UNIVERSITY OF GOTHENBURG
SCHOOL OF BUSINESS, ECONOMICS AND LAW

# "Commitment through Communication"

**Strategies for Communicating CSR Initiatives: Enhancing Engagement and Commitment Among Internal Stakeholders**

**Ijlal Hasnain 19970824**
**Sohaib Qureshi 19861130**

Supervisor: Sara Brorstrom

Master's thesis in Management

Spring 2024

Graduate School, School of Business, Economics and Law, University of Gothenburg, Sweden

**Abstract**

The current thesis seeks to investigate how internal communication influences Corporate Social Responsibility initiatives, with a focus on the improvement of employee commitment and engagement. The main research question is: "How can companies effectively communicate CSR initiatives to increase engagement and commitment among internal stakeholders?" It uses an in-depth case study of a manufacturing firm through unstructured interviews with employees and managers along with analysis of both internal and external communication channels.

According to the findings, even though employees have a high knowledge and involvement in CSR, commitment levels are affected by the extent of their involvement particularly at senior management level. Personal interaction is preferred, which permits feedback as well as discussion. However, lower rank employees are often less involved. It can be concluded that effective internal communication plays a key role in building up a strong commitment within organizations.

**Keywords:** Corporate Social Responsibility, Employee Engagement, Leadership Involvement Internal Communication, Organizational Commitment, Manufacturing Industry, Stakeholder Communication, Employee Motivation, Communication Strategies, Sustainable Business Practices, Internal Stakeholders.

# 1. Introduction

Between the 1950s and 1960s era, there was a popular rising trend in social movements that gave birth to basic idea of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) among business scholars and business leaders (Carrol, 2015). In today's world, the topic of CSR is being increasingly debated among different segments of society. Today the core focus of CSR is to validate, motivate and use CSR for competitive advantages (Skarmeas et al., 2013). According to one of the definitions of CSR, "A core social concept where organizations align parallel other business functions with environmental and social concerns and its effects on stakeholders. It is done on both a strategic and voluntary basis.

In the past, for the employment period, employees usually seek for better compensation and job security (Golob et al., 2013). However, now things have changed and among other things, employees now are interested and, in many ways, committed for the support of societal causes (Crane and Glozer, 2016). These recent changes are making it mandatory for companies to communicate their CSR policies and show commitment for the employees' job and societal satisfaction (Birth et al., 2008). According to (Bevan et al., 2004), an effective CSR communication and strategy is linked with reducing employee turnover in companies. It is because employees now value the social commitment of their organizations.

Kotler and Lee (2005) highlight that adopting CSR frameworks can assist organizations with numerous benefits like having strong brand, reduced operational costs, increased in sales, better employee motivation, refined corporate image and lower employee turnover. When an employer involves an employee in their CSR activities, it can increase employee's self-perception for their organization (Hoeven and Verhoeven, 2013). For CSR integration, internal communication holds immense importance for the companies to its stakeholders (Birth et al., 2008). Even though employees play a prominent role in building company's trust for CSR initiatives, research on how effective internal communication remains is still limited. Moreover, it is important to understand the impact of internal communication on CSR initiatives and how to make it more effective (Bhattacharya et al., 2011).

While getting on with CSR initiatives, involving employees and building their trust, a two-way communication model and inside-out approach is recommended, a clear focus on enhancing employee roles (Morsing and Schultz, 2006). When companies are committed to their CSR policies by employee engagement, the word of mouth becomes effective for companies. Employee influence in the CSR programs is quite significant (Birth et al., 2008). The organization's internal stakeholders act as a credible information source and reduce external skepticism for CSR initiatives. Hence, it is important for companies to keep an eye on employee involvement throughout CSR journey (Du et al., 2010).

**Strategies for Communicating CSR Initiatives: Enhancing Engagement and Commitment Among Internal Stakeholders**

The main goal of the thesis is to analyze various methods by using which companies can effectively communicate the CSR efforts to internal stakeholders and as a result, enhance their involvement for the better cause.

The central research question of our study is:

**How do companies communicate their CSR initiatives to create engagement and commitment among internal stakeholders?**

To deeply explore the issue, four further research inquires will be added:

- What is the level of involvement and awareness of employees towards company's CSR initiatives?
- Which communication channels are utilized throughout the process of communication?
- What is the level of participation from employees?
- The Role of External Recognition in Fostering Internal Commitment

For the present thesis, an investigative case study methodology has been employed to investigate the topic in a large battery manufacturing factory in a local setting. The organization has an extensive focus on developing and participating in CSR initiatives including but not limited to climate initiatives, green energy sources, helping local communities through various resources. The organization operates in a local municipality where such a big project has also impacted local businesses and how the municipality manages the city operations.
The framework of this thesis follows the pattern as first, a theoretical framework is defined and explained, showing how the CSR has developed over the years, the key theories, and concepts, along with the benefits and motivations for CSR (Carrol et al, 2015). This section also highlights internal marketing and internal communications for CSR. Next, the methodology section focuses on data collection, research design, analysis, and techniques, along with dependability and credibility of the study. Following the methodology section, comes findings sections where the key findings are presented through its various angles. Finally, the conclusion section focuses on managerial and theoretical implications for further research.

## 2. Literature Review

During the evolution of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), it has been shifted from marginal theoretical concept into a key element for business success, their better brand image and hence companies have started to integrate into its core business strategies (Porter & Kramer, 2006). As companies have started to acknowledge the core importance of CSR, there is a significant shift

on how communication to internal stakeholders needs to be done to enhance CSR objectives and keep on CSR commitments. The literature bids important insights into this perspective, highlighting the critical role that effective communication plays in implanting CSR into the organizational culture.

There has been a significant shift in how CSR has been conceptualized over time. Initially, the core focus on CSR was linked with voluntary contributions and charitable activities to society in general. However, lately the interpretation of CSR has transformed from a social concept into integration for companies for their humanitarian, ethical and legal responsibilities (Carroll, 1991). Modern day CSR approaches emphasize a focus on addressing and resolving societal challenges, creating shared values and on the same point continuing to achieve core business objectives (Porter & Kramer, 2006). This significant shift shows that now companies are recognizing the position that having responsible business practices can help companies in achieving long term sustainable competitive advantage, reinforcing the necessity for organizations to communicate their CSR efforts efficiently both within and outside the organization.

Effective internal communication plays an integral role in driving the interest and engagement of employees towards company's CSR initiatives. According to Morsing and Schultz (2006), the employees of the company or internal stakeholders should not just be aware of their organization's commitment to CSR but also, they must understand its significance and must remain motivated for such highly involved activities. The more employees are aware and engaged, the more critical it will be for organizations to successfully integrate CSR along with major business strategic goals. When employees are well informed about the importance of CSR and organization's CSR efforts, they will align their personal efforts, thereby enhancing their engagement and loyalty.

When employees are emotionally attached to their organization, it shows their organizational commitment and then can aid the organization for the business and CSR goals. In an organization, when CSR objectives are well informed and spread out in employees, it brings loyalty and sense of pride among employees (Joyner and Payne, 2002). Such emotional bonding can assist an organization in planning for the long term as it is expected to gain employees' loyalty and as a result, less turnover (Maignan & Ferrell, 2001). Those employees who feel honored to work in an organization will be more likely to remain committed to the organization and will contribute to meaningful causes. Such strong commitment and loyalty not only benefit the employees but is also greatly beneficial for the employers overall and results in higher productivity and job satisfaction.

There are diverse strategies to internal CSR communication to stakeholders, starting with intranet platforms, newsletters, emails, exhibitions, and face-to-face meetings. The in-person communication is quite effective as it allows the recipient to gather immediate feedback which

translates into a meaningful discussion and provides more engaging environment for the companies (Katarina et al. 2013). There is a sense of involvement in direct interaction and provides ownership mindset to employees, makes them feel more connected and involved in CSR activities.

