


## Corporate social responsibility communication strategies through social media and their influence on e-reputation in Nigeria

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### ABSTRACT

*This study investigates the influence of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) communication strategies via social media on corporate e-reputation in Nigeria. In an era where online platforms shape brand perception and consumer behavior, CSR communications have emerged as a vital tool for companies to engage with stakeholders, enhance transparency, and foster trust. The research employs an abductive methodology and systematic literature review (SLR), exploring CSR awareness, consumer responses, and behavioral shifts driven by CSR initiatives communicated on social media. Using online polls and Q&A sessions for data collection, the study analyzes the effectiveness of CSR strategies and their impact on consumer trust, loyalty, and purchasing decisions. Findings reveal that CSR communication through social media significantly enhances e-reputation, positively influencing brand loyalty and consumer perception. The study underscores the importance of transparent and engaging CSR communication in building a strong online reputation, and highlights how visual content, storytelling, and real-time updates can amplify CSR efforts. This research contributes to the understanding of the role of digital communication in shaping corporate e-reputation in Nigeria.*

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## Introduction

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) communication strategies have become increasingly important in the digital age, particularly through social media platforms. The use of social media for CSR communication allows companies to reach a wide audience, engage directly with stakeholders, and shape their e-reputation in real-time. The effectiveness of these strategies is often measured by how well they enhance the company's image, foster trust, and maintains transparency (Etter & Fieseler, 2010). Companies that openly share their CSR initiatives and outcomes, including both successes and challenges, are more likely to build trust with their audience (Capriotti & Moreno, 2007). Transparency is a key component of credibility, and it can be reinforced through regular updates and honest communication. Social media allows for two-way communication, enabling companies to not only disseminate information but also engage with their stakeholders (Schramm-Klein, Morschett, Swoboda & Steinmann, 2020). This interaction can be through comments, polls, or direct messages, helping to create a dialogue around CSR issues.

The internet is now widely recognized as a key platform for strengthening and building relationships between companies and the public (Waters et al., 2009). Online channels have emerged as vital tools for managing corporate reputations (Jones, 2009; Castellano & Dutot, 2013). Scholars suggest that company websites offer numerous opportunities for organizations to present and communicate their corporate identity, product offerings, and management practices to stakeholders (Rolland & Bazzoni, 2009). Effectively sharing this information within a brand's community through social networks necessitates a sustained commitment to social, environmental, and humanitarian values (Castelló & Ros, 2012).

Effective CSR communication often involves storytelling, where companies share stories that highlight their social and environmental efforts. This can humanize the brand and make CSR initiatives more relatable and memorable (Madinabeitia, 2010).

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The use of visuals, such as images, infographics, and videos, can make CSR messages more engaging and easier to understand. Visual content tends to be more shareable, which can amplify the reach of CSR messages (Castelló & Ros, 2012). Collaborating with influencers who share similar values can help companies reach a broader audience and enhance the credibility of their CSR efforts. Influencers can help communicate CSR initiatives in a more relatable and impactful way. Social media enables companies to provide real-time updates on their CSR activities (Madinabeitia, 2010). This immediacy can help maintain a continuous dialogue with stakeholders and demonstrate the ongoing nature of the company's commitment to social responsibility.

CSR communication through social media can significantly influence a company's e-reputation. Positive CSR messaging can enhance the company's image, build brand loyalty, and mitigate negative perceptions (Etter & Fieseler, 2010). Conversely, ineffective or insincere CSR communication can lead to skepticism, criticism, and damage to e-reputation. Studies have shown that companies with strong CSR communication strategies on social media platforms tend to have a more favorable e-reputation, as these strategies help build trust, transparency, and engagement with stakeholders. For example, a study by Schramm-Klein et al. (2020) found that CSR communication via social media positively impacts brand perception and consumer trust, which in turn enhances the company's e-reputation.

Consistently with systematic literature review (SLR) and poll data analysis, this study primarily focused on CSR communication strategies through social media and their salient influence on e-reputation in Nigeria especially on the area customer perceptions and behaviors, enhance the transparent business practices through CSR communications, to improve corporate e-reputation and awareness on CSR on social media. The remaining parts of this paper are grouped as follows; section two details the fundamental statements on corporate social responsibility, social media, communications strategies and e-reputation. The next section follows with approach on data gathering and measures for analysis. Section four section records data analysis with pictorial explanation. Conclusion and recommendations are capsulated in section five.

## **Literature Review**

Promoting business entities and brands have been a fundamental objective and focused point for management and marketing departments. The advancement of technologies more especially on communication and social media have made the basic objective of management and marketing departments a bit easier and accessible. Looking effectively on CSR communication strategies through social media and influence on e-reputation, there are various perspectives regarding the issue (Brown et al., 2006; Simoes et al., 2005; Jones, 2009). This paper intensively resolves around marketing and public awareness perspectives.

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has become a crucial aspect of business strategy in today's world, reflecting the growing expectation for companies to contribute positively to society beyond their core profit-making activities. CSR involves a commitment to ethical behavior, sustainable practices, and a focus on the well-being of all stakeholders, including employees, customers, communities, and the environment.

Companies are increasingly focusing on reducing their environmental footprint through sustainable practices (Carroll & Buchholtz, 2014). This includes initiatives such as reducing carbon emissions, minimizing waste, promoting recycling, and adopting renewable energy sources. Environmental stewardship is often seen as a fundamental aspect of CSR, with many companies striving to balance economic growth with ecological preservation (Crane, Matten & Spence, 2019). CSR today emphasizes social responsibility, including efforts to improve social equity, diversity, and inclusion (Kotler & Lee, 2005). Companies engage with communities by supporting education, health care, and economic development initiatives (Aguinis & Glavas, 2012). Social equity also involves ensuring fair labor practices, respecting human rights, and promoting diversity within the workplace. In today's world, CSR encompasses strong adherence to ethical business practices (Carroll, 1991). This means operating with transparency, integrity, and accountability. Companies are expected to avoid corruption, respect labor rights, and engage in fair trade practices (Freeman, Wicks & Parmar, 2004). Ethical business conduct is not just about compliance but also about building trust with consumers and other stakeholders (Porter & Kramer, 2006). Good corporate governance is a critical component of CSR. This includes practices that ensure accountability, transparency, and fairness in a company's operations (Schwartz & Carroll, 2003). Effective corporate governance structures help in aligning the interests of shareholders with those of other stakeholders, thereby promoting long-term sustainability (Freeman, Wicks & Parmar, 2004). Protecting and promoting human rights is a central tenet of modern CSR (Kotler & Lee, 2005). Companies are increasingly held accountable for their impact on human rights, whether directly or through their supply chains. This includes ensuring safe working conditions, fair wages, and the avoidance of child labor (Aguinis & Glavas, 2012). CSR today also involves protecting consumers through honest marketing, safeguarding privacy, and ensuring product safety (Aguinis & Glavas, 2012). Companies are expected to be transparent about their products and services, providing consumers with accurate information to make informed choices (Schwartz & Carroll, 2003). While CSR goes beyond charity, corporate philanthropy remains an important aspect of CSR. Many companies support various social causes, from disaster relief to funding education and healthcare projects, as a way of giving back to society (KPMG, 2022). Companies are also encouraged to contribute to economic development by fostering innovation, creating jobs, and engaging in responsible investments (Schwartz & Carroll, 2003). This includes developing products and services that address societal challenges, such as affordable healthcare, sustainable agriculture, and renewable energy solutions.

