OF CONCEPTS	11
2.2.1 Community Relations	11
2.2.2 Reputation.....	13
2.2.3 Community Relations and Reputation.....	14
2.3 RELATED STUDIES	15
2.4 CHAPTER SUMMARY	17
CHAPTER THREE	18
METHODOLOGY	18
3.0 INTRODUCTION.....	18
3.1 OVERVIEW OF MTN-GHANA (MTN)	18
3.2 RESEARCH METHOD	20
3.2.1 Study Population.....	21
3.2.2 Sample and Sampling Technique	21
3.2.3 Sampling technique	21

3.3.4 Sources of Data.....	22
3.3.5 Data Collections Procedure	23
3.4 ETHICAL CONSIDERATION	23
3.3 CHAPTER SUMMARY	24
CHAPTER FOUR.....	25
CONCLUSION.....	25
4.0 INTRODUCTION.....	25
4.1 SUMMARY	25
4.2 CONTRIBUTIONS TO KNOWLEDGE.....	25
4.3 CONCLUSION	26
4.4 RESEARCHER’S REFLECTIONS.....	26
4.5 RECOMMENDATION	27
REFERENCES	28

ABSTRACT

Community relations is an indispensable factor for growth and development especially in the present changing social, political and economic climate where everyone wants to grow, wants to succeed, wants to be heard and recognized and wants to be involved in the daily activities of his locality. This study therefore sought to explore the effect of community relation on brand reputation with MTN-Ghana as a case. The study then set the objectives to determine whether community relations has an effect on brand reputation, to find out the relevance of community relations to an organization's reputation and to suggest ways of managing the effects of community relations on brand reputation. The approach to conducting the study was mainly through desk research. For this reason, the main data source for addressing the objectives was the use of secondary data. The findings from this endeavour suggested that community relations, has significant effect on the brand reputation of organizations among other relevance such as community support, loyalty and goodwill which provides a business competitive edge within its ecosystem.

CHAPTER ONE

1.0 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND OF STUDY

Community relations is an indispensable factor for growth and development especially in the present changing social, political and economic climate where everyone wants to grow, wants to succeed, wants to be heard and recognized and wants to be involved in the daily activities of his locality (Wilson and Jibrin, 2014). Building local community relationships can be the most important communication activity undertaken by an organisation, yet it is often overlooked. In today's environment of public suspicion, gaining and maintaining public consent to operate has become a major concern for most businesses (PRMR Incorporation, 2016).

Time and again, the literature has suggested that organizations take very keen interest in the feedback from the public. Googins (2020) states metaphorically that community relations is more like food for the soul of the organization. Lizarraga (2010) suggests that a positive corporate image provides organizations with individual features that lead to brand recognition. Worcester (2009) as well notes that this improves consumer and employee loyalty as well as corporate reputation that corporate image consists of product image, brand image and brand consumer image.

However, Bennett and Kottasz (2000) as cited in Chondrogiannis, Katsios, Belias, Velissariou Papadimopoulos, and Koustelios (2018) notes that corporate reputation does not only affect customers and all other stakeholders. An organisation or business entity, which is perceived in a favourable way, has the ability to: attract investors and competent employees, motivate suppliers and to be positively addressed by regulators (Chondrogiannis et al., 2018).

Competitive business and social pressures according to Googins (2020) are forcing a redefinition of the relationship between company and community.

When a company makes a commitment to the community part of its core business strategy, it does not only help attract and retain top employees, but it also positions itself positively among customers and, increasingly, improves its position and performance in the market. Positive, proactive connections to the community can translate into a boost to the bottom line (Googins, 2020).

According to Bhasin (2019), brand reputation is explained as how an organization is viewed and perceived by the customers, stakeholders, and the market as a whole. In this regard, this study will seek to explore the effect of community relations on brand reputation.

1.1 STATEMENT OF RESEARCH PROBLEM

Management theorists seem to agree that identity is a unique part of corporate entity (Rose and Thomsen 2004; Chondrogiannis et al., 2018). Chondrogiannis et al. (2018) argue that managers of large companies devote a significant part of resources and their efforts to maintain and improve corporate identity, which is important for the success and survival of their companies. Indeed, a good corporate identity and reputation provides a company with competitive advantage and influences customer buying behaviour (Nguyen and Leblanc 2001; Chondrogiannis et al., 2018).

Several years ago, Dolle (2014) asserted that companies could defend their reputation by controlling the information available about the company, through strategically placed press announcements and good public relations managers. With the rise of social media today, Dolle (2014) argues that reputation management has been expanded with online reputation management. Dolle (2014) espouses the view that companies have no advance notice or time to reflect on content of people on Social Media. When traditional customer attacks were brewing, companies had at least a warning and a modicum of control over how events will unfold (Dolle, 2014).