Similarly, for CSR initiatives, external communication also plays a vital role in shaping the perception of employees. When companies manage to efficiently communicate their CSR initiatives to the public, it builds their overall reputation among the public, which as result leaves positive impact on company employees (Du et al., 2010). When employees see that their company's reputation is increasing and positive vibes are coming from outside, it enhances their level of engagement and strengthens their bond with the organization. This positive external confirmation underlines the internal messaging, building a virtuous cycle where external and internal communications reinforce and complement each other (Bhattacharya et al. 2011).

In the theoretical framework section of the thesis, several key theories will be discussed to explain the relationship between company CSR initiatives, organizational commitment, and employee engagement. The stakeholder theory as drafted from Freeman (1984) highlights the importance of communication to all stakeholders, fulfilling their expectations including employees, which are a critical part of internal communication is important for aligning stakeholder interests with company's objectives. Similarly, legitimacy theory (Suchman, 1995) explains the need for organizations to align their societal norms with their expectations to achieve legitimacy. This alignment is key for companies to achieve employee engagement along with commitment as it is required for successful implementation of CSR objectives. On the other hand, according to Resource-Based View (RBV) theory (Barney, 1991), stresses the strategic merit of CSR as a sole resource that can articulate an organization's competitive advantage. By communicating CSR initiatives, companies can leverage this handy resource to build a committed, and strong employee workforce that impacts long-term success.

## 3. Theoretical Framework

**Theoretical Framework: CSR Communication and Employee Engagement**

Due to its various potential impacts within an organization, corporate social responsibility has transformed not just external perception but how employees relate with their place of work. Given that organizations have made it a point to include CSR in their strategies, internal communication serves as an impartial instrument of how these projects will find their way to the employees. This theoretical perspective also builds on the Stakeholder Theory, the Legitimacy Theory and the Resource-Based View (RBV which also includes current empirical findings for the communication toward employees. We will be basing our theoretical framework using the combination of these theories to analyze how companies can communicate their CSR initiatives to promote engagement and commitment among the internal stakeholders.

> Corporate Social Responsibility has evolved with the passage of time from being one dimensional to now encompassing other dimensions too. Stakeholder Theory (Freeman, 1984) stresses that employees, the critical internal stakeholders, ought to be incorporated in the organization's CSR activities if the programs are to be well implemented. Nowadays, employees require their organizations to proceed with a core value system that is consonant with their individual value systems, especially with respect to social and ecological matters. It argues that institutionalization of social responsibility requires that the corporate objectives be focused on the satisfaction of the stakeholders. Developing strong ties and trust with all stakeholders by transparent communication and cooperative efforts is very crucial for preserving societal legitimacy (Husted & Allen, 2006).

Research by Gullekson et al. (2021) supports this concept, indicating that employees who engage in CSR activities, and in particular volunteer programs, increase their levels of engagement. Their findings suggest that CSR engagement may enhance the emotional bond employees have with the organization. Here, the role of communication is paramount. Employees are not only expected to be aware of various CSR activities but also appreciate their relevance and benefit from these activities as well as motivate them to participate. The emphasis here is on two-way communication, which allows employees to express their views, share ideas, and feel like contributors rather than passive recipients of CSR messages.

A two-way communication model is important in building this alignment. Du et al. (2010) points out that companies that engage with employees by soliciting their feedback on issues such as CSR are likely to have more committed workforces. Such engagement creates a feeling of belonging and accountability towards CSR initiatives, hence the employees are in a better position to take ownership of these initiatives. This is in line with Stakeholder Theory which encourages an organization to adequately involve its stakeholders in the company’s quest for social responsibility and not as mere observers.

However, despite the growing focus on CSR communication, there remain gaps in the literature on how different communication strategies impact varying levels of employee engagement. Many companies put more emphasis on one-way communication where employees are just informed about CSR practices while feedback or even contribution of employees on the initiatives is less emphasized. This is an important area our research seeks to address, how CSR communication can evolve from being one-sided to a multi-dimensional approach.

**Legitimacy and CSR Communication: Building Trust from Within**

Legitimacy is one of the critical issues in the implementation of CSR practices. Suchman (1995) argues that legitimacy is achieved by organizations where employees’ practices are consistent with societal standards. It follows that for CSR attempts to be legitimate, employees must perceive them as authentic and not as mere attempts to reinforce the company’s image. The

theory states that employees are instrumental towards gaining internal legitimacy for CSR activities. Where employees believe in the ‘cause’ of the CSR, they are willing to engage and support that ‘cause’.

Employees are the internal and external spokespersons of CSR activities and support the cause initiated by the employees in networked institutions (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2011). Employees help enhance the image of a company by acting on its CSR activities. However, there can also be some instances where the employees can be skeptical. Where employees feel that the communication of CSR programs conflicts with the practice, they may not feel fully involved with the company’s CSR’s goals. If the employees feel that the CSR is just a mere "corporate lip service”, then serious issues related to internal morale and credibility can arise.

Organizations should practice consistent and transparent communication in publicizing their CSR activities to be trusted. It requires not only promoting successes but also coming out to explain difficulties and what else can still be done. The staff stands a better chance of supporting an organization that regularly maps out its CSR agenda while conceding that there are some interruptions. Gaps in Legitimacy Theory proposes that such communication enhances people’s trust and deepens the organization-employees’ relationship.

Though there is considerable literature on Legitimacy Theory, there is a limited understanding of the role of communication strategies in influencing employee attitudes towards CSR. Current studies are only concerned with external legitimacy seeking by organizations as if internal audiences do not matter. Our study will fill this gap through investigating how various forms of CSR communication including formal communication and informal interactions impacts on employees’ perceptions of the organization’s legitimacy and their subsequent participation in CSR activities.

**CSR as a Strategic Asset: A Resource-Based View**

An alternative viewpoint is provided by the Resource-Based View (RBV) (Barney, 1991), which views CSR as a valuable intangible resource that can give an edge over competitors. RBV claims that companies that successfully incorporate CSR into their internal culture can develop a workforce that is more dedicated, driven, and effective. In this situation, corporate social responsibility (CSR) is an integral part of the organization's value proposition to workers, not just an external-facing tactic.

Internal processes such as that of communication incorporate embedded in the organizational culture. Communication can foster community especially when Morsing and Schultz (2006) emphasize that CSR must be perceived not as a silo action but internalized in the organizational culture. When they come to work and feel that what they do is to the benefit of an important cause, they feel they belong more, they feel they care more and remain committed to the organization. This is consistent with RBV that emphasizes the catching up process whereby

resources and capabilities that are unique are built, for instance a workforce that is actively contributing to society which is difficult to compete with.

Notwithstanding the promise of CSR to contribute to the enhancement of employee engagement, there still exists a substantial gap in the studies on how communication can be used by the organizations in a bid to convert CSR from being an organizational order into a movement driven by employees. Current literature mostly assumes that CSR is a resource and less of a dynamic process that needs systems and processes in place for proper communication. We will address the role internal communication approaches can play in engaging employees on CSR, where CSR is not just a communication relay, but an enduring movement owned by both the organization and the employees.

**Addressing Gaps and Contributing to the Literature**

It has been pointed out that Stakeholder Theory, Legitimacy Theory and RBV analysis offer essential contributions to CSR communication, there are still several areas that our research seeks to fill. First, although several works have documented the fact that communication influences employee engagement, very few have delved into the actual steps and processes that make employees embrace CSR communication. We will examine the ways in which the content, the tone and the frequency of the communication of CSR will affect the employees' attitudes and actions towards the CSR program so that more effective communication strategies can be built.