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has become a crucial element in the strategies of modern businesses. It involves companies taking responsibility for their impact on society and the environment, often going beyond mere compliance with legal requirements.

Recent developments in CSR highlight an increasing focus on sustainability, diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI), as well as ethical governance. Many companies are now aligning their CSR initiatives with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). For example, Unilever's commitment to sustainable sourcing and reducing its environmental footprint is a notable case of a large corporation embedding sustainability into its business model (WBCSD, 2023). According to (Edelman Trust Barometer, 2024) employees and consumers increasingly expect companies to take a stand on social justice issues, with DEI initiatives playing a critical role in maintaining trust. Investors are placing more emphasis on companies' ESG (Environmental, Social, and Governance) performance, influencing corporate strategies (BlackRock, 2024).

CSR plays a critical role in building a company's reputation and fostering trust among consumers, investors, and other stakeholders. A strong commitment to CSR can differentiate a company in the marketplace and enhance brand loyalty. Companies that are committed to CSR often attract top talent and investors who are looking for ethical and sustainable business practices. Employees are increasingly seeking employers whose values align with their own, while investors are looking at CSR as a marker of long-term viability and risk management (Beckman et al. 2009). By engaging in responsible business practices, companies can mitigate risks related to legal issues, environmental impact, and social unrest (Brousseau et al. 2013). CSR can help companies navigate complex regulatory environments and avoid potential scandals. CSR aligns with global initiatives like the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which aim to address global challenges such as poverty, inequality, climate change, and environmental degradation (WBCSD, 2023). Companies that integrate CSR into their operations contribute to these global efforts, making a positive impact on society.

CSR is more than a trend; it is a fundamental aspect of how businesses operate in today's world. Companies that embrace CSR are not only contributing to a better society but are also positioning themselves for long-term success.

Transparency in CSR communication is crucial for building trust with stakeholders. Companies that are open about their CSR activities, including both successes and challenges, tend to foster stronger engagement and loyalty (Kim, 2017). Social media platforms have become essential for CSR communication, allowing companies to reach a broader audience and engage in real-time conversations with stakeholders. Social media also enables companies to personalize their CSR messages and create more interactive content (Etter, 2014). Storytelling is a powerful strategy in CSR communication, making complex initiatives more relatable and memorable. By sharing compelling stories about their CSR efforts, companies can better connect with their audiences emotionally (Gill, 2015). Using visual content, such as info-graphics, videos, and images, in CSR communication can significantly increase stakeholder engagement. Visual content is often more engaging and easier to share, which helps in amplifying CSR messages (Schivinski & Dabrowski, 2016). Consistency in CSR messaging across different communication channels is essential for maintaining credibility and reinforcing the company's commitment to CSR. Inconsistent messages can lead to confusion and skepticism among stakeholders (Du, Bhattacharya & Sen, 2010). Authentic CSR communication is crucial for avoiding stakeholder skepticism. Companies that are perceived as genuinely committed to their CSR initiatives are more likely to gain positive responses from stakeholders (Morsing, & Schultz, 2006). Engaging stakeholders through CSR communication not only enhances the company's image but also contributes to more effective CSR strategies. Active involvement of stakeholders in CSR discussions can lead to more meaningful and impactful CSR initiatives (Dhanesh, 2015)

Kim and Rader (2010) identified two communication strategies employed by companies, which are based on the relationship between the firm's communication approach and the perception of customer.

- i. Corporate ability communication strategy (CAS): enhancing the public's cognitive associations with an organization's expertise and proficiency in delivering its products and services and
- ii. Corporate social responsibility communication strategy (CSRS): fostering corporate associations with stakeholders by highlighting an organization's commitment to social responsibility.

The CAS is characterized by six key dimensions of a company: expertise in product or service quality, global success, implementation of quality control programs, industry leadership, market orientation, and efforts in innovation and R&D. CAS tends to have a more lasting impact on customers' evaluations compared to CSRS, as it centers on products and services (Kim and Rader, 2010).

Brown and Dacin (1997) suggested that CAS associations have a stronger influence on both product perception and brand evaluation compared to CSRS. They proposed that this difference arises because, with CAS, companies communicate from a dual perspective, making them more effective in shaping the consumer's point of view.

**Table 1:** Summarized the CSR dimension as adopted by Carroll 1991

CSR dimensions	Description	Example of items to measure it
Economic Responsibility	Business has to be profitable and produces goods and services which are desirable in a society	Book value, profit, market share, sales profitability, revenue, market performance
Legal responsibility	Meeting society's expectation as established by the law	Content from a lawsuit, case, suit, settlements, indictment, court
Ethical responsibility	Following the modes of conduct considered to be morally right	Special duties, right or wrong, dishonesty, corruption, fraud, damage to the environment, claims
Philanthropic responsibility	Involving actively in the betterment of society	Social performance, environmental performance, human rights, financial integrity, charity work, volunteer

*Source:* Adapted from Carroll (1991)

Regarding CSRS, Kim and Rader (2010) utilize a six-dimension scale that includes the company's environmental stewardship, philanthropic contributions, educational commitments, employee involvement, public health initiatives, and sponsorship of cultural activities

Engaging in CSR communication strategies with stakeholders is often seen as a way to enhance public perception of the company. Freeman referred to this aspect of CSR as stakeholder theory, arguing that companies do not have responsibilities toward society at large but should instead focus on individuals directly impacted by their activities (Donaldson and Preston, 1995; Clarkson, 1995). Notably, the survey by Aguinis and Glavas (2012) highlights the connection between reputation, communication strategies, and CSR outcomes, particularly in terms of building intangible brand assets, such as brand impact and reputation, and in cultivating relationships with stakeholders. However, the focus in this context tends to narrow stakeholders down to customers, emphasizing factors like customer loyalty, customer choice, and product/company evaluation.

