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The use of information dissemination to reflect altruism of Corporate social responsibility projects in Ghana.

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Title: The use of information dissemination to reflect altruism of Corporate social responsibility projects in Ghana.

Abstract

It is evident from literature that organisations embark on Corporate Social Responsibility as a philanthropic approach and initiative to give back to society. In Ghana, Multi-National Companies (MNCs) such as Mobile Telecommunication Network (MTN) employ information dissemination techniques and processes to broadcast these projects to the public in a manner that reflect altruism. This study looked into MTN Ghana's CSR project at Akim Asafo Senior High School (SHS) to ascertain whether the altruism portrayed to the public via information dissemination of CSR projects reflect reality or mere publicity. Twenty (20) participants were sampled through the use of purposive and convenience sampling techniques. The study was a qualitative study and employed a semi-structured interview guide for the gathering of data. Content and thematic analysis were used by the study and the findings show that MTN Ghana Foundation's dissemination of information on their CSR projects reflect reality and also enjoy some level of publicity towards the company's image enhancement. The study recommends the need for MTN Ghana Foundation to institute a robust monitoring and evaluation system to properly monitor their CSR projects.

Keywords: Altruism, Information Dissemination, Corporate, Social Responsibility, Publicity, Communication

Introduction

In the past, organisations, corporations and institutions offered no help to their publics apart from services they were established to render (Mensah, 2009; Moratis, 2016). The trend is changing with organisations also becoming agents for social change in their communities. Currently, many organisations try in many ways to address the needs of the societies in which they operate, and this is termed as Corporate Social Responsibility (Brimmer et. al., 2007; Adda et. al., 2016).

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) as a concept entails the practice whereby corporate entities voluntarily integrate both social and environmental improvement in their business philosophy and operations (Ocran, 2011). In order for the constituents to appreciate CSR projects in their communities or the country in general, organisations that embark on CSR projects disseminate information on these projects vigorously to the public. Here, information dissemination as a concept implies and serves as the channel by which information and facts on CSR projects are distributed to the public at large (Baba, 2020).

Corporate Social Responsibility that is based on altruism is the philanthropic approach to CSR in which organisations underwrite specific initiatives to give back to the company's local community or to designated national or international programme (Ghillyer, 2012). Organisations that practice CSR based on altruism help alleviate various social and developmental challenges within a community or society (Adda et. al., 2016). The justification lies in the fact that the modern corporation has been entrusted with massive economic and human resources and has the power to affect many parties beyond the participants in its transactions (Moratis, 2016). Thus, the dissemination of information on CSR to reflect the philanthropic approach is not enough especially when it mainly results in publicity, but the need to reflect on the needs and positive impacts on the beneficiaries to merit their justification.

In Ghana, evidence suggests that information dissemination on a number of CSR projects have the tendency to deceive the public since the projects seem not what it appears to be (Kudiabor, 2011). For example, Opon (2017) found in Ghana that, organisations disseminate information on CSR projects to the public in order to portray many positives of the projects when in actual fact such projects fail to meet the needs of the people in the communities for which it was intended.

MTN Ghana's consistent growth made it possible for the company to increase its CSR activities, culminating in the establishment of the MTN Foundation Ghana in 2007 as a single-purpose vehicle to drive all MTN's CSR initiatives in Ghana. The main aim of the Foundation is to have a broad community impact by supporting national and international development priorities. It facilitates partnership and sharing of resources to achieve mutual objectives. MTN Ghana Foundation was adjudged the 'Foundation of the Year 2017' at the Sustainability and Social Investment Award held in Accra. MTN Ghana is therefore seen as one of the most socially responsible corporate organisations in Ghana with a number of CSR interventions.

Statement of the problem and need for the study

In spite of the increasing efforts by Multi-National Companies (MNCs) such as MTN Ghana (through the MTN Foundation) to contribute meaningfully to the well-being of the communities within which it operates in Ghana, there are some doubts as to whether these efforts to give back to society are driven by a desire to impact on the economic and social welfare prospects of the communities or the dissemination of information on these projects is actually a means of publicity aimed at gaining public sympathy towards these organizations (Anlesinya, et. al., 2014; Hinson & Kodua, 2012).