Nowadays, when a customer launches an attack on social media Dolle (2014) claims that companies have no control and reputation damage can be the result. Reputation damage may have significant influence on the overall results of companies in the future. Online reputation management is the way by which companies can deal with customer attacks on social media, that is why companies have to organize and execute an effective online reputation management (Dolle, 2014).

Offonry (1985) states in Wilson and Jibrin (2014) that the common denominator for achieving this objective is embracing the business of creating and maintaining public understanding and support or sticking to the management function which attempts to create goodwill for an organization and its products; services or ideas with groups of people which can affect its present or future welfare. Today no matter how large, small or important an institution may be it can be undermined if its community relations are haphazard (Peak, 1991: Wilson and Jibrin, 2014).

Bearing these various arguments in mind, the basis for exploring this topic is to help ascertain whether the function of community relations has any toll on the reputation of an organization. More often than not, the community relations function is seen as a money spending avenue especially as it usually informs corporate social responsibilities of organizations. This is necessary because a number of literature reviewed, affirm the notion that having a good image and reputation is essential to an organization's success. The gap this study identifies is that even though the literature touches on community relations and brand reputation respectively, there appears to be little work done exploring the effect community relations has on brand reputation. This study will thus fill the gap by matching and exploring the gap to provide backing to the relationship between both concepts and especially how it pans out in the Ghanaian setting.

1.2 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the study will be:

1. To determine whether community relations has an effect on brand reputation
2. To find out the relevance of community relations to an organization's reputation
3. To ascertain how community relations can be effectively utilised to achieve brand reputation

1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The researcher will attempt to answer the following research questions in line with the objectives set for the study.

1. Does community relations have an effect on brand reputation?
2. What is relevance of community relations to an organization's reputation?
3. How can community relations be effectively utilised to achieve brand reputation?

1.4 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study will serve as a reference material for future works on community relations and brand reputation as a whole. Also, it will help explain the relevance of community relations to organizations that treat it as a petty function. The study again envisages becoming an essential source of acquiring information on appreciating the effect community relations efforts could have on an organization's fortunes. This study will thus help understand this phenomenon and how to harness its advantages while serving as a means of equipping organizations with strategies which can help deal with the disadvantages of having a negative brand reputation.

Even though the scope for this study is primarily on Ghana, it will be an add-on reference material for scholarly discourse on the subject matter in the sub-region and Africa as a whole.

1.5 ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY

This thesis will be organized into four (4) parts namely Chapters 1, 2, 3 and 4. Chapter One will be the introductory part. It will focus on the background of the study, problem statement, research objectives, research questions and the significance of the study. In the second part, Chapter Two, the theoretical grounding of the study will be given. This will comprise of conceptual and theoretical framework and an empirical review. The third Chapter will deal with the research methodology. This will include population, sampling techniques, methods of data collection and the research instruments employed. Also, the data analysis methods will be discussed here. The fourth part, Chapter Four, will provide details on how the study will contribute to research. This will cover the summary of findings conclusions and recommendations of the study.

1.6 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter gave an introduction into the idea behind conducting this study. It comprised a background of the study as well as giving a contextual fitting. This was then followed by establishing the problem the paper seeks to solve as well as outlining research objectives and research questions which will guide the study.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter reviews literature related to this study. This was done with the expectation that relevant information would be obtained to help shape and enrich the study. This chapter is organised under three sections; conceptual framework, theoretical framework and related studies.

2.1 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This section discusses theories that underpin the study. For this study, the two (2) are discussed, the Stakeholder Theory and the Excellence Theory.

2.1.1 Stakeholder Theory

Mitroff (1983) first suggested the idea of the Stakeholder Theory in his book Stakeholders of the Organizational Mind. Shortly thereafter, Freeman (1983) also released an article about Stakeholder Theory. Freeman rather attributed the Stakeholder Theory to discussions at the Stanford Research Institute. Freeman went on to publish his own book, Strategic Management: A Stakeholder Approach. However, there are many books and articles on the subject and most cite Edward Freeman as father of the theory (Blackburn, 2019).

The Stakeholder Theory is a theory of organizational management and business ethics that accounts for multiple constituencies impacted by business entities like employees, suppliers, local communities, creditors, and others (Lin, 2018). It addresses morals and values in managing an organization, such as those related to corporate social responsibility, market economy, and social contract theory.