Second, most models are outcomes oriented and do not examine how these outcomes are achieved. Such effects would be of interest to our research, which will explore feedback loops resulting from two-way communication with employees on CSR initiatives and ownership of CSR programs by employees.

Finally, there is still much knowledge which can be gained regarding how organizations can keep this value, while the Resource-Based View emphasizes the strategic importance of CSR. In this regard, our study will investigate how organizations can retain the relevance of their CSR policy in employee communication over time considering changes in the employees' expectations. CSR, in this sense, should be viewed not as a one-time initiative but as an ever-changing and active resource capitalization.

## 4. Methodology

Within this study, a qualitative case study method has been applied to study the association of internal communication and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in one of the battery manufacturing companies. The aim to employ qualitative methods came from the desire to investigate the intricate connection that exists between the employee's participation, the CSR, and internal communication strategies. Qualitative approaches are useful in the reason there is a need to address how the CSR strategies are disseminated to the clientele and how such strategies affect the behavior of employees as well as the people's perceptions of them (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

The case study research was limited to a particular manufacturing company serving a municipality which was selected due to its active internal communication strategies and the commitment towards CSR. This approach for the study, which is the case study approach, is preferable because it permits contextually thorough analysis without losing the contextual thickness of real-life situations even as the events unfold (Yin, 2014). The case study was keen to assess the extent and way the internal communicative strategies of the organization were utilized in supplementary to the CSR programs of the organization.

**Challenges Encountered**

There were however some difficulties that were faced at certain stages of the research process, which needed some planning and management. One of the main hurdles was to secure the cooperation of some participants who were able to give a thorough understanding of the company's internal communications and CSR strategies. Even though there was overall cooperation from the company, some employees, especially those in lower levels, were initially reluctant to take part in the research study owing to fear of confidentiality and repercussions. To prevent this, I allayed concerns and informed participants that their involvement in the study would be completely anonymous, stressing the significance of the study and assuring confidentiality. Nevertheless, obtaining open answers was still a challenge, especially for sensitive issues such as perceiving deficiencies in CSR communication strategies in the company.

Collecting data even in research has corporate ethical and legal implications, which presented even more challenges. There were participants who belonged to the middle management status who were cautious to speak about their experiences because they felt such comments would portray them negatively in the eyes of the management. In this way, I aimed at promoting free discussions with the participants with the understanding that the thesis was one for enhancement does not blame of the organization's CSR communication strategies.

Gathering data in a corporate environment filled these gaps even further. For some, especially the middle management, it was difficult to articulate their experiences because they did not want to share feedback that would put them on a bad side of the management. To this end, I stressed the need for open dialogue and explained to the participants that the purpose of the study was to enhance the concerning organization's CSR, instead of focusing on its shortcomings.

Obtaining and analyzing such rich and complex qualitative data also created numerous hurdles. The application of codes and the formulation of categories was an elaborate back and forth process that included several versions to get themes that corresponded to the actual content. Because of the information value qualitatively, this has caused certain biases that I also attempted to overcome by use of peer debriefing and triangulation to fortify the validity of the findings. Another struggle was ensuring that the analysis was both deep in its coverage of a specific topic as well as wide in scope so that many issues relating to CSR and internal communication could be addressed. Sometimes, other themes needed to be given emphasis and

relationships that involved focusing on specific data parameters were adhered to by harmonizing the analysis with the research aims and objectives.

Lastly, there was a constant challenge throughout the research process due to ethical considerations. Careful handling was needed to ensure participant confidentiality while correctly portraying their viewpoints. This was particularly difficult when talking about incidents of poor communication or perceived shortcomings in CSR tactics, since participants had to be careful about identifying details to prevent unintentional consequences.

**Data Collection**

The data collection source for the thesis is divided into primary and secondary sources. Merging both sources of data, a detailed understanding is extracted of how company's internal communication is managed from the CSR perspective, thereby strengthening the reliability of the results.

**Primary Data**

The execution of semi-structured interviews with various stakeholders in the organization, including supervisors and employees from different departments, represents the main data collection method. Semi-structured interviews were chosen due to their flexibility and that they allow for thorough exploration of specific subjects but at the same time makes it possible to explore further and clarify interesting responses (Gill et al., 2008). This method of research is highly effective as it gives a lot of detailed insights into participants' perceptions, experiences, and attitudes towards CSR initiatives by the firm as well as internal communication strategies.

The questions asked are designed to understand how CSR initiatives are communicated within the company, the methods and channels used for this purpose, and their effect on employee engagement levels and organizational commitment. Participants include representatives from such departments as human resources, production, and sustainability department, just to name a few. In total we conducted 15 interviews, both with the employees as well as the managers of different departments. They are transcribed into written text in detail so that accurate analysis can be done.

| Name | Position |
|---|---|
| Fredrick | Production Associate |
| Boris | Quality Control Associate |
| Marcin | Team Leader Safety |
| David | Team Leader Material |

| | |
|---|---|
| Jana | Assistant Manager HR |
| Astrid | Manager Sustainability |
| Severin | Operations Associate |
| Lovisa | HSE Employee |
| Adam | Production Employee |
| Ancuta | Manager HR |
| Sara | Sustainability Associate |
| Jennica | Manager HSE |
| Rossana | Manager Community Outreach |
| Hamza | Finance Executive |
| Tibor | Logistics Coordinator |

**Secondary Data**

There are multiple sources which are used to extract secondary data required for analysis. It includes sustainability reports, annual reports and intranet documents, audio visuals and other internal communications. These data sources will assist in analyzing the primary data authenticity and ensuring that available information is aligned with company CSR initiatives.

The sources of secondary data encompass:

Secondary data sources include:

• **Company Sustainability Reports**: These reports offer comprehensive information about corporate social responsibility (CSR) efforts, goals, and achievements by a company. They reveal strategic precedence as well as KPIs regarding CSR.

• **Intranet Content**: On a regular basis, these channels give out insights on how CSR activities are updated among employees. These enable an understanding of frequency, tone, and content internal CSR communication.

• **External Communication and Press Releases**: These sources help to understand how the company updates its CSR activities to external stakeholders or its effects on internal perception. These also show what the organization has publicly promised or accomplished in terms of CSR initiatives.

**Data Analysis**

The process of analyzing data consists of several steps meant to enable a comprehensive and systematic examination of the collected data. One technique that is crucial in this aspect is thematic analysis, which seeks to identify, analyze, and report patterns or themes within the research (Braun & Clarke, 2006). It can be argued that this approach has an advantage over other approaches in qualitative research as it offers a flexible framework for making sense of complex sets of data. The following are the steps involved in the process of analyzing data:

- **Acquaintance**: This first stage involves transcribing interviews and engaging with the transcripts to gain an overall understanding of the material. Such immersion helps identify initial themes and patterns.
- **Creating Initial Codes:** To do this, a number of notes are made on the data set to indicate major themes and patterns. The strategy calls for coding out specific segments of text that relate to the research questions to aid sorting information into coherent categories.
- **Aims of themes seeking:** This is where the researcher brings together codes to form themes hence gathering every relevant datum connected with each theme. Themes represent significant patterns that indicate key insights into research questions about the data.
- **Going through the Themes:** At this point, a thorough examination of these themes ensures that they flow logically and are separate from one another but also without any contradictions involved. Afterwards, the scholar may refine them to ensure that they accurately reflect both the coded extracts and overall dataset.
- **Naming and Defining Themes:** For each theme there is an elaborate definition which captures its true meaning and shows what part of information it covers or refers to. During this phase, detailed explanations/ interpretations are given for each theme selected within its major parameters.
- **Reporting**: Finally, these patterns are joined up into a coherent narrative which answers the research question as well as gives insight into what was studied. In this narrative there will be detailed explanations and analysis of each theme identified above.

