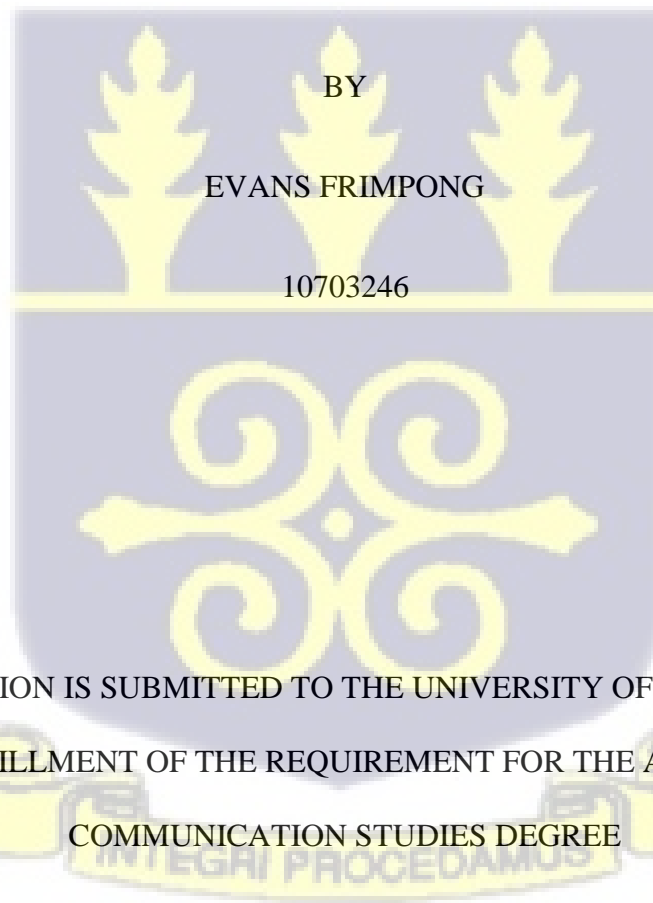


A STUDY OF PUBLIC RELATIONS ROLE IN PROMOTING CORPORATE SOCIAL
RESPONSIBILITY IN SELECT TELECOMMUNICATIONS COMPANIES IN GHANA



THIS DISSERTATION IS SUBMITTED TO THE UNIVERSITY OF GHANA, LEGON IN
PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT FOR THE AWARD OF MA IN
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Declaration

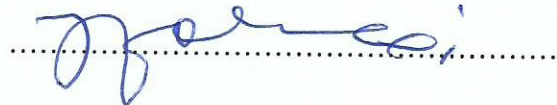
I hereby declare that except for references to other people's work, which have been duly cited and acknowledged, this dissertation is the result of my own research work conducted at the Department of Communication Studies, University of Ghana, Legon, under the able supervision of Rev. Fr. Dominic Maximilian Ofori (PhD).



Evans Frimpong

(Student)

Date 23/04/2021



Rev. Fr. Dominic Maximilian Ofori (PhD)

(Supervisor)

Date 23/04/2021

Dedication

This research is dedicated to my Mother Mrs. Angelina Attaa, my uncle Mr. Johnson Arthur and my siblings Richmond Nketiah, Frederick Gyan, Bridget Nkrumah Boateng and Kezia Nkrumah Boateng.

Acknowledgements

I am exceedingly grateful to the Most High God for carrying me through this study. I am very much grateful to my supervisor, Rev. Fr.. Dominic Maximillian Ofori for his time, patience and effort in guiding me throughout this study. I would also want to express my profound gratitude to the public relations and corporate social responsibility managers of both MTN and Vodafone Ghana for helping me in the collection of data for this study. Above all, I am very much thankful to all the lecturers of the Department of Communication Studies for the appreciable knowledge imparted in me throughout the period of my course.

Abstract

This study was premised on the notion that the act of practising public relations in a socially responsible organization played a vital role in advancing corporate social responsibility. Thus, public relations practitioners needed to have a deeper perspective about their work so as to effectively contribute meaningfully in projecting the image of their organizations through corporate social responsibility. The research therefore sought to find out the contributions of public relations in enhancing and promoting corporate social responsibility practice by studying two leading telecommunications companies in Ghana. Specifically, this study investigated the linkage between public relations and corporate social responsibility in Ghana; how public relations practitioners viewed their roles in corporate social responsibility; the contributions that public relations make in promoting corporate social responsibility; and some constraints that hinder public relations professionals' promotion of corporate social responsibility. This study was grounded in two theories: the stakeholders' theory and legitimacy theory. With the help of a semi-structured interview guide, the qualitative in-depth interview was the method upon which the research data for this study was gathered. The study's findings revealed a positive and a symbiotic relationship between public relations and corporate social responsibility because the two contributed extremely in the image building of the organization. The study also discovered four key roles played by public relations in the promotion of corporate social responsibility. The roles are: communicative role; advisory role; recommendation role; as well as monitoring and evaluation of effects. The significant contribution of this study is the empirical dimension it brings to the scholarship on the role public relations plays in helping organizations leverage their corporate social responsibility activities. Based on the findings of this study, it is therefore

recommended that a mixed method approach be employed by future researchers to uncover all the missing link in this study.

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CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION

1.0. Introduction

This study investigates critically, public relations' role in the promotion of the practice of corporate social responsibility in the Ghanaian telecommunications' industry. Although the two phenomena vary in concept, researchers argue that effective practice of public relations can be crucial to corporate social responsibility and that it should be spearheaded by public relations (Freitag, 2007; Kim & Reber, 2008). As well, according to L'Etang (2006); public relations and corporate social responsibility are so linked to the point of corporate social responsibility becoming a strategic tool for public relations' practice.

This research thus focuses on the linkage between public relations and corporate social responsibility and the role public relations play in the promotion and pursuit of corporate social responsibility activities. For instance, Kim and Reber (2008) contended that not much research has been done on how public relations contributes in the promotion of corporate social responsibility from the standpoints of public relations professionals. The study therefore argues that as the conscience of organizations, public relations role in issues management, reputation building and relationship building, makes the public relations professional a major player in promoting corporate social responsibility.

This chapter of the study therefore highlights the background to the study, statement of the problem, objectives of the research, the research questions, significance of the study, delimitations of the study as well as the organization of the study.

1.1 Background to the Study

As public relations moves from a more functional approach to a more co-creational approach, its focus has shifted to relationship management (Botan & Taylor, 2004; p. 652). Cutlip and Center (2013) corroborated the assertion by Botan and Taylor (2004) when they defined public relations as “the management function that establishes and maintains mutually beneficial relationships between an organization and its publics on whom success or failure depends.” (p. 3) The assertion by Botan & Taylor (2004) and the definition by Cutlip & Center (2013) clearly indicates that relationship management is an integral ingredient in determining the success of an organization. As well, public relations professionals should see their publics as active publics who co-create meaning and not passive stakeholders who are mere receivers and consumers of messages. Hutton (as cited in Swart 2001) concluded by stating categorically that relationship management is the only metaphor that can best be used as a model for public relations.

The whole idea of relationship management and its paradigm was researched and recommended as a general theory of public relations in 2003 by John A. Ledingham. Ledingham (2003), explained relationship management as the effective management of “Organization-public relationships around common interests and shared goals” (p.181). In his view, this relationship will inure to the advantage and benefit of all stakeholders or publics of the organization whether internal or external.

These developments and recent definitions of public relations underlie the move from the epoch of press agency, which focused predominantly if not fully on publicity, to the contemporary practice of the all-embracing two-way symmetrical communication (Botan &

Taylor, 2004). This contemporary era in the practice of public-relations comes with an increased focus on building and maintaining relationships between an organization and its various publics (Bruning & Ledingham, 2000; Lattimore, Baskin, Heiman, Toth & Van Leuven, 2004; Grunig, 2006). This whole idea of relationship-building brings to the fore management's responsibility to serve the interests of the publics, create mutual understanding and further facilitate dialogue and collaboration between the organization and its various publics (Ledingham & Bruning, 1998).

Also, Lindenmann (1999) observed that public relations' focus has shifted from communication of "key messages to selected audiences" to the recognition that an organisation's behaviour, and actions indirectly communicate the intention of the organization. This idea by Lindenmann (1999) clearly admonishes public relations practitioners to adopt all-encompassing method of communication that embraces every operation of organizational bodies. This paradigm shift has further legitimized the ultimate purpose of building and sustaining positive relationships by public relations practitioners (Ledingham, 2003; Ward as cited in Lindenmann, 1999). To this end, it can therefore be argued that relationships will remain an integral part of public relations practice (Coombs as cited in Bruning and Lambe 2008, p. 141; Sallot, 1996).

Thus, for public relations practitioners to build, maintain and sustain relationship among their key stakeholders, scholars have engaged in discussions on corporate social responsibility since it remains a key strategy employed by organizations and corporations in building and managing relationships with their various stakeholders. For instance, management scholars have noted that besides profit generation, managers have a responsibility to be agents of addressing the needs of their stakeholders. This assertion is highlighted by Hemingway and Maclagan (2004) in their definition of corporate social responsibility to mean practices which mandates

“managers to take responsibility for identifying and accommodating the interest of those affected by the organization’s actions” (p. 33). It is by so doing, that the organization will create goodwill for itself and claim legitimacy.

Similarly, Collier and Esteban (2007) have indicated that organizations can endure the competitive market environment when they come to the understanding that their continuous existence is partly determined by how they are able to deal with environmental challenges responsibly. Academic researches in contemporary times, have brought to the fore, the ramification of the pursuit of corporate social responsibility relative to organizational success. Notably, scholars and researchers have provided several definitions for corporate social responsibility. Pitt (2012) for example defined corporate social responsibility based on three distinct constructs: environmental corporate social responsibility, which focuses on environmental sustainability; external social corporate social responsibility which emphasizes acting on the demands of people and localities; and “internal social corporate social responsibility” which looks at demographical constructs (Aguilera, Rupp, Williams & Ganapathi, 2007; Orlitzky, Siegal & Waldman, 2011; Pitt, 2012).

It is important to indicate that globally, corporate social responsibility is becoming more or less like a doctrine in the business sector. As a result of this, multinational companies like telecommunications do not only operate in various sectors to maximize profit, they also operate to create employment, thereby contributing to the overall development of the economy (Hinson & Koduah, 2012). Particularly in Ghana, multinational and small scale enterprises in the communication industry are known to have good corporate social responsibility as these companies embark on social ventures for the benefits of local communities that are affected by the activities and operations of these organizations. These ventures may comprise building

schools, recreational centers, hospitals or even awarding scholarships to students (Yeboah, 2010). These organizations are embarking on such initiatives because organizations are becoming aware that the pursuit of corporate social responsibility activities presents a great opportunity in building goodwill amongst publics which would further lead to the eventual boosting of their corporate image and reputation. Corporate social responsibility literature suggests that the mere production of quality goods and services is not a guarantee for organizational success in today's competitive corporate world. Rather, overall ethical behaviour of organizations is an indispensable part of the success. This ethical behaviour includes the measures organizations put in place to address the adverse effects of their operations on their stakeholders.

Against this backdrop, telecommunications companies in Ghana have embraced and intensified the pursuit of corporate social responsibility. Issues on telecommunications companies in Ghana having a manifest focus on corporate social responsibility was indicated by Hinson and Kodua (2012). They indicated that a telecommunications organization won the corporate social responsibility organization of the year for 2009 among "The Ghana Club 100." Hinson and Kodua (2012) as well noted that "building shareholders' value by ensuring maximum customer satisfaction through providing latest telecommunication services, at the most economical rates while meeting its social responsibilities as a good corporate citizen and providing growth prospects for its employees" (p. 335) was the mission of the organization that emerged victorious. Expansion of the telecommunications industry has been met with a proportional increase in health problems posed to some communities, especially those communities where masts have been erected. For this reason, they feel that one of the ways through which they will gain legitimacy in the eyes of the communities where they operate is for

them to be socially responsible. CSR literature has suggested that companies will experience lower levels of community conflict with the strategic and successful implementation of CSR interventions and programmes (Jenkins, 2006).

Heath (2006) meanwhile has argued that public relations and corporate social responsibility have relatively been equated to be identical concepts in that as conscience of the organization, public relations practitioners have a duty to see to it that their organizations are in full compliance with their social contract and all their obligations. Similarly, Clark (2000) reported Bernays as saying, “public relations is the practice of social responsibility” (p. 368). This is because public relations professionals are regarded as liaisons between organizations and their stakeholders. In other words, by virtue of their training, professionals of public relations acquire requisite skills and expertise in offering strategic advice on corporate social responsibility by engaging various stakeholders to buy into the corporate social responsibility initiatives.

While there is considerable literature relative to corporate social responsibility’s ethical and practical value to organizations as indicated by (Clark, 2000; Jenkins, 2004; Schaefer, 2004), not much attention has been directed at investigating public relations’ role as regards promoting the pursuit of corporate social responsibility in Ghana. Similarly, public relations contributions relative to the pursuit of corporate social responsibility remains obscured in public relations literature. For instance, Kim and Reber (2008) stated that “very little research has been directed at investigating the role of public relations in corporate social responsibility from practitioners’ perspectives” (P. 4). In Ghana, for example, the chunk of available literature on corporate social responsibility investigated the benefit organizations will accrue in their pursuit of corporate social responsibility initiatives (Hinson & Nyame, 2006; Yeboah, 2010; Hinson, 2011) with very

little evidence on public relations' contribution in the promotion and pursuit of comprehensive corporate social responsibility programme in Ghana. Therefore, the research seeks to add to existing scholarship on the convergence of public relations and corporate social responsibility through the diverse roles public relations could play. The study focuses on the Ghanaian telecommunications industry.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

Evidence from literature indicates public relations' prospect in contributing to corporate social responsibility pursuit. For instance, scholars have argued to the effect that public relations has crucial contributions to make as regards corporate social responsibility pursuit and that public relations must supervise it (Freitag, 2007; Kim & Reber, 2008). Also, public relations intersects with corporate social responsibility so much so much so that public relations professionals can employ corporate social responsibility as a viable instrument for the pursuit of public relations (L'Etang, 2006; L'Etang 1994; L'Etang, 1996). L'Etang (2006) further noted that it is congruous to put corporate social responsibility under the domain of public relations in that corporate social responsibility has an effect on the relationship management of organizational bodies. Similarly, there has been some observation that public relations share similar goals and processes with corporate social responsibility thereby making corporate social responsibility a creation of public relations (Clark, 2000; Franketal, 2001). Although there is existing research on public relations as practiced in Ghana (Gyan, 1991; Wu & Baah-Boakye, 2008; Wu & Baah-Boakye, 2009; Boakye, Nsor & Tabi, 2012; Adjei, 2014; Asante, 2016; Thompson, 2018) and how corporate entities in the country leverage corporate social responsibility to burnish their image and reputation (Hinson & Nyame, 2006; Yeboah, 2010; Hinson, 2011; Ofori-Agyekum, 2016), as yet, there is not much that has been said about how

public relations as a professional practice could be employed in promoting corporate social responsibility in Ghana. To this end, this research seeks to add to existing scholarship relative to the convergence of public relations and corporate social responsibility through the diverse roles public relations could play within context Ghana.