In the literature, CSR is frequently operationalized through corporate social performance. Igalens and Gond (2003) proposed five levels of measurement: the content of companies' monthly reports, pollution indicators, attitudes or values derived from questionnaire surveys, corporate reputation, and behavioral measures or audits conducted by external organizations.

This perspective aligns closely with the summary provided by Aguinis and Glavas (2012). They identify various moderators and predictors of CSR outcomes but observe that conceptual papers tend to emphasize customer information intensity, public perception of CSR, macroeconomic factors, and cultural and institutional contexts. However, a significant issue in the academic literature is the presence of a "black box" (Aguinis and Glavas, 2012), as the relationship between CSR predictors and outcomes at the institutional level is not thoroughly examined. On the other hand, Aguinis and Glavas point out the extensive and fragmented body of field research, where each study tends to focus on highly specific aspects of CSR. This fragmentation creates a knowledge gap, complicating the understanding of CSR's impact and posing challenges to the development of multi-level CSR research. Expanding this understanding requires bridging the gap between conceptual and empirical studies and fostering a more integrated approach to CSR research across different levels and contexts.

This study contributes to the ongoing evaluation of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) by delving deeper into the fourth level of analysis and integrating a social media perspective. By embracing this approach, we aim to advance the understanding of how CSR influences various outcomes, particularly in mediation effects, addressing Aguinis and Glavas' second identified knowledge gap. Additionally, we propose a novel tool for future research in this field, offering a pathway to explore the fourth knowledge gap identified by these scholars. This expanded framework not only enriches the existing CSR measurement but also provides a new lens through which the impact of CSR on organizational and societal outcomes can be examined.

The relationship between corporate social responsibility (CSR) strategies and organizational performance is one of the most thoroughly explored areas in CSR research. Despite the extensive investigation, there is still no definitive consensus on how these two variables interact. Some researchers, such as Griffin and Mahon (1997), Posnikoff (1997), Mallin et al. (2014), Arshad et al. (2012), and Flammer (2013), argue that CSR strategies have a positive effect on performance, suggesting that companies committed to social responsibility often experience enhanced financial and operational outcomes. Conversely, other scholars, including Wright and Ferris (1997), assert that CSR strategies may negatively impact performance, possibly due to the allocation of resources away from core business activities. Additionally, a third perspective, represented by researchers like Teoh et al. (1999), Fauzi (2009), and Hasen Thuhin (2014), posits that CSR strategies do not significantly influence performance, implying that the impact of CSR may be neutral or dependent on other factors. The ongoing debate highlights the complexity of the CSR-performance link and underscores the need for further research to unravel this intricate relationship.

Schramm-Klein et al. (2015) highlight that CSR has significant positive effects on retailers' performance and emphasize the importance of identifying which CSR dimensions should be prioritized. Their findings reveal that both downstream activities, which are customer oriented, and upstream activities, which focus on suppliers, are crucial in driving performance improvements. Moreover, studies examining the impact of CSR on retailers also underscore the importance of effective CSR communication, as it plays a key role in enhancing a company's reputation and stakeholder engagement. Kweh et al. (2014) further demonstrate that investing in the social aspects of CSR can lead to improved corporate performance. However, they note that inconsistencies in earlier studies regarding the CSR-performance relationship may stem from the various metrics and proxies used to measure corporate performance, suggesting that a more standardized approach could yield clearer results. Giannarakis et al. (2011) specifically examine the telecommunications sector, finding that it is particularly sensitive to CSR concerns, with most European operators actively implementing CSR initiatives. This sector-specific insight highlights the variability in CSR impact across different industries. Wang et al. (2014) add to the discussion by showing that companies that integrate CSR strategies tend to achieve higher corporate efficiency compared to those that do not. This suggests that CSR is not merely a peripheral concern but can be a driver of operational excellence. Lastly, Loureiro et al. (2012) explore the broader significance of CSR in the automobile industry, focusing on its role in enhancing consumer satisfaction. They propose that CSR contributes to better financial performance not only by directly reducing costs and boosting productivity but also indirectly by fostering higher levels of customer satisfaction, which can lead to increased loyalty and long-term profitability. These findings collectively underscore the multifaceted impact of CSR across different industries and dimensions of corporate performance.

Research on the connection between corporate social responsibility (CSR) and reputation consistently highlights the positive influence of CSR on an organization's public image. Atakan-Duman and Ozdora-Aksak (2014) conducted a thematic content analysis of banks' corporate websites to examine the role of public relations and CSR practices in shaping organizational identities. Their findings clearly indicate that CSR strategies have a favorable impact on corporate reputation. In the retail sector, Prieto et al. (2014) emphasize the importance of reputation management for multinational corporations, focusing on WalMart as a case study. They argue that these organizations should prioritize their reputation, especially given prior research that demonstrates how reputation can shape stakeholder perceptions (Rindova et al., 2005), influence investor reactions (Pfarrer et al., 2010), and contribute to long-term profitability (Roberts and Dowling, 2002; Śmigielska, 2013). While the direct impact of CSR on profitability can be challenging to quantify, CSR strategies are instrumental in building a positive image for retail organizations. Additionally, these strategies help create sustainable competitive advantages, such as fostering strong relationships with suppliers and employees, and serve as a foundation for long-term corporate strategy. Boyd et al. (2010) further support this view, asserting that reputation is a critical tool for companies to maintain a sustainable competitive advantage and to establish enduring relationships with various stakeholder groups. Through effective CSR practices, companies can enhance their reputation, which in turn strengthens their position in the market and contributes to their long-term success.

This review highlights the ongoing debate regarding the impact of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) on organizational performance, revealing that there is still no definitive consensus in the literature. This lack of agreement suggests the need for alternative approaches to studying CSR's effects. In response, some researchers have shifted their focus towards exploring new moderators, such as corporate reputation or image, as key factors influencing the relationship between CSR and performance. This is the approach we adopt in our study. Following the guidance of Cohen et al. (2011), we emphasize the importance of research protocols and outcomes that gain greater significance by incorporating non-financial information. By doing so, we aim to provide a more nuanced understanding of how CSR contributes to overall organizational success, beyond traditional financial metrics.

