

**UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA**

**corporate identity management practices:  
the case of MTN Ghana**



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**CORPORATE IDENTITY MANAGEMENT PRACTICES:  
THE CASE OF MTN GHANA**

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## DECLARATION

### Student's Declaration

I, **Kaithlyn Koomson**, declare that this thesis, with the exception of quotations and references contained in published works which have all been identified and duly acknowledged, is entirely my own original work, and it has not been submitted, either in part or whole, for another degree elsewhere.

Signature:.....

Date:.....



### SUPERVISOR'S DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of this work was supervised in accordance with the guidelines for supervision of thesis as laid down by the University of Education, Winneba.

SUPERVISOR'S NAME: **Professor Christiana Hammond**

SIGNATURE .....

DATE:.....

## **DEDICATION**

To my mother, mentor and teacher, Prof. Mavis Amo-Mensah





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## ABSTRACT

This study explores corporate identity management practices of a leading multinational telecommunications company, MTN Ghana. The research adopts a qualitative approach, using a case study design. Drawing on corporate identity theory, the study relied on semi-structured interviews with eight (8) purposefully sampled participants from the corporate communications department of the company, along with a review of official corporate documents. The findings revealed that MTN Ghana visually presents itself through corporate design elements including the company's logo, colors and symbols. The company also communicates its identity through various forms of behaviors that reflect corporate norms, values and culture. In addition, the company recognizes the role of communication mix elements such as advertising, traditional and digital media in corporate identity formation. The data further revealed three main driving forces of corporate identity management practices: image and reputation management, competitive advantage and fraud prevention. It emerged that corporate identity management processes of the company involve integrating stakeholder engagement into the broader strategic corporate framework, collaborations and partnerships with credible entities, and commitment to corporate social responsibility. This study contributes to the understanding of corporate identity management practices of a multinational telecommunications company operating in a unique competitive context, Ghana. It provides valuable insights for practitioners and scholars interested in the interplay between corporate identity, organizational culture, and stakeholder engagement, particularly in emerging markets.





## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Background to the Study

Identity is a widely explored concept, encompassing various expressions such as individual identity, group identity, social identity, national identity, and more recently, corporate identity (Hatch & Schultz, 2001). Between 1956 and 1991, Paul Rand, widely recognized as the father of corporate identity, embarked on a monumental corporate design project for the International Business Machines Corporation (IBM), marking one of the most significant endeavors in North American history. Rand's seminal contribution to corporate identity manifested in the iconic IBM logo created in 1956, and this was celebrated not merely as a corporate emblem, but as a foundational design philosophy that profoundly influenced both corporate consciousness and public awareness.

Lippincott and Margulies (1957) introduced the term "corporate identity" to specifically denote an organization's logos and symbols, which were perceived as instruments of recognition by external entities. Various corporate identity definitions have emerged since then, resulting in diverse definitional perspectives (Kitchen et al., 2013). For example, Shee and Abratt (1989, p.414) defines corporate identity as: "an assembly of visual cues physical and behavioral by which an audience could recognize the company and distinguish it from others". However, Balmer (2017) argues that corporate identity does not only involve these visible outward representations, as the meaning of Corporate Identity needs to be extended to incorporate the set of intrinsic characteristics that give the company coherence. Within this context, Balmer (2001, p.248), for example, defines corporate identity as 'what an organization is' referring to the inherent character underpinned by corporate personality and experienced through everything an

organization says, makes or does (i.e., total corporate communications). Similarly, Cornelissen (2020) defines corporate identity as the strategically planned and practiced use of all communicative means by an organization to support and enhance its image and reputation. From Hatch and Schultz (1997), an organizational behavior perspective, also acknowledge organizational culture within which local meaning and organizational symbols are embedded. They refer to organizational identity as “what [organizational] members perceive, feel and think about their organizations. It is assumed to be a collective, commonly-shared understanding of the organization's distinctive values and characteristics” (Hatch & Schultz, 1997, p. 357).