**Validity and Reliability Checks**

Ensuring the quality of qualitative research, validation strategies such as triangulation, member checking, rich descriptions, and reflexive analysis are applied to increase credibility, dependability, and transferability. Triangulation includes the use of more than one method, for

instance the use of documents, interviews, etc., which brings out a deeper insight into the research problem and its actualization. Member checking allows participants of research to check whether the objective of the research has been reflected in the results which, in return, increases the validity of the survey implementation.

Also, providing such a rich thick description allows the readers to judge whether such results can be extrapolated to different environments. The use of reflexivity has also contributed to the credibility of the research because reflexivity entails telling the reader the bias of the researchers and how that bias may impact upon the research. All these strategies prevent an erosion of insights and create a more confident and reliable process for conducting qualitative research.

**Limitations**

This study has some limitations that should be noted. Acknowledging them is important as it would provide a wide-ranging comprehension of the research and position the findings within a broader context.

**Single Case Study**: The focus of the inquiry on one organization only limits the generalizability of the findings to larger population. While case studies yield deep insights, their results might not be applicable to all entities involved in similar activities. The fact that this company has certain peculiarities could influence its performance. Therefore, conducting additional research within different firms is required for it to be widely represented.

**Subjectivity**: Qualitative research usually contains researchers' interpretation which makes findings subjective by their nature. The use of strategies such as triangulation and member checking assists in reducing bias but still some subjectivity remains. These investigators' backgrounds and biases are bound to inform how they interpret data; thus, this sense of subjectiveness is integral to any study.

**Access to Data**: Participants' readiness to reveal their experiences and access to organizational documents determine data richness and quality. Inadequate approach can limit your study comprehensiveness. One should try using a variety of sources in order get several types of information from participants with diverse backgrounds or socio-economic statuses.

## 5. Findings- Cognizance and Awareness

The purpose of this chapter is to understand the data gathered in our interviews from four different angles 1) Cognizance and Awareness 2) Involvement 3) Content and Channels 4) External Communications influence on Employees. We aimed to focus on these specific tenets to decipher how effective is the internal communication to drive the CSR initiatives and the respective viewpoints of managers and their subordinates.

As Dahlsrud (2008) noted the nature of CSR is not always set in tone and it could be interpreted as complex, we first started conducting our interviews to get to know what do employees and the managers think CSR means, and how aware they are of what CSR entails. We aimed to get a

holistic view of what CSR is described as in the literature compared to how the people doing it in their work acknowledge it.

In the first interview, we got to know that some interviewees equate CSR with the environmental stewardship: it is a concept where one thinks of themselves to act as a steward to maintain the responsible and sustainable usage of the resources and also manage them in such a way to ensure availability for the future generations. As Fredrick stated in his interview that:

"What I think of the term CSR is that it means to be closely tied with our obligations to the environment. Since we work in a battery manufacturing company, a top priority of our CSR initiatives is to reduce our environmental footprint."

In addition to adhering to environmental stewardship, we in our interviews discovered different viewpoints and themes which make our study interesting and thought provoking for us. Some respondents considered CSR to be beyond and not limited to the responsibilities to the environment but also involving ethical business practices and community engagement. As a statement by Bori's summaries this viewpoint:

"To me, corporate social responsibility (CSR) encompasses various obligations beyond just environmental concerns. This includes acting with integrity in all business dealings, contributing positively to community well-being and making sure we contribute to the betterment of the society in general."

This holistic interpretation of CSR enlightened us in understanding that although upholding sustainable practices is a vital part of any CSR strategy, other tenets of corporate responsibility are also of significance to a company. For example, upholding integrity in all business activities, ensuring fairness and transparency in the operations and making a positive impact on society.

Furthermore, in our interviews we also found some respondents to have a common and straightforward knowledge about CSR and how it works, and what it means to them. They focused more on the environmental, ethical, and social obligations which is also regarded as a common and widely accepted understanding of the concept. Marcin, when inquired about his stance or understanding, relates doing CSR with "doing things the right way." This helped us to understand how important it is for the employees to maintain a high standard of professionalism, abiding by the regulations, rules, and maintaining a high standard of ethical behavior.

In exploring various perspectives on Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), David, the team leader, provides a comprehensive and thoughtful perspective. His view provides a comprehensive "Best of both worlds" kind of approach to the subject comprising both social as well as sustainable dimensions in his response to us. Firstly, he emphasizes the magnitude of sustainability by advocating for resource conservation and the use of renewable energy within the company's operations. In his words "As we know the resources are scarce, so we have to make sure we don't deplete them for our future generations." Since David works in a battery manufacturer which professes to produce one of the greenest batteries, sustainability is close to

his heart and his coworkers. Secondly, the social lens of CSR, emphasizes upon the company's role in fostering community integration and supporting the marginalized groups and to use CSR as a vehicle to drive social inclusion in the company's policies as well as in the CSR activities for the society in general. Jana, who is the assistant manager HR, shed some light on this:

"Well, if you ask me, I am of the view that of course conserving the resources and reducing carbon footprint is one of our biggest priorities but for me the kind of social impact we have is of equal importance. We are actively working to integrate marginalized individuals into our community and providing them with opportunities for a fresh start through our support." When asked about what he meant or think constituted the marginalized communities, he talked about the Sami community in Sweden as well as women and LGBTQ communities in the work environment.

To show respect for the Samis, an important historical and rich cultural group in the area, one can provide support for them in a firm's activities. This is while paying attention to women empowerment and LGBTQ community within the organization shows how the company breaking gender barriers that leads to an inclusive environment where all employees thrive. Such CSR strategy enriches the company by blending environmental goals with robust social advocacy making it a more comprehensive program.

There is a need to ensure workers know, appreciate, and embrace their organization's CSR initiatives to get maximum value from CSR. To evaluate the effectiveness of these initiatives we conducted research involving interviews with both managers and staff members.

In general, managers in different organizations expressed confidence that their staff are informed about the company's CSR activities. They believe that internal newsletters, meetings, and digital forums have made it possible for them to reach out to people regarding CSR related issues. This is not the case; however, a further look at how this information gets to employees will reveal some issues with employees' comprehension of such messages. Astrid stated as below:

"We are doing well in spreading the word about our corporate social responsibility programs. For example, through this method people can be reached out by having meetings as well as having newsletters. Despite this notion, we need more efforts to ensure everyone understands what we stand for and why."

Furthermore, workers also believed that they know everything that happens in this town and other cities where the branch offices are located elsewhere. In terms of location, it is especially important for effective internal communication which ensures all company staff irrespective of their locations feel as if they belong to the organization's CSR initiatives. This will nurture organizational commitment when everybody has an understanding and buys into these objectives, hence establishing a collective approach towards achieving our corporate social responsibilities.

This was also expressed in the discussion with Severin who is an associate at Operations:

"As an employee, I actually feel pretty on top of things when it comes to our CSR efforts—not just here in our city, but also in the other places where we have offices. It's been great to get updates that keep us all in the loop, so I really get a sense of how we're all working together across locations to make an impact."

Another interesting thing we discovered from our research is that rather than viewing these CSR efforts as additional tasks or extra work, employees perceive them to be an integral part of their work. This is a positive indication of the company's efforts in embedding its CSR values into the fabric of its operations. As a result, the employees feel a sense of pride and worthiness by working in the company. As Lovisa points out:

"One thing I can tell you is that I feel really proud and happy while working here, particularly because we are committed to sustainability and doing our part in leaving a positive impact in the industry. It is fulfilling to know that our job goes beyond just the completion of the goals and objectives, but it also includes betterment for the environment we live and breathe in."