1.3. Objectives of the Study

The principal goal of the work is to find out the role of public relations in promoting corporate social responsibility within the Ghanaian context.

Precisely, the study seeks to do the following:

1. To find out the relationship between public relations (PR) and corporate social responsibility in Ghana;
2. To explore how public relations practitioners view their roles in corporate social responsibility;
3. To ascertain the contributions of PR in the promotion of CSR; and
4. To ascertain some of the constraints that hinder the promotion of CSR by PR practitioners.

The next part of this study presents the research questions underpinning the study.

1.4. Research Questions

In enabling the researcher realize the objectives set for the study, the following questions will serve as a guide to the research:

1. What is the relationship between public relations and corporate social responsibility?

2. How do public relations practitioners view their roles in corporate social responsibilities?
3. In what ways do public relations contribute in the pursuit of corporate social responsibility in Ghana?
4. What are the constraints that hinder the effective promotion of corporate social responsibility by public relations practitioners in Ghana?

The researcher is of firm belief that the findings from the study in relation to the aforementioned research questions will help realize objectives of this research

1.5. Significance of the Study

Ultimately, this study is relevant because the study will bring to bear the significant roles of public relations in the performance of corporate social responsibility in corporations and project the nuances that inhibit the roles played by the practitioners of public relations in the promotion of corporate social responsibility projects. Particularly, the study will contribute to scholarship in the provision of practical evidence with respect to the fundamental purpose for embarking on corporate social responsibility amongst organizations generally and Ghana in particular; the findings from this study will help discover and establish the actual contributions of public relations in the pursuit and promotion of corporate social responsibility which has gained little attention in Ghana; findings from this research would also provide a guide for students, practitioners, scholars and researchers who would want to delve deeper into public relations' contributions and roles in the promotion of corporate social responsibility activities; the results from the study will aid corporate entities appreciate the relevance of public relations not just in the promotion of corporate social responsibility but as well, public relations overall importance to organizational success.

1.6. Synopsis of the Study

In examining public relations' role in the promotion of corporate social responsibility, this work has been organized into five distinct chapters. The first chapter presents the background to the study, problem statement, research objectives, the research questions as well as significance of the work. The second part discusses theoretical framework of the work as well as reviews of academic literature that are germane to the study's topic.

The third chapter of this study discusses the methodology of the study. Here, the research method, the method of data collection, instrument, research population, sample size and units of analysis, sampling procedure as well as data analysis procedure are all discussed. The chapter four of this research offered analyses and discussions of the data collected based on research questions.

Fifth and final chapter which is the conclusion section of this research work, summarizes the research and highlights the major or key findings of the study. It also discusses implications of findings, limitations and makes recommendations based on the limitations.

Chapter Summary

This chapter of the study first of all focused on the background of study, it proceeded to present problem statement. The research objective and the research questions were subsequently presented. Finally, the study demonstrated the relevance of the study and outlined the synopsis of the work.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0. Introduction

Even though public relations and corporate social responsibility are two distinct areas in research with varied models and theories, the two have certain conjoint values. This part of the research therefore tries to draw the linkage of public relations with regard to corporate social responsibility by carefully reviewing articles and works that speaks to the topic under discussion. This review will help in determining the impact and prospects of the two phenomena. First, the chapter explains the theories that will guide this work and explicates the relevance of the theory to the course of this work. .

As well, given the nature of the topic, this chapter discusses works of researchers by providing the background to corporate social responsibility as well as reviewing works on rationale for performing corporate social responsibility. Moreover, the chapter illustrates the linking point between the two phenomenal from wide range of public relations functions.

2.1. Theoretical Framework

To provide direction and focus for this study, the research will be guided by two main theories. The first theory which underpins this work is stakeholder theory. The study will as well be guided by the legitimacy theory. Together, these theories will help the researcher in analyzing and interpreting the findings of the data collected.

2.1.1. The Stakeholder Theory

Stakeholder theory originates from business as well as organizational studies. This theory describes how organizations attempt to manage organizational relationships with varied publics. The concept stakeholder was first mentioned in 1963 by Edward Freeman. The early conceptualization of the theory is attributed to “Edward Freeman in 1984” when he asserted in his book titled, “*Strategic Management: A Stakeholder Approach*” that “the intention of stakeholder management is to create methods to manage the different groups and relationships that resulted in a strategic manner” (Freeman, 1984). Freeman (1984) outlines “a managerial and practical scope” which eventually formed the background for expanding the stakeholder theory. Freeman (2004) explains stakeholder as “those groups who are vital to the survival of the organization” (p. 31). It therefore presupposes that organizations have responsibility to create as much value as possible for its various publics.

Freeman (1984) further suggested to the effect that organizational leaders must prepare favorable grounds through the formulation and execution of procedures that inure to the wellbeing of organizational stakeholders. It is worthy of note that the idea of these procedure for managing and integrating the relationships and welfares of the publics must be done in a manner that guarantees the immediate and future success as well as the continued existence of the organization. These tenets of theory invoke the boundary-spanning duty of public relations practitioners. This is because effective public relations dictates that the practitioner liaise with all these stakeholders by establishing favourable relations amongst these diverse groups. This presupposes that the stakeholder concept is very much particular with clever organizational management which thrives on promoting warm relationship with stakeholders so as to develop organizational strategies.

Stakeholder concept by Freeman (1984) informed Donaldson and Preston (1995) theoretical development. Donaldson and Preston (1995) in their article “*The Stakeholder Theory of the Cooperation: Concepts, evidences and Implications,*” held the view that the literature on stakeholder theory can be categorized into three approaches: “Descriptive approach, Instrumental approach and Normative approach.”

The co-authors indicated that the descriptive approach is concerned with understanding the relationship between organizational leaders and their publics and how these leaders care about the welfare of their publics. This approach presupposes that organizations are perceived as representatives of interests, sometimes supportive and sometimes unsupportive. Instrumental approach aims at analyzing the ramification of incorporating the welfare of public in the management of organizations. The normative deals with acting ethically in the dispensation of duties.

The stakeholder theory is relevant for this work in the following ways.. Firstly, descriptive approach of the stakeholder theory will help understand how managers including public relations practitioners care about the welfare of their publics. Secondly, instrumental approach will help in understanding the ramification of incorporating the welfare of publics in the management of organizations. Lastly, the normative approach will help in uncovering the ethical considerations of PR in their CSR pursuits.

2.1.2. Legitimacy Theory

One other important theory that underpinned this work is the legitimacy theory. The legitimacy theory was propounded by Dowling and Pfeffer in 1975. The theory traces its root from the “organizational legitimacy concept” by Dowling and Pfeffer (1975). Dowling and

Pfeffer (1975) defined “Organizational Legitimacy” as “a condition or status which exists when an entity’s value system is congruent with the value system of the larger social system of which the entity is a part” (p. 122). The theory suggests that organizations repeatedly seek to work within the confines and norms in their operating societies. The theory is predicated on the assumption that there is an existence of “social contract” between the organization and the community where they operate (Deegan, 2000; Mathew 1993; Patten 1991).

The theory presupposes that corporate social responsibility initiatives are regarded as strong tool in obtaining legitimacy and publicity within the surrounding communities of the organization (Moir, 2001). Contributing to the development of the theory, Lindblom (as cited in Moir 2001) indicates to the effect that corporate entities could adopt measures in convincing the publics, or change the mindset of people about the unfavourable things about the organization. On his part, Campbell (2002) connects legitimacy theory to reporting of corporate social responsibility. He attributed the publication of corporate social responsibility reports by organization to mean a ploy geared towards validating the organization’s activities and brightening its image. This assertion by Campbell (2002) particularly, makes public relations a crucial body in claiming legitimacy for organizations through corporate social responsibility pursuits. This is because as communication facilitators, public relations practitioners serve as the liaisons managing information flow between their organizations and their publics. And for this reason, they are better positioned to communicate corporate social responsibility of corporations to augment their legitimacy. That notwithstanding, Guthrie and Parker (2012) analysis on the reports on social disclosure debunks the seeming connection.

The legitimacy theory is particularly relevant for this study because the idea of gaining and preserving external support from publics is central and well known in practical and

theoretical terms in so far as public relations is concerned. Therefore public relations practitioner's ability to foster good relationships with these stakeholder groups as well as win their consent helps solidify their legitimacy and facilitate the acquisition of the needed social license to operate. The next section of the work will review works of scholars that are germane to realizing the objectives of this study..

2.2. Review of Related Literature

A considerable amount of literature has been directed to prospects of public relations in contributing to corporate social responsibility in organizations. A public relations scholar, L'Etang (2006) noted, "CSR falls within the portfolio of PR because it affects a company's image and reputation" (p.414). Also, scholars have observed similarities in public relations and corporate social responsibility in terms of processes and goals (Clark, 2000) and averred corporate social responsibility is only the making of public relations (Frakental, 2001). To this end, this part enunciates the background of corporate social responsibility and extricates the rationale for its performance. It as well illustrates how the core functions of public relations intersect with the strategic pursuit of corporate social responsibility as well as the prospects of effective public relations in the promotion of responsible practices. This review will provide good enough information to enrich the discussions of the findings.

2.2.1. Background to Corporate Social Responsibility

Snider, Hill and Martin (2003) have stated that in the last decade, organizations with socially responsible programmes have increased considerably creating the impression that a new phenomenon has emerged from corporate social responsibility. However, Asongu (2007) indicated, discussions about the social responsibilities of business dates back to the 1920s and

had evolved and developed into present day corporate social responsibility initiative in (p. 30). Bowen (1953) is mentioned as the promulgator of corporate responsibilities. Maignan (2001) claims that the first article by Bowen in 1953 gave rise to an unprecedented amount of literature in the dimensions of corporate social responsibilities (Ackerman & Bauer, 1976; Davis, 1973; Eells & Walton, 1961; Mason, 1960; McGuire, 1963).

Conceptually, corporate social responsibility has now assumed a household name both “economic-wise” and in theory (Klein & Dawar, 2004; Marin & Ruiz, 2007; Melé, 2006). For this reason, it is vital to investigate its relevance in the public relations literature because when not managed well, corporate social responsibility could scupper the image and identity organizations have. Also, being “organizational conscience,” practitioners of public relations must assume a seminal role in corporate social responsibility’s discussions and subsequent implementation. Hinson and Ndhlovu (2011) noted that organizations have developed from the initial thought of profit maximization to the new model that as responsible organizations, they assume some obligations that transcend profit maximization. Chahal and Sharma (2006) also averred that corporate social responsibility is now organizations’ responsibility and has now become social license needed for operation (Schmidt & Tropp, 2009).

Scholars have extensively argued about the relevance or otherwise of the performance of corporate social responsibility. For instance, Friedman (1962) emphasized that “the approval to pursue any kind of social responsibility other than the maximization of shareholder value by organizational leaders would challenge the relevance of a free society.” Moir (2001) also argued that whether organizations must pursue corporate social responsibility or not whichever way their responsibilities ought to be is dependent on the economic standpoint of that organization

(p.2). What Moir (2001) sought to suggest in his assertion is that organizations can either be in “the neo-classical or the behavioural form” (.Cyert & March as cited in Wartick & Wood, 1998)

Commenting on the topic, Perrini (2006) indicated that the corporate social responsibility concept emerged from “two parallel developments. The first development was based on the efforts of policy makers and organizations to communicate information on corporate social responsibility practices and socially responsible behaviour through several initiatives including former definitions.” This assertion by Perrini (2006) means that before organizations even get the license to operate, there is a clear requirement from policy makers as regards the pursuits of corporate social responsibility. The second parallel development began as the result of relationship between organizations and the ethical implications thereof. By these assertions, it is obvious that he was drawing the attention of organizations on effects of their activities on their publics and the need to engage in responsible practices to foster the kind of relationship the organization needs to operate well. In spite of all the disparities between the concepts, there were some commonalities concerning the notion that organizations have a responsibility to act, though willingly, it needed to comply with corporate social responsibility standards and even exceed the legal requirements (Davis, 1973).

Authors noted that the concept of corporate social responsibility concerned itself with the mutualism of relationship amongst organizations as well as communities where the organizations operate (Ackerman, 1975; Preston & Post, 1975). Against his backdrop, Garriga and Mele (2004) averred that “detection and scanning of, and response to, the social demands that achieve social legitimacy, greater social acceptance and prestige” (p. 58) was very crucial, even though organizations are also to be mindful of their long-term objective of profit maximization. The understanding is that responsible organizations attain social legitimacy because the various

stakeholders are very much happy to be associated with these organizations and that the organizations accrue to themselves goodwill and the peace of mind needed for their successful operation. The subsequent part of the work expounds the rationale for performing corporate social responsibility.

2.2.2. Rationale for Corporate Social Responsibility

Investigating the rationale for pursuing of corporate social responsibility, McDonald and Rundle-Thiele (2008) outlined rewards that organizations incur through the pursuit of corporate social responsibility initiatives included: “increased profits; customer loyalty; trust and positive brand attitude; as well as fighting negative publicity” (Brown & Dacin, 1997; Drumwright, 1996; Maignan & Ferrell, 2001; Murray & Vogel, 1997). As well, Handelman and Arnold (1999) explained that once organizations engage in corporate social responsibility pursuits, their clients develops strong attachment with the organization and therefore project the good name of the organization. It is widely suggested that customers can be goodwill ambassadors of an organization when their expectations are met by the services of an organization. In their survey among managers, Maignan and Ferrell (2001) concluded by stating authoritatively, the direct correlation of organizations’ corporate social responsibility projects and stakeholders’ loyalty. In a related research, Berger and Kanetkar (1995) as well as Creyer and Ross (1997) noted the willingness of customers to support organizations when organizations embark on corporate social responsibility activities.