Social media refers to digital platforms and applications that enable users to create, share, and interact with content and information online through networks of social connections. These platforms facilitate communication, collaboration, and the exchange of ideas, allowing individuals, organizations, and communities to engage in real-time interactions across geographical boundaries. Social media is primarily characterized by content created and shared by users rather than traditional media producers. This includes text, images, videos, and other forms of multimedia. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) define social media as "a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content." Social media platforms are designed to foster interaction among users, enabling them to comment, like, share, and collaborate on content. These interactions create networks of users who can communicate directly with each other. As Boyd and Ellison (2007) describe, social media sites allow users to "construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system." Social media serves as a tool for community building, allowing individuals with common interests to connect, share experiences, and collaborate. These virtual communities can range from informal groups to large, organized networks. According to Kietzmann et al. (2011), social media "involves a set of relationships among people who share interests, activities, backgrounds, or real-life connections." One of the key features of social media is the ability to share information instantaneously. This immediacy allows for timely updates, discussions, and reactions to current events. As stated by McFarland and Ployhart (2015), social media "provides a real-time, interactive, and highly accessible platform for sharing information and engaging in conversations with a broad audience." Social media encompasses a wide range of platforms, each with different formats and purposes, including social networking sites (e.g., Facebook, LinkedIn), microblogging services (e.g., Twitter), multimedia sharing platforms (e.g., YouTube, Instagram), and messaging apps (e.g., WhatsApp, Snapchat). These platforms enable different forms of communication, from brief status updates to long-form content creation.

Conceptualizing social media in the context of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) involves understanding how digital platforms serve as both a communication tool and a strategic asset for organizations. Social media has transformed the way companies engage with stakeholders, allowing for real-time interaction, transparency, and the amplification of CSR initiatives.

Social media platforms provide companies with the ability to disseminate CSR information quickly and broadly, reaching a diverse audience that includes consumers, employees, investors, and the general public. Through platforms like Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, and Instagram, organizations can share their CSR activities, achievements, and goals, fostering a sense of transparency and accountability. Research by Capriotti and Moreno (2007) highlights that social media enables companies to build and maintain relationships with stakeholders by engaging them in two-way communication, thereby enhancing the credibility and visibility of their CSR efforts. Social media facilitates stakeholder engagement by providing a space for dialogue and feedback, allowing companies to listen to and respond to stakeholder concerns in real-time. This interactive nature of social media helps organizations to co-create CSR strategies with their stakeholders, making the initiatives more relevant and impactful. As noted by Morsing and Schultz (2006), engaging stakeholders through social media not only strengthens relationships but also enhances the company's reputation, as stakeholders feel more involved and valued in the CSR process. The reputational impact of CSR is significantly influenced by how it is communicated on social media. A well-managed social media presence can amplify positive CSR actions, while poor communication or negative feedback can quickly damage a company's reputation. Kim and Ferguson (2014) shows that companies that effectively use social media to communicate their CSR activities tend to have stronger reputations, as stakeholders perceive these companies as more socially responsible and transparent. The interactive and fast-paced nature of social media encourages companies to be more innovative in their CSR initiatives. By observing trends and participating in online conversations, companies can identify emerging social and environmental issues that resonate with their stakeholders, leading to the development of more relevant and forward-thinking CSR strategies. As argued by Hinson, Boateng, and Madichie (2010), social media not only facilitates the dissemination of CSR information but also acts as a catalyst for CSR innovation by enabling companies to stay connected with societal expectations and demands.

While social media offers numerous opportunities for CSR communication and engagement, it also presents challenges. Companies must navigate the risks of misinformation, negative publicity, and the potential for backlash if their CSR activities are perceived as insincere or purely for marketing purposes. It is crucial for organizations to approach social media with authenticity and a clear strategy to avoid these pitfalls. According to Lee, Oh, and Kim (2013), the credibility of CSR communication on social media depends largely on the perceived alignment between the company's actions and its stated CSR values. Social media plays a crucial role in the conceptualization and execution of CSR, serving as a powerful tool for communication, stakeholder engagement, reputation management, and innovation. However, its effective use requires careful consideration of the challenges and complexities associated with digital communication.

E-reputation, or online reputation, refers to the perception of an individual, organization, or brand as shaped by the digital environment. It encompasses all the information available online about a person or entity, including user-generated content, reviews, social media interactions, and other digital communications that contribute to how they are viewed by the public.

E-reputation is built on the cumulative digital footprint left by an entity, which includes content they create or that is created about them. This can range from official statements and marketing materials to customer reviews and social media comments. According to Jones et al. (2009), an entity's e-reputation is "the sum of the information and feedback available online that influences the public's perception." E-reputation is heavily influenced by how an entity engages with its stakeholders online. Responsive and transparent communication can enhance e-reputation, while neglecting or poorly managing online interactions can harm it. As Aula (2010) suggests, the dialogue between the organization and its stakeholders in the digital space is a critical factor in shaping and maintaining e-reputation. Social media plays a significant role in shaping e-reputation, as it allows for rapid dissemination of information and the potential for viral content. Positive or negative experiences shared on social media can quickly influence public perception. Kietzmann et al. (2011) note that social media platforms serve as arenas where reputations can be constructed, contested, and destroyed in real time. Online reviews and feedback are crucial components of e-reputation. Positive reviews can bolster an entity's reputation, while negative reviews can significantly damage it. According to Chen and Xie (2008), online consumer reviews represent a powerful mechanism through which reputation is formed in the digital marketplace. The management of online crises is essential to maintaining e-reputation. How an entity handles negative incidents, criticism, or misinformation online can either mitigate damage or exacerbate the situation. Coombs (2007) highlights the importance of a proactive and strategic approach to crisis communication, stating that effective crisis management in the digital age is key to protecting and restoring e-reputation. E-reputation, when considered within the context of social media and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), refers to the online perception and credibility of an organization based on its CSR activities and how these are communicated and perceived on social media platforms. In this context, e-reputation is shaped by the transparency, authenticity, and engagement demonstrated by a company in its CSR initiatives, as well as the reactions and interactions from stakeholders on social media. Social media provides a platform for organizations to communicate their CSR efforts in real time, but the success of these communications in building a positive e-reputation depends heavily on their perceived transparency and authenticity. Stakeholders expect companies to provide honest and accurate information about their CSR activities. According to Capriotti (2011), companies that use social media to transparently communicate their CSR initiatives are more likely to build trust and a positive e-reputation among stakeholders. Social media enables two-way communication, allowing stakeholders to engage with companies regarding their CSR activities. This interaction can