The Stakeholder Theory succeeds in becoming famous not only in the business ethics fields. It is used as one of the frameworks in corporate social responsibility methods. For example, ISO 26000 and Global Reporting Initiative involve stakeholder analysis (Ann, 2010). The stakeholder view of strategy according to Philips (2003) integrates a resource-based view and a market-based view, and adds a socio-political level. One common version of stakeholder theory seeks to define the specific stakeholders of a company (the normative theory of stakeholder identification) and then examine the conditions under which managers treat these parties as stakeholders.

Argandoña (1998) is of the view that the Stakeholder Theory of the social responsibility of business is the more appealing of the two from an ethical point of view, at least if we understand ethics in a broad sense. And yet it lacks a solid philosophical, sociological and economic foundation that would be acceptable to a variety of schools of thought.

Stakeholder theory has seen growing uptake in higher education in the late 20th and early 21st centuries (Westerheijden, 2014). One influential definition defines a stakeholder in the context of higher education as anyone with a legitimate interest in education who thereby acquires a right to intervene (Bjørkquist, 2011). Studies of higher education first began to recognize students as stakeholders in 1975. External stakeholders may include employers. In Europe, the rise of stakeholder regimes has arisen from the shift of higher education from a government-run bureaucracy to modern system in which the government's role involves more monitoring than direct control (Mansell, 2013).

Blattberg (2004) has criticized Stakeholder Theory for assuming that the interests of the various stakeholders can be, at best, compromised or balanced against each other. He goes on to argue that this is a product of its emphasis on negotiation as the chief mode of dialogue for dealing with conflicts between stakeholder interests. Blattberg (2004) recommends conversation instead and this leads him to defend what he calls a 'patriotic' conception of the corporation as

an alternative to that associated with stakeholder theory. By applying the political concept of a 'social contract' to the corporation, stakeholder theory undermines the principles on which a market economy is based (Mansell, 2013).

2.1.1.1 The Present Study and the Stakeholder Theory

This theory is of relevance to this study because among other things, it posits that a company is only successful when it delivers value to its stakeholders, and those values can come in many forms beyond financial benefits. The theory also addresses business ethics, morals and values when managing stakeholders involved with a project or organization. It seeks to optimize relations with stakeholders, thereby improving efficiencies throughout the project or organization. There are ethical benefits of practicing it as well. The usage of the opinions and influence of stakeholders helps shape an organization and put it in a much better position for success. When an organization practices the Stakeholder Theory, it creates healthy competition among other companies, where all can thrive and help benefit their stakeholders.

Also, this theory becomes relevant to this study because it is very much in line with the essence for giving back to the society which is the core of corporate social responsibility. In all these endeavours, it is evident that Community Relations thrives in the view of the Stakeholder Theory this is because at every point, stakeholders are interacted with.

Xiao and Teng (2015) are of the view that positioning is a concept that makes efforts to paint a picture in the minds of future potential consumers. The objective of advertising positioning is to find the right and accurate location in the minds of these consumers. Therefore, ad positioning is a method to help the enterprise or brand determine location in the consumers' minds through advertising activities (Xiao and Teng, 2015).

2.1.2 The Excellence Theory

Littlejohn (2009) posits that the Excellence theory is the first general theory of Public Relations (PR) (Littlejohn, 2009). The theory was as a result of a 15-year study of best practices in communication management (Grunig, 2000) known as the Excellence Study. The Excellence Theory is a theory of excellence and effectiveness in PR and communication management. The theory specifies how PR makes organizations more effective, how it should be organized and managed in order for it to contribute to organizational effectiveness, and how to determine the monetary value of PR (Grunig, 2002).

The Excellence Theory first explains the value of PR to an organization and the society in which it operates. This value is based on the quality of Relationships an organization has with its stakeholder publics (Grunig, 2002). The theory asserts that in order for PR to make a contribution in an organization it must be part of strategic management (Grunig, 2008).

According to the theory, for an organization to be effective, it must solve the problem and satisfy the goals of both the manager and stakeholders. Organizations must identify their various publics who are affected by the decisions taken by the organization or those who want the organization to solve a problem important to them. To identify these publics, the organization must scan the environment. This is PR's contribution to strategic management (Grunig and Grunig, 2008).

The theory also suggests that organizations must communicate symmetrically with their publics. This facilitates the cultivation of quality, long-term Relationships with them. Through symmetrical communication the organization is likely to set and achieve goals desired by both the organization and its publics (Grunig and Grunig, 2008), since a good Relationship is essential and crucial to the survival of the organization. Grunig and Grunig (2008) explained that this is because a good Relationship reduces cost incurred in unfavourable circumstances like litigation, regulation, legislation and negative publicity. It also reduces the risk of making

decisions which may have adverse effects on different stakeholders and increase the chances of the organization producing goods or services needed by various stakeholders and ultimately its base.