Scholars in the corporate communication field have extensively explored the multifaceted nature of corporate identity, emphasizing its role in shaping external perceptions and internal cohesion. One influential perspective is the position by Hatch and Schultz (2003) earlier espoused. The authors argue that corporate identity extends beyond logos and visuals, emphasizing the need for a holistic approach that aligns organizational strategy with brand management. They posit that a strong corporate identity not only fosters external recognition but also enhances employee identification with the organization, contributing to a sense of unity and shared purpose. Additionally, Balmer and Greyser (2003), delve into the complexities of corporate identity by introducing the concept of multiple identities. They argue that corporations often embody various identities, including product, corporate, and regional identities. What these scholars point to is that, recognizing and managing these multiple identities is crucial for organizations to navigate diverse markets and stakeholder expectations.

Most authors agree that corporate identity characterizes the organization and expresses its uniqueness, which is something that corporations can take advantage of (e.g. Gray & Balmer, 1998). Markwick and Fill (1997) supports this assertion by stating that

‘most’ authors perceive the concept of corporate identity to be the organization’s presentation towards stakeholders, and the means by which it distinguishes the organizations from similar organizations.

In the last two decades, attention has been paid to corporate identity management as a source of competitive advantage (Lauring & Thomsen, 2009). Several factors have increased the need for organization’s to strategically manage their corporate identity (Balmer & Gray, 2000). These factors include the quickening pace of product life-cycles, deregulation, privatization initiatives, heightened competition, globalization, corporate mergers, acquisitions, scarcity of top-tier personnel and stakeholder demands for corporate social responsibility (Balmer & Gray, 1999). Kiriakidou and Millward (2000) also support Christensen and Askegaard's (2001) assertion that unpredictable nature of business climate makes it imperative for organization to clearly project their identity if they want to stay relevant. Significantly, shifting business climate can blur the image between the actual identity (what the organization really is) and the ideal identity (what the organization desire to be) (Kiriakidou & Millward, 2000). This means that by clear and structured management, organizations are able to create an adaptable corporate identity.

Abratt and Kleyn, (2012) assert that effective identity management practices contribute to positive perceptions among customers, employees, and investors. Thus, Corporate identity elements, should, therefore, be specified and managed consistently to enable the organization establish the desired corporate image in the minds of their stakeholders.

### **1.1.1 An Overview of MTN Ghana**

The telecommunications sector is a broad and crucial field that involves the transmission of information over a distance, typically through the use of electronic systems and technologies (Hobday, 2023). The roots of Ghana's telecommunications sector can be traced back to the early days of landline services (Bodammer et al., 2005). However, it wasn't until the late 1990s and early 2000s that the sector experienced a major revolution with the liberalization and introduction of mobile telephony (Fransman, 2001). This period marked the entry of private players, fostering competition and innovation. The country witnessed a surge in mobile phone penetration, with millions of subscribers across various networks (Curwen & Whalley, 2016). The sector expanded to include a range of services, including voice, data, internet, and value-added services with leading mobile network operators including MTN Ghana.

MTN, a South Africa-based Pan-African telecommunication and a subsidiary of MTN group of companies, penetrated the Ghanaian market as the first Global System for Mobile Communication service (Statista, 2022). MTN's history began in 1994 with the registration of Scancom Limited as a company in Ghana (MTN Ghana, 2024). The company's first location was on the Graphic Road in Accra which was the sole place of business for the company acting as its Head Office and Service Centre (MTN Ghana, 2024). Over time, Scancom grew beyond the boundaries of the Graphic Road office, and the head office was moved to Ridge Towers, while Graphic Road retained the Technical Office and Service Centre (MTN Ghana, 2024). The launch of operations for Scancom was done two years later, in November 1996, under the trade name, Spacefon. Spacefon introduced into Ghana's telecoms market the first GSM (Global System for Mobile Communication) service along with enhanced features such as Caller ID, call