Over the years, studies in the area of CSR in the Ghanaian context suggest that many organisations in Ghana disseminate information on CSR projects as a corporate strategy to improve their corporate image, which usually may not adequately address the needs of the beneficiaries (Friends of the Earth International, 2005). The practice of CSR in Ghana is considered not to be living up to its expectation as many organisations seem to embark on CSR to disseminate 'pleasant' information' for the sake of publicity (Rockson, 2008).

Information dissemination of CSR projects in Ghana usually portray the projects to be people centered, thus, indicating that the identification, decision, planning and the execution of the projects are made by the organisations together with the beneficiaries (Anlesinya, 2019; Damoah et. al., 2019). However, the problem is that, in spite of their increased efforts over the years to disseminate information on CSR projects to portray positive impacts, these CSR activities of

MNCs in Ghana seem not to adequately address the needs of the beneficiaries (Rockson, 2008; Kudiabor, 2011; Opon 2017). These developments present an opportunity to assess the CSR activities of MNCs in order to ascertain whether the altruism portrayed to the public via information dissemination of CSR projects reflect reality or mere publicity. MTN Ghana is one of the leading MNCs in Ghana that disseminates information and commits much resources to CSR activities in the country through its foundation, hence its choice as a case study. The following objectives enabled the study to achieve its aim:

- **RO1:** Looking into the information dissemination processes and rationale of MTN Ghana's CSR projects
- **RO2:** Investigating the level of involvement of beneficiaries of MTN Ghana's CSR initiatives.
- **RO3:** Ascertaining whether MTN Ghana's CSR projects are accessible to the intended beneficiaries.

Theoretical framework

Diffusion theory

The theory of diffusion is found to represent attempts towards the understanding of how ideas and actions spread. Twentieth century theories of diffusion evolved into more robust theories of information and knowledge utilization (Green et. al., 2009). According to Henry (2018), diffusion could be explained as the process of communicating ideas and actions among participants in a social system over a time period. The sharing and spreading of these actions and ideas across social groups as depicted in theories of diffusion could stem and also be targeted at individuals, companies or governments (Baba, 2020). For the purposes and mapping for this study, the spread and sharing of actions (CSR projects) stem from MTN Ghana and targeted at the general public.

Diffusion theory is highly credited to Everett Rogers based on his 1962 publication. Two key elements of Roger's diffusion theory (1962) are communication and communication channels. Clearly, without these two elements, diffusion cannot take place since the spread of ideas or actions are impossible without the two elements (Henry, 2018). Here, communication refers to the process in which individuals or organisations create and share information with one another with the aim of reaching a mutual understanding and thus, occurs through channels between sources (Rogers,

1910). In this study, ‘mutual understanding’ as reflected in the theory of diffusion attests to acceptance and appreciation of the actions (CSR projects) as depicted in the spread and sharing (dissemination) of information on them to the public by MTN Ghana.

Methodology

Based on the nature of the study, the study employed the case study design because the research was an empirical enquiry that investigated a phenomenon within its real-life context. The case of this study was the MTN Ghana’s three-unit classroom and allied facilities project at the Akim Asafo Senior High School (SHS). The qualitative approach was adopted and through the use of a semi-structured interview schedule, the study was able to gather in-depth information on the project in order to juxtapose them to the information disseminated by MTN Ghana on the project towards ascertaining altruism.

The population of the study included staff of the MTN Ghana Foundation and the people of Akim Asafo (including the staff and students of the school). Based on the theory of saturation, the study arrived on a sample size of twenty (five from the staff of the MTN Foundation and 15 members from the Akim Asafo community). The study projected that saturation could be reached between the range of 17 and 22 of the respondents. The purposive and convenience sampling techniques were used for the selection of the sample. Seven (7) persons were purposively sampled and they were the Chief of Akim Asafo; the Assemblyman of the Area; the Headmaster; the Chairman of the Parent-Teacher Association (PTA); the Senior Boys’ Prefect; and the Senior Girls’ Prefect of Akim Asafo Senior High School as well as the head of education projects and project officer of the MTN Ghana Foundation. The remaining thirteen (13) respondents were selected from the MTN Ghana Foundation and Akim Asafo community through the use of convenience sampling technique.

The interviews for the MTN Ghana Foundation staff were conducted at their corporate office as well as through phone calls while those for the respondents from the Akim Asafo community were conducted mainly within their community. Open ended questions that were developed based on the research objectives were asked with follow-up questions where necessary. The use of semi-structured interview schedule enabled the interviewers to have control over the line of questioning

and also provided the interviewees enough space to provide in-depth information (Owusu and Kankam, 2019). Responses from the respondents were recorded and analysed through the use of content and thematic analysis.

Literature Review

Conceptualisation of information dissemination

Dissemination involves communicating relevant information, which can be understood and stored for later retrieval and use as well as acting and encouraging the feedback on such information (Ordoñez & Serrat, 2017). Information dissemination attests to the means by which information are distributed to targeted recipients and the public at large. It involves the delivery and reception of a message where an individual is engaged in a process and the transfer of information products (Albright et. al., 2020). Importantly, Information dissemination tools are employed by organisations for the distribution or sharing of information on their products, projects and services to customers and the public in general (Nicholas-Ere, 2017).

Effective dissemination of information requires the proper matching of the channel to the information as well as the recipient. Dissemination occurs through many channels and employs strategies that are aimed at influencing individual, social, and other networks of adopters (Green et. al., 2009). Currently, information dissemination takes place through the use of the traditional and the new media. Traditional media includes radio, the print and the television. The new media encompasses the whole array of rapidly developing fields of technologically mediated production and examples include the internet, social media and other digital media (Ordoñez & Serrat, 2017). Improvements in technology have made new media outlets increasingly popular and have become the main channel of disseminating information due to the speed in which dissemination occurs through the new media. Although the traditional media is slower, it is still an effective way of information dissemination since it has a high degree of trust.

Conceptualisation of Corporate Social Responsibility

Corporate Social Responsibilities are organisational actions that bring business activities in-line with the 'prevailing social norms' and 'values'. They include a process where social problems are identified, with the organisations anticipating what 'constitutes a desired state of affairs' to devise

policies that would address them (Sethi, 1975; Fitch, 1976). These actions are expected and thus, appear to further social good beyond the interest of the organisation and requirements made by law (Ghosh, 2020).

As asserted by Forstater et al (2002), CSR occurs when company actions contribute to sustainable development through the implementation of its core business activities, social investment and public policy debate. They are therefore characterised by moments when an organisation goes beyond compliance and engages in activities that appear to promote social good, beyond the business interests of the firm and that which is required by law (McWilliams et. al., 2006). This highlights how CSR activities are separate from the business model or a firm. Hence, CSR to a larger extent ensures that organisations give back to the communities in which they operate through social interventions that would benefit the community (Opon, 2017; Damoah et. al, 2019).

Objectives of Corporate Social Responsibility

The objective of CSR has been argued to be a fulfillment of stakeholder interests whilst acting within the requirement of the law (Brimmer et. al., 2007; Sethi, 1975). It could be deduced from this perspective that one major purpose of CSR is not only to reward stakeholders but to address societal issues in the course of business (Adda et. al., 2016). The process of CSR programmes is, therefore, to allow stakeholders interaction to accomplish common goals which would translate into social capital (Doppelt 2003).

Furthermore, businesses that conduct CSR do this on the principal that they do not exist as a ‘stand-alone’ but form part of the environment in which they exist. From this, it could be concluded that, proponents of CSR are of the opinion that organisations do not operate in a vacuum (Hinson, 2012). From this view of CSR, businesses exist in order to serve whilst depending on their environment. Hence, they have the charge to ensure the wellbeing of the organisation’s environment (Pearce and Robinson, 2005). Porter and Kramer (2002) argue that most companies conduct strategic CSR in order to create value to the society while causing a surge in the competitive advantage of the said company. Kamyshnykova and Kalinin (2016) also posit that consideration of stakeholder interests and needs is the basis of the modern CSR concept, and it is a required component of the system of CSR strategic management.

Drivers of Corporate Social Responsibility

It must be noted that there are various reasons CSR has greatly emerged especially with regards to the plan for the business (Adda et. al., 2016). This can be directly related to what causes the need for CSR in the first place. One of the major reasons for the prominence of CSR is due to globalisation. Globalisation has been described as ‘a multi-dimensional process that has interlinking yet contradicting interaction of local, global and regional dimensions of social life’ (Yunis et al, 2018). Globalisation has provided the opportunity for MNCs to become an influential and powerful actor in society (Brimmer et. al., 2007).

The power of large MNCs is not only due to the huge amount of economic resources they control but also their ability to transfer these resources around the world (Yunis et al., 2018). This could be traced to the steady spike in technology used by MNCs; lowering of trade restrictions by various countries; and even the reduction of the cost of internal communications (El Akremi et. al., 2018). All these contribute to globalisation which many MNCs capitalize on. From this perspective, globalisation is mostly centered on the activities of MNCs as well as the global supply chains and cross border trade that are used by these (Cornelius et. al., 2008).

Economic globalization, therefore, ensures the identification of CSR concerns throughout the normal course of occurrence. Due to these factors, most companies tend to go further than just ensuring an increase in the turnover of a company but have made it their priority to ensure that various stakeholders such as consumers, workers and the community, among others, are benefiting from the activities of the firm (Ofori and Hinson, 2007; Dejong & Van der Meer, 2017).

According to Brusseu (2012), the targeting of social sustainability has been a chief driver of the CSR conducted by many companies. He further posits that in a world in which a few of the Fortune500 Executives are hauling down a large bulk of income as compared to millions of people elsewhere in the world who are living on pennies a day cannot go on forever. Hence the need for CSR to balance out the upper class with the lower class of low-income earners. It is relevant to add that the fair-trade movement fits this ethical imperative to shared opportunity and wealth (Dejong & Van der Meer, 2017).

Results

The study employed thematic and content analysis for the analysis of the qualitative data. Data gathered from the respondents was responsive questions contained in the semi-structured interview guide developed for the study. Responses shared similarities or differences in content but were arranged carefully for effective data analysis. Three themes emerged after the rigorous analysis of responses by participants based on the objectives of the study. A total of 20 participants were interviewed: five (5) staff from the MTN Ghana Foundation, a staff from the Akim Asafo SHS (Headmaster), five (5) students from the Akim Asafo SHS and nine (9) persons from the Akim Asafo community.

RO1: Looking into the information dissemination processes and rationale of MTN Ghana's CSR projects

Information dissemination is the conscious effort to distribute information to targeted recipients and the public at large. Through the use of semi-structured interview guide, the study looked into the information dissemination processes employed by MTN Ghana on their CSR projects as well as the rationale behind the information dissemination. It was evident from the findings that in order to increase the reach of information to the general public on their CSR projects, MTN Ghana foundation were motivated to employ multiple information dissemination channels including TV, radio, Internet as well as the social media.

We distribute information or evidence of our CSR projects widely to many audiences and across many settings in this country and other countries we operate. In order to increase the reach of these information...all channels of communication are employed. For example, all the media houses both print and electronic are invited and catered for during the commissioning of our projects. They really serve as the major means of communicating our projects and activities to the public. A staff from MTN indicated

You are aware that MTN is a communication company, so we have communication experts among our staff who work on these stuffs. We believe that employing multiple channels and strategies in communication are more effective than single strategies. Aside what the media houses gather, we also provide content on the projects to them. Providing additional

resources about the projects, enhances the dissemination process. Another staff from MTN hinted

Dissemination of information widely to many audiences or general public and across many settings are noted to increase the reach of information. It was therefore not surprising that MTN Ghana Foundation employed almost all the available channels of dissemination to disseminate information on their CSR projects. The study further found that, the organisation prepare its own documentaries on their projects and publish them on their websites, social media platforms and other commercial channels such as radio and TV. These documentaries feature ‘promoters’ such as a beneficiary who takes ownership of the project and visibly promotes it within their own community or across other settings. It was found that, potential beneficiaries and majority of the beneficiaries of the projects became aware of the foundation through these information dissemination strategies.

Before I got admission to this school, I was aware that MTN have provided a building to the school. I saw it on TV and that even made me aware there is a school called Akim Asafo SHS. A respondent asserted

In my previous school before I was transferred to this school, we had agreed during one of our PTA meetings to write to MTN for ICT facilities. It has always been in the news that MTN help in such regard and fortunately we had a parent at the meeting who assured us of using his connections to lead us on the request. A respondent from the community opined

The interviews further revealed that the rationale behind MTN Ghana Foundation’s quest to engage in constant information dissemination of their CSR projects was not borne out of mere publicity efforts. Significantly, in their quest to negate or place low premium on the publicity aspect of their information dissemination processes, staff of the Foundation during the interviews argued that the Foundation does not seek publicity through their projects that was the reason they did not use their yellow and blue corporate colours on the Akim Asafo SHS project. The study confirms that the three-unit classroom and allied facilities funded by MTN Ghana at Akim Asafo

SHS was in green colour. The company (MTN Ghana) only settled for a small plaque with the company's logo providing details about the project to identify the commissioning and hand over of the project to Akim Asafo SHS.

“...when we are building a project for a community, be it a school, hospital, community information centre, etc, we try to blend with the environment for uniformity. So we don't really brand our projects in our colours. Our colours are mainly yellow and blue but the project at Akim Asafo, for instance, is painted green. So we get them to decide the colours they want. Except for the relatively small plaque embossed on the building to identify it as one of our projects...we don't seek to publicize the intervention by imposing our corporate colours or branding on them.” – A respondent from MTN Ghana intimated.

Moreover, the findings of this study reveal that MTN Ghana Foundation has a clearly defined CSR objective, which is to transform the communities in which its mother company, MTN Ghana, operates. These objectives were found to shape as well as influence the information dissemination processes of the company's CSR projects. As provided on their website, the main aim of the Foundation is *“To have a broad community impacting and supporting national and international development priorities”*; the Foundation's vision is: *“To be the benchmark for Corporate Social Investment (CSI) initiatives in Ghana and within the MTN Group”*; and its mission is *“To improve the quality of lives of people through appropriate and sustainable corporate social responsibility interventions in communities where MTN operates.”* (MTN Foundation, 2017)

RO2: Investigating the level of involvement of beneficiaries of MTN Ghana's CSR initiatives.

One of the key messages disseminated on CSR projects is the people centeredness element of these projects. A number of literature also projects the involvement of beneficiaries in CSR initiatives for them to be accepted as projects based on altruism. It was therefore imperative to find out the level of involvement of beneficiaries of MTN Ghana's CSR projects. The findings suggest that, to a large extent, beneficiaries of MTN Ghana Foundation's CSR projects are involved in the entire processes – decision-making, planning, identification, and execution.

With respect to what goes into the decision-making, planning, identification, and execution of MTN Ghana's CSR projects, the findings revealed that, the process starts with individuals writing formally to MTN Ghana Foundation to show a genuine need in the community. The requests were expected to fall within the Foundation's focus areas which include health, education and economic empowerment. Again, in the words of a respondent from MTN Ghana Foundation, "*you must showcase the responsibility to take care of the project*". The findings further reveal that, although the Foundation's office is open to the general public with regard to requests for social intervention projects, emphasis is laid on projects that would impact a lot of people.

"The process is just simple. You need to write to the foundation and then we take it up from there. But the thing is, there must be a genuine need in the community and the request must also fall within our focus areas; that is health, education and economic empowerment. You must also showcase your ability or responsibility of taking care of the project. For example, we ask questions like; what are you going to do to sustain the project or take good care of it? We also have to be able to measure the impact of our intervention. That is, how much of an impact it will be for the community or society. This is done to ensure value for money." – A respondent from MTN Ghana explained.

"Because ours is open, on a daily basis, we get a lot of requests from the public. We don't just go for any project for the sake of doing projects to gain publicity. Impact is very key to us. Therefore, if we look at the community and the project would not impact many people, we may not take it up...If you look at our projects, they are really heavy in terms of impact." – Another respondent from MTN added.

Moreover, the interviews conducted with respondents from MTN Ghana Foundation and the beneficiaries of MTN Ghana's CSR project at the Akim Asafo Senior High School suggest that the school's Headteacher was involved in the whole process from decision making to execution. Other stakeholders from the community were also found to be involved during the execution of the project. A respondent from MTN Ghana Foundation throws more light of the process:

“The involvement of the beneficiaries in our CSR projects starts right from the word go. Request for projects come from beneficiaries after which we invite them to make a presentation to the Board of the Foundation. Upon approval of the project from the Board, we go to the community and engage the relevant stakeholders... If it is a school, we go and meet the headmaster or headmistress first and then later involve the other stakeholders.”

– A respondent from MTN Ghana explained.

“We get them [beneficiaries] involved in most of the things we do. At every point we ask them, this is the stage where we are, what do you think? Because we do site meetings and all that. If it is a school, it is the headmaster or headmistress and if it is a hospital, the medical director or administrator of the facility is involved or whoever is assigned, so they are involved all the way to the completion of the project.” – Another respondent from MTN added.

To corroborate, an interview from the school revealed that

“Based on available documents in the office, Madam Esi Adom, the then headmistress sent a request to MTN Ghana Foundation for the construction of science laboratory for the school in 2013. Upon several meetings between the Board of the foundation and Management of the school, it was mutually agreed that the construction of 3-unit classroom block and allied facilities would be beneficial. The request was then approved by the Board in May 2014”, A respondent from the school asserted

The study also found that MTN Ghana Foundation consults the District Assembly and opinion leaders of where the project is to be undertaken particularly with respect to the provision of land and other required permits. It was also found that, some members of the Akim Asafo community served as paid artisans and labourers during the construction of MTN Ghana’s three-unit classroom block at Akim Asafo Senior High School.

The contractors of our CSR projects are encouraged to employ qualified artisans from the community as well as other forms of paid labour. – A respondent from MTN Ghana stated.

Although some respondents from the beneficiary community expressed some level of disappointment that the original request for a science laboratory was not granted, they affirmed the involvement of community leaders and the school's Management at every stage of the process and also admitted that the three-unit classroom block had been put to a more varied use.

I am an Engineer by profession and I have been at the Akim Asafo Palace for more than thirty years...The quest to get a functioning science laboratory for the school dates back many, many years. Two of my children who wanted to offer science eventually had to settle for Anum Secondary School and Ofori Panin Secondary School because the Akim Asafo SHS was not offering science back then. Although we were expecting a science laboratory, we are grateful for MTN Ghana's assistance and also appreciate the explanations as well as the level of involvement they offered us on the project" – A respondent from the community shared.

RO3: Ascertaining whether MTN Ghana's CSR projects are accessible to the intended beneficiaries.

The element of accessibility borders on ownership and use of the CSR project by the intended beneficiaries. Accessibility also addresses the issue of convenient siting of the project so that the intended beneficiaries can have access to it without let or hindrance. It came to light during the study that the main reason why MTN Ghana Foundation commissions its CSR projects and officially hands it over to the beneficiary community is to grant them unfettered access with regard to ownership and use.

One of the highlights of this study is that all the respondents from the Akim Asafo community agreed that the three-unit classroom block donated by MTN Ghana was very accessible. They intimated that siting of the project, which is, practically, located in the middle of the Akim Asafo SHS campus allowed the beneficiaries to access it very easily from all parts of the school. The multiple uses that the facility has been put to since it was handed over to the beneficiaries was mentioned by some respondents as an indication of how they have taken complete ownership of the project and using it judiciously.

“The three unit classroom block and allied facilities are for the school and we are in control of them 100%. We determine when, who and how to use the facilities without any interference from MTN. Since I was transferred to this school, I have not encountered any challenge on the use of the facilities whether from MTN or anybody”. A respondent from the school shared

“The place is open to students and we always use it. I don’t remember any of our teachers stopping us from using the facility. We call the place ‘MTN’ and most of us meet around that area for many activities including ICT lessons”. Another respondent from the school shared.

Beneficiary feedback is very important in CSR initiatives because it affords donors and beneficiaries alike the opportunity to assess if the social intervention meets the need in the community. To be able to do a proper analysis of the feedback from both the donor and the beneficiaries, one needs to establish the responsibilities of either party towards the sustainability of the CSR project. For instance, it came to light during the study that, as far as respondents from MTN Ghana Foundation were concerned, ownership of their CSR projects was within the purview of the beneficiaries since one of their prerequisite conditions is for applicants to demonstrate an ability to maintain and sustain the CSR projects.

“One of the challenges we face as a Foundation is the poor maintenance culture on the part of some beneficiaries. Even though at the application stage, they are able to demonstrate the ability and responsibility to maintain and sustain the project, once the project is approved and executed some do shirk their responsibilities towards such CSR projects.” – A respondent from MTN Ghana Foundation lamented.

Although the Foundation does not assume ownership of their CSR projects, they are keen on monitoring them to see if it is meeting the intended need as well as having the intended impact. The focus of MTN Ghana Foundation’s monitoring and evaluation process was to help them make more informed decisions for future CSR projects and not necessarily to do maintenance works on their projects.

“Yes, we do. You know evaluation is a long term process so as for monitoring it is a regular thing we do all the time. And it is done by the team at the Foundation. For example, if it is a school, clinic or empowerment project, we go back to check if the purpose for which the intervention was requested is being met and all that.” – A respondent from MTN Ghana opined.

Discussion

The means by which individuals and organisations disseminate information has detonated over the years due to advancements in technology. It is important to appreciate that information dissemination is the conscious effort to spread information, policies, and practices to target audiences or the general public (Green et. al., 2009). Clearly, attempts are made to achieve a goal through diffusion as a result of the element of ‘conscious effort’ in information dissemination. This corroborates the findings of the study since it was revealed through the interviews that MTN Ghana embark on information dissemination on their CSR projects with the ‘conscious effort’ to demonstrate to the public MTN Ghana's commitment and support for community empowerment and national development. Moreover, one of the objectives of the MTN Ghana foundation was to employ CSR to “improve upon the MTN Brand in all operating areas” (MTN Foundation, 2017). This affirms a rationale of using information dissemination techniques and processes by MTN Ghana to project its CSR projects in order to enhance the image of the organisation as a responsible corporate citizen.

Information dissemination processes are noted to strike through a variety of means, social contexts, and settings (Richards et. al., 2017). These processes involve two strategies that adopt different channels to reach their targeted groups or the general public: Active dissemination strategies and passive dissemination strategies. Active dissemination strategies involve active efforts to spread information via specific strategies and channels whereas passive dissemination strategies are uncontrolled spread of information or no spread of information (Slater, 1995, Green et.al., 2009, Baba, 2020). The findings of the study suggest that MTN Ghana employ active dissemination strategies when disseminating information on its CSR projects. Importantly, all the channels available (Internet, social media, TV, Radio, Print) to reach the general public of Ghana and

outside the country were employed by the Foundation to disseminate information on its CSR projects.

All CSR based on altruism are expected to be human centered with interventions planned and executed with the aim of providing value to the people, making a positive impact and enhancing the communities in which the company operates (Mensah, 2009; Ghillyer, 2012; Opon 2017). The study found collaborative efforts between MTN Ghana and the beneficiaries of the CSR project towards the achievement of these aims. It was refreshing to find that, beneficiaries of MTN Foundation projects initiate the process by identifying a need in their community and then putting in a formal request for MTN Ghana Foundation's assistance.

The study further revealed that the engagement of the beneficiaries and other key stakeholders in the planning and execution of the CSR projects engendered ownership by the community (Owusu-Kwarteng, 2016; Dejong & Van der Meer, 2017; Yunis et al, 2018). Importantly, the study found as revealed through the interviews and depicted in the documents available at the Akim Asafo SHS that the beneficiaries and other stakeholders were actively involved in the project from the decision-making and planning processes through to the execution of the project.

The findings from the interviews further confirmed that MTN Ghana's CSR project was very accessible to its intended beneficiaries without any interference from the funder and this enhanced the projects' altruism status (Brusseau, 2012; Ghillyer, 2012). MTN Ghana's CSR projects – schools, hospitals, clinics, etc. - are sited practically at the doorstep of their beneficiaries to meet the need for which the project was requested (MTN Foundation 2017). The study also found that MTN Ghana Foundation had a monitoring and evaluation system in place to enable them gather useful feedback to guide them in their future interventions.

Feedback from the Akim Asafo community suggested that the beneficiaries were very grateful for, and content with MTN Ghana's CSR intervention at the Akim Asafo SHS, citing the various crucial uses the building had been put to over the past three years.

Conclusion

The study looked into the CSR project of MTN Ghana at Akim Asafo SHS in order to ascertain whether the altruism portrayed to the public via information dissemination of CSR projects in Ghana reflect reality or mere publicity. The results from the study attests to the fact that MTN Ghana Foundation's general objective of transforming the communities in which MTN Ghana operates establishes the organisation's intention to have impact on the communities they operate as well as contribute meaningfully towards the socio-economic development of the country.

It was evident from the study that MTN Foundation rigorously engage in information dissemination of their CSR projects through the use of active dissemination strategies. As depicted in the study, the company enjoyed some level of publicity towards the company's image enhancement through information dissemination of their projects. However, it was revealed through the study that publicity was not the major reason for the dissemination of information on MTN Ghana's CSR projects but rather making people aware of the foundation's 'existence, viability and capacity to offer assistance to other communities that may want to access their help. It is therefore relevant to note that, publicity does not appear to be the driving force behind the dissemination of information on MTN Ghana's CSR initiatives.

In relation to implications for practice, the study shows that it is important for MTN Ghana's Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives to be borne largely and always out of altruism. Organisations in Ghana such as MTN are expected to leverage on the goodwill it receives from its numerous CSR initiatives towards the enhancement of their corporate image and to gain greater brand recognition. However, these intentions and expectations should not override the rationale for the information dissemination of CSR projects. Moreover, as a huge investor and leading advocate for CSR initiatives in Ghana, MTN Ghana, could be used as a benchmark by other companies to assess their CSR activities.

The study also expands the theoretical frontier in many ways. For example, the study confirms that, involvement of beneficiaries in the planning and execution of CSR projects improve the sense of ownership of the beneficiaries. The study further shows the need for beneficiary feedbacks to be taken into account for better outcomes of CSR projects. In spite of the positive attributes of

MTN Ghana's CSR projects and rationale for their information dissemination processes, there is more room for improvement especially on their monitoring of CSR projects. It is therefore recommended that MTN Ghana Foundation institutes a robust monitoring and evaluation system in order to properly monitor and report on their CSR projects to ensure their regular maintenance and sustainability. Again, continuous efforts should be made to sustain the easy accessibility enjoyed by beneficiaries of MTN Ghana's CSR projects.

Recommendation for further studies

The study has limitation by examining the information dissemination of CSR projects of one organisation (MTN Ghana) as well as one project – three-unit classroom and allied facilities at the Akim Asafo SHS. When funding and other resources are available, further studies are recommended to look into other CSR projects of the organisation and possibly extend to other MNCs in Ghana.

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