In addition to explaining the value of communication to an organization, the Excellence Theory provides four broad categories of the characteristics of an Excellent PR function that is how the PR function should be organized to attain maximum value (Grunig and Grunig, 2008). These characteristics are in the broad areas of PR as a management function, roles, models and the organization of the communication function.

2.1.2.1 The Present Study and the Excellence Theory

Maintaining an excellent PR apparatus as an organization has become relevant over the past years. PR has a number of functions which comes in handy in stirring the affairs of organizations. Unlike in recent times where the mass media was not as wide spread, often, what was known in one part of the country, did not reach other areas. However with the evolution of communication, being able to manage information has become very important. A PR function like research, social media management and environmental scanning are activities organizations can harness in their communication efforts.

The underlying principle of community relations is that when a company accepts its civic responsibility and takes an active interest in the well-being of its community. This enables the organization gain long-term benefits in terms of community support, loyalty and the fostering of good will. This, in turn, will help to raise awareness of the organization's products and/or services. This dovetails into the essence of maintaining a good brand reputation.

2.2 DISCUSSION OF CONCEPTS

This section discusses concepts that are relevant to the study. These concepts will include Community Relation and Reputation.

2.2.1 Community Relations

Community relations has been defined by several scholars in different fields of study (Asante, 2017). The concept of community relations, narrowly understood, simply describes a company's interactions with the community in which it resides. The use of this phrase by businesses, the media, and students of business, however, almost always signifies something more than ordinary relationships and includes voluntary actions that it is done just for the good of the community.

Joyner (2000) is of the view that community relations may also take a very proactive form but arising as parts of defensive strategies. Thus companies sometimes engage in or even initiate program or activities, exploited to the maximum by using public relations, in order to counter a single unfavourable event or a chronic problem. Asante (2017) espouses the view that community relations comprises four (4) decentralized relations, ethics and legality, grass-roots support, long term proactive problem solving and internal change.

In order to ensure the true success of a company or an organisation there is the need to implement true community decentralization, thus where companies or organisation extends their programs of operations to other departments and places to reap massive contribution. Companies, communities, organisations must also create and develop a new breed of line officers who acts as a direct link between the central parts (headquarters) and the people (beneficiaries/costumers) in the community. As the department's community outreach specialists, community relation officers work hand in hand with their partners to provide them with the needed services.

Asante (2017) is of the view that ethics and legality as a core principle of community relations implies a new contract between the service providers and the citizens they serve, one that offers hope of overcoming widespread apathy while restraining any impulse of vigilantism. This new relationship, based on mutual trust and respect, also suggests that the company heads or organisation structures can serve as a catalyst, challenging people to accept their share of responsibility for the overall quality of life in the community. Community relations means that citizens will be asked to handle more of their minor concerns themselves, but in exchange, this will free authorities to work with people on developing immediate as well as long-term solutions for community concerns in ways that encourage mutual accountability and respect. Long term-proactive problem solving as a principle has to do with the community/organisation or company officer's broad role demands continuous, sustained contact with the people in the community or organisation, so that together they can explore creative new solutions to local concerns, with private citizens serving as supporters and as volunteers. Heads of various communities and organisations officers respond to the needs of their people/customers or partners but they also go beyond this narrow focus to develop and monitor broad-based, long-term initiatives that can involve all elements of the community in efforts to improve the quality of life (Asante, 2017).

For every organization to co-exist peaceful with its stakeholder Asante (2017) is of the view that

there has to be positive and healthy grass-roots support. Community organisations and companies promotes the judicious use of technology, but it also rests on the belief that nothing surpasses what dedicated human beings, talking and working together, can achieve. It invests trust in those who are on the frontlines together on the street, relying on their combined judgment, wisdom, and experience to fashion creative new approaches to contemporary community concerns. Community structures stress exploring new ways to protect and enhance

the lives of those who are most vulnerable--juveniles, the elderly, minorities, the poor, the disabled, the homeless.

Internal change suggests that community organisations, companies, and other services adopt a fully integrated approach that involves everyone in the department, with community various representatives and officers serving as generalists who bridge the gap between the authorities and the people they serve. The community organisations, companies, and other service providers play crucial role internally and externally by providing information about and awareness of the community and its problems, and by enlisting broad-based community support for the department's overall objectives (Asante, 2017).

Pamala (2016) suggests that;

in today's environment of public suspicion, gaining and maintaining public consent to operate has become a major concern for most businesses. Community relations initiatives can boost a company's image in the eyes of the public (PRMR Inc. [PRMR], 2016).

Companies develop initiatives from their relationships with communities to help foster their good name, while the community receives support from these initiatives. A solid, comprehensive community relations programme can help any organisation achieve visibility as a good community citizen.

