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**EVALUATION OF STRATEGIC BRAND MANAGEMENT IN ENSURING
CORPORATE SUSTAINABILITY**

SUBMITTED BY

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**A RESEARCH WORK SUBMITTED TO THE GHANA INSTITUTE OF
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AWARD OF A MASTER OF ARTS DEGREE IN PUBLIC RELATIONS**

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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 dissertations as laid down by the Ghana Institute of Journalism.

(Supervisor's signature)

DR. IKE TANDOH

A rectangular box containing a handwritten signature in black ink. The signature is cursive and appears to read 'Ike Tandoh'.

DATE: 3RD DECEMBER, 2021

STUDENT'S 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 to be held responsible for any error that might be detected in this project work.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Peace Kamassah', is written over a light blue rectangular background.

(Candidate's signature)

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my children Makafui K. Quainoo and Keli K. Quainoo, my father, C. K. Kamassah (late) and mother, Rose Ametam.

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ABSTRACT

Sustainability is presently seen as a delicate balance between the economic, environmental and social health of a community, nation and the world as a whole. This has made it prudent for organizations to ensure that strategic brand management is used as a tool to augment corporate sustainability efforts. The study set out to evaluate the role of strategic brand management in attaining corporate sustainability amongst Ghanaian businesses. To realize this, data was collected from business executives of some selected Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs). Through a mixed method approach, the study adopted questionnaire as a data collection tool. This was used to poll seventy (70) business executives who were required to answer questionnaires administered to them. The findings showed that the respondents had vast understanding of strategic brand management and corporate sustainability. Further, it was realized that lack of management buy-in and organizational culture were seen to be impediments which hampered synergizing strategic brand management with corporate sustainability amongst Ghanaian businesses. It was again found that strategic brand management aids in shifting the perception of an organization because it can be calibrated to position the organization or brand in the minds of the customers. The study recommends that SMEs as well as other organizations, invest in strategic brand management, particularly if corporate sustainability is a top focus. Also, policymakers, civil society organizations, and non-governmental organizations should work together to design policies that encourage SMEs to adopt corporate sustainability as a whole or specific components of it that can complement and enhance their chances.

CHAPTER ONE

1.0 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Sustainability is presently seen as a delicate balance between the economic, environmental and social health of a community, nation and the world as a whole. The concept incorporates three dimensions and the academic literature explains these dimensions as economic, social and environmental (Mena and Chabowski, 2015; Wagner and Stich, 2017; Hult, Mena, Gonzalez-Perez, Lagerström and Hult, 2018). Business researchers indicate the economic dimension of sustainability as the most desirable because it provides financial strength and avoids conditions leading to an early demise of the business due to financial reasons (Colwell and Joshi, 2013).

The marketing literature discusses sustainability and highlights its role in creating opportunities and driving the performance of organizations by taking up social initiatives understood as corporate social responsibility (Pelozo and Shang, 2011). The role of operations in making a business perform on the parameter of sustainability has been discussed as a determinant of a firm's ability to produce or deliver efficiently (Langella, Carbo and Dao, 2016).

Sustainability is fast becoming a viable ideology in political, economic, technological, and academic circles. Yet little theoretical, empirical, or strategic research has attempted to understand it in depth; the strategic nature of sustainability is even less well documented (Varadarajan, 2017). Sustainability, at least as a concept, has permeated most spheres of life, not solely because it is a political requirement but because it resonates with something deep within us, even though we have a poor understanding of what it is (Eccles, Ioannou and Serafeim, 2014).

An important line of research in the brand literature argues that by adopting relational perspectives in brand management; this leads to the emergence of an ongoing dynamic process in

which sustainability is reviewed as a factor in the last decades (Engert and Baumgartner, 2016). Merz, He and Vargo (2009) observes that this requires big changes in traditional brand management structures. Brand building activities per Bode's (2010) assertion indicates that this require designing actions in several marketing-related areas such as different product design, product positioning and packaging, communications campaigns in traditional and online media, and brand extensions.

Consequently, the strategic brand management has to include a careful fit between the firm's global marketing strategy and the desired brand image, together with a planning of the brand's medium and long-term goals to facilitate the strategic marketing planning process (Meffert, Burmann and Koers, 2013). Practitioners and academics have reviewed sustainability from various perspectives (Lorek and Fuchs, 2011; Sheth, Sethia and Srinivas, 2011; Samiee, Chabowski and Hult, 2015) with academics acknowledging sustainability as an approach that is adopted to meet current requirements while developing capabilities that can help focus on the future (Chabowski, Mena and Gonzalez-Padron, 2011).

Over the last two decades, a small but rising number of businesses have begun to proactively incorporate social and environmental challenges into their business models and organizational strategy through the adoption of corresponding corporate policies (Benn and Dunphy, 2013). For organizational researchers, the integration of such challenges into a company's strategy presents a number of fundamental questions.

Some academics (Parmar, Freeman, Harrison, Wicks, Purnell and De Colle, 2010; Kramer and Porter, 2011; Andelin, Karhu and Junnila, 2015) indicate that businesses can "do well by doing good" by satisfying the requirements of non-shareholder stakeholders, which increases shareholder value. Eccles et al. (2014) observes that corporations can destroy shareholder value

by failing to address the requirements of non-shareholding stakeholders through consumer boycotts, failure to hire the best employees and paying punitive fines to governments.

Sustainability may be an agency cost while managers gain personal advantages from tackling environmental and social challenges, doing so has negative financial consequences for their firms (Erdil, 2013). As a result, in highly competitive contexts, organizations that do not function under such additional restraints will be more competitive and, as a result, more profitable (Jensen, 2010). At the core of this study will be the drive to evaluate strategic brand management and the role it plays in arriving at corporate sustainability.

1.1 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Companies nowadays spend a significant amount of money on brand building. (Schmitt, 2011) makes the point that brands provide to consumers, which boosts the value of the organization's business brand. Huber (2013) argues that while brand management is a critical component of economic success and provides a number of benefits to businesses, (Burmam, Halaszovich, Schade and Hemmann, 2018) management researchers have failed to identify the role played by a brand in making the causal effect of opportunities on marketing performance stronger such as corporate sustainability.

Although Grubor and Milovanov (2017) proposed a strategic agenda for sustainability and brand image, Gupta and Kumar (2013) maintain that previous studies (Friedman, 2017; Widiastuty and Soewarno, 2019; Yang and Babiak, 2021) on sustainability and branding have focused on evaluating the role of sustainability in driving brand perception adopted by firm managers, as well as the ability of opportunities created by the firm as a result of these initiatives to drive business. As a result, businesses must link their brand to their broader strategy and structure

giving credence to Gerlach and Witt's (2012) notion that sustainability and brand management has grown in relevance over the previous few decades.

The lapse identified from reviewing literature such as Kumar and Christodoulopoulou (2014) failed to identify economic, social and environmental variables that operate within the constructs and empirically test the framework conceptualized developed from a synthesis of existing knowledge from different domains. This study thus attempted to evaluate strategic brand management and the role it plays in arriving at corporate sustainability. This was justified especially when Gerlach and Witt (2012) for instance noted that traditionally, strategic brand management research has ignored or believed that managing sustainable values has a detrimental impact on a company's stability. By conducting this study, the lacuna identified was explored in order to give an understanding to how strategic brand management and corporate sustainability can be synergized to attain overall organizational success. Also, this probe presents an outlook from a purely Ghanaian context so that findings made could contribute to the body of knowledge because of its distinctiveness and salience.

1.2 RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

1. To evaluate the role of strategic brand management in attaining corporate sustainability amongst Ghanaian businesses
2. To appreciate the understanding of strategic brand management and corporate sustainability by Ghanaian business executives
3. To explore the challenges with synergizing strategic brand management with corporate sustainability amongst Ghanaian businesses
4. To ascertain how strategic brand management could be exploited by Ghanaian businesses to attain corporate sustainability

1.3 RESEARCH QUESTION

1. What role does strategic brand management play in attaining corporate sustainability amongst Ghanaian businesses?
2. What is/are Ghanaian business executives' understanding of strategic brand management and corporate sustainability?
3. What are the challenges with synergizing strategic brand management with corporate sustainability amongst Ghanaian businesses?
4. How can strategic brand management be exploited by Ghanaian businesses to attain corporate sustainability?

1.4 JUSTIFICATION OF THE STUDY

This research is important because it would help people realize why strategic brand management is so vital for any organization. This is also justified since strategic brand management not only supports and assists in crafting narratives for a brand, which increases brand recognition and revenue, but it also helps underline long-term plans for goal achievement. The study emphasizes the importance of firms combining their strategic brand management with corporate sustainability activities in order to achieve a better overall brand image, lower costs, happier shareholders, and higher productivity, among other things.

1.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

As have been suggested by Gerlach and Witt (2012), this study would help add on to the scarce literature on strategic brand management and especially how it relates to corporate sustainability. With this gap identified, this study contributed not only attempt to fill the gap but also help put Ghana on the map. This is so because findings from this study will be hinged on a sample base obtained from the Ghana setting which then implies that the uniqueness of this study as well as

its originality makes it salient to the discussion of strategic brand management and corporate sustainability. Also, the findings of this study will help the researcher develop a framework to help organizations with sustainability in mind transform their and manage the fortunes of their brands in a strategic manner. Again, the study gives a depiction of how strategic brand management and corporate sustainability influences Ghanaian businesses.

1.6 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The study centers on the variables of strategic brand management and corporate sustainability. This probe will as well be explored from the context of Ghanaian businesses. Even though Ghanaian businesses will be at the center of this exploration, the sample will be derived from only formal corporate entities. In this endeavor, the business which were surveyed focused on the Accra, the capital of the Greater Accra Region of Ghana. Also, the build of the businesses which will be focused on will be those with more than three (3) branches outside Accra. The justification for this decision lays on the thought that with other branches outside Accra, brand management and sustainability will be essential to their operations.

1.7 ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY

This study is divided into five chapters where the first chapter serves as the research's introduction. This includes a backdrop to the investigation, identification of the research problem, study objectives, research questions and scope, as well as the study's significance and justifications.