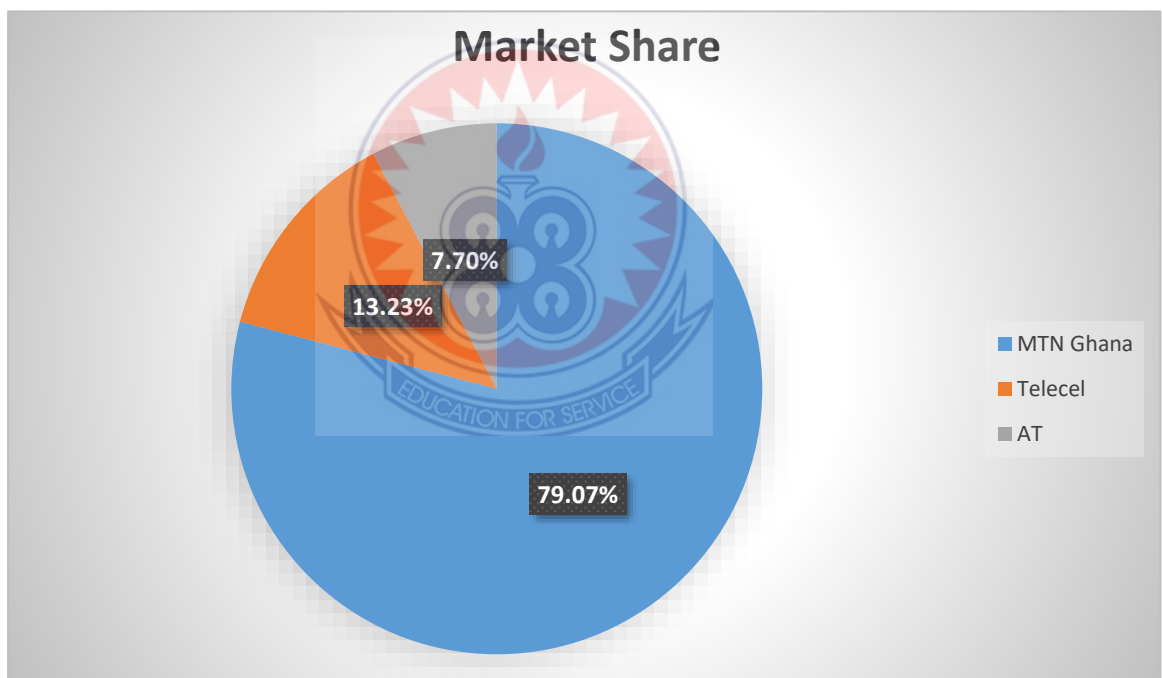
forwarding, call waiting, call barring and itemized billing (MTN Ghana, 2024). The company later rebranded as MTN Ghana after its acquisition by the MTN Group (MTN Ghana, 2024).

Established in 2006, MTN Ghana quickly rose to prominence as a leading telecommunications services provider in the country with a current market share of 75.38% as of 2023. MTN Ghana is driven by a mission to brighten the lives of customers while embodying core values such as integrity, leading with care, collaboration, serving with respect, acting with inclusion, and fostering agility (MTN Ghana, 2024). Aligning with this mission, their vision is to pioneer the ‘delivery of a bold, new digital world for their customers’ (MTN Ghana, 2024)

MTN Ghana's service portfolio encompasses a comprehensive range of telecommunications offerings (Statista, 2022). The company provides traditional mobile services, including voice calls, text messaging, and multimedia messaging. In response to the evolving technological landscape, MTN Ghana also offers data services, catering for the increasing demand for mobile data, broadband, and internet-related solutions (MTN Ghana, 2024).

A pivotal moment in MTN Ghana's history occurred in 2009 when it launched ‘MTN Mobile Money,’ a groundbreaking mobile money services. MTN launched the first mobile money service in partnership with universal banks, followed by Airtel Money in 2010 and Tigo Cash in 2012 (Statista, 2022). This service revolutionized the financial landscape in Ghana, providing a convenient and secure platform for individuals to send, receive, and store money using their mobile phones. At the 5th Women's Choice Award Africa held on December 1, 2023, MTN Mobile Money was honored with the Entrepreneur Choice of the Year Award (MTN Ghana, 2024).

Ever since its introduction into the telecommunication industry, the company has successfully grown over the years. It is the only telecommunication company in Ghana that is listed on the Ghana club 100; the best 100 companies in Ghana. MTN Ghana won the number one company of the year in Ghana on the 17th edition of the Ghana club 100 awards (Ghana Investment Promotion Centre, 2020). The company also topped as the second company of the year at the 20th edition of the Ghana club 100 awards in 2023. In 2020, MTN Ghana had a market share of 55.95%, this increased to 67.37% in 2021 and 75% in 2022 (National Communications Authority, 2021).