2.2.2 Reputation

Reputation is often difficult to define since the perception of what is and is not reputable is in “the eye of the beholder” (Schreiber, 2014). A variety of definitions of reputation have been offered from a number of different academic and professional backgrounds. However if one looks at the various definitions of reputation, one may note that the intersection or integrated view tends to be the same but with different constructs (Institute of Public Relations [IPR], 2020).

Mahon (2002) defines reputation as an intangible asset thus, reputation represents a firm's past actions and describes a firm's ability to deliver value outcomes to multiple stakeholders. Yang and Grunig (2005) also are of the view that reputation is a derivative of other actions and behaviors of the firm. The concern is, it is difficult to isolate one variable that influences perceptions to a greater degree than others across all stakeholders (Schultz, 2006). Reputation is the collective representations shared in the minds of multiple publics about an organization over time (IPR, 2020).

Barnet (2006) describes corporate reputation as observers' collective judgement of a corporation based on assessments of the financial, social and environmental impacts attributed to the corporation over time. Bailey (2018) also argues that reputation is like beauty which is in the eye of the beholder. Thus, an organization can influence how it is perceived by publics but cannot claim full management control of the process. Reputation is intangible but has a value, with studies showing that corporate reputation is positively affected by PR activities and is an integral part of PR strategies. Plowman and Huang (2001) also admit that maintaining the reputation of an organization is the most important function of PR. LeBlanc and Nguyen (1996) argue that Corporate Reputation is formed in the public's mind and it is therefore critical to view the reputation of an organization from the perspective of the receivers' mind.

2.2.3 Community Relations and Reputation

Boatema (2011) observes organizations which are socially responsible citizens and contribute to the growth and development of good causes tends to have a positive corporate reputation. To this end, Lenguyen (2011) espouses the view that community relations has been receiving much attention lately from many organizations and further note that community relations has been recognized as a source of sustainable development and has become an emerging imperative. Also, the organization must be customer focused and it must be one that its publics feel good about. Boatema (2011) further argues that the benefits of having a good corporate

reputation is an efficient marketing and promotional strategy which positions the organization in a competitive market with a particular focus on the product or service customers will want to be associated with.

Community relations in the view of Holme and Watts (2000) as cited in Lenguyen (2011) is the continuing commitment by business to behave ethically and contribute to the economic development while improving the quality of life of the workforce and their families as well as of the local community and society at large. Bailey (2018) supports this assertion by noting that having a good corporate reputation establishes for the organization an identity that is worth the trust and confidence of customers. PR involves reputation building and organizations must make a deliberate effort to carry out PR activities which will enable it develop a favourable reputation that will inure to its benefit (Bailey, 2018: Oforu, Armah, Felicia, Laryea and Daaku, 2019). This therefore suggests that community relations plays a significant role in fostering a positive corporate reputation.

2.3 RELATED STUDIES

Several researchers have done work on community relations, brand reputation and PR as a whole but this research will look at some which are in line with the work. The study reviewed works done by Ocran, Abudey, Ndom, Laarimong and Arhin, (2018), Pihlstedt (2012) and Kim and Lee (2010).

Ocran et al. (2018) conducted a study which focused on the role of PR in building the reputation of public institutions by using the Agricultural Development Bank (ADB) as a case study. The scope of the study was between 2015 and 2016 and employed the mixed research method approach. The study employed interviews and questionnaires as the research instruments. The

sample of the study were selected customers of the bank as well as employees of the bank (Ocran et al, 2018).

From the study, Ocran et al. (2018) found that the reputation of an organization could be affected if PR activities were not properly executed by the said organization. Therefore, it was concluded that for an organization to build a good image, it must have a strategic PR plan which will ultimately influence the success of the organization. The study recommended the education of customers of ADB on PR activities and functions to project the image of ADB as a viable financial institution in the country (Ocran et al, 2018).

In Pihlstedt's (2012) study, the researcher studied how companies could acquire good reputation looking at leading Finnish Companies. The theories studied according to the researcher suggested that good reputation was something that could be reached only by working hard and long, but at the same time reputation could be destroyed in a matter of minutes. The study also asserted that reputation was a multi-dimensional phenomenon, which meant that in order to reach and maintain a good reputation all these dimensions must be accounted for. Culture, no matter if it concerns corporate or national culture, was a matter that was often not considered when it came to reputation, but the fact that culture affects all business operations everywhere, reputation as well, should certainly not be underestimated (Pihlstedt, 2012).