The review of literature in Chapter 2 aids the researcher in gathering relevant information to investigate the phenomenon under investigation. This also assists to establish a foundation of conceptual and theoretical frameworks, helps to ground the study in the literature.

The research methodology as well is discussed in the third chapter. This chapter's purpose explains how the researcher collected data. The research design, research population, sample and sampling techniques, data sources, and data gathering tools are all covered here among other things.

The presentation data, discussion of the outcomes, and data analysis is all included in Chapter 4. The summary of findings, conclusion, and recommendations for the study, as well as proposals for further research for industry and policy makers is presented in Chapter 5.

1.8 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter presented an introductory brief into the aim of the study by giving a background and stating the problem the researcher intends to solve.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter bases on delivering a complete summary of previous research on the topic at hand, by reviewing scholarly journals, books, and other relevant sources. The chapter then adds to the theoretical foundation for the research by acknowledging the contributions of previous researchers.

2.1 STRATEGIC BRAND MANAGEMENT AND CORPORATE SUSTAINABILITY

The foundation of strategic brand management is the selection of an appropriate strategy for the brand's growth, as well as the regular updating of that strategy (Hanna and Rowley, 2011). A corporation can add value to its products and services by following this long-term sustainable approach. It is a set of practices that aid in the creation of a distinct identity for a company by preserving brand character, quality, and client interactions (John, 2016). Businesses should create income to alleviate poverty and do so without damaging the environment in order to contribute to sustainable development. Consumers also want businesses to be upfront about working conditions at their suppliers and manufacturers, as well as to push change by promoting changes in working conditions, environmental health and safety, and human rights compliance across their worldwide supply chain networks.

It is no longer sufficient for businesses to make or sell high-quality goods and achieve excellent market results (Chernev, 2020). The efforts of today's brands to make the world a better place are increasingly being measured. People are looking to corporations to lead social and environmental change rather than waiting for government to impose it, as their trust in

governmental institutions is eroding. Businesses contribute to society in this way, ensuring that future generations can thrive as well (Ogunsiji, 2012). This is good news for brands, as research shows that businesses who include Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) into their core business strategies are more successful in more ways than one (Ertimur and Coskuner-Balli, 2015). These programs have been connected to top and bottom-line growth, brand distinction, consumer loyalty, and staff engagement, in addition to having a good influence on people and communities.

Business is a powerful force in society, with some companies outnumbering governments. Businesses today wield so much influence that CEOs can choose whether to improve the lives of everybody or just a select few. Businesses are also being pushed to invest in sustainability by society. Many governments, citizens, and other stakeholders want to see businesses that care about the communities in which they operate (Keller and Brexendorf, 2019). Failure to do so may result in the loss of a company's social license to operate, which is defined as society's trust in it. While corporate sustainability is critical for long-term success, strategic brand management not only increases the value of a product but also improves consumer connection. It is a crucial part of marketing that uses pictures or vital text to establish brand affirmations (Asif, Searcy, Garvare and Ahmad, 2011). Even while organizations use strategic brand management to help their brands and goods get global recognition, it also comprises integrative and long-term policies that assist a firm create, develop, and manage its brand.

2.2 CHALLENGES WITH STRATEGIC BRAND MANAGEMENT AND CORPORATE SUSTAINABILITY

There are specific obstacles to bear in mind for business managers who are creating a brand. These challenges are critical to organizational success. The constant pressure to provide short-

term financial results, along with the fragmentation of media where according to Klettner, Clarke and Boersma (2014) is an effort that could encourage businesses to focus on techniques and measurables while ignoring the objective of asset building. As Bansal and Song (2017) points out, the issue of trust is intertwined with the requirement for transparency. Companies are under increasing pressure to openly report on their actions as a result of the loss of trust in business. There are numerous examples from which to choose. Governments, for example, play a vital role in establishing a framework that requires corporations to take action in order to achieve system-wide change.

However, Windolph, Harms and Schaltegger (2014) reports that governments are currently grappling with how to motivate businesses to perform better by evaluating efforts such as ensuring a level playing field, which is challenging since laws and regulations are defined by country, and sometimes even per industry, but the market is worldwide. Because open reporting is no longer a nice-to-have, but an expected, the business orientation is obvious. While increasing transparency is likely to uncover flaws and faults, this should be seen positively. It is preferable to clearly identify areas that require improvement rather than to appear to be concealing up flaws (Schneider, 2015). The issues confronting society can appear overwhelming at times, which is why significant progress is still required to adequately address a number of issues, such as climate change, resource insecurity, waste, diversity, corruption, and much more, especially given the significant implications for business.

To stay ahead of these mishaps, Benn, Edwards and Williams (2014) recommends that organizations develop their brand internally. Without personnel who understand and care about the goal, it's difficult to produce successful integrated marketing communications (IMC) or breakthrough marketing. The inspiration challenge will be nearly unattainable for a brand vision

that has a greater purpose. This Brockett and Rezaee (2012) ascribe that if the organization's pursuit for brand relevance fuels it. Brands face three risks to their relevance: fewer customers buying what they are offering, new reasons not to buy, and a lack of vitality. Detecting and responding to each demands a thorough understanding of the market as well as a willingness to put infuse capital. While change may appear to be dangerous at first, with the right strategies in place and competent management, it may propel organizational transformation and, eventually, new commercial prospects. Companies that respond quickly and begin planning now will gain an early competitive advantage.

Even when a corporation follows a well-defined strategy, it frequently encounters problems and roadblocks in putting it into daily operations, both within and outside (Asif et al., 2011). A common stumbling block is a lack of capability and resources, which is often determined by top-management commitment (Klettner et al., 2014). Sustainability activity will never become an integral element of a company's overall value generation process without management backing. Sustainability must be taken seriously by businesses as a primary driver of fundamental societal and economic change. However, in order to do so, a shift from viewing it primarily as a commercial risk to early detection of chances for innovation and development is required. This is necessary to secure the business's survival and growth in an increasingly competitive and accountable business environment (Hanna and Rowley, 2011). Many firms have already made sustainability a management task, and with effective platforms for change and expertise readily available, they are well-prepared to face these problems.

2.3 HOW CAN STRATEGIC BRAND MANAGEMENT BE EXPLOITED TO ATTAIN CORPORATE SUSTAINABILITY

The ability of sustainability to reinvent, reconfigure, and reconstruct cities, economies, workplaces, and travel appears to be regaining traction (Cantele and Zardini, 2018). Brands do not have only the opportunity but also the obligation to engage, especially as some are already pushing beyond commitment to sustainability performance (De Swaan Arons, Van Den Driest and Weed, 2014). In putting together the Wall Street Journal's "100 Most Sustainably Managed Companies in the World 2020", the editors of the Journal reported that:

“...the ranking's methodology takes a broad view of sustainability, one which assesses a company's leadership and governance practices for their ability to create value for shareholders over the long term.”

Sony led in the ranking which according to commentators is attributed to its corporate sustainability mission. According to Mr. Shiro Kambe, Sony's sustainability chief;

“For us to continue with this kind of business, the planet and society must be sustainable and healthy otherwise, Sony cannot exist.”

To this aim, Kwarteng, Dadzie and Famiyeh (2016) believes that long-term leadership and business practices have an impact on customers' brand decisions. Environmental decency, for example, has a substantial impact on brand preference and purchase in today's environment, according to research (Light, 2014a). This infers that sustainable business practices provide businesses a boost without changing customers' perceptions of them.

Asamoah (2015) is of the view that other evidence suggests that sustainability plans provide a competitive advantage, with brands focusing on the strategic use of social responsibility to gain a competitive edge achieving long-term financial success. This is not new information, as a study published in The Journal of Services Marketing in 2013 found that firms with a documented commitment to sustainability grew by over 4%, while those without grew by less than 1%.

According to the growing number of shareholders demanding better corporate behavior and global citizenship, now is the opportune time for businesses to commit to sustainability (Light and Kiddon, 2015).

Amponsah (2015) advances that it is no longer enough for businesses to produce or sell high-quality goods and achieve great outcomes. The efforts of today's brands to make the world a better place are increasingly being measured. People are looking to corporations to lead social and environmental change rather than waiting for government to impose it, as their trust in governmental institutions is eroding (Addae-Korankye, 2013). This is good news for brands, as (Amoako and Dartey-Baah, 2020) observes that firms who include CSR into their core business strategies are more successful in a variety of areas than those that do not.

These initiatives have been connected to top and bottom-line growth, brand distinction, consumer loyalty, and staff engagement, in addition to having a good influence on people and communities (Light, 2014b). Anning-Dorson (2018) further adduce that companies that align their mission and purpose with sustainable values and support environmental and social goals in ways that are relevant to their business can have a significant impact on the public's willingness to buy from, invest in, and work for them, thereby influencing their brand reputation.

The Reputation Institute, a reputation measurement and management organization, ranked LEGO first for CSR and second overall in its annual rankings of Most Reputable Companies in the United States and the Corporate Social Responsibility RepTrak 100. This is a significant indication of a corporation that rebuilt itself into a long-term brand. In addition to partnering with organizations such as the World Wildlife Fund, LEGO has pledged to reduce its carbon footprint and is aiming for a renewable energy capacity of 100 percent by 2030. It has also incorporated

ecologically friendly procedures into its manufacturing by establishing a Sustainable Materials Center that seeks for sustainable alternatives to current materials and packaging.

Consumers are increasingly seeking for methods to integrate purchases with social benefits, and sustainable company tactics will continue to be a differentiator in their views (Quaye and Mensah, 2019). Companies that embrace and share these strategies can boost their brands' reputation as well as their bottom line. Another advantage is that the more people trust a brand, the more likely they are to be motivated to take action by it. Otchere, Annan and Anin (2013) as well opines that individuals are more likely to buy greener, more sustainable items if a company incorporates environmental and social themes into its brand. While sustainability may not be sufficient in and of itself to develop a successful brand, adding it into the entire brand strategy can provide significant results (Agyapong and Boamah, 2013).

