

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST

**THE INTERPLAY OF CORPORATE COMMUNICATION
ACTIVITIES ON THE IMAGE AND REPUTATION OF
COLLEGIATE UNIVERSITIES IN GHANA**



KWABENA ANTWI-KONADU

2023

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University of Cape Coast



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BY

KWABENA ANTWI-KONADU

Thesis submitted to the Institute for Educational Planning and Administration
of School of Educational Development and Outreach, College of Education
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the award of Doctor of Philosophy degree in Education
(Qualitative Research Based)

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DECLARATION

Candidate's Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of my own original research and that no part of it has been presented for another degree in this university or elsewhere.

Candidate's Signature: Date:.....

Name: Kwabena Antwi-Konadu

Supervisors' Declaration

We hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of the thesis were supervised in accordance with the guidelines on supervision of thesis laid down by the University of Cape Coast.

Principal Supervisor's Signature:..... Date:.....

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Co-Supervisor's Signature: Date:.....

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ABSTRACT

The thesis examined how corporate communication activities influence the image and reputation of collegiate universities in Ghana, focusing on the role strategic communication practices play in shaping stakeholder perceptions and institutional credibility. Corporate communication in higher education has transcended its traditional public relations origins, assuming broader and more strategic responsibilities. The reputation of a university is intricately linked to its corporate image, encompassing perceptions of quality, reliability, and institutional value. In Ghana, where tertiary education faces challenges related to quality assurance and accessibility, corporate communication emerges as a vital tool for reputation management. Despite its importance, the interplay between corporate communication and university reputation in Ghana remains underexplored. To fill the gap, this present qualitative study examined the interplay of corporate communication activities on the image and reputation of three collegiate universities in Ghana. The total sample size was 15 participants from the three (3) collegiate universities in Ghana. The study used the purposive sampling approach to select the different groups of participants who differ in the variable of interest but share common characteristics such as educational background and status in the universities. Drawing on corporate communication roles theory and the hourglass conceptual model, participants noted that although corporate communication shares overlaps with public relations and organizational communication, each maintains distinct elements. It was also found that public relations offices, often under the registrar's oversight, handle centralized communication, although individual colleges may operate semi-autonomously. The study also revealed that colleges manage some communication independently, creating a blend of centralized and decentralized approaches to corporate messaging. Participants identified reputation management as crucial for institutional success and stakeholder trust, emphasizing that effective management requires consistent communication and proactive public engagement. It is therefore recommended that collegiate university managements should clearly delineate responsibilities for corporate communication roles, ensuring that the public relations office has a well-defined mandate. Furthermore, it is recommended that Collegiate University Managements should implement strategic campaigns that promote the university's strengths and achievements to enhance its image.

KEYWORDS

Collegiate Universities

Corporate Communication

Identity

Image

Interplay

Reputation

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DEDICATION

To my Godfearing, prayerful, strong, empathetic and lovely mother, Agnes

Efia Bio Hayford, my wife, Justina Aba Antwi-Konadu and my children,

Akosua Antwiwaa, Yaw Owusu and Efia Bio

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The thesis examines how corporate communication activities influence the image and reputation of collegiate universities in Ghana, focusing on the role strategic communication practices play in shaping stakeholder perceptions and institutional credibility. This research critically evaluates the evolution of public relations strategies in universities, transitioning from traditional roles to complex, multidimensional corporate communication frameworks. By investigating these dynamics within Ghana's collegiate universities, the study seeks to illuminate how communication efforts contribute to reputation management in an increasingly competitive educational environment.

Corporate communication in higher education has transcended its traditional public relations origins, assuming broader and more strategic responsibilities. Antwi-Konadu and Oduro (2014) underscore its central role in fostering the holistic development of universities, where effective communication promotes internal unity and external goodwill. Similarly, Campbell (2018) highlights the necessity of addressing a diverse range of audiences, including students, faculty, policymakers, and international partners, through carefully crafted messaging.

The reputation of a university is intricately linked to its corporate image, encompassing perceptions of quality, reliability, and institutional value. Research has shown that institutions with well-coordinated communication strategies tend to attract higher levels of enrolment, funding, and partnerships (Fombrun & Van Riel,

2004). In Ghana, where tertiary education faces challenges related to quality assurance and accessibility, corporate communication emerges as a vital tool for reputation management.

Despite its importance, the interplay between corporate communication and university reputation in Ghana remains underexplored. Many institutions grapple with issues such as uncoordinated messaging, limited resources for communication initiatives, and a shortage of skilled professionals in the field. This study aims to bridge this gap by focusing on how these challenges specifically affect Ghanaian collegiate universities. The higher education landscape in Ghana has undergone significant expansion, with some universities adopting collegiate structures. This shift has increased competition for students and resources, compelling institutions to enhance their communication strategies. Leading universities, such as the University of Ghana and Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST), have begun redefining their corporate communication practices to better engage with their stakeholders.

Globalisation and digitalisation have further complicated these dynamics. Ghanaian universities are increasingly incorporating digital platforms and social media to reach broader audiences. However, inconsistencies in their online strategies and fragmented messaging efforts often undermine these initiatives, highlighting the need for more comprehensive approaches. Additionally, stakeholders, including students, parents, alumni, and government entities, demand transparency, accountability, and continuous engagement. Failures in

communication can erode trust and compromise institutional reputations, making effective corporate communication a critical priority.

Previous studies provide a valuable context for understanding this issue. Antwi-Konadu and Oduro (2014) explored the role of public relations in Ghanaian universities and established a strong link between structured communication and institutional development. Campbell (2018) emphasized the global relevance of strategic communication in managing university reputations, offering insights that resonate with Ghana's context. Foundational work by Fombrun and Van Riel (2004) laid the theoretical groundwork for connecting communication practices to corporate reputation. More recent research, such as Adusei and Tweneboah's (2019) investigation into social media's role in student engagement and Mensah and Oppong's (2020) study on corporate branding, underscores the importance of coordinated communication efforts in higher education.

This study is both timely and necessary, addressing critical gaps in understanding how corporate communication impacts university image and reputation in Ghana. As competition intensifies, universities must adopt comprehensive and forward-thinking communication strategies to maintain relevance and credibility. Strategic communication is pivotal in fostering trust and building stakeholder relationships, which directly influence enrolment, funding, and institutional sustainability. Moreover, the study's findings can provide practical guidance for university administrators and policymakers seeking to refine communication frameworks. By employing qualitative methods and an interpretive lens, this research contributes to the academic discourse on corporate

communication in higher education, offering nuanced insights specific to the Ghanaian context.

The study explores the interplay of corporate communication activities on the image and reputation of collegiate universities in Ghana. In view of this, this chapter gives an overview of the background study to the research problem, statement of the problem followed by purpose of the study, research objectives, as well as research questions. The chapter also dwells on the significance of the study, its delimitation, and concludes with organization of the study.

Background to the Study

Corporate communication occupies a pivotal role in the operations of contemporary organizations, serving as a strategic interface between institutions and society. This role is deeply embedded within the larger media landscape, reflecting the increasing reliance on mediated communication in everyday life. Mediated communication, which involves the exchange of information through technological platforms rather than direct face-to-face interaction, has become a defining feature of modern practices (Thompson, 2020; McQuail, 2000). Skinner and Mersham (2002) argue that this shift is a response to the demands of modern socio-economic systems, which necessitate more structured and technologically mediated communication processes. Similarly, Cornelissen (2020) notes that corporate communication has evolved to manage the complexities of institutional relationships and public engagement effectively.

Corporate communication is the task of communicating with internal and external stakeholders toward the end of instilling a favourable point of view of the

corporation (Riel & Fombrun, 2007; Meisenbach, 2006; Shelby, 1993). Carroll (2015), say that to communicate with both external and internal stakeholders, corporate communication comes in to instil the corporation's favourable point of view. Several theoretical studies suggest corporate communication as a potential predictor of reputation (e.g. Carter, 2003; Alsop, 2004), since the internal and external elements interact with each other and inform each other (Hatch & Schultz, 2000). Preliminary empirical research shows a correspondence between corporate communication attributes and reputation attributes (Flatt & Kowalczyk, 2000; Kowalczyk & Pawlish, 2002; Kowalczyk, 2005). While Carmeli's (2004) study does not examine reputation, he examines how culture interacts with communication and the industrial relations climate (workplace atmosphere) to predict perceived external prestige of a firm. Thus, corporate communication is found to be very important to a company because an institution gets into contact with its suppliers, other elements, and customers, both external and internal, of the institution through communication. For a company, on the other hand, to create the best corporate reputation, it has to rely on corporate communication, (McDonald & Mitra, 2019).

Studies done regarding corporate communication have not predominantly looked in to the impact of corporate reputation on organizations. Many of these studies have focused on the roles and benefits of corporate communication to organizations without touching on the corporate reputation. While theoretical support suggests a link between corporate communication and reputation, limited empirical support exists to establish the link between corporate communication and

reputation. The only empirical evidence of corporate communication influencing corporate reputation are presented in a few studies such as in (Flatt & Kowalczyk, 2000; Carmeli, 2004). This leads to a hypothesis which proposes that corporate communication is positively related to corporate reputation, since corporate communication creates the context for identity and an organization's identity is related to corporate reputation. Corporate communication can greatly influence corporate reputation through corporate culture. By what an organization deems as its culture, reputation can be developed through communication, therefore, corporate communicators need to involve corporate culture in their engagements with external and internal stakeholders in a bid to build a strong organizational reputation.

According to Skinner and Mersham (2002), as society became more complex and sophistication in communication techniques and research methods increased, the need arose for communication experts who could deal with intricate socio-economic, political and other forces as they relate to the communication needs of modern-day organisations. The task of managing communications between an organization and their publics was for the majority of the twentieth century defined by the public relations and marketing functions. Through socio-economic developments, and the practical need to coordinate and draw communications disciplines together, disciplines previously falling under marketing and public relations headings have increasingly been integrated into the corporate communications function (Cornelissen, 2004). Thus, corporate communications is the management function that has come to fruition in this

stakeholder era, and caters for the need to build and manage relationships with stakeholder groups upon which the organization is economically and socially dependent.

Corporate communication is a critical management function that provides a structured framework and platforms for coordinating various communication channels, aiming to establish and maintain favourable reputations with stakeholder groups essential for organizational success (Cornelissen, 2004). It demands an integrated approach where communication activities are aligned with corporate strategies and objectives, ensuring a holistic view of organizational communication. Unlike fragmented or ad-hoc communication tactics, corporate communication emphasizes strategic, planned practices that support the broader organizational vision (Cornelissen, 2020).

Studies demonstrate that effective corporate communication correlates strongly with organizational success. For instance, a survey of Fortune 500 companies found that organizations with a well-defined corporate communication strategy had 30% higher levels of stakeholder trust and engagement (Edelman Trust Barometer, 2023). Moreover, the integration of communication practices into the corporate strategy enhances not only reputation but also financial performance, with firms showing a 15% average increase in market value over five years (Argenti, 2017).

Media management plays a pivotal role in shaping organizational narratives. Strategic use of mass media, social media, marketing campaigns, and public relations is central to corporate communication. These platforms act as

channels to influence public opinion and align external perceptions with organizational goals. For instance, a case study on Procter & Gamble revealed how its "Thank You, Mom" campaign effectively utilized integrated communication strategies across television, digital media, and public relations, generating a \$500 million increase in revenue during the Olympic Games (Kantar, 2021).

Educational institutions, much like corporate entities, rely heavily on corporate communication to build and sustain their reputations. Universities, for example, face increasing scrutiny from stakeholders, including students, faculty, and regulatory bodies. An empirical study on higher education in the UK demonstrated that universities with robust communication strategies experienced a 20% increase in student applications and donor funding compared to those without (Universities UK, 2020).

Corporate communication serves as the bridge between an organization and its stakeholders, ensuring transparency and consistency in messaging. This role is underscored in crisis management scenarios, where coordinated communication efforts can mitigate reputational damage. The 2018 Starbucks incident, where swift and strategic communication addressing racial bias allegations helped restore public confidence, serves as a pertinent example (Forbes, 2018). Corporate communication is indispensable for organizations striving for favourable public perceptions and strategic alignment. It integrates media management, public relations, and digital communications to reflect and reinforce corporate objectives. Empirical evidence underscores the role of well-planned corporate communication

in driving organizational success, making it an essential element of modern management.

According to Budd (2001), managing corporate reputation is a very delicate and sensitive process. You are not dealing with a tangible product but with a judgement, an attitude, a sense, a feeling rooted in a person's mind. Good reputation is hard to build and cannot be bought. It is also very fragile, and easy to lose. Hutton, Goodman, Alexander and Genest, (2001) argued that institutions with extensive corporate communication strategies were more likely to have strong reputations. Specifically, the more companies focused on "managing relationships" with noncustomer publics or "reputation management" as their guiding communication philosophy, the more likely they were to have a strong reputation.

Ideally, corporate communication should help institutions to communicate effectively since ineffective communication by any institution will affect the identity, image, brand and reputation badly (Bochner & Eisenberg, 1985; Carlson & Zmud, 1999; D'Urso & Rains, 2008; Ferry, Kydd & Sawyer, 2001; Timmerman & Madhavapeddi, 2008). There is a shift in Communication as growth of corporate communication due to technological advancements, diminishing traditional face-to-face interaction (Thompson, 2020). This has affected significantly the traditional public relations role in the universities. For universities, corporate communication helps in gaining public trust and competitive advantage (Cornelissen, 2004) and enhances image, brand, and reputation in the public eye through many corporate communication activities and practices.

Corporate communication is necessary for universities aiming for global visibility and credibility (Herbig et al., 1994). On Reputation Management, strong communication strategies and activities link to favorable public perceptions (Hutton et al., 2001). Therefore, corporate communication activities in the universities are very critical on the overall reputation of the institutions, most especially the collegiate universities.

Corporate communication activities in Ghanaian collegiate universities, such as University of Ghana, Legon (UG), Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST) and University of Cape Coast (UCC), are central to cultivating a cohesive institutional identity, strengthening relationships with stakeholders, and driving strategic goals. These activities harmonize traditional public relations practices with innovative strategies to address the evolving challenges of higher education. Together, they create a comprehensive framework that enhances institutional reputation, fosters engagement, and supports development.

Public relations initiatives focus on building trust and transparency with internal and external stakeholders, including students, faculty, alumni, and the wider community. By promoting goodwill and maintaining a favourable institutional image, these efforts form the foundation of effective university communication (Grunig & Hunt, 2023). Strategic communication complements these activities by aligning institutional objectives with consistent messaging frameworks, ensuring cohesion across all channels and reinforcing organizational clarity and purpose (Cornelissen, 2020).

Media relations amplify institutional visibility by fostering connections with journalists and media outlets. Through these relationships, universities share achievements, provide updates, and address crises, which helps enhance public perception and credibility in competitive academic environments (Macnamara, 2021). Publications and publicity, including annual reports, newsletters, and brochures, serve as additional channels for disseminating key information, reinforcing transparency, and fostering trust among stakeholders (Harlow, 2022).

Branding activities further strengthen a university's identity by crafting and promoting a distinct image. This differentiation helps universities attract students, faculty, and donors while positioning themselves favourably in global academic networks (Kotler & Fox, 2022). Targeted marketing strategies, particularly through digital platforms like social media, also enhance visibility and address enrolment challenges, making them essential for expanding institutional reach (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2023).

Advertising initiatives raise awareness of academic offerings, while the commodification of educational programs transforms these offerings into marketable products. While effective in navigating the commercialization of higher education, this approach also invites ethical debates about its implications for academic integrity (Marginson, 2021). Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives, on the other hand, highlight universities' contributions to societal development through community projects, scholarships, and outreach programs, thereby enhancing institutional reputation and demonstrating a commitment to social progress (Carroll & Shabana, 2023).

Government relations are another critical aspect of communication, enabling universities to align with national policies, secure funding, and strengthen partnerships with governmental bodies. These efforts ensure compliance with regulatory frameworks and showcase universities' contributions to national development goals (Aldrich & Fiore, 2023). Similarly, technical communication supports precise information sharing with stakeholders, particularly in research and innovation contexts, ensuring clarity and effectiveness in scientific exchanges (Markel & Selber, 2021).

Advocacy and strategic partnerships with industries, NGOs, and other educational institutions expand resource sharing and foster collaborative projects. These initiatives are particularly valuable for advancing research and addressing shared goals (Bryson et al., 2023). Strong alumni relations further enhance institutional growth by creating mentorship opportunities, expanding networks, and securing financial contributions. Engaged alumni act as vital ambassadors and supporters of their alma mater (Weerts & Ronca, 2023).

Protocol activities standardize communication processes, promoting professionalism and consistency across all institutional interactions (Clampitt, 2022). Finally, fundraising and sponsorship initiatives enable universities to support academic programs, infrastructure development, and community projects. Storytelling and impact-driven campaigns are often employed to attract philanthropic contributions and sponsorships (Tempel et al., 2023). These corporate communication activities form a synergistic framework that aligns with universities' missions, enhances their reputations, and cultivates strong stakeholder

relationships, ensuring their continued success and relevance in the dynamic landscape of higher education.

Corporate communication within collegiate universities in Ghana has been characterized by a certain degree of fragmentation. Empirical evidence from institutional studies highlights that communication practices across these universities often lack cohesion and consistency, with numerous individuals and departments communicating with the university's stakeholders without adhering to standardized protocols. A study by Agyei and Boateng (2020) found that only 42% of Ghanaian university staff were aware of established communication guidelines, leading to widespread ad-hoc communication practices that undermine institutional messaging and branding. Some university staff perceive established communication procedures as bureaucratic and time-consuming, prompting them to bypass these systems. Empirical findings corroborate this observation. According to Ansah and Aborampah (2021), 67% of surveyed staff in collegiate universities in Ghana admitted to directly contacting external stakeholders without prior approval from the university's communication offices. This practice not only dilutes the intended message but also exposes the institution to inconsistencies in its public engagements.

Furthermore, students often feel empowered to speak on behalf of the university without understanding the implications of their communication. Research by Owusu and Mensah (2022) revealed that over 55% of students in Ghanaian universities have engaged in unauthorized public communication, primarily through social media platforms, without considering its potential impact

on the university's reputation. Communication plays a central role in building and sustaining a university's corporate identity and reputation. Berg and Blomqvist (2019) emphasize that strategic communication with external stakeholders enhances corporate image and provides a competitive advantage in the higher education sector. However, it is critical that the messages communicated are not only coherent but also aligned with the university's actual performance. Misalignment between communication and institutional realities can lead to credibility issues and diminished trust among stakeholders (Cornelissen, 2020). A case study on communication practices at the University of Ghana by Adu-Gyamfi (2021) demonstrated that inconsistencies in stakeholder communication led to stakeholder confusion and reputational challenges. Similarly, Agyemang and Oduro (2020) highlighted that misaligned messaging often resulted in missed opportunities for partnerships and reduced enrollment rates.

The lack of coordinated communication structures within collegiate universities in Ghana presents significant challenges to institutional image and reputation. Studies show that fragmented communication practices often result in conflicting messages that confuse stakeholders. According to Mensah et al. (2021), universities that failed to establish centralized communication channels experienced a 25% decline in stakeholder trust over three years, as inconsistent messages eroded public confidence in institutional reliability. Moreover, the absence of a unified communication strategy exacerbates identity complexities. Appiah and Twumasi (2022) in their study on branding in tertiary institutions in Ghana revealed that over 70% of respondents found it difficult to identify the

unique brand or mission of collegiate universities due to disparate and uncoordinated messaging. The findings underscore the urgent need for coordinated and strategic communication practices in Ghanaian collegiate universities. Without a centralized approach, efforts to build a cohesive corporate identity and foster strong stakeholder relationships will remain suboptimal. The importance of aligning communication with institutional performance is crucial, as incongruent messaging risks tarnishing the university's reputation and eroding stakeholder trust (Kotler & Fox, 2022).

This study therefore aims to explore the interplay of corporate communication activities and their impact on the image and reputation of collegiate universities in Ghana. By addressing the observed uncoordinated communication practices, this research seeks to provide actionable recommendations for enhancing strategic communication frameworks.

Statement of the Problem

Corporate communication is a cornerstone for the effective functioning of institutions, including universities in Ghana, as it directly influences their identity, image, brand, and reputation. Ineffective communication can have grave consequences, adversely impacting an institution's survival, competitiveness, and ability to fulfill its responsibilities in education, research, and public service (Bochner & Eisenberg, 1985; Carlson & Zmud, 1999; D'Urso & Rains, 2008; Ferry, Kydd & Sawyer, 2001; Timmerman & Madhavapeddi, 2008). Historically, modern universities were designed to serve as ideological tools of nation-states. However, with the mid-20th century shift towards broader societal engagement,

higher education institutions have evolved into universal platforms of lifelong learning. This transformation necessitated redefining their social and civic roles to align with global expectations (Kwiek, 2002, p.134).

Today, universities globally strive to enhance their visibility and relevance through strategic corporate communication that bolsters their reputation and positions them in the international arena (Hybels, 2008; Suchman, 1995; McCaffery, 2018, p.500). Effective communication not only facilitates academic and administrative efficiency but also fosters collaboration across departments and ensures meaningful engagement with diverse stakeholders (Mohamad, Bakar, & Rahman, 2007, p.81-83). For Ghanaian universities, like the University of Ghana, Legon, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology and University of Cape Coast, this ideal remains elusive. Corporate communication is often poorly defined, equated narrowly to public relations, and inadequately executed. This misalignment undermines its strategic role and prevents institutions from reaping its full benefits (Daft & Lengel, 1984; Grunig, 1992a; Markus, 1994).

In the University of Cape Coast, for example, Antwi-Konadu and Oduro (2014) identified uncoordinated corporate communication as a significant challenge, with the Public Affairs Office under-resourced in both material and human capacities. The situation reflects a broader trend across Ghanaian collegiate universities, where fragmented, ill-conceptualized, and haphazard communication practices hinder institutional cohesion and damage reputation. The semi-autonomous structures of these universities further complicate communication management, creating confusion and inefficiencies that weaken their ability to

maintain a unified identity. Such systemic issues underscore the need for a clear conceptual framework and strategic alignment in corporate communication (Melewar & Jenkins, 2002).

The pressures on higher education institutions to adopt corporate-like efficiency are evident, with increasing demands for transparency, accountability, and stakeholder responsiveness (Başkan, 2001, p.28). Unlike businesses, however, the stakes for universities extend beyond profitability to societal impact and knowledge dissemination. This dual role amplifies the need for strategic communication processes that convey clear, consistent, and meaningful messages to stakeholders while fostering positive interactions at both national and international levels (Iordache-Platis & Josan, 2009, p.56). Yet, research on corporate communication in higher education, particularly in collegiate universities, remains sparse. Existing studies have largely focused on business organizations, leaving significant gaps in understanding how communication strategies affect educational institutions (Akpapere et al., 2019; Veh et al., 2019).

Institutional culture largely shapes where, how and in what way work is done in organizations. As an important theoretical and practical component of corporate communication studies, the conveyance and development of corporate culture gains an important function in the organizational dimension of higher education institution management (Anabal, 2019; Gizir, 2002; Melewar, Foroudi, Dinnie, & Nguyen, 2018; Manov, Mujkić, Husić-Mehmedović, 2020; Sauphayana, 2021; Sezgin, 2016). The absence of targeted research on Ghanaian collegiate universities is particularly concerning, given their unique challenges and structural

complexities. These institutions require integrated communication strategies that reflect their semi-decentralized nature while addressing stakeholder expectations and fostering institutional reputation. Without such insights, universities risk continued inefficiencies and reputational harm. This study aims to fill this critical knowledge gap by systematically exploring the interplay of corporate communication activities on the image and reputation of Ghanaian collegiate universities. Through a comprehensive analysis, it seeks to provide evidence-based recommendations to enhance communication frameworks and improve institutional effectiveness in an increasingly competitive global landscape where the three collegiate universities in Ghana, UG, KNUST and UCC are expected to function effectively with regards to their corporate communication, image and reputation.

Purpose of the Study

The overarching purpose of this study was to explore the interplay of corporate communication activities on the image and reputation of collegiate universities, University of Ghana, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology and University of Cape Coast, in Ghana.

Objectives of the Study

Specifically, the study sought to:

1. explore how corporate communication is conceptualized within collegiate universities in Ghana.
2. examine the processes and practices involved in carrying out corporate communication activities in these institutions.

3. identify the key factors influencing the relationship between corporate communication and corporate image, identity, branding, and reputation in the Ghanaian collegiate universities.
4. analyze the perceptions of university authorities regarding reputation and its management in their respective institutions.
5. investigate the choices and applications of corporate communication strategies in managing the corporate reputation of collegiate universities in Ghana.
6. examine the interrelationships between corporate communication, image building, and reputation management in these universities.
7. evaluate the effects of corporate communication activities on the corporate image and reputation of collegiate universities in Ghana.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. How is corporate communication conceptualised in the collegiate universities in Ghana?
2. How is corporate communication carried out in the collegiate universities in Ghana?
3. What corporate communication activity mostly influence corporate image identity, brand and reputation of the collegiate universities in Ghana?
4. How do authorities of the collegiate universities in Ghana perceive reputation and reputation management in their universities?

5. What are the choices and uses of corporate communication in corporate reputation management in the collegiate universities in Ghana?
6. How do corporate communication, image building and reputation management related?
7. What are the effects of corporate communication activities on Corporate Image and Reputation of the collegiate universities in Ghana?

Significance of the Study

The study attempted to re-conceptualise and define corporate communication aiming at developing a new conceptual model which will serve as a framework for the study of corporate communication practices in the collegiate universities in Ghana. It is anticipated that the results of the study which will be disseminated through seminars and other user-engagement activities will deepen the understanding of the actual roles of public relations and corporate communication in the universities thus helping university authorities to appreciate the critical roles of public relations and corporate communication practices and their effects on corporate reputation. The proper conceptualization will also help these institutions to appreciate the scope and dimensions of corporate communication for institutional effectiveness and thus to train whoever will be involved in corporate communication at all levels in the universities to be professional and effective in their delivery in corporate communication.

It is also believed that this study will help to deepen the universities' understanding in discharging their corporate communication tasks to their stakeholders and publics and thus serve as a guide in engaging in effective

corporate communication practices. The findings coming from this largely exploratory research could also be the basis for subsequent research into university administration/management and corporate governance, especially to the collegiate universities. This stands to help provide direction for newly established tertiary institutions which may enter into these management complexities in managing their images and reputations especially during crisis communication.

Delimitation of the Study

The study focused on exploring the interplay of corporate communication activities on the image and reputation of collegiate universities in Ghana only. Subsequently, only collegiate universities were covered in the study. The study however, could not cover other functional and the academic life of the universities in relation to the role of corporate communication regarding academic activities. Again, the study did not specifically obtain information from the universities' external publics to collaborate information received from the University authorities who were purposively sampled in assessing the interplay of corporate communication activities on the image and reputation of collegiate universities to come out with absolute generalizations or conclusions.

Limitations of the Study

The study's focus was only on assessing the interplay of corporate communication activities on the image and reputation of collegiate universities in Ghana and adopted the use of purposive sampling method. Due to the use of purposive sampling method, the researcher did not involve all the staff in the Universities. Participants were pre-determined for the study so all the university

staff could not get equal opportunity to be part of the sample for the study. Subsequently, the Vice Chancellors or the Pro-Vice Chancellors, the Registrars, Heads/Directors at the Public Affairs Outfits, Provosts and Registrars of the Colleges of Distance Education outfits participated in the study. However, these limitations notwithstanding, findings of the study constitute a strong basis for scientific research since the necessary scientific methods and strategies were followed in the study to arrive at the conclusions as evidently explained in the methodology.

Definition of Terms

The abbreviation CCRAMMPPPPABAFO was initially developed as a concept by the researcher to help in the understanding of the concept of corporate communication and corporate reputation to facilitate this research work. It is a term coined out of the main activities of corporate communication as represented below: CCRAMMPPPPABAFO, though later got modified as a result of fieldwork culminating in the development of the conceptual model.

Communication: the process of creating meaning as well as ascribing it. It is the exchange of ideas and interaction among group members.

Corporate Social Responsibility Activities: A consideration of the internal and external stakeholders of the company in an ethical and socially responsible way.

Relationship Management: holds that the purpose of public relations is to act as an intermediary in helping an organisation achieve its goals while ensuring benefit for stakeholders as well as for the client organisation

Alumni Relations: A significant aspect of the post academia experience and offer universities the opportunity to connect with former students in order to establish a long-term relationship.

Marketing: Consisting of management tasks and decisions directed at successfully meeting opportunities and threats in a dynamic environment, by effectively developing and transferring a need-satisfying market offering to consumers, in such a way that the objectives of the business, the consumer and society will be achieved.

Media Relations: Media relations is a specialised sub-branch of public relations dealing primarily with increasing public awareness and understanding of an organisation's activities by sending information to the media and by inviting the media to see operations firsthand.

Public Relations: a strategic communication process that builds mutually beneficial relationships between organisations and their publics.

Publications: make scientific information publicly available, and allow the rest of the academic audience to evaluate the quality of the research.

Protocol Activities: An agreed standardized way of performing a task. A process that is repeatable and reproducible.

Promotions and Events: A written and developed marketing plan that allows those responsible for marketing the event to communicate their plans to the wider event team, funders and partners.

Advocacy and Strategic Partnership: creating a deliberate effort to determine priorities, actions and activities. Planning for advocacy also helps to understand the

stakeholders involved for an issue and how the organisation can work together with partners and the community to achieve desired outcomes.

Branding Activities: the probability that consumers or customers are well-known about the accessibility of the organisation's products.

Advertisement and Commodification: relying heavily on advertising to draw consumer attention to an organisation's market offering.

Fundraising and Sponsorships: raising of assets and resources from various sources for the support of an organisation or a specific project.

Organisational Communication: the process whereby an organisational stakeholder (or group of stakeholders) attempts to stimulate meaning in the mind of another an organisational stakeholder (or group of stakeholders) through intentional use of verbal, nonverbal, and/or mediated messages.

Organisation of the Study

The study was organized in six chapters. Chapter one dealt with the background to the study, statement of the problem, purpose and significance of the study, the research questions, delimitation, limitation of the study, definition of terms and the organisation of the study. Chapter two is concerned with the review of conceptual and theoretical related literature on corporate communication activities on the image and reputation. Major concepts such as corporate communication, identity, reputation, interplay of corporate identity, image and brand are to be discussed. Corporate reputation and resulting effects of corporate identity, image and brand are presented. The theoretical contribution to the study is also discussed. The corporate communication roles theory, organizational

communication theory and organizational information theory were thoroughly explained in the context of the study.

Chapter three covers the review of empirical studies, key emerging issues, and conceptual framework. Studies on strategic communication, public relations, media relations, branding activities, Corporate Social Responsibilities activities, advocacy and strategic partnership and the conceptual framework of the were discussed. Chapter four highlighted on the methodology and design strategies. This chapter also explained the sampling procedures, instruments for data collection, its trustworthiness, and finally, the analytical tools for analysis of data. Chapter five explained on the results stemming from the analysis of the data obtained from the field work. This was complemented by discussion of the results making reference to studies that support the findings of the current study. Chapter six focused on the summary of the study, key findings, conclusions, recommendations, and implication for university administration. It ended with suggested areas for future research.

CHAPTER TWO

CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL REVIEW

Introduction

The review encompasses diverse corporate communication strategies as defined and reflected by various scholars worldwide, to allow a clear backdrop to set the current study on its aims and objectives of understanding how this interplay to affect the corporate reputation of these universities. This chapter presents a review of conceptual issues relating to the study. In addition, it reviews related literature on all the concepts that are relevant to the study, as well as indicting the gap in literature. In light of this, a variety of relevant sources have been reviewed to gain insight into concepts, principles, theories, and perspectives related to the topic.

Conceptual Review

Corporate Communication Concept

Etymologically, corporate' originally stems from the Latin words for 'body' (corpus) and for 'forming into a body' (corporate), which emphasize a unified way of looking at 'internal' and 'external' communication disciplines. That is, instead of looking at specialized disciplines or stakeholder groups separately, the corporate communication function starts from the perspective of the bodily' organization as a whole when communicating with internal and external stakeholders. Corporate communication, in other words, can be characterized as a management function that is responsible for overseeing and coordinating the work done by communication practitioners in different disciplines, such as media relations,

public affairs and internal communication (Cornelissen, 2008). At this stage, the common features of some of the prevailing definitions of corporate communication have been synthesized in three points (Goodman & Hirsch, 2010; Cornelissen, 2008):

First, corporate communication is a strategic management function that takes a strategic approach to communication activities and is tied to the overall strategy of the company. Second, it integrates external and internal communication activities spread among a series of organizational practices to build, maintain, change and/or repair one or more positive images and/or reputations. Third, these entire activities take place inside relationships with the external and internal stakeholders of the company. Corporate communication refers to a kind of communication which is used for the promotion of a product, services or organization (Lehman, Dufrene, Cameron-Dow, Barret, & Murphy, 2012). These scholars added that modern paradigm of corporate communication is understood as "centralized management of overall company communication", dealing with numerous stakeholders, and aiming at achieving the highest reputation possible (Schmid & Lyczek, 2006 cited in Christensen, Morsing, Cheney, 2008). Thus, corporate communication is important for a company or an institution because it is through communication that an organization make contacts with its stakeholders, staffs and other elements both internal and external of the organization (Verhoeven, Zerfass, & Tench, 2011). In another view, Argenti (1996, p. 77 cited in Christensen et al., 2008) sees corporate communication as a development of strategic corporate public relations concerned with: "image and identity, corporate advertising, media

relations, financial communications, employee relations, community relations and corporate philanthropy, government relations and crisis communications."

In line with the above-mentioned ideas and opinions, corporate communication "offers a framework for the effective coordination of all internal and external communication with the overall purpose of establishing and maintaining favourable reputations with stakeholder groups upon which the organization is dependent" (Cornelissen, 2008, p. 5). This is why Helm (2007), claims that corporate communication is both a means to securing reputation and organizational function. When addressed as a function, it is the integration and strategic alignment are central themes. The issue of integration in the literature relates to how to align or harmonize external communication activities with each other (Cornelissen & Lock, 2001 cited in Christensen et al., 2008) as well as with those of internal communication (van Riel, 1995). On the other hand, corporate communication is very important for an institution to create the best corporate reputation especially for tertiary institutions. This is to say that corporate communication establishes and maintains reputation and it is responsible for shaping of the external presentation of a company; as such, it is an important function of corporate governance, in terms of reputation management (Nobel, 2006). Consequently, reputation is a key resource to higher institutions of learning in all parts of the world. It is an important asset because with a good reputation, an educational institution can attract significant endowment, reputable sponsors, and bright scholars, among other incentives, which could boost its educational, economic, and other development programs. Dalton (2005) describes reputation, as

the sum values that stakeholders attribute to an organization, based on their perception and interpretation of the image that the organization communicates over time. This means that with corporate communication, an institution's image or reputation is maintained and allows smooth functioning of activities in the institution. Buttressing this point, Gray and Balmer (1998) cited in Christensen et al., (2008) in the context of reputation management emphasize identity, communication and visual factors. These theoretical issues represent best the metaphor of reputation as an iceberg whose only top can be seen above the water.

From another dimension however, Eniola (2011) claims that Public Relations practice has become a matter of great concern to many individuals, institutions and corporate bodies in recent years. Notwithstanding, he buttressed his point by adding that the benefits of public relations to higher education, there are conflicting views about its significance to the operations of universities". This is because Public Relations officers responsible for public relations are often left out of decision-making. On several occasions, they are called in to implement some decisions that they hardly understand because they were not part of the decision-making processes. They are not accorded the status that will make them part of those decisions (Deephouse, 2007; Sarstedt, 2009; Greyser, 1999; Helm, 2007). As a result, this gives an impression of insignificance of their function as role players in the management of Universities. Again, most people believe public relations as nothing than peddler of falsehood of an organisation or marketing image enhancer. While others are of the opinion that, it is all about arranging pretty ladies that lack moral principles to woo men to act against their wishes or just a mere rubber-stamp-

boy of the organisation that carries bag for his boss. Others still see public relations practitioners as nothing than mere communication technicians which are far removed from managerial key stakeholders of tertiary institutions (Okoro, et al., 2010; Godwin et al., 2010; Nwosu, 1997; Grunig, 2001).

Apart from these, there are other significant challenges in developing effective corporate communication strategies and programmes (Argenti, 2013). And most of the researches on corporate communication are western based in nature in the sense that the generalizations did not take into consideration some factors that could determine the effectiveness of corporate communication in reputation management of all tertiary institutions.

One easily noticeable fact is that since the inception of organisations, be it institutions or businesses of any kind, communication has been a vital element in keeping these organisations and groups together for their benefit and the benefit of whichever audiences they serve (Rajkumar, 2010). This is because without having to communicate through some means, the mission, the purpose, and the benefits the organisation has to offer, there would be a big challenge as to how best publics can relate to various organisations and even to patronize goods and services that they may have on offer (Grunig et al., 2002). It is difficult to overstate the critical importance of effective communication for most businesses and organisations. It is through effective communication that customers learn about a company's products or services and what makes brands unique compared to their competitors. It is how management and employees coordinate their activities to ensure that the entire organisation is marching toward the same strategic goals. It is also how executives

inform investors, the media, and the public about important organisational developments. In short, communication underlies many of the most significant activities that most businesses must complete (Northeastern University Graduate Programs. 2019).

Until the 1970s, practitioners had used the term ‘public relations’ to describe communication with stakeholders. This ‘public relations’ function, which was tactical in most companies, largely consisted of communication with the press (Grunig & Hunt, 1984). When other stakeholders, internal and external to the company, started to demand more information from the company, practitioners subsequently started to look at communication as being more than just ‘public relations.’ This is when the roots of the new corporate communication function started to take hold (Argenti, 1996). This new function came to incorporate a whole range of specialized disciplines, including corporate design, corporate advertising, internal communication to employees, issues and crisis management, media relations, investor relations, change communication and public affairs (Grunig & Hunt, 1984). An important characteristic of the new function is that it focuses on the organisation as a whole and on the important task of how an organisation presents itself to all its key stakeholders, both internal and external. Clearly, it was broader than just the idea of public relations. This broad new field is indicated in its name, especially the word ‘corporate’ (Argenti, 1996). The word, of course, refers to the business setting in which communication is a necessary value for growth and progress. Thus, many of these organisations embark on these communication activities in various ways and means. These communication

activities undertaken by organisations have evolved over the years, and summed up as corporate communication.

Corporate communication has been characterized as a management function that ensures the overseeing and coordinating the work done by communication practitioners in different specialist disciplines, such as media relations, public affairs, and internal communication (Christensen et al., 2008). This palpably depicts why the idea of corporate communication being a nouvelle paradigm in communication that concerns businesses and their progress goes beyond a simple construct of public relations. Van Riel is credited with a popular definition of corporate communication in which he states that corporate communication is an instrument of management by means of which all consciously used forms of internal and external communication are harmonized as effectively and efficiently as possible in order to create a favourable basis for relationships with groups upon which the company is dependent (Van Riel, 1995).

Although Van Riel's definition seems to be the most obvious one for corporate communication should there be need for a compact and sure definition, other definitions abound vis-a-vis corporate communication, as the works (dating as far back as the 1980s) of Bernstein (1984), Gray and Balmer (1998), Goodman (1994), Cornelissen (2011), also resonate very well with Van Riel's definition. It does not mean the earlier stated definition by Van Riel is some sort of absolute choice when it comes to defining corporate communications. Other definitions that have been easily summed up also clearly underscore what corporate communication stands for. The following definition provided by Van Riel and

Fombrun (2007) may be seen more detailed and appropriate expression of what corporate communications is, as categorised by many corporate communications scholars:

The set of activities involved in managing and orchestrating all internal and external communication aimed at creating favourable starting points with stakeholders on which the company depends. Corporate communication consists of the dissemination of information by a variety of specialists and generalists in an organisation, with the common goal of enhancing the organisation's ability to retain its licence to operate (van Riel & Fombrun, 2007, p. 25).

Overall, for the purpose of this study, and to tap some nitty-gritties from the earlier definitions and perspectives from scholars, an overall definition can be tapped and is stated below:

Corporate communication is a management function which allows a framework for the effective coordination of all internal and external communication with the overall purpose of establishing and maintaining favourable reputations with stakeholder groups upon which the organisation is dependent (van Riel, 1995 p. 26).

The summed definition is reflected in other ideas, showing that indeed, corporate communications strictly has to do with the various ways in which businesses and organisations communicate or would want to communicate with

internal and external various audiences. These audiences who are the target of corporate communication functions commonly include:

- i. Customers and potential customers
- ii. Employees
- iii. Key stakeholders (such as the C-Suite and investors)
- iv. The media and public
- v. Government agencies and other third-party regulators

In the above definitions and the trend drawn from the ideas shared in them, it is easy to adjudge that corporate communication involves a whole range of ‘managerial’ activities, such as planning, coordinating, and counselling the CEO and senior managers in the organisation as well as ‘tactical’ skills involved in producing and disseminating messages to relevant stakeholder groups (Abudulai, 2023). That being established, it is also reflected in that corporate communications can take many forms depending on the audience that the corporate communication strategy is aimed at. Ultimately, an organisation’s communication strategy must consist of written word (internal and external reports, advertisements, website copy, promotional materials, email, memos, press releases), spoken word (meetings, press conferences, interviews, video), and non-spoken communication (photographs, illustrations, infographics, general branding) (Northeastern University Graduate Programmes, 2019). However, corporate communication may not be so usual and straight-jacket, because there is a need for dynamism based on which kind of organisation is involved.

Corporate communication is very relevant to all organisations in maintaining long lasting inter-organisational relationships with groups upon which the company is dependent (Cornelissen, 2011); assessing social innovations and trends, and formulating corporate policies that can help the company innovate and proactively adapt to changes in society, and integrating all communications under one unique strategy so to support marketing activities (Kitchen & de Pelsmacker, 2004). Corporate communications are a compact sum of several communications activities that are all geared toward one goal, ensuring that on the tangent of communication, the organisation is progressive. These activities include public relations, strategic communication, corporate social responsibility, branding, governmental relations, media relations, marketing, technical communication, publicity and publications, advertisement and commodification, promotions, and events and specifically in the case of the current study, alumni relations, advocacy and strategic partnership, protocol activities and fundraising and sponsorship. All these activities matter to the corporate communications structure of any organisation, and play a very vital role in ensuring that the main vision and mission of the organisation is achieved within time (Nakra, 2000). All these activities, as much as they are geared toward the progress of the organisation in a general sense, are aimed at achieving a specific mark.

Naturally, the role of corporate communications within an organisation has to do with shaping the image or identity of the organisation and affecting the corporate brand (Elaies & Schreck, 2019). The earlier listed activities all unite to give the organisation a specific appearance, something the audience can identify

with the organisation or how best the organisation appears to the audiences it reaches. As these activities build an identity for an organisation, the advantage or the resulting effect is on the reputation of the organisation. Thus, these activities under corporate communications represent the nexus between the corporate identity and corporate reputation (Gray & Balmer, 1998). This exposes how much relevance corporate communication carries for an organisation as its effect on an organisation begins with shaping an identity for the organisation and further the reputation of the organisation.

The marketing concept in the higher education sector differs from the one existing inside commercial sector, mainly due to the fact that educational services are highly intangible and have properties that restrict the application of the marketing framework. As a result, in order to gain market share, both in terms of increased rate of enrolled students and the quality of those, institutions are doing marketing aggressively (Delloite & Touche, 1994, Omboi & Mutali, 2011). Organisational communication has been defined as the process by which information is exchanged and understood by two or more people, usually with the intent to motivate or influence behavior (Daft, 1997, p. 560). Therefore, Yeboah and Atakora (2013) define marketing communications as a management process through which an institution is able to start a conversation with its various audiences.

Nowadays, when universities are in an increasingly challenging position, students are bombarded by a huge assortment of marketing messages and consumer information about the top ranked schools and best programs to study. Today,

students, as important audience are also more brand-savvy than its counterparts from previous generations. Omboi and Mutali (2011) argue that in such competitive education sector, it is important to create a consistent, consolidated and crystal-clear message in order to reach specific target group. They state marketing communication can boost student enrolment by stretching messages across several communications tools, which in the end results in ultimate choice of the school. Therefore, marketing communication is very important for the educational services, but in the same time challenging due to intangibility of services in educational sector (Allen & Shen, 1999). To conclude, in the twenty-first century strategically oriented marketing communication mix is crucial for higher education institutions to move forward (Kitchen & Schultz, 2009).

In order to approach particular stakeholders, university needs to analyze its target market and through appropriate marketing communication tool approach to it. Mok (2000) states that institution should use combination of marketing communication tools for effectiveness and desired response for different publics. That is why for prospective students as important stakeholders of educational institution, number of promotional tools will be combined to target them during the recruitment process. Marketing communication consists of all strategies, tactics, and activities involved in getting the desired marketing messages to intended target markets, regardless of the media used. According to Maringe (2004) marketing communication tools mix includes advertising, sales promotion, and PR, sales promotion and direct mail, where all of these elements provide information and consultation that are important components to add value to a product or service.

Promotion inside one institution consist out of three elements: advertising, publicity and PR. Through these elements, institutions attract prospective students using different promotional tools, such as, open days, direct mail, different kind of brochures, education exhibitions and so forth (Davies & Ellison, 1999; Khan & Qureshi, 2010).

Corporate Identity

Over the last two decades, corporate identity has emerged as a significant theme within the marketing canon and there now exist a sizable literature. Although the exigencies of this article do not permit a detailed examination of the concept we note that a number of comprehensive literature reviews of corporate identity and the identity literature in general can be found within the literature (e.g. Abratt, 1989; Balmer, 1998; 2001a, 2008a; Brown et al., 2006; Cornelissen et al., 2007; He & Balmer, 2007a; He & Mukherjee, 2009; Melewar, 2008; van Riel & Balmer, 1997). And the corporate identity construct has a number of conceptualisations attached to it (see: Balmer, 1995; 2002; Balmer & Greyser, 2002; 2003; Cornelissen et al., 2007; He & Balmer, 2007b). The perspective adopted in this study conceptualises identity in terms of an individual (or a group's) cognitive knowledge/beliefs vis-a`-vis a specific entity (Cornelissen et al., 2007; He & Balmer, 2007b; Balmer, 2008a,b). As such, there is a prima facie link with the perspective adopted by organisational behaviourists vis-a`-vis the concept of organisational identity. The work of Albert and Whetten (1985) is of especial importance in this regard relating to organisational members' characterisation and cognitions of an entity's defining traits. Albert and Whetten (1985) are renowned

for their treatise on organisational identity and for their insights relating to organisational members' cognitions of identity; for their part, Hsu and Hannan (2005) are known for their research relating to organisational form.

Despite the increase in academic and corporate interest in the topic, a universally accepted definition of corporate identity remains elusive (Wilkinson and Balmer, 1996). It is not only because corporate identity management incorporates a multi-disciplinary approach (Balmer, 1998; Bick et al., 2003) but also corporate identity as a concept often has different connotations for different stakeholders. In consequence, misunderstandings between 'brand, corporate brand, employee brand and corporate identity' (Auton, 2000)¹ are common. This is a result of the fact that corporate identity is associated with a wide range of functions including business strategy, philosophy of key executives, corporate culture, behaviour and corporate design, which are both interdependent and unique to each organisation (Melewar & Jenkins, 2002).

The expression of identity is also an inherently dynamic process (Gioia, Shultz and Corley, 2000) that tends to evolve over time as the organisational context changes (Gioia, 1998). It appears reasonable to conclude from the literature that an organisation managing its identity is one in which the following core components of corporate identity are manifested: corporate design, corporate communication, corporate culture, corporate behaviour, corporate structure, industry identity and corporate strategy (Melewar, 2003). Corporate communication can be both controlled and uncontrolled in nature (Balmer & Gray, 1999; Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003; Cornelissen, 2001). Communication intentionally

instigated by management with the aim of improving stakeholder relationships is classified as controlled corporate communication. Conversely, uncontrolled communication takes place when organisations unintentionally influence stakeholders' perceptions.

A distinction can be made between three main types of controlled communication i.e. management, marketing and organisational communication (van Riel, 1995; van Riel, 1997). Management communication applies to attempts to 'communicate the vision and mission of the company in order to establish a favourable image and ultimately a good reputation amongst its internal and external stakeholders' (Olins, 1989). Management communication is perceived as being the most important of these three methods as it involves the expression of organisational goals directly to internal stakeholders (Melewar & Wooldridge, 2001). Furthermore, through communication directed at the external stakeholder management, communication plays a fundamental role in developing the desired corporate image and creating a strong competitive advantage (Gray & Smeltzer, 1985; Kirikiadou & Millward, 2000; Schmidt, 1995).

Marketing communication is associated with promotional communication aimed at creating a favourable image for products and services, which in turn contributes to the overall image of organisations (Barich & Kotler, 1991; van Riel, 1995). Cornelissen (2002, p. 266) comments that the notion of organizational identity is often used by managers as a political tool 'with the aim of giving [organizational members] some sense of purpose and directing their creative energies towards the realization of corporate objectives' (Haslam et al., 2003). As

critical theorists argue, this managerial use of organizational identity is not always neutral or rational, since top management frequently acts as an ideological actor who strives to convince others that its priorities are for the benefit of the whole (Levy et al., 2003). By framing an organization in terms of a particular logic and order, corporate identity claims can inform and justify the managerial use of power to maintain that order (cf. Foucault, 1982; Knights & Morgan, 1991). They may also serve to justify the authority of the leading corporate group insofar as it is expected to take the lead in articulating an organization's identity and is remunerated highly for so doing.

Moreover, in conveying a view of an organization's accountability, identity claims locate that organization in relation to interest groups within the wider society. Studies of social and organizational identity suggest that the process of defining a collective identity is political in nature, insofar as it serves to justify membership boundaries and power asymmetries (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Haslam et al., 2003). Management discourses with reference to corporate identity denote 'politico-ethical projects' which articulate principles that serve to construct domination by empowering some groups while disempowering others (Khan et al., 2007). Conceptions of corporate identity derive from a process of interaction and sensemaking between different corporate actors and the principals to whom they as agents are beholden. Such characterizations may not be entirely consistent among themselves or between different managers, although at the corporate level they are likely to have some common salient components. Also, while the process of

corporate identity formation is typically hidden to the researcher, corporate identity is nevertheless expressed in more public and accessible forms.

These include written corporate statements as well as narrative descriptions offered by corporate managers. The researcher's challenge is to understand these diverse expressions of corporate identity and make sense of them with the help of the extant literature. This corresponds to recognizing the value of a 'constructivist-interpretivist' position concerning the process whereby the identity is formed and the meanings that inform it, while at the same time adopting a 'naturalistrealist' position concerning the manifestations of a corporate identity (Hatch & Yanow, 2006). It is also necessary to differentiate a corporate identity from an organizational or corporate culture. While an organization's culture can help to support the identity that its top management seeks to articulate, the two are not conceptually the same. Corporate identity is a characterization of the organization as a whole by top management, including the organization's role as a social actor. The dynamics of proposition and opposition around corporate identity claims are likely to play a particularly active and salient role in the process of organizational development and they may shape internal features such as strategy, organizational design and training. Corporate identity definitions established for an organization at its foundation and during its formative years may have an enduring impact, at least as a point of reference against which the legitimacy of subsequent changes is evaluated (cf. Stinchcombe, 1965).

On the other hand, if a corporate identity and supporting policies negatively affect the self-esteem and interests of others, they are likely to oppose it (Brown &

Starkey, 2000). This loss of legitimacy could lead to alienation and the mobilization of protest, thus jeopardizing the claims of the corporate identity. Non-managerial parties to an organization are not necessarily powerless. The discursive struggle around identities highlighted by Phillips and Hardy (1997) showed that power can be exercised by groups lacking formal power or control over resources through their creation of meaning in terms of offering an interpretation of what is going on in their organization. Their collective mobilization around the articulation of a distinctive interpretation consistent with their interests secured for them a legitimate voice and hence influence. In other words, actors can put effort into ensuring that their interests have a voice within organizational discourse and, in so doing, challenge the dominance of a corporate identity and the managerial ideology that informs it (Brown & Humphreys, 2006; Poggi, 2006).