**Figure 1 Market Share January 2024 –February 2024**

**Source: NCA**

MTN Ghana has also been recognized for several awards. During the Ghana Information Technology and Telecommunications Awards (GITTA), MTN Ghana swept home 8 awards CSR: Leadership Award, Excellence in Customer Service, Customer Services Team of the Year, MoMo Leadership Award, Network Team of the

Year, Telecom Executive Team of the Year, CEO of the Year – Selorm Adadevoh and Top 20 Tech Leaders – Selorm Adadevoh (Debrah, 2022).

The company was also recognized for the distinguished HR and Employee excellence at the 6th edition of the HR Focus Awards held in Accra (Ghana Chamber of Telecommunications, 2023). MTN was adjudged the Best Large Organization in the following categories: Employee Relations Practice, Rewards Management Practice, Performance Management and Employer Branding (Ghana Chamber of Telecommunications, 2023). MTN also retained its status in the HR Hall of Fame for the second consecutive occasion, meaning the company won six awards overall at the 2023 HR Focus Awards (Ghana Chamber of Telecommunications, 2023).

MTN Ghana was honored with the Africa Best Employer Brand award during the Employer Branding Awards ceremony in Mauritius (Okine, 2016). The company was crowned the overall CSR company of the year for the second and third consecutive time at the sixth Ghana CSR Excellence Awards and the 8th Ghana CSR Excellence Awards respectively (Abugri, 2018) and was adjudged for fifth consecutive time Public Relations organization of the year at the National PR and Communications Excellence Awards organized by the Institute of Public Relations in 2022. The company was recognized for putting in place effective Public Relations Strategies to engage its stakeholders digitally, especially during the COVID-19 period. MTN Ghana was also named Company of the year in the Diamond SABRE Awards for Excellence in Public Relations in the C-Suite category at the 2019 Superior Achievement in Brand Reputation and Engagement (SABRE) Awards held in Kigali, Rwanda (Dzokpo, 2019). The SABRE Awards hosted by the Holmes Report in collaboration with the African Public Relations Association (APRA) recognizes Public Relations Campaigns that demonstrate the highest level of creativity, excellence and authenticity.



Presently, MTN Ghana remains a prominent player in the Ghanaian telecommunications sector (Statista, 2022). The company's unwavering commitment to innovation, network expansion, and customer satisfaction has contributed to maintaining its leadership position (Statista, 2022).

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

In the fiercely competitive landscape of modern business, the paramount importance of corporate identity management is evident, as it forms the cornerstone for cultivating trust, nurturing brand loyalty, and distinguishing organizations amidst crowded markets (Davenport et al., 2007). Thriving in today's dynamic business environment hinges significantly on effective corporate identity management, underscoring its pivotal role in shaping organizational success and long-term sustainability (Jerab & Mabrouk, 2023). Researches suggest that, due to the size and international standing of multinational companies, they are best at managing their identity to maintain competitiveness in the market (Amo-Mensah & Tench, 2018; Melewar, 2008). The statement highlights a paradoxical phenomenon within the competitive landscape of multinational companies (MNCs), wherein their proficiency in managing identity to maintain competitiveness inadvertently fuels a relentless 'war' among them (Amo-Mensah & Tench, 2018). Despite their effectiveness in identity management, MNCs engage in cutthroat competition, continuously striving to outmaneuver each other through corporate identity management practices aimed at gaining competitive leverage (Davies et al., 2003).

Several scholars have explored the corporate identity management concept (e.g., Halliburton & Ziegfeld, 2009; Kansbod, 2012 ; Melewar et al., 2005; Melewar et al., 2018), looking at the communication perspective (e.g. Halliburton & Ziegfeld, 2009 ; Karaosmanoglu & Melewar, 2006; Melewar et al., 2018). Some studies have assessed



the strategies used by significant European multinational corporations in communicating their corporate identity across various countries via their corporate websites (e.g. Halliburton & Ziegfeld, 2019) and others have explored the relevance of corporate identity and corporate communication in the context of mergers and acquisitions (e.g. Balmer & Dinnie, 1999). There are also studies on the use of corporate identity in communication directed towards both students and employees within the higher education sector (e.g. Melewar et al., 2018); the importance of the corporate identity elements in the formation of corporate image (e.g. Karaosmanoglu & Melewar, 2006); the extent to which practitioners integrate corporate identity into marketing communication campaigns (e.g. Stuart & Kerr, 1999); corporate identity management and employee behavior (e.g. Otubanjo & Amujo, 2012) and the extent to which companies can utilize their websites for corporate identity (CI) communication (e.g. Mohammed et al., 2016).