Similarly, McDonald and Rundle-Thiele (2008) noted “that in the retail environment, corporate social responsibility in the form of support for a non-profit organisation and/or positive ethical practices lead to store-loyalty, emotional attachment to the store as well as store-interest,

which then has a ripple effect on the behaviour of customers in the form of the increased percentage of shopping done at the store and the amount of purchases”. Sen et al. (2006) observed that in occasions where publics were privy to the philanthropic activity of the organization, the publics had positive attitudes towards such organizations thereby identifying strongly with the organization.

Contributing to this subject, Jones and Murrasse (2003) also stated:

as environmental pressures continue to increase, companies that improve environmental performance more than their peers are likely to achieve superior financial returns and competitive positioning over the mid to long term. In addition, corporate environmental leaders frequently report achieving enhanced profitability in the short term (p. 34)

This assertion from Jones and Murrasse (2003) suggests that by integrating unforeseen occurrences into the strategic plans of organizations, corporate social responsibility could be a strategic avenue for the benefit of the organization.

In summary, Polonsky and Jevons (2009) noted that the performance of corporate social responsibility activities was crucial so organizations must not relent in making a deliberate attempt as to how to leverage their corporate social responsibility initiatives, “thus translating doing good into strategic benefit”(p. 328). It is therefore important to bring to the fore that as strategic mind of organizations, the public relations practitioners assume a crucial responsibility in the promotion of corporate social responsibility particularly, in the telecommunications companies in Ghana.

2.2.3. The Relationship Between Public Relations and Corporate Social Responsibility

Corporate social responsibility has transcended its traditional idea of economic contribution to accommodate the all-encompassing factors (Carroll, 1979). In her work, L'Etang (2006) has noted "CSR falls within the portfolio of public relations because it affects a company's image and reputation" (p.414). Similarly, there has been observation to the effect of public relations and corporate social responsibility sharing related goals as well as processes (Clark 2000) has been argued that corporate social responsibility is just the making of public relations (Frakental 2001). In his work, Daugherty (2001) asserted that "public relations practitioners are instrumental in helping corporations to be socially responsible" (p. 394). Freitag (2007) affirmed that "ethical management focus public relations leaders are capable to take purview of CSR" (p. 40).

These glaring commonalities likened the two phenomena in research and practice. The findings of Kim and Reber's (2008) study of 313 PR professionals revealed close to 33% of respondents identifying "significant management role of public relations" to counsel business executives to develop corporate social responsibility programmes. "Other roles identified comprised or included philanthropy; relationship-building; acting as promulgator of ethical standards and communicating the organization's corporate social responsibility programmes" (Kim & Reber, 2008). Not only do the research findings project the seminal role of public relations, however, they as well bring to the fore the various dimensions to public relations in corporate social responsibility projects.

On his part, Clark (2000) in examining what she perceived "as two separate fields" noted that although the intersection between public relations and corporate social responsibility is

underdeveloped, the two fields sought to enhance the quality of the relationship between organizations and their strategic publics. She further accentuated the public relations professionals expertise “to scan the political, social, and historical environment” to assist in corporate social responsibility programme development. She further indicated that both phenomena “adopts and foster organization-public relationship with relevant community groups and individuals through corporate social responsibility activities and public relations tactics” (Clark, 2000).

However, Zurita (2006) drawing on the conclusion made by Clark (2000), questioned public relations’ contribution in the pursuit of corporate social responsibility initiatives. She indicated that as a managerial function, it behooved public relations to “communicate and promote corporate social responsibility activities but noted that corporate social responsibility is not the same as public relations”. She however indicated that the programmess of corporate social responsibility should be a collective effort of “public relations, management and employees” (Zurita, 2006). To this end, public relations act as environmental scanning agents; take notice of possible opportunities or threats to corporate social responsibility initiatives; disseminates information on corporate social responsibility to the publics; and build positive relationships with the locality. Simply put, public relations is regarded as an effective weapon for disseminating corporate social responsibility projects. Similarly, Frynas (2005) and Banerjee (2008) have both indicated that public relations and corporate social responsibility programmes are inextricably linked through related functions and needs of communication. The two phenomenon help in relationship-building; reputation management; community relations; and risk mitigation efforts of the organization. This convergence of the two phenomena in pursuing these functions helps to establish a connection and intersection of the two phenomena. The next

section discusses Public Relations' Role in Advancing Responsible Practice Through Relationship Management

2.2.4. Public Relations' Role in Promoting Responsible Practice Through Relationship Management

Studies have indicated that as far back as the 1990s, consideration was given to the benefits organizations can incur through relationship management. Ledingham and Bruning (2000) discussed this perspective of relationship management. Ledingham (2003) established that this approach is premised on the core assumption of "PR balances the interests of organizations and the public through the management of organization-public relationships" (p.181). Researchers have noted that the increasing attention to the relationship building approach has changed the phase of public relations from the "traditional communication functions to management function that utilizes communication strategically" (Ledingham & Bruning, 1998; p.56). To this end, this approach seeks to extend the key tenets of public relations beyond the sponsoring of organizations to include the immediate and the larger community (Ledingham & Bruning, 2000). In other words, the relationship management suggests that public relations through symmetrical communication flavours communication in the management and sustainenance of relationships with its varied stakehokders (Grunig, 2006).

Not far too long, Phillips (2006) noted that "relationships are the key to unlocking all other corporate values that opens the door to a new form of corporate wealth" p.37. With respect to this assertion, Phillips (2006) further indicated: "The challenge for communication managers is to understand how they could contribute to the process of wealth creation" (p. 213). This school of thought offers an opportunity for public relations professionals to take advantage of the

benefits from their “relational function” that could help in the advancement and accomplishment of organizational goals, while serving the interest of the publics. To this end, the contribution of public relations in generating wealth will remain controversial unless and until public relations takes a neutral position.

Contributing to the value of relationship management in advancing responsible behaviour, Waddock and Smith (2000) indicated that ideal corporate citizen depends on good relationship with publics. They noted that positive relationship is particularly advanced and sustained under the principles of “fairness, openness and honest engagement in a dialogical way” to ensure the consideration of mutual benefits between organizations and the publics. (p. 50). They, however, acknowledged the impossibility of sufficiently meeting everyone’s interest. This position is supported by Jahansoozi (2006) who argued that the relationship between organizations and stakeholders demonstrate the willingness for organizations “to understand, listen, and develop a dialogue with their important stakeholders” (p. 942). She further revealed that openness is a key ingredient for building and rebuilding trust in organization-community relationships. In addition, she noted that “rebuilding trust requires transparency as publics need ‘evidence’ that the organization is doing what it claims to be” (Jahansoozi 2007, p.400). It is clear from existing scholarship, therefore, that public relations contributions in projecting organizational activities including corporate social responsibility programmes is ultimately to allow for openness and as well stimulate publics’ trust. The next section will discuss public relations’ contribution in promoting corporate social responsibility through issues management.

2.2.5. Public Relations' Role in Promoting Corporate Social Responsibility through Issues Management

Ability of public relations in monitoring and predicting concerns and matters that are inimical and could wreak havoc in organizations strategically positions public relations on the top echelon to play a part in the decision making process of organizations (Lattimore et al. 2004). Chase (as cited in Cutlip et al., 2006) explained “issues management as the process of closing the gap between corporate action and stakeholder expectation.” Contributing to the discussion, Burson (1974) highlighted that “the public demand not only that corporations be responsive, but that they respond immediately” (p. 228). These demands have shaped organizations' responsibilities to corporate social responsibility from a “reactive programme (as a means to respond to a crisis) to a more proactive one (continuous course of action)”. This change implies that issues management overlaps with corporate social responsibility strategically at managerial point (L'Etang, 2006). L'Etang (2006) further asserts that “Issues management is linked to corporate social responsibility at a strategic level because emerging issues are often of a social nature, to which organizations may need to respond either through issues advocacy advertising, PR campaigns, or programmes of CSR”. (p.409). Kitto (1998) argues that the concerns of the publics over the ethics of organizations and the social performance of the organization provides fertile atmosphere where issues management is crucial. Kitto (1998) further indicates that issues management involves “responding to public concerns in an effective organized manner” (p. 1). The claim involves opening up to the publics about activities of the organization directed at meeting their needs.

The overall effect is that public relations' potential in monitoring and predicting concerns and matters that are inimical and could wreak havoc in organizations helps them to take decisive

method of doing what is deemed appropriate. Therefore it calls for the need of public relations professionals to serve as prompt alarm agents to help detect and solve issues head on before they escalate into crises. The next section discusses public relations' role in enlightening self-interest through reputation building.

2.2.6 Public Relations' Role in Promoting Self-Interest through Reputation Building

As the face of the organization, public relations professionals make seminal contributions in putting the organization in the good books of its strategic stakeholders. According to Argenti and Druckemiller (2004), "Corporate reputation refers to the perception of collective constituents towards an organization" (p. 24). Organizational reputation has been accepted as an important organizational asset. On their part, Forstmoser and Herger (2006) argued that good reputation gives an organization competitive advantage while posing a threat to a organization's commercial when not handled well. Corporate reputation is a construction by publics "based on information available to them from a wide range of communication activities, events, issues, relationships and experiences with the company" (Fombrun & Shanley 1990; L'Etang 2008). Fombrun (1996) noted that "reputation building is a form of enlightened self-interest which generates value to organizations through a strong relationship not just with customers but also with other key stakeholders, by meeting their needs and expectations to generate trust eventually".

The definition of reputation building by Fombrun (1996) supports the functions of public relations evidenced in Lattimore et al (2006) which states,

PR practitioners communicate with all relevant internal and external publics to develop positive relationships and to create consistency between organizational goals

and societal expectations. PR practitioners develop, execute, and evaluate organizational programs that promote the exchange of influence and understanding among an organization's constituent's parts and publics (p.5).

These functions of public relations by Lattimore et. al (2006) highlights core function of public relations in serving the needs of various stakeholders' by engendering their unrelenting approval of the organization. This current study therefore seeks to ascertain the contributions of public relations in promoting corporate social responsibility which might contain building organizational reputation in order to interrogate the implication to businesses as well as various publics.

Likewise, corporate social responsibility is often viewed as one of the core strategies employed by public relations practitioners. On her part, L'Etang (1994) explains how public relations has capitalized on the benefits of corporate social responsibility. L'Etang (1994) argues:

“Corporate social responsibility is often managed by public relations practitioners for public relations ends, and therefore corporate social responsibility is seen as part of the public relations portfolio and as a technique to establish relations with particular groups (for example, in the local community) and to enhance reputation with key stakeholders” (p. 116).

This argument advanced by L'Etang (1994) emphasizes the connection between the two phenomena. She adds, “corporate social responsibility often falls within the outfit of public relations because it affects an organization's image and reputation” (p. 116).

Similarly, Signitzer and Prexl (2008) hold the view that public relations practitioners wield the requisite expertise to effectively disseminate issues regarding corporate social

responsibility thereby projecting organizational image. However, disseminating the performance of business comes with some challenges as seen in the work of Ashforth and Gibbs (1990, p. 190).

Based on the extensive literature reviewed, it can thus be deduced that public relations and corporate social responsibility are closely tied. The three processes of issues management, reputation building and relationship building provide the key themes that frame the scholarship as regards intersection of “public relations and corporate social responsibility”. In spite of views by scholars which strongly affirm public relations’ capability of pursuing corporate social responsibility that would promote mutual benefit between organizations and their stakeholders, there is still dearth of evidence in the literature that outlines public relations’ specific roles in promoting corporate social responsibility. The study therefore seeks to fill this gap in literature by exploring the actual role of public relations in promoting corporate social responsibility from the rich insights from public relations practitioners at the telecommunications companies in Ghana, specifically, MTN and Vodafone Ghana.

2.3. Review of Empirical Studies

This study seeks to explore the role of public relations in promoting corporate social responsibility (CSR) using the telecommunication industries in Ghana as a case study. Several studies have explored the relationship between Public Relations and Corporate Social Responsibility and the impact of Public Relations in the activities of Corporate Social Responsibilities. This section of the study will review scholarly articles that explore the underlining subject matter of this current study and identify the gaps in literature which this study seeks to bridge.

L'etang, J. (1994) in his article, “Public relations and corporate social responsibility: Some issues arising” queries the contemporary assumptions of the benefits of corporate social responsibility and the claims that organizations make on behalf of their corporate social responsibility programmes. In particular, the article suggests that the use of corporate social responsibility for public relations purposes raises moral problems over the motivation of corporations. The paper cautions that the justifications which organizations employ may either be “immoral or inaccurate with regard to the empirical evidence gained from a small-scale qualitative study carried out in the UK at a time when the practice of corporate social responsibility was expanding quickly (1989).” Retrospectively, It is very glaring that greater deal of emphasis is laid on environmental rather than social responsibility. The overall implication is that organizations are predominantly reactive in their development of corporate social responsibility programmes and that they respond to external pressures rather than working out the nature of their corporate responsibilities. It appears that corporate entities only take such actions when they are under duress to do so by “consumerist and environmentalist lobbies.” The article thus argues that organizations do need to find moral justifications for their moral activities and to ensure that corporate social responsibility practice lives up to the claims made by public relations practitioners. The study ultimately explores the nature of public relations and illustrates how its responsibility for corporate social responsibility extends beyond truthfulness in publicity.

Also, Clark, C. E. (2000) in his article, “Differences between public relations and corporate social responsibility: An analysis” compares corporate social responsibility and corporate public relations by reviewing “their origins, theories, processes, and primary responsibilities and found them to be quite similar in these respects.” He intimated that comparing the two disciplines means that “theorists” and “practitioners” can gain greater insight into each field. The

comparison reveals a key difference whereby effective communication methods are largely absent from the social responsibility literature; yet by including such techniques, one can enhance the development and overall impact of managing corporate–stakeholder relationships, a communication management approach, which is linked to stakeholder analysis, is offered.

As well, Frankental, P. (2001) in his studies, “Corporate social responsibility—a PR invention?” investigated what he terms, “paradoxes inherent in the phrase corporate social responsibility.” These comprise “procedures of corporate governance, the market’s view of organizations’ ethical stances, the lack of clear definition, acceptance or denial, the lack of formal mechanisms for taking responsibility and the placing and priority that most organizations give to social responsibility.” His article found that until these “paradoxes” are addressed properly, corporate social responsibility can justifiably be referred to as an “invention of PR.” The article reveals that public relations can only play a dominant role if: it embraces all organizational stakeholders; it is protected by changes in legislations of organizations as regards governance; its definition relates to the goals of social and ecological sustainability, if its implementation is benchmarked and audited, it is open to public scrutiny; it is integrated horizontally and vertically in the corporate body; the acquiescence apparatuses are in place; and it is rewarded by financial markets.