Some studies have indicated the presence of systemic identity conflicts (e.g. Humphreys and Brown, 2002) and these offer useful leads. Changes in the definition of corporate identity can be stimulated by external pressures as interpreted by corporate managers (Chreim, 2005). Divergence between the corporate identity of an organization articulated by its leaders and the identity conceived as legitimate by significant external parties such as government agencies or consumers has been said to give rise to an 'identity dissonance' (Chreim, 2002) or 'perceived discrepancy' (Gioia et al., 2000). If this is experienced as an 'identity threat' by those leaders, it will encourage them to revise the organizational identity they hold and articulate (Elsbach & Kramer, 1996). When such dissonance or discrepancy arises, there are likely to be managerial responses aimed at restoring

consistency between projected and attributed identity (Gioia et al., 2000). Nevertheless, should management seek to redefine a corporate identity, employees may organize resistance in order to preserve what these elements they value in that identity (Ravasi & Schultz, 2006). Equally, a negative reaction by the members of an organization against the prevailing corporate identity could generate pressures for it to change if their stance is supported by strong collective action mobilized by a labour union or occupational association.

Notions of ‘identity dissonance’ or ‘perceived discrepancy’ contribute useful insights into the process of corporate identity formation. These insights can be strengthened if their analytical grounding on cognition and interpretation is extended to include the political considerations of interest and power. In regard to interest, a dissonance or perceived discrepancy between a corporate identity and other organizational identities, or between a corporate identity and managerial behaviour, may affect the legitimacy of the practices it is intended to reinforce, and generate mistrust in management’s capacity or willingness to satisfy the interest of other parties. That could encourage mobilization by groups and individuals who feel their interests are threatened.

Identity dissonance may also stimulate the exercise of power. Insofar as managers take active measures to reduce dissonance between their definition of an organization’s identity and that held by others, they require resources to research the nature of the dissonance, activities to create and project a new or reinforced identity message and, not least, efforts to formulate organizational policies and practices that support the identity. These measures depend on their power to

command and coordinate organized activities and appropriate resources. The persons at the top of organizational hierarchies have the internal authority to initiate these measures, but unless an organization is autonomous and self-financing, they may also require the approval of owners and other resource providers. The more that organizational leadership depends on external approval, the more such approval is likely to be necessary for the viability of a corporate identity that the leadership is seeking to project (Pfeffer and Salancik, 1978). Similarly, in circumstances when the reaction of internal stakeholders to an identity claim is unfavourable, the power they may have to oppose this claim has implications for its sustainability and perhaps the continuance in office of the incumbent top management team.

A combination of high dependence on external support and collective employee power is often found in organizations, such as the one reported in this paper, that are located within the public sector or subject to public regulation. As LaPalombara (2001, p. 565) comments, 'politics in both the organizational environment and political organizations actually infuses every aspect of what public-sector organizations are and what they do'. These considerations indicate that it is simplistic to regard the construction and maintenance of an identity claim just as a process of arriving at a collective agreement on shared meanings. For, if a corporate identity is the product of political manoeuvring, its social construction has to be understood as involving power relations, resource mobilization and conditional legitimacy.

Corporate Reputation

An organization's reputation is a reflection of how it is regarded by its multiple stakeholders. Its reputational stance can help the organization obtain trust and credibility in society, which will assist in the achievement of its objectives and goals (Baur & Schmitz, 2011, Mahon & Wartick, 2003, Roper & Fill, 2012). The role of institutions in society has evolved over the years, from being mainly concerned with profit for shareholders to a stakeholder and community approach with a focus on corporate social responsibility (Covey & Brown, 2001, Steyn, 2003). With this broadening of responsibilities comes a more multidimensional reputation, and the age of globalisation has made it harder for organizations to be the sole managers. Less privacy and increasing accountability have made a more proactive strategy necessary from organizations to prevent damages to its image and reputation (Roper & Fill, 2012). A solid reputation among their different stakeholders is something all brands need to take care of, given that it can help organizations when having to deal with hostile environments; it is an important source of goodwill when dealing with crises; it can be a competitive advantage and allows the organization to attract the best employees and ensures their loyalty (Foreman & Argenti, 2005).

Academic interest in corporate reputation has grown out of branding literature in the 1990s and earlier work on organizational identity (Martin, Beaumont, Doig, & Pate, 2005). Corporate reputation is a construct closely linked to stakeholder theory: it has been mostly conceptualized in academic literature, since Fombrun (1996), as a perceptual representation or assessment of the firm by

its different constituents (Winn, McDonald, & Zietsma, 2008, Bromley, 2000, Meijer & Kleinnijenhuis, 2006) and its different social expectations or corporate personality traits that people attribute to companies (Berens & Van Riel, 2004). It is probably convenient to start by establishing a general framework for the corporate reputation construct given that, as Barnett, Jermier & Lafferty (2006, v. 9, p. 28) pointed out, “[concepts such as] identity, image and reputation are still often used interchangeably”.

Walker (2010) summarized the differences found between the terms in a systematic review of corporate reputation literature over a 27-year period using multiple management disciplines. Corporate reputation can be studied as a function of both image and identity (Tkalac & Vercic, 2007). Identity is built inside the company, based on the organization’s culture. It consists of current practices, history, values and behaviour (Melewar, Karaosmanoglu & Paterson, 2005). Image is built inside external stakeholders’ minds; it refers to their temporal impression of the organization shaped by direct or indirect experiences: how they perceive the organization’s identity at a given point in time (Balmer & Greyser, 2002, Melewar, Karaosmanoglu & Paterson, 2005, Hatch & Schultz, 1997). Corporate reputation is built over time (historical component), which gives the concept a relatively more stable and enduring nature than image. Both concepts are interrelated, where corporate reputation has been conceptualised as the accumulation of images over the years (Gotsi & Wilson, 2001, Mahon, 2002).

It should be noted that corporate reputation could be influenced by changes taking place in its social environment, or by strategies carried out by the same

organisation or its competitors (García de los Salmones, Herrero & Rodríguez del Bosque, 2005). As a dynamic concept, corporate reputation develops as information about the organization's activities and achievements is spread out, and interactions take place between the organisation and its stakeholders (suppliers, competitors, clients, investors, employees and local communities). Different stakeholders may then have different perceptions regarding the organisation, based on their differing contexts and interpretation of the information received: an organisation may have, at the same time, a good reputation among its stockholders and one not so good among its employees (Fombrun, 1996, Bromley, 2000, Mahon, 2002, Prado, 2008). Organisations are not wholly in control of the information about them that exists outside the firm's boundaries.

Many stakeholders base their opinions without ever having any direct interaction with the company, through third-party sources (e.g. the media and opinion leaders). Therefore, organisations face an important challenge when it comes to managing their own reputation: reputation may be influenced by a variety of outside sources besides communication and signalling from inside the company (Brown, Dacin, Pratt & Whetten, 2006, Einwiller, Carron & Korn, 2010). Schultz, Hatch, & Larsen (2000, p. 1) state, "organisations [now] compete based on their ability to express who they are and what they stand for". Thus, reputation can be thought of as the global perception or evaluation that constituents hold regarding a company's performance and attributes. It is a collective phenomenon that comprises both cognitive and affective dimensions, and develops over time (Bromley, 2000, Karaosmanoglu & Melewar, 2006). Corporate reputation takes

place when compared to a certain standard (can be against other firms in the industry) to determine the organisation's relative position and general appeal (Deephouse & Carter, 2005) helping it measure its performance from an outside perception (Sarstedt & Schloderer, 2010).

Corporate reputation has been studied under several disciplinary perspectives: institutional theory, financial theory, economic theory, organisational behaviour theory, etc. For the purposes of explaining why a positive corporate reputation brings benefits to the organisation, we will focus firstly on the three theories most commonly referred in recent years: signalling theory, strategy theory, and the resource-based value theory. According to signalling theory (Smith, Smith, & Wang, 2010, Walker, 2010) reputation can be thought of as an informative sign about the organisation's likely behaviour and quality performance. This increases the public's confidence in the organisation's products and services, and the investor's trust in the organisation's performance. Corporate reputation could be seen as "depict[ing] the firm's ability to render valued results to stakeholders" (Fombrun, Gardberg & Sever, 2000, v. 7, p. 243).

Thus, it helps reduce uncertainty, which allows reducing transaction costs. That's why, from a strategic point of view, corporate reputation has been an asset of great value for organisations when attempting to differentiate from the rest of the industry and creating potential barriers to entry for potential competitors. Also, a positive reputation is a strategic resource for building credibility and support among different stakeholders (Melewar, 2003). Resource-based value theory classifies corporate reputation as a valuable and distinctive intangible resource that

can help the organisation obtain competitive advantage. One of the reasons corporate reputation is hard to imitate in the short term is the time it takes to develop the construct and the complex stakeholder relationships built in the process (Mahon, 2002, Martínez & Olmedo, 2009).

Gardberg & Fombrun (2002) add that reputation is an increasingly important factor for creating and maintaining competitive advantages due to four tendencies in the business environment: (a) global penetration of markets; (b) congestion and fragmentation of media; (c) appearance of more communicative markets; (d) commodification (conversion to mass products) of industries and their products. More recently, Fombrun (2011) has spoken of a new “economy of reputation”, where society will be highly connected through networks and organisations will operate in an ecosystem of permanent influence from their groups of interest. In this analytical scheme, given that information would not be symmetrically distributed between the networks, “trust” and “relationships” become vital assets. Thus, traditional and non-traditional means of communication, like social networks, may influence and mobilize both market and society with their particular interpretation of organisational performance. This is how a circular relationship emerges between society and organisations, where support of the former for the latter will depend on the favourable perception they have of each other. Likewise, the performance of the organisation will benefit from the support that it may generate among its different stakeholders. Therefore, in this reputational economy, value is created when intangible assets are properly used. This is why recent studies reveal that the person responsible for managing intangibles should

progressively hold a more relevant position in the strategic decision-making at organisations (European Communication Monitor, 2011, p. 62).

Although the concept of corporate reputation has already gone through decades of development, empirical literature's attempts to measure the construct haven't evolved at the same rate. Many times the constructs used to characterize corporate reputation do not cover all of its scope and conceptual richness. This gap needs to be addressed given that signalling perceptions of corporate reputation can often be problematic for firms: consumers are not always able to reliably capture the organisation's position from its financial statements or annual reports. In this case, external signals of brand image (such as corporate reputation rankings) could provide value-relevant information to the market, as well as help organisations measure their performance from an outside perception (Sarstedt & Schloderer, 2010, Smith, Smith, & Wang, 2010).

The strategic management of reputation assumes that it is possible to measure the construct through time and improve its score. In this way the organisation would be able to monitor the relationships between itself and its different stakeholders (Tkalac & Vercic, 2007). Also, as Meyer (2000) states: "in order to move with confidence towards its vision, the organisation must know how it is perceived and positioned today" (p. 81). An organisation may measure its reputation over a period of time, usually for necessary credibility through an external auditor (Winston, 20002). A regular tracking of an organisation's stance on the reputational map can also help it identify potential issues (Carroll, 2011). Foreman & Argenti's study (2005) cited several CEOs from diverse industries

regarding their interest on reputational rankings; they all believed a firm benefited from the attention received through those surveys.

However, some of the main corporate reputation indexes that currently exist in the market present a biased nature. The source of bias can usually be tracked to the selection of respondents and selection of evaluation criteria. Most rankings lack a representative sample of stakeholders as respondents; they focus only on the perceptions of managers and business consultants. The items chosen are also mainly financial in nature, reflecting the nature of respondents. Therefore, most of them lack content validity by focusing only on those perceptions. In that sense, Walker (2010) establishes that reputation is stakeholder group-specific and issue-specific. He proposes that in order to measure reputation it should first be decided which interest group the organisation wants to tackle, and on what issue it wants to assess reputation. This way he attempts to take into account the incompatibilities that emerge when comparing the perceptions of different stakeholders about a particular topic. It is necessary to decompose corporate reputation by issue and stakeholder: it may limit generalizability but it increases validity. Also, the instruments most commonly used do not have cross-cultural validity, which would allow for international comparability (Fombrun, Gardberg & Sever, 2000, Mahon, 2002, Ponzi, Fombrun, & Gardberg, 2011).

Practical implications of corporate reputation

Kotha, Rajgopal and Rindova (2001) examined the performance of firms in the service sector (internet firms) and debated different types of reputation-building measures. They argued that firms should invest in the marketing of reputation due

to its long-lasting impact on the firm. Shamma and Hassan (2009) conducted another study in the wireless telecommunication industry of the USA. They categorized reputation in terms of product, services, finance, emotional appeal, and so on. Their study sought to understand the different aspects of reputation that may help managers in the telecommunication industry. The reputation of business-to-business firms was critically analysed by Ewing, Windisch and Newton (2010). The findings of their study reveal that many of these firms were not considering long-term strategies that might enhance their reputations; rather, they were focusing on short-term plans that were perceived as essential for their survival. A previous study examined reputation among event-planning firms (Campiranon, 2005). This study argues that the key to building reputation in event-planning firms relates to their image and credibility. A firm can attract more customers by establishing a corporate reputation, which is dependent on how these firms manage their image, credibility and trust.

Walsh et al. (2009), in their research on the service sector, linked the success of a strong reputation with customer loyalty and Word of Mouth (WOM). They concluded that a good reputation is essential for delivering customer satisfaction. They identified multiple facets of reputation such as attraction for employees, possessing good financial resources, and playing an active role in society but their study emphasized the behaviour of companies to their customers to achieve a higher customer satisfaction level. When dealing with service companies, customers have direct communication and interaction with the employees, which influences customer perception, thus making it highly significant

for service firms. These firms might empower and train their employees to increase the customer satisfaction level. Firms can make use of WOM campaigns as part of their promotional programs to develop or enhance customer loyalty. Service firms, such as energy suppliers, need to act quickly and establish their corporate reputation as it can offer an advantage to these firms in deregulated structures (Walsh et al., 2009).

Studies have also attempted to examine reputation in not-for-profit organisations. Dickinson-Delaporte, Beverland and Lindgreen (2010) conducted a case-study (Trappist Breweries) of a hybrid organisation that acts commercially in order to achieve its social agenda. This study explained the role of stakeholder interaction, communication, and positioning for developing or sustaining a good corporate reputation. The above noted empirical studies highlight the significance of reputation in product and service sector where reputation holds symbolic value with these fields. These studies have focused on the variables for building reputation but there is limited research on how reputation is contested and the tools used during such contestations. The current study will discuss the role of categorisation systems in building reputation by collecting empirical evidences within the business education field. The researcher attempts to explain how reputation builds through ranking systems in business schools and with what consequences.

The Interplay of Corporate Identity, Corporate Image and Corporate Brand

All the above discussed activities within corporate communications are aimed at affecting some specificities of an organisation. Some genuine and real

effects must be seen and the organisation must benefit outrightly from these activities. It is crystal that one does not just carry out a strategic communications agenda or a public relations agenda for no reason. More interesting is how all these activities seem to overlap one another; what is clear is how one cannot carry out strategic communications without public relations, how public relations also means having to ensure the organisation is keen on achieving its corporate social responsibility or even ensuring publicity and media relations. Each of these activities are connected and seemingly have the same impact on an organisation. Thus, with the numerous corporate communications activities enlisted, they all squeeze through two main concepts (corporate brand and corporate image/identity). Corporate brand and corporate image/identity are the interplay, as the subsection is titled, between corporate communications activities and corporate reputation. The two concepts are serving as the nexus or the regulating factors between corporate communication strategies and their eventual effects on corporate reputation.

Corporate identity is the articulation of what a company is and how it works. Tied to the way the company carries out its business activities and to the strategies it adopts and implements, corporate identity is also a means of differentiating the company from others (Markwick & Fill, 1997, Balmer & Gray, 2003; Chun 2005). It reflects the unique characteristics or corporate personality deeply embedded in the behavior of the organisation's members which helps employees fully identify with the organisation (Balmer & Gray 2000). Consequently, there is a gap between perceptions, between "how we see ourselves," reflected in the corporate identity, and "how we would like others to see us," representing desired corporate identity.

By distinguishing between intents, main intentions and identity strategies, various aspects of corporate identity have been identified, such as actual identity (Balmer & Greyser, 2002) which differs from organisational identity that is conceived as the subjective perceptions of a company's identity by its internal stakeholders, and is called the perceived identity. Intended identity includes both how the company wants to perceive itself (ideal identity, desired identity) and how it wants others to perceive it (intended image). A distinction can also be made between organisational identity and corporate identity (Balmer and Gray, 2003; Chun 2005), with the former being a term of organisational behaviour and the latter referring to identity on a strategic level. Hatch and Shultz (2003) explored the distinction between the two terms, and even though both are at the heart of management and both generate differences relative to competitors, organisational identity refers to what the internal stakeholders feel and think about their company while corporate identity refers to how the company operates based on a shared understanding and common goals.

Various authors have tried to formulate all-inclusive definitions of corporate identity. However, because the construct covers a very broad range of an organisation's attributes, Perez and del Bosque (2014) analyzed and categorized the definitions according to the dominant attribute described. They singled out five prevailing aspects in the attributes of corporate identity: identity as organisational personality, identity as organisational image, identity as visual image, identity as a collection of corporate communication means, and identity as an integrative concept. Melewar (2003) sees corporate identity as the set of an organisation's

resources that are characteristic of the organisation and summarizes them in a model containing 21 internal factors, grouped in seven constructs. In their later work, Melewar and Karaosmanoglu (2006) explore the interrelations that make up corporate identity and conclude that corporate culture, resulting from the organisation's history, founder, country of origin and sub-cultures and consisting of a mission, vision and values, influences corporate strategy (positioning strategy and differentiation strategy) as well as corporate behaviour (company behaviour, management behaviour, employee behaviour). From corporate strategy follows corporate structure for brand structure and organisational structure, which directly affects corporate design (slogan, architecture, office layout, location, website).

Corporate strategy, corporate culture, and corporate behaviour create corporate communication (marketing, management, organisational communication), which, together with corporate design, creates corporate identity. It is evident from these constructs that managers and marketers are equally engaged in the domain of corporate identity and are in general agreement concerning the importance of corporate identity as an instrument of strategic management (Alessandri, 2001). Corporate identity management links corporate identity to corporate strategy; corporate strategy meaningfully shapes corporate identity and should be regarded as an integral part of the strategic planning process (Balmer & Greyser, 2003; Balmer, 2010; He & Balmer, 2011). A conclusion reached by recent research dealing with the corporate identity/corporate strategy interface (He & Balmer, 2011) is that by using the means of attributing, legitimizing and fine-tuning, board members and other senior managers manage the corporate

identity/corporate strategy through the reconciliation of cognitive states that display a degree of dissonance with the strategy. Thus, corporate identity can facilitate and enable strategic changes, innovations, and learning. The research also confirmed the importance of vision inspired identities in the context of identity-based views of the firm.

Cornelissen et al. (2007) underline the overriding purpose of corporate identity: to achieve the desired image from the perspective of customers and other stakeholders, with corporate identity being a platform for building this corporate image. Even though a company does not have enough power to directly determine its public image, it may influence its formation through proper management of its business identity (Karaosmanoglu & Melewar, 2006). In this regard, Karaosmanoglu and Melewar (2006) again consider that corporate image is formed from the projection of all signs that make up the identity of the company, so that both concepts are closely linked (Christensen & Askegaard, 2001). Consequently, business identity has become an increasingly important concept in business (Melewar & Karaosmanoglu, 2006) and its management is a key element of corporate strategy (Melewar and Akel, 2005) because it is the starting point for forming the corporate image.

The term corporate image was first used in 1953 by Newman (Abratt, 1989) when he formulated the problem of comparing and equating human personality to the image of an organisation. Since then, corporate image has developed alongside emerging sciences in a variety of fields corporate communication, corporate management, and corporate marketing. Although dynamically interrelated with

corporate reputation, corporate image is dependent upon a person's beliefs, feelings, ideas, and impressions of a particular organisation and is aided by the information provided by that organisation, as well as managerial attitudes, behaviour, and philosophy. (Richard & Zhang, 2012). Corporate image refers to the overall reputation of an organisation or corporation as determined by the various impressions, pictures, knowledge, information, perceptions, and perspectives that the publics of that organisation have about it. This means that corporate image is how various people who engage organisations or find themselves within the reach of these organisations picture or see these organisations. According to Villanova, Zinkhan and Hyman (2000), corporate image is an overall perception of the company held by different segments of the public, how various groups of people perceive the organisation and what it is and the ideas what they have in mind should the name of the organisation or their product or service come up for discussion, patronage or purchase.

Furthermore, Rayner (2003) opine that corporate image confers clear-cut advantages and privileges on companies, such that with a good corporate image, an organisation can sway more audiences in its favour to patronize its services or products or equally ward away audiences. At the same time, it creates responsibilities for companies because as their image, positively confers some advantages unto them, they must do well to maintain this corporate image as it is the basis for the flourish of their businesses. Corporate image is an important element for every corporate organisation or institution because it is one of the most important elements based on which they thrive and keep themselves afloat in

whatever industry they may belong to (Rayner, 2003). This research using the university as a case study analysis carefully some of these ideas to determine in a clear manner how much corporate image is relevant to an organisation and its subsequent growth.

It is evident from these definitions that image is a set of perceptions and perspectives created in the mind of the public. Consequently, image is used to create the personality of a company or a product through preferences and positive attitudes and/or through negative associations and avoidance tendencies. Therefore, image is the cognitive picture of a company which are formed based on prior attitudes, opinions and notions aligned with actual features. From a psychological perspective, an image represents the tendency to reduce many meanings into a conclusion, template, or stereotype, thus simplifying the relationship of individuals towards their environment. Many researchers have noted the importance of image, concluding that image influences the way in which people perceive, and react to, certain things (Zaltman, 2003). Image aims to create the personality of a company or product through preferences and positive attitudes or negative associations and avoidance tendencies. Hence, image is a powerful means of communicating with people to entice them to act in a meaningful way, and today image management at the strategic and tactical level of marketing and management is seen as a tool with growing potential.

Wilkins and Huisman (2014) have indicated that over time, a variety of terms have merged with the corporate image construct which include corporate associations and corporate evaluation, corporate identity, image, organisational

image, organisational reputation (Scott and Lane, 2000); and reputation (Bick & Abratt, 2003). Corporate image, translated from the company's identity (what the organisation is), is created using the perception of corporate identity projected in the hope of influencing purchase intention, the willingness to invest, or the desire to work in the company and this is noted by scholars such as Bick and Abratt (2003). Thus, this means that corporate image, the perception of the organisation is birthed from what the public identifies with the organisation. Whatever the organisation puts out about itself, from which the audience can learn about the organisation, its goals, its mission and vision, its services, and products among other information, carves out an image about an organisation.

However, Wilkins & Huisman (2014) establish a relevant link between corporate image and corporate reputation that suggests that indeed corporate image, which results from corporate identity is very connected to corporate reputation. Wilkins and Huisman (2014) indicated that corporate image is an individual's immediate impression of an organisation whereas corporate reputation results from stakeholders' holding consistent corporate images over time. Drawing from this, it is obvious that Wilkins and Huisman (2014) verify what the hourglass conceptual review depicts, that corporate image is one of the controlling factors that affects corporate reputation. This is conventional wisdom which views corporate reputation from the aspect of time, since reputation is built based on prior experience, while image is subject to change because of communicational and other efforts.

The reasons why corporate image management is that it is the key to gaining and keeping public trust and helps to build a very solid public perception of an organisation. He asserts the necessity of distinguishing between the functional meaning of a company's image (tangible assets of quality, reliability, services, and prices) and its emotive meaning. Although Wilkins and Huisman (2014) establish that sure link between corporate image and corporate reputation are generally considered as two distinct constructs which may be strongly related. This relationship is intuitively appealing given the idea that image and reputation are two socially constructed entities and derived from the shareholder's perception.

The idea of a corporate brand has to do with how an organisation or a company is wholly represented by several activities that communicate specific perspectives, information, and ideas to audiences regarding the company. The corporate brand is also an expression of the organisation's presentation to others. Knox and Bickerton (2003) explain that corporate brand refers to the visual, verbal and behavioural expression of an organisation's unique business model. This shows a holistic perspective of what a brand stands for and what it entails. Although corporate names can certainly be easily applied to the branding of a corporation's products and services, corporate names seldom provide satisfactory solutions to the goal of communicating an effective or meaningful message about the brand. While there may be efficiencies in using the corporate name to brand a variety of products, there could be also considerable risks in doing this (Kay, 2006). Corporate branding can be described as the process of creating, nurturing, and sustaining a

mutually rewarding relationship between a company and its internal and external stakeholders.

Corporate branding is the way in which an organisation communicates its identity (Sorensen, 2011). Corporate branding has three main goals: Firstly, it seeks to bring the organisation together internally. Secondly, it seeks to harmonize internal and external communication. Under the challenges of greater transparency (to the media, to investors and to other stakeholders) creating consistent messages reduces the chances of conflict and increases the profile of the organisation. Thirdly, integrated communication aims to enforce a core, enduring and distinctive identity for the organisation (Jones, 2010). A corporate brand intends to identify, differentiate, and position the organisation, based on a single and unified message to build trust in the entire organisation. Its source for originality, uniqueness and inimitability is the organisation's heritage and the values and beliefs that the corporation and all its stakeholders hold in common (Kaufmann et al., 2012).

Establishing successful corporate brand management practices can come as a challenge to many organisations because it takes more than just putting out information and artefacts that the audience can use to identify the company. In an increasingly competitive market both locally and globally, getting the company branding right is perhaps the most important job for the management of any organisation. Balmer (2001) states that corporate brands are cultural, as they reflect the organisation's sub cultures, intricate in that they are both multidimensional and multidisciplinary and tangible, as they encompass elements such as business scope and architecture. He also points to the ethereal characteristic of corporate brands as

they evince emotional responses from stakeholder groups and the need for total commitment across the organisation to manage a corporate brand successfully (Balmer, 2001). Furthermore, the companies behind the classic brands are not by any means a good model. That means they are too split by function to lead naturally to the innovation and imagination that any brand constantly needs. Decisions tend to be made too tactically, too low down in the organisation, with too little guidance from the top, but the right organisation for a company brand implies that brand management should reside right at the top.

Hatch and Schultz (2003) argue that corporate brand engineers interactions among strategic vision, organisational culture and corporate image, to position the firm in its marketplace. Corporate brand building is an ongoing interaction and negotiation of meaning and values in a cultural context between different identities: the identity of the organisation, the identity defining the corporate brand, and the identity as perceived by the customers and other stakeholders (Urde, 2009). Roodurmun and Kassean (2010) add that robust and trusted corporate brand is vital to the success of any organisation. Corporate brands are seen as a guarantee of quality, as an insurance against risk of poor performance or financial risk.

Interestingly, corporate brand as a term is interchangeably used with corporate identity and reputation just as Wilkins and Huisman (2014) indicated a link between corporate image and corporate reputation. This occurrence is so usual to the extent that there even exists the term, brand identity, which is referred to as a unique set of brand associations that the brand strategist aspires to create or maintain, it comes from the organisation, whereas brand image is how a brand is

perceived by consumers, it has its origin in the minds of consumers. Images are the interpretation of their beliefs and values (Malik et al., 2012). This explanation of brand identity is almost identical to various perspectives of corporate identity highlighted earlier, as there are very common ideas with the meanings of the two concepts. More so, it is interesting to note that Van Riel and Berens (2001) point to the corporate symbolism as part of the identity, which includes logos, house style, staff uniforms, etc.

These logos, house style, uniforms and other tangible representations and artefacts of the organisation are obvious indications of a brand of an organisation, those things an organisation can be identified by. The transmitted corporate identity is received by stakeholders as image, 'a reflection of the organisation's identity and its corporate brand' (Argenti & Druckenmiller, 2004). These and many more conflicts have been seen in the distinction of what corporate identity, corporate image, corporate brand, and corporate reputation all mean. In as much as they are connected closely, many scholars have defined these concepts in an overlapping manner that suggests that each of these concepts are interrelated. What is more these three concepts are explained in a way that suggests that a host of other activities which are the corporate communications do one way or the other affect these in different ways, depending on the chosen activity and what it is geared toward.

To help some clarity in the explanation of these concepts, Argenti and Druckenmiller (2004) proposed a taxonomy of questions which simplifies the differences between these terms. According to them the concept of corporate

identity answers the question “who are you?” Corporate brand answers the questions “who do you say you are?” and “who you want to be?” Corporate image seeks to answer the question “what do stakeholders think of whom you are and who you tell them you are?” Finally, the taxonomy explains corporate reputation by answering the question “what do all the stakeholders think of whom you tell them, who you are and what have you done?” The distinctions, however, give a clear understanding of how different these concepts are when they stand alone. Thus, in as much as some scholars would want to slam them together as probably one entity when defining the other, there is a difference. These differences although distinguishing these concepts more clearly, highlight the link between these concepts and how some are because of the other.

Even so in the taxonomy of Argenti and Druckenmiller (2004), the thread of questions that differentiate the concepts of corporate identity, image and brand result or are summed up into the bigger question which elucidates what corporate reputation is. Thus, this verifies the fact that all the activities that affect corporate identity, corporate image, and corporate brand all result in affecting corporate reputation. In this sense, it can be concluded that all activities that organisations engage in to ensure corporate identity is formed, corporate image is built and corporate brand is reflected are all building the bigger picture, which is corporate reputation.

Corporate Reputation and the resulting effects of Corporate Identity, Image and Brand

Corporate reputation is one of the very important tools organisations can employ in times like these (where there is a fast-paced growth in various markets of various industries) to secure a place within the markets (Power, 2007). Even for individuals, reputation goes a long way to build what people perceive of that individual and affects the way persons around relate with the individual. Reputation will always be of immense relevance to organisations, whether commercial, governmental, or not-for-profit. To reach their goals, stay competitive and prosper, good reputation paves the organisational path to acceptance and approval by stakeholders (Power, 2007). Even organisations operating in difficult ethical environments – perhaps self-created – need to sustain a positive reputation where possible. The term reputation came up during the 1990's and became an organising concept that stretched across many management areas, such as marketing, accounting, and organisational strategy. The concern of corporate reputation is not a new phenomenon. It has been around ever since morality and ethics have been discussed (Power, 2007).

Corporate reputation according to Gray and Balmer (1998) “indicates a value judgment about an organisation's attributes” or the extent to which the value of an organisation as assessed by stakeholders. In other words, corporate reputation has been defined according to Rindova, Williamsson, Petkova and Sever (2005) as “stakeholders' perceptions about an organisation's ability to create value relative to competitors,” but since the concept is intangible the definition is somewhat

diffuse. An organisation having a reputation does not necessarily mean that it would be known for just one specific thing. According to Herbig and Milewicz (1993), an organisation can have multiple reputations, one for each attribute, or a global or overall reputation. With this, corporate reputation is as a process that accumulates the judgments over time of the various groups who interact with the organisation as reflected by Gray and Balmer (1998).

Corporate reputation may be viewed as a mirror of the organisation's history which serves to communicate to its target groups information regarding the quality of its products or services in comparison with those of its competitors. Tischer and Hildebrandt (2014) in this same vein indicate that corporate reputation is an “overall perspective” which includes all external stakeholders (consumers, suppliers, investors, society, partners, the community) and internal stakeholders (owners, managers, and employees). In relation to the categorisation of these stakeholders, Chun (2005) argues that the knowledge collected over the years in this field can be grouped into three schools of thought, the evaluative, impressionable, and relational schools, each of which differently applies the reputation paradigm and are based on who are the central stakeholders placed in the focal point, rather than on their field of operation or on an epistemological basis. While the evaluative and impressionable schools mostly focus on the interests of the individual stakeholder, the relational school is grounded on the stakeholder theory that concedes that different stakeholders may have different expectations regarding the organisation.

The relational school centres on the opinions of internal and external stakeholders, giving us a new look at building reputation as a construct. Therefore, corporate reputation is viewed as a “signal to stakeholders” (Hoejmose et al., 2014). In this view, where reputation is concerned, credibility is analysed. Particularity of corporate reputation also comes through from the perspective of stakeholder groups. Distinct stakeholder groups have different perception of the organisation and give concern to different aspects of activities (Davies et al., 2003; Fombrun, 2006). Because of distinct perceptions of corporate reputation between stakeholder groups, corporate reputation constitutes of different indicators and is characterized by particularity (Walker, 2010). There are also differences in each stakeholder group of the organisation (Cornelissen & Thorpe, 2002; Fombrun, 2006; Walker, 2010), so it is necessary to implement their segmentation (Freeman, Harrison & Wicks, 2007).

To make things clearer, the various stakeholders are referred to as “any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievements of the organisation’s objectives” (Wartick, 1992, p.35). Thus, this means that a wide range of people could be their stakeholders whose perceptions make up reputation of an organisation. In effect, corporate reputation can be seen as the organisations’ character from the perception of its stakeholders. One of the most factual perspectives is that corporate reputation develops over time because of consistent performance and intensified effective communication. On the other hand, corporate image can be developed more quickly using well-designed communication programs, which strikes a clear distinction between the two concepts and suggests

again the idea that the accumulation of corporate image results in a good reputation for the organisation (Wartick, 1992).

This communicates the reality that also consider that reputation is more enduring than image and represents a fairly consistent resource of good repute and support to positive cases (positive reputation) or distrust and avoidance in adverse situations (negative reputation) according to Hoejmose et al. (2014). This explains why the constructs reputation and image are not the same, and cannot be used interchangeably, as is sometimes seen in the literature. However, it shows that one is just the bigger picture of the other. Markwick and Fill (1997) assert that corporate reputation reflects the historical, accumulated impacts of previously observed identity signs and possible transactional experiences. The elements to note are that the reputation is a 'collective representation' of images and perceptions, not a self-promoted message.' It involves relationships with all stakeholders and it is gained, maintained and enhanced or detracted from over time.

The importance of corporate reputation has heightened the past years because of the positive advantages it has on investors, customers, and other stakeholders as mentioned earlier. From an organisation's point of view, a favourable reputation enables the setting of premium prices, it attracts both better employees and investors, and because a well-reputed organisation is believed to be more loyal and secure for future earnings, the company can lower the cost of capital (Coombs, 2007). Based on the facts presented above, a good corporate reputation has an increasingly significant effect on organisations success. Helm (2007) states that return still is the prime factor for investment, but that corporate reputation

climbs up the scale of importance. Power (2007) argues that since reputation is socially constructed almost anything within a firm can be rationalised and described in terms of its reputational implications. The interest of the concept is growing, since its inception and progress, research has recurrently shown that a good corporate reputation has a positive relation to organisational performance and gives the organisation competitive advantages.

Research illustrates that favourable reputations does enable firms to charge premium prices, attract better applicants, enhance their access to the capital markets, and attract investors (Wartick, 1992). Argenti and Druckenmiller (2004) state clearly that organisations increasingly recognize the importance of corporate reputation to achieve business goals and stay competitive. There are very recent examples of organisations such as Enron, Arthur Andersen, Tyco and WorldCom, whose business practices and leadership have destroyed their reputation over the years and there are equally organisations that have grown large and global with the help of good reputation such as Johnson & Johnson and Philips, and innovators such as Cisco Systems. All of these highlight the need for reputation being very solid and lacking no dent for the organisation to reap its economic benefits (Argenti & Druckenmiller, 2004). A good corporate reputation has been argued to have effects on the economic choices made by stakeholders' and thereby direct influence on the financial performance of the organisation (Rindova, Williamsson, Petkova & Sever, 2005). Other authors consider reputation to be related to financial performance (Flanagan et al., 2011), favourable stakeholder behaviour (Money et al. 2011), customer trust and purchase intentions (Keh & Xie, 2009). So, in the

corporate world, reputation is seen as a major element of an organisation's provenance alongside and included in financial performance and innovation.

Corporate reputation can be easily seen as a formidable asset that supports the organisation in any way possible. It certainly is not a fixed asset nor can a depreciable and a figure cannot be put on it. It may not be an element that is easily identifiable on the balance sheet but it affects investor confidence, staff recruitment, supplier attitudes and several other stakeholders in its capacity as relationship capital. Reputation represents a principal risk to any business and as such falls within the strategic issue that companies must give top priority (Keh & Xie, 2009). Some existing corporate reputation measurement tools are based on the following elements: quality of management, financial performance, quality of products and services, market leadership, customer orientation, attractiveness, ethical behaviour, reliability, fair attitude towards competitors, transparency and openness, and credibility. For every organisation, the aim of their management must be to enhance a good reputation and build it into the marketing strategy of the organisation, based on the mentioned measurement tools (Keh & Xie, 2009). The management must understand the factors which contribute to a good reputation in the eyes of stakeholders and be able to lead a very formidable campaign to ensure that they are indeed scoring points in the eye of stakeholders.

However, up to date, many organisations still do not recognize the effects of a risk to reputation, which occurs where the organisation fails to meet the expectations of a specific stakeholder group. The key to effective reputation risk management is therefore the management of expectations. It has been said that

reputation risk lies in the gap between expected and actual behaviour. Thus, this poses a very rare and valuable opportunity for organisations to hold the fort through conscious efforts to ensure that the reputation of the organisation is unflinched. Fombrun (1996) argues in a different way that reputation is built in a planned manner by organisations taking necessary notice of the environment in which they operate. Better regarded companies build their reputations by developing practices which integrate social and economic considerations into their competitive strategies, according to Fombrun (1996). This perspective of reputation management is that the organisation's reputation is dependent on its behaviour as a corporate citizen, part of the societies in which it operates and not above or separated from these. Therefore, reputation strategy should be considered as an inevitable part of the corporate strategy (Yang and Li, 2007), and should target transforming corporate reputation into reputational capital.

From the examples of organisations that have passed and failed the reputation test above, it is obvious that reputation and a good one, does not occur by chance. It is built and sustained. It is closely knit to leadership, management, and organisational operations; the quality of products and services; and – crucially – relationships with stakeholders. It is also connected to communication activities and feedback mechanisms. For instance, media and public relations have an important role when communicating and shaping the messages that influence the perception of an organisation (Malmsten, 2002). The industry of PR consultancies has grown over the last decades helping organisations to organise and professionalise their communicative efforts, all of which sum up to build the image

of the organisation and overall, carve out the best of reputations for the organisation.

Thus, organisations need to build a character to separate themselves from their competitors when the commercial messages form a buzz and the quality of services and products are similar (Malmsten, 2002) and this can be done through communicative means and efforts. From these perspectives, the role of the various corporate communication strategies and activities can be seen as the valid inputs that do not only build reputation instantly but affect reputation from the points of corporate identity, image and brand. Corporate reputation has become an important object of discussions between scholars who research and practitioners on the ground. Despite the big interest, there is a disagreement on the main aspects of corporate reputation. This is because in the scientific literature there are a variety of corporate reputation definitions (Walsh et al., 2009), and there is no conceptual base for the management of corporate reputation (Caruana & Chircop, 2000). Moreover, this increase in research into corporate reputation creates no room for doubt about the importance of corporate reputation in various industries, including the higher education industry. It is very essential to determine the indicators based on which corporate reputation of higher education institutions is managed.

Furthermore, it is important to see the differences of approaches between and within different stakeholders of higher education institutions. This is as a result of the fact that scholars (Freeman et al., 2007; Griffin, 2008; Nguyen & Leblanc, 2001a; Walsh & Beatty, 2007) emphasize the customers' view towards corporate reputation, as they are an especially important stakeholder group, and indicate that

customers can have different expectations and perception of the organisation comparing to other stakeholder groups. For these reasons major attention should be given to corporate reputation management from the perspective of the higher education institutions' customers while segmenting this stakeholder group into three segments: school leavers, students, and graduates. The segments of students and graduates should be considered as specific customer segments that not only fulfil a consuming function but also contribute to the creation of corporate reputation of higher education institutions and are long-term customers (Freeman et al., 2007; Griffin, 2008; Nguyen & Leblanc, 2001a; Walsh & Beatty, 2007).

In consideration of different circumstances that organisations confront, corporate reputation is characterized by particularity. Corporate reputation indicators are distinct at organisations that undertake different activities and operate in different industries. In other words, some indicators are not relevant or cannot come through at specific organisations while the same indicators have very big weight at organisations from other industries (Freeman et al., 2007; Griffin, 2008; Nguyen & Leblanc, 2001a; Walsh & Beatty, 2007). For these reasons corporate reputation is managed in consideration of contextual differences. Usually, corporate reputation measurement methods are used to determine indicators that should be used for corporate reputation management. In scientific literature there is a few corporate reputation measurement methods and models for higher education institutions (Standifird, 2005; Vidaver-Cohen, 2007; Volkwein & Sweitzer, 2006). However, scholars indicate that the existing corporate reputation measurement methods and models do not fully reflect corporate reputation so none

of them can provide a comprehensive understanding based on what corporate reputation indicators and at what level corporate reputation of higher education institutions is managed. Furthermore, none of these methods or models assesses possible disparities of the stakeholders' approaches.

Corporate image can change relatively quickly due to organisational changes or communication programs, whereas reputation calls for long-term investment, and consistency in all messages communicated. Therefore, to foster investment in corporate reputation it is necessary to ensure image continuity that will create a positive reputation as a precondition to enabling the organisation to develop successfully. Thus, a summary of what the organisation reflects as its identity or image over time contributes to the reputation of the organisation. Explaining this, Cian and Cervai (2013) state that reputation represents an umbrella expression that encompasses corporate image, projected image, organisational identity and all their terminological synonyms such as organisational culture and constructed image, including corporate identity and corporate brand. Their model sees reputation as a factor, gathering the opinions of internal and external stakeholders.

Cian and Cervai (2013) further make a distinction between the image communicated within an organisation (defined as corporate identity), the image communicated to the external environment (the desired corporate identity) and the corporate image representing a new variable derived from the two aforementioned images. Thus, in a more succinct manner, Argenti and Druckenmiller (2004) suggest that reputation is a collective representation of multiple constituencies'

images of a company built up over time. It is also linked to the organisation's identity; performance and the way others respond to its behaviour.

Murray and White (2004) also point to relationship management as being at the heart of creating, enhancing and retaining a good reputation. They see strong communication performance by organisational leaders and effective feedback mechanisms from stakeholders as essential for articulating relevant messages and making better informed decisions that retain the support of stakeholders. This evidently highlights that communication has everything to do with an organisation sustaining a good reputation, and without communication going on internally and externally, an organisation may fail at holding its reputation in high esteem.

Theoretical Review

Having reviewed and considered the historical perspectives of the emergence of corporate communication, the underpinning theories guiding this research are the communication roles theory, organisational communication theory and the organisational information theory. Reviews and critiques on the subject of corporate communication invariably have assailed the lack of theoretical infrastructures behind the myriad research reports. No single criticism has been echoed with such vigor as the fragmentation of the field, and no prescription for a cure has been forwarded so frequently as the advice to elaborate coherent theory (Richetto, 1977; Putnam & Cheney, 1983; Euske & Roberts, 1987; Krone, Jablin & Putnam, 1987). Krone et al. (1987) drew, for example, on Fisher's (1978) classic view of the study of human communication to argue that the philosophical

foundations of corporate communication research rest on four perspectives: mechanisms, psychological, interpretive-symbolic, and systems-interactions.

The issue of theory deficiency is confronted pointedly and rather pessimistically by Euske and Roberts (1987) who forgo any attempt to focus on elusive organisational communication theory, instead, their approach starts from the premise that communication underlies most organisational processes; therefore, the most relevant theory is organisation theory itself. Many organisational communication theories have been based on systems theory concepts because they help to analyse the complexities of organisational interdependencies and help gain greater understanding of the communication process between the organisation and the groups that have a stake in its actions (Miller, 2003).

Corporate Communication Roles Theory

The corporate communication roles theory suggests that practitioners perform different roles in the organisation according to the tasks they perform the most. Roles "... describe daily behaviour patterns of individual communication practitioners" (Grunig, 1992a, p.19), which yield predictable outcomes (Grunig et al., 2002, p.196). A role can therefore be seen as the range of tasks or a standard set of behaviours that the practitioner needs to exhibit to produce excellent communication, which will contribute to organisational performance (Steyn & Puth, 2000, p.14). Petersen et al. (2002, p.1) argues that role enactments are directly related to the perceived benefits of public relations to the organisation. Determining roles has also contributed to enhance the image of public relations to more than simply a technical function and enhance the function's standing within the

organisation (Hogg & Doolan, 1999, p.597; Toth et al., 1998, p.145). A role is also influenced by the individual's environment (Hogg & Doolan, 1999, p.597), which can force a person to perform multiple roles, for example that of manager, secretary, councillor, and so forth (Steyn & Puth, 2000, p.14). Within any organisation there is an interwoven set of roles that are being played (Bassett, 1996, p.37; Johnson, 1989, p.253-254). By allowing to be classified into a specific role, a person also has to deliver on the normative expectation of that role (Bassett, 1996, p.37; Johnson, 1989, p.253-254), which can place a burden on the person fulfilling the role.

Furthermore, Grunig et al. (2002, p.201) also mention role ambiguity as unclear or inconsistent messages of role expectations, which can be very demoralising for practitioners. Conversely, role ambiguity gives practitioners room to enact behaviour that they deem necessary for strategic work (Grunig et al., 2002, p.201). The public relations practitioner can therefore perform many tasks from various roles, which implies that a single practitioner may be classified as enacting more than one role. Moss et al. (2000, p.292, 300) argue that their study supports the findings that practitioners combine elements of different roles in their daily work, thereby combining roles to match the context at hand. Clear categorisation of roles is therefore not as simple as first suggested. Nevertheless, current thinking mitigates that the practitioner should be classified into the role most frequently performed or enacted (Grunig et al., 2001, p.223). Academic literature clearly describes the history of the public relations role research and findings (Everett, 2006, p.24-27; Hogg & Doolan, 1999, p.597-600; Moss, 2000, p.1-2; Moss et al.,

2000, p.278; Petersen et al., 2002, p.1-4; Toth et al., 1998, p.145-146). Different public relations roles have been identified in different countries relating to the specific environments of those specific countries. This includes the research done in the USA by Broom and Dozier that was published from 1979 onwards. It conceptualised the roles of expert prescriber, communication facilitator, problem-solving process facilitator, and corporate communication technician (Lauzen & Dozier, 1992, p.205-207; Grunig et al., 2002, p.197-198; Steyn & Puth, 2000, p.15; Warnaby & Moss, 1997, p.16-17).

Many authors see Broom as the father of public relations role research (Van Ruler & Verčič, 2005a, p.241). Broom's research sparked a debate on public relations practitioner role playing that contributed greatly to the public relations body of knowledge (Hogg & Doolan, 1999, p.597-600; Moss, 2000, p.1-10; Moss & Green, 2001, p.118-132). Many articles and papers criticised public relations role research (Moss, 2000, p.1-10), which led to further research on other roles and in countries other than the USA (Dozier & Broom, 1995, p.3-26; Moss, 2000, p.1-10; Steyn, 2000c, p.20-43; Toth et al., 1998, p.145-158). Two concerns were raised on the role research that was previously conducted. First, the concern was the focus of research on USA public relations roles alone (Moss, 2000, p.108). This has, however, in recent years been countered with roles research being done in various other countries. For instance, in Europe four public relations roles were identified, which included the reflective, managerial, operational, and educational roles (Van Ruler & Verčič, 2002, p.14; Verčič et al., 2001, p.380), and in South Africa the strategist, managerial and technician roles were identified (Everett, 2006, p.87-103;

Steyn, 2000b, p.1-42; 2000cp.20-43). A comparison of the South African roles with the European roles is discussed in Steyn and Bütschi (2003, p.1-33). Second, the concern was that role research had been done from a one-sided perspective of role enactment, namely that of the practitioner (Johnson, 1989, p.244; Moss, 2000, p.108). Traditionally, the actions performed by practitioners in their daily work have been grouped through research and categorised into certain roles. The categories were developed through an examination of secondary literature and empirical tests that asked practitioners to report on what they do (Grunig et al., 2001, p.221). Some authors consequently argue that, to understand the role and role expectations clearly, one needs to examine both the receiver and the sender's expectations of the role (Grunig et al., 2002, p.197; Hogg & Doolan, 1999, p.599; Johnson, 1989, p.243, 255). These expectations of the role played and the context in which the role is performed, could explain why people will adjust their roles (Johnson, 1989, p.247-248) or experience role strain (when a person cannot perform a role) (Bassett, 1996, p.38).

Organisational Communication Theory

Organisational Communication looks at human communication within and outside the organisation. According to Goldhaber (1981, p.11) an organisation is defined as “a group of people aspiring for the same goals”. The connection between the effectiveness of the organisation and effectiveness of its communication is very clear to current organisations. There are many theories about what organisational communication entails, but there are three factors that occur frequently according to Goldhaber (1981, p.17), 1. Organisational communication is an open and

complex system which is affected by the environment. 2. Messages are transmitted in the system. The messages have a direction, goal and method. 3. People are involved in the organisational communication with their attitudes, feelings, relationships and skills. Francis (cited in Sparrow and Marchington, 1998, p.78) divided the process of organisational communication into four main segments which depict the various purposes of the communication. The segments also have three supporting elements each.

- i. **Communications for sharing vision or mission:** Persuasive management. Management which makes one trust the vision or mission; Compelling vision. Vision that is easy to believe in.; Sensitivity to the external environment. Taking the external environment in the considering and keeping up with the demands and changes of it.
- ii. **Communications for integrating effort:** Integrating mechanisms; Incorporating mechanisms to the organisation; Helpful geography e.g. workplace layout. Workplace is logical and comfortable; Downward flow. Information from managers to employees travels well.
- iii. **Communications for making intelligent decisions:** Communication skills. Good communication skills to make high quality decisions efficiently. o Apt administration. Appropriate management which is capable and efficient; Upward flow. Information from the employees to the managers travels fluently.
- iv. **Communications for sustaining a “healthy” community:** High trust- High trust in the company and the goals and beliefs of it; Lack of prejudice

-No prejudice as it makes the work atmosphere unsafe and suffocating;
Supportive-Supportive of the employee and the company in their development, growth and decisions.

The segments and elements have equal opposite powers, which can be called “blockages of communication” (Sparrow & Marchington, 1998, p.79). For example, in “communication for making intelligent decisions”, the blockages would be: Insufficient communication skills – individuals do not have, for example, proper listening skills. Inept administration – information may be distributed, but may not be made available for those who would need it. Flawed upward flow – the channels are either not there or are not used. Models like this are useful to organisations which want to improve and develop their communication systems, because each blockage can be assessed and attempted to be prevented. According to Viitala (2004, p. 217) communication is an effective way to increase the knowhow of the organisation and personnel, and a method to influence the attitudes of the personnel.

Communication often has to compete over people’s time and attention in a work environment which tends to be hectic and already full of information. Communication is seen as a strategic resource of an organisation according to Viitala (2004, p. 217). A change or direction of the company cannot come into effect if the personnel are not aware and committed to it. This requires frequent sending of information via different channels. In an organisation, communication needs structuring and planning. Although most of the time communication is spontaneous, each time a new issue needs to be told to the personnel, there is no

point in wasting time in developing or choosing a new method of communication. With a basic model, communication can be carried out routinely leaving room for surprises, handling changes and developing communication. Internal communication is done by everyone in the organisation to notify the appropriate people of important work-related issues.

Viitala (2004, p.219) reminds us that the minimum requirements of the communication of an organisation are defined by laws. The most important law is the law of cooperation in the organisation. However, the minimum requirements are insufficient for the functioning or developing of the organisation. Communication is also needed for keeping the personnel satisfied in their work in order to, for example, minimize workforce turnover which can be very expensive to organisations. External communication also needs systems and planning as it is the method of releasing, for example, the annual reports and press releases. External communication is close to marketing, but it also forwards the organisation's image and culture to its employees and therefore should be transparent. If the external communication is not transparent, it can cause the employees to see the organisation as untrustworthy or the employees cannot see how the organisation is doing compared with competitors.

Timing of communication is important. The information which is communicated needs to be sent at the right time for it to be current. If information arrives too late, it is useless. If information arrives too soon, it is forgotten or not paid attention to. For example, during a change, communication at the right time diminishes rumors and fears, even if there is nothing actually to announce. Culture

also influences communication for example, how information is expressed. Cultural differences for example show that Japanese prefer to be more indirect and prefer oral communication whereas North Americans are the opposite preferring written communications and being direct (Bratton & Gold, 2003, p.370).