2.4 EMPIRICAL STUDIES

In an evaluation to probe the effect of a firm sustainability on brand perception, Erdil (2013) noted that the model developed by using existing approaches in the literature, provides supportive findings for further large scale empirical investigations in terms of variables and hypotheses that can be used for both academic and managerial purposes. Gerlach and Witt (2012) in their study on sustainability in the context of strategic brand management which employed the qualitative approach found that in the strategic brand management process is crucial to automobile manufacturers as they incorporate sustainability to varying degrees and in various ways. Furthermore, there are several levels and possibilities for incorporating sustainability into the strategic brand management process.

In this approach, Engert and Baumgartner (2016) while exploring how corporate sustainability strategy as a tool for bridging the gap between formulation and implementation imbibed that

brand management emerges as an ongoing dynamic process in which sustainability is assessed as a component in recent decades, demanding significant adjustments in traditional brand management structures (Kapferer, 2012). Brand building activities (Baporikar and Fotolela, 2020) include planning actions in a variety of marketing-related domains, including product design, product positioning and packaging, traditional and online media communications campaigns, and brand extensions. As a result, in order to facilitate the strategic marketing planning process, strategic brand management must involve a careful fit between the firm's global marketing strategy and the intended brand image, as well as a planning of the brand's medium and long-term goals. This can be premised on Wong's (2014) indication that business academics, the economic dimension of sustainability is the most desirable because it gives financial strength and prevents conditions that could lead to the business's early demise owing to financial issues.

Making a point for marketing and management, Armstrong and LeHow (2011) in their study on sustainable apparel product development observed that consumers' needs have shifted from creative products to sustainable ones necessitating various transformations. As a result of these pragmatic transformations, there is renewed interest in practice in identifying the link between sustainability issues and brand distinction, which has become a customer brand selection factor (Grubor and Milovanov, 2017). Managers have utilized the traditional utilitarian approach to brands as instruments to help consumers distinguish them from their competition. To address global competition, managers can use branding theories to get their customers to associate, analyze, evaluate, and differentiate them from their competitors across national borders (Nguyen, Melewar and Hemsley-Brown, 2019).

In today's competitive market, a brand's development and administration requires a reputation built on positive feedback from motivated customers. Sustainability considerations can be used to construct such an evaluation because they reflect responsible behavior in response to mankind's needs (Kiron, Unruh, Reeves, Kruschwitz and ZumFelde, 2017). Elliott, Rosenbaum-Elliott, Percy and Pervan (2015) highlight supply-driven marketing activities as an appropriate way to ethically serve consumer segments in an analysis of a capitalistic view of the market. This supports the idea that consumers want a better emotional connection with a brand and frequently seek meaningful brand distinction based on its sustainable practices (Rezaee, 2017).

Keller, Apéria and Georgson (2008) also discovered that, while strategic brand management is the skillful application of techniques by which a brand selects and measures a suitable branding strategy in order to maximize brand success, businesses that prioritize corporate sustainability do not only consider profit or revenue gains, but also the well-being of their environment. This implies that corporate sustainability and strategic brand management are critical components of overall organizational performance. Santos-Vijande et al. (2013), on the other hand, disagrees, claiming that a proper strategy-driven brand management approach is critical to brand loyalty and value perception.

In a different vein, Till, Baack and Waterman (2011) refute this argument by claiming that corporate sustainability is at the heart of every business and that long-term economic success is no longer merely a business imperative, but a necessity for society's overall well-being. This supports Abugre's (2014) premise that, while CSR focuses on what a business has accomplished, corporate sustainability focuses on how a business will achieve environmental, societal, and economic goals while remaining competitive for years to come.

These considerations imply that, while businesses aim to develop an ideal brand, without corporate sustainability, once the business's operations, for example, have negative environmental repercussions, the business lifecycle is affected as well. According to Kessey and Arko (2013), the debate centers on business executives' incapacity to implement policies and practices that ensure long-term viability. This is because insecurity in the workplace is not conducive to organizational success (Fusheini and Marnoch, 2020).

Despite the importance of SMEs in the Ghanaian economy, Agboh (2015) believes that the difficulties they face in conducting their business are severe, which has slowed their growth and prevented them from driving the national economy as planned. In light of this, Donkor (2011) highlighted managerial determinants, business environment factors, growth/expansion factors, and political determinants as the key categories that drive enterprises to fail in Ghana. This background supports Amponsah-Tawiah and Dartey-Baah's (2011) claim that implementing a corporate strategy focused on sustainability may add brand value, fulfill customer demands, increase efficiency, recruit great people, and generate new opportunities.

Even though it has been acknowledged that strategic brand management is key tool to attaining organizational success, corporate sustainability as well has been identified to be essential to long-term organization growth. Regardless, Mirzanti, Simatupang and Larso (2015) believe that in the implementation of policies by businesses, changes are difficult to achieve and can result in resistance. When it comes to integrating strategic brand management with corporate sustainability, this offers a problem for businesses. This is because, in order for policy changes to be effective, the implementation process must be given equal weight to policy formulation. Grindle (2017) maintains that organizational changes are required to achieve policy reforms,

despite the fact that it is a complex and arduous process. If there is no coherence in the process, it becomes a recipe for misunderstanding in organizational planning.

The inability to synergize strategic brand management with corporate sustainability, according to John and Torelli (2017), can be linked to organizational culture as well as a lack of foresight. More recently, Mokhber et al. (2017) discovered that, while succession planning is critical for long-term business growth, most organizations, particularly family businesses, fail to recognize it. According to statistics, nearly 70% of SMEs fail due to a lack of succession planning (Kalra and Gupta, 2014). While corporate sustainability considers business strategies that consider the ethical, social, environmental, cultural, and economic aspects of doing business, this idea is undermined by a lack of succession planning. Furthermore, ignoring corporate sustainability implies that there is little or no room for the brand to thrive, effectively dismissing the need of strategic brand management.

Going forward however, Eniola and Entebang (2015) postulate that business which make use of strategic decision making and forecast flourish in the business environment. From this assessment it, becomes prudent to harness strategic brand management so that businesses can attain corporate sustainability in the long-run. While Erdil (2013) argues that the lack of capability and resources is a typical stumbling obstacle, which is often determined by top-management commitment, Drucker (2012) is of the view that without management support, sustainability activities will never become an intrinsic part of a company's total value creation process. Businesses must prioritize sustainability as a main driver of fundamental societal and economic change (M'zungu, Merrilees and Miller, 2010). However, a shift from perceiving it largely as a business risk to early detection of opportunities for innovation and development is essential in order to do so. This is required to ensure the company's survival and growth in a

more competitive and accountable business climate (Hanna and Rowley, 2011). This affirms Drucker's (2012) findings that many businesses have already made sustainability a management priority, and they are well-equipped to deal with these issues due to effective change platforms and easily available knowledge.

2.5 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.5.1 Systems Theory

The systems theory often attributed to Ludwig von Bertalanffy's work on the General Systems theory of biology. This key argument of this theory is that it is a framework by which one can investigate and/or describe any group of objects that work together to produce some result (Whitchurch and Constantine, 2009). This can be used to construct business processes, and could also be used to evaluate their problems and diagnose them. Each organization is part of a system with three components, according to the system theory; the organization, its audiences, and its goals as survival is the primary organizational goal (Luhmann, Baecker and Gilgen, 2013).

This means that when looking at how smaller systems interact to effect the larger complex system holistically, certain properties of the complete complex system are difficult to explain or rationalized when looking at any one of its systems separately (Krstic, 2013). Systems theory aims to explain and propose ideas about traits that emerge in complex systems but do not appear to occur in any one system within the total. When a complex system exhibits emergent behavior, it indicates that its features exhibit traits that do not appear on their own (Tsyarkin, 2014).

The systems approach, in general, evaluates the system's overall effectiveness rather than the effectiveness of its subsystems (Hespanha 2018). Instead of focusing solely on the aims and performance of different departments, this enables for the application of system concepts across organizational levels (subsystems). Interaction and dependency between subsystems, synergy

between subsystems, and interaction between internal (closed system) and external components all contribute to organizational effectiveness (internal system) (Dekkers, 2015).

The systems approach assumes that decisions and actions taken in one part of the business will have an impact on other areas (Chryssolouris, 2013). For example, if the purchasing department fails to obtain the necessary number and quality of inputs, the production department will be unable to complete its tasks. This method understands that an organization's essential inputs come from the environment. Furthermore, the environment serves as a conduit for the outputs of the system.

Even though the theory comes with some advantages, the theory has some shortcomings too. The first shortcoming relates to measurements and the second is the issue of whether the means by which an organization survives really matter. Measuring the means, or process, of an organization can be very difficult when compared to measuring specific end goals of the goal-attainment approach. Also, Theunissen and Noordin (2012) note that one criticism of this approach is that it focusses on the means necessary to achieve effectiveness rather than on organizational effectiveness itself.

Even with these negatives, the theory helps visualize these systems and organs as metaphors representing departments and units of organization. This then essentially aid in working to see the organization growth. This is the same case in the practice of strategic management as the manager(s) would have to be able to work tirelessly to maintain homeostasis in the organizations.

2.5.1.1 Relevance to the Study

Most effective organizations according to the system theory adapt to their environment. Anderson and Vongpanitlerd (2013) described the environment as the events occurring in the world that have any effect on the activities and outcomes of organizations. Environments range from 'static' on one extreme to 'dynamic' on the other. Static environments are relatively stable or predictable and do not have great variation, whereas dynamic environments are in a constant state of flux (Liu and Forrest, 2010). Because environments cannot be completely static or constantly changing, organizations have varying levels of dynamic or static environments.

In order to thrive, the perception of organizations as open social networks that must communicate with their environment is known as the Systems theory Approach. According to Yeomans and FitzPatrick (2017) the main function of management is to help organizations respond to and respond to changes in the climate of an organization. Organizations depend on a variety of critical resources in their environment from consumers who buy the goods or services, manufacturers who supply products, workers who supply labour or management, investors, and even controlling governments (Jakopović, 2013).

Again, the theory is essential to this study because it gives organizations insight into how managers can coordinate their various systems or departments for growth. In this regard, strategic management have to ensure that there is peace within the organization, thus among the various departments as well as between the organization and its publics from the external outlook (Patton and McMahon, 2014). In line with the views of the theory, organizational managers for instance must constantly monitor their environment, intended goals, actions and feedback from stakeholders and publics in order to make the necessary changes to the road safety campaigns so that it fit within the environment and reach a goal state of equilibrium. Teece

(2018) observes that the essential role of strategic management is to act as an open system and to help organizations adjust and adapt to change in their environments, so they must monitor and interpret environmental factors and work with management to develop strategic plans of organizational change and responsiveness.