Relatedly, Capriotti, P., and Moreno, A. (2007) in their joint article, “Corporate citizenship and public relations: The importance and interactivity of social responsibility issues on corporate websites,” explored the importance of corporate responsibility information on those websites, and their levels of interactivity. The overarching goal of this article was to analyse the degree of relevance and importance that organizations ascribe to information concerning corporate responsibility posted on their organizational websites, and the degree of interactivity of

that information. They adopted a content analysis methodology (Krippendorff, 1990) to audit the business websites of the 35 sampled organizations. They established two distinct categories. They are: “content categories” and “presentation of information categories.” The study clearly established that the Internet has become an indispensable space through which information about corporate responsibility is efficiently and effortlessly dispensed.

On the same subject matter, Bartlett, J., Tywoniak, S., and Hatcher, C. (2007) in their article, “Public relations professional practice and the institutionalisation of CSR,” uses an interpretive perspective to understand the role and impact of public relations practice on societal change. The motive of the study was “to present the findings of a longitudinal case study into the professionalization of public relations practices and the institutionalization of corporate social responsibility as a legitimate social and business arrangement”. A “qualitative longitudinal study” was used to analyze the societal structure of social responsibility in the Australian banking industry in five (5) years, that is, from 1999 to 2004 across two levels of analysis “societal expectations as institution” and “practices of banking and public relations as action.” Their paper revealed that the organizations shifted their public relations and communication practices during the period of the study. In response to the demands of publics, there was a paradigm shift from a linear point of view (where organizations sought to influence and persuade publics of the appropriateness of their actions) to a dialogic point of view (where organizations needed to consult, negotiate and engage with publics).

Moreover, in their quest to ascertain the relationship between Public Relations and Corporate Social Responsibility, Kim, S. Y., and Reber, B. H. (2008) in their paper, “Public relations’ place in corporate social responsibility: Practitioners define their role,” they used qualitative responses from 173 Public Relations practitioners to examine their contributions and roles in corporate

social responsibility (CSR). Practitioners identified five roles for public relations in Corporate Social Responsibilities (significant management, philanthropic, value-driven, communication, and none). Their study showed that Public Relations professionals demonstrated these roles by describing their contributions to social responsibility programs. They however expressed limitations to their capacity to contribute to Corporate Social Responsibility activities.

On their part, Benn, S., Todd, L. R., and Pendleton, J. (2010) in their article, “Public relations leadership in corporate social responsibility” noted that most of the undesirable inferences of corporate social responsibility (CSR) are associated with its perceived role as a public relations exercise. Drawing on from the incessant calls for public relations professionals to feature more prominently in the strategic planning of organization coupled with the ever-increasing interest in corporate social responsibility as a potent strategy for organizations, their study addresses the concern of how public relations’ theory and practice is capable of providing direction and support for corporate social responsibility. Their article explored leadership qualities and motivations of sampled corporate leaders from reputable Australian-based organizations relative to their CSR pursuits to determine “the current position of, and potential for, professional communicators’ impact in shaping CSR-driven policies at a strategic level”. The findings of the study revealed that although there has been an evolution in public relations theory, most organizational leaders still see the relevance of public relations practitioners only on matters related to favourable publicity. Their findings therefore indicate that “the model of distributive leadership has more relevance to an emerging idea of public relations involvement in CSR than more traditional understandings of leadership.” Their conclusion therefore is that there is the need for public relations professionals to garner a broader understanding of “senior management

approaches to the development and dissemination of CSR activities” to help in organisational leadership in so far as corporate social responsibility is concerned.

Similarly, following on calls for more positive engagement by public relations professionals in organizational strategic planning and given the rapidly increasing interest in Corporate Social Responsibility as a business strategy, Benn, S., Todd, L. R., and Pendleton, J. (2010) in their article, “Public relations leadership in corporate social responsibility” addresses the question of how the theory and practice of public relations can provide direction and support for Corporate Social Responsibility. To this end, this article ascertained the leadership styles and motivations of a sample of corporate leaders from prominent Australian-based corporations in relation to their chosen Corporate Social Responsibility activities to examine the current position of, and potential for, professional communicators’ impact in shaping CSR-driven policies at a strategic level. They found that while public relations theory has evolved, many leaders still see public relations professionals only as a source of positive publicity. This finding suggests that “the model of distributive leadership” has more relevance to an emerging idea of public relations involvement in Corporate Social Responsibility than more traditional understandings of leadership. They concluded that the public relations profession needs to develop a greater understanding of senior management approaches to the development and dissemination of Corporate Social Responsibility activities to support organizational leadership as it currently operates with respect to Corporate Social Responsibility.

Contributing to the subject, Ruiz-Mora, I., Lugo-Ocando, J., and Castillo-Esparcia, A. (2016) in their paper, “Reluctant to talk, reluctant to listen: Public relations professionals and their involvement in CSR programmes in Spain” makes a significant contribution to this subject matter under research. Their article explores the kinds of contributions public relations

practitioners offer to the course of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives, coupled with the attendant challenges they encounter in their quest of entering their professional area. The paper investigated top state owned organizations in Spain, which forms part of the “IBEX35®”. Their study combined “a semi-structured interviews and interpretative analysis of official documents and reports.” Their study revealed that in spite of the normative claims from corporate social responsibility outfit that belittles the significance of public relations in the overall design and implementation of corporate social responsibility initiatives, the empirical evidence proves otherwise. Their findings reveals significant operational paucities and accountability shortfalls specifically because of the sidelining of the inputs of public relations in the design and implementation of the CSR initiatives.

Lastly, Lim, J. S., and Greenwood, C. A. (2017) in their paper, “Communicating corporate social responsibility (CSR): Stakeholder responsiveness and engagement strategy to achieve CSR goals,” compared two contemporary Corporate Social Responsibility communication strategies, that is, “engagement” and “responsiveness” alongside communication channels, in achieving Corporate Social Responsibility goals. In doing this, they conducted an online survey with public relations, corporate communication, corporate social responsibility, investor relations and sustainability executives within the companies listed on the “Wilshire 5000 Total Market Index of publicly traded U.S. companies.” The Results revealed that Corporate Social Responsibility engagement strategy had a positive impact on achieving all three Corporate Social Responsibility “goals” they identified through factor analysis: business, community, and employees. The “responsiveness strategy” was positively associated with only business and community goal achievement. These findings give credence to the testimonials from organization’s reports as regards the benefits of the engagement approach in achieving intended

organizational goals which does not only include attracting talented employees but also maintaining them. It is worth emphasizing that in analyzing the impact of communication channels on goal achievement, they noted that print ads played a significant role in achieving corporate goals.

From the ongoing review, it is evident that the chunk of earlier studies have looked at the relationship between public relations and corporate social responsibility and how public relations is well placed to communicate corporate social responsibility initiatives. In the review, what is clearly missing is the specific roles public relations plays in promoting the activities of corporate social responsibility. Also, the chunk of extant literature that had tried to investigate this subject matter focuses on other jurisdictions with little emphasis on the Ghanaian context.

To this end, this current study thus seeks to bridge this gap by bringing to the fore the specific roles played by public relations practitioners in the promotion of corporate social responsibility initiatives.

As well, this study will help improve the paucity of literature on public relations' role in the promotion of corporate social responsibility in the Ghanaian context.

2.4. Chapter Summary

The chapter has dealt with two theories underpinning public relations and their connection with corporate social responsibility. The two theories are “the stakeholder’s theory”, and “the legitimacy theory”. Again, this chapter of the study has reviewed relevant literature and empirical studies that put this work in the right perspective. The literature showed that corporate social responsibility as a concept has received considerable attention from scholars and researchers and that has helped enrich the research. “The literature review” showed that through

the key functions of public relations, overall, it intersected with corporate social responsibilities practice. The subsequent chapter discussed “the methodology of the study”.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0. Introduction

The chapter three of this study presented the research method and the various format that occasioned the research. The chapter discusses the manner in which data in this work were obtained and analyzed. Specifically, the chapter clearly spells out the population of the study, sampling procedure, data collection procedure and the data analysis strategy. This study is a qualitative one which applies “in-depth interview” as the means of collecting data. With the help of an interview guide that served as the instrument for the data collection, six public relations and corporate social responsibility practitioners were interviewed from both MTN and Vodafone Ghana for the study. That is, three practitioners each were interviewed from MTN Ghana and Vodafone Ghana respectively. The in-depth interviews which were aided by the semi-structured interview guide helped the researcher ask supplementary questions to elicit the needed responses on the subject matter under consideration.

3.1. Research Sites

In all, two telecommunications companies were used as the site for the study. They are MTN Ghana and Vodafone Ghana.

3.1.1 Profile of MTN Ghana

MTN Ghana is a branch of the MTN Group headquartered in Johannesburg, South Africa and “it is the leading provider of mobile telecommunications services in Ghana” (Ghana Chamber of Telecommunications Report, 2019). According to the Ghana Chamber of

Telecommunications report of 2019, MTN has “over 17.83 million subscribers with a market share of approximately 55.09% as of December 2017” (The Ghana Chamber of Telecommunications Report, 2019). The vision statement of the company reads, “to lead the delivery of a bold new digital world to customers and their mission is to make the lives of customers a whole lot brighter”. MTN Ghana has a number of departments including corporate services department which oversees all public relations activities and is also responsible for providing strategic direction for MTN Ghana on the regulatory and legal framework of Ghana and that of its stakeholders.

3.1.2. Profile of Vodafone Ghana

Vodafone Ghana, previously referred to as “Ghana Telecom,” is the national telecommunication company of Ghana. The company in Ghana operates under Vodafone Group Public Limited Company, “the world’s leading mobile telecommunications company with a significant presence in Europe, the middle East, Africa, Asia Pacific and the United States” (Ghana Chamber of Telecommunications Reports of 2019). As of April 2016, Vodafone Ghana was ranked “the second largest telecommunications operator in Ghana and had around seven million, nine hundred and seventy six thousand, three hundred and forty eight mobile voice subscribers, representing 21.92% of the Ghanaian market share and 25.32% of data behind African communication giant MTN Ghana” (Ghana Chamber of Telecommunications Reports of 2019). The vision of Vodafone is “to be the communication leader in an increasingly connected world”. The company’s mission is “to enrich its customers’ lives through the unique power of mobile communication”.

Several factors informed the researcher's choice of these telecommunications giants. First and foremost, the two companies have won a lot of admiration and praise in the field of "corporate social responsibility" (Ghana Chamber of Telecommunications Reports of 2019). Also, they both have strong public relations departments, a fact that will help realize the objectives of the study.. As well, MTN Ghana and Vodafone Ghana are the largest telecommunications companies in Ghana, therefore, studying these organizations will add to the literature on how corporate social responsibility impacts organizational success.

3.1. Research Design

According to Leedy (1997), research design is "a plan for a study, providing the overall framework for collecting data" (p. 195). MacMillan and Schumacher (2001) also explains research design as "a plan for selecting subjects, research sites and data collection procedures to answer the research question(s)" (p. 166). As well, Durrheim (2006) provides even better perspective of research design. Durrheim (2004) defines research design as "a strategic framework for action that serves as a bridge between research questions and the execution, or implementation of the research strategy" (p. 34). It is worthy of note that the research design provides a succinct blueprint to ascertain the research questions.

This current study is geared towards investigating the role public relations plays in promoting corporate social responsibility of organizations. The researcher employed qualitative research methodology. Qualitative methodology refers to "a broad class of empirical procedures designed to describe and interpret the experiences of research participants in a context-specific setting" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000: p. 33). Qualitative research requires that data are collected, analysed and discussed using participants' expressed views. This method is crucial because not

only does it help the researcher to get first-hand information from professionals, also the method provides depth since the researcher can seek clarification from the participants. It is also striking to note that qualitative research does not in any way superimpose operational definitions of variables on research participants. Instead, meanings are drawn from the research participants. This characteristic of qualitative research design emphasizes its flexibility.

The motive for choosing the qualitative methodology was to enable the researcher acquire in-depth information as regards the topic under study. As Grunig (2002) has indicated, the most common qualitative method that could be used for assessing relationships is the in-depth interview because of its ability to help the researcher understand the motives of people and explain what they think and do in their own terms (p. 61).

3.2. Research Population

A study's population refers "to the complete set of individuals who have common observable characteristics in which the researcher is interested" (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2007). Selltiz, Wrightsman and Cook (1976, p. 513) define population as "the aggregate of all the cases that conform to some designated set of specification." The population for this study was all the individuals in the public relations departments and corporate social responsibility departments of MTN Ghana and Vodafone Ghana.

3.3. Sampling and Sample Size

Spata (2003) defines "sample" as "the units which are selected from the target population to be a part of the research project" (p. 72). Sampling is crucial to the research process because it aids in the determination of the depth of interpretations done by the researcher which emanated from the research findings (Collins, Onwuegbuzie & Jiao, 2006). This research adopted the

purposive sampling technique. “Purposive sampling is the type of sampling where participants are subjectively selected by the researcher based on their relevance to the study” (Wimmer & Dominick, 2011). The selection is usually based on specific characteristics or qualities the participants possess such as their experience, knowledge and understanding on a topic or subject of interest. The objectives of the research informed the sample size. To this end, six (6) public relations and corporate social responsibility practitioners were purposively sampled from the corporate communications and corporate social responsibility departments of the two telecommunications companies used for this work- three each from MTN Ghana and Vodafone Ghana.

3.4. Data Collection Procedure

With a semi-structured interview guide, the in-depth interview was used as the main method for data collection. An in-depth interview is a broad personalized dialogue through which one can obtain detailed information (Wimmer & Dominick, 2011). Wimmer and Dominick (2000) asserts that “the biggest advantage of the in-depth interview is the wealth of detail that it provides.” In-depth interview affords the researcher a graver opportunity to ask follow-up questions so as to garner a better understanding of behaviours, attitude, perceptions and so forth. Trochim (2006, p. 8) also noted that “the purpose of an interview is to probe the ideas of the interviewees about the phenomenon of interest.” Reflective notes were taken all through the process of data collection, mainly at the period of interview to record the activities and cues (verbal and nonverbal) of respondents. The six (6) sampled public relations and corporate social responsibility professionals were interviewed; the researcher asked follow-up questions, as dictated by a semi-structured interview guide, to probe further for clarification and

depth. This procedure gave a better comprehension of the public relations professionals' involvement and functions as regard corporate social responsibility.