Although most employees and managers expressed that they are aware of the company's CSR initiatives, Adam noted the uncertainty about the specifics and their role, emphasizing the need for clearer communication and guidance.

"While I know our company is involved in some great CSR initiatives, I have to admit I'm not completely sure about the details or how I fit into them. I feel like a bit more guidance would help me understand how I can contribute more effectively."

Similarly, the CSR initiatives taken by the companies sometimes also pose some obstacles for the employees. They are of the view that transition to new sustainable practices can occasionally disrupt their routine work and can also complicate their daily routine work. For instance, Adam also opined that the introduction of new, lithium-ion batteries requires extensive additional training or adjustments to existing workflows, which causes burdens and complications for employees.

**Involvement**

In this chapter, we study the level of involvement of the employees and their management. In our research and from the interviews we conducted, we found out that the extent of participation varies according to the nature of the CSR initiatives in the company. The company distinguishes between top-down initiatives, led primarily by the upper management and secondly, employee-involved initiatives, which seek input from employees at multiple levels.

**Top-Down CSR Initiatives**

Top-down CSR initiatives are those which cater to broader corporate aims and respond to the stakeholder demands. These are decided and directed by the upper management. The vision and mission of these initiatives often involve achieving high-reaching sustainability targets, reducing the carbon footprint to the bare minimum, or transitioning to renewable resources or practices.

These initiatives do not ask or involve them in the shaping of any decisions, they merely are asked to follow the directives from the top management.

This was explained by Astrid, who is also the shift manager at one department, “the strategic decisions of the large-scale projects are of course taken by the upper management, usually the Board of Directors, Directors, and Production Managers. The board's strategic focus and stakeholder needs drive the process, with teams being informed of the goals but having little to no say in shaping them.”

Employees, on the other hand, often feel detached from these initiatives. As one employee (Fredrick) expressed, “We are told about the targets we need to meet, but it feels like all the decisions are made far above us. We just follow the plan without really understanding the bigger picture or how we can make a difference.”

This top-down approach, while efficient in aligning the company’s operations with its strategic goals, may lead to a disconnect between management and employees. When employees are not involved in the decision-making process, their engagement and commitment to these CSR activities can diminish, as they might not fully grasp their role in achieving these objectives.

**Employee-Involved CSR Initiatives**

Contrasting with the top-down approach, the company also undertakes CSR initiatives that actively involve employees, particularly at the local level. These projects include but are not limited to workplace development, social responsibility, engaging with the community, including the marginalized communities, women empowerment and extending support to the LGBTQ+ communities. In these areas, input and feedback from the employees is valuable as they are the ones carrying out these plans. Communication from the top to the bottom and vice versa is usually done through digital platforms like Microsoft Teams.

This is pointed out by Ancuta, who is a manager in the Human Resources department, who emphasizes on the benefits of this approach: “ As the employees at the staff level are the ones who will be actually carrying out the tasks, it is essential to gather feedback and ideas from them. We usually send surveys in the respective department groups in Microsoft Teams, where we also have discussion threads. This helps in taking everyone along and making them feel valued, which also increases the sense of ownership in the employees.”

As Ancuta pointed out about the sense of ownership and commitment in employees, our research found a similar correlation between involvement, participating in the CSR activities and feeling proud and a sense of worthiness of working in a company which strives to be at the forefront of CSR. This is highlighted by Sara who works at the sustainability department: “When I am being asked for my two cents on our CSR projects, it makes me feel worthy and empowered. I feel like my voice matters and that I am playing my small part in doing something palpable and meaningful.”

This statement by Lovisa calls attention to the role played by an inclusive approach by the upper management to include the opinion of the staff. This not only helps in cultivating a culture of collaboration but also a sense of shared responsibility to work together as one team. If employees are given a chance to contribute to the CSR projects, they will feel more motivated to work towards achieving the company's broader sustainability mission.

**Impact on Employee Behavior and Motivation**

Just as the two approaches to CSR, top-down and employee-involved, both have different nature and characteristics, they also have different effects on the employee's motivation and behavior. Although the Top-down method might seem to provide clear direction as it aims to align with the company's strategic goals and vision, it may lack a grassroot foundation. On the other hand, the employee-involved approach calls for feedback and input from all the spheres of organization, which cultivates a feeling of belongingness and ownership amongst the employees. It is also beneficial for the upper management in the sense that if their employees are motivated and committed, the directions from the upper management would be understood and acted upon with more dedication.

**Communication Channels and Modes:**

Just like it was pointed out in the previous chapter, the channels of communications of the CSR activities also depend on the nature of the initiative, whether it is a top down, or an employee driven. Choosing a correct communication mode not only helps in passing down the directions, but also ensures effective understanding of information, ideas and feedback across different departments and offices.

**Top-Down CSR Initiatives**

Here the flow of communication is from the top management, who are responsible for taking strategic decisions, towards the bottom of the hierarchy. The nature of communication is formal, centralized and usually one-way with little or sometimes no room for feedback. These initiatives are of strategic importance to the overall strategic vision and mission of the company, in this case, the battery manufacturer which aims to be the greenest battery manufacturer. When the stakeholders and directors come to a decision, it is communicated through the official channels like Microsoft Teams companywide groups, departmental specific groups, companywide emails, or presentations. Furthermore, relevant data and documents are also available on the intranet and some on the official website of the company.

Jennica, who is the manager at the HSE department, talks about how the company informs about the new updates or new projects: "Whenever there are some decisions regarding new high-level projects or even regarding the existing ones, the Director of the sustainability department communicates usually through the groups in Microsoft Teams or company-wide emails. They are also available on the intranet for the employees if they want to find out about the updates or the progress and for the public we have the official website, of course." Employees in

departments that are not directly involved in these initiatives, such as administrative or support functions, often feel that these communications are detached from their daily responsibilities. As Adam pointed out, "We get these updates through the intranet and emails about the big sustainability goals, but they don't feel very relevant to what I do every day. It's more like background information we're expected to know, but it doesn't really engage us."

**Employee-Involved CSR Initiatives**

In contrast, CSR initiatives that actively involve employees, especially at the local level, use more interactive and collaborative communication channels. These initiatives open the room for a two-way communication, encouraging employees to share their viewpoint. The modes often used in these projects are Microsoft Teams, Google Forms for the feedback and comments, also one-on-one meetings with their managers once every month. This one-on-one meeting is solely aimed at discussing progress, any hurdles, grievances and taking feedback about these projects, etc.

Rossana, who is the manager of the community outreach department, expresses her view on the efficacy of these channels:

"We have our department specific groups on Microsoft Teams and different community pages and groups which proved beneficial for garnering feedback and thoughts on issues from everyone. We also use Google Forms to gather and compile the comments received from the respondents. It also allows us to gather data for the long term."

**Department-Specific Communication**

Some departments are directly relevant to the CSR initiatives and the operations of the projects directly depend on these departments, for example the sustainability department, community outreach department. Since these departments are crucial for the CSR, they receive and are involved in frequent and direct meetings, discussions, etc. Conversely, some departments which are not directly relevant to the operations of the CSR, such as Finance, HR, or IT, receive less frequent or broader updates. A finance department employee, Hamza, mentioned, "We get the general updates about CSR through the intranet and our monthly department meetings, but it's more high-level stuff. The sustainability team gets more in-depth communication since it is more central to their work. For us, it's about understanding the overall direction without getting into the nitty-gritty."