2.5.1.2 Researcher's Position

Katz and Kahn, who adapted the theory of general systems to organizational behaviour, first applied the open-systems method (Kiron et al., 2017). By mapping the repetitive cycles of input, output and feedback between organizations and their external environment, this approach defines organizational behaviour. The device receives feedback either as information or in the form of resources from the environment (Chrysolouris, 2013). In an attempt to restore harmony to the setting, the system then processes the input into the environment. The system then sends feedback to decide if the results were effective in restoring balance (Dekkers, 2015).

This gives the inference that business professionals can cause the academic concept of Systems Theory to implement protocols for regular feedback to the organization, there by aligning it with the desires of publics in its environments (Tsyarkin, 2014). The theory can also be useful in understanding the role of research and feedback in creating a thoroughly analysed and consistent strategy. The analysis of information and creation of strategy known as throughput helps to conceptualize and justify not only the research budget of the organisation but also the need for making decisions that strategically align public communications of an organization with the information needed by publics. The practical implementation of this approach keeps from being used as a simple publicity function, and places the function squarely in the strategic planning process (Demetis, 2010).

One shortcoming with social systems theory is that it does not always adequately describe an individual's current situation. A more typical psychological approach might be employed in certain circumstances. People with a serious mental condition who require specialized care or medication are examples of this. Another issue with social systems theory is that it is difficult to draw actionable implications from what is discovered. Identifying problems is critical, but finding solutions can be tough, particularly at the cultural and legislative levels. Furthermore, social workers may find it challenging to properly comprehend their clients' social and cultural upbringing and milieu, which might stymie progress.

Despite these flaws, social systems theory is useful in social work because it helps practitioners better understand the people they work with. That notwithstanding, in some areas, such as strategic management have a wide range of applications. Experts in a wide range of fields must use systems theory to take a holistic approach to their work and obtain a deeper grasp of all the variables at play in their fields.

2.6 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter was based on delivering a complete summary of previous research on the topic at hand, as well as reviewing scholarly journals, books, and other relevant sources. The chapter added to the theoretical foundation for the research by acknowledging the contributions of previous researchers.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 INTRODUCTION

The research method and design that was employed in this study are discussed in this chapter. It also includes a description of the population, sample procedure, data collection tools, data analysis plan, and data presentation plan, as well as ethical concerns.

3.1 RESEARCH METHOD

According to Watson (2015), a research method is a guideline or specification of procedures for acquiring and analyzing data in order to identify an issue or solve a problem. The research design aids the researcher in properly answering the research questions and also serves as a guide for selecting the relevant data for the study. This study adopted the descriptive approach to evaluate the role of strategic brand management in attaining corporate sustainability amongst Ghanaian businesses. This is because Salkind (2010) defines descriptive research design as the way of acquiring data in order to address issues about the current situation of the study's subjects. In keeping with this, the mixed method research approach was used in this study. Teddlie and Tashakkori (2011) elucidates that the term "mixed methods" refers to an emerging research methodology that promotes the systematic integration, or "mixing," of quantitative and qualitative data within a single investigation or long-term research program.

The underlying idea of this methodology also known as triangulation is that integrating quantitative and qualitative data gathering and analysis allows for a more full and synergistic use of data than separate quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis (Venkatesh, Brown and Sullivan, 2016). According to Teddlie and Tashakkori (2011), the logic of triangulation

indicates that qualitative and quantitative methods can be merged to create a holistic view of the topic under investigation, resulting in mixed methods research. Onwuegbuzie et al. (2007) define ‘pragmatism’ as the guiding paradigm of mixed methods research, which rejects pure ideas of ‘truth’ and ‘reality,’ arguing that the method(s) used should be based on the research’s aim. The implication of adopting the mixed-method approach is that while it adopts qualitative and quantitative methods, it employs the advantages of both methods so that it is more effective.

3.2 STUDY POPULATION

Taherdoost (2016) elucidates that the total number of subjects, persons, concepts, or phenomena that the researcher is interested in examining or researching is referred to as the population. Delice (2010), on the other hand, believes that due to cost and time limits, researchers are unable to examine every individual in the community, thus they use sampling techniques to choose samples from the population. The population of this study consisted of business executives of organization in Accra.

3.3 SAMPLING PROCEDURE

Sampling occurs when researchers investigate a small portion or sample of a larger group of potential participants and utilize the results to make statements that apply to the complete group or population (Bloomfield and Fisher, 2019). A researcher’s ability to generalize about the study population based on sample findings, as well as the types of statistical tests you may run on the data, is influenced by the sampling technique they utilize (Lowhorn, 2007). Sukamolson (2007) underlines the importance of selecting a sample when doing sound research. Since of the large size of populations, it is often impossible for researchers to evaluate each individual in the community because it is too expensive and time-consuming. As a result, researchers use sampling processes to pick samples from the population (Goertzen, 2017).

According to Neumayer and Plümper (2017), non-probability sampling is a common qualitative research technique in which researchers choose a sample based on their judgment, whereas probability sampling ensures that each participant has an equal chance of being chosen. Brown (2015) goes on to state that the most basic form of probability sampling is simple random sampling. Specific statements about a population can be made with a high degree of confidence from relatively small samples with good sample collecting. The study made use of the convenience sampling technique under the non-probability sampling method.

This is because Etikan and Bala (2017) explains that it is a more flexible approach because the researchers' knowledge is mainly reliant on this sampling method. Convenience sampling is a sampling approach in which participants are chosen depending on their immediate availability (Frey, 2018). Cochran (2007) adds that this accessibility is commonly measured in terms of geographical proximity, but it can also include other factors such as known contacts. As a result, this study used the convenience sampling technique to select Seventy (70) business executives in the small and medium scale enterprise (SMEs) space. A breakdown of the business executives is tabulated below.

Table 1.0 Breakdown of Business Executives

NO.	INDUSTRY	NUMBER
1	COMMERCE/TRADE	33
2	COMMUNICATION	9
3	HEALTH	6
4	MANUFACTURING	10
5	CONSTRUCTION/ ENGINEERING	7
6	HOSPITALITY	5

	TOTAL	70
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Source: Field Data, 2021

3.4 DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENT

The data collection tool for the study per the researchers' assessment will be the use of questionnaire (Parajuli, 2004). In line with this assertion, the study will adopt the questionnaire as the data collection instrument of the study. This was the suitable mode of data collection because to collect data, a questionnaire frequently employs both open and closed questions. Also, this is advantageous since it allows for the collection of both quantitative and qualitative data as Williamson (2013) noted. For this study, both open-ended and closed-ended questions were used in this study. This approach was the way to go because open-ended questions differ from other types of questionnaire questions in that they can yield unexpected answers, enhancing the research's uniqueness and significance.

However, Krosnick (2018) adds that when data is obtained through a questionnaire with open questions, it can be difficult to understand the results. Also, closed-ended questions organize responses by only allowing responses that fit within established categories. McGuirk and O'Neill (2016) also found that closed questions can also provide ordinal data. The implication for this is that when assessing the strength of attitudes or emotions, a continuous rating scale is usually utilized. When compared to many other primary data collection methods, Codó (2008) believes that questionnaires provide faster data collection, fewer or no cost requirements, and higher levels of objectivity.

3.5 DATA ANALYSIS PLAN

With the study's goal in mind, the study used both primary and secondary data, as previously stated. Primary data was obtained from the respondents through questionnaires, while secondary

data was gathered through books and other publications on strategic brand management as well as corporate sustainability and other salient areas such as public relations among others. The information gathered was then analyzed using Microsoft Excel (2016) with frequency distribution tables, graphs, and charts used to illustrate the examined data. In order to enhance comprehension, descriptions and more explanation was provided.

3.6 ETHICAL CONSIDERATION

Throughout the study, this researcher strived to preserve the highest level of objectivity in discussions and analyses. Also, the importance of respondents' voluntary engagement in the study was considered as participants had the ability to withdraw from the study at any time if they so desire. In addition, the respondents informed and their agreement sought to participate in the study. The principle of informed consent here entailed the researcher providing sufficient information and assurances about participating in order for individuals to fully understand the implications of participation and make an informed, considered, and freely given decision whether or not to participate, without any pressure or coercion as Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2014) prescribed. Again, inflammatory, discriminatory or other undesirable language was avoided in the development of the data collection instrument, and respondents' privacy and anonymity was again prioritized.

3.7 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter discussed the research method and design that was employed which also included a description of the population, sample procedure, data collection tools, data analysis plan, and data presentation plan, as well as ethical concerns.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

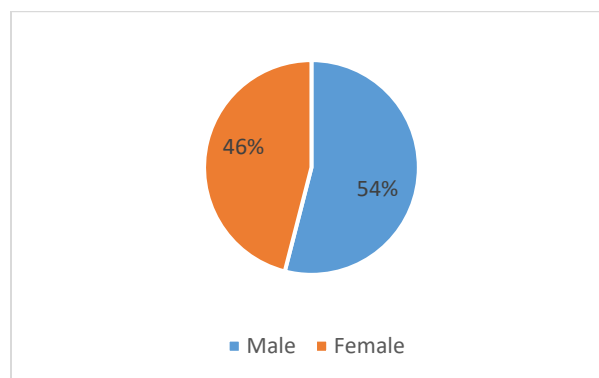
4.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter focuses on the presentation and analysis of data collected from respondents in a study that sought to undertake an “Evaluation of Strategic Brand Management in Corporate Sustainability”. Data was gathered from executives of Accra-based Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs). The goal of this sample selection was to acquire accurate information that reflected what was going on in the field of practice.