3.5. Data Collection Instruments

Since the researcher conducted interviews as the means of collecting primary data for the study, "a semi-structured interview guide" was used. The interview guide is basically a list of questions which guide both the interviewer and interviewee during the data gathering process. The interview guide helps to maintain the focus of the researcher as much as it helps respondents to sharpen their knowledge on particular areas prior to the interview. Patton (2002) observed that the interview guide keeps the focus of study within the time limit while allowing the participants to enrich the data with their stories. Turner (2010) also indicated that consistency is guaranteed with the application of the interview guide for information gathering from respondents.

Guided by the design of this research and the available literature therein, an interview guide was developed for the interviews. Questions in the guide were structured in such a way that they are consistent with the objectives and research questions driving the study. Emerging themes from the research questions were adopted to direct and expand the line of questioning so as to enable the collection of the requisite data. The interview guide covered such themes as: relationship between the two phenomena under study, promotion of corporate social responsibility programmes to communities, implementation and challenges. Questions in the interview guide were informed by available literature in the areas of public relations and corporate social responsibility and the relationship between the two phenomena as a whole. Two interview guides were used for the participants. One was used specifically for all the public relations professionals interviewed and the other for the corporate social responsibility managers.

It is worthy of note that the researcher did not ask the questions on the interview guide systematically, rather, questions were asked depending on the responses provided by the interviewees and how satisfactory these responses were to the cause of the research.

The researcher first met with the participant, briefed them on the merits of the research and provided them with a summary of the research detailing the research problem and objectives and why there is the need for them to be a part of the study. After their approval and eventual acceptance to partake in the work, the researcher administered the interview guide to them in advance to enable them in their individual preparations. Meetings were then scheduled for the interviews. Though the researcher took notes during the interviews, with the approval of the participants, the interviews were also recorded for accuracy of facts and onwards reference. The recordings were manually transcribed and classified into themes emanating from the objectives of the study. This process ensured effective and efficient analyses and helped to eventually draw conclusions for the study based on the findings that emerged.

3.6. Data Analysis Procedure

The researcher adopted the thematic analysis approach where the researcher laid emphasis on the themes that emerged from the data. Braun and Clarke (2006) define thematic analysis as, “a method for identifying, analyzing and reporting patterns within data” (p. 79). Due to the flexibility of thematic analysis, it helps to provide detailed, rich and robust explanation of data. The recorded interviews were manually transcribed by the researcher. Following the transcription, similar responses were put in one category while stand-alone responses were put in a different category. Responses to each question on each transcript were further grouped in line

with the themes developed from the research questions. These themes helped the researcher to have a directed or guided discussion.

As demanded of qualitative research, the analysis started by skimming and scanning through the text with no effort at trying to analyze the data. This process helped me to familiarise myself with the text as noted by Willig (2001, p.94). My next step was to read the data several times to identify patterns in the interview responses. Afterwards, my next step was to code the data to look out for relevant materials for analysis. During the coding period, I was concerned with identifying the recurring themes and ascribing general titles to related ideas, quote or passage anywhere necessary. It is worthy of note that major arguments of the theories provided insight in choosing the themes. At this point, particular attention was directed at the content of the data. For example, if the data mentioned the various forms of corporate social responsibilities initiatives organized by the telecommunication companies, then it was coded as forms of corporate social responsibility. Data which had similar codes were categorised into a broad topic. This process is consistent with Coffey and Atkinson (1996) assertion which says “data bits that relate to a particular code need to be presented together to enhance the process of exploring the composition of each coded set” (p. 46).

3.7. Chapter Summary

This chapter of the research presented methodological procedures followed by the study. Particularly, the research design, sample size, population, sampling procedure, data collection procedure and the data analysis procedure were discussed in this chapter. After these processes, the tone is then set for the presentation of findings and discussions which are presented in the next chapter of this work.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.0. Introduction

The objective of this research work was to ascertain “the role of public relations in promoting corporate social responsibility in the telecommunication companies in Ghana specifically focusing on MTN and Vodafone Ghana.” In this chapter of the research, the findings and discussion of the study based on the in-depth interviews conducted with the six public relations and corporate social responsibility managers are presented. The findings of the research were presented in line with the objectives that underpinned the study by specifically looking at the relationship between public relations and corporate social responsibility and how public relations practitioners view their role in corporate social responsibility. As well, the findings expatiated the various contributions of public relations in the promotion of corporate social responsibility and further highlighted some of the constraints that hindered public relations’ promotion of the CSR goals of their companies.

The three participants interviewed at MTN Ghana were the head of MTN Foundation—the corporate social responsibility arm of the organization, senior manager corporate communications and the manager corporate communications. As well, the three participants interviewed at Vodafone Ghana are the manager Vodafone Ghana Foundation and Sustainability—the corporate social responsibility arm of Vodafone Ghana, corporate communications manager Vodafone Ghana, Awareness Specialist Vodafone Ghana. The participants of MTN Ghana are identified here as CSRMM (corporate social responsibility manager, MTN), CCSMM (corporate communication senior manager, MTN) and CCMM

(corporate communication manager, MTN). the participants of Vodafone Ghana are identified as CSRMMV (corporate social responsibility manager, Vodafone), CCMV (corporate communications manager, Vodafone) and ASV (awareness specialist, Vodafone).

4.1. Relationship between Public Relations and Corporate Social Responsibility

Going by the objective of the study, this section sought to establish the connection or the link between public relations and corporate social responsibility from the expert view of professionals. The researcher gathered that there was a positive linkage between public relations and corporate social responsibility. From the data that was gathered as regards the relationship that exists between PR and CSR, the researcher found that there is a symbiotic relationship between public relations and corporate social responsibility. This is because public relations in the bid to build a good relationship between the organization and the key stakeholders, and its quest to create a positive image for the organization rode on the back of the corporate social responsibility initiatives of the organization. In the same vein, the corporate social responsibility departments of both MTN Ghana and Vodafone Ghana relied on the public relations' departments to communicate the programmes of the corporate social responsibility to the key stakeholders to achieve the desired outcome of their organizations.

Responding to the question, “what is the relationship between public relations and corporate social responsibility?” the Corporate Social Responsibility Manager of MTN (CSRMM) provided a clear and a profound response that indicated a symbiotic relationship between public relations and corporate social responsibility:

CSRMM: I will say that the relationship between public relations and corporate social responsibility is a positive one. This is because both PR and CSR

play a complementary role. For us as the CSR department, when we roll out our programmes, we need the public relations department to publicize all that we do. They also need us because remember that all that we do for our stakeholders out there in terms of CSR initiatives creates a positive image for the organization which benefits the organization because one of their core mandates is to create a good image for the company. So errmm we are making their work a bit easier you know. So I'll say we need them as much as they also need us. All that I am driving at is that there is a positive relationship between the two because we complement each other.

This participant in his response in the extract above has clearly established the positive correlation between PR and CSR. In the extract, the participant demonstrated the link by indicating that public relations and corporate social responsibility play a complementary role. In his response as evidenced in the above extract. He used a sentence like “This is because both PR and CSR play a complementary role.” The participant further explained the complementary role of both PR and CSR by indicating that the CSR department needed the PR to publicize their CSR initiatives. As well, he indicated that public relations rode on the back of the CSR initiatives to consolidate public relations’ responsibility of creating a positive image for the organization. the response of the participant firmly establish a direct link between PR and CSR as demonstrated in his statement “All that I am driving at is that there is a positive relationship between the two because we complement each other”

This response by CSRMM was corroborated by the Corporate Communication Manager of Vodafone. Responding to the same question on “the relationship between public relations and corporate social responsibility,” CCMV indicated the close connection between the two:

CCMV: I think it's ermm it's linked and it's tied alright so long

as communications or PR is needed to trump all the ratings we are doing in the area of CSR. Public relations also needed CSR in driving affinity for the brand. So let me clarify. So as much as through CSR and through communications we are able to let Ghanaians and everyone know about the great things we are doing alright by using PR. In the same way, one of the key errmm what do we call it key things that you can use PR for is to drive brand affinity. And how can you drive brand affinity?

They are soft things that you do that actually draw errmm people closer to the brand. You know, so, they are the kind of things you do and people sit back and say oh really I decided to buy Vodafone Sim card because of this particular initiative that Vodafone passed out there so it's linked and they all are meant to drive the corporate objectives and vision of the organization. So, in terms of the relationship, I think it is linked, they need each other and for most organizations you realize that the CSR bit sits under the public relations function that helps both public relations and CSR.

The responses put forward by the participants are clear indication of the positive relationship and correlation between public relations and corporate social responsibility. From the above extract, the participant has demonstrated clearly the connection between public relations and corporate social responsibility. In his response as evidenced in the extract, the participant indicated through the statement, "I think it's ermm it's linked and it's tied," how inextricable "public relations and corporate social responsibility" are as phenomena especially in the quest for organizations to drive affinity for their brands. This assertion is an indication that not only are public relations and corporate social responsibility connected but PR and CSR are also inseparable. As well, as evidenced in the extract, the participant indicated the correlation between PR and CSR in the

statement, “ So, it’s linked and they all are meant to drive the corporate objectives and vision of the organization.” This assertion by the participant clearly demonstrate the linkage between public relations and corporate social responsibility and how the combined effect of both PR and CSR are geared towards driving and realizing the corporate objectives and visions of organizations.

However, when ASV was responding to this same question on the relationship between public relations and corporate social responsibility, he indicated that even though the relationship between public relations and corporate social responsibility is symbiotic, it is sometimes a “frenemy” kind of relationship. In his answer to the question, “what is the relationship between public relations and corporate social responsibility?,” ASV stated, “errmmm, I must say that relatively, there is a symbiotic relationship between PR and CSR. However, I will add that the relationship can be frenemy you know because of clash in roles.” From the quote, ASV asserts that irrespective of public relations contributions to the pursuit of corporate social responsibility especially in institutions where there are separate departments for public relations and corporate social responsibility such as Vodafone Ghana, public relations sometimes receives resistance from the corporate social responsibility department due to clash in roles. The succeeding section will highlight the findings regarding how public relations practitioners view their role in promoting corporate social responsibility.

4.2. How Public Relations Practitioners View their Role in the Promotion of CSR.

The second objective of the study sought to investigate how public relations practitioners view their role in the promotion of corporate social responsibility. As regards this objective of the research, the study found that public relations practitioners perceive their role as strategic so

as to achieve mutual interest between the organization and the publics. The strategic positioning of public relations in an organization helps the public relations practitioners to ride on the back of CSR initiatives to get people to appreciate the brands of responsible organizations and identify with these organizations, to get workers to be goodwill ambassadors of the organization and to help the organization claim legitimacy in the telecommunication's space. The study found that by and large, public relations practitioners perceive their work as strategic when its impact to the organization or the business is positive.

Responding to how public relations practitioners viewed their role in the promotion of corporate social responsibility, the participants clearly indicated why they think their role in the promotion of corporate social responsibility is strategic in their responses. CCMV for example, demonstrated why public relations practitioners view their role in the promotion of corporate social responsibility as strategic:

CCMM: I see our role as very strategic you know! Our responsibility as a department is to communicate our CSR activities to our publics so as to create a positive image for the organization. However, the communication is done so tactfully that it does not give room for people to misinterpret it to mean blowing our own trumpet, you know! So we see to it that our CSR initiatives are not just limited to the external publics but the internal stakeholders as well. This to me is an indication of how strategic the role of PR is especially in our pursuit of CSR programmes.

The response by CCMM clearly suggests that the public relations role in the promotion of corporate social responsibility is purely strategic as evidenced in the above extract. In her response, she averred that the pursuit of corporate social responsibility was to create a positive

image for organizations. And as public relations practitioners, one of their core mandates was to build a memorable image for their organizations. Therefore, public relations strategically rides on the back of corporate social responsibility to advance that course. Also, CCMV in contributing to this discussion stated “I see our role as very strategic. Public Relations is about relationship management okay and relationship can best be managed when it is of mutual benefit and we are strategically placed to execute that.” This response is an indication that the role of public relations in corporate social responsibility is to advance the strategic mission of the organization. She drew on the idea of relationship management to establish how he viewed public relations as strategic. She averred that since one of the functions of public relations is relationship management and that one key strategy for establishing and maintaining relationship is through the performance of corporate social responsibility, public relations practitioners therefore needed to strategically scan the environment so as to appreciate what the needs of the publics are in order for the organization to tailor the resources of the organization to meet those needs. To this end, she viewed public relations’ role in the promotion of corporate social responsibility as purely strategic which needed to be executed with tact. Likewise, ASV in his response corroborated the assertions put forward by both CCMM and CCMV. He viewed public relations role in corporate social responsibility as strategic when he indicated that as liaison between the organization and the publics, public relations practitioners have the responsibility to claim legitimacy for the organization. He pointed to the “boundary-spanning” role of public relations as a strategic tool worthy of assisting public relations practitioners in gathering firsthand information on what the needs of the publics are and eventually advises the corporate social responsibility department accordingly to direct their CSR initiatives. The next section of

this chapter will present the findings as regards public relations' role in promoting corporate social responsibility.

4.3. Public Relations' Role in Promoting Corporate Social Responsibility

One of the objectives of this study was to investigate the role of public relations in the promotion of corporate social responsibility. The study found that there seemed to be a shared agreement by participants that the core contributions of public relations to the promotion of corporate social responsibility were: communication role (communication and awareness creation), advisory role, monitoring and evaluation as well as recommendation role. The following sections will expatiate on the aforementioned roles played by public relations practitioners in the promotion of corporate social responsibilities of their organizations.