The basic point to be made according to Pihlstedt (2012) was that corporate reputation should not be underestimated and that it should be considered in a company's strategy and in all operations, inside the company as well as outside. The study again suggested that it was important for companies to know exactly who their customers were and what they most value in the company, in order to choose the correct tools to manage their reputation because it takes time and resources but eventually the benefits that follow are undeniable.

It is interesting to note that the research respondents as well as the theories which underpinned the study were inclined towards the notion that brutally competitive markets reputation could provide a company a real edge, and if managed correctly over the years the good reputation may ensure continuous economic success now and in the future (Pihlstedt, 2012).

Kim and Lee (2010) also sought to undertake this study to examine the relationships among corporate image, brand awareness, service price, service quality, customer support services, and customer loyalty and investigate the key drivers that establish and maintain customer loyalty to mobile telecommunications service providers. This study was situated and organized in Korea.

In this endeavour, Kim and Lee (2010) sampled four hundred and sixty-nine (469) participants. The study was a web-based survey which was analyzed using multiple regression analysis techniques. The results of the study showed that corporate image, brand awareness, service price and service quality were strong antecedents for establishing customer loyalty in mobile communications service markets. Also, the empirical findings showed that corporate image played the most important role in establishing and maintaining customer loyalty in the markets. Based on the findings of the study, the researchers discussed possible strategies for marketing success in high-tech service markets (Kim and Lee, 2010).

2.4 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter focused on reviewing the literature on how certain theories could help solidify the base of the study. Further, various concepts which needed to be understood in order to get a better understanding and perspective of the study were discussed. Also, the researcher introduced related studies to bring to light an empirical perspective. The next chapter gives a presentation of the research methodology that will be employed by the study.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents an overview of the methods to be used in the study. Areas covered in this section include the research design, research population and sampling among other things.

3.1 OVERVIEW OF MTN-GHANA (MTN)

The MTN Company Profile (2020) states that MTN is an emerging market mobile operator at the forefront of technological and digital changes. From its headquarters in Johannesburg and guided by its values, MTN delivers a bold, new digital world to its customers across Africa and the Middle East – one of the world’s fastest-growing regions for mobile telecommunications (MTN Company Profile, 2020). Launched in 1994, MTN is a global telecommunications group, operating in 21 countries in Africa, Asia and the Middle East. The countries are: Afghanistan, Benin, Botswana, Cameroon, Cote d’Ivoire, Cyprus, Ghana, Guinea Bissau, Guinea Republic, Iran, Liberia, Nigeria, Republic of Congo (Congo Brazzaville), Rwanda, South Africa, Sudan, Swaziland, Syria, Uganda, Yemen and Zambia. The MTN Group is listed on the JSE Securities Exchange in South Africa under the share code “MTN” (Ghana Chamber of Telecommunications, 2020).

MTN has according to its MTN Company Profile (2020) grown rapidly by investing in advanced communication infrastructure and by harnessing the talent of its people. MTN offers voice, data and digital services to retail customers and also offers enterprise solutions to corporate and public-sector customers in a total of 23 countries. The MTN brand is among the

most admired brands in Africa as well as among the most valuable African brands (MTN Company Profile, 2020).

MTN's overriding mission from the Ghana Chamber of Telecommunications' (2020) report is to be a vehicle for Ghana's economic growth and development, helping to promote Ghana's strong development potential from the provision of world class telecommunications products and services all through to innovative and sustainable corporate social responsibility initiatives. MTN is the market leader in an increasingly competitive mobile telecommunications industry in Ghana with over 20 million subscribers and offering its valued customers a range of exciting products and services under Pay Monthly and Pay As You Go Services (Ghana Chamber of Telecommunications, 2020).

MTN's network coverage as reported by the Ghana Chamber of Telecommunications (2020) is extensive, covering all 16 regional capitals, major cities and many rural and remote areas. MTN continues to invest heavily in infrastructure to expand its coverage and capacity across the country. MTN has more than 70 customer service centers and hundreds of local agents across the country. The Ghana Chamber of Telecommunications (2020) indicates that MTN delivers uniquely designed communication solutions. As the leading telecommunications company, MTN is focused on providing excellent telecommunications services across the African continent under the philosophy of improving access to economic empowerment (Ghana Chamber of Telecommunications, 2020).

Ghana Chamber of Telecommunications (2020) is of the view that MTN acknowledges its responsibility towards their stakeholders to sustain long term mutual value. In this regard, MTN has established relationships with governments and community groups for partnership that is geared towards improving the quality of service it offers to Ghanaian consumers and enriching their lives as well. In order to make a meaningful impact on the lives of people and communities

in which MTN operates, the company established the MTN Foundation across all its footprints globally (Ghana Chamber of Telecommunications, 2020).