4.1 GENDER REPRESENTATION

The findings indicated that from the respondents the study collected data from, 54% were males and 46% were females. While the data suggests that respondents of both genders were willing to participate in the survey, the majority of those who did so were men. This data reveals that there may be more male business executives in the SME space than females in Accra as per the data collected

Figure 1: Gender Representation of Respondents

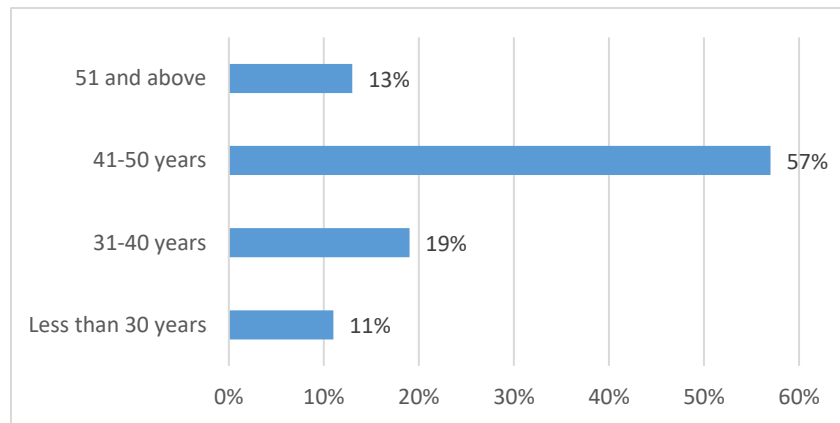


Source: Field Data, 2021

4.2 AGE REPRESENTATION

On the issue of the age ranges of the respondents, 11% said they were less than 30 years, 19% said they were between the ages of 31-40, and 57% said they were between the ages of 41-50 years. For respondents of 51 years and above, there were 13% of them as well. The indication then is that a majority of the respondents would have had enough experience from schooling and working so that they can give out salient and hand-on answers to enquires made of them in this study. The quality of the age distribution thus to suggest that answers to questions will be from a practical standpoint rather than guesswork.

Figure 2: Age Representation of Respondents



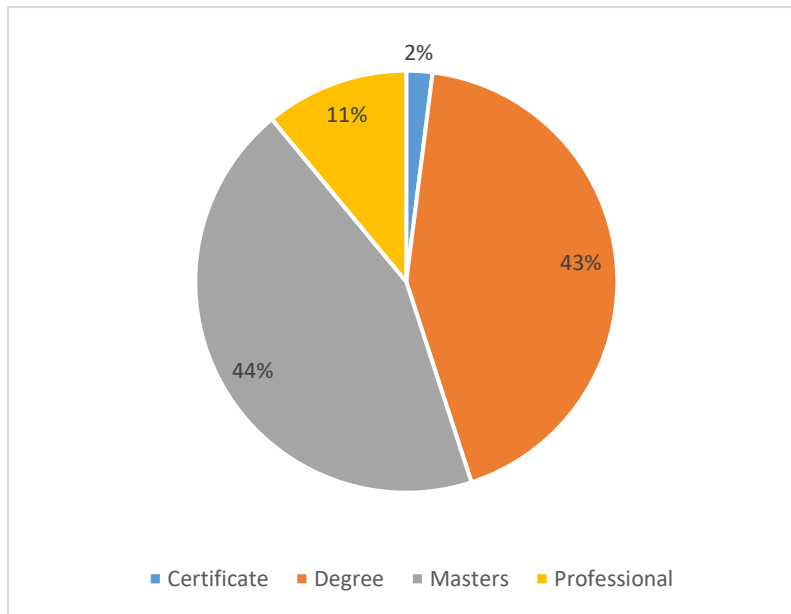
Source: Field Data, 2021

4.3 HIGHEST EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATION OF RESPONDENTS

Regarding academic qualification two percent indicated they had certificates, while 43% held undergraduate degrees. A further 44% noted they had obtained a master's degree. On professional qualifications, 11% of the respondents as well asserted that was their highest educational qualification. Inference from the data supposes that a majority of the respondents had had tertiary education. This suggests that in doing business, they may dwell on insights from

their theoretical as well as practical experience. Once more, this revelation highlights the peculiar case that business executives are continuously gearing towards self-development as well.

Figure 3: Highest Educational Qualification of Respondents



Source: Researcher's Field Data 2021

4.4 UNDERSTANDING OF STRATEGIC BRAND MANAGEMENT

In setting the mood for the enquiry, the respondents were asked of their understanding of strategic brand management (strategic brand management). In explanation their appreciation of strategic brand management, 23% of the respondents were of the view that it entailed processes individuals or organizations go through to distinguish their various brands. Another view was introduced by 9% of respondents who suggested strategic brand management was largely bothered on improving quality for all publics especially to customers and internal staff. On the other hand as well, 48% of respondents were of the view that strategic brand management has to do with processes put in place to enable individual or organizations matching brands with its

organizational objectives. While there were varying thoughts, they rather seem to not far from each other significantly. This therefore indicates that the respondents had a fair idea of what strategic brand management is and what it encompasses.

4.5 UNDERSTANDING OF CORPORATE SUSTAINABILITY

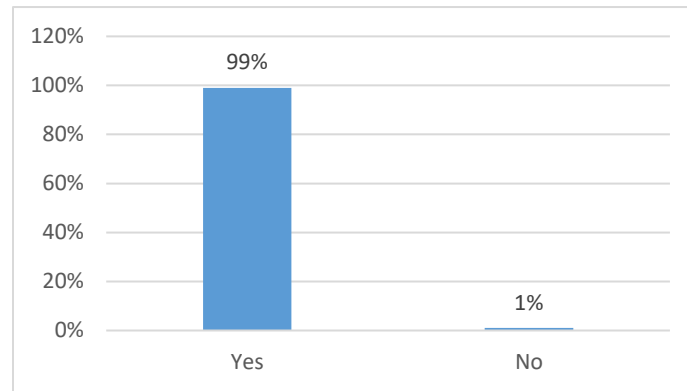
Corporate sustainability was ascribed to be that process which essentially ensures corporate continuity by 16% of respondents. A further 70% of respondents noted that they understood the concept to be those plans and programs focused on achieving organizational objectives over the long term. Another 14% highlighted that corporate sustainability was largely centered on plans and activities undertaken to staying in business over a long period. Even though the views from the respondents seemed different on the face of it, in the long run, there seems to be a point convergence. In each of the themes, it can be observed that continuity is key to corporate sustainability. Continuity here means the ability of a business or brand to prolong its lifecycle so that it is able to remain formidable for a long while.

4.6 STRATEGIC BRAND MANAGEMENT INFLUENCING CORPORATE SUSTAINABILITY

In appreciating whether strategic brand management could influence corporate sustainability, an overwhelming majority (99%) of respondents affirmed the assertion. That notwithstanding, one percent of respondents did not share the view that strategic brand management had any influence on corporate sustainability. This supports Meffert, Burmann and Koers's (2013) position that a carefully manage strategic brand will serve as a backdrop to catapult and facilitate corporate sustainability efforts. The inference from this finding as well indicates that it is popular opinion among business executives that strategic brand management is essential because it influences corporate sustainability. This means that for organizations poised on expanding their corporate

sustainability gains, the starting point has to be managing their brand strategically. Imbedding corporate sustainability for instance as a part of the branding strategy can go a long way to meet this objective.

Figure 4: Strategic Brand Management Influencing Corporate Sustainability



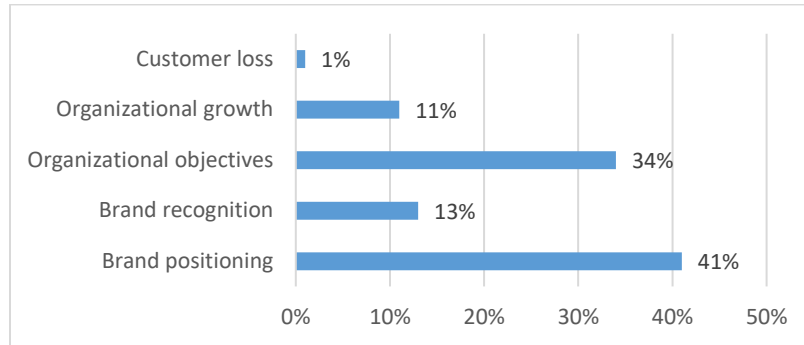
Source: Researcher’s Field Data 2021

4.7 WHY STRATEGIC BRAND MANAGEMENT INFLUENCES CORPORATE SUSTAINABILITY

Justifying the reason for affirming or disagreeing with the assertion that strategic brand management influences corporate sustainability, 41% of respondents indicated that through strategic brand management, there is long term brand positioning for the brand or organization. An increased brand recognition was motivating factor for 13% of respondents for being their bases for affirming the assertion. Another 34% of respondents also noted that strategic brand management helped achieve organizational objectives while 11% also based their argument on the fact that strategic brand management translates to organizational growth in the long-run. A contrary view was however presented noting that a poorly implement strategic brand management could result in loss of customers because of a decrease in reliability. Then again, all the bases for which respondents sided with the assertion or not were validated by their further

justification. This indicates that as alluded to earlier, the respondents had a grasp of the issue under discussion.

Figure 5: Why Strategic Brand Management Influences Corporate Sustainability

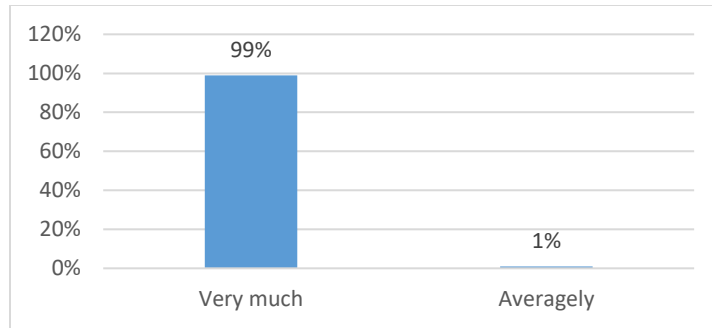


Source: Researcher's Field Data 2021

4.8 IMPORTANCE OF STRATEGIC BRAND MANAGEMENT TO CORPORATE SUSTAINABILITY

On ascertaining the importance of strategic brand management to corporate sustainability, 99% of respondents indicated strategic brand management was very much important to attaining corporate sustainability. While another one percent of respondents agreed of the important, the importance was said to be only average. The overwhelming sentiment garnered from these opinions gives credence to the investing in strategic brand management because it is noted to be of significant importance to attaining corporate sustainability.