significantly influence e-reputation, as active and responsive engagement can enhance stakeholders' perceptions of the company's commitment to social responsibility. Morsing and Schultz (2006) argue that engaging in dialogue with stakeholders on social media can strengthen a company's e-reputation by demonstrating its willingness to listen, respond, and adapt to stakeholder concerns. Social media has the power to amplify CSR efforts, both positively and negatively. Positive CSR activities that resonate with stakeholders can be shared widely, enhancing the company's e-reputation. Conversely, any perceived shortcomings or failures in CSR can also be rapidly disseminated, potentially damaging the company's online reputation. Kim and Ferguson (2014) note that social media serves as a double-edged sword, where effective CSR communication can significantly boost e-reputation, but mismanagement or negative feedback can lead to reputational risks. Social media allows users to generate content related to a company's CSR activities, such as sharing, commenting, or creating posts about their experiences or opinions. Positive user-generated content can reinforce a company's e-reputation, while negative content can undermine it. Additionally, third-party endorsements from influencers, NGOs, or other reputable entities on social media can further shape the public's perception of a company's CSR efforts. As indicated by Lange, Lee, and Dai (2011), the credibility of third-party endorsements on social media can significantly impact a company's e-reputation, particularly in the context of CSR. In situations where a company's CSR activities are called into question or criticized on social media, effective crisis management becomes crucial for protecting and restoring e-reputation. Companies need to respond swiftly and appropriately to any negative feedback or crises related to their CSR efforts to mitigate potential damage to their reputation. Coombs (2007) emphasizes that how a company manages crises related to CSR on social media can determine the long-term impact on its e-reputation.

## Research and Methodology

The method adopted in this study is based on a comparative, exploratory, and theory-building case study in-line with the approach outlined by Yin (2009). Our research employs an abductive methodology, closely aligned with the principles of grounded theory as originally proposed by Glaser and Strauss (1967), and more specifically with the interpretation provided by Strauss and Corbin (1990). Abduction, as an inferential strategy, involves the retrospective formulation of hypotheses, making it particularly suited to situations with incomplete evidence and high complexity (Fylkernes, 2006). This approach allows for the development of "tentative theories" that can suggest further hypotheses (Niiniluoto, 1999; Thomas, 2010).

Our study is conceptually driven, as described by Miles and Huberman (1994), who emphasize the importance of explaining events rather than merely documenting their sequence. They advocate for identifying the underlying individual or social processes, mechanisms, or structures that can provide a causal explanation of the forces at play (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The abductive process becomes evident as we refine our analysis with more precise assumptions and conduct additional data collection, ultimately achieving higher levels of "explicitness" and "groundedness" in accordance with Corbin and Strauss's framework. This primarily focus on awareness and perception of CSR on social media, impact of CSR communication on E-reputation, consumer responses to CSR communication on social media, effectiveness of CSR communication strategies, perception change overtime, behavioral change overtime, overall impact on E-reputation, and specific CSR communication strategies. The data collection was derived from on-line polls and Q&A sessions following the objective of the study. The analysis of data gathered on corporate social responsibility (CSR) communication strategies through social media and their influence on e-reputation in Nigeria follows a structured pattern that aligned with accountability of demographic data, education and employment statuses, use of social media, awareness, impact of CSR, consumer responses on CSR communications, effectiveness of CSR communication strategies, perceptions of companies' CSR activities on social media, behavioral change over time, overall impact on E-reputation, specific CSR communication strategies and additional feedback.

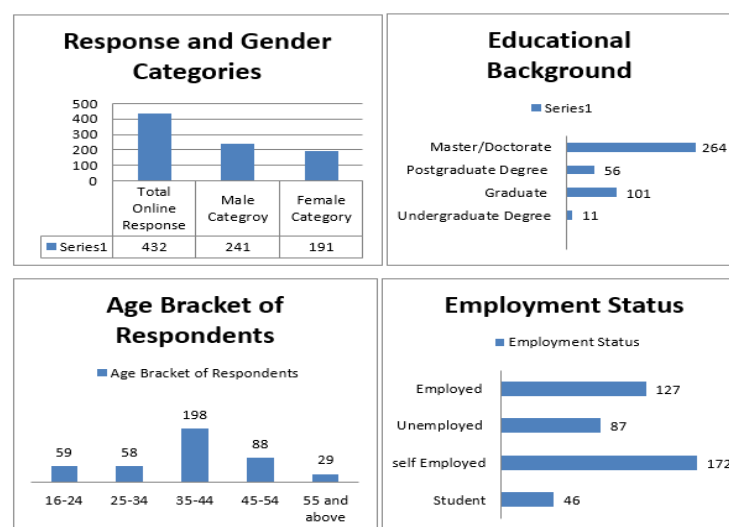
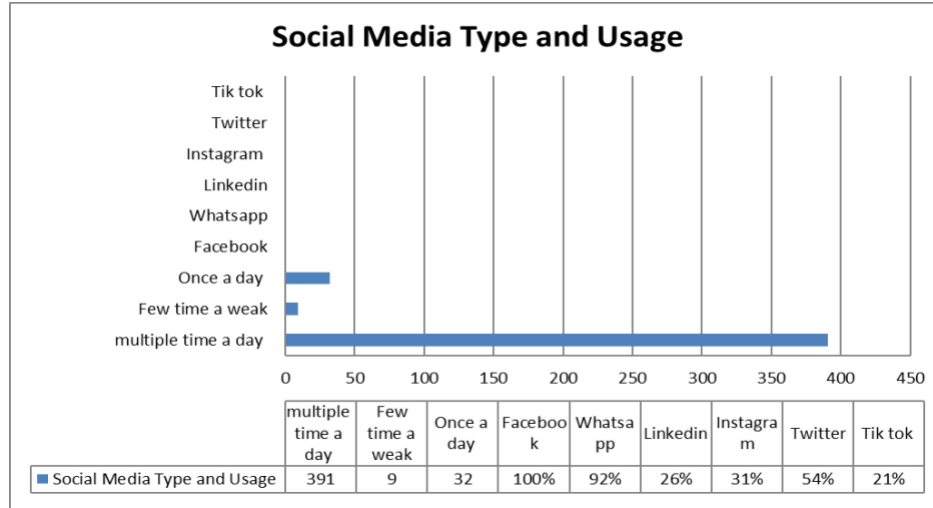