**The Role of External Recognition in Fostering Internal Commitment:**

Another interesting and thought-provoking insight found during our research is how receiving external recognition plays a role in garnering the internal commitment of the workforce. This recognition can take many forms, for example, awards, public commendation, YouTube vlogs, documentaries, etc. The recognition by external stakeholders or the public really boosts the morale and motivation of the workforce as it validates their hard work. In addition to amplifying

the company's image, the employees reinforce their sense of purpose and conviction in the social and environmental aims of the company.

**Positive Impact on Employee Motivation:**

When a company's efforts are recognized by the public domestically or internationally, its employees feel a sense of pride and commitment that their efforts are being recognized at a bigger stage. For them it is a positive indicator to keep on striving and working hard.

As Lovisa expressed her sentiments: "Receiving that sustainability award last year really made all the time and effort we invested in our green initiatives feel worthwhile. Knowing that our work is appreciated outside the company walls gives you a sense of being part of something hugely significant."

Jennica observed a similar effect on her team: "When my team sees that people externally are also acknowledging us, we could see a noticeable uplift in their spirits. Now it is not only about doing the bare minimum, because the public is watching us, we must give our 110%."

**Challenges and Potential Downsides: A double-edged sword.**

While external recognition is often seen as a powerful motivator, its impact can vary significantly across the workforce. Not all departments have the same significance when it comes to CSR; some are directly involved, and some are indirectly. Those who are not directly involved in these important CSR projects, might not consider these awards and public attention to be appreciating and appealing. Because if the recognition does not resonate with the work they do, it can prove to be a double-edged sword for them, feeling left out.

This sentiment was shared by Tibor. an employee from the logistics department: "Personally I feel happy that our company is winning awards for sustainability, for those of us not part of those projects, it can feel like we're on the outside looking in."

Jennica, who is the manager, was of the same view about the potential downsides: "While receiving external recognition is positive, it is crucial to make sure all employees feel included in that success. If we focus too much on specific departments, it can create unintended divisions. It is important to demonstrate how everyone's work contributes to these achievements, even if they are not directly part of the CSR projects."

## 6. Discussion

In the discussion section, we analyze and base our study on the very same four factors we discussed in the findings section: Cognizance and awareness, Involvement, Communication Channels and Modes, lastly, the role of external recognition in fostering internal commitment. To answer the research question, it is imperative to understand the interplay between the communication strategies and stakeholder involvement. In addition to this, a culture of

engagement fosters an all-inclusive environment which in turn builds a motivated and committed workforce.

**Cognizance and Awareness**

The effectiveness and success of the CSR initiatives depend upon the level of understanding of the employees. Hence, we begin by evaluating how well the employees perceive and are aware of these initiatives and how to interpret them. This variation in comprehension agrees with Dahlsrud's (2008) thesis of CSR's multifaceted nature, which often leads to multiple interpretations across different sectors and individuals.

**Variability in Understanding CSR**

During our study we found that employees significantly vary in their interpretations of CSR, which reflects the complex nature of the concept itself. Since the company is primarily associated with producing sustainable batteries, some employees, like Fredrike, believe CSR to be limited to the environment stewardship and sustainability of the resources. This view is in correspondence with Carroll's (1991) notion of environmental dimensions of CSR being a central pillar of any CSR activity, anywhere in the globe. But, on the other hand, Boris's view of CSR is in a broader context incorporating ethical business practices and community involvement, in addition to the environmental concerns. This view is in line with Joyner and Payne (2002) assertion about ethical as well as societal responsibilities.

Another fascinating aspect of this study is the focus some workers put on CSR programs intended to propagate social justice and inclusion. For instance, some colleagues emphasized the significance of backing the Sami community to preserve cultural heritage and foster local relationships with Indigenous communities. Similarly, highlighting women's empowerment opportunities and LGBTQ+ rights advocate the organization's resolve to make an embracing and helpful atmosphere. Merging environmental objectives with robust social advocacy leads to a completer and more effective CSR framework.

According to Freeman's (1984) Stakeholder Theory, for a CSR strategy to be effective, it must meet the needs and expectations of all stakeholders, including employees. However, the findings show that while those in managerial and CSR-related roles are well-informed, many lower-level employees, and those from non-CSR departments, have a limited understanding of CSR and its relevance to their daily work.

Hence, this variation in perspectives brings to the forefront the need for clear and consistent communication within the company. As Birth et al. (2008) argue in his work about the cardinal role of effective communication strategy influencing employee understanding and aligning their efforts with company's mission. For those employees who feel sidelined, companies can use

structured communication strategies that link their roles to the company's broader CSR objectives, especially in areas like cultural inclusion, gender equality, and LGBTQ+ rights.

**Mixed Effectiveness of Communication Channels:**

The managers' belief on employees' awareness of CSR initiatives reflects a perception of immaculate communication channels**,** yet, in practice, their effectiveness varies. Initiatives related to the Sami community and gender, and non-binary inclusivity are well understood by some employees, yet others may not fully grasp their significance or how these initiatives add up to the company's broader CSR goals. This observation corroborates the findings of Kataria et al. (2013) who suggest that the mere distribution of information is not enough to achieve effective engagement. Companies should develop more interactive and participatory approaches to communicate the information to the employees and to consider the feedback.

This gap in the engagement approach was highlighted in the interview with Adam who was uncertain about his role and relevance in the CSR projects. This means that the end goal is not to just communicate and pass down the information or commands, but to make sure that they are aware of their roles and place in the projects and how relevant these are to their work. Similarly, Morsing and Schultz (2006) in their seminal work calls attention to establishing a two-way communication with the employees where they could feel included in the policy development.

**Pride and Operational Challenges**

During our research and while conducting the interviews, the pride and belief the employees had in the CSR programs was quite evident. This sentiment aligns with Bevan and Wilmott's (2002) insights into how ethical organizational practices bolster employee morale and identity. However, the operational challenges faced by some employees, stemming from the adoption of new sustainable practices, mirror the findings of Skarmeas et al., (2013). They note that while CSR initiatives can enhance organizational image, they may inadvertently introduce complexities in daily operations if not managed thoughtfully.

**Implications for Practice**

The company stands at a vantage point where its CSR initiatives are recognized and appreciated by its workforce. To build on this foundation, integrating employees more actively into the CSR planning and implementation processes could be beneficial. Drawing from Du and Sen's (2016) consumer psychology perspective, just as consumer engagement enhances CSR's impact externally, employee engagement can amplify its effectiveness internally. Creating platforms for feedback, facilitating workshops, and ensuring that CSR goals are contextualized within employees' daily tasks can bridge the existing gaps. As the Commission of the European Communities (2001) emphasizes, promoting a European framework for CSR necessitates both top-down and bottom-up approaches, ensuring alignment across all organizational levels.

**Involvement**

The study reveals there is a noticeable difference between top-down and actively employee-involved approaches when it comes to how employees interact with the company's CSR programs. These differences are significant because they affect employee engagement and organizational commitment as well as the efficacy of CSR programs.

Developing and executing the company's CSR programs frequently uses a top-down methodology. Senior management makes most of the decisions in this situation, with employee input being low. Although this strategy can successfully match CSR initiatives with the business's strategic goals, it frequently results in disengaged and disinterested workers. For instance, some employees have expressed their deep concerns regarding in-adequate involvement in the CSR decision making. They were only told about the specific targets they must achieve. Hence, consequently, this lack of engagement can reduce their sense of ownership and responsibility towards CSR objectives. The Stakeholder Theory (Freeman, 1984), which promotes the involvement of all stakeholders—including employees—in decision-making processes that impact them, can also be used to analyze this situation. This hypothesis states that if employees are not heavily involved in the process of creating the CSR goals, they may not fully understand its relevance. They will not feel completely devoted to these projects.