Also, extant studies have focused on other areas relative to corporate identity management from myriad perspectives. Balmer (1996) explicated the social psychological mechanism underpinning corporate identity formation and sustainability; Siano et al. (2007) delved into the drivers influencing corporate reputation management within corporate governance structures; Simões (2016) studied drivers and outcomes of Corporate Identity Management; while Bechan (2008) looked at what communication managers in top listed companies consider as key determinants of managing corporate identity and reputation. Melewar et al. (2005) underscored the importance of corporate identity by investigating the perceived advantages that organizations can accrue from having a strong corporate identity. The results indicated that a robust corporate identity enhances employee motivation and provides a competitive edge. The study concluded

that corporate identity is vital for the success of organizations, hence organizations should establish structured approaches for measuring and managing their identity.

A review of the literature above suggests that even though studies abound in corporate identity management, these studies have been conducted in the Western context. For example, Simões' (2016) and Melewar et al's. (2018) study was conducted in the United Kingdom; Siano et al's. (2007) study focused on the Italian context, Balmer's (1996) study on Corporate Identity Management concentrated on Scotland while Kansbod's (2012) study focused on the Sweden context.

In Africa, some studies have also been conducted on corporate identity management (For e.g. Chinomona, 2016; Hawabhay et al., 2009; Le Roux, 2005; Mzembe et al., 2016 ; Otondi, 2014). Chinomona (2016); Hawabhay et al. (2009) and Otondi's (2014) study focused on the importance of corporate communication in shaping corporate identity which was in South Africa, Mauritius and Kenya respectively. Mzembe et al. (2016) investigated the drivers of corporate identity management in Malawi; while Le Roux (2005) explored the corporate identity management processes in South Africa.

A few scholars in Ghana have focused on identity related research. For instance, Ayaawan (2018) looked at corporate identity management on the web; Anani-Bossman (2021) examined the role of public relations in corporate reputation management ; Osei (2021) explored the mediating role of brand identity on the relationship between brand orientation and performance while Boafo et al. (2020) investigated the balance between corporate identity and corporate image and its impact on marketing performance of universities. Despite these studies, a noticeable gap exists in the literature on Corporate identity management practices from a public relations perspective and specifically the telecommunications sector in Ghana. In addressing this gap, the present research aims

to adopt a qualitative research approach to delve into the corporate identity management practices of MTN Ghana.

### **1.3 Research Objectives**

1. To explore the strategies MTN Ghana uses to communicate its identity to its stakeholders.
2. To examine the drivers of MTN Ghana's corporate identity management practices.
3. To investigate the processes MTN Ghana adopts in managing its corporate identity

### **1.4 Research Questions**

1. What are the strategies MTN Ghana uses to communicate its identity to its stakeholders?
2. What are the drivers of corporate identity management at MTN Ghana?
3. What practices do MTN Ghana adopt in managing its corporate identity?

### **1.5 Significance of the Study**

This study explores corporate identity management practices of MTN Ghana. Its primary objective is to identify the strategies MTN Ghana adopts in managing its corporate identity. By undertaking this investigation, the study carries profound significance for a wide array of stakeholders, including the global academia, governmental bodies, and the Public Relations Society across the globe.

First, this study contributes to the existing body of literature on corporate identity management, specifically within the telecommunications industry in Ghana. By exploring and documenting MTN Ghana's practices, this research adds valuable insights and knowledge to the field, helping to expand our understanding of effective

identity management strategies in the context of Ghana's telecommunications sector. The study provides an opportunity to expand existing theoretical frameworks, such as Birkigt and Stadler's (1986) model, by applying it to a unique real-world case in Ghana. Through empirical research and analysis, it offers insights into how theoretical concepts manifest and operate in a practical setting, enriching scholarly discussions within the corporate identity field. This can inform future studies, serve as a reference point for researchers, and contribute to the academic understanding of corporate identity management practices within the telecommunications industry.

Again, the findings of this study will serve as a valuable resource for MTN Ghana and other telecommunications networks operating in Ghana and beyond. By uncovering best practices for managing corporate identity, the research will provide practical insights and recommendations that can guide these organizations in their own identity management efforts. It can inform decision-making processes, strategic planning, and communication strategies, ultimately supporting these companies in cultivating a strong and consistent corporate identity that resonates with their stakeholders.