Figure 6: Importance of Strategic Brand Management to Corporate Sustainability

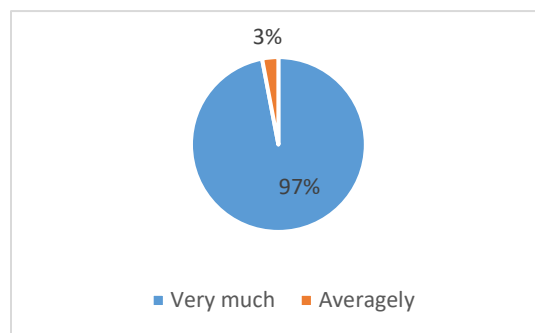


Source: Researcher’s Field Data 2021

4.9 IMPORTANCE OF CORPORATE SUSTAINABILITY TO ORGANIZATIONS

While discussing how strategic brand management and corporate sustainability, at this point, the study sought to ascertain the level of importance respondents gave to corporate sustainability as it relates to organizations. From the respondents sampled, 97% indicated corporate sustainability was very much important to organizations. Three percent of respondents also agreed corporate sustainability was important to organizations but pegged the extent of the importance to be only average. Once again, findings from this probe indicated that overall, corporate sustainability was significant concept that organizations should pay attention to.

Figure 7: Importance of Corporate Sustainability to Organizations

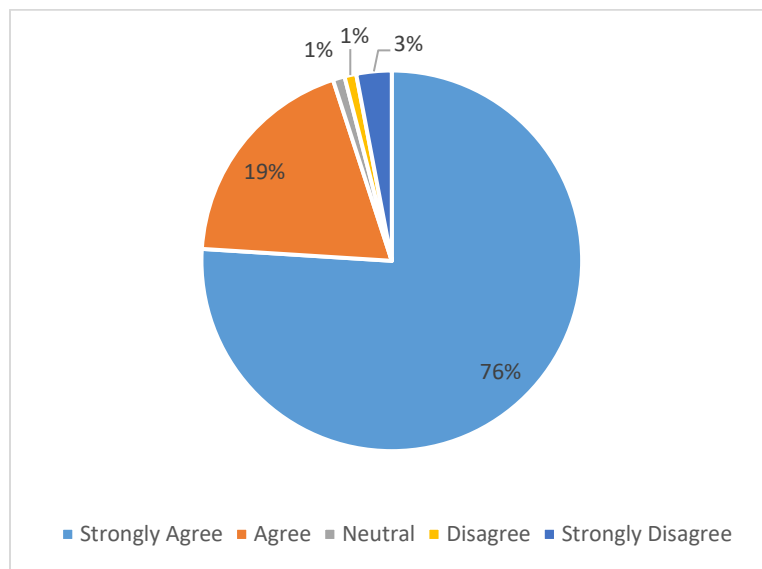


Source: Researcher’s Field Data 2021

4.10 BRAND MANAGEMENT AFFECTING ORGANIZATIONAL GROWTH

In ascertaining whether brand management affected overall organizational growth, a little over two-thirds of respondents were in affirmation of the assertion. From the responses, 76% strongly agreed with another 19% only agreeing even though one percent said they found the statement to be neutral. That notwithstanding, other three percent of the respondents strongly disagreed while one percent disagreed with the statement. Again, what the data suggests is that brand management is considered to be an important ingredient to attaining overall organizational growth. While strategic brand management has been established to be significant to achieving organizational objectives, if brand management is then seen to be key to attaining overall organizational growth, this means that organizations will continue to thrive which then ties in to long term sustainability.

Figure 8: Brand Management Affecting Organizational Growth

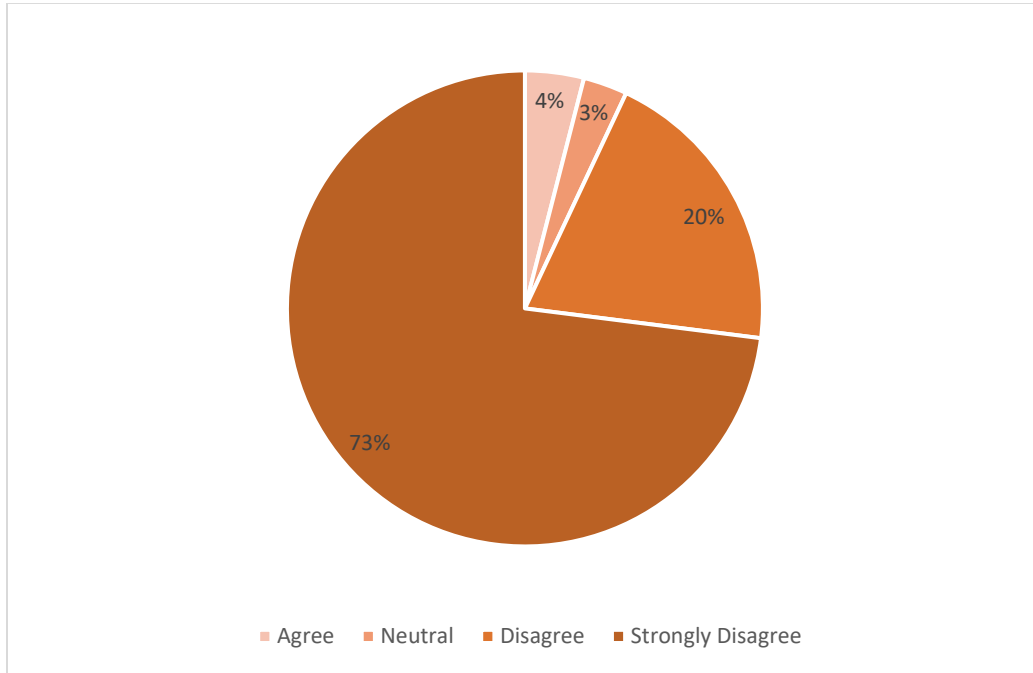


Source: Researcher's Field Data 2021

4.11 STRATEGIC BRAND MANAGEMENT FOR BIG ORGANIZATIONS

When asked if strategic brand management was for only big organizations, the majority of respondents (73%) strongly disagreed. Even though four percent of respondents agreed and another three percent said they were in agreement, 20% disagreed. Here as well, the indication from the respondents suggested that strategic brand management was not limited to only organizations perceived to be developed. This is because more than two-thirds of the respondents were confident strategic brand management played a significant role in all businesses, thus both large and small ones.

Figure 9: Strategic Brand Management for Big Organizations

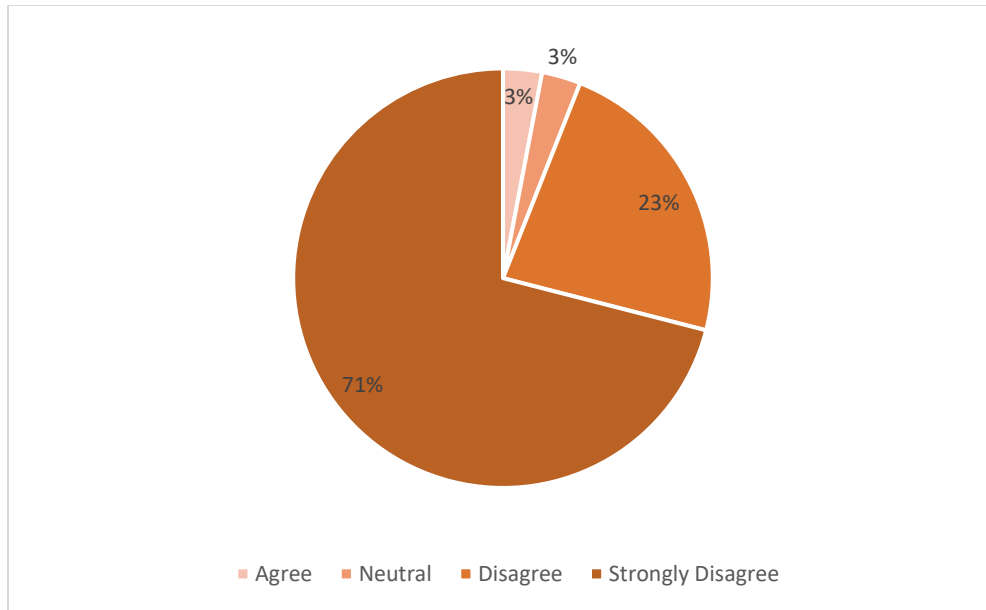


Source: Researcher’s Field Data 2021

4.12 CORPORATE SUSTAINABILITY FOR BIG ORGANIZATIONS

On whether corporate sustainability was only for big organizations, 71% of respondents were in strong disagreement while 23% also merely disagreed. This was then followed by three respondents who stayed neutral to the argument. On the contrary however, three percent of respondents agreed that corporate sustainability was only for big organizations. The implication of this data goes to suggest that a majority of the respondents subscribed to the idea that corporate sustainability was not limited to only big organizations. What this goes to suggest is that for organizational objectives to be achieved, corporate sustainability cannot be neglected.