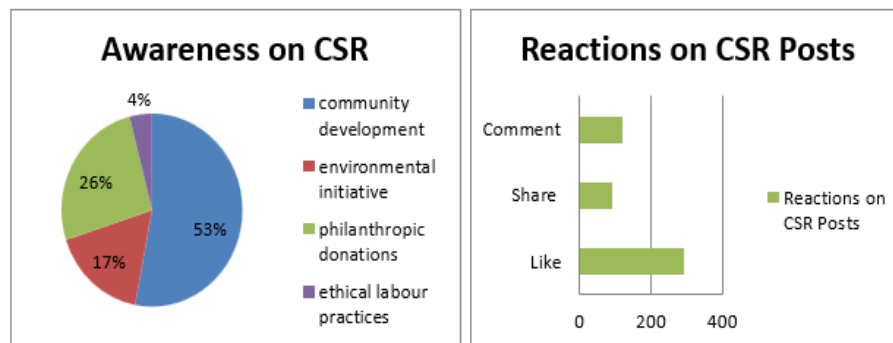
Figure 1: Demographic Factor Analyses

The demographic contents showed that 432 respondents fill the online form and 241 (55.8%) of the respondents are male while 191 (44.2%) are female. In the educational background, 264 (61.1%) respondents have masters/doctorate degree, 56 (13%) have post graduate degree while 101 (23.4%) have first degree and 11 (2.5%) respondents are undergraduates. The age bracket underlined that 198 respondents are within the bracket of 35-44 while 88 persons out of 432 are within the bracket of 45-54. 58 persons fall between the aged of 25-34 and 59 persons are in the bracket of 16-24 while 55 and above age bracket harbor 29 persons from the total number of respondents. From the employment categories, 127 (29.4%) and 172 (39.8%) are employed and self employed respectively while 87 (20.1%) and 46 (10.7%) are unemployed and students respectively.



**Figure 2:** Social Media Type and Usage

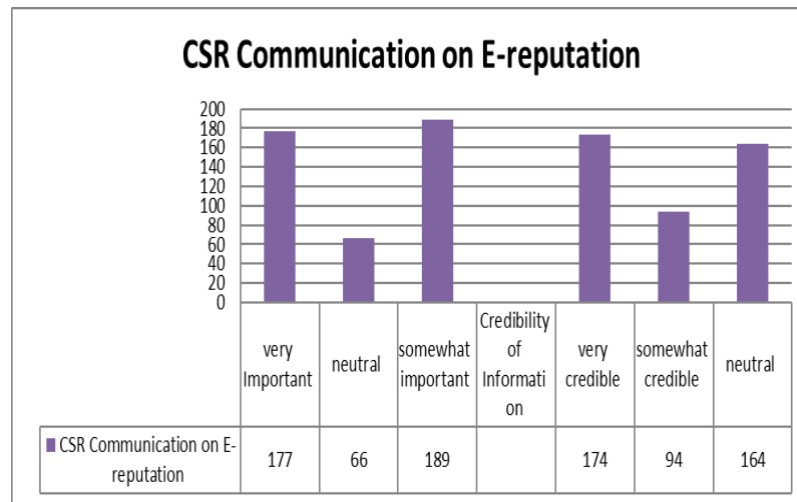
Figure 2 revealed that 391 respondents make use of social media multiple time daily while 32 people use it once a day and 9 persons use it few times a week. 100% of the respondents make use of facebook while 92%, 26%, 31%, 54% and 21% whatsapp, linkedin, instagram, twitter and tik tok respectively.



**Figure 3:** Awareness and Reactions

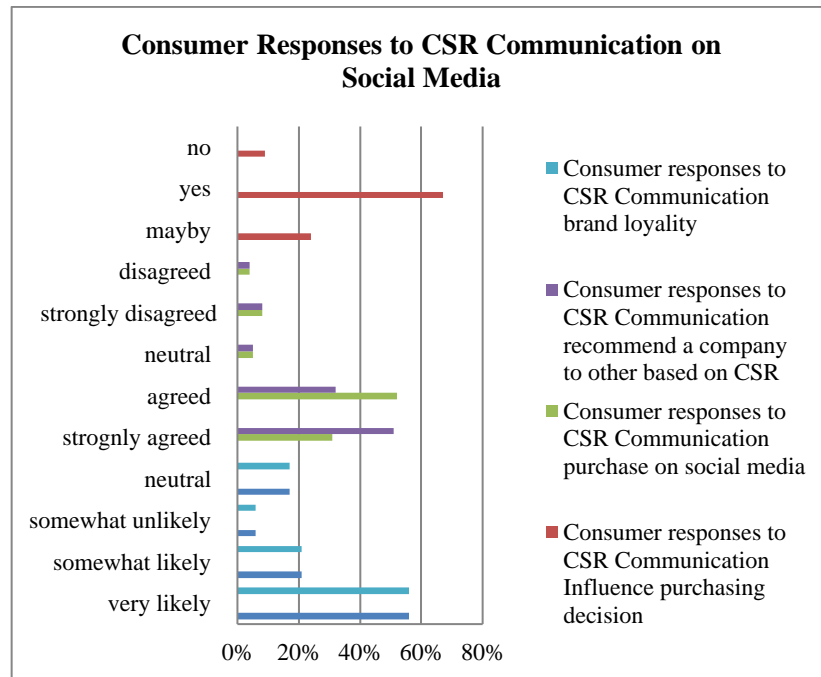
Figure 3 indicated that 53 percent respondents believe that companies perform community development while 26% dwell more on philanthropic donations, 17percent engaged on environmental initiatives and 4 percent channel their resources on ethical labour practices. 293 respondents react on CSR post through like button while 121 persons comment and 93 share CSR posts.