4.3.1 Communication Role

One dominant theme that emerged from the data gathered from the interviews as regards public relations role in promoting corporate social responsibility is that of communication. Some of the recurring keywords found in the data gathered to give credence to this role include: "tell", "draw attention to", "create awareness on", "communicate". "highlight", "publicize." These groups of words and terms were used by the various participants to indicate clearly their communicative role in the promotion and pursuit of their corporate social responsibility. For instance, CCMV in explaining the role of public relations in promoting corporate social responsibility used some of these words as evidenced in the extract below:

So, I think PR plays a key role for errmm errmm I mean in terms of significance it brings into CSR. I think it does so in a number of ways. So apart from the fact that it helps us publicize or let the world know what we are doing or the number

of properties or platforms that we have that are significantly transforming the lives of people across the country. You know, it helps us in trying to communicate the social impact and the developments we've brought to this country. In essence, PR tells the CSR story. Apart from that which are positives, there is also the element of creating awareness so people will know what is available, what kind of support we offer and how they can also leverage.

In the above extract, the participant clearly indicated the communicative role of public relations in promoting corporate social responsibility initiatives through the choice of the following phrases, 'it helps us to publicize' and 'let the world know'. The participant articulated this role based on his direct involvement and vast experience of the performance of corporate social responsibility. As well, the clauses 'it helps us in trying to communicate the social impact and the developments we've brought to this country' and 'PR tells the CSR story' signified public relations unrivalled potential to communicate and promote the corporate social responsibility initiatives of the organization to the external publics.

It is worthy of note that though communicating the corporate social responsibility activities of organization is very essential, over drumming these activities may be misconstrued as propaganda and just a mere publicity stunt. Thus, there is the need to strike a balance as was indicated by CCSMM in the extract below:

I mean if we don't talk about what you are doing, nobody will see it. I mean, people will not know what you are doing and CSR is seen as a voluntary activity. Some people have a problem you know projecting what you are doing in that space. It is like supporting somebody and you are blowing your horn. So, you do a balance. ... So, it is very important the role the PR plays because

if we don't communicate what they are doing people will not know but our strategy is not to drum it like we do drum the other commercial activities.

Communication as indicated in the above submission is one major role played by public relations practitioners in the promotion of corporate social responsibility. This is because when corporate social responsibility programmes are rolled out, there is the need to communicate it to the strategic public so as to achieve the desired effect. This is not to suggest that the purpose of the communication is to “show off.” Rather, the motive of the communication is to draw the public's attention to the initiative or programme and the benefits that come with it. And in doing so, public relations is regarded as an indispensable trustee worthy of designing and communicating messages to realize the intended purpose.

4.3.2 Advisory Role

One other dominant theme that emerged from the collected data indicated that public relations play an advisory role in the promotion of the corporate social responsibility of an organization especially when corporate social responsibility is not fully under the tutelage of the public relations department, that is, when there is a separate department for corporate social development initiatives as it is in the case of the telecommunications companies sampled for this research. The data collected from the interviews revealed that public relations have a great amount of expertise and experience to ratify or give approval to corporate social responsibility initiatives of organizations since corporate social responsibility initiatives in one way or the other have the tendency to affect the image and identity of organizations. To this end, since the public relations department has oversight responsibility over issues pertaining to image, identity and reputation building of an organization, public relations practitioners have a major role to play on

such matters. Specifically, public relations practitioners have the wherewithal for advising the corporate social responsibility department of the organizations on how corporate social responsibility will be initiated and executed strategically to positively affect the image and reputation of the organization.

This advisory role played by the public relations practitioners was evident in almost all the interviews the research conducted with the public relations managers and the corporate social responsibility managers of the telecommunication companies. The excerpt below give credence to this assertion when the researcher posed the question: Apart from communicating the CSR initiatives of your organization, what other major role does public relations play?

CSRMM: I will say that apart from communication, one other major role played by the PR is that of an advice you know. They are responsible for managing the image of this organization and because our initiatives are geared towards improving the lives of our publics both internally and externally, we seek their views on almost all of our projects so as to ensure that these projects will desirably affect the image and identity of the organization. So, the PR helps the CSR department in that regard.

As evidenced in the extract, CSRMM clearly brings to the fore the seminal role public relations play in the promotion of corporate social responsibility of organizations. It can be inferred from the excerpt that though the corporate social responsibility activities of the organizations are not under the purview of the public relations or corporate communications department of these organizations, it is evident the role of public relations in advising and offering recommendations to the corporate social responsibility arm of these organizations cannot be discounted or downplayed in any way. For instance, CSRMM averred that the corporate social responsibility

department sought the expert view of public relations practitioners on almost all their programmes even though corporate social responsibility was not under the tutelage of public relations, “we seek their views on almost all of our projects so as to ensure that these projects will desirably affect the image and identity of the organization.” All of these consultations and pockets of advice are geared towards promoting the corporate social responsibility initiatives of the organizations so as to build a strong and positive reputation for their organizations.

Commenting on the other roles of public relations in the promotion of corporate social responsibility, CCMV corroborated the assertion of CSRMM. CCMV in his response indicated that as conscience of organizations and as a department responsible for building and sustaining the image of organizations, public relations practitioners ensured that all activities including corporate social responsibility initiatives reflected the image and identity of their corporate brands. For this reason, he indicated that the best way to ensure this compliance is through advice, “So we engage them and advise them as to how best they could execute their initiatives to better put the organization in the limelight.”

4.3.3. Monitoring and Evaluation of Effect.

One other seminal role played by public relations in the promotion of corporate social responsibility of organization is monitoring and evaluation of the effects of the activities of the corporate social responsibility arm of the organizations. The public relations departments or corporate communications departments of the organizations are seen as the monitors of the activities and the underlying effects of their corporate social responsibility initiatives. This is what the practitioners termed as the “Surveillance Role of Public Relations.”

The researcher found that even though the public relations department of the telecommunications companies are not fully responsible for the corporate social responsibility initiatives of their organizations, public relations practitioners are actively responsible for scanning the environment, monitoring progress of the corporate social responsibility projects embarked on by the corporate social responsibility departments and making assessment with regard to the impact organizations are making in the lives of stakeholders and the benefits the organizations are accruing as regards its image and reputation.

As custodians of the image and identity of the organizations or as a body that has oversight responsibility on image and reputation management in organizations, the public relations or corporate communications outfit of both MTN and Vodafone Ghana keep an eye on all activities of the other departments that have the tendency to affect the image of the organizations to ensure that such activities or actions are consistent with the image and identity of the organizations or better still, such activities have the propensity to project a good image for MTN and Vodafone Ghana. Responding to the question on the role of public relations in promoting corporate social responsibility, CCSMM strongly indicated that without the expertise of public relations practitioners, the image and identity of the organization would be missing:

I will say that one important role of public relations in the promotion of corporate social responsibility is monitoring and evaluation. This is what I call the surveillance role of public relations. This is because when the CSR department do their programs, their focus isn't so much on image or the identity. So, we are charged with that responsibility, check their programs to ensure that the outcome will lead to building the image of the organization.

From the extract, it can be inferred that though public relations may not be manning the corporate social responsibility activities of the organization, the public relations department still plays an indispensable role in terms of overseeing and evaluating the activities of the corporate social responsibility department to ensure that corporate social responsibility activities and actions are geared towards contributing to the image and reputation building of the organization.

4.3.4. Recommendation Role

The researcher found that in instances where public relations is not spearheading corporate social responsibility, one other important key role played by public relations in the promotion of corporate social responsibility is offering of recommendations. As a liaison between the organization and the various stakeholders, the public relations practitioners get first-hand information on the needs and aspirations of the various publics. As a result of that public relations practitioners are better positioned to suggest to the corporate social responsibility department on the various programmes and initiatives that are more likely to achieve the desired results of the organizations. The CSRMV when responding to the question on some other contribution of public relations in promoting the corporate social responsibility initiatives of organizations spoke highly of the public relations' contribution in terms of sometimes suggesting to the corporate social responsibility department what programmes will meet the needs and aspirations of the beneficiaries:

Although we have the niche areas of our CSR programs, the PR department as part of their boundary-spanning role is able to know the needs of our targets and so, they sometimes recommend to us what project they think will be better appreciated by the beneficiaries to get the desired results. So, the PR helps us in that regard.

The excerpt brings to the fore the importance of the “boundary-spanning” role of the media. The participant in his assertion averred that as monitors and intermediary between the organization and the publics, public relations professionals scan the environment of the publics to get insight on what the needs of the publics are. These insights the public relations professionals are able to gather help them to make an informed recommendation to the CSR departments to channel resources to where resources are needed most.

Likewise, media relations functions of the media helped the public relations outfit to know what media is suitable to communicate what message at what point in time. The researcher found that the public relations outfit played a crucial role in suggesting to corporate social responsibility departments on which media will be appropriate at what time to communicate the corporate social responsibility initiatives of the organizations. For instance, the response by the ASV that “the media relations function of public relations positions us as the right body to offer proper suggestions to the CSR department on matters relating to media coverage” is indicative of the important role of public relations in the promotion of corporate social responsibility. The media relations function of public relations which positions the public relations department to give proper counseling on media related issues was corroborated by the CCMV when he said:

Since the public relations people have a strong insight on media and its related issues, they normally suggest and make recommendations on which medium they think will be most appropriate to communicate our initiatives. So, frankly speaking, our department has benefited a lot from them in this regard.

According to the CCMV, the best resort to seek suggestions on matters relating to media and media related issues is the public relations outfit because they have great expertise in this area,.

The next section presents findings on the constraints that hinder the promotion of corporate social responsibility by public relations practitioners.

4.4. Constraints that Hinder the Promotion of CSR by PR Practitioners

Despite public relations significant contributions in the promotion of corporate social responsibility, as clearly explained in the preceding sections of this research work, the study found that there were few hindrances affecting the contributions of public relations in the promotion of corporate social responsibility. As regards the challenges public relations practitioners were grappling with in promoting corporate social responsibility, the study found that two issues were of concern to the public relations practitioners in the promotion of corporate social responsibility. First and foremost, “The preferential treatment syndrome” on the part of some of the traditional authorities and opinion leaders was a major challenge that the public relations practitioners were confronted with. The second challenge that public relations practitioners encountered was the high cost of media buying in the coverage of corporate social responsibilities initiatives.

One major challenge that derailed the contribution of public relations in the promotion of corporate social responsibility is what CCMV termed as, “the preferential treatment syndrome.” As regards “the preferential treatment syndrome,” the study found that one major issue which was of great concern to the public relations and corporate social responsibility managers of the organizations was the erroneous impression and perception of traditional rulers and opinion leaders that opinion leaders should and must always be the first people to benefit. These traditional rulers and opinion leaders thought that before the CSR programmes are rolled out in their communities, the traditional leaders and their cohorts have to first benefit before the

projects extends to the community at large. Responding to the question on some of the constraints that hindered their promotion of corporate social responsibility initiatives, the CCMV stated:

I think in some cases people within the palace or special stakeholders that you engage earlier want to be the first to benefit. And you know errmm, if you go and talk to them about any initiative, they want to make sure that their family members, their friends and loved ones are the first to benefit. I think sometimes this is what we have a challenge with and we always have to tell them that look, with Vodafone, our policies are different, we can't have that approach. It's to benefit all and it should be as fair as possible.

The excerpt clearly points out the frustration of the participant. The sentences, “we can't have that approach” and “It's to benefit all and it should be as fair as possible” is a clear indication of the frustration public relations practitioners have to grapple with in the practitioners bid to promote the corporate social responsibility initiatives of organizations. This assertion by CCMV was corroborated by the CCSMM when she indicated to the researcher in a strong voice that public relations professionals would have to always explain to the traditional authorities and opinion leaders that corporate social responsibility programmes are community-centered and not individual-centered, “we have to always explain to these opinion leaders and traditional rulers that our initiatives are meant for the benefit of the community and not just some few individuals.”.

Still on “the preferential treatment syndrome,” the study also discovered that most of the traditional rulers and opinion leaders were normally in disagreement with the organizations with regard to siting of corporate social responsibility projects. Responding to the question on the

challenges of public relations in the promotion of corporate social responsibility, CCMM lamented that most of the chiefs in the various communities wanted the projects sited in their locality and did not want to come to terms with the organizations criteria for siting a project:

We in MTN have a criterion for siting a CSR project. We believe in centrality when it comes to putting up a structure so that it is easily accessible by the surrounding communities. Some of the traditional authorities do not want to accept that partly because they feel that their communities may be bigger than the proposed places for siting the project therefore they are better placed for the project.

The excerpt creates a picture of the frustration public relations practitioners would have to endure in their bid to promoting corporate social responsibility. According to CCMM, the uncompromising stance of some of the traditional rulers caused public relations practitioners to sometimes engage these traditional rulers for a longer period of time before the projects are executed. This, he observed sometimes delayed the corporate social responsibility projects.

Another challenge that derailed public relations practitioners in the promotion of corporate social responsibility was the high cost of media buying. The study discovered that one other challenge that poses a big challenge to public relations in the promotion of corporate social responsibility is the high cost of media buying for the coverage and the communication of corporate social responsibility projects. The media is very key in the communication of corporate social responsibility initiatives and for this reason public relations and corporate social responsibility managers involve them a lot in their work. Nevertheless, the high charges of these media in covering and communicating these initiatives was of grave concern to public relations practitioners especially in the promotion of corporate social responsibility initiatives. Commenting on the challenges that hindered the work of public relations in the promotion of

corporate social responsibility, the CCSMM noted that the media houses wanted to charge as high as charging for coverage of a commercial product which in her view is undermining the effective promotion of corporate social responsibility:

The unfortunate thing is the cash-cow mentality. A lot of people think MTN has a lot of money so when we intend to communicate CSR activities, they want to charge you the actuals like the commercial rate. If you approach them, they want to charge you like the actuals but the CSR department doesn't have a big budget like the commercial. It is a challenge because I can go to TV3 and pay like 8.000 cedis for coverage of goods and services launching but I wouldn't be willing to pay the same 8.000 to project the building of a maternity block at Madina because I feel that this is all that we are doing to support our communities so we expect the TV stations to give us a subsidized rate.

To the public relations practitioners, corporate social responsibility is a collective effort and that the media must understand it in that regard because all that they are doing is for the good of the society they serve. So, the media should try to as much as possible incentivize the public relations practitioners in the form of a subsidized rates when dealing with corporate social responsibilities.

Likewise, another dominant theme that also emerged from the data gathered with regard to the constraints that confronted public relations especially in the promotion of corporate social responsibility was the perception that public relations is just best in influencing behavioural change. According to ASV, this erroneous perception persists especially when public relations is not fully in charge of spearheading the corporate social responsibility activities of the organization or when there is a separate department responsible for corporate social

responsibility, as it is in the case of the telecommunications companies that were sampled for this study. Responding to the question, “what are some of the constraints that derail public relations in promoting corporate social responsibility?” the ASV passionately indicated:

What I see as a major challenge especially in our contribution to CSR is the erroneous impression created by some actors within the organization that includes the CSR, that PR is about causing behaviour change or better still publicity. I think as part of management, we have tried to convince management errmm to believing that PR is the lifeblood of organization because when PR fails, the organization fades. So I see it to be unfortunate when PR is reduced to just publicity.