Communication audit

Perhaps the most widely used method of assessing communication during times of change is the organisational communication audit. Auditing or gauging communication effectiveness in organisations can be traced back to the 1950's (Odiorne, 1954), but this methodology for examining communication grew quickly in the 1970s with the development of the organisational communication audit (Brooks, Callicot, & Siegerdt, 1979; Goldhaber & Krivonos, 1977; Greenbaum & White, 1976). While there have been numerous studies involving the audit in various countries over the last 40 years, the results reported uniformly point to a desire for more information by organisation members concerning most all organisation issues including change (Brooks et al., 1979; Hargie & Tourish, 2000).

The organisational communication audit was developed by the Organisational Communication Division of the International Communication Association (ICA) in 1971 to measure organisational communication using five measures: a questionnaire survey, interviews, network analysis, communication experiences, and communication diaries (Goldhaber & Krivonos, 1977). Throughout the years, the survey has become the foremost tool used out of the five for “its ease of development, administration, and interpretation—both for clients and research publication” (Goldhaber, 2002, p. 451). During the 1970's, this

measurement package was propagated by many scholars (e.g., Brooks et al., 1979; Goldhaber & Krivonos, 1977; Greenbaum & White, 1976) to assess the “health” or the effectiveness of organisational communication along an array of dimensions including message sources, receivers, topics, channels, attitudes, behaviors, and more (Goldhaber & Krivonos, 1977).

Communication audit and validity

Many scholars (e.g., Clampitt, 2005; Downs & Adrian, 2004; Tourish & Hargie, 2009) continue to believe that the audit is a useful tool for capturing effective organisational communication. This tool has been available and has been utilized for close to 40 years. Yet, there is a vast body of research spanning many years and multiple countries (e.g., Brooks et al., 1979; Goldhaber et al., 1978; Gray, 2000; Hargie, Tourish and Wilson 2002; Hogard et al., 2005; Opyt, Stewart and Soy, 2001; Quinn and Hargie, 2004; Robson and Tourish, 2005; Scott, et al., 1999; Tourish and Mulholland 1997; Zimmerman, Sypher and Haas, 1996) that purports organisational members nearly always want more information than they currently receive. The question raised from this research is that of the validity of the organisational communication audit. Is the audit really measuring effective organisational communication, or is it tapping into a consistent belief system regarding a communication “metamyth” in the organisation?

Zimmerman et al. (1996) first publicized the idea of a communication “metamyth” in “that more communication is better” in regards to an organisational context (p. 186). Moreover, this deep-seated metamyth is adopted without question by organisational members. This metamyth ideal is rooted in two related belief

systems: the established notion of the importance of communication in organisations and the conduit or “pipeline” metaphor. The established notion of the importance of communication comes from an extended period of research (e.g. Barnard, 1938; Batemen and Miller, 1981; Blanchard, 1991; Bush and Frohman, 1991; Chen, Miller, Jiang and Klein, 2005; Czarniawska-Joerges, 1992; Guetzkow, 1965; Katz and Kahn, 1978; Leonard, Graham and Bonacum, 2004; March and Simon, 1958; McLaurin and Bell, 1991; Postmes, 2003; Scott, 1981; Stringham, 1992; Weick, 1987) that propagates the significance of communication for organisations in formation, progression, and the continued life of organisations.

The second belief system, or the conduit metaphor, stresses that communication can be viewed as a pipeline that conveys information from the sender to receiver. There is a body of literature (e.g., Axley, 1984; Barnard, 1938; Costa, de Matos and Cunha, 2003; Hargie and Tourish, 2004; Jenner, 1994; Katz and Kahn, 1978; Krovi, Chandra and Rajagopalan, 2003; Smith and Grimm, 1991; Sy and Cote, 2004; Walsh and Birkin, 1980; Weick, 1987) that supports this notion (Haas, 2007).

The Organisational Information Theory

Organisational Information Theory (OIT), developed by Karl Weick, provides a valuable framework for understanding how institutions like Ghana’s collegiate universities, namely KNUST, UCC, and UG, manage and make sense of equivocal information. The theory emphasizes that organisations exist in an information environment where they must process complex, ambiguous, or conflicting information to reduce equivocality, enabling them to operate smoothly

and effectively (Weick, 1969; Avgerou, 2002; Brett, 1993; Cernea, 1988). This is particularly relevant for universities, which rely heavily on strategic communication and knowledge management to align their internal operations with external stakeholder expectations.

In the context of these universities, corporate communication activities serve as the backbone for institutional reputation and image management. However, challenges such as fragmented communication channels, unclear roles, and inadequate coordination of information-sharing activities have undermined their ability to reduce equivocality. For instance, studies like Antwi-Konadu and Oduro (2014) reveal that corporate communication in Ghanaian universities often suffers from a lack of clear conceptualization and execution, leading to inefficiencies and reputational damage. The principles of OIT provide a structured approach to addressing these shortcomings by emphasizing the need for systematic cycles of communication, acts, responses, and adjustments, to process and clarify equivocal messages (West & Turner, 2000).

The theory's concepts of the information environment, equivocality, and communication cycles are directly applicable to the interplay of corporate communication activities in Ghanaian universities. These institutions operate within a highly dynamic information environment shaped by internal complexities (such as semi-autonomous collegiate structures) and external pressures (such as stakeholder demands for accountability and transparency). As Weick (1969) notes, the ability to decode, manage, and utilize information effectively is essential for

maintaining organisational cohesion and ensuring positive interactions with stakeholders.

The core objective of corporate communication in KNUST, UCC, and UG is to manage and convey institutional narratives that enhance reputation and foster stakeholder trust. However, the semi-autonomous structures of these universities create information silos that amplify equivocality, resulting in mixed messages and weakened institutional identity. OIT emphasizes the need for well-defined processes to handle such ambiguities, suggesting that universities should establish centralised communication frameworks to streamline information flow and assign specific roles for interpreting and disseminating information (West & Turner, 2000).

For example, the theory highlights the importance of cycles of communication, acts (identifying ambiguity), responses (clarifying messages), and adjustments (ensuring understanding), to resolve equivocality effectively. Applied to Ghanaian universities, this approach could help address the persistent confusion caused by the overlapping roles of various departments and the lack of a unified communication strategy. As Edwards (1994) notes, proper coordination of information fosters a stronger relationship between an organisation and its stakeholders, a principle that is especially critical for institutions that rely on public trust and engagement.

OIT underscores that organisational success depends on the effective use of information to manage relationships and adapt to environmental changes (Weick, 1969). In Ghanaian collegiate universities, corporate communication serves as a

strategic tool for aligning institutional operations with stakeholder expectations. However, the absence of coherent information-sharing policies has led to inconsistencies that undermine reputation management efforts. For instance, fragmented communication processes often result in stakeholders receiving conflicting messages, which erodes trust and credibility.

By integrating OIT principles, universities can enhance their reputation management practices. This involves not only reducing equivocality but also creating feedback loops that allow for continuous improvement in communication strategies. The use of modern IT tools, such as email and video conferencing, can further facilitate this process by providing platforms for real-time information exchange and collaborative decision-making (Basole et al., 2013). Moreover, embedding cycles of communication into daily operations can ensure that all stakeholders, faculty, students, and external partners, receive clear and consistent messages, thus reinforcing institutional reputation.

Edwards (1994) stresses that interpretation and coordination of information is the essence of the information environment. The organisational information theory addresses information equivocality and explains how information is received in organisations via multiple sources (Land, 1992; Lewis, 1997). The received information must be decoded and examined-either it is comprehensible or not; and qualified persons or department must be selected to deal with this (Lewis, 2001). Information equivocality refers to messages without clarity of subject, explanation, reference and scope (West & Turner, 2000). Ambiguity means no definition. Equivocality refers to multiple possible definitions; uncertainty reflects

one definition with some confidence predictability while complexity highlights one definition with certainty but with many elements. These all are the confusions that organisations generally face (West & Turner, 2000). Sometimes information sharing itself creates lot of complexity (Lewis & Wallace, 2000).

The equivocality creates confusions in organisations (Land, 1992). The organisational information theory is a larger version of uncertain reductions in organisations (Liebenau & Backhouse, 1990). Organisations cope with uncertainty on bigger scale (Powell, 2003). The level of equivocality increases when departments/ people are unable to understand the messages that are delivered to them (Edward, 1994). Organisations exist in an information environment, and get equivocal or confusing messages and deal with them as per their level of understanding (Powell, 2003). Mostly organisations face lots of trouble in reducing equivocality. The organisational information theory states that organisations should at first figure out the equivocal information, then establish a focal point to handle specific information and finally select the right person responsible to make sense out of equivocal information and process equivocal messages (Weick, 1969).

The cycle of communication discusses a series of hierarchy, roles, norms, patterns, formal and informal structures (Edwards, 1994). There are three steps of the cycle of communication; act, response, and adjustment (West & Turner, 2000). 'Act' refers to the communication behaviors used to indicate one's ambiguity as a result of information that is received and the reaction to the act indicating equivocality of information; 'Response' is provided to clarify information as a result of act while the effect of response can be found when an organisation

formulates a response mechanism in return of any adjustment and finally an ‘adjustment’ is made to indicate that the information is now understood (West & Turner, 2000 p. 252). Organisational information theory emphasizes the principles of equivocality:

1. the cycles of communication should be used to analyze the relationship among the equivocality of information,
2. a greater number of cycles is needed if the organisation has few rules that assist in reducing equivocality
3. greater equivocality has to be removed when more cycles are used to obtain additional information and make adjustments (Weick, 1969).

A key tenet of OIT is that organisations must align their communication processes with their strategic objectives to thrive in complex environments (West & Turner, 2000). For KNUST, UCC, and UG, this means using corporate communication not just as a tool for information dissemination but as a mechanism for achieving broader institutional goals, such as enhancing global visibility and fostering stakeholder loyalty. The theory’s emphasis on structured communication cycles and the reduction of equivocality aligns closely with the need for these universities to adopt a more strategic approach to information management.

For example, Hoy and Miskel (2008) argue that effective communication is essential for achieving instructional, interpersonal, and administrative goals in educational institutions. In the Ghanaian context, this would involve creating integrated communication systems that facilitate collaboration across departments and ensure that all stakeholders are aligned with the university’s mission and vision.

Such an approach not only reduces ambiguity but also enhances the institution's ability to respond to external challenges and opportunities.

Organisational Information Theory offers a robust framework for understanding and improving the interplay of corporate communication activities in Ghanaian collegiate universities. By addressing issues of equivocality and emphasizing structured communication processes, the theory provides actionable insights for enhancing institutional reputation and stakeholder engagement. For KNUST, UCC, and UG, adopting the principles of OIT can help transform their corporate communication practices into strategic assets, enabling them to navigate the complexities of their information environment and achieve their organisational objectives.

The importance of a sound strategic communication process that supports business goals, enables individuals and teams to contribute their best, and encourages dialogue, is often misunderstood by university management as it appears there is no common definition for 'communication positions' within and among universities. One person's understanding of a 'communication professional' may involve strategy and key messaging, while another's may involve working solely with the media. Many of the theories on media explain the effects media has on people. It is the theory which explains how people use media for their need and gratification. Embedded in the Organisational Information Theory is the Uses and Gratifications Theory which emphasises motives and the self-perceived needs of audience members (Blumler & Katz, 1974). Blumler and Katz (1974) concluded that different people can use the same communication message for very different

purposes. The same media content may gratify different needs for different individuals, showing there is not only one way that people use media, and there are as many reasons for using the media as there are media users (Blumler & Katz, 1974).

The communications function is much more effective when it is driven to generate results, such as increased rates of awareness, and in improved stakeholder relationships or strengthened internal alignment (Kealey, 2012). Universities, for example, consist of a number of departments or units (faculties, marketing, finance, student management), each of which includes individuals and teams. The functioning of any of these units or subsystems cannot be divorced from the ways other units or subsystems operate within a university; they are interdependent. Universities are also a part of a larger system (Brits, 2010).

Contemporary approaches see organisations as living systems and communication as having a real presence in the life of the organisation (Pacanowsky & O'Donnell-Trujillo, 1983). Despite these changes, strategic organisational communication has helped define the structural elements that lie within the constraints of the business environment (Goldhaber, 1990). Employees at all levels are major players in the communication environment that not only affects the organisation directly but also the lives and actions of other people (Giddens, 1989). Any examination of the communication process within organisations enables management to better understand the expectation of employees and others, and gives a valuable insight into the policies, procedures, customs and habits of those who help make up the organisation (Daniels & Spiker,

1991, p. 29-49). While a hierarchical organisational structure within any university may induce efficiency by way of the perceived power supervisors may have over subordinates, Koehler and Applbaum (1981) and Goldhaber (1990) suggest that such power can be at the expense of information accessibility.

Te'eni (2001) mentioned that communication is essential for both achieving organisational goals as well as maintaining positive relationships. Organisations will need to design communication support systems by keeping in mind both cognitive and affective models for more effectiveness (Te'eni, 2001). Another reason highlighted about the importance of communication in educational organisations among administrators is that it is needed for instructional, interpersonal, organisational, and administrative processes and structures (Hoy & Miskel, 2008). The theory of organisational information provides a framework to interact and manage information (Avegerou, 2002). Mostly universities use a two-way communication flow with their employees and community members. In fact, it is the general requirement of management of these universities to execute and sustain development projects that need equivocality free information because of the nature of their job (Lin, 1999). The theory of organisational information can be an instrument to connect and strengthen the partnership between the university and other public sector institutions (Lewis, 2001). At present improper information sharing and poor communication are emerging issues among universities (Powell, 2003). There is no correlation between who is to say what and where to say it. Everybody in the university is in one way or the other a spokesperson for the university and this creates a lot of confusion. Effective communication depends

upon the relationship of employees with organisations and organisations with stakeholders (Mathie & Cunningham, 2003).

In KNUST, UCC and UG, Legon, for instance, the organisational information theory is used as a working approach. The organisational information is all about human communication and valuing togetherness (Weick, 1969). The theory stresses social collectiveness and states that connected individuals can do better for others (Avgerou, 2002). Sometimes organisational information theory has been discussed and criticized by development agencies (Powell, 2003). The organisational information theory should be enhanced more rigorously to respond to communication needs, to ensure information sharing policies and to strengthen connection of organisations and grass root level groups for the betterment of people in a broad way (Fine, 2001). Organisational information theory is an effective approach to connect people working in an organisation in a better way (Lewis, 2000). At the present time organisations also use numerous IT instruments for sharing organisational information such as Emails and meetings by using videoconferencing where all teams meet to discuss matters (Basole, Bodner et al., 2013). Different areas of organisational management need proper information to make effective decisions (West & Turner, 2000). Without proper information several issues can arise such as conflicts, misunderstandings, ambiguities and disturbance in workflow (Powell, 2003).

Relevance and justification of the Theories to this Study

Corporate communication has grown as an effective instrument of organisational management over a period of time (Christensen et al., 2008).

Corporate communication has become an important component of organisational management in modern society. Corporate communication is the process of facilitating exchange of information and ideas between the internal and external groups and individuals that have a direct relationship with an enterprise. It is concerned with communication management of the modern corporate houses from the stand point of sharing knowledge and decisions from the enterprise with investors, employees, suppliers, dealers, customers, media professionals, government officials, members of the community and other stakeholders of the organisation (Siano et al., 2011). In the age of globalisation, corporate communication serves as the conscience of the corporation and is responsible for the establishment and maintenance of the reputation of modern organisations.

Scholars (Argentini, 2003; Fernandez, 2007; Jefkins, 1987; Zulhamri, 2009) have noted that corporate communication is a management function that offers a framework for effective coordination of all internal and external means of communications. According to Fernandez (2007) the overall purpose of establishing and maintaining a favorable reputation with stakeholder groups upon which the organisation is dependent on good communication flow. Corporate communication is also an instrument of management by means of which all consciously used forms of internal and external communication are harmonized as effectively and efficiently as possible (Lages & Simkin, 2003). Corporate communication is one of the most important links between an organisation and various publics. Corporate communication is the key factor in the creation, implementation, monitoring and reporting on all corporate activities. It also

provides opportunities to feel the pulse of various stakeholders and bring about suitable changes and modifications in the business and communication approaches. The field of corporate communication has undergone radical developments over the years and has become a full-fledged career option in the new millennium. Modern corporate houses have undoubtedly accorded highest importance to corporate communication in order to achieve their business objectives (Lages & Simkin, 2003).

Theories of corporate communication roles, organisational communication theory and the organisational information theory helped propel the discourse on corporate communication in the Universities in Ghana which practice the collegiate system. For the universities to sustain its communication structures, it must afford the information needed to achieve the goals. The Organisational Information Theory as an approach developed by Weick describes the process of collecting, using and managing information (Avgerou, 2002). The approach is considered as an information management method. There is the need for university management to manage the sort of information that goes out and specific persons must be charged to do that as the main aim of the universities is to churn out information and teach. The theory propounds that the management of a large amount of information and knowledge is a one of the leading challenges for organisations (Weick, 1969).

In recent years several studies have already highlighted that it seems difficult to handle increasing means of communication and number of messages sent and received by insiders and outsiders (West & Turner, 2000). The theory of

organisational information insists on the process rather than the structure (West & Turner, 2000). The understanding of messages by individuals is as important as the exchange of information circulates within the organisations. According to Weick (1969) the theory of organisational information focuses on 'information communication that is vital in shaping the performance-based institutions.

The organisational communication theory, however, states that a variety of channels can facilitate communication flow. It asks basic questions about the flow of information, channels of communication, and the available media. Organisational communication is described by Torp (2014) as comprising everything an institution speaks and does as well as everyone who is affected by the existence and activities of the institution. Organisational communication is seen as a strategic and goal-oriented activity that manages discourse to achieve the defined goals and outcomes by the institution. This is what most universities desire to achieve. The emergence of strategic communication in most universities across the world and in Ghana in particular is seen as a unifying paradigm which offers how they can present and promote themselves as well as on how to interact with their audiences (Hallahan, Holtzhausen, van Ruler, Vercic & Sriramesh, 2007).

Strategic communication represents the communication realized by companies to achieve their missions, values, long-term goals, objectives and managing communication should be a strategic priority for the organisations. Hallahan et al. (2007, p. 7) revealed that strategic communication focus is on how a company communicates across organisational activities. The importance is on the strategic application of communication and how an organisation as a social actor

advance its mission. This the universities can adopt to enhance their visibilities to the world. From the strategic communication point of view, the universities would be preoccupied to distinguish from their competitors, to proactivity find right opportunities to communicate and influence their publics, and to accomplish their objectives considering the industry trends. The challenges faced by the universities in communication, justify the need for more effective and ingenious organisational communication approaches and strategies. The derived outcomes of this study will promote proficient strategical organisational communication and commitment.

Chapter Summary

This chapter has reviewed the literature on the concepts of corporate communication and reputation management in order to understand the various theories informing the conceptual framework. The literature review focused on the various definitions and concepts of corporate communication. Furthermore, the theories of the organisational information theory, organisational communication theory, and the integrated model of media selection was discussed. The knowledge and ideas of corporate communication that contributes to reputation management were also reviewed. The Theoretical review provided important ingredient for establishing foundational element on what has already been done or discovered on the topic. The reviewed thus far shows several benefits of corporate communication theories being recognized in the institution.

CHAPTER THREE

EMPIRICAL LITERATURE AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Introduction

The researcher aimed at assessing the interplay of corporate communication activities on the image and reputation of collegiate universities in Ghana. This chapter presents a review of empirical literature on corporate communication and reputation management and a conceptual framework on the study. It also reviewed related literature on all the issues and variables that are relevant to the study. Having reviewed the divergent field of corporate communication and provided a rationale for using the conceptual framework to help group and differentiate the various corporate communication activities and practices.

First, I observed that the importance of delineating the boundaries of corporate communication activities and the efficacy of using these activities in the universities interface and their publics. This delineation helped to set the right framework, for instance, the hourglass conceptual model that I developed. Furthermore, it helped in developing the research questions and drove the study in relation to the objective of the study and methods and strategies that was needed to obtain the right information and data for the entire study.

Review of Empirical Studies and Key Emerging Issues on Corporate Communication Activities

A glance at recent titles on corporate communication is both revealing and puzzling. The diversity of academic inquiries is so wide that one can easily confuse the field with its subsets. Topics include image and crisis (Balmer and Greyser,

2006; Shim and Yang, 2016), branding and brand management (Gupta, 2011; Bateson & Hoffman, 2011), corporate identity (Argenti, 2014), social media and risk (Ott and Theunissen, 2015; Rokka, Karlsson and Tienari, 2014), PR and marketing communication (McKie and Willis, 2012), management communication, organisational communication (Szyszka, 2008; Theis-Berglmair, 2008), and employee communication. Surprisingly, the field is still evolving and searching for its identity leading some researchers to ponder the need to converge the differences over the nature and applications of corporate communication (Frandsen & Johansen, 2013).

Others have concluded that the time is right to clarify the role of corporate communication as a multidisciplinary field of study with overlapping areas but distinct logic and explanations (Mazzei, 2014). These academic disciplines and areas of practice compound the field and make the task of identifying solutions to internal and external communication problems very difficult. Mazzei (2014) attempted to develop a better understanding of corporate communication by reviewing definitions in business-related communication disciplines: marketing, public relations, organisational communication, and corporate communication. She suggested attaching a higher value to research results in the communication field that come from considering multiple points of view, because each discipline contributes specific connotations to our understanding. The multiple points of view allow a multidisciplinary approach and the awareness of the polysemic nature of corporate communication. Others proposed that a more holistic approach pre-eminently makes corporate communication an area for special attention, positioned

meaningfully within the interdisciplinary research of communication management (Podnar, 2014).

While we agree that corporate communication needs to be specific enough to preserve the autonomy of distinct contributions to the field (Hutton, 2010), we also think that it must be broad enough to allow for the integration of ideas and the development of agreement among theoreticians, researchers, and practitioners. An integrated approach to corporate communication, for example, has been shown to be important in the process of innovation communication when organisations form networks to link functions and common practices internally and externally (Belasen & Rufer, 2013; Hirunyawipada, Beyerlein & Blankson, 2010), particularly during crises (Gupta, 2011).

An important challenge for corporate communication researchers is to identify the boundaries of corporate communication as an interdisciplinary academic field of study (Christensen & Cornelissen, 2013) as well as a community of practice (Belasen & Frank, 2010). The latter is especially critical since social media has shifted the focus of corporate communication in terms of direction, access, and influence (Lin et al., 2016). Successful integration of social media into decision-making and policy development is crucial for sustaining the reputation and presence of corporate communication narratives on social media sites (Carroll, 2015; Dijkmans, et al., 2015; Jankauskaite & Urboniene, 2016). And a good reputation and satisfied customers are critical to the success of corporations (Stradner & Brettel, 2014).

Ideally, corporate communication encompasses all strategic communication for the overall development and showcasing identity, the image, and reputation of an organisation. Corporate communication thus becomes both a communication tool and practice and very broad and complex (Christensen et al., 2008). However, in these universities, the concept appears to be narrowly defined as public relations which does not necessarily capture the totality of and the multi-dimensional nature of the concept in relation to an organisational reputation. This misconception and narrow definition has led to a narrow understanding and effects of corporate communication practices on the identity, image and reputation of these universities (Belasen & Rufer, 2013). This narrow conceptualization has also led to a situation where largely all the literature on corporate communication have been skewed and centred on public relations outfits and activities in these universities.

Traditionally, universities the world over, have been promoted through the activities of their Public Relations or Public Affairs and lately the Corporate Affairs Outfits. These outfits, however, have been engaging in Corporate Communication Activities including but not limited to: Communication, Corporate Social Responsibility Activities, Relationship Management, Alumni Relations, Marketing, Media Relations, Public Relations, Publications, Protocol Activities, Promotions and Events, Advocacy and Strategic Partnership, Branding Activities, Advertisement and Commodification, Fundraising and Sponsorship, and Organisational Communication for the total development and, advancement in these universities. These activities have been carried out mainly through the use of media, mostly the traditional media, and other specific events and university

activities. Using corporate communication in building a good reputation for the Universities is however problematic since corporate communication is very uncoordinated (Antwi-Konadu & Oduro, 2014).

It is important to note from the works of Antwi-Konadu and Oduro (2014) that corporate communication as a community of practice is no longer the exclusive domain of PR or Marketing departments, which traditionally have focused on the external stakeholders. All activities that “communicate” in these universities are part of the corporate communication domain. For good corporate governance and effective administering of a complex entity like the University, effective corporate communication is very essential (Antwi-Konadu & Oduro, 2014). Towards this end as indicated, these universities traditionally have specific units in charge of corporate communication activities. These are traditionally called the Public Relations Unit. Even though these outfits are structured to play this role, what these institutions lose sight of is that corporate communication goes beyond PR/Marketing and is virtually practiced by every individual and outfits in these institutions which overall brings image and reputation challenges to these institutions (Antwi-Konadu & Oduro, 2014).

Previous studies have noted increased attention given to strategic communication aimed at creating differentiation in the higher education sector (Ivy, 2001; Kosmützky & Krücken, 2015), although some researchers (such as Chapleo, 2005, 2010) have shown that there is little ‘real’ differentiation in practice. This is similar to the findings of other studies on strategic communication and reputation strategies in public subsectors such as health care (Blomgren, Hedmo, & Waks,

2015; Wæraas & Sataøen, 2015) and local government (Wæraas, 2015a). The challenge for individual higher education institutions, then, is to respond successfully to similarity and differentiation pressures at the same time, taking into account that “the pressure to conform dampens the impulse to be different” (King & Whetten, 2008, p. 193) and that legitimacy pressures may conflict with reputation-building pressures.

For the higher education sector as a whole, the challenge is to differentiate successfully from other countries’ higher education sectors in order to build reputation, while at the same time conforming to expectations of quality and excellence in order to satisfy legitimacy requirements. Suffice to state that in the Ghanaian context, there has not been any scientific study into the complexities and intricacies of corporate communication and its effects on the image of these collegiate universities. Observably, this situation of uncoordinated corporate communication is worse in the collegiate universities where corporate communication practices and activities appear very prevalent, largely unplanned, micro in nature and uncoordinated as a result of the semi-autonomous nature of these colleges within the universities (King & Whetten, 2008, p. 193). It has also been observed from the literature that there has not been any specific scientific study into this problem in these universities. These are the gaps the current study seeks to fill.

There is a widespread belief in the management world that in today’s society the future of any company critically depends on how it is viewed by key stakeholders. Subsequently, a variety of studies have been undertaken the world

over in the areas of corporate communication, reputation management, corporate identity construction, image building in various fields. Argenti and Druckenmiller (2004, p. 368) argue that “organisations increasingly recognize the importance of corporate reputation to achieve business goals and stay competitive” whilst Veh, Gobel and Vogel (2019) note “there is no agreement on one definition” of corporate reputation. However, the most popular definition is “*corporate reputation* is the overall estimation in which an organisation is held by its internal and external stakeholders based on its past actions and probability of its future behaviour (Fombrun, Ponzi, & Newburry, 2015).

Furthermore, Van Riel and Berens (2001, p. 45) say, “corporate identity can be defined as a company’s self-presentation, that is, the managed cues or signals that an organisation offers about itself to stakeholders”. Fombrun (1996) argued that reputation is built in a planned manner by organisations taking necessary notice of the environment in which they operate. Balmer (1995) is of the view that corporate identity is the reality of the corporation, indicating that the management of a corporate identity involves the dynamic interplay amongst the company’s business strategy, the philosophy of its key executives, its corporate culture, and its organisational design. Although a salient corporate image can be created more quickly and easily than a sterling reputation, a strong image can be built through a co-ordinated image-building campaign that encompasses a formal communication system. A favourable reputation, on the other hand, requires more than just an effective communication effort; it requires a meritorious identity that can only be moulded through consistent performance, usually over many years. It is therefore

in the right direction to state that the issue of corporate communication has not been defined and appreciated well regarding image and reputation of an organisation. Other studies have also explored how the understanding of corporate communication, corporate brand, the understanding of corporate reputation, its meaning, measurement and implications and the multi-disciplinary field of communication (Carroll, 2013; Apadore & Mohd Noor, 2013; Shamma, 2012). The emerging and key issues include but not limited to the following:

Strategic Communication

The idea of strategic communication has recently become popular across the globe (Robinson, 2011). This may be due to how important it is lately in a world that is increasingly inundated by activities of businesses and corporations. In today's complex world, organisations seek the attention, admiration, affinity, alignment, and allegiance of all kinds of audiences of all sorts, customers, employees, investors and donors, government officials, and others. This induces organisations to make strategic decisions about the how much resources they would allot for such communication-based agenda, thus strategic communication (Fuertes, 2020). It is important to stress that not only corporations, but also activist organisations and social and citizen movements, use strategic communication to reach their goals because the concept encompasses just an attempt to announce an organisation to an audience. Strategic communication assesses organisational communication from an integrated, multidisciplinary perspective by extending ideas and issues grounded in various traditional communications disciplines (Hallahan et al., 2007). Although the concept was developed in the 20th century, it

has functioned even better in a postmodern environment that stresses more holistic approaches to examining organisational phenomena, while having to deal with increasingly fragmented audiences and delivery platforms.

Strategic communication is still a developing concept as stated earlier and scholars are still making inputs to the concept (Heide et al., 2018; van Ruler, 2018). This is because the concept is similarly linked to other communication perspectives and there is the need for a lot of clarification. Thus, over the years, there have been various ideologies that have come to set the strategic communication concept apart. What is sure is that strategic communication differs from integrated communication because it focuses on how an organisation communicates across organisational endeavours (van Ruler, 2018). Similarly, strategic communication differs from public relations, which only has to do with maintaining sustainable relationships with publics. The emphasis strategic communication is on the strategic application of communication and how an organisation functions as a social actor to advance its mission.

Subsequently, communication professionals have adopted strategic communication as an umbrella term which includes other communication-related professions, such as public relations, brand communication, advertising, and many others. Hallahan et al. (2007) have defined strategic communication as “the purposeful use of communication by an organisation to fulfil its mission.” Although the definition is simplistic in nature, it hints how multidisciplinary strategic communication is and in that it draws from a variety of methods and subject areas. Furthermore, Paul (2011) hints that creating succinct goals and

understanding how a certain set of audience attitudes, behaviours, or perceptions will support those objectives is what makes communication strategic.

In strategic communication, message development, or the process of creating key points or ideas, requires high levels of planning and research. These messages are targeted, or created with a specific audience in mind, and help to position an organisation's communication goals with *its* structural goals. As the world becomes increasingly interconnected through new forms of communication, the role of strategic communications is to help organisations understand how to effectively deliver their message to audiences (Paul, 2011). The purposeful nature of strategic communication is crucial to organisations and their structure. This is because strategic communication focuses on how best an organisation presents and promotes itself through the intentional activities of its leaders, employees, and communication practitioners. This does include the building of relationship networks along the line.

The rationale behind corporate communications easily points to a specific and unifying framework to analyze communications by organisations (Van Riel, 1995). First, the ability of communicators to differentiate between traditional communications activities and their effect is easily disappearing because many organisations are rather fighting to stand unique in their reputation and differentiate themselves via media platforms to affect how they are viewed by publics. Thus, this clamps together a lot of activities instead of a structured, coherent, and coordinated plan for communications for the organisation. Any claims to exclusive responsibility for activities within an organisation are becoming challenged in

many organisations (Van Riel, 1995). Furthermore, some important changes in public communication are being driven by technology and by media economics. Digital innovations like the World Wide Web and instant messaging, for example, make it increasingly impossible to differentiate what is advertising versus publicity, sales promotion, or e-commerce. Technology is converging communications channels. Although this is an overlooked work of postmodernism, it forms a rationale for the purpose and existence of strategic communication.

Third, organisations use an expanding variety of methods to influence the behaviours of their constituencies (Lord, 2003). These include what people know, how people feel, and the ways people act, relative to the organisation. Thus, audiences' experiences with and impressions of organisations are the sum of the people's experiences, giving fortitude to the need for an organized communication structure within an organisation to tackle these.

Lastly, strategic communication highlights that deliberate and purposeful influence is the fundamental goal of communications by organisations (Hallahan et al., 2007). Whereas certain disciplines are conceptually grounded merely in providing information (e.g., technical communication) or in establishing and maintaining mutually satisfactory relationships (public relations), these are only necessary but woefully insufficient conditions for organisations to achieve strategically important goals. These are basis on which strategic communication as a concept is hinged and needfully operates.

Furthermore, beyond the rationale that gauges the practice of strategic communication within organisations, the tactics of strategic communication

methods, the purpose and the general characteristics of strategic communication may vary but very are similar across related industries (Hallahan et al., 2007). In 2008, the U.S. Department of Defense's Strategic Communication Education Summit considered these similarities and created a list of principles (Hastings, 2008) for specific ideas and steps to support strategic communication. The following tenets of strategic communication are informed by these principles as well as arguments from Paul (2011).

The foremost principle focused on intentional message design, which is very crucial to the strategic communication concept. This involves a great deal of thought, planning, and analysis. It does not mean simply designing a clever advertisement or sending a tweet without thinking about its implications. There must be some realistic communication goal embedded in the planning and designing of the message because the message must achieve something. This emphasizes Paul's (2011) argument strategic communication is made of. Do you want to cultivate positive associations with the organisation's brand? Raise awareness of a new product? Connect with key stakeholders in a meaningful manner? Whatever your goal, you must begin with a well-defined purpose and continue to keep it at the forefront throughout the process of creation and implementation.

Second point in the created principles is that there is the need for the right platform to communicate. One of the most popular sayings in public relations, marketing, and even journalism is "go where your audience is." Plainly, it depicts that choosing the right platform to communicate to your key publics or audiences

which can be a very challenging task these days as there are many media houses and sources of information for audiences to choose from. Audiences have a lot of choices when it comes to media, making it even more difficult for your message to be seen or heard. This makes it very important which platform to choose for a specific communications campaign.

Audience analysis and selection also forms a relevant part of the principles of strategic communication (Barber, 2014). Sometimes, audiences are more important to a message's goal than others. Strategic communication encompasses a lot of traditional communication strategies, because it does include a lot more. Thus, in the case of internal communication, the audiences involved – which include employees, investors, and managers differ from audiences for external communication messages which include customers, influencers, and the news media. Therefore, this makes a sure constant that there is the need for communication within the organisation be well structured to ensure important to always keep the message goal in mind so that you can choose the correct audiences that will help you meet the goal. Taking a broad approach and targeting everyone is not the best way to succeed. Practice audience segmentation, that is, the division of a large group into subcategories based upon attitudes, demographics, and media use.

For a successful strategic communication campaign, there is the need for some form of envisioning of what the campaign would look like and mean to the organisation. Questions such as 'how will the strategic communication team measure success?', 'are you hoping to increase sales?', 'are you aiming to increase

attendance at promotional events?’, ‘are you trying to minimize negative media coverage about your client or company?’ come in as very relevant and need immediate answers. As such, for any strategic communications campaign to be successful, there is the need for the organisation to see ahead and be able to realise earlier how things would turn out. A good example of this is in 2015, shortly after a series of racially tense incidents across the US, the coffee chain *Starbucks* launched an initiative called “Race Together” that encouraged customers and employees to have conversations about race relations. The company’s CEO, Howard Schultz, told the Huffington Post: “Our intent is to try to elevate the national conversation” (Baertlein & Rigby, 2015). Although there was a lot of backlash in relation to this campaign, the desired outcome was achieved and *Starbucks* received a lot of attention.

Thus, the relevance of strategic cannot be downplayed in the context of organisations, as the definitions, perspectives and principles with examples have exposed above. It is quite clear that communication in the context of organisations and their needs does not have to be simply carried out because of the need of it but must be strategized well. The broader indication is that strategic communication, being part of the corporate communications function, demands way much more than any other idea of communication and transverses communication between a brand or an organisation and its publics. As such, situating this in the context of collegiate universities, a lot of indication can be given that points to the existence of corporate communications within these educational organisations. Although literature does not openly draw links between strategic communication and

collegiate universities, as far as collegiate universities in Ghana are organisations that make use of communications, then every detail of strategic communication, as a corporate communication function, does apply to these educational organisations as well.

Public Relations

The moment the idea of communication comes to mind concerning an organisation, public relations or the role of the public relations officer is most promptly the first occurrence (Fern-Banks, 1996). Over the years, it has become some kind of norm that public relations officers or public relations is the most important in all affairs of communication especially with the goal of affecting the reputation of an organisation (Watson & Noble, 2007). Thus, there has always been that grey line between corporate communications as a broad umbrella and public relations because formerly, public relations occupied the place which has now been given to corporate communications. However, public relations still remain a key component of organisational structures across the world. Matter-of-factly, every organisation, no matter how big or small definitely depends on their reputation for survival and for their success (Watson & Noble, 2007). The organisation's publics cannot be tossed aside because a positive feedback from them is always most important. Customers, employees, investors, journalists and regulators can have a very powerful aftermath on an organisation after having known them and engaged them on various levels because in their engagements, they all tend to develop an opinion about the organisation whether good or bad or right or wrong.

The market is very competitive lately and an organisation's greatest asset could be its reputation because it is that very thing that makes the organisation stand out and gives it the competitive edge. This reaffirms the need for effective public relations in building a solid reputation and a corporation image or identity for the organisation, which can be achieved through a consistent communication strategy which continually engages the public and seeks to build a specific image for the company. Kim and Cha (2013) emphasize that as the world we live in today becomes complicated and diversified, it becomes increasingly important for an organisation to effectively communicate with its publics in marketing its products and services, in turn increasing the importance of effective public relations and reputation management.

Public relations are the art and social science of that link inside and outside the organisation together (Jejari, 2012). Public relations draw purpose, and how programs. Public relations in organisations in terms of work quality means assist to organisation management in achieving organisational goals, believe to the transparency affairs and accountability, respect citizens' rights, identify duties and responsibilities of government, the right control of people to the work and the right people in criticize and evaluate programs and practices of the organisation and having specific strategies.

In this definition, Skandari (2004) states that public relations is planned and continuous efforts to establish and maintain goodwill and understanding between an organisation and its target audience. Words such as planning and continuous show that goodwill and understanding itself does not obtained easily and in fact,

must "create" and "maintain" and determined that public relations activities are planned and the purpose of public relations is to create goodwill and understanding. In last definition of the Institute of Public Relations (IPR), public relations is considered a method that an organisation uses to maintain the credibility, products, services, or staff with the aim of obtaining recognition and support. For public relations are also used other words and expressions: Public relations is vital artery and permanent and brain and engine of organisation (Armour, 2006). Public relations are the art and social science of that link intra-and extra organisation together. In public organisations have reliable information, accurate and timely, considering the purpose and structure is an organisation's greatest asset and survival of an organisation depends on having a reciprocal relationship between internal and external of organisation and advertising, and up to date and useful information and appears necessity of the public relations in public affairs station (Gilkalaei, 2008).

In today's world that has broken communication boundaries and human seek to discovery of optimal solutions life and attitude of the society oriented. Scientific principles lead to explore and focus on the interaction conditions and to involve. Undoubtedly, an organisation, or an agency cannot be considered unrelated to their island and no need and unrelated from technology and its products. Public relations is the responsibility of corporate bodies and organisations in maintaining mutual understandings between management, staff and the general public or whomever patronizes the products or services of these organisations. It is a strategic communication process that helps to build mutually beneficial relationships between organisations and their public. According to the Public

Relations Society of America (PRSA) (2009), public relations help an organisation and its public to adapt mutually to each other.

In the basic sense, it is where an organisation engages its audiences in a way to make sure that their existence as an organisation is very satisfactory to its audiences (Jeffery, 2009). It is the opportunity for organisations to indulge and engage their public not only for the benefit of their public but for their personal gains. Being a communication function, public relations offer organisations the chance to create and control the perceptions or images they would want their public to have of them. Within this function, they create a consistent public opinion, which can be termed as brand or corporate image, depending on whichever organisation or institution it applies to (Dutton et al., 1994). In the sense that they engage their audiences in a specific narrative or perspective, it helps to build in the minds of these audiences a relatable and exact idea of what the organisation is and what they stand for. The case is same for all organisations that decide to make public relations a relevant concern.

Although the concept is very old, there are rarely much cases in literature examining the issue of public relations in organisation such as public educational institutions as in the current study (Watson & Noble, 2007). This may be due to the obvious reason that people are more acquainted with the idea of public relations in relation to multinational and national corporations and large-scale organisations. Even for small-scale businesses, public relations may not be of relevance to them. Thus, it is quite abstract for people to easily come to the realization that public relations functions within collegiate universities and much more in Ghana. Thus,

there is barely much in literature related to perspectives of public relations as carried out within these public universities.

However, in one isolated study is where Aikins and Adu-Oppong (2015) examine the extent to which public relations is used as a management tool to facilitate the achievement of the objectives of the University of Education, Winneba in Ghana. The study tries to ascertain whether the charge given to the university's public relations department to advance the objectives of the university to enhance its corporate image. Using a qualitative method of inquiry, the study sampled one hundred and fifty respondents from the staff of the university comprising Senior Members, Senior Staff and Junior Staff to assess the management's support for PR Practice in the university, the effectiveness of the PR office of the in reaching its objectives and to determine the various challenges that saddle the effective practice of public relations in the university. The findings of the study showed that the PR unit is effective and involved in using events and promoting access to the university's facilities as a means of enhancing the image of the University and projecting the University to its public.

The findings of the study show some level of support for PR practice, though according to Aikins and Adu-Oppong (2015) stated that it is not adequate to push forward innovative and pragmatic practice of the public relations. An example stated in the research is that the respondents agree that the PR department is well informed about its role, functions, and schedule. However, they believe that the effectiveness of the PR office is dependent on elevation of the states of the office, inclusion of the office in top management decision making and

empowerment of the office to function as the exclusive means of promoting the goodwill of the University and coordinating/integrating the concerns of its different stakeholders. This current study does resonate with Aikins and Adu-Oppong (2015) because although the current study tackles a broader umbrella of corporate communications at the level of collegiate universities, the idea of public relations does fall and form part of corporate communications and the stance of Aikins and Adu-Oppong (2015) does serve as a positive backdrop for the current study and its objectives.

Media Relations

Beyond strategic communication, media relations which may be considered a part of an organisations strategy to communicate its goals and vision of the organisation. The use of the media by organisations in their strategic communication and public relations campaigns is nothing new. Relatedly, Wilcox et al (2005) explain that media relations is the core activity in many public relations jobs. Media relations has over the years become an increasingly significant profile and has added value to the business bottom-line. The media is a very significant tool and component of all forms of communications that involves organisations. It is through the media that the various ideas and concepts created by organisations can be best spread abroad. Without the media, it will be very difficult for organisations to carry out that which need to be put out for audiences. Thus, this makes media relations a very crucial part of corporate communications or generally any form of communication that any organisation, including collegiate universities.

According to Argenti (2003), the expanded media, referred to as “the press” in earlier times, has always had a more antagonistic relationship with business, even in the American context. This partly stems from the privacy organisations enjoyed in the early part of this century. However, organisations were later forced to rethink this isolationist approach because of increased public and media interest in business due to several controversial events. The public began to realise that business had a tremendous effect on their lives. It is this shift in attitude definitely had a profound effect on business and its dealings with the media, because organisations now took seriously the relevance of the media in their attempt to ensure that their publics are well addressed and updated with their brand.

For most business people or leaders in organisations, the term public relations has become synonymous with dealing with the press and getting publicity, as stated by Seitel (2003). The author explains that 20th century public relations got its start as an adjunct to journalism, with former journalists hired to refine the image of well-to-do clients. In pre-1990, most of the professionals who entered public relations were former journalists but this is no more the case today (Seitel, 2003). Nonetheless, the author underlines that the importance of the media to the practice of public relations cannot be denied. Similarly, the popular duo, Grunig and Hunt (1984) indicate that relations with the news media are so central to the practice of public relations that many practitioners, especially those guided by the press agency and public information models of public relations, believe that public relations is nothing more than media relations. Grunig and Hunt (1984) noted that public relations did indeed evolve out of efforts to influence press coverage of

organisations and individuals but they point out that today, media relations should be considered only as one of several important public relations programmes aimed at specialized publics.

Consistent with Grunig and Hunt's (1984) view is that of Argenti (2003), who said that although the old-style public relations function which focused almost exclusively on media relations may be outdated, the subfunction referred to as media relations today is still central to the corporate communication effort. Argenti (2003) further explains that most of the corporate communication staff typically reside within this subfunction and the person heading the communications department must be capable of dealing with the media as a spokesperson for the organisation. This fact was really reflected in Argenti's (2003) study where a respondent noted that my role would be more of a strategic management input level and overall coordination rather than very specifically writing, editing, and producing, although I do that as well. I'm also the spokesperson. This respondent, clearly one who played the role of a corporate communications head or public relations officer indeed relayed the reality of her role as journalist for the organisation, which is usually termed as a public relations officer.

Describing media relations as one of the most critical areas within any corporate communication function, Argenti (2003) supports this claim by explaining the media's role in an organisation. According to Argenti (2003), "the media is both a constituency and a conduit through which investors, suppliers, retailers and consumers receive information about and develop images of a company". The author adds that the media's role as disseminator of information to

an organisation's key constituencies has gained increasing importance over the years. This, Wilcox et al (2005) expound that the media are the multipliers that enable millions of people to receive a message at the same time. This makes the media very important to any public relations or corporate communications personnel in an organisation because according to Wilcox et al (2005), the media serve as third-party endorsers of information, giving one's information credibility and importance by deciding that it is newsworthy.

Given the credibility factor, there is little doubt that much value is attached to media publicity. Given this crucial role, Argenti says that almost every organisation has a media relations department, either staffed by a part-time consultant or a large team of professionals. Argenti (2003) further elaborates that although the media relations subfunction started off as a flaking service for managers in response to requests from news organisations, today the best corporate communications departments actively set the discussion agenda for the organisation in the media. Center and Jackson (2003) link the agenda-setting role to the main power of the media which they say is to provide information and create awareness about products, services, companies, and ideas.

Seitel (2001) further states that for anyone in the position of a public relations officer or playing a corporate communications role in any organisation must know the ins and outs of the media. Meanwhile, Hendrix (2001) suggests that the practitioner in media relations must know how each media outlet works. Similarly, the skilled public relations practitioner must be an expert in the media, knowing what is available, how they differ and how to use them to the best

advantage. Sriramesh (2004) explains a quite critical view that public relations and corporate communications practitioners spend a significant portion of their time on media relations because of the media's ability to generate mass publicity. In addition to benefiting from this, Sriramesh states that practitioners also serve the media by providing them with information subsidies, thus creating a symbiotic relationship. To add more, Sriramesh et al. (2000) found media relations to be the primary public relations activity in their Japanese and Indian samples, whereby the function was mainly linked to publicity. Thus, media relations was an important foundation for public relations activities within Japan and India.

Likewise, in South Korea, Samsup and Yungwook (2004) highlighted that the primary focus of public relations was to gain publicity through media relations. They noted how dominant media relations was within the public relations functions of organisations within South Korea, consistent with Sriramesh and Vercic (2001). For them, media relations was the center-stage of all public relations activities and did serve as the main means of propagating messages from these organisations to the various publics that needed to hear them. For media relations, more researchers have shared on and established media relations' promotional role in public relations practice. Kelly et al. (2002) suggested that from a mere promotional or publicity role, corporate media relations has assumed a more strategic role to inform the public of the truth, and has no longer been about simply promoting information that is mutually beneficial to both the public and the organisation.

Kelly et al. (2002) also features the media relations in Japanese public relations practice as evidence in the changing relationship between the media and

public relations over 30 years. The study highlighted the results of a survey by the Japan Economic Public Relations Center, announced in 1993, indicating that the people in charge of public relations thought that maintaining good relationships with the mass media was their major responsibilities. The results further showed that regardless of the size of the organisations, gaining societal and stockholder understanding of the organisation through the media was the most important activity for the public relations division.

This detail was a very important to speak to the lingering reality that media relations indeed played a vital role in public relations functions of organisations. Therefore, Kelly et al. (2002, p.271) state that “the main purposes of news releases to the media are to provide the society with an accurate understanding of corporate activities and to carry out one’s responsibility to inform the public” and furthermore, “most corporations and governmental organisations considered these two purposes more important than using media public relations to create a better image of the corporation and to advertise merchandise”.

Kelly et al. (2002) indicate that the role of media relations seems to be evolving as greater emphasis is placed on its strategic capabilities while at the same time, acknowledging its promotional role. According to Sriramesh and Vercic. (2001), many culture-specific media relations practices are found to shape and greatly influence the relationship between public relations practitioners and the media. They pinpoint that these practices define how media relations is viewed and the role it plays in public relations practice. The above perspectives on media relations reflect an intertwined relationship and the convergence between media

relations and public relations, where media relations form the basis of public relations in most perspectives shared by scholars.

Furthermore, it also invites the thought of media relations being a concrete element in strategic communication. Even in the earlier discussions of strategic communication as a function of corporate communications, it was clear that public relations indeed formed part of organisations' strategic plans on how best their goals, visions and plans can be communicated. Thus, the literature highlights a very strong connection that binds strategic communication, public relations, and media relations. This suggests that these functions all summarily play a vital role within any organisation to forward any form of organized communication to various publics they may be engaged with. However, there are other functions that also come together to form a solid front for any organisation in terms of communication.

Publications and Publicity

The extent to which an organisation makes itself public is also an important factor which is necessary in its corporate communications plan or agenda. In the case of this current study, the idea of a university making themselves known surely does include the media as a solid basis for all forms of communications campaigns to achieve this purpose, as established in the subsections above. In the discussion of media relations, one of the most important impressions made is that the use of the media in strategic communication, public relations is to ensure that the organisation is well publicized (Mersham et al., 2009). This is the reason media relations form a part of not just corporate communications but its subsets as well. It is important to know that a firm element of public relations is publicity. Publicity

refers directly to communication about a product or organisation by the placing of news about it in the media without paying for time and space directly. Simply put, publicity is the means of conveying information to the public through the media. Unlike advertising which is clearly planned and paid for, publicity simply involves the sharing of information to the public without cost and not necessarily with the media. It is the movement of information to the public from the media (Mersham et al., 2009).

The information being publicized could be news, awareness about a product and service, etc. It can be referred to as an awareness creation for a particular product or service. In the context of this current study, publicity is a convergent concept with publications. In the case of educational institutions like collegiate universities (as this study addresses) publications also play a similar role of publicity or even end up being a means of publicity. This is because these publications go a long way to achieve the basic goal of publicity – to create awareness about a product or service. Moreover, one important factor to consider in publicity is your target audience (Aula, 2010) and this is solely dependent on the kind of product or service being publicized. For example, if the product is for babies, nursing mothers, and pregnant women will likely be the target audience. That is the best means to carry out publicity. Thus, for the sake of this current study, publications of academic documents and ideas from collegiate universities would serve as good publicity but the targets would be students and scholars, in order to make known to all the university and its goals and vision.

Ehrenberg, Barnard, Kennedy, and Bloom (2002) emphasize that the means of getting publicity are through print media (newspapers, journals, magazines, etc.), television; radio; email; websites; and social media like Facebook, Twitter, and blogs. Also, digital media platforms such as mobile apps and digital newspapers serve as a means of gaining publicity. There are other means of publicity which include public speech, seminars, and workshops, which is a core mandate in collegiate universities, as far as this study is concerned. These are all means of attracting the attention of the public. Some other means of publicity are staging events, building associations, and doing other things. These are usually based upon the type of business the company is in, that the public would be genuinely interested in knowing about.

The means of publicity to adopt usually depends on the kind of information to be publicized, financial resources and target audiences (Toth, 2009). Thus, a public relations practitioner should understand his audience, identify the proper media that suits them and then make appropriate use of that media. The better media chosen the better result obtained because unlike a full media campaign, this is a publicity and it is more focused on a variety of audiences much more than a full media campaign which may include advertising and does not need time for long planning. Therefore, publicity has only one purpose to get certain information across to as many people as possible within the shortest period (Aula, 2010). According to Ahluwalia, Burn, Rant, and Unnava (2000) for an organisation to record any sale on their products or services, their prospective customers must be

aware of those products and services, and they also have to know the attached benefits.

Publicity is indeed a way of communication and it is a two-way transaction because it is never complete without getting feedback from the recipients of the required information. Thus, publicity finds a way of providing a means for some form of response from those who got the message being disseminated. Thus, the use of social media for instance helps product and service providers to have that opportunity of the two-way communication that is necessary in publicity. The two-way form is fueled by the seamless nature of social media to allow persons to interact with each other, give comments, likes and approval, making the online publicity a very relevant catalyst in creating awareness of products and services (Aula, 2010).

Further, because these publicity agendas go without the detailed kind of plan that is done for other forms of media campaigns, the stories that come with the publicity must be interesting, timely and relevant (Monga & John, 2008). Boring stories that have no merit will take you nowhere and could have a detrimental fact on your business by causing people to lose interest and stop listening. Effective publicity can be best achieved with very instant but strategic quick plans to forward poignant communicative pieces to various audiences to catch their attention and create the necessary awareness to get you the results that you desire.

Due to some of these ideas, Seitel (2003) carries out a different tangent, that publicity is regarded as more credible than advertising. Seitel (2003) expresses himself in this way because he believes that publicity generally has to do with very

credible information being put out there without any form of messaging nor tactic to attract audiences. Therefore, Seitel understands that to attract positive publicity, establishing a good working relationship with the media, despite the media's more aggressive and hostile tone, is essential, which is a clear reflection of media relations. In this vein, Cutlip et al. (2000) that accuracy and fairness in press coverage does not result from journalists' work alone. Instead, the authors suggest that ultimately, the relationship between practitioners and journalists has an impact on the quality of news coverage about organisations. Media relations comes in as a solid foundation to ensure that the publicity is beneficial to the organisation, since it is usually not paid for and is free. Cutlip et al. (2000) suggested that the sound approach for organisations and practitioners is to view media relations as an investment.

What is worth highlighting is that, the idea of publicity has been categorized into two by Aula (2010). According to Aula, there are two major types of publicity in this digital age, which are offline publicity and online publicity. Offline publicity is done without the internet. Offline publicity includes print media (magazines, journals, newsletters, daily newspapers, postcards, bills, fliers, banners); television; radio; and giant billboards, public speech, seminars, workshops, staging events, and building associations and alliances (Aula, 2010). On the other hand, online publicity is the one done through an internet-based platform. Some online publicity techniques are email marketing, web page pop-ups, blogs, websites, Facebook publicity, Twitter publicity and referral links/ad banners.

As indication above, the online publicity in this current time seems to be taking the center stage of publicity in general. Most organisations, firms and groups have taken to ensuring their own publicity is done through various social media platforms, employing social media influencers and managers as aides (Aula, 2010). Thus, instead of more organisations keeping a mutual relationship with the media (television, radio, newspaper) are no longer much of priority to these organisations. Even in the case of collegiate universities, beyond the fact that many are hosts to radio and television stations, as in the case of the three traditional universities, these institutions are also growing and shifting to the use of social media. Many of these are even using some of these social media platforms to make known to their audiences the presence of their own media outlets and the rebroadcasting the activities of their media outlets.

Thus, what is clear is that combining both the offline and online publicity is becoming a key factor in the corporate communications activities of organisations. The advantages that come with publicity are being duly harnessed by these organisations much more than usual. Toth (2009); Aula (2010) and Mersham, et al. (2009) highlight numerous advantages of publicity, which are very practical to organisations. According to Toth (2009) publicity helps businesses build credibility and brand awareness. Furthermore, edge of publicity is that low-cost or no-cost option. In other words, it is a cost-effective strategy, but only if you create newsworthy stories and ideas to share. Publicity also boosts the organisations to stand out, to develop partnerships and strategic alliances and makes the public know more about the organisation.

On the contrary, three major problems arise from the use of publicity which are timing, accuracy, and lack of control over information distribution. For timing of the publicity, it is never under the control of the marketer. Thus, the time of the information being released is barely in the control of the organisation, except if the social media or the online marketing strategy is one of the organisations own. Also, accuracy can be a problem. Unfortunately, a lot of information sometimes gets lost in translation, that is, it is not always reported the way the provider wishes it to be. Thus, in publicity, there is a loss of control of content, which is there is no way of ensuring that the viewpoint of the company is reflected in the published article. Lastly, the lack of control over how your releases will be used, and frustration over the low percentage of releases that are taken up by the media.

Collegiate universities as in the case of this study have been tilting more towards tapping into the advantages of publicity as part of their various agenda toward communicating their goals and visions to audiences. Moreover, the idea of publicity may inculcate the perspective of publications, where these collegiate universities, through their publication of various materials for a variety of academic causes can be means of making the institution more known to its publics. On the overall, publicity is an inevitable part of public relations. No matter how good an organisation is, without effective publicity, one will just be “winking in the dark”.

Branding Activities

Xie and Boggs (2006) posit that activities geared toward adding to the brand of companies do connect with promotions and events, publicity and publications, public relations, strategic communication and with the media as a solid rock

underlying all. This is because the goal of branding and the processes involves in adding to the brand of an organisation surely includes all these other communication activities categorised under corporate communications (Xie & Boggs, 2006). The role of branding and brand management is primarily to create differentiation and preference in the minds of audiences, a very key component in every organisation's communication agenda. The study of branding has traditionally been biased; discussions have been more about product brands. However, Xie and Boggs (2006) have noted that the fast innovation, increased service levels and diminishing brand loyalty characterizing today's marketplaces have led to corporate branding becoming a strategic marketing tool. Ward and Lee (2000) found that there was a shift by firms away from reliance on product brands to reliance on corporate and service brands.

Formerly, brands were used as the means of differentiating the products by craftsmen and claiming the ownership of animals by cattle owners. Thus, the baseline is that many brands do create an identity for something specific. However, in recent years organisations use brands to reach the minds and hearts of their customers and create special emotional connections with them that would last for long. Biedenbach (2012) highlighted that organisations across industries attempt to develop strong brands and to use them for achieving success in the competitive marketing environment. Branding is the art of creating and maintaining a brand. Brand must to be compatible to wants and needs of target audiences. Marketers seek to develop or align the expectations comprising the target audience's brand experience through branding activities.

A successful brand is referred to as identifiable product, service, person, or place augmented in such a way that the buyer or user perceives relevant, unique added values which match their needs most closely. It is vital to be different in the crowded market so that the brand will not easily forgotten by the customer (Handaria & Iskandar, 2012) and as such branding comes in as that difference and that specialty. Thus, names on many products and services do not prevent them from being commodities which are characterized by the lack of perceived differentiation by customers between competing offerings. Brand goes beyond just a name or a tagline. Products like milk, tin, iron ore and potatoes come to mind, where purchase decisions tend to be taken based on price or availability and not because of the brand or the manufacturers' name (McDonald et al., 2001). Brand is a whole concept that characterizes products and services well enough to make them the preferred choice of the audiences.

Conceptually, branding is a good way of building sales because it helps identify products specifically. Branding is the initial means to build consumer awareness by naming the offer, but also by distinguishing the offer from other similar products or services within an established category. Increasingly, literature suggests that brands are social or cultural "property" (rather than company property) to the extent that consumers incorporate elements of "brand meaning" into their lives. therefore, managers need to incorporate other stakeholder meanings very well to keep the brand progressive. An example is the attempt by managers at Coke to alter their formula in the 1980s, and the profound negative reactions that resulted from this effort. This clearly gives credibility to the earlier view and

reflects the idea that *power* brands must be managed with extraordinary care (Kay, 2006) because they have been amalgamated into the livelihoods of audiences.

Brand has been a part of almost every company, especially a big one that exists nowadays. Brand is a statement. Brand is an image. Brand is a message. All these are wrapped up for the customer or consumer to communicate what the organisation stands for. This basically connects with other forms of corporate communications activities which are all geared towards emphasizing what the organisation stands for. The branding construct has evolved over the years, moving beyond a primary concern with products and services and focusing more on organisations in their totality. This has led scholars to lean towards a newer and broader concept of branding, wherein distinct literature has been developed around the concept, corporate branding. A broader understanding of brands has led to the realization that different branding types require different approaches in terms of their management and this is especially so for corporate brands (Balmer & Thomson, 2009).

This is because the brand is the central building block of everything that an organisation does. It guides all corporate behaviour, whether it is external or internal (Ropo, 2009). Balmer and Thomson (2009) further emote the idea that the corporate brand concept is a combination of corporate behaviour and values, the technical functionality and quality of products and the intangible promise the company instils in their products for customers. It combines tangible and intangible attributes to create and maintain positive connection with the customer, and to create incentive for customers to use the products of the company in the now and

in the future. Corporate branding aims to modify the image (the perceived-self) and/or to reflect a change in the identity (Singh et al., 2012). For example, organisations are trying to influence consumers into buying their product instead of their competitors' products and this needs a lot of differentiation, customers need to be totally convinced of the product (Bergström et al., 2010).

However, with branding, there is not a simple, obvious, and straight-jacket procedure to achieve it. Many brands do well to change and develop their “power” in several different ways. There is no single approach to developing a strong brand. Branding logic appears to vary for each individual brand, but depending largely on the type of industry, organisation, service, or product. Coke's brand power differs from Starbucks, even though both are strong brands in the beverage category. Coca-Cola deals with soft drinks whereas Starbucks is a coffee shop brand. More so, while Coke is a long-established brand, Starbucks emerged only recently, with a different logic as a retailer and beverage product (Kay, 2006).

It is important to note that branding does not only inform external stakeholders, such as customers and investors, about the values of the organisation, but also instructs and directs organisation members in a variety of ways. In this sense, branding can be viewed as a management and leadership practice. Brands and branding activities not primarily as marketing tools, but rather as a way of expressing preferred values and meanings and transferring them to the internal and external audiences and leading the organisation on a specific tangent in terms of behaviour, public relations, media relations and publicity (Kay, 2006). This is

because the brand is the quick way of identifying the values of the organisation and that is what drives the entire organisation towards achievement.

Thus, in the case of collegiate universities, branding activities should be very key in their communications agenda and how best they would want to appear to their audiences (Kay, 2006). From the above perspectives of branding explored above, it is identifiable that branding activities include other communications activities that help to advance what an organisation is and what it stands for. And in the case of the collegiate universities in this study, branding should be a way to create an obvious differentiation between them through their public relations and general corporate communication practices (Kay, 2006). Clearly, we do not just know the University of Cape Coast for just the name, neither for Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology nor the University of Ghana. All the three are set apart by specific differentiations, which reflect the goals and visions, the path these universities are taking and even their environments. Thus, branding as a communication activity is very vital, although branding may preferably apply generally to products only.

Marketing

Beyond establishing a brand, marketing stands as one of the most important communication tools used in promoting brands and selling organisations to various audiences (Paquette, 2013). Equally, marketing stands as one of the most important activities in all forms of communication an organisation seeks to undertake to ensure that they are well-known to the public. In contemporary organisations conducting marketing activity supporting management processes has become a

norm. This phenomenon has grown to include and apply to all kinds of institutions including governmental organisations that may not necessarily need marketing like products. Other cases include some other industries that would not even be concerned with matters of marketing, even universities (Ajina, 2019). What is important to note however is that if there is a brand being built daily, marketing activities are quite inevitable. For example, even well-known and highly developed universities apply marketing elements in management activity, in order to spread their brand across broad.

The scope and manner of marketing activities vary depending on a particular university and depend on numerous factors both internal, that is, broadly understood identity, and external factors associated with the current policies for the development of science and education, as well as with situation on the labour market (Białoń, 2015). All of these are intertwined again with ideologies of public relations, strategic communications, and the use of the media as well. What is more, the idea of marketing is growing beyond its traditional situations, as more room is being created for more organisations and industries that are most unlikely to join the train of marketing. Over the years, the meaning of marketing has evolved to suit the changing times and the industrial transformations globally (Białoń, 2015).

However, in a more recent definition, Shultz (2007, p.293) stated that “marketing is a form of constructive engagement, a societal function and a systemic set of processes for creating, communicating, and delivering value to customers and for managing customer and societal relationships in ways that benefit local and global stakeholders of these processes.” Obviously, this definition encompasses all

the various ideas that could be drawn from marketing, indicating that the idea of marketing a product or a service is something societal, engaging audiences, communicating to and managing relations to all audiences including local and international stakeholders to ensure that the brand of whatever is being marketed is very upheld.

Furthermore, Kotler et al. (2009, p.7) highlight that “marketing is a societal process by which individuals and groups obtain what they need and want through creating, offering, and freely exchanging products and services of value with others.” To add, Kotler et al (2009) provide another societal definition, however the central emphasis is the exchange, an outlook comparable to other recent literature (Lamb Jr et al, 2000). Of particular interest is the use of ‘freely’ to describe the exchanges, and the omitting of ‘producer’ and ‘consumer’ roles, which could signify a dynamic move to break down the boundary of the parties and introduce a more interactive and integrative experience. McKenna (1991) actually envisioned this perception when he suggested that the role of marketing “was to integrate the customer into the design of the product and to design a systematic process for interaction” (Groucutt et al, 2004).

Thus, these definitions are very key in highlighting that marketing is evolving into a concept that is banking more on interactions between organisations, industries, product owners and service providers and their various audiences. This idea may be the reason for the wider net marketing seems to be casting in terms of organisations that are employing it as a communication and branding strategy lately (Hooley et al., 2008). This draws us back to the main case of this current study –

collegiate universities and their corporate communications activities of which marketing is key. It is relevant to know that in the discussion concerning the marketing of universities began at the time when the first non-public universities were established. However, until the 1980s, the idea of marketing was still one tucked under the sheets when it came to certain organisations (Lusch, 2007). By the early years of the 21st century marketing was not necessary as this period was characterized by strong demand on the market of universities, so schools were not forced to compete for greater number of student candidates.

Bialon (2015) emphasizes that it was in the second half of the first decade, or even more so after 2010 that first problems of the university market caused by spikes in demographics and the churning out of many graduates without employment, emerged. The emergence of these issues may appear to be the fault of these universities but not so. However, Bialon (2015) underscored that these issues undoubtedly influence the dynamics of attracting student candidates. Bialon (2015) insisted on a second part that “leading to the slowdown of recruitment is the attractiveness of universities, their curriculums, which can provide knowledge and skills allowing people to serve professional functions in a constantly changing reality, as well as enabling every graduate to develop his, or her personality.” These created some form of competitiveness in the university market which allowed for more of these schools to start marketing more to attract as much people as possible.

Bialon (2015) simply posits this that every university managed in a modern way should work out such marketing strategies that could help provide active support for the implementation of general strategies, thus maintain, and further

develop the university's position on the market of universities. Thus, today, more universities seem to be out there, with their management trying their best to cast a good light on their schools using marketing as one of its tools. In this current study, a valid nexus is drawn to connect marketing to other activities under corporate communications, relating it to collegiate universities within the Ghanaian context. This is to determine how marketing plays a key role as one of the formidable activities in the communication processes of these universities.

Advertisement and Commodification

Having discussed public media relations, publicity, branding, and marketing as part of corporate communications activities, it is only worthy that advertising and commodification, a pair which is clearly not left out if the aforementioned activities are at play, are highlighted. In very simple words, advertising is mass media content intended to persuade audiences, readers, viewers, or listeners to act on products, services, and ideas. The idea is to drive consumer behaviour in a particular way regarding a product, service, or concept. Yet, some other scholars disagree, Jefkins (1992) states that advertisements can amuse, inform, misinform, worry or warn, opening our thoughts to the possibility of advertising being a more dynamic process or element. On the other hand, commodification in the perspective of Karl Max is a process through which social relations are reduced to an exchange relation, or in other words the transformation of a non-commodity into a commodity or assigning a monetary value to something that traditionally would not be considered in monetary terms, for example an idea,

identity or gender. Thus, in this case how university education is commodified (Tomsic, 2015).

Advertising, according to Terkan (2014), is a form of communicative activation, both informative and persuasive in nature. The British Institute of Practitioners in Advertising (IPA) state clearly that advertising presents the most persuasive message to the right prospects for the promotion of a product or service at the lowest possible cost (Jefkins, 1992). The concept of advertising can be explained as a marketing communication tool that employs an openly sponsored and non-personal message to promote or sell a product or a service. Dominic (2013) reiterates it by stating that advertising is any form of non-personal presentation and promotion of ideas, goods and services usually paid for by an identified sponsor.

It is indeed an important communication function that is used as a tool to promote and persuade audiences to patronize goods and services through well-crafted messages and propagated through the media. Kumar and Raju (2013) stated that advertising is a form of communication intended to convince an audience including viewers' readers and listeners to purchase or take some action upon, information or services etc.

It must be emphasized how advertising has become an important and relevant tool of marketing for many product owners and service providers across the world and even in Ghana (Oyeh, 2015). Therefore, advertisements continue to flood all media platforms and the advent and popularity of social media has created means for product and service providers to make their products known to various audiences. However, for an advertisement to be effective, it should have smart

placement where it will be seen by your target audience; a persuasive headline, which is the most important technical aspect of your advertisement; a powerful headline which suggests benefits or news (Sharma & Sharma, 2009).

This inconsistent with the idea of publicity being timely and worth the attention of various audiences. Comparing to publicity, advertising is a more planned and organized form of giving out details to audiences, thus more effort must be garnered to make it work (Kotler & Keller, 2009).. Eye-catching graphics, great storytelling or advertising concepts are also important means of getting your audience to read, listen to or watch any advertisement put out there. An attractive graphic and a strong headline will pull a reader or viewer into your advertisement (Sharma & Sharma, 2009). Focusing on the objective is required to persuade consumers to fulfil your one main objective. Having multiple objectives will confuse people and then they will not get the message.

The baseline of advertisement as reflected in the definitions and scholarly perspectives in the former paragraphs, is the media. Without the media, there would be no advertisements for audiences, be it stakeholders or the public. This also draws attention to the fact that all efforts of advertising are all plans of pushing the brand of products and services and creating awareness (Sharma & Sharma, 2009). This makes obvious that branding activities, publicity, marketing, and even public relations are all connected to advertising and vice versa. Many organisations as part of their public relations functions consider advertising as one of the main means of sharing information to the public. On a broader scale, advertising forms a definite portion of strategic communication activities.

With each corporate communication activity, there is a clear connection that one cannot be done without the other. However, for advertising to be full, there is the need for a commodity, a specific one to be advertised. This brings up the concept of commodification (Kotler & Keller, 2009). Even for publicity, marketing to be achieved, there should be a specific commodity which is being marketed or publicized. In the case of this study, it may sound interesting that collegiate universities are probably into advertising in the first place, to even think of which commodity they may be advertising because education sounds like an abstract service or even product for it to be treated like soap or beverages and receive the same kind of marketing, publicity and advertising.

The concept commodification deliberates the social relations conducted in the form of relations between commodities or things (Tomsic, 2015). Commodification, however, is a thought that expresses outcomes in terms of their monetary value often without virtue ethics. For instance, educational success is commodified if re-defined to attain a good job and a “huge” pay. From this viewpoint, a government would see education as a production process and production engine. To appreciate the impact of commodification process by which things, services, ideas, and people relations are transformed into objects for sale in a capitalist economic system, one must begin by critiquing the worldviews imbedded in the messages and images in mass media.

Hearn (2015) notes that the consequence of commodification is that human practices which are normally considered to be outside of the ‘marketplace’, such as courtship, art, religion, education, medicine, are commodified and integrated into

the capitalist 'marketplace'. This is where the idea of universities becoming more of products and becoming part of a marketplace where they can compete for the attention of audiences.

In this vein, it is key to note that the idea of education is outside the marketplace, bringing it to the marketplace through commodification would surely mean that there would be need for brand building, marketing, advertising and publicity, all of these going beyond the normal public relations a public institution may engage in. Furthermore, numerous economic activities bind commodification as a concept and for collegiate universities, which include pricing of fees, creating economic communities around to support the existence of the university among others (Tomlinson, 2018). These go a long way to affect the reputation of the institution and tell audiences what these schools have to offer. The price of tuition, for example, at colleges and universities sends signals to the students about the quality of the education they are receiving. Slashing prices at colleges and universities leads students to believe that they are receiving a lower quality good, regardless of whether they are or not. In economics, the term commodity refers to a good that is highly standardized. Commodities have an extremely high price elasticity of demand since they are basically the same product, no matter when you buy them or from whom. Higher education has not been commodified and is not headed down the path towards commodification soon (Tomlinson, 2018).

Although the issue of commodification cannot be easily discussed within a Ghanaian context, prime examples can be found in the elite (Ivy League) colleges and universities (Gallet, 2007). Schools such as Harvard and Yale charge extremely

high prices for tuition, yet each year there is exceptionally high excess demand for their product. Students could attend a junior college for a fraction of the price they would pay to spend their first two years at an Ivy League school (Lewis, 2010). Yet, year after year, those elite colleges and universities are being filled. Students are willing to pay more for an Ivy League education because it sends signals to future employers. Employers see the name of that elite college or university, and their attention is immediately perked towards that candidate. With the status associated with their name, which could be referred to as a brand they have built over the years, those colleges and universities can charge higher prices and still consistently fill to capacity. Thus, their administrations have placed commodification as an important factor in making their universities gain all the attention they are getting today, through various communicative means and further creating a brand that is unmatched globally (Sjögren & Trautmann, 2019).

As these Ivy League schools have properly commodified themselves, set a standard 'price' for their education which is quite exorbitant, the brand speaks for the schools. Many may expect, as mentioned earlier, that these schools are too expensive. However, they get all the attention of their target audiences to the surprise of many. More so, their strategic communications, public relations, media use, marketing, advertising all sum up to present them as a great commodity of education everyone across the world needs to have. The process of advertising and commodification could not have been carried out without the other corporate communication activities coming together as a package to support it (Dobni & Zinkhan, 1990). The current study, however, examines this within the confines of

corporate communication and in the case of these collegiate universities in Ghana to expose more about their agenda in corporate communications.

Corporate Social Responsibility Activities

If there is any means by which organisations can create awareness for itself, make itself more known to the public and create publicity easily, it is through corporate social responsibility. Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has almost always been interpreted as a business tool taken over ultimately by management gurus whose concern has universally been with branding, image building and, of course, profits of various kinds (Carroll, 1979). Thus, besides the idea of it being in favour of the public good, corporate social responsibility tends to be an effective communication tool for organisations to reach out to a wider range of publics. The history of CSR studies can be traced back to the 1960's in the works of Steiner (1971) who propounded the notion that companies should ultimately also be responsible for the society around them, at times for legal, but more often, for ethical reasons. In the 1970's, the pioneering work of Davis (1983) began to introduce the notions of responsibility and profit, establishing the relationship between them more clearly and formally (Muijen, 2004).

Archie Carroll, an acknowledged theoretician in this area defines CSR as being primarily interdisciplinary and states that, at present, the economic, legal, ethical, and philanthropic areas of CSR are at a point of struggle and constant tension owing to the often-contrary pulls of the corporate sector (Carroll, 1979). These four areas of CSR specifically address various responsibilities corporate organisations owe the state and the public. Usually, it is the philanthropic area of

CSR that is more obvious to audiences because that is when everyone obviously sees the organisation doing something responsible to give back to society. However, organisations owe us an economic responsibility by providing quality goods and services not just for their profit but to benefit audiences. They also owe us a legal responsibility by abiding by the laws and governmental statutes and other regulations within the area they operate, which is closely related to ensuring that they ensure they behave ethically (Caroll, 1979).

The concept of CSR has evolved during the past few decades. Towards the end of the twentieth century, the focus shifted to a more sustained definition of the term CSR and its implications in a changing society. While the focus is on large corporations at the beginning, later with more evolved definitions, it went beyond large corporations and other organisations such as small firms also got involved in it. The growing importance and significance of CSR is being driven by owners, investors, managers, customers, and even employees. Therefore, organisations are monitored based on their responsible behaviours and reporting and are expected to show transparency and accountability (Caroll, 1979). Also, as many organisations have sprung up, there has been a call for more research into CSR and its related activities. Judging from the concept of commodification where educational institutions are being treated like products lately, CSR is nothing new to these institutions, even within the Ghanaian context. Universities are obviously more potent to carry out CSR because they exist within communities and open their gates to these communities in terms of offering education, outreaches by students of these universities among others.

According to Panduranga and Nair (2010) in their study of the impact of social commitment in universities as involving the various sectors of industry, they explore the way in which universities have begun to move to more multidisciplinary areas to make learning and research a more immediately relevant and applicable pursuit. Furthermore, Topal (2009) also identified that the central and most significant areas in which CSR is being developed within universities as being those of economic, intellectual, social, and cultural capital. Universities as an entity, therefore, seem to be positioned in a uniquely strategic way to use the public policies that may be in place in most parts of the world, to make use of the educational and technological innovations available to the institutions and affect sustained and effective changes in the immediate and global communities.

In a community portal “Sustainable Groove”, Richard Goossen suggests that universities are, in fact, platforms for leadership activities and that they can either choose to be followers in the initiatives of corporations or seize the opportunity to be leaders and adopt CSR as a vital aspect of their competitive advantage (Goossen, 2009). His suggestion is that universities are already privileged by society, already being in the business of learning instead of profit and can, therefore, frame their position to interact with their stakeholders in an immediate, more effective discourse. In the context of universities, previous research shows that higher education institutions are in the position to lead significant environmental impacts (Jabbour, 2010).

Furthermore, Alshuwaikhat and Abubakar (2008) verify that many of these universities, because of their large size, expressive movement of people and

vehicles, high consumption of materials, and strong development of complex activities, may even be considered as “small towns”. Therefore, it can be concluded that universities should be responsible toward society and their stakeholders. Deegan (2002) stated that stakeholders provide organisations with a range of resources such as capital, customers, employees, materials, and legitimacy (Deegan, 2002).

A good example of such corporate social responsibility efforts was in the study of Nejati et al. (2010), which investigated the issue of environmental sustainability in universities by examining the website content of the world top ten universities. The authors showed that top ten world universities are aware of their environmental impacts and have taken necessary steps toward sustainability. Their findings offered proof that all the studied universities practiced reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, reduction in the use of fossil fuels and increase in the use of renewable resources, running a specialized environmental centre/network, and increase of environmental awareness among staff and students. These steps are clearly considered under the ethical area of CSR, where these universities find themselves ensuring that they are keeping the environment in good shape. There are several studies which have tackled the issue of sustainability in higher education, which is one of the means through which universities are ensuring that CSR activities are really their concern (Nejati et al. 2010).

Furthermore, corporate social responsibility stands as a means of ensuring that the organisation is quite accountable to the stakeholders of the jurisdictions within which they work and exist. These stakeholders also provide the “license to

operate” to the organisations in return for the provision of socially acceptable, or legitimate, actions (Suchman, 1995). Thus, here is the need to keep enforcing the contact these stake holders. To strengthen this social contract which allows organisation to continue operations (Deegan, 2002), they need to be socially responsible. This can be an underlying reason one would expect universities to be involved in CSR and reporting it to society, making it expedient that these universities put in the work to ensure that they give back to the society around them. For these reasons and perspectives from scholars, CSR has become a very important component of organisations and their day-to-day activities (Deegan, 2002).

Although it cannot be directly considered as a communication activity, it has become a part of an organisations agenda to emote great perspectives about itself to the public. Thus, CSR can be situated in strategic communications and public relations activities, which is geared toward improving on the brand of the organisation and creating enough publicity for the organisation. Therefore, it is usually seen in these times that CSR is a means to an end, as an opportunity for all organisations, including institutions like universities to make themselves well-known in some positive identity to affect their optics (Deegan, 2002).

Governmental Relations

Bowen, Rawlins and Martin (2012) noted that government relations is another highlight of corporate communications activities. The idea is that government relations is the public relations specialization that helps communication between organisations and/or corporations and the government. In

simple terms, everyone can agree to the reality that organisations and corporations exist within confines of nations and states where a sovereign power governs. So, this calls for the need for some form of engagement between the government and these organisations for them to thrive properly (Bowen et al., 2012).. Government officers are persons of governance and often do not easily understand the complexities of running a business, and business people often do not understand the difficulties of making decisions for legitimate policies and legislations for the publics. And since policies that the government agrees to or introduces affects corporations or industries, there is the need for direct communication with representatives of governments (Bowen et al., 2012).

Government relations specialists are focused on educating corporations and/or organisation officials about government processes, such as law-making processes, and other governmental issues that are important to businesses and organisations. Furthermore, both governmental and organisation leaders are educated about potential outcomes for upcoming legislations and regulations to be able to carry out the dutiful purpose of being the link between an organisation and the government (Cameron & Wilcox, 2012). After the whole educating process, government relations specialists give officers advices on how to influence policies and laws. It is a surety that people working in government relations should have in-depth knowledge about government policies and legislation decisions as well as having a fair knowledge of how these policies and legislation decisions affect industries, corporations, and businesses (Cameron & Wilcox, 2012). However, being in government relations also means being able to consider the government as

both political and bureaucratic through the gathering, managing and provision of information that can affect the decision-makings of the government, and they watch activities of the members and agencies to prepare for possible issues (Cameron & Wilcox, 2012).

The purpose of governmental relations is to ensure that an organisation is coordinated with governmental statutes, policies and are in constant communication with each other to keep organisations aligned to what is right. In as much as both parties are different, they are in many ways interrelated and interdependent because the economy of the nation depends on these organisations largely (Wirba, 2023). Without these organisations being in action, no matter which industry they are from, the economy will suffer woefully. Thus, in as much as governments must make sure organisations run in very conducive environments, organisations must also be making sure that they are following and adhering keenly to whatever policies, plans, laws, and regulations that have been proposed by governments. Thus, governmental relations stand as the bridge to ensure a balanced relationship between the organisation and the government, for the sake of the growth of economies and welfare of nations (Wirba, 2023).

Therefore, educational organisations cannot be left out because the government leads the educational sector with reforms and all of these must be well-understood and communicated, amidst dialogues and discussions for a better system of education for the nation (Fu, 2013). This makes it expedient that collegiate universities have some level of governmental relations to ensure that they are not off the tangent of the government's plans for education and the

governmental agency that runs the education system of the country, especially for the effectiveness of the Colleges in these Universities because of the semi-autonomous nature of these colleges in these universities.

Technical Communication

Technical communication is one of the growing aspects of communication in recent times, which cannot be done away with in discussing corporate communication activities. It may be one of the few isolated activities of communication considering how the others are very interconnected and dependent on one another. However, it does not downplay the relevance of technical communication. Technical communication refers to written and oral communication for and about an organisation, business and or a specific industry. Hence, the name technical communication (Pringle & Williams, 2005). It has to do with communicating about specialized topics, communicating via technology such as web pages and providing instructions as to how something must be done. Summarily, Johnson-Sheehan (2005) indicated that technical communication is a means of conveying scientific, engineering, or other technical information.

Thus, some kinds of information that technical communication focuses on are about products and services, how to manufacture them, market them, manage them, deliver them, and use them. In perspectives shared by Kimball (2016), technical communication is formed or created in the work environment for supervisors, colleagues, subordinates, vendors, and customers for whatever specific details that concerns each party. What is more, the field of technical communication is concerned with how professionals communicate complex information with

specialist and non-specialist users to solve practical problems, often using communication technologies, multi-modal documents, or complex documents. That which makes this field be reflected in the section of corporate communications is that these professionals who carry out technical communication roles may be identified primarily by their roles as communicators, with varying job titles and responsibilities but with primary expertise in communication (Brumberger & Lauer, 2015).

Besides this basic strength in communication, they may have roles in another professional area, such as engineering, computing, management, accounting, criminal justice, and healthcare to ensure how specifically they carry out the technical communication. Due to its nature, technical communication takes many different forms depending upon the field it is being (Pringle & Williams, 2005). It is important to highlight that technical communication transcends oral and written communication to engage persons via various types of correspondence and technology, dependent upon the audience, purpose, and situation.

Furthermore, whoever oversees technical communication would have to include the fact that internal workplace communication is also a form of communication that needs to be ensured, workers are part of the audience in the context of technical communication. To communicate successfully in the workplace, you must adapt to many different channels of communication. Technical communication is not a frill or an occasional endeavour. It is a major component of the work environment (Reardon et al., 2019). Through technical correspondence, employees are able to maintain good customer–client relations

(follow-up letters), ensure that work is accomplished on time (directive memos or e-mail), provide documentation that work has been completed (progress reports), keep machinery working (user manuals), ensure that correct equipment is purchased (technical descriptions), participate in teleconferences or videoconferences (oral communication) and inform the world about a company's products and services (Reardon et al., 2019).

Therefore, it can be deduced that these activities of technical communication are very necessary in the organisation's quest to have a formidable communication structure and system, no matter which industry is involved. In the case of collegiate universities, technical communication does appear to be almost inevitable component of their organisational structures (Reardon et al., 2019). This is so because there would be a lot of specific information to be shared amongst departments, faculties, and colleges within the university, as well as administrative staff regulating non-academic activities. The works of many non-academic professional, technically communicate hugely about these universities. The type of engineering and architectural designs and structures they build in these environments in these universities differ and speaks specifically about these universities.

Besides that, the university is always on its toes to ensure that certain information that needs to go to the public regarding admissions, deadlines for admissions, fees, among others. All these could be considered under technical communication and collectively under the broad umbrella of corporate communications (Reardon et al., 2019). Since there is the gap in the literature

regarding technical communication and collegiate universities, the current study (as it explores corporate communications in general) looks at some of these and how best the corporate communications structure of these collegiate universities addresses these and more especially the universities-built environment and physical infrastructure (Reardon et al., 2019; Pringle & Williams, 2005).

Advocacy and Strategic Partnership

The ideas of advocacy and strategic partnerships may not apply to all industries nor will they apply to all organisations in the context of corporate communication. This is because these may be reserved for organisations in the domain of achieving the two. The idea of advocacy has been very broad and still being developed over the years. With the advent of social media, there has been a lot of practical outpours of advocacy as many have resorted to these virtual platforms as a means of standing up for specific causes, in as much as advocacy off these virtual platforms still hold till date (Bowen, et al., 2017). According to the Pocock et al. (2002, p.209), advocacy is defined as “the act of pleading or arguing in favour of something, such as a cause, idea, or policy; active support.” Synonyms proposed for advocacy include active espousal, aid, approbation, approval, auspices, championship, countenance, encouragement, and endorsement (Merchant & Gajar1997). Thus, the basis for advocacy is that whoever is serving as an advocate is championing, endorsing or probably encouraging a specific cause that will be of great benefit to society.

Over the years, due to the broad nature of the idea of advocacy, there have been numerous developments of the concept of advocacy over the years. These

developments have come with defining how advocacy can work within profit making and non-profit making organisation. With these various perspectives coming through year in year out, Ezell (2011) proposed a typology, which gives us a better picture of how non-profit organisations, within which collegiate universities fit perfectly, interpret, and carry out advocacy. The typology is a succinct expression of the various forms of advocacy which a non-profit organisation can easily turn to. The initial form of advocacy Ezell (2011) discussed is administrative advocacy.

This kind of advocacy is done through the carrying out of laid down laws and regulations. Once legislation is passed, it rests on administrators to set up rules and regulations needed to follow the law. Non-profit practitioners are often involved in making sure these regulations are interpreted in a way that benefits clients (Gilman, 2005). This type of advocacy involves identifying needed changes in programs' policies and practices, and influencing administrators to make needed changes. A benefit of administrative advocacy is that changes in regulations can happen faster than changes (and consequently implementation) in legislation.

Legal advocacy is also a form of advocacy which non-profit organisations can easily explore (Child & Grønbjerg, 2007). This is where the organisation seeks to influence the implementation of laws or legal rules that impact clients or non-profits through the court system. Since courts are the place where laws and regulations are interpreted, it is important for non-profits to be active in this type of advocacy by speaking up for the advancement of these laws in dealing with clients and the public in general. Non-profit professionals can team up with the

community, lawyers, and even judges to seek fair court practices, the protection of individual rights, changes in court rules that negatively impact clients, the creation or improvement of court supported services, and even seek funding for court supported services.

Lastly, community advocacy entails the challenging of assumptions on vulnerable populations (Forbat & Atkinson, 2005). The negative attitudes and myths, often promoted within communities, influence availability of services for those who may be in need. As such, an organisation can use community advocacy to change mistaken public perceptions. With community advocacy, changing these perceptions must occur at the grassroots level, through the provision of accurate information on the issues that matter to the community, and assisting community members to make their voices heard in various ways.

To be an organisation that advocates for the people is a very strong means of communicating whatever the organisation stands for, without having to overly exaggerate it through other means of communication (Schein, 2004). This makes it easier for them to reach out to the publics and build a firm brand in the eyes and minds of their publics. In the case of these collegiate universities which are public universities, this study's aims to find some of the most diverse means through which their corporate communications agenda is spread abroad to affect the image and identity of the university, including a very strategic means as advocacy (Schein, 2004). The objectives of this study to find the place of some of these corporate communications activities within collegiate universities, cannot go without the mention of strategic partnerships (which is a likely together with advocacy).

They strive for an organisation to stand as an advocate would surely lead the organisation to partner with others, where ideas, technologies and innovations would be shared (Schein, 2004). However, from the various perspectives of advocacy and leading into strategic partnerships show that there is barely literature investigating these two as a part of corporate communications activities and much less as a means that can be employed by a collegiate university to sustain its corporate identity or image.

However, one must note that the idea of strategic partnerships aims to support the development, transfer and/or implementation of innovative practices as well as the implementation of joint initiatives promoting cooperation, peer learning and exchanges of experience (Martin, 2002). Thus, it has to do with being able to engage people on some common ground to share a lot to benefit one another. This is a key part of an organisation's relational stance with other organisations, which is also a positive way of improving brand and image (Junça & Dias, 2023). On a broader platform, strategic partnerships can be seen in two ways. First, strategic partnerships that support innovation are expected to develop innovative outputs, and/or engage into intensive dissemination and exploitation activities of existing and newly produced products or innovative ideas.

Second, strategic partnerships supporting exchange of good practices, which are to primary goal is to allow organisations to develop and reinforce networks, increase their capacity to operate at transnational level, share and confront ideas, practices, and methods (Junça & Dias, 2023). These are very necessary for even a non-profit to ensure that these organisations get to learn from

each other and improve upon their states. In the case of these collegiate universities in this study, these partnerships would not only allow a learning experience from other institutions but also a transfer of technical knowhow which would be very beneficial beyond the image and identity of the university (Junça &Dias, 2023).

Other specific partnerships like the school exchange partnerships are very relevant generally to educational institutions (Eddy, 2010). Many schools may participate in this type of strategic partnership because the projects can use mobility opportunities for pupils and staff to help the participating schools develop as organisations and increase their ability to work in international projects. This does not only increase the cooperation with other institutions but also affects the teaching and learning experience that do occur in these institutions (Eddy, 2010). Therefore, depending on the priority and the objectives addressed by the project, strategic partnerships should involve the most appropriate and diverse range of partners to benefit from their different experiences, profiles, and specific expertise and to produce relevant and high-quality project results (Eddy, 2010).

The challenge with advocacy and strategic partnership is that there is very little research on these concepts and although it is still emerging and developing, there is not much empirical research to even apply to the context of educational institutions (Johnson et al., 2016). As such, the current study explores some of these to provide some empirical basis for how much advocacy and strategic partnerships are activities of communication that would be of help to a university.

Alumni Relations

A growing body of research documents shifting patterns of alumni engagement and involvement with their higher education institutions (Radcliffe, 2011). Scholars and practitioners have identified sudden alumni interest in their alma mater and emphasized that some changes in alumni involvement with their alma maters may be due to socioeconomic, demographic, and generational differences. Younger alumni have access to broader opportunities fueled by information technology, increased diversity, and global connectedness when compared to their older counterparts (Sanders & Scanlon, 2021). Moreover, today's alumni represent diverse social, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds that bring implications for traditional models of alumni engagement.

These alumni have served and continue to serve as reliable backing for these higher institutions and furthered a lot of institutional goals. However, to engage the next generation of alumni, it is important to understand the changing patterns of alumni affiliation, engagement, and identity, all of which are linked with alumni attendance at events, volunteering, advocacy, student referrals, and giving behaviour (Etzelmueller, 2014). It is also relevant to note that these alumni can be largely attracted through some of the already discussed activities of corporate communication, such as publicity, advertising, and events (Etzelmueller, 2014).

These alumni relations can be hinged theoretically on a few general perspectives on affinity, engagement, and philanthropy, as these are the main means by which alumni do connect with their institutions. Alumni affinity focuses on alumni's identification with and connection to their Alma Maters, how much

they want to be associated with their alma mater. On the other hand, alumni engagement refers to the extent which the alumni deliberately hold interactions with their alma maters, either directly with their institutions or indirectly (such as with affiliated groups and persons), all aimed at achieving something worthwhile in favour of the university (Veluveli & Suriseti, 2023).

Alumni philanthropy means the giving of alumni's time, money, or resources to their alma maters or related groups and organisations to benefit the alma mater. This is the most common activity of alumni across the world and it sometimes appears as though that should be the purpose for alumni relations. In the collegiate setting, alumni relations and communications are frequently associated with fundraising and development. However, alumni relations do extend beyond these limits and does affect these universities in a lot of positive ways.

More importantly, Worth (2002) relates that with many schools, alumni relations, public relations, fundraising, and governmental relations are departmentally clustered together or have overlapping administration. This highlights how much alumni relations forms a part of other corporate communications activities in the context of these educational institutions (more especially collegiate universities). Thus, many alumni base on this to ensure that they are actively involved especially in fundraising and development. Although alumni relations are frequently associated with annual giving (because of the dues that are normally charged for membership in an alumni association), traditional wisdom and research show the importance of alumni relations activities to major giving drives (Dolbert, 2002).

Patouillet (2001) found that members of alumni associations are three times more likely to give to the institution than non-members. Membership in the alumni association is frequently seen as a significant step in the donor cultivation process and beyond that, engaging alumni in various activities of profound benefits to their schools. Thus, this current study does reflect some of these perspectives of alumni relations in its quest to assess the extent of corporate communications activities within collegiate universities and its effect on image and reputation of the school.

Protocol Activities

Furthermore, protocol activities are very important within many organisations as things cannot be done just anyhow. Protocol is simply the official procedure or system of rules governing the affairs of a particular organisation or in a bigger light, a state (Gilman, 2005). This understanding situates the idea of protocol at a very prominent place within any facet, as it is a necessary guide to regulating affairs or how things are done. What is clear is that protocol is best explored within the context of communication because organisations must minimize communication gaps, build alignment with all levels of leadership, and ensure that employees receive consistent messages (Cad, 2018). This is to reflect the idea that to communicate specific information, to organise meetings promptly, to allot duties, among other protocol stuff do need communication to effectively carry them out, and may thus be referred to as communication protocol.

The communication protocol outlines the types of information to be communicated to the organisation and within the organisation, as well as identifying the person(s) responsible for communicating those topics or details. In

addition, the audience, frequency, and suggested communication vehicles are also outlined and organised to take effect. Prominently displayed in all common areas such as lobbies and conferences, and distributed to all new hires, protocol ensures that communications will align with the organisation's strategic priorities and aid in achieving whatever vision or mission the organisation may be up to achieve (Bart et al., 2001).

Furthermore, protocol represents a set of company commitments to employees. First, the leaders will be held accountable for fulfilling their communication responsibilities and assessed on the effectiveness and timeliness of their communication. Also, employees will receive regular updates about the progress, initiatives, and changes that affect them. And (most importantly for this step of the engagement process), each communication milestone provides opportunities for employees to ask questions, contribute ideas, and give or receive feedback. All these give room for communication to serve as a glue that binds numerous organisational activities and agenda. Protocol, overall ensures that all employees are responsible to share information and give feedback to help the company reach its goals, thereby reinforcing the desire for employees to communicate "up" and bolstering the mutual commitment shared by employer and employee (Dicker, 2003).

So, within the context of higher educational institutions, protocol does serve as a means for an organized level of communication within the organisation, where information is very well distributed or shared across board to as many that need to receive it. From the perspectives that have been discussed above, it can easily be

concluded that collegiate universities do employ the use of protocol as a communication tool within the organisation to communicate on a technical level, to advance publicity and advertisements and to further ensure that activities such as CSR and public relations in general are well-carried out. However, these may be mere assumptions until an empirical and detailed investigation is conducted, as in this current study.

Fundraising and Sponsorship

Fundraising and sponsorship are very important to any organisation, especially one that is non-profit. This is the main means by which funding could be received for numerous activities that are conducted by non-profit organisations (Bernstein, 2013). The idea is intertwined with sponsorship because both are to achieve obviously the same goal. In the past decade, expectations about the role of fundraising and sponsorships, coming usually in the form of philanthropy in institutions of higher education have increased. A lot of donor support has come through to support these institutions and the reality is that none of these institutions of higher education have survived without some form of fundraising, sponsorships, or gifts for the institution (Bernstein, 2013). These fundraising and sponsorship come from various groups, organisations and even governments, as such creating an almost valid case of how relevant governmental relations, public relations, publicity, strategic communications are to fundraising and sponsorships and how these activities seem to coordinate to aid an organisation's corporate communications strategy.

What is real is that a number of these public collegiate universities are more indulged in fundraising and sponsorship activities through various philanthropic agenda. As financial aid support declines and tuition rates continue to rise, colleges and universities have grown much more dependent on the increased philanthropic involvements of the wealthy and the government to fund academic and professional programs, to raise college participation and completion rates, and to build state-of-the-art facilities for high quality teaching and research in higher education. There has been an intense pressure on institutions of higher education to conform to new fundraising policies and procedures (e.g., gift acceptance policy, donor-privacy policy) worldwide against the changing demographics, increased competition, and reduced state and federal funding for post-secondary education (Hendrickson, Lane, Harris, & Dorman, 2012). This has become a very important goal for most of these institutions to achieve. What is more, colleges and universities must compete for students and resources (e.g., financial, physical, natural, human, information, labour) by adopting market-like ideologies or market-oriented mechanisms to stay competitive in the global marketplace (Edwards, 2004).

This context raised by Edward (2004) points to the commodification factor that has taken common place in institutions of higher education, to make them appear more as commodities on sale than non-profit service providers. Therefore, many organisations of higher education are value-driven and profit seeking of late (Villalonga & McGahan, 2005; Weitz & Shenhav, 2000). Thus, these institutions need to adapt to and behave like they are products on the market to be able to compete for students and resources which include these fundraisers and

sponsorships. They need to be able to show something for all they may be engaged in. These funds, however, are gathered from various areas and more especially from states or governments.

In the America, state spending on higher education has significantly increased to \$10.5 billion from 1990 to 2010 (Quinterno & Orozco, 2012). However, in recent times in America, state funding in higher education budgets continues to drop across the country (Giroux, 2014). What is surprising is that private gifts to support the needs of colleges and universities is vastly growing nationwide as a result to globalisation and the increasing adoption of neoliberal policies moving away from funding postsecondary education (Giroux, 2014).

These fundraising and sponsorship activities are deeply connected to communication activities, and thus as much as they go to advance other agenda these institutions may have, it is another means by which these collegiate universities add to their identities. Educational institutions generally cluster public relations, alumni relations, governmental relations, and fundraising efforts together into units titled Development or Institutional Advancement (Cook & Lasher, 1996). This is reason enough to verify that most of these activities of corporate communication do not stand alone. Furthermore, these fundraisings and sponsorships are because of constant engagements with donors and governments, which is done through communication. One way or the other, the institution needs to commodify, the institution needs to advertise itself, the institution needs to make itself public more, have a strategic communication plan that includes external

engagements, governmental relations must be key, among other things to attract these obviously necessary funds and sponsors.

Critique

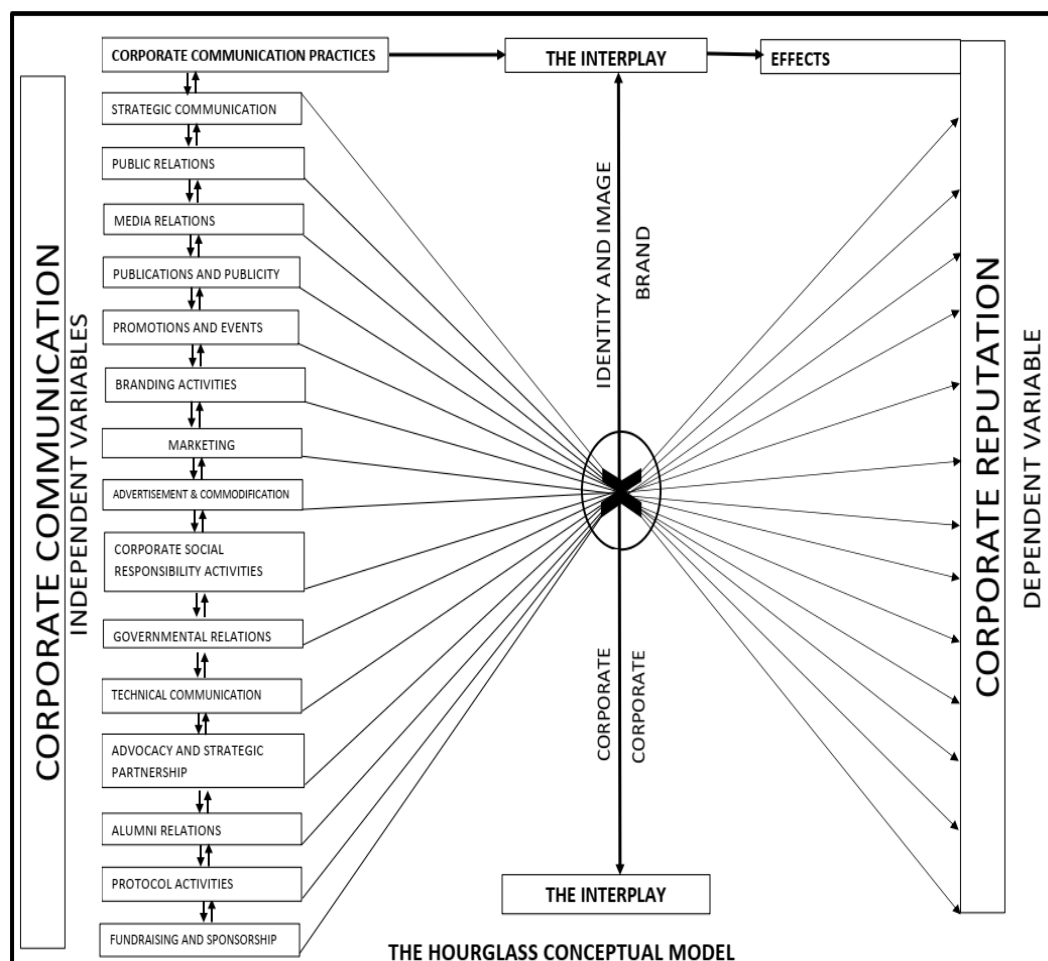
Due to the emerging nature of the concept of corporate communication vis-a-viz the role of the traditional public relations, it appears that literature on the current study were skewed towards related concepts rather than on the specific works on the subject matter. Subsequently, in reviewing related literature, the thematic approach was thus adopted to review key emerging issues rather than specifically reviewing works on corporate communication in relation to the study topic. Because it appeared that not much research works in relation to the topic have been done. Again, from the review, it appears that corporate communication is considered as both a tool and strategy therefore corporate communication is so broad, complex and therefore difficult to define or conceptualize as a single and simple concept.

Conceptual Framework of the Present Study

A conceptual framework as defined by Orodho (2008) is a model of presentation where the researcher presents the relationships between variables in the study and shows the same graphically or diagrammatically. With the hourglass conceptual model, scholarly ideas and perspectives of corporate communication and its strategies are first examined, then bridges with issues of corporate brand and image and finally how these directly affect corporate reputation. The interplay of corporate communication activities on corporate image was noticed as a critical issue when I first did a casual observation when I visited these universities on

official duties as a member of the University community. These observations motivated me to develop a Ph.D. proposal to embark on this research journey, having identified the problem for this research work. Using the knowledge I had gained from my Ph.D. studies and the reading, especially on theories as maps of influence that drive knowledge and practice, especially the importance of theories and conceptual frameworks in research, I developed a mental picture of the corporate communication model below to guide this study. Figure 1 illustrates the conceptual framework of the study.

Figure 1: The Hourglass Conceptual Framework/Model



Source: Author's Own Construct, 2023

The Hourglass Conceptual Framework developed by the researcher provides a comprehensive and multi-layered approach to understanding the interplay of corporate communication activities and their impact on institutional reputation. This framework is particularly suited to the context of collegiate universities, where the complexity of communication processes necessitates an integrated and nuanced approach to analyzing their effects on image, brand, identity, and reputation.

Empirical observations from the field underscore the necessity of this model. During the research, it was evident that corporate communication activities do not operate in isolation but interact dynamically, producing outcomes that significantly influence an institution's image and reputation. The framework recognizes these corporate communication activities as independent variables that collectively shape the dependent variable, reputation. This reflects existing theories on the systemic nature of communication in organisations, such as Weick's Organisational Information Theory, which emphasizes the interdependence of communication processes in reducing equivocality and achieving organisational coherence (Weick, 1969).

Antwi-Konadu's framework visually encapsulates this interplay, using the hourglass shape to represent the flow of strategies, their points of convergence, and their eventual outcomes. The lower bulb of the hourglass symbolizes the various corporate communication strategies and activities, such as public relations, integrated marketing communications, and alumni relations, that constitute the foundation of institutional communication efforts. These strategies converge at the

neck of the hourglass, representing their combined influence on corporate image and branding. The upper bulb depicts the resultant effect: the institution's reputation.

This design aligns with empirical findings from studies in organisational communication, which highlight that the reputation of an institution is shaped by the consistency, coherence, and strategic implementation of communication activities (Fombrun & Van Riel, 2004). Furthermore, the framework's emphasis on interplay captures the nuanced ways in which different strategies and activities interact to produce either positive or negative outcomes, as observed in Ghanaian collegiate universities.

The Hourglass Framework is particularly relevant to the context of Ghanaian collegiate universities, KNUST, UCC, and UG, given the multifaceted nature of their corporate communication functions. These institutions operate within semi-autonomous collegiate structures, where multiple communication activities and strategies coexist. This complexity often leads to challenges in achieving coherence, as evidenced by Antwi-Konadu and Oduro's (2014) study, which identified uncoordinated communication as a major issue in Ghanaian universities.

The framework addresses these challenges by providing a structured model for analyzing how various corporate communication activities interact to shape institutional outcomes. For example, the inclusion of alumni relations within the framework highlights the importance of leveraging external networks as part of a holistic communication strategy. This is particularly significant for Ghanaian

collegiate universities, where alumni engagement plays a critical role in reputation management and stakeholder relations.

Moreover, the framework's emphasis on the transition from communication strategies to outcomes aligns with the strategic priorities of these universities, which aim to enhance their image and reputation in an increasingly competitive educational landscape. By situating corporate communication activities as the foundation of institutional reputation, the Hourglass Framework provides a practical tool for administrators and policymakers to evaluate and refine their communication strategies.

The researcher's framework moves beyond the traditional scope of public relations, positioning corporate communication as a broader and more integrated concept. This reflects a growing consensus in the literature that corporate communication encompasses multiple dimensions, including public relations, integrated marketing communications, and organisational communication gaps (Cornelissen, 2020). The framework's inclusion of these diverse elements allows for a comprehensive analysis of communication practices, ensuring that all relevant activities are considered in evaluating their impact on institutional reputation.

The use of the hourglass metaphor further reinforces this integrative approach. By illustrating the convergence of diverse strategies at a critical juncture (the neck of the hourglass), the framework underscores the importance of alignment and coherence in achieving positive outcomes. This aligns with contemporary theories in communication and reputation management, which emphasize the need

for integrated approaches to address the complex challenges facing modern organisations (Hybels, 2008; Suchman, 1995).

The Hourglass Framework offers practical insights into how collegiate universities can optimize their communication strategies to enhance their reputation. For instance, by identifying the interplay of activities such as media relations, stakeholder engagement, and internal communication, the framework provides a roadmap for prioritizing efforts that yield the most significant impact. This is particularly valuable for Ghanaian universities, where resource constraints often necessitate strategic decision-making to maximize the effectiveness of communication initiatives.

Additionally, the framework's focus on outcomes, image, brand, identity, and reputation, aligns with the strategic goals of collegiate universities, which seek to position themselves as leaders in education, research, and public service. By linking communication activities to these outcomes, the framework ensures that all efforts are aligned with the institution's overarching mission and vision. The Hourglass Conceptual Framework developed by Kwabena Antwi-Konadu is empirically grounded, contextually relevant, and conceptually robust. It offers a comprehensive tool for analyzing the interplay of corporate communication activities in Ghanaian collegiate universities, addressing both the challenges and opportunities inherent in their complex organisational structures. By integrating diverse communication strategies and emphasizing their cumulative impact on reputation, the framework provides a valuable contribution to the field of corporate communication and reputation management in higher education.

Chapter Summary

The perspectives of various scholars on corporate communications activities or strategies as highlighted in the review show the extent to which these strategies are important to every organisation, no matter what. Be it strategic communication, public relations, media relations, governmental relations, corporate social responsibility, or any other strategy, they are all to ensure that the organisation is reaching the goal of keeping constant communication with various stakeholders and audiences of these organisations, no matter which industry. Streamlining these perspectives to the case of collegiate universities or higher education institutions as some scholars put it. It is realized that the gradual advancement in communication strategies and even in the case of the educational industry goes a long way to affect what these universities look like to the public or audiences. It is noted that generally these higher educational institutions do not specifically separate these strategies in a way that is obvious but to ensure that at least they are on top of issues and using these strategies as tools to create a worthy impression of them.

While there are tools and strategies proposed that individuals may use in the process of institutionalization, there remains a gap in the literature on which of these mechanisms are most frequently used or most successful toward the goal of corporate communication. Furthermore, the review, which followed an Hourglass conceptual format, depicted that generally, these corporate communication strategies seep directly through key factors such as corporate identity, corporate image, and corporate brand, which eventually affect corporate reputation (which is

the bigger picture). For every organisation to indeed create the very best of reputation, the process must begin from a well-organised employment of these corporate communications strategies to affect the organisation's identity, image, and brand (the three of which are the nexus that control corporate reputation).

From the literature, there exists a gap regarding the clarity of how collegiate universities use these corporate communications strategies in creating a good identity, image, and brand for the universities, and thus promoting a positive reputation in the end. Majority of these studies only focus on commercial entities and organisations in general, and more specifically away from the educational industry. However, from the review regarding advertisement and commodification, it is made obvious that these educational institutions have moved from just being non-products to growing brands that appear to offer tangible and real products like beverages or furniture. This makes it very relevant for more research into various corporate communication strategies used within the context of collegiate universities and the eventual effects on the corporate identity, image, brand and the overall reputation of these universities.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESEARCH METHODS

Introduction

The chapter provides detailed information on the research path followed in assessing the interplay of corporate communication activities on the image and reputation of collegiate universities in Ghana. This section describes the research paradigm, the research design, the description of the research sites and the specific domain of the study. Also addressed are the data collection procedures, population, sampling method and the tools employed in analysing the data as well as ethical issues considered in the study have been discussed.

Research Paradigm

The qualitative research paradigm, rooted in the interpretivist tradition, was chosen as the methodological framework for this study on the interplay of corporate communication activities and their impact on the image and reputation of Ghanaian collegiate universities (KNUST, UCC, and UG-Legon). This paradigm is well-suited to the study's aim of delving into the subjective experiences, contextual nuances, and dynamic processes that define corporate communication within these institutions.

Kuhn (1962) posits that a paradigm is an integrated cluster of substantive concepts, variables and problems attached with corresponding methodological approaches and tools. According to him, the term paradigm refers to a research culture with a set of beliefs, values, and assumptions that a community of researchers has in common regarding the nature and conduct of research. A

paradigm hence implies a pattern, structure and framework or system of scientific and academic ideas, values and assumptions (Olsen, Lodwick & Dunlop, 1992). According to Guba (1990), research paradigms can be characterised through their ontology, epistemology and methodology. This study is rooted in the qualitative research paradigm using the interpretivist approach.

The interpretivist paradigm asserts that reality is socially constructed and can only be understood through the subjective experiences of individuals (Willis, 1995). In the context of this research, the practices and processes of corporate communication are shaped by the perceptions, actions, and interactions of various stakeholders in the collegiate university environment. This aligns with the study's focus on unpacking the meanings, intentions, and interplay of communication activities and how they contribute to institutional image and reputation.

The interpretivist paradigm's emphasis on contextual understanding is especially relevant to this study. Collegiate universities in Ghana function within unique organisational frameworks and socio-cultural contexts, making it essential to examine how these factors shape their communication strategies. As Reeves and Hedberg (2003) note, interpretivism prioritizes understanding phenomena within their specific contexts. This paradigm facilitates an in-depth exploration of participant perspectives and experiences, allowing the researcher to interpret these insights within the broader institutional and cultural milieu.

Myers (2009) argues that the premise of interpretive researchers is that access to reality (whether given or socially constructed) is only through social constructions such as language, consciousness and shared meanings (online).

Interpretive paradigm is underpinned by observation and interpretation, thus to observe is to collect information about events, while to interpret is to make meaning of that information by drawing inferences or by judging the match between the information and some abstract pattern (Aikenhead, 1997). It attempts to understand phenomena through the meanings that people assign to them (Deetz, 1996). Reeves and Hedberg (2003, p. 32) note that the “interpretivist” paradigm stresses the need to put analysis in context.

The use of qualitative methods complements the interpretivist framework by enabling the collection and interpretation of detailed and rich data. Techniques such as interviews, observations, and thematic analysis allow the researcher to focus on the “why” and “how” of social phenomena (Kaplan & Maxwell, 1994). Unlike positivist approaches, which rely on quantifiable measures and statistical analysis, qualitative research is oriented toward uncovering subjective meanings and reasons. This aligns perfectly with the study’s objective of understanding the conceptualization, execution, and perception of corporate communication practices in Ghanaian collegiate universities. As Gephart (1999) argues, qualitative approaches are necessary to capture the complexities and subtleties of human sense-making processes, which are central to this study.

The objectives of the research further justify the adoption of the interpretivist paradigm. The study seeks to understand the environment in which corporate communication occurs, the factors influencing these practices, and the resulting outcomes in terms of image and reputation. These goals resonate with the interpretivist principle of the hermeneutic circle, which emphasizes iterative

exploration of the whole and its parts to achieve a comprehensive understanding (Creswell, 2014). By investigating the interplay of communication activities within their broader context, the study provides valuable insights into their cumulative impact on institutional outcomes.

Communication in collegiate universities is deeply embedded in organisational culture and influenced by complex stakeholder interactions. The interpretivist paradigm enables the researcher to go beyond mere observations of behaviors, incorporating participants' intentions, emotions, and narratives to create a holistic understanding of corporate communication practices. Furthermore, this approach allows for reflexivity, acknowledging the researcher's biases and subjectivities in the analysis process, ensuring nuanced and informed interpretations (Tracy, 2013).

Positivist paradigms, with their focus on objectivity, measurement, and predefined variables, are unsuitable for this research. Such approaches prioritize empirical data and statistical analysis, which conflict with the study's emphasis on open-ended inquiry and the exploration of subjective experiences. Positivism is limited in addressing the complex and context-dependent nature of corporate communication in Ghanaian universities, whereas interpretivism offers the necessary methodological flexibility to capture emergent and dynamic phenomena (Neuman, 2014).

By adopting the interpretivist paradigm, the study makes several significant contributions. First, it allows for an exploration of subjective experiences, capturing the perspectives of administrators, staff, and other stakeholders on how

communication strategies influence institutional image and reputation. Second, it facilitates contextual analysis, situating corporate communication practices within the unique organisational and cultural framework of Ghanaian collegiate universities. Finally, the iterative process of data collection and analysis enables the refinement of existing theories and the generation of new insights into the dynamics of corporate communication.

The qualitative research paradigm, underpinned by interpretivism, is the most appropriate methodological choice for this study. It aligns seamlessly with the study's objectives and research questions, offering a robust framework to explore the complex interplay of corporate communication activities in Ghanaian collegiate universities. Through its focus on subjective experiences, contextual nuances, and the dynamic interrelationships within communication practices, this paradigm provides deep and meaningful insights into the role of corporate communication in shaping institutional image and reputation.

Research Design

This study adopted a qualitative research design to investigate the interplay of corporate communication activities on the image and reputation of collegiate universities in Ghana, specifically KNUST, UCC, and UG-Legon. The qualitative research approach aligns with the study's goal of exploring and understanding the nuanced perspectives, experiences, and meanings that participants attach to corporate communication practices within these institutions. Altheide (1996) underscores that qualitative research seeks to comprehend the processes and character of social phenomena, emphasizing the organisational and

representational aspects of experiences. This study's focus on the naturalistic and interpretive aspects of participants' experiences with corporate communication validates the appropriateness of qualitative methods.

Denzin and Lincoln (2005) describe qualitative research as an interpretive approach that studies phenomena within their natural settings, aiming to make sense of or interpret them in terms of the meanings individuals assign to them. This aligns with the study's objectives, which require understanding corporate communication practices in their real-world context, shaped by the organisational structures and cultures of collegiate universities. Hiatt (1986) further notes that qualitative research emphasizes discovering the meanings, purposes, and realities embedded in participants' perspectives, making it a fitting methodology for uncovering the complex interplay of communication activities in this study.

The research employed the multi-case study design (Creswell, 2014), which is particularly suitable for exploring phenomena within specific contexts. This design allows for the examination of the same phenomenon in multiple contexts, enabling researchers to identify patterns, similarities, and differences (Creswell, 2014). By comparing findings across cases, it helps to improve the study's credibility and the replication of patterns across cases strengthens the reliability of the results, providing a sounder basis for interpretation and theory-building. Each case within a multi-case study provides rich, contextual data, allowing researchers to understand how context influences behaviors, perceptions, and outcomes. According to Baxter and Jack (2008), case studies enable researchers to delve deeply into a phenomenon while preserving its contextual relevance. This is

especially important for this study, as corporate communication practices are influenced by the unique structural, cultural, and operational dynamics of Ghanaian collegiate universities. The embedded case study approach allows for the examination of multiple perspectives, capturing the voices and experiences of participants in their natural environments (Miller & Crabtree, 1999). This collaboration between researcher and participants facilitates a richer understanding of the realities shaping corporate communication within these institutions.

Yin (2003) highlights the utility of an embedded case study design within the interpretivist paradigm, as it supports descriptive and exploratory research. Given that little is known about the specific interplay of corporate communication activities in Ghanaian collegiate universities, the exploratory nature of this approach provides an ideal framework for identifying and analyzing the factors influencing these practices. Furthermore, the descriptive elements of the case study allow the researcher to present a detailed account of participants' experiences and the contextual factors that shape their perceptions of communication and reputation.

The interpretivist framework that underpins this study's qualitative design, emphasizes the subjective and socially constructed nature of reality. This paradigm aligns with the study's focus on understanding participants' perceptions of the interplay between corporate communication activities and institutional reputation. By situating the research within an interpretivist framework, the study prioritizes the natural settings in which communication occurs, fostering a congenial

environment for participants to share their perspectives openly (Bryman, 1988; Holloway & Wheeler, 2010; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

The interpretivist paradigm also aligns with the study's aim to examine the dynamic and context-dependent nature of corporate communication in collegiate universities. As Morse (2003) explains, qualitative methods are particularly valuable when the research context is poorly understood, the phenomenon is not well-defined, and little is known about the topic. This study addresses a clear gap in the literature, as there has been limited research on the interplay of corporate communication activities in Ghanaian collegiate universities. The qualitative design, supported by the interpretivist paradigm, provides a methodological framework for uncovering insights into this underexplored area.

The decision to adopt a qualitative design is further justified by the need to address the lack of prior research on the subject. Morse (2003) highlights that qualitative methodology is particularly suitable for topics that are not well-documented or quantifiable, where the nature of the problem remains unclear. This study fits this description, as it investigates the relatively unexplored domain of corporate communication practices and their impact on image and reputation in Ghanaian collegiate universities. By employing qualitative methods, the research seeks to re-examine assumptions about corporate communication and generate new knowledge in this domain.

The use of qualitative methods, such as in-depth interviews and thematic analysis, allows the researcher to capture the complexities and nuances of corporate communication practices. Participants' narratives provide valuable insights into the

challenges and opportunities associated with communication activities in collegiate universities. This approach also enables the researcher to explore the interconnectedness of communication strategies, organisational culture, and institutional reputation, offering a holistic understanding of the phenomenon under study.

Moreover, the embedded case study design facilitates a comparative analysis of communication practices across KNUST, UCC, and UG-Legon, highlighting both commonalities and differences in how these institutions manage their corporate communication functions. By situating the research within the specific context of Ghanaian collegiate universities, the qualitative design ensures that findings are contextually grounded and practically relevant.

The qualitative research design, supported by the embedded case study approach and interpretivist framework, is well-suited to the study's objectives and research context. By emphasizing participants' subjective experiences and the contextual factors shaping corporate communication practices, this design provides a robust foundation for exploring the interplay of communication activities on the image and reputation of Ghanaian collegiate universities. Through its descriptive and exploratory focus, the qualitative approach addresses a critical gap in the literature, generating new insights and contributing to a deeper understanding of corporate communication in higher education.

Research Sites

The research focused on collegiate universities in Ghana with specific reference to public universities. The study was conducted at University of Ghana,

Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology and University of Cape Coast. For ethical reasons, these universities are represented by the pseudonyms X, Y and Z in no particular order. The reason for selecting these universities is that they are the only public universities in Ghana which operate the collegiate system of education. Also, all the sites have established public affairs directorates that handles corporate communication, although communication appears decentralised in the universities.

University of Ghana

The University of Ghana was founded in 1948 as the University College of the Gold Coast on the recommendation of the Asquith Commission, on Higher Education in the then British colonies for the purpose of providing for and promoting university education, learning and research. The campus of the University lies about 13 kilometers northeast of Accra, the capital of Ghana, at an altitude of between 300 and 400 feet. The university has additional one campus to its main one - Accra City Campus which offers part-time degree programs in Bachelor of Arts (BA) and Bachelor of Science in Administration (BScAdmin). University of Ghana's mission is to develop world-class human resources and capabilities to meet national development needs and global challenges through quality teaching, learning, research and knowledge dissemination (www.ug.edu.gh). The current student population of about 29,754 (representing male/female ratio of about 2:1) consisting of 21,894 on the Main Campus, 4143 at the Accra City Campus, 1,990 in the College of Health Sciences, (906) on the Distance Learning Programme and (821) in the Affiliate Institutions, and Females

constituting 40.23% of the student population. The total staff strength of the university staff stands as (4774), consisting of (865) Academic Senior Members, (128) Administrative and Professional Senior Members, (1,200) Senior Staff and (2,583) Junior Staff. There are 22 universities affiliated to the University of Ghana and running a wide range of programmes (www.ug.edu.gh).

The University of Ghana is the oldest and largest of the six public Universities in Ghana. The academic programs include: Postgraduates students (1,816); Bachelors' degrees (26,154); Sub degrees (1,784); foreign students (1142). The university has Two (2) Colleges: College of Health Sciences, College of Agriculture and Consumer Sciences; Eight (8) Faculties: Arts, Law, Science, Social Studies, Business School, Engineering Sciences; and fourteen (14) Research Institutes and Schools: The Medical School, the Dental School, School of Allied Health Sciences, School of Nursing, School of Public Health, Institute of African Studies, Institute of Adult Education, Institute of Statistical, Social and Economic Research, Noguchi Memorial Institute for Medical Research, Regional Institute for Population Studies, School of Communication Studies, School of Performing Arts, School of Research and Graduate Studies, etc (www.ug.edu.gh).

The university has adopted an electronic mode of study to the already existing print-mode to serve a wide range of students geographically through distance education. University of Ghana is a member of the International Association of Universities (IAU), the Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU), the Association of African Universities (AAU), the League of World

Universities (which comprise 47 renowned research universities all over the world), etc (www.ug.edu.gh).

Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology

The Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST) started as the Kumasi College of Technology on 6th October, 1951. KNUST has two campuses (Kumasi and Sunyani). The geographical location of Kumasi is Latitude 6° 40' 60" N, Longitude 1° 37' 0" W while that of Sunyani is Longitude 7° 20' 24" N, Longitude 2° 21' 00" W. The main university campus is situated on the left, about two kilometres off the Accra-Kumasi high way just before one enters Kumasi Township from Accra (knust.edu.gh). It covers an area of about eighteen square kilometres of undulating land. The Sunyani campus, houses the Faculty of Forest Resources Technology, and the campus teak plantation and wildlife sanctuary. The University Council, which constitutes the apex of a hierarchical structure of a system of committees, is the governing body of the University (knust.edu.gh).

The principal officers of the University are the Chancellor, the Chairman of the University Council and the Vice-Chancellor. The Vice Chancellor is the academic and administrative head of the University and the chief disciplinary officer. The university has fundamentally restructured into six Colleges: College of Agriculture and Natural Resources, College of Architecture and Planning, College of Art and Social Sciences, College of Engineering, College of Health Sciences, and the College of Science. Each College has Faculties which are further divided into Departments. KNUST has a student population of about 25,774 of which about

thirty percent are foreign students (knust.edu.gh).. On the teaching staff, KNUST has 21 professors, 54 associate professors, 158 senior lecturers and 483 lecturers. Currently the university has 2,734 supporting staff which consists of 1,561 junior staff and 813 senior staff.

The vision of KNUST is to advance knowledge in science and technology for sustainable development in Africa. The mission of KNUST is to provide an environment for teaching, research and entrepreneurship training in science and technology for the industrial and socio-economic development of Ghana, Africa and other nations (knust.edu.gh).. KNUST also offers service to the community. It is open to all people and has positioned itself to attract scholars, industrialists and entrepreneurs from Africa and the international community. The Core Values of KNUST is the commitment to attract and develop excellent staff and students to achieve the challenging goals, targets and directions the Government has set for higher education. The following cherished values characterise the work and life of the University and are ingrained in all those who pass through the University, in a bid to fulfilling the vision and mission of the University: Leadership in innovation and technology, Culture of excellence, Diversity and equal opportunity for all, and integrity and stewardship of resources (knust.edu.gh). KNUST an institution for higher learning has established an Institute of Distance Education (DL) to reach out to a lot more potential students by establishing off campus learning centres (Distance Education).

In its brief history (knust.edu.gh), it has become a key center for the training of scientists and technicians not only for Ghana but also for other African nations

and the rest of the world in its brief history (knust.edu.gh). The US News and World Report ranked it as the best university in Ghana and West Africa, the fourteenth (14th) best in Africa, and seven hundred and sixth (706th) best in the world in 2019 (knust.edu.gh).

University of Cape Coast (UCC)

UCC is located in Cape Coast, the Central Region of Ghana and one of the most intellectually active and culturally diverse areas of the country. This institution was established in October 1962 as a University College out of a dire need for highly qualified and skilled manpower for education. On October 1, 1971, the then University College attained the status of a full and independent University, with the powers to confer its own degrees, diplomas and certificates through an Act of Parliament which is The University of Cape Coast Act, 1971 [Act 390] and later the University of Cape Coast Law in 1992 [PNDC Law 278] (www.ucc.edu.gh).

UCC operates from two campuses. Thus, the Southern Campus (Old Site) and Northern Campus (New Site). The University is expected to provide higher education to persons suitably qualified and capable of benefiting from such education. UCC is expected to also train students to be critical and independent in thought; while making students aware of the need to use their education for the good of the Ghanaian society. Again, the university also seeks to engage in and provide facilities for teaching and cutting-edge research for the purpose of promoting the advancement and dissemination of learning and knowledge with particular reference to the needs and aspirations of the people of Ghana. (Statutes of UCC, 2016).

In UCC, the highest decision-making body is the University Council. Thus, according to the Statutes of UCC (2016, p. 5), “the Governing Council of the University shall be the Council of the University of Cape Coast consisting of: the Chairperson; the Vice-Chancellor; two Convocation Representatives, one teaching; one non-teaching; one representative of the University of Cape Coast Branch of the University Teachers Association of Ghana; two staff representatives, one representing junior staff, and one representing senior staff (www.ucc.edu.gh). The others are a representative from: undergraduate students of the University; postgraduate students of the University; the Principals of Colleges of Education; the Conference of Heads of Assisted Senior High Schools; the National Council for Tertiary Education (NCTE); the Alumni Association of the University of Cape Coast. The rest are: three government appointees, taking into account, the need for gender balance, expertise in management and finance; two other person(s), appointed by the University Council, from outside the University in consultation with the Vice-chancellor; Registrar (Secretary) (Status of UCC, p. 25)

UCC is organised into five (5) Colleges (College of Humanities and Legal Studies, College of Education, College of Agriculture and Natural Sciences, College of Health and Allied Sciences, College of Distance Education) with six (6) Faculties and eight (8) Schools headed by Provosts and Deans respectively. Presently, UCC has restructured its degree programmes by de-coupling the study of professional education courses from the main degree courses. UCC is well recognized worldwide due to the selfless contributions of staff and students who keep raising the image of the University very high both locally and internationally

(VC's Report, 2017). This feat appears to have been attained through the leadership roles played by various individuals including Vice Chancellors, Registrars, Council Members, lecturers and students (www.ucc.edu.gh).

The University of Cape Coast in the 2022 Times Higher Education World University Rankings was ranked 4th in Africa, first in West Africa and first in Ghana. The University's nearest competitor in Ghana was ranked 39th in Africa being Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology followed by the University of Ghana. This was the first time the University is featured in the rankings and also to attain the first position. This feat comes as no university in Ghana has ever achieved this position since the Times Higher Education Annual rankings commenced two decades ago (www.ucc.edu.gh).

Population

Sekaran (2003) suggests that the population is a whole community of individuals, incidents or objects of interest that the researcher would like to explore in a survey. Polit and Hungler (1996, p.416) claimed that "it is the whole aggregation of cases that meet the criteria set out." Simply put, it deals with a subject population that the researcher has an interest in gathering information and drawing conclusions from. The population of interest was staff of the public universities in Ghana. The target population for this study comprised Vice Chancellors/pro-Vice Chancellors, Registrars, Provosts of the various colleges in the study universities, the Directors of Public Relations/Affairs and College Registrars. A target population, otherwise known as the theoretical population, is the entire group of individuals who are the focus of the study (Knight, 2014).

Although there are a lot of equally qualified staff in the various universities, most of them do not appear to communicate on behalf of the university. The population were chosen because they are expected to be “knowledgeable informants” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 234). A total of fifteen (15) participants from the three universities, five (5) each were thus used for the study. These participants were management members who are mandated to engage in corporate communication regularly.

Sample and Sampling Procedure

A sample is said to be a subset or the portion of the total population and must always be viewed as an estimate of the total population (Sarantakos, 2005). Sekaran (2003) also states that it is a subset of the population since it consists of a selection of representatives chosen from the population. This ensures that the study consists of a carefully chosen subset of the units that make up the population. With this understanding and in line with the choice of study design, the study engaged twelve (12) out of the fifteen (15) participants for the purpose of the study. This number comprises Vice Chancellors/pro-Vice Chancellors, Registrars, Provosts of the various colleges in the study universities, the Directors of Public Relations/Affairs and College Registrars. In order to seek for participants perspectives on the current study, the last five years (2018-2022) were used as a yardstick for their responses. This is shown in Table 1 and 2 respectively.

Table 1: Summary of Sampled Participants

Participants	VC	Pro VC	Registrars	College Registrars	Provosts	Directors/Head/PR/P
University X	1		1	1	1	1
University Y	1		1	1	1	1
University Z	1		1	1	1	1

Source: Field survey (2023)

However, after informed consent have been signed, only twelve (12) participants responded to the interview schedule.

Table 2: A Summary of Demographic Data by Gender, years worked in the Universities.

GENDER		
Participants	Males	Females
Pro-Vice chancellor		1
Registrars	3	1
Former Provosts	2	
Directors/Head/PR/P	2	1
College Registrars	2	
Years of Working in the University		
4-10		
10-15	3	2
15 and above	6	1

Source: Field Survey; (2023)

Table 2 presents a summary result of the demographic data by participants gender and years working in the University. The data shows that for participants in relation to gender, males participated more in the study than their female counterparts. The findings further indicate that with the number of years working in the University, the male dominated. All participants were between the ages of 40-55 years-old and had attained a master's degree, hence their positions in the various Universities. Other relevant data from the participant profile was also incorporated using quotations from the interview data to highlight their experiences.

The views of the selected participants were sought to know their experiences in the universities. However, the 12 participants were used because the interview had reached saturation. This was so because the responses were becoming the same at a point. Also, these group of participants from the three universities were selected purposively for the structured interview. This is shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Participants and their positions

No.	Participant (Pseudonym)	Position
1.	Barbara	Registrar
2.	Felicia	Director, PR
3.	Kwame	College Registrar
4.	Daniel	Former Provost Distance
5.	Bright	College Registrar
6.	Enock	Former Director PR
7.	Edmond	Registrar
8.	Kwabena	Head, PR/P Section
9.	Francis	Registrar
10.	Bernard	College Registrar
11.	Buckman	Former Provost
12.	Baaba	Former Pro-VC

Source: Field survey (2023).

This study employs purposive sampling to explore the interplay of corporate communication activities on the image and reputation of Ghanaian collegiate universities, KNUST, UCC, and UG-Legon. Purposive sampling, also referred to as judgmental, selective, or subjective sampling, is a non-probability

sampling method where researchers rely on their judgment to select participants based on specific criteria relevant to the research objectives (Dudovskiy, 2016). This method aligns with the qualitative nature of the study, which seeks to engage information-rich participants who have specialized knowledge or experience in corporate communication and its impact on institutional reputation.

According to Creswell (1994), purposive sampling allows researchers to intentionally select individuals, documents, or cases that will best answer the research question. This study focuses on individuals who hold strategic positions within the universities and are directly involved in corporate communication and reputation-building activities. Their expertise and insights are vital for understanding the interplay of communication activities and their influence on institutional outcomes. Creswell (2007) emphasizes that purposive sampling is particularly effective when targeting participants who can provide rich and detailed information due to their roles and experiences.

Manchishi and Masaiti (2011) further support the appropriateness of purposive sampling by noting that it is ideal for selecting participants whose characteristics, roles, and experiences align closely with the subject matter of the study. In the context of this research, participants are chosen based on their active engagement in corporate communication strategies, decision-making processes, and reputation management within the selected collegiate universities. Their unique perspectives are critical for shedding light on the complexities of communication practices and their impact on image and reputation.

The adoption of purposive sampling is justified by the study's qualitative

research design, which emphasizes depth over breadth. The goal is not to generalize findings to a broader population but to gain a nuanced understanding of how specific communication activities interplay within the unique organisational contexts of KNUST, UCC, and UG-Legon. Purposive sampling ensures that participants are strategically selected to provide insights that are directly relevant to the research objectives.

For instance, individuals in roles such as public relations officers, alumni relations managers, and senior administrative staff are more likely to have firsthand knowledge of corporate communication strategies and their outcomes. By focusing on these key informants, the study can capture detailed and contextually rich data that might not be accessible through random sampling methods.

Purposive sampling offers several advantages that make it an appropriate choice for this study. First, it enables the researcher to target participants who are directly involved in the phenomenon under investigation, ensuring that the data collected is both relevant and insightful (Creswell, 2007). Second, it allows for flexibility in participant selection, accommodating the study's focus on exploring the subjective experiences and professional perspectives of individuals in collegiate universities. Third, purposive sampling is efficient, as it prioritizes the selection of participants who can provide the most valuable information, reducing the time and resources required for data collection (Dudovskiy, 2016).

The use of purposive sampling also aligns with the interpretivist paradigm underpinning the study. Interpretivist research emphasizes the importance of engaging with participants who can provide in-depth insights into the meanings,

contexts, and processes associated with the research topic (Creswell, 1994). In this case, purposive sampling allows the researcher to focus on individuals whose roles and experiences uniquely position them to articulate the interplay of corporate communication activities and their effects on institutional reputation.

While purposive sampling has limitations, such as the potential for researcher bias in participant selection, these concerns are mitigated through a rigorous and transparent sampling process. The criteria for participant selection are clearly defined and based on their relevance to the study's objectives, ensuring that the sampling decisions are purposeful and justified. Additionally, triangulation methods, such as cross-referencing data from multiple participants and sources, are employed to enhance the validity and reliability of the findings.

Purposive sampling is a methodologically sound and contextually appropriate choice for this study on the interplay of corporate communication activities in Ghanaian collegiate universities. By selecting participants who hold strategic roles in corporate communication and reputation management, the study ensures the collection of rich, relevant, and context-specific data. This approach not only aligns with the qualitative research design and interpretivist paradigm but also directly supports the study's aim of providing a nuanced understanding of how communication practices shape the image and reputation of collegiate universities.

About 11 hours and 87 minutes of recordings (12 recordings) were made. These were later transcribed, translated, and analyzed.

Table 4: Participant Interview and Duration

No.	Participant (Pseudonym)	Position	Duration
1.	Barbara	Registrar	55:15
2.	Felicia	Director, PR	01:16.08
3.	Kwame	College Registrar	01:09.57
4.	Daniel	Former Provost Distance	56.06
5.	Bright	College Registrar	54.43
6.	Enock	Former Director PR	36.44
7.	Edmond	Registrar	49.04
8.	Kwabena	Head, PR/P Section	01:00.53
9.	Francis	Registrar	49:18
10.	Bernard	College Registrar	52:17
11.	Buckman	Former Provost	01:15.27
12.	Baaba	Former Pro-VC	01:21.28

Source: Field survey (2023).

Data Collection Instrument

In line to explore the interplay of corporate communication activities on the image and reputation of collegiate universities in Ghana, a semi-structured interview guide (see Appendix A) was chosen as the main instrument for data

collection. The interview guide was adopted for the study because of the in-depth knowledge and experience of the participants about the subject under study. Thus, it allowed me to probe for more information about the lived experiences and roles of the participants. The interview questions in this study were planned prior to the interviews which allowed the participants to digress and explore their thinking abilities on particular issues (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009).

An interview guide according to Edlund (2011) is a list of questions planned to be explored during an interview session. An interview has been defined to be a conversation to gather descriptions of the life-world of an interviewee with respect to interpretation of the meanings of the described phenomena (Kvale, 1996; Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007; Creswell, 2007; Krauss et. al., 2009). In a similar vein, Schostak (2005) describes an interview as an extendable conversation between individuals with the goal of having in-depth information about a certain subject. Thus, an interview enables participants to discuss their interpretation of the world in which they live and to express how they regard or see situations from their own point of view.

Data gathered using interviews were based on a relatively small number of participants who generated more in-depth information in response to probes from the researcher. Seidman (2013) was of the view that, in trying to investigate an educational institution or any education service process, the experiences of the top and middle management in the affairs of the institution were the most important information. Seidman (2013) further points, if the purpose of the research is to understand how the individuals spearhead a process in education and their

experience in the system, then, interviewing provides a necessary, if not, always completely sufficient means of inquiry.

As Baker and Brown (1984) pointed out, interviews are actively crafted and are as self-evident about the person questioned by the interviewer as they are about the subject under discussion. This means that each interviewee has his/her own attributes and should be handled accordingly. The interview guide developed was based on literature reviewed in the study. It focused on the area of the concept of corporate communication, public relations, corporate image, corporate reputation, and image building. Through literature review, inquiries were made on the best practices of corporate communication activities on image and reputation being practiced in the educational institution context elsewhere in the world. A valid and reliable range of responses for the qualitative study was obtained through participants level of experiences by number of years spent with the university and their years of work in the particular position.

The interview guide was made up of twenty-eight (28) interview items with probing questions (see Appendix A). Section A of the guide was developed to elicit the demographic information of participants (i.e., Age, Religious affiliation, Position and Years spent in the University). Section B was designed to elicit information to answer the research questions (i.e. How is corporate communication conceptualised in these universities? How is corporate communication carried out in these universities?; What are the determining factors as to how corporate communication can influence corporate image identity, brand and reputation of the collegiate universities in Ghana?; How do authorities of these universities perceive

reputation and reputation management in their universities?; What are the choices and uses of corporate communication in corporate reputation management in the Universities?; What is the relationship between corporate communication, image building and reputation management? and What are the effects of corporate communication activities on Corporate Image and Reputation of these Universities?). It was observed from the collection of the data that participants answered all the 28 items on the interview guide.

Open-ended items were used in a way that helped in focusing on the theme of the study while allowing enough flexibility for the participants to take the interviews into new areas of inquiry (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). The purpose of using questions (“what” and “how”) was to allow participants to portray their experiences and perceptions in their own words and in their own contexts, and to elicit spontaneous descriptions from the participants rather than to get their own, more or less speculative explanations of why something took place (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). To ensure the dependability of the research instrument, I relied on the expert judgment from my supervisors and fellow researchers to ensure that the items on the interview guide were adequate and comprehensive to cover all aspects the study purported to explore.

In the study, significant efforts were made to ensure participants felt comfortable sharing their narratives. Participant comfort was critical to fostering an open and honest dialogue, which is central to the study’s interpretivist approach. By employing a combination of thoughtful interview techniques and a sensitive research design, the study created an environment conducive to meaningful data

collection. One key strategy involved presenting participants with interview questions that focused on their experiences and professional roles, particularly their work in communicating with various publics. This approach allowed participants to reflect on familiar aspects of their responsibilities, making the process engaging and non-threatening. The alignment of the questions with participants' lived experiences also demonstrated respect for their expertise, encouraging candid responses.

The use of silence during interviews, as recommended by Seidman (2006), played a pivotal role in creating a comfortable atmosphere. Allowing moments of silence ensured that participants had sufficient time to process their thoughts, reflect on their experiences, and respond meaningfully. This technique helped participants feel less pressured to answer quickly, enabling them to share deeper insights into their roles and perspectives.

Additionally, the interviewer's sensitivity to non-verbal cues, such as nervous laughter or body language, further contributed to participant comfort. As noted by Seidman (2006), being attentive to these unintended signals allows the researcher to respond empathetically, creating a safe and supportive space for participants to express themselves fully. For example, recognizing and addressing signs of discomfort or hesitation helped to build rapport and trust.

The study adopted a phenomenological interview approach, which emphasizes an "informal, interactive process" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 114). This methodology prioritizes the participant's voice and experiences, enabling them to narrate their stories in a natural and unstructured manner. By avoiding overly

formal or rigid questioning, the study minimized potential stress and encouraged participants to share authentic and nuanced accounts of their corporate communication activities.

Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) emphasize the importance of giving participants ample time to associate, reflect, and articulate their thoughts. This approach was central to the interviews conducted in this study, ensuring that participants did not feel rushed or constrained in their responses. Providing this flexibility not only enhanced participant comfort but also yielded rich and detailed data essential to understanding the interplay of communication activities.

Ethical principles were also integral to ensuring participant comfort. Participants were fully informed about the study's purpose, scope, and procedures before the interviews began. They were assured of confidentiality and anonymity, addressing any concerns about the potential impact of their disclosures. This transparency fostered trust, enabling participants to engage freely and honestly in the research process. By employing strategies such as aligning interview questions with participants' experiences, using silence to allow reflection, and adopting a phenomenological approach, the study ensured a comfortable and supportive environment for participants. These techniques, combined with ethical safeguards and sensitivity to non-verbal cues, allowed participants to share their narratives openly and authentically, contributing to the study's goal of capturing the complex interplay of corporate communication activities in Ghanaian collegiate universities.

Probing questions were used to elicit detailed information when needed. According to Rubin and Rubin (2012), probes "signal the interviewees that you

want longer and more detailed answers” (p.148). Probes, as defined by Creswell (2013) are sub-questions that can be used to clarify points of confusion or used to encourage the participant to elaborate. Probing questions that began with “how” and “what” were utilized instead of follow-up questions that began with “why” to avoid participants perceiving they were being asked to defend their decisions (Dale & Wrisberg, 1996). I agree with Seidman (2006) about the use of the word probe, which sounds intrusive. Regardless of the term used, the goal was to allow for clarification and to follow up on the participant’s responses. This also enabled me to move the interview forward based on the participants’ responses (Seidman, 2006).

The research instrument was also peer reviewed to enhance its validity in addressing the research problem and questions. Further, the research instrument was reviewed by educational researchers and practitioners to further enhance its validity. The questions in the research instrument were largely teased out from the literature to improve on its reliability as well as afford the researcher the opportunity to relate the findings to issues in the literature.

Pre-testing

The research instrument was pre-tested at the University of Education, Winneba to find the precision, consistency and suitability of the instrument over different testing and time spans. This helped to verify that decisions that were to be made based on the instrument would be the same from time to time, and addressed the question of how much error was present in the responses generated. The University of Education, though not a collegiate yet, was chosen because at the

time, it was one university that had some campuses all over Ghana and thus outside the main campus in Winneba and certain complexities and challenges with corporate and organisational communication. Three research participants were engaged during the pre-testing which was conducted in the month of February 2022 for a period of one (1) week. The aims for the pre-testing were to check for the clarity of questions, sensitivity of the questions, timing for the data collection engagement, and adequacy of the instrument. Accordingly, feedback from the pre-testing exercise was used to rearrange the questions, change some of the questions, add some more questions, and change the diction of some of the questions.

The average timing for the pre-testing was one hour and 20 minutes. However, the questions were reduced to contain an interview session within 50 minutes. The aim was to reduce the interview time to enable the participants to focus on their activities.

Trustworthiness

In order to validate and make the study trustworthy, this research was grounded on the criterion of trustworthiness accorded to reflexivity, adequacy of data, and adequacy of interpretation (Morrow, 2005). Invariably, this involved an understanding of the researcher's experiences and his world and how it could affect the research process. In line with reflexivity, I was aware of my assumptions, predispositions and personal experiences about research and made them overt to the self and others through bracketing (Fischer, 2009). The recorded interviews were played back to the respondents and transcripts of the interview were given to the respondents. The themes generated from the analysis of the interview data were

also checked by participants, what Creswell and Creswell (2018) termed as “member checking”. Member checking, also known as participant validation, is a qualitative research technique used to enhance the validity and credibility of a study's findings. The primary objectives of member checking in qualitative research are to validate findings, enhance credibility, identify misinterpretations, and facilitate collaboration. Validation involves ensuring that the researchers' interpretations accurately reflect the experiences and viewpoints of the participants. By involving participants in verifying the results, the process builds trust and strengthens the credibility of the research. Additionally, member checking allows participants to correct any inaccuracies or misrepresentations in the data, ensuring the findings are authentic and grounded in reality. This collaborative approach fosters active engagement between researchers and participants, promoting mutual understanding.

To conduct member checking, I shared summarised findings, themes, and verbatim transcripts with the participants. In response, the participants provided feedback, clarifications, or additional insights. This feedback was then integrated into the final analysis, maintaining the research's alignment with participants' perspectives. Member checking offers several benefits. It increases the trustworthiness of the study, ensuring the research accurately captures the complexities and nuances of participants' experiences. Furthermore, it helps uncover potential biases or assumptions on the part of the researcher, contributing to the overall rigor and reliability of the study. This was done to ensure the correction of necessary mistakes and present a valid data. The researcher also took

time to give thick, rich description of the steps leading to the collection of data, analysis and interpretation.

Trustworthiness also relates to the long duration of the interview and follow-up interviews in anticipation of technology failures with reference to the tape recorder used for the interview. To prevent this, I used two recording gadgets during all the interview sessions. Also, based on the postulations of Lincoln and Guba (2000), in preserving the credibility of the research, I adopted two of the stated means in achieving trustworthiness: persistent peer and academic scrutiny of the research project. Peer and academic scrutiny of the research was employed through the period of the study and was achieved through constructive feedbacks offered by my supervisors, peer researchers and other academics. These fresh perspectives and additions to the study enabled me to fine tune and present stronger arguments for the study, thus making the study credible with enhanced validity.

The meaning of validity is whether your methods, approaches and techniques actually measure and relate to the problem that has been explored (Blaxter et.al. 2001). Validity is defined as an instrument's ability to measure exactly what it is supposed to measure (Eriksson & Wiedesheim-Paul, 2001). There are according to Yin (2003), three forms of validity, construct, internal, and external validity. When establishing construct validity, the researcher makes sure that the correct operational measures are utilized for the concepts being studied, and that objective judgment is used to collect data. Internal validity is only of relevance if conducting an explanatory study, and since this work was not about conducting an explanatory study, this is of no relevance. Finally, external validity

refers to establishing of the domain to which the findings to a study can be generalized. Since the sample is relatively small, and the study qualitative, and a case study of collegiate universities in Ghana, this research is not aiming to generalize (Yin, 2003).

Construct validity was therefore relevant to this study. To ensure construct validity, two or more methods are used in order to complement each other. Combined, they can produce differing but supporting ways of collecting data with increased validity as a result (Denscombe, 2003). By using interview guide the construct validity of this study was to be increased. To further increase the construct validity, the interview guide was sent to the participants in advance, mostly, one week before they are interviewed. This gave the participants the possibility to prepare to obtain the correct information. Before the interview proper, the interviewer helped clarify any item that was not understood before the interviews were conducted. The interviewer helped in corrective reading to validate the responses through friendly interactions and repetitions of some questions in different ways because according to Denscombe (2003), friendly direct contact at the interview helps check for accuracy and relevance of data, as it is collected. Subsequently, the interview guide was read and explained to the participants when the need arose before their responses were recorded to avoid misunderstandings and mis-representativeness.

My association with the study sites as a staff of a university proved beneficial because the participants were those I have known as a staff with the university. It was easy to approach my interviewees and they also asked severally

if I needed any input from them. They treated me as their colleague. As I analysed the data, I reflected on my involvements with the views of minimising biases that might influence my interpretation. Another validity check is prolonged engagement (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Triangulation of data sources through extensive document analysis and interviews gave me opportunities to ask and validate the question on the interplay of corporate communication activities on the image and reputation of collegiate universities in Ghana.

Assumptions and Predispositions

The study relied on carefully considered assumptions and predispositions to ensure methodological rigor and trustworthiness. These assumptions guided the research design, data collection, and analysis, addressing critical aspects such as validity, reflexivity, and pre-testing to enhance the quality and credibility of the findings. Corporate Communication is not properly conceptualised and has been equated to Public Relations (PR). Again, Corporate Communication is very multifaceted and affects corporate reputation either negatively or positively.

The assumptions and predispositions of the study were carefully justified through rigorous methodological practices, including pre-testing, trustworthiness measures, and construct validity checks. Reflexivity and triangulation ensured that the researcher's biases were managed and that the data accurately reflected participants' experiences. These strategies collectively supported the study's aim to explore the nuanced dynamics of corporate communication activities in Ghanaian collegiate universities, providing robust and credible insights into this critical area of institutional practice.

Data Collection Procedure

Interviewing was used as the method of gathering data for the study. Creswell (2012) noted that interviewing is a powerful way of helping people to make explicit things that have hitherto been implicit. With the interviewing method, I first had initial meetings with the research participants to introduce myself, the purpose of the study, seek their consent of participation, and the appropriate timing for the data collection. This was done through an introductory letter (see Appendix B and C) from the University of Cape Coast. Upon agreement to participate in the study, I scheduled appointments with each of the research participants about their free days and times that were convenient for the data collection exercise. This was to ensure that the data collection process did not seriously interfere with their daily leadership administrative duties of their universities. It was also to ensure that the research participants were prepared to provide more detailed information for the study.

I honoured the times scheduled with the research participants and interviewed them for the study. The interview sessions were physical (face-to-face) and with the assistance from the trained personnel conducted at the three universities (Universities X, Y and Z). Though face-to-face, a few opted for zoom interview due to constraints of time as a result of participants busy schedules. The setting of the data gathering for all the participants was that it was one-on-one engagement with the help of research assistants. This enabled the research participants to freely give their candid opinions about their lived experiences in the universities. I asked the questions and recorded the responses of the research

participants, accordingly. The recordings were done through both writing and audio. The audio recordings were done upon the permission from the research participants. The average time for the interviewing was 55 minutes. Each interview ended with a polite note of thanks to the interviewee for spending the time and effort willing to contribute to the study (Creswell, 2014).

Participants were asked if they agreed to the interview being recorded through a digital audio recording device. Although hand written notes can be less obtrusive or intimidating to some participants, an audio recording provides a more precise account of the content of the interview and allows the researcher to pay closer attention to the verbal and nonverbal cues presented by the participant being interviewed (Glesne, 2006). Another advantage of utilizing digital recording during data collection was that an actual recording of the interview allowed the researcher the ability to study the information more thoroughly (Gall et al., 2007). Finally, and most importantly, the use of a digital recording “reduces the tendency of interviewers to make an unconscious selection of data favouring their biases” (Gall et al., 2007, p. 256). In this research study, each of the research participants agreed to the interview being digitally recorded.

During the interview, the researcher took notes in addition to recording the interviews. Patton (2015) stated that taking notes during an interview help the interviewer formulate new questions as the interview moves along, and during data analysis, they can be used for key quotes, and as a backup. At the close of the interview, participants were asked if there was any additional information or insights the interviewees wanted to share. After participants shared remarks, the

researcher thanked participants for engagement in the study and concluded the interview. The audio-recording device was turned off.

To acquire an intimate and accurate understanding of this phenomenon, it was imperative that the interviews took place in the “natural setting . . . where participants experience the issue or problem under study” (Creswell, 2014, p. 1168); hence, participants were interviewed at their respective chosen places for the interview sessions. This helped participants to recount their experiences in the setting in which their day-to-day leadership practices occur. King and Horrocks (2010) suggest that the location of the interviews is commonly held on interviewees’ home turf. The participants’ offices also served as a place where they could retreat in times of crisis and reflect on their experiences and the challenges they face. In a sense, they frame their perspectives in this context, so it is natural to ask them to recall those perspectives in the same context. The interviews took place at the various campuses where the study was conducted. However, the locations of the interviews were determined at the comfort and convenience of the interviewees and some changes on the mode (zoom mode) at the request of some participants.

I arrived at least 30 minutes before the scheduled interviews and stayed 30 minutes after the interviews, allowing adequate time to prepare and wrap up the interviews. This extra time also allowed me to observe the culture of each site. The data gathering, using interviews took four months (September-December, 2022). The interview sessions were carried out on different dates for the institutions over a period of four (4) months as a result of exigences of time though this had been planned for two (2) months earlier lasting about 1 hour 30 minutes with each of the

participants. There were four (4) breaks of 5 minutes each at the request of the participants with the anticipation that the interviews should not run a maximum of 2 hours. I allowed for a further two months until all transcripts were completed and returned to the participants for checking to ensure that the transcripts were recorded accurately.

In order to limit researcher bias, a journal of notes of my impressions, reflections, and insights regarding the interviews was taken (Creswell, 2013; Seidman, 2006) within a few hours of conducting them. These memos documenting my reflections on the processes of the interviews and observations were useful in analyzing the data and writing the final report. The research literature on phenomenological studies shows agreement on the necessity for reflexivity (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). These reflective memos helped me analyse my own perceptions of the phenomena that appeared in the interviews and helped bracket my personal experiences in providing an accurate phenomenological record.

In addition, to facilitate taking field notes during interviews, a two-column format was utilized (Rajendran, 2001). The left column was for me to highlight information from the participant that spurred a probing or clarifying question. The right column was where I wrote my own thoughts about the interview. It was important to remain an outsider to the data analysis process, and not allow personal preference or personal knowledge to leak into the interpretation and analysis of the data (Rajendran, 2001).

The transcripts of the data were validated with the research participants. They were made to provide further clarity on some of the issues and other issues

they wanted to change. In addition, the researcher built triangulated questions in the research instruments to ensure consistency and confirmability of responses (see Appendix D). In areas where there were divergence in responses, the research participants were asked to provide further information to enhance the credibility of the data.

Data Analysis

Interpretive researchers attempt to derive their data through direct interaction with the phenomenon being studied. An important aspect of data analysis in qualitative study is the search for meaning through direct interpretation of what is observed by themselves as well as what is experienced and reported by the subjects. Bogdan and Biklen (2003) define qualitative data analysis as working with the data, organizing them, breaking them into manageable units, coding them, synthesizing them, and searching for patterns. The aim of analysis of qualitative data is to discover patterns, concepts, themes and meanings. In case study research, Yin (2003) discusses the need for searching the data for patterns which may explain or identify causal links in the data base.

In the process, the researcher concentrates on the whole data first, then attempts to take it apart and re-constructs it again more meaningfully. Bloomberg and Volpe (2012) argue that qualitative data analysis requires the researcher to immerse oneself in the data, to cycle back and revisit the data while you continue to read and collect data. Creswell (2014) states “you cycle back and forth between data collection and analysis” (p. 1230). Patton (2015) maintains that data analysis involves reducing the volume of raw information, sifting trivia from significant

patterns, and constructing a framework for communicating the essence of what data reveal. The use of analysis data was a way of bringing order, structure and meaning to the mass of collected data. During data analysis, researchers have a general sense of what they think they know about the phenomenon beforehand; however, the data may transcend this prior knowledge and allow new meanings to be discovered (Englander, 2012).

In the current study, the researcher analyzed the interviews to acquire an understanding of: (a) How is corporate communication conceptualised in the collegiate universities in Ghana; (b) How is corporate communication carried out in the collegiate universities in Ghana; (c) What are the determining factors as to how corporate communication can influence corporate image identity, brand and reputation of the collegiate universities in Ghana; (d) How do authorities of the collegiate universities in Ghana perceive reputation and reputation management in their universities; (e) What are the choices and uses of corporate communication in corporate reputation management in the collegiate universities in Ghana; (f) How are corporate communication, image building and reputation management related; and (g) What are the effects of corporate communication activities on Corporate Image and Reputation of the collegiate universities in Ghana?

In analyzing the data for this study, data from each component were usually analyzed separately first, using 'regular' text analysis methods (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). Text analysis is the process of examining and interpreting textual data to uncover patterns, themes, and insights. It involves various techniques such as content analysis, sentiment analysis, thematic coding, and natural language

processing (NLP) (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). In the context of the study on collegiate universities in Ghana, text analysis was used to explore and evaluate how corporate communication activities influence institutional image and reputation. The use of text analysis provided a structured and objective way to evaluate the interplay of corporate communication activities on the image and reputation of Ghanaian universities. The rationale for analyzing data separately at the initial stage was to ensure that insights from each dataset, whether derived from interviews, observations, or document reviews, were thoroughly understood in their own right. This step-by-step analysis facilitated a deeper appreciation of the unique contributions of each component to the broader research objectives. For example, interview transcripts were carefully coded and categorized, enabling the identification of recurring themes related to corporate communication activities and their impact on the image and reputation of the collegiate universities. Similarly, documents and records were analyzed to contextualize the interview findings and provide additional layers of understanding.

Once each component was analyzed independently, the findings were integrated to develop a holistic understanding of the interplay of corporate communication activities. This process of combining datasets allowed for the cross-validation of insights and the identification of overarching patterns that might not have been apparent when analyzing data sources in isolation. By adhering to Creswell and Plano Clark's (2007) framework, this study ensured a robust and methodical approach to data analysis, enhancing the validity and depth of its findings.

A modified version of the Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method as outlined in Creswell (2014) was used. The Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method is designed to uncover the essence of a phenomenon by focusing on participants' descriptions of their experiences. It involves iterative steps to distill core themes and meanings from qualitative data, making it well-suited to a study that seeks to understand the nuanced dynamics of corporate communication in a specific institutional context. The study aimed to capture how participants, through their roles and responsibilities, perceive and enact communication practices that shape their universities' image and reputation. By applying this method, the research could systematically analyze the rich, detailed narratives provided by participants.

The method's emphasis on bracketing was essential for ensuring reflexivity. By setting aside personal assumptions and biases, the researcher could approach the data with an open mind, allowing participants' voices to guide the analysis (Creswell, 2014). This was particularly important given the researcher's familiarity with the study sites and participants.

The method's structured steps, including horizontalization (listing all significant statements), clustering of meanings, and synthesis of textual and structural descriptions, provided a rigorous framework for analyzing the data. These steps ensured that the findings were grounded in participants' actual words and experiences, enhancing the credibility and validity of the study. The modified Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method was also effective in integrating data from multiple sources, including interviews, document reviews, and observations. This integration was crucial for capturing the multifaceted nature of corporate

communication activities and their impact on institutional image and reputation. The method facilitated the synthesis of individual experiences with organisational-level insights, offering a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon.

I described experiences with the phenomenon being studied. Creswell (2014) defines this as creating an “epoche” or bracketing. The aim of epoche is to achieve direct contact with the world by suspending prejudgments, bracketing assumptions, deconstructing claims, and restoring openness. This permits the readers to understand better the researcher’s personal experience and how it might impact the study.

The work is qualitative research in nature, so the data were labelled, categorised and thematized for a step-by-step analysis and discussion. These qualitative steps as proposed in a published book, ‘A step-by-step Guide to Qualitative Data Coding by Philip Adu, a methodological expert at the Chicago School of Professional Psychology, in 2019 thus guided this research work. I therefore at first experienced the art of coding as intensive interaction between me and data. I needed to go through the data, identified significant information and developed codes appropriately and systematically.

Coding is all about identifying significant information, assigning levels of significance trying to develop categories and or themes to help the researcher to address the research questions. This should be an intensive process, because as a researcher, you are having a conversation with the document on the transcript to help you to address the research questions you that you have (Adu, 2019). Adu (2019) talked about three coding strategies. The first one is the description focus

coding; the second one is the interpretation focus and the third one is the presumption focused coding.

Reading through the transcribed interviews, I manually developed a list of significant statements that illuminate the researched phenomenon. Creswell (2014) defines this as horizontalization of the data (p.159). Here, it is important to get a good feel for the data to generate some emergent insights. As Merriam (2009) points out, qualitative data analysis usually results in the identification of recurring patterns and themes that “cut through the data” (p. 11). Furthermore, I manually took significant statements and grouped them into larger units or themes. Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014) describe this step in the initial phases of working with data as data reduction. This process of reduction includes questioning the data, identifying, and noting common patterns in the data, creating codes that describe the patterns in the data, and assigning these codes into categories (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008). This phase of the process includes reducing overlap and redundancy of codes and collapsing the codes into themes. Themes are similar codes brought together to form a major idea in the database (Creswell, 2012). At this point in the study, confirmability was conducted.

I solicited the help of two senior lecturers in one of the study sites who have received advanced degrees (Ph.D.) in communication studies and conducted their dissertations utilizing qualitative research methods to review the codes and themes to see if my codes were appropriate and relevant to the research questions. Bloomberg and Volpe (2008) argue that important insights may emerge from the different ways in which researchers look at the same data set. I used a transcription

service to produce written text from the recorded interviews. Following transcription, I also listened to each interview multiple times to ensure the accuracy of the transcription, and took notes in the margins of nonverbal elements. I also returned the transcripts from the interviews to the participants to ensure accuracy and correct for errors when the need arose.

Next, I used *epoché* to view each transcript freshly and to minimize pre-assumptions. I highlighted specific statements, sentences, and quotes through the use of horizontalization. I then developed clusters of statements into meaningful units and subsequently developed themes from these units. Braun and Clarke's (2006) Reflexive Thematic Content Analysis was employed as the primary approach to analyze the qualitative data for this study. This method is widely regarded for its systematic yet flexible nature, which allows researchers to uncover meaningful patterns and themes within textual data. The study adhered to four analytical steps, informed by the guiding principles outlined by Saldana (2015), to ensure a comprehensive and reflective engagement with the data.

The first step involved identifying codes within the data, a process that required a careful and iterative reading of the transcripts to pinpoint significant elements. These codes were derived from participants' narratives, reflecting key ideas, actions, or phenomena related to corporate communication activities and their impact on the universities' image and reputation. Saldana (2015) emphasizes the importance of coding as the foundation for organizing and interpreting qualitative data.

Next, the identified codes were organized into categories, which were subsequently refined into high-level categories. This stage involved grouping similar codes to create coherent clusters that captured broader aspects of the data. As Saldana (2015) notes, categorization helps to transition from the granular details of coding to a more abstract understanding of the data, paving the way for thematic development.

The third step focused on reviewing and synthesizing high-level categories through a process of analytic memoing. Analytic memos served as reflective notes that captured the researcher's thoughts, interpretations, and emerging insights during the analysis. This step was crucial for identifying overarching themes, which encapsulated the essence of the categories and provided a deeper understanding of the interplay of corporate communication activities (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Saldana, 2015).

Finally, the emerged themes were systematically applied to the research questions of the study. This alignment ensured that the analysis remained focused and relevant, linking the identified themes directly to the study's objectives. By integrating Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis framework with Saldana's principles, the study achieved a robust and insightful analysis of the data, offering a nuanced understanding of corporate communication practices within Ghanaian collegiate universities. The emergent themes were:

1. Conceptualisation and Identification of Corporate Communication Activities
2. Execution of Corporate Communication

3. Corporate Communication and Institutional Identity, Brand, and Reputation
4. Challenges in Corporate Communication
5. Perceptions of Reputation Management
6. Public Relations as Central to Communication Efforts
7. Corporate Communication Tools and Policies
8. Role of Institutional Structure

I wrote composite narratives the interplay of corporate communication activities on the image and reputation of collegiate universities in Ghana.

Ethical Considerations

Some of the ethical issues considered under the study were seeking the consent of participation from the research participants before engaging them in the data collection exercise, assuring them of their anonymity, and allowing them to indicate the appropriate timing and place for the exercise. In the research process, I served as the primary instrument from which decisions were made such as who would be in the study and what questions are asked. In addition, data collection and analysis may be coloured by the researcher's experience and background. As a result, I cannot claim to be completely "objective," as that is just not possible. As Creswell (2013) points out, the researcher needs to be aware of the personal presuppositions that might have a potential influence on the research process before initiating the study. This process involves a description of the researcher's experience with the phenomenon under study. It is known as "bracketing" or "epoche", which is a Greek word meaning to stay away from or to abstain (Moustakas, 1994, p. 85). The purpose of epoché for me was to identify biases and

preconceived ideas about the specific experience. van Manen (2014) suggested that it allows the researcher to clear his mind of personal biases and to see the world from participants' perspectives.

This is especially important as the research questions are so intertwined with my views of what is valuable and important to know about the world. In practice, as Creswell (2013) noted, this is a difficult task and experience. Nevertheless, it is important for the researcher to be aware of the subjective experience in order to see how it might influence the research. At the beginning of the research process, I considered various personal perspectives on corporate communication and reputation management and identified two that might have potential influences on the research process; my personal experiences as a journalist/PR expert and as a chartered administrator and management consultant, and my assumptions about what the role of the participants should be. These personal assumptions and experiences were reflected upon prior to the interviews and data analysis and were suspended as much as possible in order to gain the perspectives of the interview participants as well as to preserve the credibility of the study.

Therefore, I was fully aware not to let any of these preconceptions and understandings influence the interviews and data analysis processes as much as possible. Throughout the course of the interviews and data analysis, I reminded myself to listen closely and carefully to what my participants have to say, to represent the full range of their views, and to re-examine how my assumptions may be influencing my analysis of the data. However, I am cognizant of how my own

preconceptions may affect what I chose to note or emphasize. Once I had bracketed my preconceived notions as much as possible, I started the process of data collection and such conscious reflection continued throughout the research process. I concur with Creswell (2013) that this is a difficult experience. However, self-discipline, effective supervision and following unbiased steps in the conduct of the research study prevailed

Although qualitative research using interviews as a source of data, ensures that researchers collect data in a naturally occurring process, the methodology nonetheless raises various issues such as anonymity because it is usually done without the fore-knowledge of the target group (Bieswenger & Storrer, 2008). There is the belief that subjecting participants to answering items in an interview session could cause physical and emotional harm to them. Thus, statements in the interview guide were framed in a way that presented a variety of options and free will to participants so that, they could select items appropriate to them. Participants were assured of anonymity and confidentiality. The researcher revealed his identity to participants of the study for the purpose of clearing their minds of all doubts and deceptions of the study and also, assuring them of not sharing information they provide with anyone. Concerning anonymity, the researcher used generic names (pseudonyms) of participants as they do not refer to specific persons. This attempt aimed at avoiding using the names of participants without seeking their consent.

To avoid the scientific misconduct in research, called plagiarism, the study followed strictly the prescribed standards of scientific behaviour to avoid plagiarism. The researcher ensured that ideas, works and writings made use of were

acknowledged and referenced appropriately. I heeded the advice put forth by Angell & Relman (1989) which states that if the results of a single complex study are best presented as a 'cohesive' single whole, they should not be partitioned into individual papers. Furthermore, if there is any doubt as to whether a paper submitted for publication represents fragmented data, authors should enclose other papers (published or unpublished) that might be part of the paper under consideration (Kassirer & Angell, 1995). Similarly, old data that has been merely augmented with additional data points and that is subsequently presented as a new study is an equally serious ethical breach. Colleagues and supervisors helped the researcher to avoid all these and any other ethical breaches.

Chapter Summary

This chapter outlined a systematic approach of the processes engaged in by the researcher to arrive at the detailed and rich data collected from the participants. It dwelt on the method and research design which employed the use of the qualitative approach, specifically the interpretative strategy. It discussed in detail ways of data collection and analysis, as well as emphasized on the reflexivity and the rationale behind the use of such strategies in reaching the outcome of the study. In addition, the researcher discussed the ethical concerns binding the study.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS AND FINDINGS

Introduction

This chapter presents the results and discussion on the interplay of corporate communication activities on the image and reputation of collegiate universities in Ghana. It deliberates on the information solicited through in-depth interviews which addresses the research questions. Thus, it is envisaged that the perceptions or views of participants could influence corporate communication activities on image and reputation. Some of the major themes captured under the chapter were conceptualizing corporate communication in the collegiate universities; public relations practice and its effect on corporate communication; understanding who handles corporate communication by authorities; understanding of corporate communication by authorities; channels of communication in the collegiate universities; carrying out corporate communication in the collegiate universities

communication activities carried out in the universities; the interplay of corporate identity and corporate communication; relationship between corporate communication and corporate image, identity, brand, and reputation; challenges of the corporate communication systems in the universities; realizing reputation in an institution; reputation management; type of communication undertaken by the universities; tools and medium for communication; role of communication in building good reputation; and corporate communication being an instrument in executing image building. I aimed at carving out the perspectives of key informants, as enlisted in chapter four, of the three collegiate universities (X, Y and

Z) in the country with respect to their understanding of corporate communications and how it has been practicalized in their jurisdictions. The results and discussion are done based on the research questions.

Research Question One

How is corporate communication conceptualized in the Collegiate universities in Ghana?

In the bid to understand thoroughly how corporate communication is conceptualized in the various collegiate universities, including the University of Ghana, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology and the University of Cape Coast. An array of questions based on research question one was asked to each of the interviewees who participated in the interview sessions for this research work. Most participants ascertained that corporate communication involved communication among stakeholders within the institution and also without the institution. These stakeholders were also referred to as internal or external publics. Senior executives in both private and public companies recognize the significance of communicating effectively with their key stakeholders if they want to establish and maintain a positive reputation or correct and modify a bad reputation (Frandsen & Johansen, 2018).

Conceptualizing and Identification of Corporate Communication Activities

Participants made known that there were multiple components involved in corporate communication in the various institutions. These include public relations, marketing, branding, advertising, promotion, events, alumni relations, sponsorship, fundraising, technical communication, corporate social responsibility, strategic

communication, media relations, publications, publicity, strategic partnership, governmental relations, advocacy, promotion activities and commodification. According to Argenti (2014), corporate communication utilizes multiple communication theories and components to provide a valuable framework for effective communication. Frandsen and Johansen (2018) also posits that coordination of all formal communication activities including internal and external communication, marketing and public relations is key in corporate communications.

The participants also expressed the view that, even though corporate communication, public relations, and organisational communication are related or similar, they also entail their own elements of uniqueness. The field of organisational communication is typically not what drives the theory and practice of corporate communication. However, corporate communications' unique perspective emphasizing completeness and consistency in corporate messages also has a growing impact on the field of modern organisational communication (Christensen & Cornelissen, 2013). According to Wehmeier and Winkler, (2013), organisational communication and public relations are two related fields of research in the larger discipline of communication studies, however they developed individually. In Sandra Oliver's handbook of corporate communication and public relations, she posits that organisational communication is essential to corporate communication and they all come with their public relations needs and issues. Some key excerpts raised from the interviews are discussed in relations to their institutions.

A participant in the University Z mainly views corporate communication as a general conscious effort to communicate to and with its stakeholders both internally and externally. When asked what they understood by corporate communication, the public relations officer said:

My understanding of corporate communications and where I sit as someone who is within the communication enterprise within the university is a conscious effort of interacting stakeholders within the university (both internal and external) in order to create a positive feedback and mutual understanding with the stakeholders. (Kwabena, Uni Z, Sept, 2022).

Participant 4 (Buckman) explained corporate communication as,

My understanding about corporate communication simply I see that as information flow, up down, down up, horizontal which seeks to create awareness so far as the entity in its totality is concerned to stakeholders. Process of creating an awareness among stakeholders, both within and without. (Buckman, Uni Z, Sept, 2022).

There is clearly a more theoretical point of view to the second answer and the first is mainly practical. This is in line with Cornelissen (2020), which posits that even though academia is concerned about theories of education, professionals are the ones caught in the nitty gritty of the details of executing corporate communications and obviously has quite different orientations to corporate communications.

Public relations practice and its effects on corporate communication

In terms of public relations practice in University Z, those who are officially mandated and therefore prominent in corporate communications, they have a practical view or conceptualization and easily noticed that their concept of corporate communication involves communication within the organisation among internal stakeholders and without the organisation involving the organisation and its external stakeholders. It was realized that out of the multiple corporate communication concepts presented, the participants from University Z rated strategic communication to be the most important element or concept. Now strategic communication can be viewed as communication that is aligned with the company's overall strategy intended to improve its strategic positioning (Argenti, 2014).

It was realized that participants from University Z conceptualized the term corporate as an entirety or totality of an institution. This is as presented by Costa (2008) whose conception of the term alludes to the body, understood as an integrality, holism, totality, unity constituted by processes of interaction, action and meaning making. To further capture what the participants and in relation the university correlated with the concept of corporate communication, when asked if organisational communication was the same as public relations, the University Z interviewees said that they were not the same despite being related. But when asked to explain the relations, it was realized that the relation they drew between organisational communication and public relations individually varied. Baaba from University Z shared:

I think public relations is the practice of building a good relationship with the external publics mostly. For organisational communication, I think that yes, it can also be about the external public, but it is more about internal publics. I think that is how the organisation packages itself for its internal public so that they can also go out and communicate what the culture of the organisation is, what the organisation stands to do. If you are a staff in the university, you should be able to speak about the university. I think that the organisational communication is more internal and public relations is more external, but I think that if the organisational communication is well done, it will help in how we build public relations. (Baaba, Uni Z, Sept, 2023)

While another interviewee who also believed they were related said:

I think public relations can be an aspect of organisational communication, because then, organisational communication will refer to the way you communicate, all the activities that intend to communicate to the public in order to win a favorable image for yourself. Whereas public relations (as I mentioned somewhere earlier) will be the maintenance, and some have said that the professional maintenance of a favorable image of the institution, so maintaining the image. Now organisational communication as I said will be a broader one which will

involve all the activities that tend to engender favorable opinion of your organisation. (Francis, Uni Z, Sept, 2022)

Yet still, some participants also viewed them as two mutually exclusive forms of communication, and argued that,

Public relations is the interaction between the organisation and the publics and the stakeholders outside the organisation. While the organisational communication is basically the internal communication, it could be horizontal or vertical. (Bernard, Uni Z, Sept, 2022).

The participants who therefore agree to the relations between public relations and corporate communications are in line with works like Wright (1997), Doorley & Garcia (2020), Kitchen (1997), and Michaelson, Wright & Stacks (2012) who all in one notion or the other depict correlations between corporate communication and public relations. Public relations is depicted as the precursor to corporate communication (Kitchen 1997). Kitchen (1997) asserts that public relations can serve as the primary theoretical basis or foundation for corporate communications.

Still in trying to determine how the notion of corporate communication was conceptualized in the institution, interviewees were asked if they thought corporate communication and organisational communication were the same, participants argued that they were not the same, but that rather they were related. This is in agreement with notions of corporate communication and organisational communication that were presented in Christensen and Cornelissen (2011) and

Frandsen and Johansen (2013). One has emphasized certain connections between organisational communication research and corporate communication research (Christensen and Cornelissen, 2011) and the other concentrated more on trying to find differences between the two alongside other concepts and therefore was of the notion that they were quite similar and at first glance, somewhat difficult to differentiate (Frandsen and Johansen, 2013).

In the case of the University Y, in a bid to determine how corporate communication was conceptualised in the institution, the researcher asked participants, what their understanding of corporate communication was, there was a general notion of corporate communication, being the medium or manner through which the institution communicates with both its internal and external stakeholder community. But Podnar (2014) describes it as a tool required to construct and present an organisation's identity, the fundamental element of reputation in the economic, political, technological, and social global environments in which organisations as social entities operate. In response to this, Enock proposes that,

The word corporate explains itself, so once you belong to an organisation, an organized group or body that is recognised, licensed and registered, that body becomes a corporate organisation. And the word communication is just straight forward, so, speaking on behalf of corporate organisation or being the mouthpiece of such an organisation is my understanding, thank you. (Enock, Uni Y, Nov, 2022)

This is in the same vein as some literatures which argue that corporate communications are the diverse outbound communication means utilised to get in contact with clients and other constituencies (Lubis et al., 2021). Participant 6 was of the view that it had to do with both internal and external communication, saying;

Corporate communication simply is the way we communicate with our stakeholders. the way every corporate institution communicates with its stakeholders, and the stakeholders can either be internal or external. (Edmond, Uni Y, Dec., 2022)

Bright from University Y also added that,

Corporate communication, I think it has to do with the way we communicate with both internal and external stakeholders”
(Bright, Uni Y, Nov., 2022)

This particular set of views point to the notion that even though; corporate communication is concerned with presenting a particular image to the external stakeholders so as to build a desired reputation and also maintain their identity; it is also very concerned about communication practices within the organisation. A comprehensive corporate communications strategy considers the implications of management, employee, and product behaviour, as well as word-of-mouth, media, and competition opinion (Balmer & Greyser, 2003).

When asked to arrange twenty concepts of corporate communication in descending order of importance, strategic communication and public relations were identified to be paramount among all other corporate communication elements. According to Mazzei (2014), the various components of corporate communication

converge at the entire communication of an organisation. Strategic communication is essential in corporate communication as it sets the whole exercise up for either success or failure, depending on whether it is done right or not. To be able to explore further the concepts of corporate communication in existence in the school, the participants view on the relationship between corporate communication, organisational communication, and public relations.

Per the answers received, it is seen that most of the interviewees believe that organisational communication and public relations were either components of corporate communication or were fields that were closely related to each other. These views are in the same vein as scholarly works that have been drawing connection between these concepts (Argenti, 1996; Argenti, 2004; Ruiz & Ortiz, 2022). Bright put forth that,

Public relations, I think, has to do with trying to have understanding of what we do in regard to society. So, trying to have a link between the institution and the public, and here when I say the public, I mean all our stakeholders. But I think when it comes to organisational communication, it goes beyond that one, it involves both what we do and what we have to let the general society know, so for instance when it comes to organisational communication, it involves communication within and without the organisation. So, it seems to be broader than public relations. (Bright, Uni Y, Nov., 2022)

Edmond also referred to public relations as a medium, and both corporate communication and organisational communication as the manner in which the institution communicates to both their external and internal stakeholders, saying,

I see public relations as the medium through which we communicate. The organisational communication is the way we communicate to external and internal stakeholders. How do we communicate? And the public relations are the channel or the medium through which we communicate. (Edmond, Uni Y, Dec., 2022)

And

“In my view, they are the same, I do not see any difference between corporate communication and the organisational communication. So, we take a university for instance, as a corporate entity at the level of the university in the entirety of the university is the same as the organisational in my view.”
(Edmond, Uni Y, Dec., 2022)

Understanding who handles corporate communication by authorities

To probe further, participants were asked about their thoughts on which office is officially mandated to communicate on behalf of the university, every participant agreed on the fact that it was the public (university) relations office through the public relations officer (assistant registrar, university relations), this view is also expressed in Steyn (2000). According to a participant, the public relations officer speaks on behalf of the registrar of the school, saying,

Essentially, it is the registrar's office, what we call the registrar's offices, so under the registrar's office, you will have a specific department that then will speak on behalf of the university. So, essentially it is the registrar's office, but then the registrar will have his associate or deputies who would then speak on behalf of the university. For many universities, we say it is the public relations office, some call it university relations office and then that is it. (Enock, Uni Y, Nov., 2022)

Enock also acknowledged the multifaceted nature of public relations office by saying,

So, if you look at it, you have several units that play different roles, you have the media relations that will directly relate to the media, and all the media related issues that the university will have to undertake, then you have a unit that looks at publications, looking at the recordings, the gazettes, the university materials for official programmes, programme outlines, graduation ceremony programmes etc. So, you have the publications outfit. (That is for KNUST) Then you have the aspect that looks at, programmes, then we have another that looks at visitors, where is the first point of call for visitors, students want to undergo an excursion, where do they report to first? They have to come these relations, so that is for KNUST that is what they have been doing. (Enock, Uni Y, Nov., 2022)

According to Grunig (2013), excellent public relations make an organisation more effective and results in contributing significantly to the organisation. But some participants argue that the work of the PR unit is rather reactionary and not proactive enough. This is seen as a problem by institutions because the institution should be able drive public opinion into the direction they want, not rather they are made to respond to rumors every time. Even though reactive PR is important, it is not the primary goal of public relations (Farte & Obada, 2018; Oluwasola & Obajuluwa, 2017). The participants also opined the fact that their institution had a communication guide that guides corporate communication and that all communications within and without the organisation is guided by this policy. Corporate communication should be governed by policy, so all involved personnels can be properly informed to not end up going against the company's policy (Cornelissen, 2020).

Understanding corporate communication by authorities

In a bid to understand how corporate communication is conceptualized in University X. Felicia exhibited an in-depth knowledge in corporate communication saying,

So, corporate communication refers to the way an organisation communicates with internal and external stakeholders. The way an organisation could communicate with its internal and external stakeholders. So, if you take an institution, you can segment the stakeholders into, we have internal ones, which includes employees who work in the institutions, students are

also internal stakeholders, students or staff, students, management, they are all parts of internal stakeholders. And then when you take a look outside as we have a wide range of external stakeholders, which include governments, the media, alumni, and many more guardians, the community and many more. So, the way the organisation or the institution packages information to communicate to these different segments of stakeholders is what is referred to as corporate communication.

(Felicia, Uni X, Nov., 2022)

Views on corporate communication in the organisation were all in the same vein as this comment and this goes to show that corporate communication is regarded as essential in the organisation (Argenti, 2014). There is also a general notion of strategic communication being paramount in corporate communications. To further paint a picture of how corporate communication is conceptualized in the institution, the view of the participant on the differences and or similarities between corporate communication, organisational communication and public relations were sort through a series of questions. Per the responses, it was realized, generally the notion is that the three concepts are very related or similar despite not meaning the same. Felicia further posits that,

public relations to me encompasses a lot. Public relations does not only refer to communicating with people, it has to do with a lot. For public relations, we are looking at media affairs, we are looking at event management, we are looking at stakeholder

relationship management, and you are also looking at protocol things. I mean, it's a lot. Organisational communication may refer to communicating with your publics. (Felicia, Uni X, Nov., 2022)

The Director of Public Affairs added further by stating that

For instance, the internal conveying information, such as the organisational goals, organisational snap plans, mission and vision to your audience, the policies and rules and regulations to your audience. So, I would say that organisational communication is quite, it's not broad. It's not about communicating an integral part of the institution to your publics. So, as I said, the mission, vision, your policies, your goals and plans and so on and so forth. But public relations entail a lot. You are looking at all the things that I mentioned already. (Felicia, Uni X, Nov., 2022)

To know whether organisational communication and corporate communication were the same, Felicia also said,

Well, corporate communication, yeah, public communication and organisational communication may be similar. But corporate communication refers to the way in which an institution communicates with its internal and external audiences. Yes. So, yeah, I think they are quite similar. (Felicia, Uni X, Nov., 2022)

These statements are in line with a range of literature that have been studying the topic and drawn similarities between the three concepts and even with other communication concepts (Cheney & Dionisopoulos, 2017; Christensen & Cornelissen, 2013; Gillis, 2006; Wehmeier, & Winkler, 2013). The participant feels both organisational and public communication are the same but differs with corporate communication. This is in sharp contrast to the views of Cheney and Dionisopoulos (2017) who intimates that organisation communication is also classified as corporate communication. To probe further and understand how corporate communication is understood in the organisation, interviewees were asked about the office mandated to communicate on the behalf of the university, Barbara of University X posits that,

The public affairs directorate, they normally handle such communication. (Barbara, Uni X, Dec., 2022)

The participants concurred to this viewpoint, but some also argued that the registrar's office is the mandated outfit for official communication to both the internal and external publics of the university of Ghana. Felicia in agreement with this notion said,

Public affairs is supposed to communicate officially to the public, but then the registrar is the head of administration, and so a lot of information comes from the registrar. So, sometimes some of the things are drafted by public affairs, but then it's routed through the registrar, or sometimes the registrar may approve for public affairs to just release it. And so, for things to

do with policies or communication coming from the university council and all that is the registrar. The registrar is the one who communicates. (Felicia, Uni X, Nov., 2022)

When asked which personnel or employee was officially in charge of communications in the university, some like the registrar were certain it was the public affairs director of the institution, saying,

That will be the director of public affairs. (Barbara, Uni X, Dec., 2022)

While others believe that college wise, it was the college secretary and even so, that it was dynamic depending on the situation, Participant 7 stated that,

Yes, so, by virtue of the statutes, that is the college secretary. So that according to the rules defined. There are others where the communication is done by the provost and there are others done by the Deans. And so, for, for me to publish, even within the college, I can also communicate directly to central administration without passing it to the provost. (Felicia, Uni X, Nov., 2022)

Some also said even for the entire university, it was dynamic as well and depending on the situation at the time, a spokesperson or communications representative is chosen, Participant 7 argued that,

So public affairs have a duty to officially communicate, but not everything rests with public affairs or not everything rests with the public affairs director. Sometimes the registrar communicates to the public and also sometimes depending on

the issue at stake, the committee may be put up and then somebody may be appointed to attend to the public and answer questions with the public. I will cite an example of something that happened recently. The Pro-Vice Chancellor in charge of academic and student affairs was the head of the committee or the chairperson, the chairman of the committee. And so, he was nominated as the person to communicate with the public to answer questions from the media and others. So ideally people call public affairs, but I will usually refer them to Pro VC you see because our institution agreed that he should be the one to be answering the question. So, it depends on what is happening at any point in time. (Felicia, Uni X, Nov., 2022)

All these views about the office officially in charge of communication and the personnel in charge of communication shows a notion that corporate communication is the responsibility of every employee, management, and students especially student leaders (Brockhaus, Buhmann & Zerfass, 2023; Volk, & Zerfass, 2021). What must be pointed out here is that there should be a comprehensive codified corporate communication policy to guide the practice for effectiveness.

Research Question Two

How is corporate communication carried out in the collegiate universities in Ghana

To be able to grasp thoroughly how corporate communication is carried out in the various institutions, each interviewee was required to answer numerous questions,

some even multidimensional. The themes that emerged from this research question were: execution of communication activities, channels of communication in the collegiate universities, and communication activities carried out in the universities. All participants provided a myriad of ways their individual universities carried out corporate communication. And as collegiate universities, it was determined that, even some colleges had different ways of communicating both within and without the colleges. The participants made known that, their various universities employed multiple means of carrying out corporate communication both internally and externally, some internal means of communication identified by the participants include, but are not limited to memos, notices, circulars, radio stations, public lectures, inaugural lectures, letters, internal radio advertisement, billboards, notices, notice boards, meetings, announcements, school portal, action minutes, emails, institution websites and union heads.

Participants also added that in order to stay relevant, the corporate communication outfit should be fully equipped and up to date and that, it is the channel or process through which the publics view the institution. The level at which businesses achieved encouraging job satisfaction, sales turnover, cost reduction, profitability, increased customer/client base, customer/client satisfaction, improved market share, improved personnel/staff satisfaction, improved level of social responsibility, improved level of goods/services quality, improved level of sales volume, and achieved short and long-term goals, satisfaction with company's business practices (with regard to attention to customers/clients, competitors, and gathering, using, and responding to relevant

information pertaining to customers/clients and competitors) and finally ‘satisfaction with overall company performance in its business operations’ (Udegbe et al., 2012). According to Bowen, Rawlins, and Martin, (2019) Managing rapid communication is difficult and in most pressing circumstances such as emergencies or disasters, it falls on organisations especially these public sector organisations and their public affairs personnel to manage the situation.

Channels of communication in the collegiate universities

Participants from the University Z painted a picture of the channels of through which corporate communication is carried out by mentioning, how it is carried out, who mandated officially to carry it out, most frequently carried out among others. As a management tool, corporate communication is tasked with harmonizing all consciously used forms of internal and external communication with its stakeholders (Van Riel, 2003), so the paper firstly, finds out the type of corporate communication activities employed in the university according to most participants are memos, notices, circulars, radio interviews and ads, TV ads, events, emails, postal mails among others. Kwabena said,

“Internal, we use internal memos, notices, circulars, to communicate to them as well as using the radio station to communicate with our internal audience. So, these are the basic ways that we use to communicate with them. But if you want other more specific as in other event formats, we have some events that we do as a form of communication, the public lectures, inaugural lectures and all other events that needs to be

done to make sure that we have our internal audience, core of them I mean have interactions with them, we do that. So, memos, letters, circulars, through advertisement, through the internal radio stations, billboards, notice boards we use those ones to communicate with them.

External publics, we look at the again electronic media; emails, sometimes also use normal mails as in postal mails, we also use events, we invent them to attend our events, we use print ads; that is the dailies, we advertise with them, we invent them to events, we issue press statements as a form of reaching our publics, we do radio ads and we do TV ads sometimes, if necessary, again we use events to also communicate with them.

(Kwabena, Uni Z, Sept., 2022)

The participants were in agreement with either all or most of the means of corporate communication that were mentioned by Kwabena. For external means of communication, they also identified, Emails, postal mails, events, print ads, press statements o releases, radio and TV ads, reports, congregation, meetings, social media, letters, communique arising out of meetings, phone calls, publications, media interviews, alumni association, and institution's website. All participants also added that, the various means of communication were chosen as and when it was deemed fit. This proves the notion that, corporate communication strategy is the outcome of a strategic decision-making process by senior communicators and top management making strategic decisions based on the identification and

management of, and communication with strategic stakeholders (Steyn, 2004). Subsequently when asked the ones that were most frequently used, some participants mentioned events, announcements, inaugural lectures, circulars, memos, notices, letters, social media, and especially electronic means of communication. Advances in new media and web technology are making it easier for organisations and their stakeholders to participate in the communication process. It is therefore useful for institutions to understand how a corporate communication strategy can take advantage of these trends (Hearn, Foth & Gray, 2009).

This notion is in line with Reilly and Hynan (2014) and Oni, (2021), Global businesses must contend with a constantly evolving corporate environment that includes new methods of stakeholder communication and new metrics for measuring firm performance. According to Cornelissen, (2020), after identifying the message that is to be communicated, it is then key to determine what the appropriate and effective channel or means of communication are through which it can be delivered to selected audiences. Participants also made known that the office in charge of corporate communication in their various universities is the public relations unit under the registrar's office and college wise, the college registrar's office. This is in line with the notion that, today's paradigm of corporate communication is seen as centralized management of overall company communication, handling various stakeholders, and aiming to achieve the highest reputation achievable (Schmid & Lyczek, 2006).

According to Participant 2 (Francis), other forms of corporate communication employed in the university includes,

Internal- meetings, memos and circulars, announcements, publicity through especially our CBS, this are all ways by which we communicate with our internal publics and of course for our external publics, if you want press releases when the need comes, reports, look at reports we send out when we have congregation, there is an annual report which actually reports on the activities of the institution and of course, the external too, we have engaged them in meetings, inviting them for events of the university, we communicate to them in that manner. So, this are the modes here. (Francis, Uni Z, Nov., 2022)

This assertion conforms with the communication roles theory which stipulates that practitioners perform different roles in the organisation according to the tasks they perform the most (Grunig, 1992a, Petersen et al., 2002). These modes of corporate communication mentioned are sometimes, activities, channels and even sometimes communication technology, which is all in line with the findings of Oltarzhevskiy, (2019), which argues that, according to criteria of relationship to the company, corporate communication channels can be split into two primary categories: outsiders and insiders. The channels can then be separated into general functional subtypes such as events, advertising, media, and a particular category known as social media. The auditorium and communication technology can serve as additional bases for typological distinction.

To further paint a picture of how corporate communication is carried out in the university, participants were asked to identify five of such activities that are frequently carried out in their institution. Buckman said,

Well upfront, when we talk about inaugural lectures, it is a university wide activity, we talk about congregations, we talk about memorial lectures, we talk about investiture of university vice chancellors. We talk about marketing new investments like the Goil that we have, like our water, that is a corporate event. Well for the university, I'll say the one that is most carried is congregation. Why because I think it is deemed as the prioritized platform for the university in making the public aware of its achievement and engaging Policy makers in terms of knowing challenges that university is facing. On the average it's two times with about six sections. (Buckman, Uni Z, Sept., 2022)

In the case of the University Y, Enock said,

Internally, use memos that we normally call circulars. So, internally that is what we do, then electronically and also by hard copy, we put things on notice boards, but basically it is by memos, correspondences among faculties, departments, schools and the rest. That is what we do internally. Externally, the main master piece or mouth piece of the university is normally the website, that is a public place where everybody can source for

information regarding the university and when they are in doubt of anything, then they may call then you speak to the issues or send a mail then you speak to those issues, sometimes we have media houses calling in to seek clarification, so that is for the external publics thank you. (Enock, Uni Y, Nov., 2022)

Participant 6 also added that,

Generally, sometimes the internal one through the general notices that we send out to our deans, HODs, provost, the general notices is one, sometimes the memos from the top management to the entire university is another. The action and minutes and the action of committee, we have sieve through it and communicate various target groups who are supposed to take action on the committee's work. When it comes to the external, the press releases and communique arising out of meetings are some of the means that we communicate (Edmond, Uni Y, Dec., 2022)

Carrying out corporate communication in the collegiate universities

To further explore how corporate communication is carried out in the institution, participants were asked to identify corporate communication activities that are frequently carried out in their institution, Edmond mentioned that,

Advertisement is one, public relations, media relations, alumni relations, protocol activities, publicity and publications. The

most carried, I will say is the public relations, because as I said we have an outfit entirely for that and headed by a deputy registrar, who is supposed to be responsible for carrying out all the communication that the university will have to churn out to the public. So, it is the first and foremost activity that we carry out. (Edmond, Uni Y, Dec., 2022)

The participants were in agreement with this view that public relations is the most carried out this is in the same vein with notions that, public relations is most significant or important because it is the medium of establishing social capital, trust and legitimacy (Wood, 2013), but some were of the view that, training and orientation in corporate communication are mostly not carried out. Bright of University Y in agreement with this notion asserts,

I think when it comes to corporate communication, I will make mention that we have certain documentation which actually deals with communication within the organisation, for instance, because we are in the university, we deal with our statutes, number one is statutes. Then we have recorders, the recorders deal with issues which borders on several things such as promotions, appointments and all sort of things. We also use things like handbooks, you know to deal with some of the issues. We have things like memos, which are issued generally, sometimes from time to time also deals with corporate communication. And you can even talk about things like,

conditions of service. We even have training and then orientation. I must say two are outstanding, for instance orientation, anytime somebody, staff is recruited, he or she goes through orientation, and then the other one also has to do with the recorders, because the recorders virtually take care of everything that goes on within the university as well though we are not mostly deliberate on these trainings and orientations on corporate communication. (Bright, Uni Y, Nov., 2022)

Language is an important communication tool and therefore, each institution must endeavor to train all its employees and other internal stakeholders on how to communicate efficiently, effectively, and properly with their various publics (Kasim & Ali, 2010). But then, Fredriksson, Barner-Rasmussen and Piekkari (2006) argue that people who are in charge of providing management education to groups with different linguistic origins need to be very conscious of the "traps" that language might provide. It is important to critically examine the widely held belief that management education given in English will be understood uniformly by all participants because English is their language of employment. Therefore, orientation and training especially in language in terms of corporate communication should not be taken lightly by any organisation.

Participants were also asked which external communication means or channel is frequently employed by their university, and they proposed radio or other forms of press releases. Participant 6 posits,

Most of them are press releases, it is faster to use to spread across a lot of the stakeholders in a short time. Through the medium of social media, both electronic and conventional media as well. (Edmond, Uni Y, Dec., 2022)

Public Relations professionals have the opportunity to shape their performance in a more strategic direction thanks to the convergence of communications and technology (Breakenridge, 2012). Participants also mentioned that, reports were the go to means of communication with the external publics of the university, Participant 10 explains that,

Like I said earlier on, one is adverts, we advertise to communicate a few things, then we also have notices. Let me give a typical example, in fact I happen to be in admissions office so, I will be comfortable using that place. For instance, when it is time for admissions, people have all sort of crude means by which they do things, so at every point in time, when they are starting admissions, for instance, the registrar issues notices for the attention of the public, applicants and their parents or guardians, that look these are channels we provide which you come to the university and when you use them well, otherwise, they could be fraud. So that is a means of communication with the external people. Then when we want to sell forms, when we want to do our congregation, when school reopens, and the thing, those ones, they are advertised through

the various modes; graphic, television, radio, and co. Reports, for instance, at congregations we give a report, a basic statistic, facts and figures, are all means of communicating with the people. (Bright, Uni Y, Nov., 2022)

Finally, to understand how the University X undertook their various corporate communication programmes, participants provided information about the various channels of communication used in their institution. Participant 8 assets that,

The ways through which the UG communicates to it internal publics depending on what the matter at hand is, it will probably be through notices, official letters and so on. For external, it is by and large the same, not many notices per say, but then we will send out releases to our external and more often than not these will also go out by emails. If it is not targeted, then it is on our social media, our website. (Barbara, Uni X, Dec., 2022)

In terms of the colleges, as a collegiate university, participants, made known that the university had structures in place to help the various colleges operate a semi-autonomous corporate communication strategy. Francis mentioned,

And then we also have students. So, what we do is to use Dishman, different channels to communicate the same information to these different categories of internal, internal public or internal stakeholders. We have internet, we send information by internet or by email. We have a list for staff. So, we use that very often. We also use our website to communicate

information to our staff. So, for the email parts, we have for both students and staff, we have a link that goes to students, we have the link that goes to staff. And so, it is information that is meant for the consumption by these two groups of people, we can use the email, and then we beef it up with our websites as well. And most of all, we also use us to see our social media because we realize that our students are mostly on social media. (Francis, Uni Z, Nov., 2022)

This statement by Francis from University Z was corroborated by Felicia of University X.

So, we use our social media platforms to communicate this information. And sometimes what we do is to link what we have. Information like bulky information, So caption or a flyer, that links to the major information, either on the websites or the email for the consumption of our internal stakeholders, that's not all. We also use notices, we use letters and stuff, notice boards. But it is realized that sometimes you put things on the notice board and people do not even read. And so, the soft copies or the online version which I've mentioned, are very, very crucial to us. Then we also sometimes route information through a union and union leaders. So even though you are here, communicating as a public relations officer, and you are using different people or different channels to get your

information to reach the people you want to communicate with. So, the union leaders, information that is coming to internal stakeholders, we route through them. And when I talk about union leaders, I'm talking about our UTAG and GAUA presidents, our presidents, those who served the senior staff, we have two different groups, so FUSSAG and what they call Senior Staff Association of Ghana, they have a long name, and then TEWU president, and among the students' groups, we have GRASSAG and SRC. So, we use all these people. So that information will really go down very well. (Felicia, Uni X, Nov., 2022)

Kwame from University X made mention that usually they communicate on academic activities, meetings for the semester.

We also look at college lectures. The mostly carried out is the academic activities. (Kwame, Uni X, Dec., 2022)

Communication Activities carried out in the Universities

As a response to the most carried out corporate communication activities. It was more crucial to communicate with main stakeholders like employees and consumers than with other stakeholders (Sinha & Bhatia, 2016). A participant made known that,

For external communications, we have two main channels, we use the email and then we use the hard letters. But for some time now, we do more of the electronic mails than the physical letters

and the explanation is that with my experience over the years, when I realized that there are some of the letters sometimes that people were supposed to deliver or deliver them. Or the people were supposed to receive them but forget about them. And then later on, complain that they have not received those letters. Or they didn't receive them in time. But the email option offers us, one, real time receipt of letters. After the letter has been signed, it could be delivered within minutes after scanning them. And then when it comes to denial of non-receipt of letters, you can easily refer them to the email that you sent to them. And so that is why we tend to do more electronic than the physical and it also cost-effective and cheap. (Kwame, Uni X, Dec., 2022)

This, as explained, is because of the greater reach, has postage stamps and hand receipts and the fact that it is readily accessible. This demonstrates the extent to which technology and technological trends are influencing corporate communication (Argenti, 2006).

Research Question Three

What are the determining factors as to how corporate communication can influence corporate image identity, brand and reputation of the collegiate universities in Ghana?

To identify the various determinants of how corporate communication can influence corporate image, identity, brand, and reputation of collegiate universities in Ghana, participants sampled from the various levels of these collegiate

universities with lived experience or professional experience of corporate communications and the various influences it has on the image, brand, identity and reputation of their individual institutions including its determining factors were queried on various topics in relation to the subject matter to arrive at the various notions presented in this section. The dominant theme that emerged was *Corporate Communication and Institutional Identity, Brand, and Reputation*, while the sub-themes were: *The Interplay of Corporate Identity and Corporate Communication*, *Relationship between Corporate Communication and Corporate Image, Identity, Brand, and Reputation*, and *Challenges of the Corporate Communication Systems in the Universities*

Corporate Communication and Institutional Identity, Brand, and Reputation

Participants ascertained that corporate reputation is the sum total of the public's perceptions about their various institutions and that reputation is influenced mostly by their track record so far and their assumptions about the institution's future endeavors. This definition is in line with the findings that specific terminology like judgment, estimation, evaluation, or gauge are used by the meaning cluster defining corporate reputation that appears to have the best chance of being used in further definitional work (Barnett, Jermier, & Lafferty, 2006). Generally, participants also agreed to the notion that corporate image is the picture that people have of their institution or how people perceive the institution in total, stakeholders rely on the crucial role of corporate image to shape their perceptions of these organisations (Tran et al., 2015).

The Interplay of Corporate Identity and Corporate Communication

Explanations about corporate identity across board also indicated that corporate identity is that which makes your organisation or institution distinct from other organisations even in the same industry, according to studies, many scholars and practitioners think that a good corporate identify is essential to their success (Melewar, Karaosmanoglu, & Paterson, 2005). It refers to their core values and what they stand for as an institution. Corporate brand was also identified as the aura created in the public space about the institution, that is easily identified around all its products. It ranges from colors, symbols and even taglines among others.

To understand how corporate communication affected all of these concepts, we first had to understand how they were related to each other and also how they affected each other. It identified across the various responses that the participants gave that, they agreed with the notion that corporate brand affects corporate identity. And that an inconsistent corporate brand, undermines your corporate reputation. They also made known that corporate brand affects corporate image, the various elements of corporate brand summed up helps in building corporate image and corporate brand are also said to affect corporate reputation. This relationship between these concepts can be said to go both ways as each of them can have significant impact on the other. According to Simões, Dibb, and Fisk, (2005), The phrases identity, image, and reputation cannot be distinguished clearly from one another, and they are not used consistently in many fields of study.

Participants were also asked to demonstrate their views on whether corporate communication affects any of these concepts and also if it does, how it

affects. After identifying the interconnection between the various concepts, it was then essentially established by these participants that corporate communication indeed influences these factors on multiple levels. In the case of corporate reputation, participants ascertained that corporate communication if done properly can build on your organisation's reputation through proving your credibility. Corporate communication is also a medium through which corporate reputation, identity, image, and brand could be managed and upheld to various stakeholder groups (Balmer & Greyser, 2006; Carrol, 2015).

In identifying the determining factors as to how corporate communication can influence corporate image identity, brand, and reputation of a collegiate university like the University of Ghana, Legon, the interviewees were queried in-depth to find out the various intricacies involved in the relationship between these various concepts and corporate communication. Participants were made to exhibit their understanding of the various concepts. Felicia explained that,

Corporate reputation is the sum of all the views and beliefs that people hold about an institution. Based on its history, interactions, and future prospects. And so, people are looking at institutional values, the quality of your services, the workplace environment, the methods that you use to discharge your services, your customer service procedures or protocols, and the market value that you have, they all go into corporate reputation. For instance, if you take market value, if you are among your competitors, are you likely to be chosen over your

competitors? What reputation have you built to earn a competitive edge over your competitors? So, all the other things, the institutional value, the quality of your service, employee sentiments and workplace environment, your approach to your service, the way you discharge your services and all, your customer service, they all build your reputation. They sum up, they all come together as a sum of their beliefs that people have about the institution. (Felicia, Uni X, Nov., 2022)

Özkan et al., (2020) also posits that, an institution's standing in the eyes of consumers is improved by leveraging reputation in its strategy more successfully. Participants also exhibited the knowledge they have about the other concepts, including corporate identity, image, and brand. Barbara asserts that,

The corporate identity, that is the way the corporate body or institution identifies itself. The way it thinks and the way its components think of that corporate body and the way in which they perceive that institution to be. The corporate image, the impression that the general public including stakeholders of the institution have of the institution. What it gives out as being its image. Corporate brand, I would say that that is what the institution stands for, for instance. What it gives out for instance, maybe it's logo, its distinct colours, what it sells. Image building, I will say that that will be the steps that the

university takes to influence the impression that the general public has about the institution. (Barbara, Uni X, Dec., 2022)

However, in the determining the relationship between corporate reputation, corporate image, corporate brand and corporate identity, Felicia explained that,

Corporate image affects the corporate reputation. You know, reputation is something that is built over time. So, your corporate image must be consistent. If you have a good image today tomorrow, you have a bad image and so on, you only end up damaging your corporate reputation. So corporate image is really key. (Felicia, Uni X, Nov., 2022)

She further added:

Yes, I think it does as well. So what brand are you putting out there to your stakeholders? Are you telling them today that I am this today, then tomorrow you come back to say I'm that. Or this is the service I provide tomorrow, you come back to say, no, I didn't mean that this is what, if you keep, if you are not consistent, you don't ensure consistency in your corporate brand, it can go to damage your corporate reputation. (Felicia, Uni X, Nov., 2022)

These relations drawn are in line with findings and propositions that propose that these are very similar concepts, even though they are not interchangeable (Abratt & Kleyn, 2012). To demonstrate how they perceived the relationship between

corporate communication and the various concepts and whether or not corporate communication influences these concepts. But Kwame of University X states

So, because of...we know that Public relations are very instrumental in image building because of the way the university recognizes the public relations are critical in a corporate image of the university, the number of things that the university has done to ensure that the influence is positive and so here I'm looking at the University certain up institutional advancement office and they deal with mostly alumni office they deal with fundraising, sponsorships and things like that. So, they also deal with what we call it, customer service relationships. And so, for instance, the only reason, we organize some workshops for members of our community on customer relations. So, the way our people deal with our stakeholders, bring positive outcomes, and invariably influence positively on the cooperative niche of the industry. So that would be my answer. (Kwame, Uni X, Dec., 2022)

Barbara corroborates this by stating that,

Well, we have established that corporate reputation is how an organisation is perceived and corporate communication has to do with the processes through which you manage reputation, by putting the institution out there in the public space and highlighting or showcasing the thing that the institution is

doing, you are certainly influencing the perception of what the university is capable of doing. Setting the agenda for how the public out there would perceive the institution. (Barbara, Uni X, Dec., 2022)

Balmer and Greyser, (2006), realized this interrelationship so much that they proposed corporate communication, corporate identity, corporate reputation, and corporate branding should be integrated under an umbrella term of corporate marketing.

Relationship between Corporate Communication and Corporate Image, Identity, Brand, and Reputation

In finding out the intricacies of the relationship between corporate communication and corporate image, identity, brand, and reputation including the determining factors of corporate communication that affects these concepts in the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and technology, various interviewees were asked to demonstrate their knowledge and lived experiences vis a vis the topic. Studies show that improving corporate reputation can be accomplished by using interactive channels to share information about the institution's operations (Eberle, Berens, & Li, 2013). A participant expressed the importance of corporate communication in building and maintaining a positive corporate reputation and image saying,

It does, I will say it again, you see whatever you do affects the image of the institution you are representing okay, so you want to go public with an idea, you want to go public with an

institutional decision, you want to communicate a policy of the institution to the public. If you don't carry it out properly, it will affect the institution that you are representing so yes, public relations influence public image. (Edmond, Uni Y, Dec., 2022)

In expressing how the institution understood the various concepts including corporate identity, image, reputation and branding, the participants are of the view that corporate identity, corporate brand, corporate image and corporate reputation were related in the sense that, each of them can influence the other.

I will say when they say corporate reputation, it is what you are known for as an institution. For instance, I have worked with another pro vice chancellor and at a point in time, and he or she said that "I am interest in leadership", I will send him or her to Ashesi university, this is someone who was a pro vice chancellor, but you see, because they have built themselves in that area, people get to know them for that. So, there is a need for corporate organisations to carve a niche for itself. So, that people will know you for this one. Another example is that I happen to work in collaboration with some of these affiliate institutions and I told them, you can't catch up with KNUST, Legon or Cape Coast, so if you are coming in, just take an area and carve a niche for yourself in that area, so that you are known for that. I think that is what corporate reputation has to do with. (Bright, Uni Y, Nov., 2022)

He further added that corporate identity has to do with things that as soon as you see.

Let me give you a typical example, of university, you go to university, you realize that all their buildings are painted white and their roofs are red, and then you look at their colour, so those things serve as an identity. You can even use the logo, then when you come to corporate image, it has to do with like policies, how personnel are handled then the operations of the organisation and then the, all these things are impacted into the people and then the public, if for instance you mention that I went to KNUST, someone is expecting you to exhibit certain characteristics and those images, that is corporate, both the institution and the people that work in the institution. The brand also has to do still with the like I said logo, colour, in fact things that you do that set you apart. The image building has to do with what I said earlier on, when it comes to the secondary schools. You come in, they take you through orientation and then, they make sure that they inculcate that into it. It has to do with organisational culture, that is the way is see it. It doesn't just happen, so it has to be inculcated into the appropriate stakeholders. (Bright, Uni Y, Nov., 2022)

The findings of a study shows that customer views of product and service quality are more specifically influenced by brand image, but customer perceptions

of customer worth and loyalty are more broadly influenced by corporate reputation (Cretu, & Brodie, 2007). When asked about the effects corporate communication has on corporate image of their institution, participants agreed that corporate communication did have effects on corporate image, however, when asked to explain the kind of influence corporate communication had on the corporate image of the institution, participants had varying views. A participant stated that,

It does, I will say it again, you see whatever you do affects the image of the institution you are representing okay, so you want to go public with an idea, you want to go public with an institutional decision, you want to communicate a policy of the institution to the public. If you don't carry it out properly, it will affect the institution that you are representing so yes, public relations influence public image. (Enock, Uni Y, Nov., 2022)

The above view is in line with findings of Eberle, Berens, & Li, (2013), that argues that, even though corporate communication helps improve corporate reputation and image, a bad review from stakeholders has greater impacts than a positive review. While others believe that, depending on the effectiveness of the communication, corporate image or reputation can be impacted positively or negatively (Tran et al., 2015). A registrar made this clear saying,

When University Y converted all the halls of residence to mixed halls, I mean there was a lot of hullabaloo about why all been converted. The way it was handled affected our image. We couldn't articulate the reasons clearly to the public. We allowed

the alumni to run the show, dictating the pace why it shouldn't be done and affected our image negatively. So, the way you communicate effectively about any policy has a very strong effect on our reputation. (Edmond, Uni Y, Dec., 2022)

Further, to this, Enock established that, corporate reputation can be affected by the corporate brand.

It does, the way you brand yourself will sell you out so if you brand yourself negatively, your reputation will also be negative, it is a direct relationship, corresponding direct relationship. (Enock, Uni Y, Nov., 2022)

Corporate reputation and corporate branding are intertwined, and more businesses are placing careful management of this effort as their priorities (Argenti & Druckenmiller, 2004). Some participants also argued that the collegiate system contributes positively to the university in terms of corporate communication in relation to reputation building and maintenance, however, some disagree.

Well, the collegiate system in university is better, because then you could give power to others to assist in running the university. In that case, managing of the university is simpler. When it comes to communication, it is also simpler, then people have specific information relating to specific colleges, so I rather saw it as a positive thing. So, the collegiate system rather came to help us, so that is what the collegiate system to me did

to the university management system and the communication aspect as well. (Enock, Uni Y, Nov., 2022)

The bureaucratic/product approach to corporate brand management leads to low brand identification, diplomatic/communications approach moderates it, and custodial/brand values and promise approach increases it (Balmer & Liao, 2007). At the University of Cape Coast, the sampled interviewees were asked various questions to be able to understand their stance on the influences that corporate communication determinants had on corporate image, identity, reputation, and brand. Kwabena also indicated how paramount corporate communication is to corporate image building and maintenance by saying,

I agree, because it is only by corporate communication using the various strategies and tools within cooperate communication, that you can get the understanding of your stakeholders and your target audience and you can get feedback from them by doing that, that is where you are building and cementing your relationship and also to make sure that, if there are any negatives, we can have the opportunities to correct them and make sure you maintain the positive image within the public. (Enock, Uni Z, Sept., 2022)

Keeping a positive brand reputation can significantly affect stakeholder groups. As colleges and universities look for other ways to increase funding and exposure, they are becoming more entrepreneurial in nature. It might be difficult for smaller universities without ties to major conferences to establish and maintain a positive

brand image (Lee et al, 2008). Registrar and University Z explained corporate reputation as the total perception that stakeholders have of the institution.

So corporate reputation will then be, if you want, the total perception that the publics have of you, about what you've been doing in the past and what expectations perhaps they have for you for the future. That is reputation. What do people think about you, what do the public think about you and of course that is based on what you have been doing in the past and that will lead to some expectations they will have of your future in terms of the things you do. (Francis, Uni Z, Nov., 2022)

Another participant also presented an understanding of the various concepts which the interviewees were in agreement with saying,

Corporate identity is how you see yourself or identify yourself in a certain light, as an institution, for instance, University Z is known as a bit hard on students in terms of examination, we don't give room for malpractice. Corporate image I will say the way you are, the way people see you, that is your image. The corporate brand is how you are able to, make effort to make it unique. There is an extra mile that you go to build upon your image and make it unique from others. Image building is a consistent thing that you do, it is a process, continuously you do things to make you differentiated from others, you are building your image maybe in terms of your communication, maybe the

way you do things, the way you give feedback to your stakeholders. The way you respond to people, the way your staff relate with your stakeholders, all this is a continuous process of activities that you do to make your organisation come up in that light. (Bernard, Uni Z, Sept., 2022)

Luca and Cervai (2014) propose that these concepts are different individually but however, corporate reputation is an umbrella term under which each of these concepts can correlate. This notion is shared by numerous other studies including Pruzan (2001), Brown et al 2006 and Gray and Balmer (1998). Financial prospects, corporate management, and corporate communication all have a big impact on perception. A positive corporate image can be an effective strategy to stand out from the competition and a source of competitive advantage that will guarantee long-term success (Yeo & Youssef, 2010). Former Pro-Vice Chancellor of University Z also displayed an in-depth knowledge of the influences of corporate communication on corporate image and reputation saying,

Public relations influence the corporate image of the university. Because public relations involve how you build your strategic partners and also the internal publics. So, the process that you use to do that is very, very important. If you do not do it well, then your both internal and external partners will not create a good image for the university. And for us, University Z, I always complain that we do so well here, but nobody knows about it. We do very well here. We work very hard internally Lowest

ranked workers, everybody does very well, but nobody knows about what we do here. So, if we do not have a good practice of engaging Lincoln, if the public relations department do not have a way of linking the public to what we do here, nobody will know. Recently, a colleague came to my house as a colleague lecturer. This one even had a demonstrator. I'm saying a colleague senior member. A colleague senior member came to my house and brought me gifts of a rated air-dried pineapple. Air dried pineapple. Yes, air dried pineapple. So, I took one and then I saw the University Z crest, small dot on it. And I said, ah, do we do this here? And I was surprised. Do we do this here? And I opened it and it tested so well. So, I looked at the telephone number and I called a colleague at the School of Agric. And then said, oh yes, prof, we do it here. I said, so why are you guys not telling us? The following two weeks or so I called and I ordered a lot because I wanted to go and show people that, you know, we do this at the University Z. So, if I say that we do a lot of good things, but we do not actually engage our publics well, so the relationship is not that smooth. That is why our image is not that known out there. (Baaba, Uni Z, Sept., 2022)

Challenges of the Corporate Communication Systems in the Universities

The participants in a study site indicated some challenges of the collegiate system of corporate communication in the institution. Baaba in agreement with this notion said,

I think it does. The collegiate system is supposed to work in unity in diversity. So there are five colleges, each is semi-autonomous in a certain way, but still comes under the central management of the university. So, there are checks and balances for the colleges. I think that we are not doing it the way the book that set up the collegiate system said we should do. Now, how it affects the image of the university is that people do not see the excellence in the colleges. They only see the university. They don't see the excellence. And I remember the last time our Chancellor visited, one of the things he said was that when you go to any university, there is a college or there is some department or faculty that gives the university its name, because it is known. Now, if you take the medical school, it is doing very well. But if you go out there, whatever it is doing is captured by the main university. It is not seen as the medical school. (Baaba, Uni Z, Sept., 2022)

But some of the participants were of the notion that the collegiate system being run by the institution has no effects on the overall image and reputation of the institution in terms of corporate communication.

For my case, I don't see any challenge here, because almost whatever I want to communicate to my clients I will be able to do. But maybe, it, maybe a challenge to other colleges depending on how it's been structured. If we get it wrong, it will have a challenge for the entire university." (Bernard, Uni Z, Sept., 2022)

Most interviewees' views agree with results of a study pointing to successful outcomes as a result of the new management strategy, which is the transition from a decentralized to a more centralized management style at the university of Warwick (Melewar & Ake, 2005).

Research Question 4:

How do authorities of the collegiate universities in Ghana perceive reputation and reputation management in their universities?

On the perception of the concept of reputation and reputation management by authorities of collegiate universities (Universities X, Y and Z) in Ghana, participants had similar yet distinct views on what a reputation is and how that reputation can be managed. The common perception about reputation among these authorities is that reputation is the views or the perception of the public or stakeholders about an organisation. More like a character that people whether within or outside the organisation have painted about the organisation in their minds. Some of the participants who shared this view stressed on the fact that, the perception of people about an organisation which forms the organisations

reputation is not necessarily about what the organisation does or does not do but rather more about people's expectations of the organisation.

This implies that, these set of participants believed that the reputation of their respective universities is what people perceive of the university and these perceptions do not necessarily have anything to do with the actions or inactions of the university. This perception of reputation held by some of the participants aligns with the definition of reputation given by Brown et. al., (2006), their definition refers to reputation as the views that external entities have about an organisation. In further explanations, they raise the question, what do stakeholders actually think of the organisation. Gotsi and Wilson (2001), also share the same thoughts defining reputation as the overall evaluation of a company or organisation by others over time. Again, this definition emphasizes the perception of others as what forms the reputation of an organisation.

Realising Reputation in an Institution

According to Balmer (2001), the reputation of an institution is a lasting perception held of an organisation by a group or an individual that creates a system of beliefs an opinion influencing how people relate with the organisation. This definition does not only emphasise reputation as people's opinion about an organisation, it goes further to state this perception formed may influence how people relate with the said organisation. Gibson et. al., (2006) also defines reputation as a public evaluation of an organisation's activities.

The following are excerpts captured from participants from the interview sessions.

“Reputation is more or less like a character within, or the perception of your external audience about you the organisation. This one is not about, even though it can be influenced but what have been built within a number of years. An image can be created but it might not be a reputation, so when we say reputation, it is a character, the perception of your stakeholders about you over the years that becomes the reputation. (Kwabena, Uni Z, Sept., 2022).

Corporate reputation I will say is the perception of an institution by others, by the stakeholders both internal and external and even people who may not be seen as stakeholders. What is in the public space about the institution? (Barbara, Uni X, Dec., 2022)

Other participants while asserting that corporate reputation was the sum of the views of all stakeholders or the public also put emphasis on the fact that these views are formed based on the organisations activities. This implies that the perception of stakeholders or the public of these universities are not built on mere thoughts or imaginations but rather a function of the activities of the universities. This includes past activities, present activities and even future expectations that stakeholders have of the universities. This perception of corporate reputation aligns with the definition of corporate reputation (Coombs, 2000; Grunig & Hung, 2002). They defined corporate reputation as the representations in minds of multiple publics about an organisation’s past behaviors and related attributes. Thus, the

corporate reputation of an organisation is the perception of the public or outsiders about the organisation, these perceptions are influenced by the activities of the organisation.

According to Fombrun (1996), corporate reputation is the perceptual representation of an organisation's past actions and future prospects. Karaosmanoglu and Melewar, (2006), also define reputation with the same parameters. They stated that reputation can be considered as the overall perception that entities or individuals hold regarding an institution's attributes. They further explain that it comprises both affective and cognitive aspects and is developed over time. These are excerpts from participants of the study:

So corporate reputation will then be, if you want, the total perception that the publics have of you, about what you've been doing in the past and what expectations perhaps they have for you for the future. That is reputation. What do people think about you, what do the public think about you and of course that is based on what you have been doing in the past and that will lead to some expectations they will have of your future in terms of the things you do. (Francis, Uni Z, Sept., 2022)

Another stated,

Okay, so corporate reputation is the sum of all the views and beliefs that people hold about an institution. Based on its history, interactions and future prospects. And so people are looking at institutional values, the quality of your services, the

workplace environment, the methods that you use to discharge your services, your customer service procedures or protocols, and the market value that you have, they all go into corporate reputation. For instance, if you take market value, if you are among your competitors, are you likely to be chosen over your competitors? What reputation have you built to earn a competitive edge over your competitors? So all the other things, the institutional value, the quality of your service, employee sentiments and workplace environment, your approach to your service, the way you discharge your services and all, your customer service, they all build your reputation. They all come together as a sum of their beliefs that people have about the institution (Felicia, Uni X, Nov., 2022).

From the excerpts above, corporate reputation refers to the collective perception or the overall opinions and assessments that others hold about an organisation. This perception is developed based on the organisations action and characteristics from the past and the future expectations and this perception is formed over time. The reputation of an organisation according to some participants of the study is the image or identity of the organisation. According to Tkalac and Vercic (2007), corporate reputation is both a function image and identity. Identity is built by the activities inside the organisation. It consists of current practices, values and behavior of the organisation and the image is built by external

stakeholders. This perception is formed by the impressions they have of an organisation at a certain time (Melewar, Karaosmanoglu & Paterson, 2005).

This image could be positive or negative and includes all actions an organisation or members of an organisation will do or not do to protect the image and identity they have. Fombrun and Shanley (1990) argued that a firm's reputation could be positive or negative, thus resulting in a benefit or loss for the firm. If the corporate reputation of a company is positive, it reinforces the company's position and easily overcomes any negative publicity increasing the chance of purchase from potential customers (Fombrun & Shanley, 1990). This implies that a reputation is the image that an organisation has created in people's mind which is worth protecting because it has the potential to positively or negatively affect the organisation. Roper and Fill (2012), state that an organisation's reputation can help the organisation obtain trust and credibility in society which in the long run assist in the realization of the organisations goals. This definition affirms the perception of the concept of reputation given by participants of the study.

Every organisation has a reputation to protect, because you exist because of certain characteristics or certain features, you need to make sure either your brand or image is intact, so I think your corporate reputation is a concept where you protect or maintain your identity or the image that you have. (Bernard, Uni Z, Sept., 2022)

Another participant was of the view that corporate reputation is how one is seen and perceived by his or her publics.

My understanding simply is when you have a student who will go out, join friends and misbehave, but then he says "because of my school, I won't do this" then there is a reputation to protect. So, when we look at corporate reputation, basically for me is that which sells the positive side of the entity (Buckman, Uni Z, Sept., 2022)

Corporate reputation is how you are seen or perceived by the outside public. Every university has its own culture and its own image or how it wants to be seen. But how you are able to put your culture, your traditions, your practices and activities together so that you are seen outside the organisation, I think will be the reputation. And it is the positive one because every organisation does not want to be seen negatively. Every organisation wants to be seen positively. So, if you are able to put yourself together and the people outside the organisation see you as what they expect from you, then they will say you have a reputation. And then it will make people respect you as the institution because you are doing what is expected of you. So yes, the reputation is very, very important and everybody wants a good reputation (Baaba, Uni Z, Sept., 2022)

A participant also indicated that corporate reputation is simply the image of the organisation, what can we associate you with.

What do you stand for, okay that is your image that is your projection that is your outlook that is what people see you to be. So, putting these big words aside, I'll just say the image of institution or the organisation. (Enock, Uni Y, Sept., 2022)

This is further corroborated by another participant.

For me, corporate reputation is anything that the entity would do that will not bring its image into the drain (Daniel, Uni Y, Dec., 2022)

But Kwame brought out another dimension of it by stating that reputation relates to image.

To me, in my view, the corporate reputation relates to the corporate image of the whole industry, or the whole institution so, for instance, units in the institution are supposed to ensure that things are done in such a way as to not to affect the corporate image of the university. So, in a way, the corporate reputation, I would say, may be similar to corporate image of an institution. (Kwame, Uni Y, Dec., 2022).

The view of Bright is at par with the views of Barnett et al. (2006), who classified corporate reputation into three classes of meanings.

I will say when they say corporate reputation, it is what you are known for as an institution. For instance, I have worked with another pro vice chancellor and at a point in time, and he or she said that, "If anyone is interested in leadership", I will send him

or her to Ashesi university, this is someone who was a pro vice chancellor, but you see, because they have built themselves in that area, people get to know them for that. So, there is a need for corporate organisations to carve a niche for itself. So, that people will know you for this one. Another example is that, I happen to work in collaboration with some of these affiliate institutions and I told them, you can't catch up with University Y, X or Z, so if you are coming in, just take an area and carve a niche for yourself in that area, so that you are known for that. I think that is what corporate reputation has to do with (Bright, Uni Y, Nov., 2022).

As part of the classification, they identified the assessment of the behavior of the organisations, their relationship with staff and customers, their unique culture, their values and beliefs. The aggregate of the aforementioned elements becomes what the organisation is known for and thus shapes their reputation.

Findings from this study align with the concept of corporate reputation as a multifaceted and complex concept. According to Fombrun (2006), corporate reputation is a concept of extraordinary multidisciplinary which is very complex to define. It's multidisciplinary and multifaceted nature has caused several scholars to define the concept differently. Fombrun and Van Riel (2003) state that corporate reputation based on different perspectives, has been defined as assessments that multiple stakeholders make about the company's ability to fulfill their expectations. This is very evident from findings of these study as participants of the study gave

distinct definitions of the term though similar to some extent. Past studies have identified the definition given by Bennett and Kottasz (2000) as the definition that most encompasses all facets of the concept (Trotta & Cavallaro, 2012).

Bennett and Kottasz (2000) define corporate reputation as the accumulation of all perceptions, expectations of an institution formed over time by customers, employees, suppliers, investors and the public. These perceptions are shaped based on the institution's values, attributes, personal experience or hearsay and the organisation's past activities. Corporate reputation is relevant in higher educational facilities to enhance their value in the competitive market. In the competitive world, Higher Educations adopt new strategies for adding uniqueness to their offerings where reputation is a key driver of differentiation (Davies and Hilton, 2014) and is therefore highly significant for Higher Educations. Participants' knowledge of the concept of corporate reputation proves the importance of corporate reputation in collegiate universities.

Reputation Management

Given the importance of corporate reputation to the success and sustainability of organisations, it is not surprising that its management continues to become a major matter for discussion. According to Shamma (2012), there is evidence to prove a continuous increase in interest in reputation management in all sectors. Higher educational institutions have not been left out in this new wave of interest in reputation management. Šontaitė and Kristensen (2009), state that there has been a surge in interest in corporate reputation management in higher educational institutions. They further explained that this may be as a result of

changing market dynamics and a decline of government support. Findings from this study aligned with claims of increasing interest in corporate reputation management in higher education institutions as participants showed a great understanding of the term and its importance to their institutions. Some participants explained reputation management as all the activities that the universities undertake to make sure that their stakeholders had a positive perception of them.

They further explain that this involves a continuation of what the university has been doing and fulfilling all that they have promised to do. This perception of reputation management is at par with the definition given by Aula and Mantere (2016), they assert that stakeholders are very essential factors in building and maintaining corporate reputation and that all striving to meet stakeholder demands to make sure they perceive your organisation in a positive light can be considered as reputation management. Similarly, Jonge (2007), state that reputation management is significantly influenced by interactions with all stakeholders.

Reputation management in my opinion is the total process of making sure that your stakeholders have positive perception about you, by doing the very thing you have been doing and you have promised to do. (Kwabena, Uni Z, Sept., 2022)

Reputation management is basically a coruscated effort I should say by the institution to manage the way in which it is perceived by the public. Actively managing the way, the university will be perceived by the outside world. Managing

the narrative so that it is the way the way that the institution wants to be perceived, not leaving anything to chance.

(Barbara, Uni X, Dec., 2022)

Based on the excerpts above, reputation management is therefore the intentional efforts an organisation invests to make sure that all stakeholders hold the organisation in high repute. Veloutou and Moutinho (2009) share the same views on reputation management, they stated that reputation management is an art that ensures that stakeholder experiences are positive and their expectations are well managed at all times. A director of public affairs at University X stated,

Well, reputation management, I think you should have a plan.

You should have a plan and a plan that's for communicating your values very well. And you should have a plan with resources available, both human and other resources available for the discharge of your duties. I think you have to train your staff very well to discharge your services. So you have the plan, you put the plan down, the protocols that you've adopted for managing your reputation, and then you bring them together, the human resource together, to train them that this is the way we are going. And so everybody will be on the same page, you all speak the same language. It won't be like one college is speaking one language, another college is speaking a different language. You should have a plan that is guiding everybody in discharging your duties, your services to your customers. And

in that case, the customer experience will be very good. (Felicia, Uni X, Nov., 2022)

According to the participant above, reputation management should be guided by a plan. This implies that any organisation that considers reputation management to be very essential must have an organized system that clearly states and guides what can be done and what cannot be done in the organisation. This plan ensures members of the organisation understand all company policies and are fully aware of how to discharge their duties both within the organisation and to customers. This perception of reputation management aligns with the definition of reputation management given by Liu (2015); he defines reputation management as a set of strategies that companies develop to manage the expectations of all stakeholders, manage those expectations in order to cause stakeholders to see the organisation in positive light.

Similarly, Fombrun et. al. (2000) stated that reputation management can be considered a more active, intentional, centralized, focused and scientific approach of communicating with stakeholders of an organisation. This definition also speaks of reputation management as art that has to be needed purposefully, according to a guide or plan and even refers to the term scientific approach. This could also mean that reputation management can be done on the basis of analyzing the needs and expectation of stakeholders and then developing plans and strategies to manage and fulfill those needs. Thus, this participant is of the view that reputation management in universities should not be left to chance but rather a set of strategies should be developed to guide the actions of all members of the university.

A participant of the study, likened reputation management to the prestige that some secondary schools in Ghana have. This participant further explained that the prestige that these schools have are as a result of the protocols they have that set them apart from other schools at in the same category. The values of these schools have been inculcated into staff, students and non-teaching staff and this makes them behave in particular ways giving these schools the prestige they have. In essence, the participant referred to reputation management as those activities or strategies that university authorities put in place to ensure that all members of the universities behave in ways that cause stakeholders to have a good perception of the university. This perception of reputation management is at par with the definition given by Veloutsou and Moutinho (2009), they stated that reputation management is the sum of the activities and strategies that ensures that stakeholder experience are positive and well managed.

This one I will go back to our secondary schools. You realize that, you have what they call A-class schools, the last time I was in contact with the immediate past director general of education, I told him something, I say look at all the schools that you are mentioning that they are A-class schools, about 98-99% of them are all mission schools. So, it means that, there are certain things they do in those schools and those are the things that lead to management of reputation. So, when you mention your name, people say, this person is from here or they get to know you, they see your character, as soon as you mention that

you are from that school, they expect you to exhibit A, B, C, D and that is what it is supposed to be. I think when it even comes to universities, you can also note that it is like that when it comes to some areas and these things have to be inculcated into the people; staff, students and other stakeholders. Yes, for instance you are in Cape Coast, when they mention Wesley Girls, you know what can happen there. It doesn't just happen, once the students come in, they make sure that they, take you through the various stages of what you need to do once you are in those four walls. And I think that is the way organisations also have to manage their reputation. (Bright, Uni Y, Nov., 2022)

Furthermore, some participant also defined reputation management as the art of preventing or managing situations that could potentially mar the reputation of the university. Reisnick (2004), states that when managing the reputation of a company, it is important to consider the following; identify the potential areas of reputation risks, identifying the relevant stakeholders and considering how these potential risks may affect the perception of the organisation.

Excerpts from the study revealed the following;

Reputation management is a way to make sure that, maybe something has gone wrong and you want to try to correct it in a way, so maybe you may use other medium to correct that kind of reputation, maybe it may be a rumour about your reputation,

and you have to clear the image, then maybe you can send out a notice to clarify. (Bernard, Uni Z, Sept., 2022)

Well simply I will say reputation management is where you would have to analyze events, make sacrifices to ensure that the negatives of the university, anything that will blemish the public outlook of the university will not be projected. (Buckman, Uni Z, Sept., 2022)

Reputation of the institution you lead, how do you manage it? It so fundamental that we need to protect the reputation, we need to manage the reputation of the institution that we lead. Because if you are leading an institution which has been tattered, then you are in trouble. How do you ensure that your image, your brand is always up high? (Edmond, Uni Y, Dec., 2022)

For as long as there are situations that can mar the image, their response turnaround is very critical. What it means is that, if you down play anything that is affecting the image, it, might be too late to remedy. You have to manage it and make sure the turnaround time is minimal, just so you maintain that corporate image, because if you spoil it, it might never be recovered. (Daniel, Uni Y, Dec., 2022)

So reputation management, coming from the corporate reputation that I guess is great. Reputation refers to your image, how people perceive you. And so reputation management, in a

way, is how to ensure that your reputation from any form of injury. More or less, manage it in such a way that the image is insulated from any contractions or anything bad. (Kwame, Uni X, Dec., 2022)

Francis's perception of reputation management is at par with the definition of the term given by Van Riel and Fombrun (2007); reputation management refers to the process of tracking an organisation's activity as well as all stakeholders' activities. He further states that these activities need to be reported and monitored to ensure that the organisations reputation is always positive. Similarly, Aula and Mantere (2005) are of the view that reputation management involves the ability to monitor and track changes among stakeholders and markets and react to them in a correct manner.

"So, I tried to put it in a way, that is how you manage, that is how to keep it (if you want) alive and, so this concept comes in here, monitoring and evaluation, the activities you do which keep your reputation up there, you continue to monitor, evaluate and you know what monitoring and evaluation is, you will check where there are slacks and you try to improve (Francis, Uni Z, Sept., 2022)

According to Fu (2014), reputation used to be a relatively new phenomenon in the corporate world. This is no longer the case in recent times as the term has become popular in corporate discussions. Building a reputation and managing it well and the risks associated have generated several discussions in many

organisations (Aula & Heinonenn, 2016). Evidently, the term has also gained a lot of prominence among university authorities in Ghana. Participants demonstrated an in-depth understanding of the term with a couple of variations yet similar definitions given. Generally, the term reputation management is perceived as a set of activities or strategies put in place to manage, build or maintain a positive reputation. This art of managing reputation is to ensure that all stakeholders have a positive perception of the organisations. Additionally, reputation management also has to do with managing or preventing potential risks in an organisation.

Research Question 5:

What are the choices and uses of corporate communication in corporate reputation management in the collegiate universities in Ghana?

Every organisation whether a small company with one staff or a large corporate organisation with branches and members across the globe, they all experience communication in one way or the other depending on its stakeholders (Ferguson, 1999). Similarly, Zaremba (2010), asserts that depending on the nature of an organisation, the choice of corporate communication and strategy may vary. Organisations must also understand that for the purpose of effective communication, different choices of communication can be employed depending on the stakeholder involved or the customer the company is dealing with (Zaremba, 2010). This is because different stakeholders may have different means of working and dealing with organisations (Spotts & Weinberger, 2010).

This is true for collegiate universities in Ghana, the interview session with participants revealed the various choices of corporate communication strategies

used in these universities. Thus, depending on what is being communicated and the audience for the message is meant for, a communication choice is made. Most participants revealed that the choice of corporate communication strategy depends on whether the message is intended for internal stakeholders or external stakeholders. The internal choice of internal corporate communication identified from the interview sessions include the use of memoranda's, face to face meetings, emails, circulars, letters, public lectures, corporate events and sometimes through announcements at events.

Dalton and Croft (2003), state that there are various modes of internal communication channels to choose from. They further expatiated that internal communication is usually achieved by newsletters, departmental briefings, memos, magazines and emails. Arins (2013), share similar views on internal corporate communication and identified e-mails as the most commonly used communication channel in organisations. Smith and Mounter, (2005) also point out that it is hard to imagine an organisation without emails and that emails have become a major part of communication and doing business in organisations.

The following are excerpts captured from participants from the interview sessions;

“The internal public mainly gets information from the university through memos, letters, announcements, adverts, notices, and sometimes at events. These are the main ones. Sometimes through press releases, press releases would inform the internal publics. Because of the structure of the university, the line of communication is established. So if the university as a corporate

entity wants to communicate to its internal publics, it just follows the line of communication. The exceptional cases are when there are events. I remember when I was a dean, I established the faculty durbar as a point where we will communicate some of the decisions of faculty to the very junior staff who may not be receiving letters and other things and who may not know about changes or innovations we want to bring to the faculty. Sometimes events provide the opportunities for the university to communicate to the internal publics. (Baaba, Uni Z, Dec., 2022).

Francis, who is a registrar in University Z indicated that *meetings, memos and circulars, announcements, publicity through especially our media house, these are all ways by which we communicate with our internal publics and of course for our external publics, if you want press releases when the need comes, reports, look at reports we send out when we have congregation, there is an annual report which actually reports on the activities of the institution and of course, the external too, we have engaged them in meetings, inviting them for events of the university, we communicate to them in that manner. So, this are the modes here.*

Another registrar stated this:

Generally, sometimes the internal one through the general notices that we send out to our deans, HODs, provost, the general notices is one, sometimes the memos from the top management to the entire university is another. The action and

minutes and the action of committee, we have sieve through it and communicate various target groups who are supposed to take action on the committee's work. When it comes to the external, the press releases and communique arising out of meetings are some of the means that we communicate (Edmond, Uni Y, Dec., 2022).

Type of Communication undertaken by the Universities

The interview sessions also revealed that, the choice of internal communication in some of the collegiate universities may vary depending on the audience the message is meant for. For instance, while internal communication is typically done using memos, meetings or emails, under certain circumstances when the message is intended to reach junior staff that may not have access to memos or meetings, information is disseminated at events where all members of the university are present. Additionally, social media was another tool for communication internally and the most utilized platform in this category is the “WhatsApp group” pages. Some participants also identified the use of radio stations for internal communications. This is typically done in all universities since they all have their own radio station.

I communicate through social media. Most at times, I normally send through their platforms WhatsApp platform or through their portal. (Bernard, Uni Z, Sept., 2022)

Moreover, a director stated that at their university, they have different channels which include students, staff who are professionals, administrators and academic staff who constitute their internal publics.

And then we also have students. So, what we do is to use different channels to communicate the same information to these different categories of internal, internal public or internal stakeholders. We have internet, we send information by internet or by email. We have a list for staff. So we use that very often. We also use our website to communicate information to our staff. So for the email parts, we have for both students and staff, we have a link that goes to students, we have the link that goes to staff. And so, it is information that is meant for the consumption by these two groups of people, we can use the email, and then we beef it up with our websites as well. And most of all, we also use social media because we realize that our students are mostly on social media. So, we use our social media platforms to communicate this information. And sometimes what we do is to link what we have. (Felicia, Uni X, Nov., 2022)

With regards to external communications, universities engage various modes of communication. This includes the use of formal letter, emails and electronic media. Technology has allowed people across the globe to communicate and exchange message via several channels. These channels of communication have contributed significantly to how stakeholders perceive organisations. Whiles

other forms of communication such as emails are often utilized in external communications, social media and other digitized platforms have become a major means of projecting organisations' reputations to major stakeholders. Participants of the study revealed a number of means by which their universities communicate with external stakeholders. However, the three major means of communicating with external stakeholders in these universities were through social media, press publicity and formal letters.

Bernard, a participant, asserts that social media platforms are used for corporate communication because it is faster and has a wide reach. According to this participant information disseminated via the university's social media channels reaches students in about a minute and almost every student receives the information and this makes it a fast and effective way of disseminating information.

In our case, the social media, that is the fastest and the easiest way to reach the students, when you send information in a minute, almost everywhere the student gets to know it. It is very fast and effective. (Bernard, Uni Z, Sept., 2022)

Another means of corporate communication in these universities is the use of press releases. These are either circulated in print media such as the newspapers, on social media or on both platforms. Additionally, universities also use mainstream media to communicate; radio stations and advertisements.

Below are excerpts from participants;

Buckman (Uni Z, Sept., 2022)

For external communications, there are two, one is the Media house and the second one is letters. The most used is media engagement. The college is a marketing triggered institution. The college is in competition and so strategically the only means that the college can be known by all considering that the clients of the college are scattered across the country some in very hinterlands where some the only source of information is the radio. So strategically, the media houses

Baaba (Uni Z, Sept., 2022)

For the external publics, I would say that we use mostly the media advertisement, the dailys, both print and electronic media. And in recent times, a lot of social media because whenever we have issues and we are dealing with the issues, we prefer to go to the press release that we send to our social media than to even go to a news, a media house to ask for them to do it for us. We use the online media often. And then we also do letters. We do letters to external publics

Felicia (Uni X, Nov., 2022)

I would say that it's a social media and websites, the homepage, because we realize a lot of our publics are there. A lot of them are there. So if it is not something that is mainly for internal consumption, and we think it's for all our publics, both internal and external, we better use the social media and our websites. A comprehensive part of the information is on the website and then we do a flyer, put it on the social media and link it to what is on the website. Because we think that that is where we will get a lot of stakeholders

Depending on the type of organisation, corporate reputation serves various purposes. According to Dowling (2006), corporate communication is the means by which a corporate organisation interacts with all its stakeholders, both internal and external. Forman and Argenti (2005) add that a company can create competitive advantage by using communications to form long-term relationships with its stakeholders and by socializing them to its culture, since stakeholders are the ones who shape the firm's reputation. Additionally, corporate communication is used to manage issues whether within or outside an organisation. Social media has become one of the key channels of corporate communication in organisation. It is easy to use and has a large audience reach and this has made it the easiest and fastest ways to send out information to stakeholders (Jones et al., 2009; Dijkmans et al. 2015). In collegiate universities in Ghana, it is one of the fastest means of reaching out to stakeholders especially students.

Excerpts from interview sessions on the internal and external uses of corporate communication;

Buckman (Uni Z, Sept., 2022)

Well upfront, when we talk about inaugural lectures, it is a university wide activity, we talk about congregations, we talk about memorial lectures, we talk about investiture of university vice chancellors. We talk about marketing new investments like the Goli that we have, like our water, which is a corporate event. Well for the university, I'll say the one that is most carried is congregation. Why because I think it is deemed as the prioritized platform for the university in making the public aware of its achievement and engaging Policy makers in terms of knowing challenges that university is facing. On the average, it's two times with about six sections

Baaba (Uni X, Sept., 2022)

Activities that my university engage in corporate communication activities, which means internal and external. For internal, I will say that the convocation meeting is a corporate communication activity. I will say that the durbars that the management holds with unions is one and with students, yes. For external, I will say what we do with the people around us. How do you call them? Community relations are one. The press releases one. The occasional, very, very rare, buying airtime to go on air as the university is also one. Congregation is also an event through which the university communicates to internal public as well as external public. Have I done five?

Participants of the study identified social responsibility as a significant use of corporate reputation. They further explained that, their universities engage in such activities to create a good reputation. Some mentioned that this was to attract funding and ensure that major stakeholders continued to have a good perception of the university. Similarly, Eberle et al. (2013) asserts that corporate communication plays a significant role in communicating an organisation's corporate social responsibility initiatives to the community and major stakeholders. Besides being a major use of corporate communication, effectively communicating an organisation's corporate social responsibility initiatives helps the organisation build and maintain a positive reputation.

Furthermore, according to Ajayi and Mmutle (2021), corporate communication is crucial to the communication and implementation of social responsibility initiatives within communities. This is corroborated by Kwabena of University X.

For instance, we have social responsibility (CSRs) that we do, we also have partnership engagement, and again there is a conscious effort of making sure that the university is well suited to attract funding, so there is an advancement office that does that, which is also within the corporate communication entity. Also, the university in a way trying to strategically get closer to its publics makes a conscious effort to get more attracted to the work of the broadcasting area, use it as a strategic communication tool for the community and in a way help the community. Events that we organize are one way that we undertake corporate

communication. For example, if you look at Kwame Nkrumah memorial lecture, it is one of the key aspects of our corporate communication strategy which draws people from industry and other places to come and speak about the founder of the university. (Kwabena, Uni Z, Sept., 2022)

Furthermore, advertisements and media engagements were identified as significant uses of corporate communication in these universities. Media advertisements where corporate communication is used include press release, stakeholder engagements, public relations and publicity. Advertisements and media engagements are important uses of corporate communication that aid organisations to promote their services and build a good reputation for their organisations.

Tools and Medium for Communication

The following are excerpts captured from participants from the interview sessions.

Edmond
(Uni Y, Dec., 2022)

Advertisement is one, public relations, media relations, alumni relations, protocol activities, publicity and publications. The most carried, I will say is the public relations, because as I said we have an outfit entirely for that and headed by a deputy registrar, who is supposed to be responsible for carrying out all the communication that the university will have to churn out to the public. So it is the first and foremost activity that we carry out

- Barbara** *I will say, periodic stakeholder engagement, media engagement, press releases, timely release of information through social media, and constant updates of our information on our website. The constant update of our social media handles, the reason being that, we have found that that is the most effective, people are busy and will not have time to go to the university's website to look at what is there, take their time to read*
- (Uni X, Dec., 2022)**
- Enock** *The one that is mostly carried out is actually the media and publications aspect. That one entails a lot of what we do. People are looking for information in the university, so you have to deal with them, so they come to your office. So, you open your doors, then give them the information that they need, that is one on one. Those who cannot come to you, they are publishing things in the media, you need to respond, social media; all the handles are talking about your university, you need to address them, so that is key, that is at the top. The others about social responsibility and call it publications all those things they all come under*
- (Uni Y, Nov., 2022)**

Source: Field survey (2022).

Based on participants' views above, it can be concluded that, corporate communication is a tool that collegiate universities in Ghana utilize to achieve various goals. Through corporate communication, these universities are able to communicate with all stakeholders; both internal and external. Finding from the

study also revealed that the choices of communication may differ depending on the message that is being communicated and whether the target stakeholders are external or internal. In today's fast paced world, social media is one of the most utilized channels of corporate communication. Collegiate universities have not been left out as they utilize several social media platforms to communicate with stakeholders. Other form of corporate communication choices includes letters, meetings, forums or events, adverts, TV and radio.

Internally, corporate reputation facilitates the flow of information within the university (information for staff and students). Externally, corporate communication helps universities build and maintain relationships with relevant stakeholders. Corporate communication is therefore a crucial factor in the reputation of these universities. Findings of the study revealed several uses of corporate communication in collegiate universities in Ghana. Collegiate universities navigate a competitive landscape and as such corporate communication can be used as a tool to create competitive advantage. These universities use corporate communication for advertisements, public engagements and stakeholder engagements.

Research Question 6:

How are corporate communication, image building and reputation management related?

Corporate communication, image building and reputation management are interrelated concepts that come together to shape the public perceptions of an organisation. Corporate communication is crucial for both reputation management and image building (Van Riel & Fombrun, 2007). Effectively communicating a company's beliefs and values are vital for building an

organisation's image. Additionally, corporate communication is the means by which a company manages its reputation. Leveraging various communication channels to disseminate key messages whether to protect or clarify misconceptions about organisations are all forms of managing reputation through corporate communication (Waeras & Byrkjeflot, 2012).

Role of Communication in building good Reputation

According to Argenti (2006), it is essential to understand the role of corporate communication in developing good reputations since corporate communication is closely linked reputation management. Similarly, Cornelissen (2020) is of the view that corporate communication is used to build and maintain favorable reputations with the organisation's stakeholders. To ascertain how collegiate universities in Ghana perceive the relationship between image building, corporate communication and reputation management, participants were required to answer questions regarding the aforementioned.

Participants agreed that corporate reputation is essential for building the image of an organisation. Furthermore, participants also stated that corporate communication if not managed strategically, can create a negative image for the university. Adding that, negative images of the university may be difficult to handle as stakeholders tend to be more influenced by negative news. Howbeit, corporate communication is the means by which negative perceptions of collegiate universities are dealt with.

- Baaba**
(Uni Z, Sept., 2022)
I think it is very, very critical in building the image of the university because how you engage it, if you are strategic, you can build a positive image for the university. If you are not strategic, you will build a negative image for the university. And most of the time, the negative image stays for a long time to erase. The positive image, people will say, well, it's a university, so they're doing what they should do. But if it is negative, it takes for a long time. So it is very, very important that it is done well for the image of the university.
- Felicia**
(Uni X, Nov., 2022)
Yes, it's very critical. Now, because if you communicate haphazardly, then it means that you don't intend to have any good image about yourself or your institution. You are not intending for any good image about your institution. You really have to be intentional about the way you communicate so that you end up with an impressive image.
- Barbara**
(Uni X, Dec., 2022)
It is critical, and the main reason will be that, that is the channel or process through which the publics see what is going on in the institution. That is your face to the public, what they see of you, what you are doing, what the benefits of being associated with you are.

Source: Field survey (2022).

Other participants agreed that corporate communication is closely connected to image building and more so in this era where social media is a major means of communication. These participants further asserted that social media has become a powerful communication tool to engage with stakeholders and to build good images of their universities. Similarly, Jones et al. (2009) and Dijkmans et al. (2015), posit that social media as a communication tool has become one of the key channels of corporate communication in organisation. In recent times social media has become the means by which the public and major stakeholders ascertain the reliability and credibility of several organisations. Thus, communications made through social media pages of these collegiate universities contribute immensely to the image they have built and also influence the image the general public has of the university.

It is so key, more especially in this time where the media seems to drive the agenda of most corporate institutions. You can't afford not to sharpen your corporate communication outfit; otherwise you will be lagging behind. We are in a very competitive environment. So, corporate communication is fundamental if you want to build a very good image and universities are not exempted. (Barbara, Uni X, Dec., 2022)

Edmond, a registrar is also of the view that corporate communication largely influences the image the general public has of the university. Thus, corporate communication is the channel through which an organisation builds a positive image or positive impression.

Yeah. Okay. So what will I see? Corporate image in the first place is how people say you are is corporate image? For

instance, even in our homes, when you are using a mirror, if you put a mirror in front of you, what you see in the mirror is the image of yourself. So the image is like a mirror or how other people see you. So for the mirror, you are seeing yourself, but when you come to the corporate world, the image is like a mirror that enables people to see you. So the way people see you is the image. And so in doing corporate communication, you are packaging your information in a manner that will give a very beautiful or positive impression.

(Edmond, Uni Y, Dec., 2022)

Other participants are of the view that, corporate communication is putting information out to the general public in a way that causes them to have a good image of the organisation which in this case is the university. According to Cornelissen (2014), corporate communication activities are usually, undertaken to create a positive organisational image in the minds of the general public, especially major stakeholders. Excerpts from the participants:

Felicia *And that is the image that you hold about you. So, if you*
(Uni X, Nov., *are communicating about your institution, you are*
2022) *putting information in a very attractive way so that*
people have an impressive image about you. So the
public relations you do, the media relationship. You are
doing it in a manner that will make both your internal
and external publics have a good image about it.

- Francis**
(Uni Z, Sept., 2022)
Totally, I agree you have to communicate, yesterday, I was at this research awards and grants ceremony and the keynote speaker said “I read your innovation report, you have done a lot but you are not talking much, it is upon reading that I realized that you have been doing” So if you don’t communicate, nobody gets to know. It is very important in building the image (I think) and it is something, we should take much more seriously. Because people will form opinions about the institution if they know what you’ve been doing over the years and the connection with what you’ve been doing then your image with them is positive and favorable.
- Daniel**
(Uni Y, Dec., 2022)
Oh, I do agree. Because in our modern world now, communication is key, whatever you put out there, people have different interpretations to it, so before anything goes out, you should make sure that communication is clear without any ambiguity, so that the stake holders will be able to understand the message that you want to put across, so that anytime you want to communicate, you are direct and you get to where you want to send across. so corporate communication is very critical in other to build the name of the university.

Source: Field survey (2022).

Corporate Communication being an instrument in executing Image Building

Additionally, participants identified corporate communication as an instrumental tool in executing image building strategies of the university. Corporate communication helps to disseminate positive messages and highlight an organisation's strengths and build positive relationships with stakeholders and this subsequently shapes and builds a favorable image of the organisation (Frandsen & Johansen, 2018). Similarly, Dolphin and Reed (2009) are of the view that by aligning communication efforts with an organisation's goals and values, corporate communication can effectively contribute to creating a positive and enduring image for the organisation.

Oh yeah, for me yeah, that is why I think strategic communication is key. Without strategic communication, the public will not be able to identify the uniqueness of the university's activities. (Buckman, Uni Z, Sept., 2022)

This was concurred by Baaba of the same university.

I agree, because it is only by corporate communication using the various strategies and tools within cooperate communication, that you can get the understanding of your stakeholders and your target audience and you can get feedback from them by doing that, that is where you are building and cementing your relationship and also to make sure that, if there are any negatives, we can have the opportunities to correct them and make sure you maintain

the positive image within the public (Baaba, Uni Z, Sept., 2022)

The reputation of an organisation cannot be entirely controlled, since it is formed by the perceptions of stakeholders. It has become even more uncontrollable in this digital age. However, organisations can influence the perception of stakeholders by being competent and communicating strategically and effectively (Floreddu et al., 2014). To effectively manage the reputation of an organisation credibility and trust are crucial and this is largely achieved through corporate communication (Fombrun & van Riel, 2004). Several scholars suggest that the key responsibility of corporate reputation is to build and maintain a favorable reputation with the organisation's stakeholders (Cornelissen, 2014). Many of the activities associated with corporate communications are related to promoting and managing reputations. From the interview sessions, it was revealed that activities of corporate reputation include reputation management, internal communications and managing crisis.

This proves that collegiate universities understand the role and the connection between corporate communication and reputation management. This is at par with Neill (2015), definition of the responsibilities of corporate communication. He stated that the responsibilities of corporate communication include crisis communication and management, community relations, ghostwriting for senior executives, management of social media, reputation management, internal communications, and government relations which are all essential for managing the reputation of organisations. Cornelisen et. al., (2006) view on the activities of corporate communication is at par with Neil's. According to Cornelisen et. al., (2006), corporate communication activities

include media relations, government relations, employee communications, community relations, advertising, investor relations, corporate design and issues management.

Participants agreed that reputation management and corporate communication are closely linked, however they shared varied views on how the two concepts are connected. However, participant's views were centered on the fact that communication is the means by which their universities manage their reputations and the perceptions of the general public about their universities. Others also identified reputation management as a key component of corporate communication.

If you look at the corporate entity we are in an era of competition and in an era of competition, communication plays a very key role in reputation management. So, if you have a chief executive who is not supported by a strong communication strategy. Strategically, the entity cannot place itself advantageously in the competitive arena.

(Buckman, Uni Z, Sept., 2022)

Okay, so corporate communication activities, right? So we have, we can have media relations, protocol, and corporate reputation management, image building. My understanding of corporate communications and where I sit as someone who is within the communication enterprise within the university is a conscious effort of interacting stakeholders within the university (both internal and external) in order to create and manage a positive feedback and mutual

understanding with the stakeholders. (Felicia, Uni X, Nov., 2022)

Oh yes, yes because it does both positively and negatively it does. It has both positive and negative outcomes like with the example that I gave. When you go to industry in Ghana, most industries in Ghana we all know that UCC graduates they are good and it is evident, but on the reverse if industry knows about this, of course, as we speak now, we are number one in Ghana according to The Times Education Ranking, number one in West Africa, number four in Africa. Research influence, all the big big universities are behind us, I am talking globally. The question is why is not bringing positive image whereby we can get the number one or highly rated students, as in why are we not the number one choice in terms of student's preference for a university, so it means that, if we do our work well and we come together, we can cause the corporate image to affect our reputation. Because the image is there, it is huge, we have heritage we have it there, but how to positively link it to let people erase that kind of negative aspect they have about the university is where the challenge is. (Daniel, Uni Y, Dec., 2022)

Participants were also of the view that corporate communication is critical to building the corporate image of their respective universities. According to most participants, when corporate communication is done haphazardly, the general public and stakeholders of the university may end up having a negative

impression of the university. Thus, corporate communication must be done effectively and strategically to ensure that the image of the university formed by stakeholders both internal and external is a positive one.

Excerpts from the interview sessions are presented below;

I agree. I agree because it gives the institution the opportunity to one, ensure that the right information gets out there and not distorted and two, responses to issues raised by clients and other stakeholders communicated without any contradictions. In other words, if you have many people communicating on behalf of the industry, without any professional touch, it's likely that you get the message distorted and not delivered in a way and manner that is expected. There is no information delivered. So it offers the opportunity for decisive communication to the investing purpose. (Kwame, Uni X, Dec., 2022)

Sure, I agree, and that is the means by which people get to know what is happening in the institution and the way we are making or how we are making progress. So, if you don't do that one, people don't seem to see or hear about you. I tell people KNUST of late is all over the place but I worked with one vice chancellor at a point in time and he will tell you that oh, we are a four-star university. He started by --- that and today it has catch up with everybody. (Bright, Uni Y, Nov., 2022)

According to a participant in University X, corporate communication is crucial for corporate image building because it is the only means by which stakeholders understand the values and beliefs of the university. Every information given whether to stakeholders or the general public is conveyed through communication and this is what forms the perceptions the public and stakeholders have of the universities.

It is critical, and the main reason will be that, that is the channel or process through which the publics see what is going on in the institution. That is your face to the public, what they see of you, what you are doing, what the benefits of being associated with who you are. (Kwame, Uni X, Dec., 2022)

Evidently participants of the study agree that corporate communication, image building and reputation management are closely interrelated. The interview sessions revealed that corporate communication as at the core of both image building and reputation management. The image that stakeholders and the general public have about organisations is built from the consistent communications and interactions they have had with the organisation over time. Additionally, managing the reputation of these universities includes managing the perceptions of stakeholders and the general public which are both done using corporate communication activities. Another crucial communication tool identified is the role of social media in managing corporate reputation and building the image of these universities. According to participant's social media has become a major corporate communication tool that has the capability to define the image of an organisation; and this could either be positive or negative.

Research Question 7

What are the effects of corporate communication activities on Corporate Image and Reputation of the collegiate universities in Ghana?

Corporate communication no matter what form it takes greatly impacts the reputation of an organisation. According to Argenti (2003), corporate communication is a management function that forms the framework for efficient coordination of communication (both internal and external) for the overall aim of creating and sustaining positive reputations with stakeholders of an organisation. Thus, corporate communication has the potential to positively or negatively affect the reputation of an organisation. The perception of stakeholders about an organisation is largely influenced by the type of messages the organisation puts out to the general public through their communication channels.

Participants of the study hold similar views about corporate communication, describing corporate communication as a major determinant of corporate reputation. According Forman and Argenti (2005), an organisation's reputation is significantly influenced by the effectiveness of corporate communication. This implies that, the effectiveness of corporate communication determine the kind of perception stakeholders will have about an organisation.

Below are excerpts from participants about instances where effective communication would have given stakeholders different views about their universities;

Kwabena (Uni Z, Sept., 2022)

Positive corporate reputation, for instance if I am to use my organisation, so if we have a collective and common goal of creating a positive perception about the university by churning out positives news and creating brand identifiers in the minds of our stakeholders if we are all conscious about that, obviously it will increase the positive perception people have about us. So, for instance, currently there is a perception that University Z is a difficult university to have your study, why? Because they think we have the rigor, we don't joke with our examination, you have to work hard before you can earn, people think it is negative but to me, if we have proper corporate communication, we can change that negative to become positive and that one will be our hallmark, our reputation that we can maintain to build the university.

Edmond (Uni Y, Dec., 2022)

When University Y converted all the halls of residence to mixed halls, there was a lot of a hullabaloo about why some halls have been converted. The way it was handled affected our image. We couldn't articulate the reasons clearly to the public. We allowed the alumni to run the show, dictating the pace why it shouldn't be done and affected our image negatively. So, the way you communicate effectively about a policy has a very strong impact on your reputation.