**Figure 4:** CSR Communication on E-Reputation and Credibility

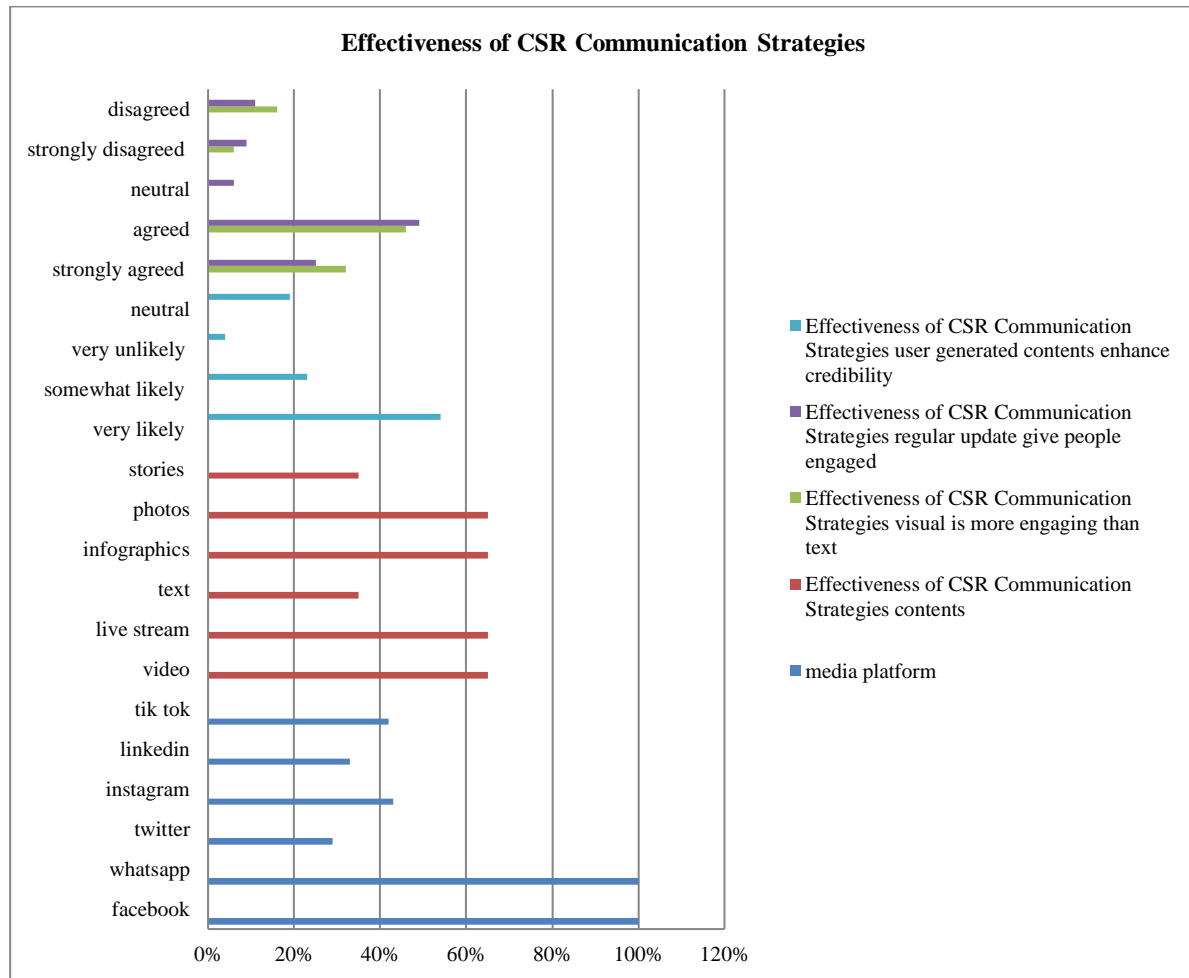
In fig 4, 177 persons believe that CSR communications are very important on E-reputation, 189 believe that CSR communication are somewhat important while 66 respondents are neutral regarding CSR communication on E-reputation. 174 people believe that information about CSR on social media are very credible, 94 persons believe that such information are somewhat credible while 164 people are neutral.



**Figure 5:** Consumer Responses to CSR Communication on social media

In figure 5, 67 percent of the total respondents believed that CSR communication influence purchasing decision, 9 percent were on the opinion that CSR communication does not influence purchasing decision while 24 percent were neutral regarding how CSR communication influences purchasing decision. 56 percent respondents confirmed that CSR communication are very likely create brand loyalty, 21 percent were on the opinion that CSR communications are somewhat likely to create brand loyalty while 17 percent were neutral that CSR communication create brand loyalty and 6 percent believe that CSR communications are somewhat unlikely to create brand loyalty. 51 and 32 percent strongly agreed and agreed respectively that they can recommend company to others based on CSR, 5 percent of the respondents were neutral regarding recommending company to others based on CSR. 4 percent and 8 percent disagreed and strongly disagreed to recommend company to others based on CSR. 52 and 31percent of the total respondents believed and strongly believed respectively that they can make purchase on social media based on CSR communication of a company. 5 percent were neutral concerning making purchase on social media while 4 and 8 percent were disagreed and strongly disagreed on making purchase through social media based on CSR communication.

56 percent are of the opinion that very likely their perception have improved CSR communication, 21 percent are somewhat likely that their perception have improve, 6 percent are somewhat unlikely that their perception have improve while 17 percent are neutral that their perception have improved.



**Figure 6:** Effectiveness of CSR Communication Strategies

From figure 6, majority of the respondents strongly believed that effectiveness of CSR communication strategies user generated contents enhances credibility. More than average suggested that regular updates on social media make or give people engaged. It was also observed that visual content give people engaged than text. Facebook and whatsapp are mostly used than tik tok, twitter, instagram and linkedin.

### Perception Change

37 percent believed that their perception have significantly increase or changed overtime while 36 percent believed that their trust have significantly increase or changed overtime and 38 percent believed that their engagement or loyalty have significantly increase or changed overtime. 41 percent believed that their perception have somewhat increase or changed overtime while 39 percent believed that their trust have somewhat increase or changed overtime and 37 percent believed that their engagement or loyalty have somewhat increase or changed overtime. 4 percent believed that their perception have significantly decrease or reduce overtime while 6 percent believed that their trust have significantly decrease or reduce overtime and 7 percent believed that their engagement or loyalty have significantly decrease or reduce overtime. 3 percent believed that their perception have somewhat decrease overtime while 0 percent believed that their trust have somewhat decrease overtime and 4 percent believed that their engagement or loyalty have somewhat decrease overtime. 15 percent, 19 percent and 14 percent suggested that their perceptions, trust and engagement or commitment respectively have not changed overtime.

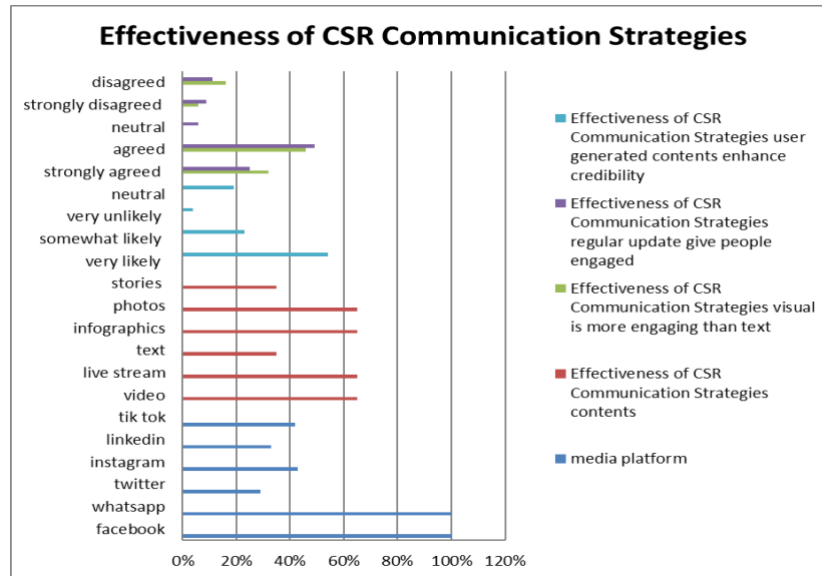


Figure 7: Perception change

Companies' with strong CSR are significantly likely to increase their sale by 64 percent while 62 percent respondents are significantly likely to recommend their products and 66 percent respondents are significantly likely to commit their loyalty to their products. Companies' with strong CSR are somewhat likely to increase their sale by 23 percent while 19 percent respondents are somewhat likely to recommend their products and 27 percent respondents are somewhat likely to commit their loyalty to their products. Companies' with strong CSR are significantly likely to decrease their sale by 0 percent while 4 percent respondents are significantly unlikely to recommend their products and percent respondents are significantly unlikely to commit their loyalty to their products. Companies' with strong CSR are somewhat likely to decrease their sale by 7 percent while 7 percent respondents are somewhat unlikely to recommend their products and 1 percent respondents are somewhat unlikely to commit their loyalty to their products