The MTN Foundation from Ghana Chamber of Telecommunications' (2020) assessment has been remarkable in fulfilling its mandate of improving the quality of people's lives through appropriate corporate responsibility interventions in communities where MTN operates. As a global policy, a proportion (one percent) of each operating unit's profit after tax is dedicated to undertaking corporate social responsibility initiatives. The Foundation aims at having a broad community impact and supporting national development priorities in the areas of health and education and economic empowerment. The Foundation has so far invested over GHC 77 million in CSR projects across the country (Ghana Chamber of Telecommunications, 2020).

The Ghana Chamber of Telecommunications (2020) indicates that the MTN Group has also instituted 21days of Y'ello care where staff volunteers their time and effort to serving their communities for 21days in June annually. Last year, the Ghana operating unit was adjudged the best among the 21 MTN operations for recording the highest staff participation and undertaking the best CSR programs for the year. As its prize, the Ghana operating unit was awarded USD 100,000 and a trophy. MTN's record breaking 15,770 trees as against Group's request for 1000 trees to be planted in this year's Y'ello Care again puts it at another opportune position to retain the trophy (Ghana Chamber of Telecommunications, 2020).

3.2 RESEARCH METHOD

Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2007) suggest that the research approach may either be quantitative or qualitative in nature and this differentiates both procedures of data collection and data analysis. This study will thus adopt the quantitative approach to research.

3.2.1 Study Population

A research population is generally a well-defined collection of individuals or objects with common characteristics that are the main focus of a scientific enquiry (Fraenkel and Wallen, 2000). However, due to the large sizes of populations, researchers cannot test every individual in the population because it is expensive and time-consuming. Thus, researchers use sampling techniques to pick samples from the population (Aina, 2004). Therefore, the population for the study will be Osu Kinkanwe in the Greater Accra Region. Osu Kinkanwe was selected as the population for the study because among the four (4) focus areas of MTN's Community Relations Strategy (CRS), thus CSR, festival management, community engagement and network communications, Osu Kinkanwe is the area in the heart of Accra which benefits from all four (Community Relations Strategy Plan, 2020). Also, Osu Kinkanwe was selected because it is a representation of the Osu Traditional Council which has a highly cosmopolitan mix of residents (Community Relations Strategy Plan, 2020).

3.2.2 Sample and Sampling Technique

Burns and Grove (2001) assert that sampling basically is the selection of a part or subset of the entire research population so that the selected part can represent the entire population. A research sample therefore is a subset of the population from which it was drawn and it must have a good size to warrant statistical analysis to draw conclusions which apply to the population (Burns and Grove, 2001). Due to the large sizes of populations, researchers often cannot test every individual in the population because it is too expensive and time-consuming. Thus, researchers use sampling techniques to pick samples from the population (Aina, 2004).

3.2.3 Sampling technique

Sampling occurs when researchers examine a portion or sample of a larger group of potential participants and use the results to make statements that apply to this broader group or population (Salkind, 2010). The type of sampling strategy a researcher uses will influence their

ability to make generalisations from the sample findings about the study population, and the type of statistical tests you can apply to the data (Kumar, 2019). The process of selecting a sample according to Salkind (2010) is an integral part of designing sound research. In conducting a study, Frey (2018) suggests that there are two categories of sampling design non-probability sampling designs and probability sampling designs.

Given (2008) explains that non-probability sampling is a common technique in qualitative research where researchers use their judgment to select a sample while probability sampling presents each participant with the same chance of being selected. Given (2008) further holds that the most basic form of probability sampling is simple random sampling. Frey (2018) also observes that including every member of a population into a study is often not possible and simply not feasible. Thus, subsets of the population (samples) must be chosen to represent the population (Frey, 2018). If samples are collected properly, precise statements can be made about a population, with a fairly high degree of confidence, from relatively small samples. Frey (2018) therefore notes that simple random sampling is a probability method of selecting a subset, or sample, from a larger population in such a manner that every element. For this reason, this study will employ the simple random sampling approach. This technique will be used to select five hundred (500) research respondents.

3.3.4 Sources of Data

In research, there are different methods used to gather information, all of which fall into two categories, thus, primary and secondary data sources (Douglas, 2015: Ajayi, 2017). Data gathered using the first approach is said to be collected from primary sources, whereas the sources used in the second approach are called secondary sources (Ajayi, 2017). Both qualitative and quantitative research studies use secondary sources as a method of data collection (Kumar, 2019). Kumar (2019) notes that secondary data sources may include government or semi-government publications, earlier research, personal records, mass media

among others. Kumar (2019) asserts that the choice of a method depends upon the purpose of the study, the resources available and the skills of the researcher and that there are times when the method most appropriate to achieve the objectives of a study cannot be used because of constraints such as a lack of resources and/or required skills.