The excerpt points to the erroneous impression created by people that public relations is just a behaviour change machinery that thrives on publicity. This finding was corroborated by CCSMM when she indicated that “PR has unfortunately been misconstrued to be a publicity stunt which to me is a serious challenge.” The next section will put forward the discussions of the major findings of the current study.

4.5. Discussion of Findings

Based on the findings presented in the earlier section of this work, the researcher will critically interpret and discuss the findings using the theories underpinning this study and the literature reviewed in the early chapter of this research. The discussions are organized under the research questions the study sought to answer.

RQ1. What is the relationship between public relations and corporate social responsibility?

This question was designed to find out the linkage that existed between public relations and corporate social responsibility so as to put the research in its rightful perspective.

As was revealed by the findings of this study, it is very much instructive to note that public relations and corporate social responsibility are inextricably linked. For this reason, the corporate social responsibility departments of the telecommunication companies regularly sought the opinion of the public relations departments on what, when, and how to execute their projects and policies so as to achieve the desired outcome. To this end, it can be argued that public relations thus plays a crucial role especially in the decision making process of the organizations' corporate social responsibility initiatives. Assessing the linkage between public relations and corporate social responsibility, Judd (1989) noted that those public relations practitioners who recommended socially responsible initiatives frequently as well participated in policy decisions frequently. Judd (1989) further indicated that "if participation in policy decisions is an indicator of the credibility of public relations with management, then the results could be interpreted as a link between public relations credibility and social responsibility" (p.38). The assertion by Judd (1989) sought to bring to the fore, the linkage and the relationship between public relations and corporate social responsibility. This study corroborates the findings by Judd (1989). This is because the researcher gathered that public relations plays a dominant role especially in the decision making process of the telecommunications companies.

The findings also revealed that corporate social responsibility has become one major reason organizations and corporate entities should have public relations department. This is because organizations need public relations to publicize the social responsibilities activities of

the organizations so as to gain legitimacy, affection and acceptance from the varied publics. As stated in the response of CCMV on the relationship between PR and CSR, “I think it’s ermm it’s linked and it’s tied alright so long as communications or PR is needed to trump all the things we are doing in the area of CSR.” This findings corroborates the assertion made by Grunig and Hunt (1984) that social responsibility of an organization had become a major reason for which an organization should have a public relations function and that public responsibility is a basic tenet of public relations .

Additionally, the findings also revealed that public relations and corporate social responsibility have similar goals because they are all geared towards creating a positive image of the organization so as to generate brand affinity. There is an interplay between public relations and corporate social responsibility in that whereas the corporate social responsibility departments of the telecommunications companies are responsible for the corporate social responsibility projects of the organizations, the public relations outfit scans the environment to investigate the social needs of the people and advises the corporate social responsibility department accordingly. As well, the public relations departments are responsible for communicating the corporate social responsibility projects of the organization to the external publics. Together, the activities of both public relations and corporate social responsibility was to create a positive image for the organizations and to build good relationship with the key publics. This finding confirms the assertion by L’Etang (2006) that “CSR falls within the portfolio of PR because it affects a company’s image and reputation” (p.414) and further reinforces the observation by Clark (2000) that public relations and corporate social responsibility shared similar goals and processes.

Based on these findings, it is very crucial to understand why the glaring commonalities between public relations and corporate social responsibility have often linked the two fields in

academic research and professional practice. The next section will discuss how do public relations practitioners view their roles in corporate social responsibilities.

RQ2. How do public relations practitioners view their roles in corporate social responsibilities?

Drawing from public relations scholars, public relations has been observed as a strategic tool that helps organizations to achieve mutual interest between organizations and their varied publics (Grunig & Hunt, 1992; grunig 1992). To this end, this research question sought to find out from practitioners how they perceive public relations' role in the promotion of corporate social responsibility and public relations' eventual benefit to the success of the organization.

The findings of the study revealed that publicizing corporate social responsibility initiatives to the strategic public is crucial to projecting a good image for the organization. CCMM for instance in her response to how public relations viewed their role in corporate social responsibility stated, "I see our role as very strategic you know! Our responsibility as a department is to communicate our corporate social responsibility activities to our external publics to create a positive image for the organization." She further noted, "the communication is done so tactfully that it does not give room for people to misinterpret it to mean blowing our own trumpet, you know!" The first part of the response provided by the participant in this context implies that the mere engagement in corporate social responsibility does not enure to the benefit of the organization. However, the benefit lie in communicating the corporate social responsibility activities to the strategic public so as to court public recognition and admiration of what the organization is doing to the benefit of the public. The communication, however, must be done so tactfully that people will not misconstrue it to be "a show off" or a propaganda stunt

as indicated by the second part of the response provided by CCMM. The findings thus indicate that the role of public relations in promoting corporate social responsibility is very strategic when the overall impact of public relations aids in projecting a good image for the organization; and helps the organizations gain legitimacy from the publics of the organizations.

As well, the findings of this research also revealed that the strategic positioning of public relations in the organization helped the public relations practitioners to contribute meaningfully to the cause of the corporate social responsibility arm of MTN and Vodafone Ghana. The research findings indicate that the strategic positioning of public relations within telecommunications companies helped the public relations practitioners to ride on the back of corporate social responsibility initiatives to get people to appreciate their corporate brands, to get workers to be goodwill ambassadors of the organization and to help the organizations claim legitimacy in the telecommunications' space. As CCMV noted, "I see our role as very strategic. Public relations is about relationship management okay and relationship can best be managed when it is of mutual benefit and we are strategically placed to execute that." This response from CCMV reinforces the validity of Grunig (2002) propositions in the two way symmetry model that "We can describe excellent public relations in its simplest expression, therefore, as strategic, symmetrical communication management" (p. 306).

The study also found that the strategic direction and support provided by the public relations department ensured that the corporate social responsibility programmes initiated for the communities mutually benefitted the organizations and targeted communities. The reason being that the corporate social responsibility projects met the demands of the communities and in return, both MTN and Vodafone Ghana earned affinity for their corporate brands. The next

section discussed the contributions of public relations in promoting corporate social responsibility.

RQ3. In what ways do public relations contribute to the promotion of corporate social responsibility in Ghana?

Following the objectives of this study, this question was well crafted to bring to the fore the major contributions made by public relations practitioners in their bid to advance the course of corporate social responsibility in the telecommunications industries.

The study found that public relations played a vital role in terms of advising the corporate social responsibility arm of both MTN and Vodafone Ghana. It is worthy of note that public relations practitioners in the organizations played advisory role in the promotion of corporate social responsibility partly because corporate social responsibility was not under the tutelage of public relations in both MTN and Vodafone Ghana. Phrases such as “we engage”, “we advise” clearly indicate the dominant role public relations plays in the corporate social responsibility programmes of MTN and Vodafone. Also, public relations ability to offer suggestions, recommendations and advise demonstrates that public relations has the expertise to enact corporate social responsibility. The ability of public relations to offer proper advise and recommendations to the cause of corporate social responsibility is as a result of the “boundary-spanning” role of public relations. The “boundary-spanning” role of public relations professionals confers on the practitioners, the power to serve as an intermediary between the organization and the publics. In performing the boundary-spanning role, public relations practitioners are able to scan the environment well to know the needs of the publics in order to advise and make recommendations to the corporate social responsibility department on where

and how to direct their resources to meet the needs and demands of their publics. This finding corroborates the assertion of Clark (2000) that the ability of public relations professionals to scan the political, social, and historical environment makes it an effective tool to contribute to corporate social responsibility programme development.

It is also worthy of note that public relations' advisory and recommendation role is crucial especially when public relations is not spearheading corporate social responsibility initiative. The reason is that public relations is tasked with the image and reputation building of the organization and corporate social responsibility plays a major part in the image building of organizations. The response by CCMV that "So we engage them and advise them as to how best they could execute their initiatives to better put the organization in the limelight" reinforces public relations commitment to ensuring every aspect of a corporate social responsibility activity is geared towards projecting the intended image of the organization. This advisory role could be credited to public relations' function at the managerial level, which affords public relations practitioners the opportunity to be involved in the decision making process as dictated by the excellence theory postulated by Grunig (2006).

The study also found that one major role of public relations in the promotion of corporate social responsibility is communicating the corporate social responsibility initiatives of MTN and Vodafone to promote the growth of the organization. Recurring words and phrases like: "tell," "draw attention to," "create awareness on," "communicate," "highlight," "publicize," give credence to the communication role of public relations practitioners. As well, the clauses "it helps us in trying to communicate the social impact and the developments we've brought to this country" and "PR tells the CSR story" reflects public relations unrivalled potential to communicate and promote the corporate social responsibility initiatives of the organizations to

the external publics. The study noted that central to the performance of corporate social responsibility is the idea of relationship building. It is also worthy of note that as an intermediary between organizations and the publics, public relations practitioners play a crucial role through communication to foster good relations between the organizations and the strategic publics.

The study thus discovered from CCSMM that public relations ability to negotiate, collaborate, reach compromise and facilitate dialogue made it a viable and a credible outfit to communicate the corporate social responsibility activities of the organization. This discovery supports Signitzer and Prexl (2008) argument that public relations practitioners do have the necessary expertise and competence to communicate on issues of corporate social responsibility (p.12). The finding thus supports the assertion of Lattimore et.al (2006) which states:

PR practitioners communicate with all relevant internal and external publics to develop positive relationships and to create consistency between organizational goals and societal expectations. PR practitioners develop, execute, and evaluate organizational programs that promote the exchange of influence and understanding among an organization's constituent's parts and publics (p.5).

Lattimore et.al (2000) in their assertion projects the purpose of communication in public relations. According to Lattimore et. al (2000), public relations professionals communicate with strategic stakeholders to establish positive relationships between the organizations and the publics. It is also instructive to note that communicating corporate social responsibility is one strategy through which public relations practitioners establish a rapport between their organizations and the publics.

The study as well noted that though communicating the corporate social responsibility activities of organization is essential, over drumming these activities might be misconstrued as propaganda and just a mere publicity stunt. This finding is consistent with the findings of Benn, Renier, and Pendleton (2010), which emphasizes that even though the theory of public relations has evolved and continue to evolve, there are still negative perceptions of corporate social responsibility being associated with public relations. They noted that the problem often arises when managers of the organizations view public relations professionals as only a source of positive publicity. As a result of this negative perception, there is the need to be strategic in order to minimize the publics' skepticism upon receiving corporate social responsibility messages as noted by Du, Bhattacharya and Sen (2010).

The study also revealed that one other major role played by public relations in the promotion of corporate social responsibility is monitoring and evaluation of effect. As a department that has oversight responsibility on image and reputation management, the public relations or corporate communications outfit of the organizations keep an eye on all activities of the other departments including the corporate social responsibility department that have the tendency to affect the image of the organizations. The public relations arm of MTN and Vodafone Ghana ensured that all activities and actions of all other departments within the organizations including the corporate social responsibility department were consistent with the image and identity of the organization. This role of the public relations practitioners is what CCSMM referred to as "the surveillance role of public relations." The monitoring and evaluation role of public relations practitioners as well helped practitioners of public relations to identify where to direct corporate social responsibility resources. For instance, commenting on the role of public relations in promoting corporate social responsibility, ASV averred, "I must say that our

surveillance role helps us to advise the corporate social responsibility department on which area to direct their resources” This findings corroborate Clark (2000) assertion that “public relations adds value by being able to provide a thorough record and analysis of the previous communication and interactions between the organization and those stakeholders on any given issue”

RQ4. What are some of the constraints that hinder the effective promotion of corporate social responsibility by public relations practitioners in Ghana?

In answering the fourth objective of this research, this research question sought to find out from public relations practitioners, some of the challenges they are confronted with in their bid to contribute to corporate social responsibility.

The findings of the study revealed that irrespective of public relations’ enormous prospect and significant role in the promotion of corporate social responsibility as evidenced in the findings in the previous chapter of this work, there were few challenges that derailed public relations practitioners’ effort in promoting corporate social responsibility. One major hindrance that public relations practitioners encountered in the promotion of corporate social responsibility was the unbridled “preferential treatment syndrome” of some of the traditional rulers in the communities where MTN and Vodafone Ghana operate. Given the nature of corporate social responsibility implementation, public relations practitioners are expected to engage key opinion leaders in the communities to build understanding for the proper execution of corporate social responsibility projects. This attempt by public relations practitioners to seek collaboration from opinion leaders presented these leaders to make some selfish demands. CCMV demonstrated his frustration when he bemoaned the selfishness of these opinion leaders “I think in some cases

people within the palace or special stakeholders that you engage earlier wants to be the first to benefit which is very wrong.” Failure to meet the demands of these traditional leaders more often than not strained the relationship between the organization and the traditional authorities. The uncompromising nature of these traditional leaders defeats the idea of “symmetry” as explained by Larissa Grunig, James Grunig, and David Dozier (2002). According to Larissa Grunig, James Grunig, and David Dozier (2002) the concept of symmetry calls for “a balance of the organization’s and the public’s interest. Total accommodation of the public’s interest would be as asymmetrical as unbridled advocacy of the organization’s interests” (p. 314). Anything short of this assertion by Grunig et. al (2002) is a slap in the face of effective public relations.

The study also revealed that the high cost of media buying was a challenge for public relations practitioners in their quest to promote corporate social responsibility in MTN and Vodafone Ghana. Promoting corporate social responsibility involves lot money and given the limited amount of money MTN and Vodafone Ghana allocate for communication, public relations practitioners had to hold back on promoting some of their corporate social responsibility initiatives. As CCMV stated, “Funding has always been a major part of our communication process and so we sometimes have to rely on our connections with the media.” This assertion by CCMV corroborate Freitag (2007) claim that “Finally, it has been affirmed that the long term corporate social responsibility initiatives require a substantial amount of funding. This serves as another major challenge for public relations departments.” The reason for the high cost of media buying stems from the knowledge of the media that it is only through publicity that the general public will get to know the impact and the contributions these telecommunications companies are making. The media are also of the firm belief that the image of the organization is likely to be enhanced only when people get to know of the responsible actions of the

telecommunications companies. For these reasons, the media charge exorbitant fees for media buying which in turn affected the work of public relations especially in the promotion of corporate social responsibility. Corporate social responsibility as a practice is a collective effort and that the media must understand it in that regard. This is because the work of the media is for the good of the society they serve. In view of that responsibility, the media should try to as much as possible to incentivize the public relations practitioners in the form of providing subsidized rates when dealing with corporate social responsibilities. Through engagements, public relations practitioners can activate their media relations expertise by negotiating with the media the need for the media to incentivize publicity on corporate social responsibility projects. By so doing, the tenets of symmetrical communication including dialogue, listening and relationship building as proposed by Grunig, Grunig and Dozier (2002) will be realized.