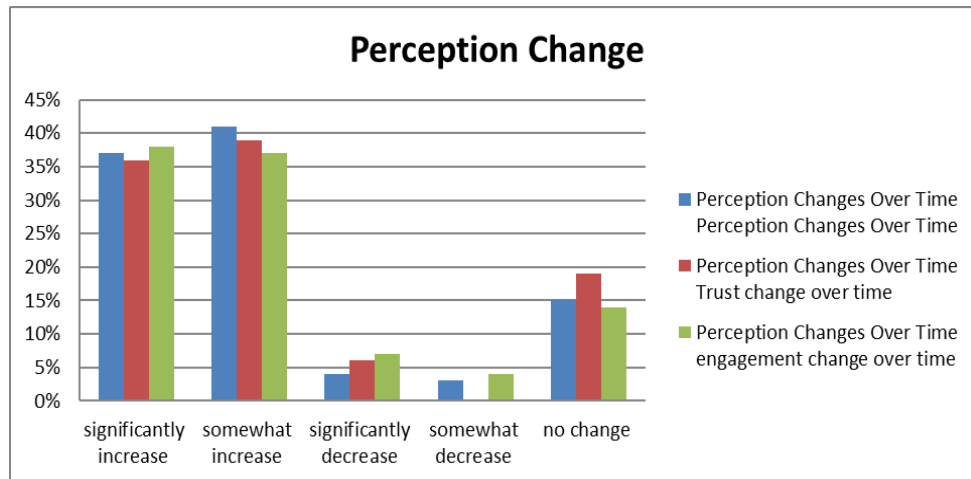
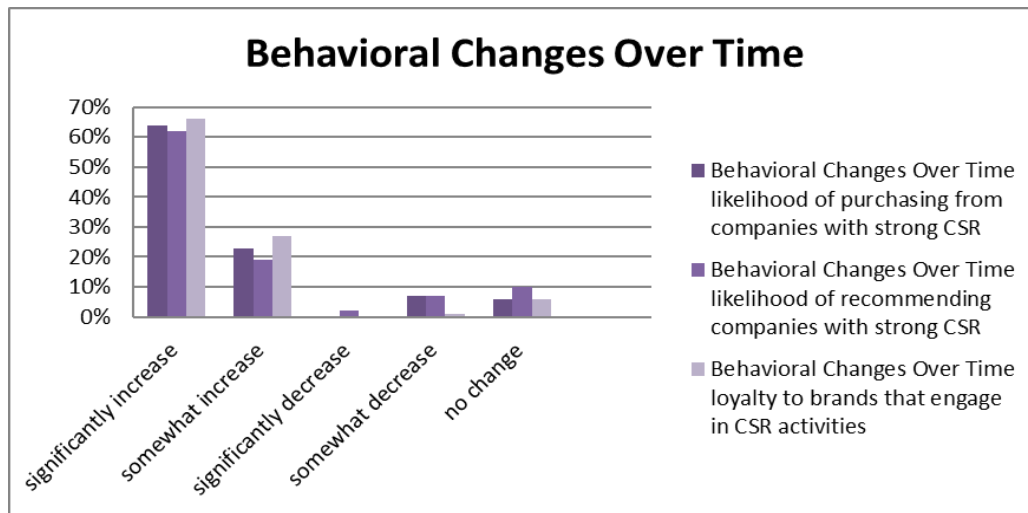


Figure 8: Behavioral change



**Figure 9:** Overall Impact

51 percent of the respondents agreed that the E-reputation of companies engaged on CSR activities on social media significantly improved, 27 percent believed that E-reputation of companies on CSR activities on social media somewhat improved while 7 percent are of the opinion that their E-reputation significantly worsened, and 11 percent suggested that their E-reputations are somewhat worsened. 4 percent believed that no change occur on the E-reputation of companies on CSR activities on social media.

49 and 28 percent outlined that effectiveness of company's CSR communication strategies significantly enhances and somewhat enhances their E-reputation while 8 percent underlined that effectiveness of company's CSR communication strategies significantly worsened and somewhat worsened their E-reputation. 7 percent believed no change occur on company E-reputation based on effectiveness of their communication strategies on social media

## Conclusion

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) communication on social media can significantly influence a company's e-reputation, as social media serves as a powerful platform for engaging with stakeholders and shaping public perception. As underlined from our findings, effective CSR communication can bolster a company's brand image and build trust with consumers. When companies share their CSR initiatives on social media, they demonstrate their commitment to social and environmental issues, which resonates with consumers who prioritize ethical consumption. Social media provides a platform for companies to be transparent about their CSR activities. This transparency can reduce skepticism and build a loyal customer base.

In times of crisis, social media allows companies to quickly address issues related to their CSR activities. Effective communication can mitigate negative impacts on e-reputation by providing timely updates and reassurances. Companies can engage directly with stakeholders, responding to concerns and feedback, which can help in maintaining or restoring a positive reputation. Positive CSR communications turn consumers into advocates who promote the company's initiatives, enhancing e-reputation through word-of-mouth and shared content on social media (Lee, Oh, & Kim, 2013). Companies that effectively communicate their CSR efforts foster stronger brand loyalty, as consumers are more likely to support brands that align with their values. Positive user-generated content related to a company's CSR efforts serve as social proof, enhancing the company's e-reputation. When users share, like, or comment on CSR-related posts, it signals legitimacy and approval from the broader community. Collaborations with influencers or endorsements from respected figures can amplify the positive impact of CSR communication, further enhancing e-reputation. CSR communication on social media plays a critical role in shaping a company's e-reputation. While effective communication can enhance brand image, foster trust, and build consumer loyalty, missteps can lead to reputational damage. Companies must be strategic, transparent, and responsive in their social media CSR communication to positively influence their e-reputation.

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