Furthermore, the results can also be supported by the Legitimacy Theory (Suchman, 1995). In his groundbreaking work, Suchman (1995) makes the case that keeping workers out of critical choices could damage the company's reputation for legitimacy. As a result, it might result in lower employee engagement and higher staff turnover.

As we have discussed in the previous section, employees who feel involved and engaged feel motivated and committed. The same was observed in the discussion with the managers who noted that involving employees in the development and execution of CSR projects results in improved outcomes and a stronger sense of ownership and dedication.

This hands-on approach resonates with the principles outlined by Morsing and Schultz (2006), who advocate for a two-way communication model for CSR where employees should be more than mere recipients of CSR policies. Furthermore, incorporating their feedback allows companies to benefit from a broader range of insight. They would consider themselves to be a part of the change and not mere followers of orders from the top hierarchy.

**Unlocking Potential: Areas for Growth**

The research suggests that the company could enhance its CSR strategy by integrating more inclusive practices. While aligning CSR initiatives with corporate goals often requires top-down approaches, inviting greater employee involvement could make these efforts far more effective and fruitful. To illustrate, seeking employee input during planning or forming cross-functional teams could bring fresh ideas and foster a dedicated work environment.

Moreover, considering the Resource-Based View (RBV) (Barney, 1991), cultivating a culture of participation and engagement in CSR can assist the business in creating a special internal

resource—driven and dedicated staff members—that may provide a major competitive edge. The company may improve its organizational performance as well as its CSR outcomes by identifying and utilizing the value that engaged employees bring to CSR activities. A culture that encourages employee participation in CSR can develop into a significant competitive advantage from the standpoint of the Resource-Based View (RBV) (Barney, 1991). Motivated employees, deeply engaged in CSR efforts, become a unique asset, driving both CSR success and broader organizational performance.

**Communication Channels and Modes**

This study highlights the significant impact of communication channels in conveying CSR initiatives effectively within the battery manufacturing company. The efficacy of these channels determines how well employees receive and understand CSR messages. This is intricately linked to this paper's research question on the role of internal communication in supporting CSR initiatives.

The top-down approach in which all decision making and planning is done by the higher management is characterized by formal and one directional communication. This is achieved by using mediums such as company-wide emails, intranet updates, and presentations in large meetings to maintain consistency of messaging and to communicate strategies clearly. Our research, however, found that these channels often lack sufficient interactive elements to engage employees fully. Employees who are not in CSR roles reported that while they know about sustainability goals, the updates on this are usually irrelevant to what they do daily. Thus, the finding supports the position of Kataria et al. (2013) who argue that although formal communication helps maintain consistency, it falls short of fostering active engagement and ownership of CSR initiatives.

In addition, excessive reliance on formal channels can create a sense of alienation among employees. One employee said that these communications are more like "background information" which they do not consider any integral part of their role. In this regard, Morsing and Schultz (2006) argue for a more communicative mode, one that promotes feedback and dialogue.

Conversely, interactive communication channels like Microsoft Teams, Google Forms, and face-to-face meetings are frequently used in CSR initiatives that involve employees in decision making process. Furthermore, employees' sense of ownership and involvement increases as these channels support real-time feedback and input.

The use of interactive communication channels supports the insights of Birth et al. (2008). Their work argues that engaging employees helps align their values with the organization's goals, incorporating CSR into the company's culture.

**Departmental Communication**

The impact of communication channels depends mostly on the alignment between a department and CSR goals. For example, sustainability and community outreach are departments that receive detailed updates relating to their aligned goals with CSR in strategy meetings and talks. Otherwise, finance and human resource departments receive broad updates through the intranet or during periodic meetings. This variation may lead to some parts of the company being more engaged than others thus reducing the overall influence of CSR.

There is, however, an opportunity for the company to adopt a more individualized approach to its communication. This would mean giving them some context on how such initiatives relate to their work as opposed to those which are closely tied to CSR.

**Areas for Improvement**

While current communication channels effectively disseminate information, they can be more interesting and appropriate for recipients. These platforms could be improved by adding interactive features like post surveys or discussion forums on intranet. Employees would then have space where they could air their views about these issues as well as raise relevant questions to the authorities.

Moreover, it is important that the company's communication strategies should be inclusive and responsive enough to address diverse requirements emanating from various departments. Therefore, one way through which this understanding can be achieved is when there exists a mutual understanding within these departments concerning CSR initiations across the organization. This, in turn, would strengthen employee engagement and commitment.

**The Role of External Recognition in Fostering Internal Commitment**

This study emphasizes how external recognition impacts internal commitment. External awards, media coverage or adulation from the public for CSR activities do more than just enhance corporate image; they also have a major positive impact on worker engagement and motivation. That is why this link is vital in understanding how internal communication fosters CSR efforts.

In addition, endorsement of CSR initiatives by external sources reinforces the internal messages about them. Such recognition adds weight to employees' belief that their bosses regard socially responsible behavior as important. This validation from the outside strengthens their commitment to such actions. For instance, according to Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), part of people's identity comes from belonging to groups. Consequently, whenever an organization is recognized for its social responsibility, employees feel deeper connections with it thereby strengthening their feelings of pride and involvement. One notable finding came from an employee who said that winning a sustainability award made her green and sustainable work seem "really valuable." This statement demonstrates how external acknowledgement can drastically change one's perception and create a sense of engagement among staff members. Bhattacharya et al. (2011) supports this view about external recognition. It can intensify

employees' emotional attachment to their company, integrating them into a broader, socially responsible narrative.

On the other side, not all responses to external validation are positive. Employees whose roles are not directly relevant to the recognized CSR efforts might feel alienated. Data from these employees revealed that the recognition did not resonate with their everyday responsibilities. One drastic negative consequence of this is that it creates a gap between the company's celebrated image and their personal work experience. This problem illustrates the concepts of Equity Theory (Adams, 1963), which holds that employees evaluate their efforts and rewards in relation to their peers. When recognition is skewed towards specific departments or initiatives, it can lead to feelings of inequity. Employees who believe their contributions are not equally acknowledged may feel discontent and disengage from their work.

**Approaches to Improve Inclusivity in Recognition**

Addressing these challenges requires the company to implement more inclusive communication strategies. It is important to recognize all employees' contributions, even those who are not directly involved in specific CSR initiatives. Expanding internal communications to highlight how various departments contribute to CSR success will ensure that every employee feels valued, reducing the risk of disengagement. Institutional Theory (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983) can guide the integration of inclusive recognition practices into the company's culture. Acknowledging both high-profile and everyday contributions helps build a more inclusive environment and strengthens commitment. Briefly, external recognition must be matched by inclusive internal communication to reinforce employee commitment effectively. Aligning these elements will boost engagement, minimize feelings of inequity, and enhance the company's overall culture. Hence, as a result, it will support the long-term success of these CSR activities.

## 7. Conclusion

This study sought to examine how internal communication influences the effectiveness of CSR initiatives, specifically in enhancing employee engagement and organizational commitment within a battery manufacturing company. The research involved detailed interviews with both managers and employees, revealing several important insights into effective CSR communication. We answered our research question: *Strategies for Communicating CSR Initiatives: Enhancing Engagement and Commitment Among Internal Stakeholders* and we came to find significant variation in CSR communication across organizational levels. Employees actively engaged in CSR roles exhibit higher levels of awareness and engagement, whereas those in other departments often lack detailed knowledge. This discrepancy underscores the necessity for more inclusive communication strategies that ensure comprehensive reach and engagement for all employees.