Figure 10: Corporate Sustainability for Big Organizations

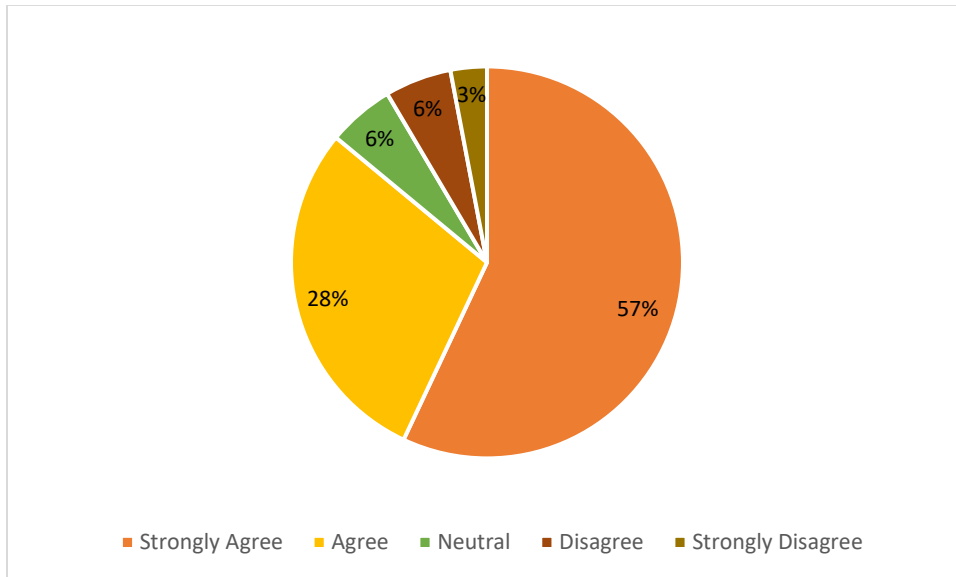


Source: Researcher's Field Data 2021

4.13 CORPORATE SUSTAINABILITY AND MANAGEMENT BACKING

Corporate sustainability, according to more than half of respondents polled, would thrive only with backing from management. As per to the responses, 57% strongly agreed, 28% agreed but not strongly, and six percent thought the statement was neutral. In the face-off however, three percent of respondents strongly disagreed with the statement, while six percent disagreed with it. Here as well, the indication was then that, for organizations to attain sustainability, it would have to have obtained the buy-in of its management. This suggestion then validates the notion that for organizations to attain their short and long term goals forecasted by its top management, corporate sustainability efforts cannot be underestimated.

Figure 11: Corporate Sustainability and Management Backing

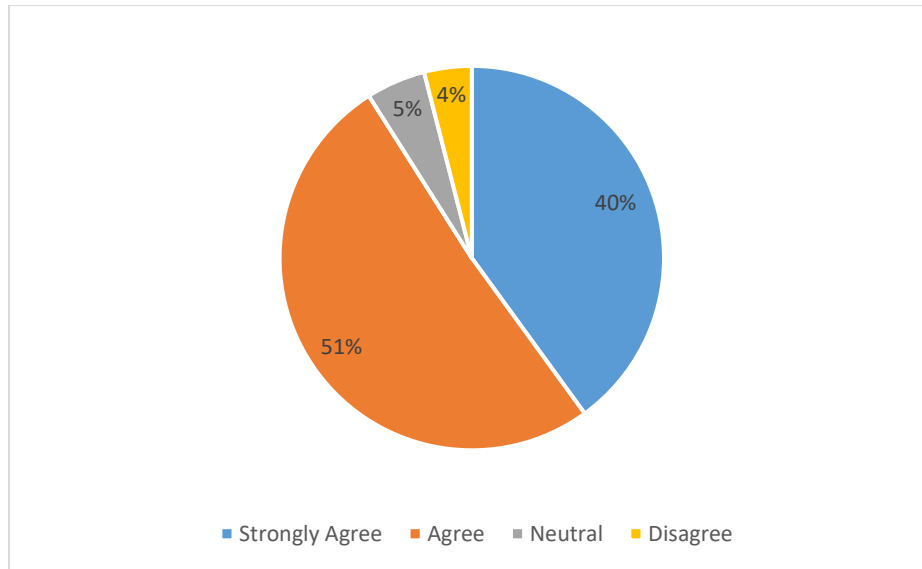


Source: Researcher's Field Data 2021

4.14 ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE AND CORPORATE SUSTAINABILITY

Faced with the assertion whether organizational culture affects the prospects of corporate sustainability, the majority of respondents (51%) indicated they agreed. A further 40% also strongly agreed despite the fact that four percent of respondents were opposed. This was then followed by another four percent of respondents who found it neutral. Building on the foundation laid from the idea that corporate sustainability is more feasible with management buy-in, it is no surprise that the respondents indicated that organizational culture could affect the prospects of corporate sustainability. It can be envisaged from this assertion that while corporate sustainability is significant to organizations, overall organizational culture could affect its progress because it is at the heart of the organization's makeup.

Figure 12: Organizational Culture and Corporate Sustainability

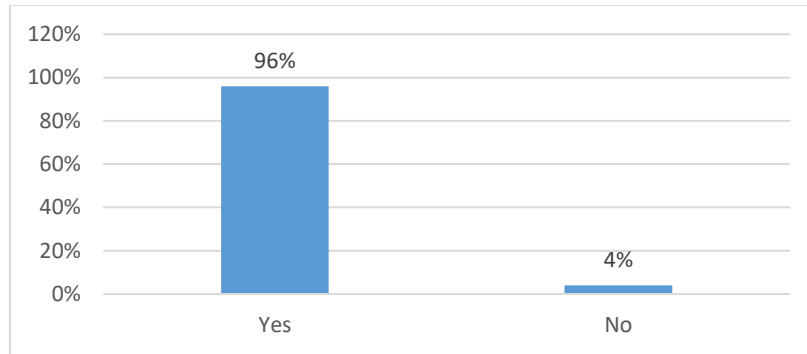


Source: Researcher’s Field Data 2021

4.15 STRATEGIC BRAND MANAGEMENT INFLUENCING PERCEPTION

When asked if strategic brand management could influence the perception of an organization, this view was subscribed to by 96% of respondents with only four percent going in opposition. This distinction in essence showcases how significant strategic brand management is to business executives. This is because per the respondents’ view, organizations seeking to shift or position themselves in a positive light should invest strategic brand management because it is ideal for the purpose.

Figure 13: Strategic Brand Management Influencing Perception



Source: Researcher’s Field Data 2021

4.16 WHY STRATEGIC BRAND MANAGEMENT INFLUENCES PERCEPTION

On why respondents subscribed to the view that strategic brand management could influence the perception of an organization, it was observed by 31% of respondents that strategic brand management helps position the organization or brand in the minds of the customers. Also, there is indication that good strategic brand management efforts could affect how customers view a brand or organization by 59% of respondents. Then again, according to 10% of respondents, strategic brand management could influence the perception of an organization because there was a positive correlation. While the views had variations, a cursory look at the arguments indicates that there is some sort of synergy with various reasons given as basis. This therefore goes to suggest that organizations hoping to recalibrate or deepen its image or reputation should place emphasis in strategic brand management activities.

4.17 HARNESSING STRATEGIC BRAND MANAGEMENT

While there has been affirmation of the essence of strategic brand management to organizations, in order to harness this concept, 10% of respondents indicated that instituting and maintaining an excellent customer service was key. Seven percent of respondents also noted that to harness

strategic brand management, organizations had to be engaged in active listening of the business environment. This is because through this effort, needs and wants can be collected and configured into the strategies being implement in line with brand management. Four percent of respondents also suggested continuous capacity building as a way to harnessing strategic brand management. This tied in to the assertion made 36% of respondents which suggested that to harness strategic brand management, organizations have to invest in continuous improvement. In all, these suggestions all could be found in ensuring total quality management as ascribed to by 43% of respondents. Overall, the various suggestions given bottles down to ensuring continuous development and improvement which can be obtained through capacity building. Interestingly, it could be noted that all the suggestions made by the respondents are interlinked in one way or the other. This therefore gives credence to the organizations or brands who want to harness strategic brand management adopting these measures.

4.18 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter focused on the presentation and analysis of data collected from business executives of Accra-based SMEs. The goal of this sample selection was to acquire accurate information that would reflect what was going on in the field of practice.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

5.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides an overview of the study, and a discussion of data analyzed and provides recommendations as well as a conclusion with insight from the findings of the study as well as information gleaned from other sources.

5.1 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This section discusses the objectives set for the study by juxtaposing the findings of the study with literature in order to ascertain points of convergence as well as those findings which did not confirm the arguments by the literature. Through this discussion, the end goal is to evaluate the role of strategic brand management in attaining corporate sustainability amongst Ghanaian businesses.

5.1.1 Understanding of Strategic Brand Management and Corporate Sustainability

As a way of ascertaining the respondents' appreciation of the variables, the probe sought to come up with their understanding of the concepts. This enquiry began with the respondents understanding of strategic brand management. Per the responses, it entailed processes individuals or organizations go through to distinguish their various brands with another suggesting strategic brand management was largely bothered on improving quality for all publics especially to customers and internal staff. This was then summed up with the view that strategic brand management has to do with processes put in place to enable individual or organizations matching brands with its organizational objectives. It was interesting to note that even though there were differing viewpoints of the concept, they did not appear to be that far off each other. Then again,

these varying viewpoints overall ties in to Hanna and Rowley's (2011) postulations that the foundation of strategic brand management is the selection of an appropriate strategy for the brand's growth, as well as the regular updating of that strategy. This to a significant extent shows that the respondents had a good understanding of what strategic brand management is and what it entails.

On corporate sustainability as well, it was found that the concept was seen as those plans and programs focused on achieving organizational objectives over the long term while other respondents saw it as centering on plans and activities undertaken to staying in business over a long period. Despite the fact that the respondents' opinions appeared to diverge on the surface, there appears to be a point of convergence in the long term. Continuity is seen in each of the concepts, indicating that corporate sustainability is dependent on it. Continuity refers to a company's or brand's capacity to extend its lifetime so that it can continue to be formidable for a long time. With business becoming a powerful force in society, with some companies outnumbering governments, businesses are also being pushed to invest in sustainability by society. Keller and Brexendorf (2019) for instance makes the point that many governments, citizens, and other stakeholders want to see businesses that care about the communities in which they operate. Failure to do so may result in the loss of a company's social license to operate, which is defined as society's trust in it.

This means that while corporate sustainability is critical for long-term success, strategic brand management not only increases the value of a product but also improves consumer connection. It is a crucial part of marketing that uses pictures or vital text to establish brand affirmations (Asif, Searcy, Garvare and Ahmad, 2011). Even while organizations use strategic brand management to help their brands and goods get global recognition, it also comprises integrative and long-term

policies that assist a firm create, develop, and manage its brand. Again, while the claim is made that corporations can add value to its products and services by following this long-term sustainable approach. It is a set of practices that aid in the creation of a distinct identity for a company by preserving brand character, quality, and client interactions (John, 2016). It is no longer sufficient for businesses to make or sell high-quality goods and achieve excellent market results (Chernev, 2020). The efforts of today's brands to make the world a better place is increasingly being measured which is why organizations and brands have to invest in it.