The study will therefore employ the use of both primary and secondary data. Primary data will be collected using questionnaires. In line with O'leary's (2017) line of argument, this study will employ secondary data analysis which involves a researcher using the information that someone else has gathered for his or her own purposes. Researchers leverage secondary data analysis in an attempt to answer a new research question, or to examine an alternative perspective on the original question of a previous study (O'leary, 2017).

3.3.5 Data Collections Procedure

With the focus of the study in mind, the study will employ the use of both primary and secondary data as stated earlier. Questionnaires will be used to gather primary information from research participants while secondary data will be collected from books, journal articles, online/internet materials, among other publications on community relations and brand reputation generally. Data collected will then be analysed using Microsoft Excel and the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The analyzed data will be presented using frequency distribution tables, graphs and charts. Also, descriptions and further explanation will be given in order to aid the comprehension process.

3.4 ETHICAL CONSIDERATION

Bryant and Charmaz (2010), advise that researchers should ensure that participants are protected from any physical or psychological harm that may arise from research procedures. In

line with international best practices in education, the researcher will reveal the intentions of the study to the participants and seek informed consent for their participation. The researcher will verbally assure the participants of anonymity of their identities and confidentiality of the data the researcher collects. The researcher will also assign them pseudonyms during the writing of the report. In addition, with regard to the ethical issue of confidentiality, the researcher will store all information from the study safely. Hard copies will be locked in a cabinet and soft copies stored in files protected with a password which was only accessible to the researcher.

3.3 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter sought to spell out the guideline the research used to collect data for the study. This began by giving an overview of the MTN-Ghana and the discussing the research design, research population and sampling among other things.

CHAPTER FOUR

CONCLUSION

4.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the concluding part of the study. The chapter comprises a discussion of findings, a summary and conclusion of the study as well as recommendation of this study.

4.1 SUMMARY

This study sought to explore the effect of community relation on brand reputation with MTN-Ghana as a case. The study then set the objectives to determine whether community relations has an effect on brand reputation, to find out the relevance of community relations to an organization's reputation and to suggest ways of managing the effects of community relations on brand reputation. Lenguyen (2011) indicates that with the success of an organization highly dependent on its relationships with its key stakeholders and their satisfaction level, showing *good corporate governance* has become critical. Moreover, Lee, Kim and Roh (2019) notes that community relations activities have positive effects on company image and evaluation from customers and finally boost purchase intention. In short, community relations endeavors can no longer be something complementary or temporary (Yunus, 2007; Lenguyen, 2011). This therefore goes to suggest that community relations, has a positive effect on brand reputation and should therefore not be underestimated.

4.2 CONTRIBUTIONS TO KNOWLEDGE

In adding on to the body of knowledge, the gap this study identifies is that even though the literature touches on community relations and brand reputation respectively, there appears to

be little work done exploring the effect community relations has on brand reputation. In furthering the course, the study will help define and establish the Ghanaian outlook to community relations. Also, the study will help determine whether community relations has an effect on brand reputation. This study dwells on indigenous examples to put forth relevance of community relations to organizations as well as suggesting ways of harnessing community relations to achieve a positive brand reputation. The impact of the study can as well be seen in its addition to the literature on community relations especially because the arguments made will generally be made along the line of PR practice.

4.3 CONCLUSION

Pirsch, Gupta and Grau (2007) assert that with the emergence of public standards for social performance, society is putting companies under strong pressure to embrace social responsibility and embrace new approaches in their business strategies, such as green innovation, social entrepreneurship and among others. In the view of Lenguyen (2011), one factor that has made it necessary for companies to integrate community relations into their corporate strategies is the general public's growing interest in and better knowledge of social and environmental problems. On this premise, the study concludes that organizations should as a matter of importance invest in community relations as it helps foster their reputation.

4.4 RESEARCHER'S REFLECTIONS

The originality of the study hinges on how the researcher drew on secondary data to address the research objectives set. Also, the researcher established that organizations should therefore note that community relations is not just for fun rather, it involves specialized PR programs to facilitate communication between an organization and publics in its geographic locality. This

further affirms the point that community relations is an important activity all organizations should explore and leverage to grow.

4.5 RECOMMENDATION

This study recommends that organizations should take note of their social responsibilities and fulfil them. Even though not mandatory, the literature shows that organizations who embark on community relations activities garner goodwill from the publics which helps build their corporate image and reputation. This could be done by instituting policies that will embed community relations into the annual forecast and budgeting. This will in the long run translate to becoming a norm in the corporate sector. Also, further studies can be conducted along the lines of replicating the study with regards to other concepts such as corporate identity, brand equity among others.

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