Current literature has not sufficiently addressed the variation in CSR awareness and engagement among various levels within organizations. Hence, a gap we discovered was the disparity in CSR

awareness and engagement across various organizational levels. Most research has focused on CSR's effects on external reputation and stakeholder relations, leaving internal communication gaps underexplored. Our findings show that employees in CSR-specific roles are more informed and engaged compared to their counterparts in other departments.

Furthermore, another noteworthy finding in our study is evaluating the significant impact of CSR initiatives focused on social equity. Support for the Sami community, women's empowerment, and LGBTQ inclusion can shape the company's culture and work environment. Employees involved in these initiatives often feel a deeper connection to the company's values and greater pride in their roles. However, this sense of connection is not uniform across all departments. Hence, our papers emphasize the need for a comprehensive strategy that includes both social and environmental aspects of the company's culture.

In addition to the social dimension, this study also brings to light the effects of top-down versus employee-involved CSR approaches, a topic that has not been thoroughly explored in the literature. Top-down methods are effective for aligning with strategic goals but can sometimes lead to feelings of separation among employees. In contrast, involving employees directly in CSR efforts tends to enhance their sense of ownership and engagement. This indicates a clear need for CSR approaches that actively incorporate employee participation across all levels of the organization.

In the same vein, our research adds valuable insights into how different communication channels impact CSR effectiveness. Existing literature often stresses the need for communication but does not always identify the most effective channels for engagement. We discovered that formal communication methods, such as emails and intranet updates, are efficient for information sharing but lack interactive features. On the other hand, interactive platforms like Microsoft Teams and face-to-face meetings were found to be more effective in fostering employee involvement. This research fills a gap by highlighting the importance of dynamic communication strategies in CSR.

Lastly, another important takeaway from our paper is the complex role of external recognition in internal CSR commitment, a detail often missed in existing research. External praise can boost morale and strengthen employees' connection to the company. However, it can also lead to a sense of exclusion among those not part of the recognized projects. This finding points to the need for inclusive communication that integrates all employees into the company's achievements.

In summary, this paper was an effort to analyze and add to the contributions to CSR and internal communication literature. It reveals gaps in how inclusivity, employee involvement, and communication channels are managed. It not only enhances academic insights but also delivers practical strategies for companies to improve CSR outcomes. We also faced some limitations during our work. One of the main limitations is that our work is solely focused on internal communication within a single organization. Although this allowed for an in-depth exploration

of communication strategies, it might also limit the applicability and relevance to other organizations. Furthermore, our research did not consider other factors which could have a bearing on CSR. These could include technological advancement, economic factors, etc. Future research could therefore investigate how other factors influence Corporate Social Responsibility and its implications.

**References**


1. Adams, J. S. (1963). Toward an understanding of inequity. Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology, 67(5), 422-436. https://doi.org/10.1037/h0040968
2. Barney, J. (1991). "Firm resources and sustained competitive advantage." Journal of Management, 17(1), 99-120.
3. Bevan, S., & Wilmott, M. (2002). *The Ethical Employee*. London: The Work Foundation.
4. Bevan, S., Isles, N., Emery, P., & Hoskins, T. (2004). "Achieving high performance: CSR at the heart of business." The Work Foundation.
5. Bhattacharya, C. B., Sen, S., & Korschun, D. (2011). *Leveraging corporate social responsibility: The stakeholder route to business and social value*. Cambridge University Press.
6. Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77-101.
7. Bryman, A., & Bell, E. (2011). *Business Research Methods*. Oxford University Press.
8. Birth, G., Illia, L., Lurati, F., & Zamparini, A. (2008). "Communicating CSR: Practices among Switzerland's top 300 companies." Corporate Communications: An International Journal, 13(2), 182-196.
9. Carroll, A. B. (1991). "The pyramid of corporate social responsibility: Toward the moral management of organizational stakeholders." *Business Horizons*, 34(4), 39-48.
10. Commission of the European Communities. (2001). Green Paper: Promoting a European framework for Corporate Social Responsibility.
11. Crane, A., & Glozer, S. (2016). "Researching Corporate Social Responsibility communication: Themes, opportunities and challenges." Journal of Management Studies, 53(7), 1223-1252.
12. Dahlsrud, A. (2008). "How Corporate Social Responsibility is Defined: An Analysis of 37 Definitions." Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental Management, 15(1), 1-13.

13. DiMaggio, P. J., & Powell, W. W. (1983). "The iron cage revisited: Institutional isomorphism and collective rationality in organizational fields." *American Sociological Review*, 48(2), 147-160.

14. Du, S., Bhattacharya, C. B., & Sen, S. (2010). "Maximizing business returns to corporate social responsibility (CSR): The role of CSR communication." *International Journal of Management Reviews*, 12(1), 8-19.

15. Easterby-Smith, M., Thorpe, R., & Jackson, P. R. (2012). *Management Research*. Sage Publications.

16. Freeman, R. E. (1984). *Strategic management: A stakeholder approach*. Pitman.

17. Gill, P., Stewart, K., Treasure, E., & Chadwick, B. (2008). Methods of data collection in qualitative research: Interviews and focus groups. *British Dental Journal*, 204, 291-295.

18. Golob, U., Podnar, K., Elving, W. J., Ellerup-Nielsen, A., Thomsen, C., & Schultz, F. (2013). "CSR communication: Quo vadis?" Corporate Communications: An International Journal, 18(2), 176-192.

19. Gullekson, N. L., Cedergren, A., Arnold, L., & Brooks, T. (2021). Corporate social responsibility and employee engagement: Making the case for international corporate-sponsored volunteering using a matched-sample analysis. *Society and Business Review*, *16*(4), 517–534.

20. Hoeven, C. L., & Verhoeven, J. W. M. (2013). "Sharing is caring: Corporate social responsibility awareness explaining the relationship of information flow with affective commitment." *Corporate Communications: An International Journal*, 18(2), 264-279.

21. Husted, B. W., & Allen, D. B. (2006). "Corporate social responsibility in the multinational enterprise: Strategic and institutional approaches." Journal of International Business Studies, 37(6), 838-849.

22. Joyner, B. E., & Payne, D. (2002). "Evolution and implementation: A study of values, business ethics and corporate social responsibility." *Journal of Business Ethics*, 41(4), 297-311.

23. Katarina, C., Jensen, S., & Lundbergh, A. (2013). "CSR and internal marketing: Employee involvement in the CSR process." *Business Strategy Series*, 14(4), 103-112.

24. Kotler, P., & Lee, N. (2005). *Corporate social responsibility: Doing the most good for your company and your cause*. John Wiley & Sons.

25. Maignan, I., & Ferrell, O. C. (2001). "Corporate citizenship as a marketing instrument: Concepts, evidence, and research directions." *European Journal of Marketing*, 35(3/4), 457-484.

26. Morsing, M., & Schultz, M. (2006). "Corporate social responsibility communication: Stakeholder information, response and involvement strategies." *Business Ethics: A European Review*, 15(4), 323-338.

27. Porter, M. E., & Kramer, M. R. (2006). "Strategy and society: The link between competitive advantage and corporate social responsibility." *Harvard Business Review*, 84(12), 78-92.

28. Skarmeas, D., Leonidou, C. N., & Saridakis, C. (2013). "Examining the role of CSR skepticism using fuzzy-set qualitative comparative analysis." *Journal of Business Research*, 66(10), 1836-1847.

29. Suchman, M. C. (1995). "Managing legitimacy: Strategic and institutional approaches." *Academy of Management Review*, 20(3), 571-610.

30. Tajfel, H., & Turner, J. C. (1979). An integrative theory of intergroup conflict. In W. G. Austin & S. Worchel (Eds.), The social psychology of intergroup relations (pp. 33-47). Brooks/Cole

31. Yin, R. K. (2014). *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*. Sage Publications.