5.1.2 Challenges with Strategic Brand Management in Reaching Corporate Sustainability

Even though there is evidence from the findings that strategic brand management serves as a springboard to attaining corporate sustainability, there are still challenges to seeing the fruition of this initiative. With an overwhelming majority of respondents affirmed the assertion that could influence corporate sustainability, it is baffling that organizational makeup for instance could impede the process. This is hinged on the fact that per the findings, for corporate sustainability to be successful, it would have to have backing from management. Then again, some respondents were found to affirm the viewpoint that strategic brand management was for only big organizations. The implication of this mindset challenges corporate sustainability to the core because if the management of a business regard the business to be small, it would sideline corporate sustainability. This as well is backed by assertions made by respondents suggesting that corporate sustainability is for only big organizations.

Again, in organizations where the concept of corporate sustainability is foreign or new, the findings suggests that this presents an appetite to sideline corporate sustainability efforts mainly because organizational culture is salient to the adoption and progression of corporate sustainability as a whole. This again ties in directly to the assertion that management of

organizations could be a challenging factor to the implementation of strategic brand management efforts which would lead to corporate sustainability. This does not appear surprising because organizational culture of organizations are largely formed and informed by the management of the various organization. This then implies that if the management do no back or believe that strategic brand management efforts can lead to corporate sustainability, the idea does not see the light of day naturally indicating the thought will not make it into the organizational culture in essence.

Even though Asamoah (2015) is of the view that other evidence suggests that sustainability plans provide a competitive advantage, these findings defeat this insight significantly. This is because sustainability is presently seen as a delicate balance between the economic, environmental and social health of a community, nation and the world as a whole. With brands focusing on the strategic use of social responsibility to gain a competitive edge achieving long-term financial success, it is important to synergize the cycle facilitating strategic brand management so that organizations can approach corporate sustainability in a seamless manner. This is because Meffert, Burmann and Koers (2013) posits that strategic brand management has to include a careful fit between the firm's global marketing strategy and the desired brand image, together with a planning of the brand's medium and long-term goals to facilitate the strategic marketing planning process. Consumers are becoming increasingly adept at distinguishing between genuine commitment to sustainability and actions performed solely for show. By embracing sustainability, organizations are encouraged to accept new methods, technologies, and ideas, resulting in a culture of creativity. In the long term, this validates Kwarteng, Dadzie and Famiyeh's (2016) belief that long-term leadership and business practices have an impact on customers' brand decisions.

5.1.3 Exploiting Strategic Brand Management

With strategic brand management being established as an essential tool to reverse and maintain organizational fortunes towards the positive light, this objective sought to find out how the concept could be harnessed. To begin with, it was found that strategic brand management was believed to have an influencing ability on shifting the perception of an organization by a more that two-thirds (96%) of the respondents. The basis for this assertion was laid on the notion that strategic brand management helps position the organization or brand in the minds of the customers. This is essential because it appeals to Quaye and Mensah (2019) assertion that consumers are increasingly seeking for methods to integrate purchases with social benefits, and sustainable company tactics will continue to be a differentiator in their views.

The implication of this is that companies that embrace and share these strategies can boost their brands' reputation as well as their bottom line. This dovetails into the ideas presented by the response that for organizations to effectively harness, it had to strategic brand management; instituting and maintaining an excellent customer service was key, engage in active listening to the business environment, investing in capacity building, continuous improvement and ensuring total quality management. Overall, the different proposals boil down to assuring ongoing progress and improvement, which may be accomplished by growing capacity. It is indeed worth noting that all of the respondents' recommendations are interconnected in some way. As a result, organizations or brands that want to implement strategic brand management measures can do so with confidence.

In hindsight, another advantage to upholding strategic brand management is that the more people trust a brand, the more likely they are to be motivated to take action by it. Otchere, Annan and Anin (2013) as well opines that individuals are more likely to buy greener, more sustainable

items if a company incorporates environmental and social themes into its brand. While sustainability may not be sufficient in and of itself to develop a successful brand, adding it into the entire brand strategy can provide significant results (Agyapong and Boamah, 2013). While strategic brand management is based on selecting an appropriate growth strategy for the brand and updating it on a regular basis, this long-term sustainable policy allows a firm to add value to its products and services. This makes it a set of tactics that aid in the creation of a distinct identity for a business by preserving brand character, quality, and customer interactions, which is why all companies and brands wishing to extend their lifespan should not overlook it.

5.2 CONCLUSION

The study set out to evaluate the role of strategic brand management in attaining corporate sustainability amongst Ghanaian businesses. In order to realize this, data was collected from business executives of SMEs. This sample was appropriate because the study had specific objectives which sought to appreciate the understanding of strategic brand management and corporate sustainability by Ghanaian business executives, to explore the challenges with synergizing strategic brand management with corporate sustainability amongst Ghanaian businesses and to ascertain how strategic brand management could be exploited by Ghanaian businesses to attain corporate sustainability. Through a quantitative survey approach which polled seventy (70) business executives who were required to answer questionnaires administered to them.

It was found that overall, the respondents had a grasp the concepts of strategic brand management and corporate sustainability. This could be attributed to the fact that majority of the respondents were master's degree holders. That notwithstanding, lack of management buy-in and organizational were seen to be impediments which could hamper synergizing strategic brand

management with corporate sustainability amongst Ghanaian businesses. It was again found that strategic brand management aids in shifting the perception of an organization because it can be calibrated to position the organization or brand in the minds of the customers. From the numerous suggestions given on how to harness strategic brand management to attain corporate sustainability, adopting or working towards ensuring total quality management was at the heart of the discussion.

5.3 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The sample size chosen and employed for the study was insufficiently representative, making it impossible to extrapolate the findings beyond Accra or even Ghana. Again, the citing of indigenous Ghana literature was hampered by the lack of data on the topic from the Ghanaian setting. In addition, as a result of the safeguards imposed by Covid-19 prevention, the research methodology had to be altered to surveys, with questionnaires replacing in-depth interviews as the appropriate data collection tool.

5.4 ORIGINALITY OF THE STUDY

With the focus of evaluating the role of strategic brand management in attaining corporate sustainability amongst Ghanaian businesses, the variables juxtaposed made study stand out because of its uniqueness. Also, because the study narrowed in to explore the topic from SMEs' perspective, the study presented insight into how these SMEs process and harness strategic brand management as well as corporate sustainability in relation to their business. This data therefore serves as a foundation block to developing a framework for business in adopting strategic brand management while working towards corporate sustainability. Finally, this study stands out as it sought the opinion of respondents which gave a depiction of how strategic brand management and corporate sustainability influences Ghanaian businesses.

5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study recommends that SMEs, as well as other organizations, invest in strategic brand management, particularly if corporate sustainability is a top focus. This could be through a deliberate attempt on the part of the business because it can employ the benefits of strategic brand management to achieve its short and long-term objectives. Again, policymakers, civil society organizations, and non-governmental organizations should work together to design policies that encourage SMEs to adopt corporate sustainability as a whole or specific components of it that can complement and enhance their chances. Furthermore, while there has been a lot of work done on SMEs in the Ghanaian space, there has been very little work done on strategic brand management and corporate sustainability in the same light. This is why future research should step up the pace of this study to conduct further studies along the lines of replicating this study using alternative methodologies and sample sizes, among other things. This will present data that may be used to compare and contrast findings in order to help businesses establish a framework for implementing strategic brand management in the context of corporate sustainability for instance.

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APPENDIX
RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE

Dear Respondent,

I am graduate student of the Ghana Institute of Journalism and undertaking a study on the topic **“Evaluation of Strategic Brand Management in Corporate Sustainability”**. The study is being conducted as part of the requirement for the award of a Master’s degree in Public Relations. This questionnaire is designed to elicit information in pursuit of the research objectives. Kindly provide your candid opinion on the issues raised as the information collected will be treated with utmost confidentiality. Also, if you feel uncomfortable at any point, you can opt out. Again, this study is for a purely academic purpose.

Thank you for your co-operation.

SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHY OF RESPONDENT

1. What is your Gender?

i. Male [] ii. Female []

2. What is your age range?

i. Less than 30 years [] ii. 31- 40 years [] iii. 41-50 years [] iv. 51 years and above []

3. What is your highest educational qualification?

i. Certificate [] ii. HND [] iii. Degree [] iv. Masters [] v. Professional []

4. Which sector do you work?

- i. Communication [] ii. Health [] iii. Financial [] iv. Manufacturing [] v. Education []

Others, please specify

SECTION B: UNDERSTANDING OF STRATEGIC BRAND MANAGEMENT AND CORPORATE SUSTAINABILITY

5. What is your understanding of strategic brand management?

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6. What is your understanding of corporate sustainability?

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7. In your view, does strategic brand management have any influence on corporate sustainability?

- i. Yes [] ii. No []

8. What is the reason for your answer above?

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9. To what extent do you think strategic brand management is important to an organization?

- i. Very Much [] ii. Averagely [] iii. Below Average []

10. To what extent do you think corporate sustainability is important to an organization?

- i. Very Much [] ii. Averagely [] iii. Below Average []

SECTION C: CHALLENGES WITH STRATEGIC BRAND MANAGEMENT IN REACHING CORPORATE SUSTAINABILITY

Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree to each of the following statement. Use the following scale as a guide:

- 1. Strongly Agree 2. Agree 3. Neutral 4. Strongly Disagree 5. Disagree**

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Strongly Disagree	Disagree
11. Weak brand management affects overall organizational growth					
12. Strategic brand management is for only big organization					
13. Corporate sustainability is for only big organization					
14. Constant pressure to provide short-term financial results to the neglect of corporate sustainability					

15. Corporate sustainability initiatives will not thrive without management's backing					
16. Organizational culture affects the prospects of corporate sustainability					

SECTION D: EXPLOITING STRATEGIC BRAND MANAGEMENT

17. Can strategic brand management influence the perception of an organization?

- i. Yes []
- ii. No []

18. What is the reason for your answer above?

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19. How can organizations harness strategic brand management?

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THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME