**Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Research Brief**

**By**

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# Writer’s Name and Topic of Reviewed Article

This paper, written by Natnael Kebede, discusses the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) topic from the perspective of communications with internal and external stakeholders, and the opportunities and challenges it introduces. A CSR framework for designing strategies and theories for further research regarding the topic is also detailed.

# Research Brief Title

A descriptive and engaging title for the discussion presented in this paper: The Evolution of Corporate Social Responsibility Communication.

# Analysis of Article

The original article title and citation for the discussion presented in this paper:

Crane, A., Glozer, S. (2016). Researching Corporate Social Responsibility Communication: Themes, Opportunities and Challenges. *Journal of Management Studies, 53*, 1223-1252. https://doi.org/10.1111/joms.12196

# Key Points

The following key points highlight the important details discussed and examined in the article.

* The belief that Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) originated from the critical communications corporations engage with stakeholders led to management researches proposing different assumptions, approaches, and goals. The article responds to this scenario.
* A review of existing research suggestions, which entails a holistic and multidisciplinary understanding of CSR communications regarding the main contributions, assumptions, and approaches evident in research suggestions.
* A recommendation for a new conceptual framework for CSR communication that reduces the complexity of CSR communication research and provides a unique classification of CSR communication concepts.
* A mapping of the framework to theories, opportunities, and challenges for further research by considering the link between internal and external stakeholders and how CSR interpretation influences an organization's image.

# Overview

CSR communication is challenging as it bears various threats and opportunities. Hence, an effective communication strategy is essential to influence consumer behavior, employee performance, and enable managers and stakeholders to understand the globalized economy. It also helps identify the company’s image the same way the public perceives it, depending on its activities.

# What the Research Shows

Written by Andrew Crane, York University, and Sarah Glozer, Royal Holloway, University of London, the article in discussion appeared in Journal of Management Studies academic journal.

It provided a comprehensive and multidisciplinary understanding through a study analyzing five articles published within the last 15 years, discussed in various areas of business and management, and are part of the five streams of management literature. Additionally, the research examined: the paradigm of CSR communication, the audience of communications, the purpose of CSR communication, and the theory of CSR communication.

The results detail that CSR communication previously focused on consumers, investors, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) instead of employees. It also focused on organizational perspectives, such as maximizing profits instead of how it contributes to individual and collective decision making. Unfortunately, communication is also driven by stakeholders who achieve the firm’s goals (Barnett, 2007). Furthermore, CSR communication has been explored via stakeholder and legitimacy theories, expanding the concern from sustainability reports to the role it plays in achieving, maintaining, and inventing business goals aligned with society (O’Donovan, 2002).

Finally, the article's data analysis indicates that that firm’s CSR programs intend to inform or persuade the firm's CSR practices and exhibit a one-way communication to reinforce corporate actions and identity.

# Why This Matters

As discussed above, if a company has a CSR strategy to address issues such as social or environmental ones, there are challenges in the implementation of CSR communication. As a result, an organization's leadership team should consider a new conceptual framework for CSR communication to be effective. Fortunately, the research proposed one that is specifically designed to reduce the complexity of implementing CSR communication by incorporating the following four key points.

1) CSR Integration: Integrating knowledge about CSR facts throughout the organization by discussing CSR practices and performance with employees.

2) CSR Interpretation: Focusing on internal stakeholders as well as managers when constructing the role of communications and CSR practices.

3) CSR Identity: How organizations can craft effective CSR communication strategies at it pertains to external stakeholders.

4) CSR Image: The identities that organizations show around their stakeholders when having external communications about CSR with the public.

This framework helps corporations to perform better in various ways, generally. First, it allows organizations to inform employees about CSR practices and performance to engage them in creating a more robust two-way communication to support and reinforce corporate actions and identity. Second, it helps managers engage with external stakeholders and perceive CSR communication as a concrete component of the business image. Lastly, the framework comes in handy in implementing business objectives, which are usually influenced by the network of stakeholders that are generally embedded in organizations.

That said, an example of the components of this type of framework applied to companies such as Motorola showed that the CSR communication strategy was effective in achieving employee buy-in. It also allowed stakeholders and consumers to maintain CSR knowledge, trust, and perceptions of corporate identity. The approach, in turn, helped the leadership team and the company, as a whole, to keep an excellent image in the products they provide as well as in their sustainability practices (Kim, 2011).

# Conclusion

In conclusion, the relationship between businesses and their stakeholders is critical in achieving business objectives and maintaining sustainability activities. This relationship is based on the design, implementation, and success of a CSR communication strategy. Hence, firms should consider a CSR communication framework that reduces the complexity of implementing such strategies. The approach should also add value to business and society.

Furthermore, CSR communication is broadening in scope and moving from the traditional face-to-face approach to advanced online methods that encompass several stakeholders. As a result, it is crucial to highlight and examine the drivers of internet-based CSR communication when designing a strategy to use.

# Related Links

* “CSR Communications.” (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Arxx_uhTIgA>)
* “CSR Online: Internet Based Communication.” (<https://doi.org/10.1007/3-540-33247-2_30>)

# References

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