Another major constraint that affected the work of public relations practitioners in the promotion of corporate social responsibility in MTN and Vodafone Ghana is the reduction of public relations activity to just publicity. The four models of communication: “press agency, public information, two-way asymmetric and two-way symmetric” propounded by Grunig and Hunt (1984) has demonstrated how public relations have provided context to analyze how public relations have been practised over time. It is worthy of note that though public relations practitioners have successfully moved from the era of just information dissemination to be considered as a management function, the impact of public relations to organizational success is still undervalued,. Actors within the organizational setting are still ignoring the expertise of public relations in making critical business decisions. According to CCMM, players within organizations more often than not see the relevance of public relations when it has to do with influencing the behaviour of the publics through publicity. To this end, public relations is

reduced to just behaviour change machinery. This finding is consistent with the assertion of Starck and Kruckeberg (2003) that “communicators would only be used to affect behavioural outcome.” CCSMM also stated that “PR has unfortunately been misconstrued to be a publicity stunt which to me is a serious challenge,” it is in order to state that public relations has been reduced to mean a behavioural changing machinery whose weapon is through effective publicity. This finding is consistent with Frynas (2005) assertion that “public relations may be used to promote corporate social responsibility initiatives developed in response to bad publicity especially where the organization needed to improve its reputation.” This devaluing erroneous impression created by actors within the organizations threatens the long-term sustainability of public relations as a management function as “excellence theorists and researchers” like John E. Grunig, Todd Hunt, David Dozier and Bey-Ling Sha have suggested. Public relations practitioners therefore have to justify their value beyond publicity to erase this erroneous impression about public relations worth.

4.6 Chapter Summary

This chapter of the research presented the findings of the study as connected with the research objectives which informed this study. In essence, the study found that there was a strong connection between public relations and corporate social responsibility especially when public relations is strategically positioned. As well, the findings revealed that public relations played a dominant role in the promotion of corporate social responsibility initiatives of organization as evidenced across the interviews conducted. The chapter also discussed the findings in reference to the theories that guided the work and findings from related literature. The next chapter will focus on drawing conclusions, discussing the limitations and make recommendations for both the practice of corporate social responsibility and further scholarly research.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0. Introduction

This study was geared towards investigating the role of public relations in promoting corporate social responsibility focusing on MTN and Vodafone Ghana, the two leading telecommunications companies in Ghana. This chapter of the study therefore provided the summary of the work by highlighting the key findings in the work. Also, the chapter continued by drawing conclusions by bringing to the fore the implication of the findings. As well, this chapter discussed the limitations of the study and made recommendations for both the practice of corporate social responsibility and further scholarly research

5.1. Summary

This study was designed to explore the role public relations played in the promotion of corporate social responsibility especially in the telecommunications industry. The study was informed by the evidence that public relations professionals have considerable amount of knowledge and appreciable skills in effective stakeholder relationship management abilities and how this relationship affected the reputation of the organization. All in all, the study showed that in instances where public relations is not spearheading corporate social responsibility activities as it is in the case of this study, public relations can work hand in hand with the corporate social responsibility arm of an organization by harnessing and utilizing the expertise of these departments to manage the relationship and reputation of corporate entities.

As was determined by Grunig (2000) in his articulation on the “excellence public relations,” the researcher noted that for public relations to contribute meaningfully to the overall success of corporate social responsibility, it needed to be positioned strategically, particularly, among top level management. By so doing, public relations could play a dominant role in the decision making process of the organization and assumed its rightful position as the counselor of management.

The study revealed the interplay between public relations and corporate social responsibility. The reason being that MTN and Vodafone Ghana that served as the research site for this study appeared to appreciate the direct link between public relations and corporate social responsibility.

Nonetheless, public relations still seems to be battling with its historical association with propaganda and publicity stunt. This is because most players within the organizational setting still maintain a slender view and understanding of public relations function as purely persuasive. It is for this reason that it appears impracticable to believe that public relations can play a frontal role in championing corporate social responsibility, or serve as the “social conscience of the organization” as has been championed by many public relations scholars including Heath (2006).

Though the findings of this research seems to partially confirm the findings of Benn et al (2010) that many organizational actors still perceive public relations professionals only as a source of positive publicity, the admission by the public relations and corporate social responsibility managers at both MTN and Vodafone Ghana that public relations plays a pivotal role especially in the implementation process of the corporate social responsibility programmes is an indication that apart from publicity or communication, public relations has more to offer in

terms of promoting corporate social responsibility. Likewise, the prospect of public relations in corporate social responsibility is so huge that it can be effectively employed to contribute meaningfully not just to the promotion of corporate social responsibility but the overall growth of the organization.

It is instructive to note that the knowledge and insight of public relations professionals on the external publics of the organization, coupled with public relations' desire and ability to champion the cause of stakeholders to strike a balance between the organizational interests and the societal interests, are some of the greatest contributions of public relations professionals in advancing the cause of corporate social responsibility. The successful performance of this boundary-spanning role of public relations helps the organization to gain legitimacy from the publics and as well enhance the corporate image.

5.2. Conclusions

Drawing on the objective of this study, the researcher concluded by analyzing the implications of the key findings of this study relative to the statement of the problem; theoretical framework; literature reviewed; and public relations practitioners' conduct. This study showed that public relations played a crucial role in the promotion of corporate social responsibility in MTN and Vodafone Ghana. However, public relations was not the department spearheading corporate social responsibility initiatives of the organizations. Based on the findings discussed in the chapter four of this study, the study had six implications.

First and foremost, the findings of the study concluded that public relations was a strategic venture and that public relations practitioners should be strategic and tactful in the

promotion of corporate social responsibility in order that their communication efforts would not be suspected or misinterpreted by their strategic publics as a “show off.”

Similarly, the findings of the study implied that for public relations to function effectively and efficiently so as to reap its intended benefits, public relations should strategically be placed within management as proposed by Grunig (2000) to make a case for public relations unrivalled potential in decision-making.

Also, the findings of the study indicated that the successful and effective promotion of corporate social responsibility by public relations practitioners has the potential to achieving a desirable corporate image and reputation for organizations thereby claiming legitimacy.

Moreover, the findings of this study concluded that public relations practitioners serve not just a communication function but as well perform advisory role, recommendation role, monitoring and evaluation of effects role. These important roles clearly solidify the place of public relations in the pursuit of corporate social responsibility. No wonder Franketal (2001) refers to corporate social responsibility as “an invention of public relations.”

Furthermore, the findings of this study noted that for public relations to assume its rightful position as a management function, public relations practitioners still need to do more to demonstrate its capacity to their organizations and communities through their role in the pursuit of corporate social responsibility programmes. By so doing, public relations professionals will solidify their professional value.

Above all, the study further implied that the role of public relations in the promotion of corporate social responsibility is to make explicit, the responsible practices of organizations thereby erasing any erroneous and distorted impression of the strategic publics on organizations.

This is to say that failure to make known to the publics, the responsible practices of organization, affords the publics to have an erroneous impression about the organization. This implication corroborated the assertion of Carroll (1979) that “The lack of specific effort to communicate, therefore, leaves the company at the mercy of the public’s perception of its activities....passivity can lead to a distorted view of the organization” (p.390). This implication further legitimizes the appropriateness of the Stakeholder Theory in this study.

5.3. Limitations of study

One major limitation to the study was the scope of the research. In all, two telecommunication companies (MTN and Vodafone Ghana) were studied to investigate “the role of public relations in promoting corporate social responsibility” of which six (four public relations and two corporate social responsibility) professionals were interviewed. To this end, the findings can therefore not be generalized to be “the role of public relations in promoting corporate social responsibility” across different industries or sectors.

Another limitation of this study has to do with the tedious nature of acquiring data. Since many people in Ghana are not willing to give out information especially sensitive information about their organizations, the researcher had to forfeit the document analysis bit of the research that could have further enriched the study.

The stringent policies of organizations as regards granting of interviews was a key limitation to this study in that the researcher had to delay this work due to the hesitation of the participant in granting the interview.

The very last limitation of the study was the small number of public relations and corporate social responsibility practitioners of MTN and Vodafone Ghana. It was due to the small number that informed the small sample for this research.

5.4. Recommendations and Suggestions for Further Studies

Based on the limitations of this study, the research recommended that a mixed method approach be employed by future researchers to uncover all the missing link in this study. When this is done, it will unravel all the intricacies of the phenomenon for it to be dealt with in a more holistic manner.

Further studies should focus on examining the willingness of public relations professionals to participate in corporate social responsibility. This study could be done by exploring the challenges, assessing the various approaches and investigating the pros and cons of the two phenomena.

To validate the findings of this study, the researcher recommended that similar studies be conducted in organizations from different industries with different sizes to compare and contrast the activities and techniques used by other public relations professionals to the ones observed here. It would be more advisable to investigate public relations professionals in a more socially responsible organizations so as to get a reflective outcome.

Looking at how critical and effective public relations is especially in the promotion of corporate social responsibility, the researcher recommends that corporate social responsibility be placed under the purview of public relations. In other words, the public relations department should be an active player in determining the corporate social responsibility initiatives of organizations to ensure the maximum success of the corporate social responsibility's goals.

It is also recommended that in instances where public relations department is not the department spearheading or fronting corporate social responsibility, members within the department responsible for corporate social responsibility should have some amount of knowledge in public relations to augment their work.

5.5. Chapter Summary

The last chapter of the study provided a comprehensive summary of the whole study. It also encapsulated the implications of the findings on the role of public relations in promoting corporate social responsibility. As well, the study enumerated a number of limitations of the study and offered recommendations for future researchers, organizations and professionals of public relations.

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APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR CSR PRACTITIONERS OF MTN AND VODAFONE GHANA

I am currently in the process of completing my dissertation on the topic, “The Role of Public Relations in Promoting Corporate Social Responsibility: A Study of Telecommunication Companies in Ghana.” The research is being done as part of my master’s programme under the supervision of Father Dominic Maximilian Ofori (Ph.D) at the Department of Communication Studies, University of Ghana. I strongly believe that your in-depth knowledge and broad experience in public relations practice will provide invaluable insight that will contribute immensely not only to the research but the public relations profession in general. More importantly, I assure you that your responses will be treated with the utmost confidentiality it deserves and that the responses provided will be used solely for this academic purpose.

CSR PRACTICE IN THE ORGANIZATION

1. As the person responsible for the CSR department, what are your functions?
2. How does your organization conceive corporate social responsibility?
3. How long has your organization been championing CSR?
4. What is the niche area of your CSR programmes?
5. Who are the beneficiaries of your CSR programmes?
6. Does your organization have any CSR policy in place?
7. Does your organization publish CSR reports?

8. Do you involve the public relations department in the CSR activities?
9. What are some of the roles the public relations practitioners play in the promotion of your CSR initiatives?
10. What motivate your organization to embark on CSR programmes?
11. In what ways does CSR reflect in your day to day activities?
12. In what ways does CSR impact on the success of organization?

PROMOTION OF CSR ACTIVITIES

1. In what ways does your organization involve communities in your CSR programmes?
2. What exact roles do you play in the engagement process?
3. In what ways does your outfit promote and communicate with communities in this process?
4. What challenges do you encounter in the promotion and communication of your CSR projects?

IMPLEMENTATION OF DETERMINED INITIATIVES

1. What is the process for implementing CSR initiatives in your organization?
2. What specific roles do you play in the implementation process?
3. Which other departments are involved in the process? What do they do?
4. Upon the completion of CSR interventions, who is responsible for communicating them to beneficiaries and or other stakeholders?

5. What challenges do you encounter in the implementation process?
6. In what ways is your contribution to CSR programmes valued in your organization?
7. What should be done to enhance your contribution in the execution of CSR initiatives?

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR PR PRACTITIONERS OF MTN AND VODAFONE GHANA

I am currently in the process of completing my dissertation on the topic, “The Role of Public Relations in Promoting Corporate Social Responsibility: A Study of Telecommunication Companies in Ghana.” The research is being done as part of my master’s programme under the supervision of Father Dominic Maximilian Ofori (Ph.D) at the Department of Communication Studies, University of Ghana. I strongly believe that your in-depth knowledge and broad experience in public relations practice will provide invaluable insight that will contribute immensely not only to the research but the public relations profession in general. More importantly, I assure you that your responses will be treated with the utmost confidentiality it deserves and that the responses provided will be used solely for this academic purpose.

PUBLIC RELATIONS ROLE IN CSR

1. How long has your organisation been practising Public Relations (PR)?
2. What are your responsibilities?
3. To what extent are you fully responsible for Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)?
4. In what ways does your department report CSR programmes?
5. In what ways do you find PR role in CSR promotion significant?
6. Based on your experience, what are some of the main roles of PR in CSR?
7. How do you construct your roles in the pursuit of corporate social responsibility?
8. What is the relationship between public relations and corporate social responsibility?
9. What would be lacking if CSR is not championed by PR?

10. What is your comment about organizations that separate CSR from PR? (For instance, having an independent department for CSR initiatives?)
11. What are some of the major constraints that you have experienced in the pursuit and promotion of CSR initiatives?

CSR PRACTICE IN THE ORGANIZATION

1. As the person responsible for the CSR department, what are your functions?
2. How does your organization conceive corporate social responsibility?
3. How long has your organization been championing CSR?
4. What is the niche area of your CSR programmes?
5. Who are the beneficiaries of your CSR programmes?
6. Does your organization have any CSR policy in place?
7. Does your organization publish CSR reports?
8. Do you involve the public relations department in the CSR activities?
9. What are some of the roles the public relations practitioners play in the promotion of your CSR initiatives?
10. What motivate your organization to embark on CSR programmes?
11. In what ways does CSR reflect in your day to day activities?
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