The situations described by Kwabena and Edmond are typical examples where a mishap in communication caused their universities (University Y and Z) to be perceived in a negative light. Their inability to effectively communicate their intentions carved a negative reputation for them. This aligns with the views shared by other participants; they stated that corporate reputation had the ability

to negatively or positively affect the reputation on an organisation. Making reference to the type of language used and how well the intended message is communicated.

Excerpts from interview sessions:

Francis
(Uni Z, Sept., 2022) *Corporate communication can have both positive and negative effect on your reputation. For instance, if you communicate to the public and there are a lot of mistakes in your write up, the public will presume, what kind of university is this that can't even construct a simple sentence? It is really going to affect you. And also, when you write it very well and the communication is very direct, also will build up the image.*

Enock
(Uni Y, Nov., 2022) *Language, the kind of language you use when you are communicating.*

Bright
(Uni Y, Nov., 2022) *The issue is that, if you communicate properly with the public, it' helps improve your image or reputation. If you don't do that well too, it also has its implications. So, if you are communicating, you have to come out clear for people to understand what you are talking about. Otherwise, the negative one will also take effect.*

Source: Field survey (2022).

Some participants are of the view that communication activities influence the trust and credibility stakeholders and the general public has about their university. This perception is at par with Cornelissen's view of communication activities, he stated that trust and communication is crucial to building a good reputation. Communicating effectively and openly establishes trust and clarity with all stakeholders including investors, customers, employees

and the general public. Clarity enhances the credibility of the organisation and fosters long term relationships between the organisation and its stakeholders (Cornelissen, 2020). Similarly, Balmer and Greyser (2006) posits that when the type of communication activities an organisation utilizes has the potential to negatively or positively affect the clarity of the message they intent to pass and subsequently affect the reputation of the organisation. Excerpts from interview sessions:

Baaba
(Uni Z, Sept., 2022)
I think one way that it affects us is clarity, clarity of your communication. Yes clarity because most of the time we are not clear about what we want to do so we say A then the next day we change A to A1 and then the next day it is oh it's no longer A1 it is B so yes or we meant we say A but we meant C so sometimes people are not very clear about what we actually want to do and you know in communication your consistency credibility very important so that's one affects us negatively.

Francis
(Uni Z, Sept., 2022)
Credibility for instance, credibility, that is one way that your corporate communication can affect, the way you communicate makes people to see you as a credible institution or not as a credible institution.

Barbara
(Uni X, Dec., 2022)
Well, we have established that corporate reputation is how an organisation is perceived and corporate communication has to do with the processes through which you manage reputation, by putting the institution out there in the public space and highlighting or showcasing the thing that the institution is doing, you are certainly influencing the perception of what the university is capable of doing. Setting the agenda for how the public out there would perceive the institution).

Kwame *“Um, I will say probably in time the questions round and the problem of meditation and of delivering decisive and critical information to the domestic stakeholders. You know, I have many people delivering that information and it's taught in the formation of venture. So if you have one unit, professional unit, four professionals who have the capacity to write effective press releases or speak the university's mandate, you are enabled to affect the reputation of the domestic positively.*

(Uni X, Dec., 2022)

Source: Field survey (2022).

From the above, it is clear that participants of the study strongly agree that corporate communication activities have a profound impact on corporate image and reputation. The way and manner in which these collegiate universities communicate with stakeholders, both internally and externally, shapes image and the reputation of the universities. The perceived image and reputation whether good or bad is largely dependent on the type of messages the university puts out and the manner or channel through which the message is communicated. According to participants of the study, corporate communication is likely to affect the trust and credibility of the university, stakeholder engagement and perception, external relations and public perceptions of the university. The participants were of the view that those in charge of corporate communication should thus receive professional and proper training in order to communicate effectively.

Chapter Summary

It was revealed from the data and interpretation through to the discussions that every participant agreed on the fact that it was the public (university) relations office through the public relations officer (assistant

registrar, university relations). The participants also opined the fact that their institution had a communication guide document that guides corporate communication and that all communications within and without the organisation ought to be guided by this guiding policy. On external means of communication, participants identified, Emails, postal mails, events, print ads, press statements o releases, radio and TV ads, reports, congregation, meetings, social media, letters, communique arising out of meetings, phone calls, publications, media interviews, alumni association, and institution's website.

Participants also added that in order to stay relevant, the corporate communication outfit should be fully equipped and up to date and that, it is the channel or process through which the public's view the institution. The participants were also in agreement with this view that public relations is the most carried out this is in the same vein with notions that, public relations is most significant or important because it is he medium of establishing social capital, trust and legitimacy. Findings from this study align with the concept of corporate reputation as a multifaceted and complex concept. Most participants revealed that the choice of corporate communication strategy depends on whether the message is intended for internal stakeholders or external stakeholders.

CHAPTER SIX

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

This final chapter presents a summary of the research and the main findings. This section also presents some implications, conclusion and outlines recommendations including areas for further research.

Summary of the study

Corporate communication is essential in creating a positive image and reputation of every organisation. For this to be achieved, corporate communication must be clearly defined and its roles properly stated and executed. However, past research and field observations proved that corporate communication in collegiate universities in Ghana have failed to effectively coordinate and clearly define the role of corporate communication making corporate communication ineffective in these universities. Additionally, these universities seem to have merged public relation activities with corporate communication further leading to the misconception of the roles of corporate communication. In light of the above, this research sought to properly assess the relationship between corporate communication activities and the image and reputation of collegiate universities in Ghana. Hence, the researcher premised the research on seven research questions; Finding out how corporate communication is conceptualized in these universities (University X, Y and X), Finding out how corporate communication is carried out in these universities, Determining how corporate communication activities can influence corporate image, identity, brand and reputation of the collegiate universities in Ghana, Examining how authorities of these universities perceive reputation and

reputation management in their universities, Identifying choices and uses of corporate communication in corporate reputation management in the Universities, analyzing the relationship between corporate communication, image building and reputation management and assessing the effects of corporate communication activities on Corporate Image and Reputation of these Universities.

Considering that the views of participants from the collegiate universities were essential to this study, the qualitative interpretivist paradigm was adopted and to assess the interplay of corporate communication activities on the image and reputation of collegiate universities in Ghana. Participants of the study included Vice Chancellors/pro-Vice Chancellors, Registrars, and Provosts of the various colleges in the study universities, the Directors of Public Relations /Affairs and College Registrars. Using the purposive sampling method, a total of 15 participants were selected from the various colleges of the study universities, five from each university. Qualitative interviews were used to offer opportunity for in-depth information from participants and this was done with an interview guide. Interview sessions largely followed a structured interview guide but the researcher also ensured that the sessions were interactive to allow participants to be able to share all information relevant to the study. Interview sessions were mostly face to face with a few of the participants opting for virtual (via zoom) interview sessions due to time constraints.

Key Findings

Based on the analysis and discussion of the data, the following key findings were made with specific reference to the research questions.

The conceptualization of corporate communication in collegiate universities reveals a multifaceted approach that centers on engaging both internal and external stakeholders. Participants described corporate communication as encompassing a wide range of activities, including public relations, marketing, branding, and corporate social responsibility. This broad scope underscores its critical role in fostering relationships, building institutional reputation, and aligning communication strategies with organisational goals. Interestingly, while participants recognized overlaps between corporate communication and fields like public relations and organisational communication, they were careful to distinguish the unique elements of each domain. This nuanced understanding highlights the complexity and specificity of corporate communication practices within academic institutions.

To further explore the operational dynamics, participants were asked to identify the offices officially responsible for corporate communication within their universities. A unanimous consensus emerged: the public relations office, led by the public relations officer (often an assistant registrar for university relations), was seen as the primary authority. Participants explained that the public relations officer typically serves as the spokesperson for the university registrar. Additionally, other offices, such as the Directorate of Public Affairs and the college secretary, were noted as key contributors to the university's corporate communication efforts. At its core, corporate communication was viewed as a strategic mechanism for engaging stakeholders and maintaining positive relationships that enhance the institution's image and reputation. This

engagement is not merely a function of outreach but a deliberate effort to align messages with the university's broader mission and identity.

Participants also emphasized the critical role of strategic communication in advancing the university's position in an increasingly competitive academic landscape. They noted that strategic alignment of corporate messages serves as a cornerstone for reinforcing the institution's credibility and influence. Moreover, corporate communication was seen as integral to maintaining and promoting the university's institutional identity. It reflects the values, goals, and ethos of the institution, ensuring coherence and clarity in how the university is perceived by its diverse stakeholders. This cohesive representation is essential for building trust and sustaining long-term relationships that support the university's objectives. Through these findings, it becomes clear that corporate communication in collegiate universities is a dynamic, strategic, and identity-driven practice, vital for both operational effectiveness and reputation management.

The execution of corporate communication within collegiate universities is marked by a blend of centralized oversight and semi-autonomous practices, with diverse channels used to engage both internal and external audiences. Participants highlighted that communication efforts are largely orchestrated by public relations offices, often under the registrar's supervision. However, colleges within the universities also manage some communications independently, reflecting a semi-autonomous collegiate system.

For internal communication, the methods employed include memos, notices, emails, and meetings. These channels are instrumental in ensuring smooth operations and fostering alignment among staff and faculty. In contrast,

external communication relies heavily on modern and traditional tools such as websites, social media platforms, press releases, and public events. These methods are strategically deployed to engage with external stakeholders, ranging from prospective students to the broader public.

The role of social media has been particularly emphasized as a critical component of external communication. Participants noted that platforms like Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram are invaluable in amplifying the university's public image and connecting with a wide range of stakeholders in real time. This integration of digital tools underscores the universities' efforts to remain accessible and relevant in an increasingly digital world. While public relations offices serve as the central hub for corporate communication, the semi-autonomous nature of collegiate universities introduces a decentralized element. Individual colleges within the universities often handle specific communication tasks independently. This dual approach allows for tailored messaging at the college level while maintaining coherence and alignment with the university's broader communication strategy.

Participants universally agreed that public relations activities dominate the corporate communication landscape in these institutions. These activities are pivotal in managing the university's reputation, handling media relations, and ensuring consistent messaging across all communication channels. Ultimately, the execution of corporate communication in collegiate universities is a dynamic process that balances centralized control with decentralized adaptability. By leveraging a mix of traditional and digital communication tools, these institutions effectively manage their relationships with diverse stakeholders, safeguarding their image and enhancing their reach.

Corporate communication serves as a cornerstone in shaping a university's corporate identity, brand, and reputation. Participants consistently emphasized that effective communication reinforces these elements, with brand consistency emerging as a critical factor in sustaining positive perceptions. Conversely, poor communication practices can erode trust, tarnish reputation, and weaken institutional credibility. The intricate relationship between corporate communication and concepts such as corporate identity, brand, and reputation was explored through participants' knowledge and lived experiences. They described these aspects as deeply interconnected. Corporate identity provides the foundation, reflecting the institution's core values and unique characteristics. This identity, when communicated effectively and consistently, informs the corporate brand, the external representation of the university's essence. Together, these elements coalesce to shape the institution's reputation, which in turn influences stakeholder trust and public perception.

A recurring theme in the findings was the importance of brand consistency. Participants highlighted that a coherent and uniform brand image is crucial for maintaining trust and ensuring that stakeholders perceive the institution in a favorable light. Any misalignment or inconsistency between the corporate brand and the institution's actions can lead to reputational damage, underscoring the need for a harmonious relationship between image, identity, and communication.

Credibility was identified as a key driver of reputation-building. Participants noted that effective corporate communication fosters credibility by aligning messages with institutional actions and values. This alignment not only

strengthens the university's reputation but also cultivates trust among stakeholders, reinforcing its long-term image.

The role of the collegiate system in this dynamic drew mixed reactions from participants. While some argued that the decentralized collegiate structure enhances reputation-building by allowing tailored communication at the college level, others believed that this approach could lead to inconsistencies and potential misalignment with the university's overarching brand and identity.

Ultimately, the findings highlight the symbiotic relationship between corporate communication and institutional identity, brand, and reputation. By maintaining a clear corporate identity, promoting a consistent brand, and fostering credibility through strategic communication, universities can effectively bolster their public image and reputation, ensuring long-term success and stakeholder trust.

The perception of reputation within universities is deeply tied to how the institution is judged by its stakeholders. Participants described reputation as the public's collective evaluation of the university, shaped by its historical performance, ongoing activities, and expectations for future achievements. This understanding underscores the dynamic and cumulative nature of reputation as a concept that evolves over time, influenced by consistent institutional efforts and stakeholder interactions.

Authorities in these universities view reputation management as essential for fostering institutional success and building stakeholder trust. Effective reputation management, according to participants, hinges on two primary strategies: consistent communication and proactive public engagement. These strategies enable the institution to stay connected with stakeholders,

address concerns, and highlight its achievements in a way that reinforces credibility and trust.

Institutional actions also play a pivotal role in shaping reputation. Participants noted that reputation is significantly influenced by how well the university aligns its actions with public expectations. When institutional decisions, policies, and activities reflect stakeholder interests and address their concerns, they positively impact the university's public image and reinforce its reputation.

Transparent communication emerged as a central theme in effective reputation management. Participants emphasized that regular, open communication is vital for aligning the public's perception with the institution's goals. Transparency fosters trust and ensures that stakeholders have a clear understanding of the university's values, objectives, and achievements.

Overall, reputation is not seen as a static attribute but rather as a dynamic construct shaped by the university's interactions with its stakeholders. Proactive engagement, strategic communication, and alignment between institutional actions and public expectations are viewed as critical components of maintaining and enhancing the university's reputation.

The choice and utilization of corporate communication channels in university reputation management are strategically influenced by the nature of the message and the target audience. Participants observed that universities carefully select communication methods to suit the type of information being conveyed and the stakeholders they aim to engage.

For internal audiences, including staff and students, a variety of communication tools are employed. Face-to-face meetings, circulars,

memoranda, and event-based announcements are widely used to ensure that messages reach both managerial levels and junior staff, who may not regularly access formal communication platforms. This layered approach ensures comprehensive internal engagement and minimizes the risk of miscommunication within the institution.

Externally, the use of press releases, public advertisements, and social media platforms takes center stage. These tools are vital for engaging broader audiences, including the general public and industry partners, and for projecting a positive image of the university beyond its immediate academic environment. Social media, in particular, stands out for its speed and extensive reach, making it an indispensable tool for reputation management in today's fast-paced digital landscape. Platforms like WhatsApp and university radio stations are also integral to rapid information dissemination, especially for time-sensitive updates or announcements aimed at students.

This differentiation in communication methods by stakeholder group underscores the strategic approach universities take to maintain and enhance their reputation. Tailoring messages and channels to specific audiences ensures that communication is effective, relevant, and impactful.

Ultimately, the uses of corporate communication in reputation management vary significantly among universities, reflecting the unique needs of each institution. However, the common thread is a deliberate emphasis on aligning communication strategies with stakeholder expectations to build and sustain a positive reputation.

The relationship between corporate communication, image building, and reputation management is both dynamic and interconnected. Participants underscored that strategic communication is the cornerstone of image building, as it shapes public impressions of the university. Effective communication strategies create favorable perceptions, while poor communication can lead to reputational damage that is difficult to repair.

Social media emerged as a crucial tool in this relationship. Platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter enable universities to consistently project a positive image to a diverse audience, including prospective students, alumni, and industry stakeholders. This consistent engagement builds credibility and reinforces a strong institutional image.

Moreover, participants noted that corporate communication serves as a reflection of the university's values. Messaging that is coherent and aligned with institutional principles helps to establish trust and project a reliable and credible image. This, in turn, enhances both internal and external perceptions, making stakeholders view the university as a dependable institution.

The interconnectedness of communication and reputation management was emphasized as well. Participants observed that effective communication strategies not only clarify institutional goals but also address misconceptions, ensuring that the university maintains a positive reputation among its stakeholders.

Corporate communication plays a pivotal role in shaping the university's corporate image and reputation. Participants consistently described it as a major determinant of reputation, with the content, tone, and medium of communication profoundly influencing public perceptions.

The clarity and consistency of communication emerged as central factors. Clear and professional messaging fosters trust and enhances the university's reputation, while inconsistencies or poorly managed communication can lead to doubts about the institution's credibility. Participants highlighted that credible communication signals competence and reliability, which are essential for building strong stakeholder relationships.

Language and tone also have a significant impact on reputation. Professional, clear, and direct language positively shapes public perceptions, whereas unprofessional or ambiguous communication can lead to misunderstandings or negative impressions. This underscores the importance of professionally trained personnel managing corporate communication to ensure precision and effectiveness, particularly during crises.

Field Observations: Challenges in Communication Practices

Several field observations revealed underlying challenges in the corporate communication landscape of collegiate universities:

1. **Lack of Comprehensive Policies:** Students and staff often engaged in corporate communication activities without explicit permissions or guidelines, reflecting an absence of a codified, comprehensive communication policy.
2. **Decentralized Practices:** The collegiate system sometimes led to Public Relations outfits being overlooked. Colleges, faculties, and departments often conducted communication activities independently, disregarding centralized coordination.
3. **Overlooked Frontline Staff:** Key individuals like university security receptionists, who interact with the public as first points of contact, were

not considered part of the corporate communication framework. This oversight diminishes the coherence of institutional messaging.

4. **Reactive Crisis Communication:** Universities often lacked proactive crisis communication strategies, resulting in emotive and inconsistent responses during crises. For instance, in one case, the spokesperson during a crisis was an academic with no professional expertise in communication, which hampered the institution's ability to manage the situation effectively.

These findings highlight the need for universities to adopt a more integrated and strategic approach to corporate communication. Clear policies, professional training, and consistent messaging across all levels of the institution are essential for building a resilient reputation and managing crises effectively.

Conclusions

Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions were made.

1. Corporate communication within collegiate universities emerges as a vital function that facilitates engagement with both internal and external stakeholders. This multidimensional activity spans Communication, Corporate Social Responsibility Activities, Relationship Management, Alumni Relations, Marketing, Media Relations, Public Relations, Publications, Protocol Activities, Promotions and Events, Advocacy and Strategic Partnership, Branding Activities, Advertisement and Commodification, Fundraising and Sponsorships, Organisational Communication, distinguishing itself from organisational communication through its unique focus and execution. At the heart of

this system is the public relations office, typically operating under the registrar, which oversees the university's corporate communication efforts.

2. The execution of corporate communication relies on a variety of channels tailored to the intended audience. Internally, tools like memos, emails, and meetings ensure effective dissemination of information, while external communication leverages websites, social media platforms, press releases, and public events to connect with broader audiences. Despite the centralization of these efforts in the public relations office, a semi-autonomous system allows individual colleges to manage certain aspects of communication independently, reflecting a balance between centralized oversight and localized flexibility.
3. The influence of corporate communication on a university's brand and reputation cannot be overstated. Brand consistency and the alignment of identity with reputation are critical to building credibility. Effective communication reinforces trust and reliability, while missteps or inconsistencies in messaging can significantly erode stakeholder confidence.
4. Authorities perceive reputation as a dynamic, cumulative evaluation shaped by the university's historical performance and aspirations for the future. Managing this reputation is deemed essential for fostering stakeholder trust, a goal achieved through transparent communication and active public engagement. Clear, consistent messaging plays a pivotal role in maintaining alignment between the institution's values and stakeholder perceptions.

5. The choice of communication channels is strategically informed by the type of message and its intended audience. For internal communications, face-to-face meetings and formal notices ensure clarity among staff and students, while external efforts often depend on the wide reach and immediacy of social media, alongside the targeted visibility of public advertisements.
6. Corporate communication is not only a tool for operational effectiveness but also a driver of image building. Consistent and professional messaging solidifies the university's credibility and fosters a positive impression among stakeholders. Conversely, ineffective communication can tarnish the institution's image and disrupt the trust cultivated over time.
7. In essence, corporate communication directly shapes a university's reputation through clarity, consistency, and credibility. A professional approach to messaging builds trust and fosters lasting relationships with stakeholders, ensuring that the university remains a trusted and respected institution in the eyes of the public. Miscommunication, on the other hand, carries significant risks, highlighting the importance of strategic and coherent communication practices at every level.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made based on the findings of the study.

1. **Establish Clear Corporate Communication Roles:** Management in collegiate universities should take steps to explicitly define the roles and responsibilities of those involved in corporate communication. The public relations office must have a clear and authoritative mandate to

lead these efforts, ensuring consistency across all communication initiatives. A comprehensive communication policy should be developed to delineate the boundaries and intersections of corporate communication with other departments, such as marketing. This policy would serve as a vital reference guide to streamline processes and minimize overlaps.

2. **Optimize Communication Channels:** Managements of Collegiate Universities must regularly evaluate the effectiveness of their communication tools, especially with the increasing reliance on social media for external engagement. To maintain coherence in messaging, guidelines should be established for college-level communication, ensuring alignment with the university's overall branding and communication strategies. These guidelines will help harmonize efforts across the institution while respecting the semi-autonomous nature of individual colleges.
3. **Focus on Brand Consistency:** Consistent branding is critical for strengthening institutional identity and reputation. Managements of Collegiate Universities should standardize branding elements across all communication platforms to foster a cohesive and recognizable image. Investing in staff training on strategic communication and brand management will empower employees to contribute effectively to reputation-building efforts while maintaining stakeholder trust.
4. **Enhance Transparency in Communication:** Transparency is key to aligning public perceptions with the university's mission. A proactive approach to sharing institutional goals, milestones, and achievements

will build credibility and foster stakeholder trust. Managements of Collegiate Universities should implement a strategy for consistent updates on institutional actions and demonstrate responsiveness to stakeholder concerns, ensuring their communication reflects openness and accountability.

5. **Strategize Communication for Audience Types:** Tailored communication is essential for maximizing engagement with diverse stakeholder groups. Internal stakeholders such as staff and students may require detailed updates via emails, memos, and meetings, while external audiences benefit from timely, engaging content shared through social media and public advertisements. Leveraging the immediacy and reach of social media platforms can help universities address the fast-paced information needs of students and the public effectively. Managements of Collegiate Universities should do the above for their institutions to stay relevant.
6. **Strengthen Image-Building Initiatives:** Managements of Collegiate Universities should design strategic campaigns to highlight their achievements, strengths, and unique offerings. Using analytics tools to measure the impact of corporate communication on public perception can provide actionable insights for refining strategies. These efforts should be geared towards creating a strong, favorable image that resonates with stakeholders and enhances the university's competitive positioning.
7. **Emphasize Professionalism in Communication:** Professionalism in corporate communication is paramount. Managements of Collegiate

Universities should ensure that communication roles and activities are filled by trained professionals who understand the nuances of public relations, branding, and other stakeholder engagements. Clear guidelines on tone and language should be adopted to promote a professional and consistent voice across all messaging, fostering a positive and trustworthy institutional image.

By implementing these recommendations, collegiate universities can enhance the effectiveness of their corporate communication, align their messaging with institutional values, and build a strong, credible reputation that resonates with stakeholders.

Implications for study

The findings of this research provide practical implications for corporate communication activities on the image and reputation on collegiate universities in Ghana. Today, in a world of increasing competitiveness in the educational landscape, reputation can be the deciding factor for stakeholders who wish to invest and a deciding factor for potential students as well. This emphasizes the importance of corporate communication activities, image building and reputation management to collegiate universities and other corporate institutions in Ghana.

Findings from the research identified that every member of the university is a potential ambassador of the study university. This implies their actions (whether students or staff) affect the reputation of their respective universities in one way or the other. Leveraging on this finding, universities can organize seminars on reputation management for all its members to ensure that each member of the university is a positive ambassador of the institution.

Additionally, students' role in reputation management can be particularly utilized in the social media space. Most students if not all are conversant social media trends and are likely to share school related content on their personal pages. This possesses opportunities for the universities, by harnessing students to purposefully share school-related content on their online channels. However, this must be well regulated to avoid sharing information that may tarnish the reputation of the universities.

Another finding of this research is that collegiate universities do not actively coordinate corporate communication activities and this has affected the realization of the full potential of corporate communication on building a positive reputation and image. Having access to the findings of this study will trigger collegiate universities to pay more attention to coordination and the monitoring of corporate communication activities in the study universities.

Furthermore, the study revealed the essence of having a well-planned structure for corporate communication activities and how this prevents haphazard communication and consequently influences the reputation of organisations positively.

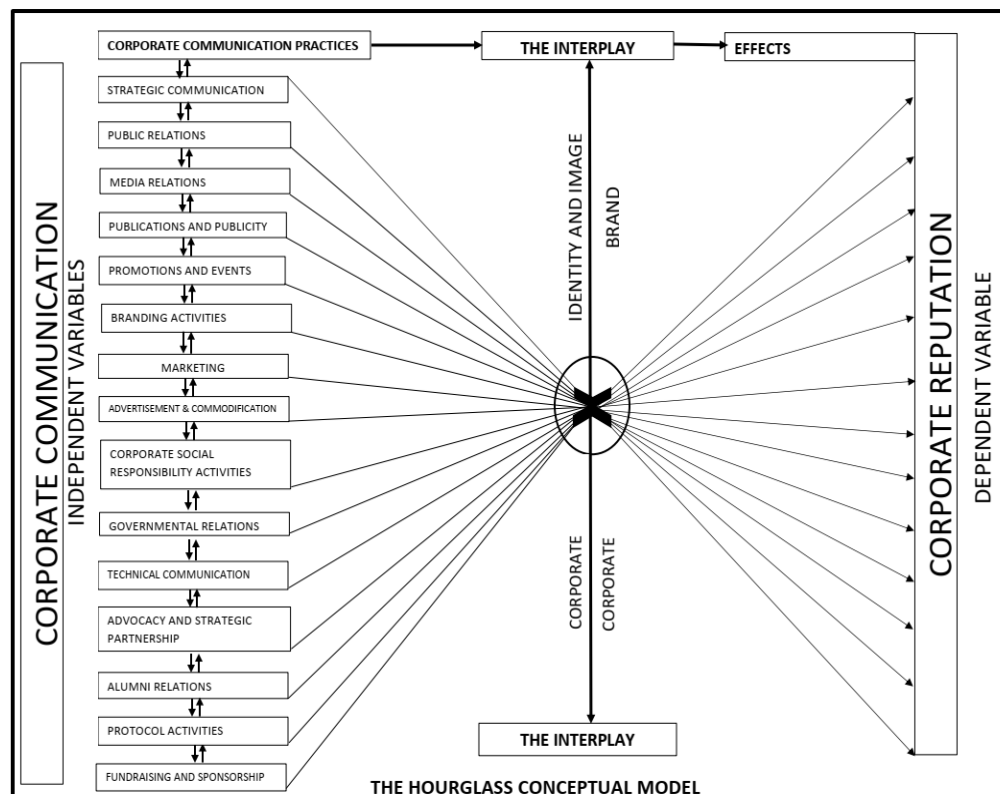
Finally, the study also revealed that credibility and clarity are crucial to building positive reputations and images of the collegiate university. This will ensure that communication with stakeholders is done in a manner that earns their trust and subsequently portrays the university as a credible institution.

Contribution to Knowledge

This study has made valuable contributions to the field of corporate communication and reputation management, offering both theoretical and practical insights:

Firstly, it has enriched the existing literature on corporate communication in collegiate universities. By adhering to rigorous scientific methodologies and ethical protocols, the research ensures its validity and reliability, successfully meeting the stringent standards for ethical and plagiarism-free scholarship. This comprehensive approach enhances the study's credibility and its utility as a reference for future research in the field.

Secondly, the researcher has developed an innovative conceptual model, termed the *Hourglass Conceptual Model*.



This model represents a significant theoretical advancement and provides a structured framework for understanding corporate communication and its influence on reputation management. The model is designed to be flexible, making it suitable for application or adaptation in future studies, particularly those employing quantitative or mixed-method approaches.

Through these contributions, the study not only broadens the academic discourse on corporate communication but also offers a practical tool that can guide further research and institutional strategies in managing corporate reputation effectively.

Suggestions for Future Research

In view of the gap in the current literature on actual benefits and challenges associated with executing corporate communication activities, further research in the field will be useful to collegiate universities in Ghana.

1. Collegiate universities and other higher education institutions in Ghana engage in corporate communication activities in one way or the other. However, there is little to no literature on the actual benefits of corporate communication to higher educational institutions such as collegiate universities. Thus, in the future, it would be very useful to study those activities that have indeed had an effect on the corporate reputations of higher education institutions.
2. Findings of this research revealed all members of the university including non-management staff and students as key agents of reputation management. It will be beneficial to use mixed methods design to study how the perceptions of staff and students influence the reputation of the universities and how the actions and inactions of staff and students influence the reputation and reputation management of collegiate universities in Ghana. A research in this area will provide a basis for investments to be made in educating members of the universities on corporate communication activities.

3. Furthermore, as this research was conducted in collegiate universities, it would be interesting to conduct similar studies in other higher educational institutions in Ghana to identify similarities and differences in corporate communication activities and reputation management.
4. Further still, social media was identified as a tool for building positive reputation in the study of collegiate universities, a study into the actual benefits and challenges of utilizing this communication channel to influence the perception of the general public about collegiate universities in Ghana will be needful.
5. Finally, there could be a future study on the main components of corporate reputation and how these components, for example, ethical standards, employer treatment of employees, financial performance, leadership style, quality of management, corporate governance, corporate citizenship and corporate values affect corporate reputation in higher education administration.

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APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Dear Participant,

This interview guide has been designed to gather information for a research work being undertaken on the topic above. You have been selected as one of the participants. The information you provide will not be made known to any other person or institution. Please kindly respond to the items/statements in this interview guide by responding to the questions posed by the researcher.

Please do not write your name or the name of your school on any part of the interview guide. I look forward to your participation and appreciate your effort in this important exercise.

Consent to Participate in Research:

I understand that any information I share will remain confidential and that when the results of the research are published or discussed in conferences, no information will be included that would reveal my identity. **I am 18 years of age or older.** By agreeing to continue with the survey and submit a response to the researcher in question, I am giving consent to participate in this study.

I consent to participate in this survey: ☐ Yes ☐ No

SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

Instruction: Please, place a tick (✓) in the appropriate columns to indicate your response.

1. Age: 35-45 (); 45-55 (); 55 and above ()
2. Religious Affiliation: Christianity (); Islam (); Traditional (); Non-Religious ()
3. Position

Vice Chancellor	()
Pro-Vice Chancellor	()
Registrar	()
Director/Head/PR/P	()
Provost	()
College Registrar	()

4. Years spent in the University: 4-10 (); 10-15 (); 15 and above ()

SECTION B what is the purpose of the information in the box? How do you ensure anonymity if you have participants' names attached to the instrument? Provide a justification for that.

<p>Introduction Key Components:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thank you • Your name • Purpose • Confidentiality • Duration • How interview will be conducted • Opportunity for questions • Signature of consent 	<p>I want to thank you for taking the time to meet with me today. My name is Kwabena Antwi-Konadu with my Research Assistant and I would like to talk to you about your experiences on the issue of corporate communication, image and reputation. Specifically, as one of the key persons in corporate communication, your responses will help to throw more light on the INTERPLAY OF CORPORATE COMMUNICATION ACTIVITIES ON THE IMAGE AND REPUTATION OF COLLEGIATE UNIVERSITIES IN GHANA.</p> <p>The interview would take less than an hour. I will be recording using my recorder the session because I don't want to miss any of your rich comments. Although I will be taking some notes during the session, I cannot possibly write fast enough to get it all down. Because we are on tape, please be sure to speak up so that we do not miss your comments.</p> <p>All responses will be kept confidential. This means that your interview responses will only be shared with research team members and we will ensure that any information we include in our report does not identify you as the respondent. Remember, you do not have to talk about anything you don't want to and you may end the interview at any time.</p> <p>Are there any questions about what I have just</p>
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	<p>explained?</p> <p>Are you willing to participate in this interview? If yes, then please let us sign below.</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>Name and Signature Name and Signature</p> <p>Date Date</p> <p>Interviewer Interviewee</p>
<p>Questions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No more than 15 open-ended questions • Ask factual before opinion • Use probes as needed 	<p>1. a. What is your understanding of corporate communication?</p> <p>b. Arrange the following communication activities in order of importance to you: (1=most important; 20=least important)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Strategic communication,</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Corporate Social Responsibility Activities,</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Governmental Relations,</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Alumni Relations,</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Marketing,</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Media Relations,</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Public Relations,</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Publications,</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Publicity,</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Protocol Activities,</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Promotions,</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Events,</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Advocacy,</p>

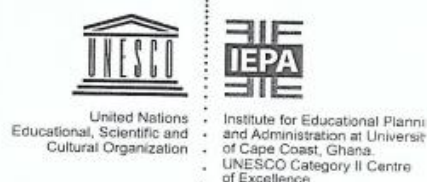
	<input type="checkbox"/> Strategic Partnership, <input type="checkbox"/> Branding Activities, <input type="checkbox"/> Advertisement, <input type="checkbox"/> Commodification, <input type="checkbox"/> Fundraising, <input type="checkbox"/> Sponsorship, <input type="checkbox"/> Technical Communication.
	<p>2. How does your university/outfit communicate to its publics?</p> <p>i. Internal</p> <p>ii. External</p> <p>3. Which outfit/office in the University is mandated officially to communicate to your publics?</p> <p>4. Give your opinion on the work of the Public Affairs/Relations Outfit regarding corporate communication and reputation building.</p> <p>5. What is the difference between Public Relations and Organisational Communication?</p> <p>6. Is Corporate Communication the same as Organisational Communication? YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Explain your answer</p> <p>7. Mention five (5) corporate communication activities that your institution/outfit engages in. Which of these activities is mostly carried on and why?</p> <p>8. Which Officer/Authority is in charge of official communication in your institution?</p> <p>9. Which medium of communication is mostly used for external communication in your institution/outfit. Explain the reason for this choice.</p> <p>10. Corporate communication is seen to be critical in building corporate image. If you agree/ disagree, give your reasons</p>

	<p>11. What is your understanding of Corporate Reputation?</p> <p>12. How do you explain Reputation Management?</p> <p>13. Explain how you understand the following concepts</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">Corporate identityCorporate imageCorporate brandImage building <p>14. Does Public Relations influence Corporate Image. Explain your answer</p> <p>15. Mention your greatest challenge in communicating to your publics</p> <p>16. Does your university have a communication policy that guide corporate communication? Can I see a copy of it, if yes</p> <p>17. Does the collegiate system pose any challenge in corporate communication in your institution? Explain your answer and how it affects the image and reputation of your institution.</p> <p>18. Does your university train its leaders in corporate communication?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">Office holdersStaffStudent leaders <p>19. The physical structures and your environment are said to be key in how your publics brand you. Do you agree/disagree? Explain further</p> <p>20. Mention one way by which corporate communication affects corporate reputation of your institution.</p> <p>21. Which of the following authorities would you suggest to police corporate communication in a collegiate university?</p>
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	<p>i. Vice chancellor</p> <p>ii. Registrar</p> <p>iii. Provost of the College</p> <p>iv. The College Registrar</p> <p>v. The Director/Head of Public Affairs/Relations</p> <p>Give a reason for your choice</p> <p>22. Suggest one measure to help improve corporate communication practice in your institution.</p> <p>23. Does your corporate image affect your corporate reputation?</p> <p>24. Does your corporate brand affect your corporate reputation?</p> <p>25. The physical architecture of your institution affects your image. True/False. Give reasons.</p> <p>26. Corporate communication is every staff/student's duty. Yes/No.</p> <p>Give reasons for your choice of answer</p> <p>27. Using corporate communication activities, state in your view, how your University can build a healthy corporate image and reputation.</p> <p>28. Please state any other information you wish to add for this study.</p>
<p>Closing Key</p> <p>Components:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional comments • Next steps • Thank you 	<p>Is there anything more you would like to add?</p> <p>I'll be analyzing the information you and others gave me and may submit a draft report to your institution in three months. I will be happy to send you a copy to review at that time, if you are interested.</p> <p>Thank you for your time.</p>

APPENDIX B

INTRODUCTORY LETTER



Our Ref.: IEPA-UNESCO /I.2/VOL.1/0088

24th September, 2021.

The Registrar
University of Ghana
Legon.

Dear Sir/Madam,

LETTER OF INTRODUCTION

The bearer of this letter **Mr Kwabena Antwi-Konadu (ED/QLR/14/0008)** is a Ph.D. Student studying at the Institute for Educational Planning and Administration (IEPA) at the University of Cape Coast.

He requires some information from you/your outfit for the purpose of writing his thesis titled: **"Assessing the Interplay of Corporate Communication Activities on the Image and Reputation of Collegiate Universities in Ghana"** as a requirement for his Ph.D. Programme.

Kindly give the necessary assistance that Mr. Antwi-Konadu requires to enable him gather the information he needs.

While anticipating your co-operation, we thank you for any help that you may be able to give him.

Thank you.

Yours faithfully,

Dr. Francis Ansah

HEAD, ACADEMIC PROGRAMMES

For: DEPUTY DIRECTOR-GENERAL (ACADEMIC PROGS. & PROFESSIONAL DEV'T)

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APPENDIX C

ETHICAL CLEARANCE

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD SECRETARIAT

TEL: 0558093143 / 0508878309
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OUR REF: UCC/IRB/A/2016/1177
YOUR REF:
OMB NO: 0990-0279
IORG #: IORG0009096

1TH DECEMBER 2021

Mr. Kwabena Antwi-Konadu
Institute for Educational Planning and Administration
University of Cape Coast

Dear Mr. Antwi-Konadu,

ETHICAL CLEARANCE – ID (UCCIRB/CES/2021/115)

The University of Cape Coast Institutional Review Board (UCCIRB) has granted Provisional Approval for the implementation of your research titled **Assessing the Interplay of Corporate Communication Activities on the Image and Reputation of Collegiate Universities in Ghana**. This approval is valid from 1st December, 2021 to 2nd December, 2022. You may apply for a renewal subject to submission of all the required documents that will be prescribed by the UCCIRB.

Please note that any modification to the project must be submitted to the UCCIRB for review and approval before its implementation. You are required to submit periodic review of the protocol to the Board and a final full review to the UCCIRB on completion of the research. The UCCIRB may observe or cause to be observed procedures and records of the research during and after implementation.

You are also required to report all serious adverse events related to this study to the UCCIRB within seven days verbally and fourteen days in writing.

Always quote the protocol identification number in all future correspondence with us in relation to this protocol.

Yours faithfully,

Samuel Asiedu Owusu, PhD
UCCIRB Administrator

APPENDIX D

A SAMPLE OF THE TRANSCRIPTIONS OF INTERVIEWS FROM UNIVERSITIES X,Y AND Z

SAMPLE 1

Q1

- a. Corporate communication for me is the way an organisation communicates with its publics both internal and external. It is actually the management (if you want) of the external and internal communication with a view engendering some favourable image of your institution and to prompt behaviours among your stakeholders towards the institution. That for me is my understanding of what corporate communication is.
- b. I looked at these and I can tell you all of them are important in corporate communication. But of cause, you have to do some before you do the others. Because some necessarily will lead to others being done. I see as if you knew, strategic communication for me should be number 1.
 1. Strategic communication- corporate communication must be strategic in order for you to achieve your mission your objective your goal it has to be strategic so for me that is number 1
 2. Government relations -the reason is that, we are a public institution, we depend heavily on government, so your relations with government must be at the top of the list if you are to be relevant and then to exist.
 3. Public relations-because my understanding of public relation will be the maintenance of of a positive or favourable image of the institution continuous maintenance of the favourable image of yourself.
 4. Branding activities
 5. Strategic partnership- because you need people who have the strength you can leverage on or tap into

6. Publicity
7. Corporate social responsibility activities
8. Alumni relations
9. Media relations
10. Marketing
11. Publications
12. Sponsorship
13. Fundraising
14. Technical communication
15. Promotion
16. Events
17. Protocol activities
18. Advertisement
19. Advocacy
20. Commodification

Q2.

Internal- meetings, memos and circulars, announcements, publicity through especially our CBS, this are all ways by which we communicate with our internal publics and of course for our external publics, if you want press releases when the need comes, reports, look at reports we send out when we have congregation, there is an annual report which actually reports on the activities of the institution and of course, the external too, we have engaged them in meetings, inviting them for events of the university, we communicate to them in that manner. So, this are the modes here

Q3.

That is the directorate of public affairs, specifically the public relations and protocol section of that directorate. But of course, you said officially, so officially they are mandated but you can imagine the university institution, some

office holders also have the responsibility, and so you will think that the vice chancellor is the chief PR person, the registrar is a PR person, the Pro VC, those who hold important, because they get to speak to the public both internal and external. But officially, it is the director of public affairs acting through the public relations and protocol section

Q4.

Within the constraints, I think they are doing a good job. Of course, you will want them to do better, but we know the constraints

And these constraints are?

Some of the constraints will be funding, for instance they want to do somethings that need to be funded. The general problem of funding for the university it self comes into play here, there are things they want to do, which they can not do, for instance if they want to contract people to do documentaries to cover several aspects or many aspects of the university's activities, funding for this becomes a problem. So, it is one thing that I can yield as a difficulty. When you come to the institution, apathy, we have always talked about this where, even when they have tied to reach people about events in the university, they do not care, people do not care a hoot. They invite people to events and they do not show up and that is certainly a constraint for them. But they are doing fairly well in the face of the constraints

Q5.

I think public relations can be an aspect of organisational communication, because then, organisational communication will refer to the way you communicate, all the activities that intend to communicate to the public in other to win a favourable image for yourself. Whereas public relations (as I mentioned somewhere earlier) will be the maintenance, and some have said that the professional maintenance of a favourable image of the institution, so maintaining the image. Now organisational communication as I said will be a broader one which will involve all of the activities that tend to engender favourable opinion of your organisation.

Q6.

They can be used interchangeably really, because then the corporate, I am looking at keywords the organisation and if you say the corporate entity, so you can use them, I believe we can use them interchangeably. It is a yes for me.

And your reason is that they promote the same thing?

Yeah, they promote the same thing.

Q7.

Some of the activities are events we organize, press releases, information dissemination, granting media interviews and branding.

But I think events is the one we have used most in the university because we are always organizing event to which we are inviting people to show them our side of things, what we do, to tell them or announce to them what we are engaged in, congregation for instance is an activity we show case what we have been doing for over the year, you will add an annual report we issue on such an occasion. We do that often and in doing that, we try to tell the public, our stakeholders the what we have been up to during the year.

Q8.

The director of public affairs, but I don't stop at that, because all key officers within the institution should be responsible for corporate communication and I dare add that, all of the publics you can identify both internal and external we expect to be responsible or engage in some sort of communication for us are student, our employees, and so on, they should also be part of that process, because you can go as the head and go and create a favourable image and in the twinkle of an eye, or a blink, any member of the other publics can go and pull that down. So, everyone.

Q9.

Reports, these annual reports we give out, whether they are research reports or activity-based reports like I mentioned the vice chancellor's report, annual reports. We do that often. The report communicates, what we have been doing over the year, allows people to get into the institution, so to speak and when

they do that, they see what we are doing. Especially when you train students when there are reports of that indicate for instance that you have been doing a lot of research and therefore you even within the world you are recognized as being the 24th, having moved away from first in terms of research influence globally. That engenders some opinion of you by the public.

Q10.

Totally, I agree you have to communicate, yesterday, I was at this research awards and grants ceremony and the keynote speaker said “I read your innovation report, you have done a lot but you are not talking much, it is upon reading that I realised that you have been doing...” So if you don’t communicate, no body gets to know. It is very important in building the image (I think) and it is something, we should take much more seriously. Because people will form opinions about the institution if they know what you’ve been doing over the years and the connect with what you’ve been doing then your image with them is positive and favourable.

Q11.

So corporate reputation will then be, if you want, the total perception that the publics have of you, about what you’ve been doing in the past and what expectations perhaps they have for you for the future. That is reputation. What do people think about you, what do the public think about you and of course that is based on what you have been doing in the past and that will lead to some expectations they will have of your future in terms of the things you do.

So, this one mean that, if you have a good reputation, you must manage it

Yes, continue, manage it, maintain it and public relations comes in here; professional maintenance of a favourable image of yourself.

So, it means that, Q12 has been answered in a way. Because I was going to ask how do you explain reputation management, if you wouldn’t mind, you can rephrase it for us

So, I tried to put it in a way, that is how you manage, that is how to keep it (if you want) alive and, so this concept comes in here, monitoring and evaluation,

the activities you do which keep your reputation up there, you continue to monitor, evaluate and you know what monitoring and evaluation is, you will check where there are slacks and you try to improve.

Do you do that in your institution

It is not documented, I would imagine that we do that, over the last two or so years, with the creation of an M&E unit within the vice chancellor's office, a bit of that has been done, but it has not been extensive. And not carried forward to managing the reputation, so to speak and so, perhaps this interview is a good thing and it's an area neglected which should be looked at.

Q13.

They appear to be very related concepts, so simply corporate identity, how you present yourself, who are you. Kind of that is your identity. If they say UCC what comes to people's minds' that is the identity. For instance, it is the number one university in Ghana. That is the identity we have carved for ourselves. Then image, how you are perceived by your publics, especially your external publics and of course you can include stakeholders in that. Brand will be the description (if you want) of an organisation. How do you describe that organisation, it will be that organisation's brand. Then image building, that is improving the image of the, you are building so you are improving the image. So, that will be if you want, through PR, corporate social responsibility and so on. Because then you want the view of you to continue to grow, and so you are building it from some level.

Q14.

Most certainly and I think I explained it earlier, most certainly, you know, because public relations I said earlier is the professional maintenance (let me add the word continuous) maintenance of a favourable image of yourself. And so, if you do that, then the chances are that, your image will be high up there, all the time. Once you stop, you are likely to have a slack, unless your activities speak for themselves. Except that I know now that even when you do things, people are not so interested in coming to fish, they will want you to tell them. It is just like they say, the African child if you want to hide something from them,

put it in the book; they will not read, so you have to go out and tell them look on this page, you will see this.

Q15

Especially for my internal publics, I see apathy, as I said there are times where our PR section or unit/outfit will go out there to try and communicate and yet, some will see and turn away and that really is a great challenge for the system. External, no; external I don't have any particular thing in mind, except we communicate and of course it is for them to take what we have said, but I think for them to take, we have to be convincing and so I don't see them as so much of a challenge, as long as we can convince them. You have control over things, yeah and even which channel we use.

Q16.

I am not sure we have a communication's policy. Even at the time I was in charge of public relations, we didn't have a document. Even though I went out to do things which guided like opinion service which guided, we never really had a codified document. I think we still don't have. I think the current director is supposed to have drawn up a document, which has not been considered at the highest level for it to be made an institutional policy yet. So the answer is, we don't have one.

Q17.

It does in a way. You see the collegiate system is seen as a decentralization of the administration of the university. At least that is what they see or what they think it should be and therefore, they should do their own things without reference to the centre. Semi-autonomous, that is what they think, they think they don't have to refer to the centre for anything, so that even when they are carrying out activities, the centre, DPA does not know. So you are unable to coordinate some of these activities. That affects the reputation, because it gives, a semblance of disorder within the institution because, you don't know what they are doing. Lately, we see that several meetings are taking place and they want the same, office holders to attend when that may not have been communicated to DPA to make available to the officers and so, and so you see

clashes of programmes all the time and certainly, this can not be good for your reputation. Because then, there is confusion.

Perhaps, sending the registrar's representative to a college is supposed to serve as a bridge between the centre and the college, and so where your representative does not even communicate to you, you don't get to know. Where the provost for instance are academic and administrative heads of the institution which will be a replica VC in the colleges, they will also have to communicate and so when that communication is not there, it becomes a difficulty, but you know, curing that as I said it's posting your representative to the place, so they keep you engaged at all times, it is expected that, there will be no confusion because they will communicate with you all the time so that, and you will know what is happening in places all the time.

What is the present situation in UCC regarding the relationship between the college registrar, the registrar of the university, the provost and if you like the vice chancellor in terms of communication in particular (corporate communication) so that it wouldn't affect the image negatively

It is not top notch, it is not the best, because as I said earlier, sometimes the colleges view themselves as semi-autonomous and therefor they should keep things within themselves. When it comes to appointments and promotion, it was a difficult thing getting them to say that even when, because then they've been allowed to promote up to the level of senior lecturer, it is a difficult thing asking them that, even when you have done that, bring it to central A&P for endorsement. But that is what we do now, and in order not to create confusion as for professorial, it is done solely by (administer the process) but it is considered solely by.

Q18.

Just a bit of training is done, we don't go all out to train them on corporate communication, the other bit will be in documents as to lines of communication, student leaders, they refer you to the student handbook, the way you communicate to the internal and external publics or with both the internal and external publics. That is about it, but there is no full-scale training. It is when

they do orientation program that the bit is talked about, which may be inadequate as I view it.

Q19.

I think I agree here we are talking about physical structures, if you go to an institution sometimes the architecture tells you that yeah, this is this institution. Painting tells you this is the institution, if you go to UG for instance, you see painting, the red top, the roof, the material they use for the roof almost all the buildings they try to do that, and so it gives you a particular image. The slate, brownish whatever erh ceramic something, it gives you a given image, if you come to UCC, we have tried to maintain a given colour but in between time, some people try to slip in some other colours which then detracts from our colours what our colours should be so, you will wonder whether this is part of the university, because expectation is that, the university have some colour and that all buildings within the university will follow that scale of colour and so yes it directly has link to the physical structures; the way your architecture is makes people to identify you a certain way. It creates crises in peoples mind “what is your brand”.

Q20.

Credibility for instance. Credibility, that is one way that your corporate communication can affect, the way you communicate makes people to see you as a credible institution or not as a credible institution.

Q21.

All of them should, the vice chancellor should be number one followed by the director of public relations or affairs, that is the official, where ever the vice chancellor goes and speaks, people will think he is speaking for the institution, when the registrar goes out somewhere and they ask him questions and he speaks, they think it is an official position, the registrar will be the third, the provost and the college registrar in that order.

Q22.

Training, people should be trained, properly trained to engage in corporate communication, some communicate to publics, without knowing the effect the

communication has on the image of the institution and so we should deliberately train them to know how to communicate to win a favourable image for ourselves. So, training for me is a key measure.

Q23.

Again, most definitely, because then the image is how people see you, the perception of you and so if there is a given perception of you either negative or positive, that will be the reputation they have of you. If they have a negative image of you, negative reputation: a positive image of you, a positive reputation and so, they are correlated positively.

Q24.

Yes, it does, what's the brand? The brand is what the outside ascribes to you as an institution, just as the question before, if what they ascribe to you is negative, then obviously your reputation is viewed and if they ascribe positive brand to you, your reputation is as well positive.

Q25.

It is true, it affects. If your architecture is one that makes people identify you as this person, orderliness then of course, your image is a positive one. We have done a bit of work over the last several years, where we have even asked people who have tried to paint out of scheme to revert to the original scheme so that we are also identified as this. Architectural, in times past, we had some simple simple structures put in some locations which didn't actually near to our benefit but you see now we are trying to let architecture buildings be built in a particular way. The current structures that are coming up are very tall, we are no longer the short people.

What about your road network

Sure, that can be defined as part of architecture if you go out there and see what we have done recently, you will see that people see and you will see the beauty that has come to campus. The markings also bring some extra beauty into the campus.

Q26.

Yes, it is everybody's business, because I said that you can make every effort to build an image but when one member of your publics, be it a student or an employee miscommunicates, that affects your image, students have to be nested or cultivated when they are on campus, if you don't, when they say can affect your image. Like you have people, alumni saying "me I will never come back to the university of cape coast, I will never recommend it to anyone else". Employees go and say things about how management for instance does not treat them well and speaks negatively. And so, everyone is important, the things they say out there, make people think oh that is an institution to belong to, to visit. So, it is very important for every member. So, I made a point that perhaps in addition to treating your publics well, you should train them on what they should do to ensure that a good image is built of your institution. Because, we are all in it together.

Q27.

Again, I go back to the need to train people to be engaged in communication on behalf of the university. Getting people to be ambassadors of the institution, especially when it comes to students. Because sometimes we went out on our trip program and we have past students of UCC be ambassadors to go and speak on behalf of the institution, and that gets people to say wow, if this guy was there, experienced it and is telling us a good experience, why won't I also go. Train people, make them ambassadors, nurture people so they can speak positively about you.

Q28.

Intentionality, you have to be intentional about the things you want to do, and when you are intentional, you commit resources to doing them. And corporate communication we have to be intentional about it, we have to sensitize people on the usefulness of corporate communication because, then it is that which brings about credibility, reliability for your institution. And therefore, we should be intentional about building the culture about communicating positively about the institution into our publics especially our internal publics.