Further, insights from the study will be valuable to policymakers and regulators in Ghana. By understanding the corporate identity management practices of MTN Ghana, policymakers can gain valuable insights into the industry's dynamics and identify areas where regulatory frameworks can be strengthened to promote best practices. This research can further inform policy development aimed at creating a conducive business environment, fostering healthy competition, and protecting the interests of stakeholders.

Additionally, researchers and scholars interested in corporate identity management practices and their impact on organizational success will benefit from this study. It can

serve as a reference for future research endeavors, providing a foundation for further exploration and analysis of corporate identity within the telecommunications industry or other relevant sectors. The findings can inspire new research questions, methodologies, and theoretical frameworks to advance knowledge and understanding of corporate identity management.

### **1.6 Delimitation**

The study will solely focus on MTN Ghana's corporate identity management practices within the geographical boundaries of Ghana. It will not extend to other branches or subsidiaries of MTN operating in different countries. The research will primarily examine corporate identity management practices from the perspective of MTN Ghana as an organization. It will not extensively delve into the individual branding strategies or practices of MTN's partners, affiliates, or subsidiaries operating within Ghana. The study will prioritize the perspectives of participants from the Corporate Communication Department at MTN Ghana and will not explore the perspectives of participants outside the Corporate Communication Department of MTN Ghana.

### **1.7 Organization of the Study**

This study has been organized into five chapters. The first chapter introduces the study and the background. It clearly defines what the study seeks to achieve, the statement of problem, the objectives as well as the research objectives. It also captures the significance and the delimitations of the study. The literature review and the theories underpinning the study are captured in chapter two. Chapter three details the methods used in conducting the research. It entails the research approach, research design, sampling techniques, data collection and data analysis methods. Chapter four presents the findings derived from the data collected and the analysis of these findings. Finally,

the last chapter concludes the study and provides recommendations for further researchers.

### **1.8 Chapter Summary**

This chapter is the introductory chapter of the study, and it detailed the background of the study as well as the problem for which the study was conducted. In addition, the research objectives and questions are highlighted, among other aspects. The chapter also outlines the relevance of the study, the organization of the study as well as its delimitation.



## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.0 Introduction**

This chapter reviews literature relevant to the topic under study. Specifically, the chapter reviews literature within the context of corporate identity management, communication and corporate identity management, drivers of corporate identity management, and corporate identity management processes. The chapter also discusses the corporate identity theory as expounded by Birkigt and Stadler (1986) as the theoretical underpinning of the study.

#### **2.1 An overview of Corporate Identity Management**

Corporate identity management is a fundamental component of modern business strategy (Tourky et al., 2020). It refers to the process of creating and maintaining a unique brand identity for a corporation or organization and involves the use of marketing strategies, communication methods, and visual design elements to establish a recognizable and memorable identity that aligns with the company's values and objectives (Drescher, 2018). Effectively managing corporate identity involves having a fundamental business philosophy ingrained in the organization's mission and vision statements (Bryson, 2018). These values are then conveyed to employees through management communication and to external stakeholders through the organization's visual elements, behavior, and communication initiatives (Christensen & Cornelissen, 2013).

According to Cornelissen and Elving (2003), Corporate identity reflects internal and external strategic plan for an organization's self-presentation encompassing how the organization chooses to portray itself or how it allows stakeholders to perceive, define, and connect with it (Melewar, 2003). The concept of corporate identity originated in

the 1970s and was viewed from the design perspective; this however, gradually evolved into a strategic tool that relates to the impressions, image, and personality projected by an organization to its stakeholders (Tran et al., 2015). From this perspective, perceptions held by stakeholders regarding organizations play a pivotal role in shaping their responses to the products and services offered by these companies. As Drumwright (1996) elucidated, “organizational-level associations enable the benefits of stronger organizational identification to be widespread and pervasive” (P.71). The value of corporate identity and/or corporate image, then lies in its capacity to directly or indirectly enhance business performance (Riel, 1995) as it represents a potential source of differentiation and competitive advantage (Ajike et al., 2015).

Kiriakidou and Millward (2000) highlight the issue of incongruence between an organization's ideal (desired) identity and its actual identity (perceived by employees). The desired identity is primarily conveyed through organizational symbolism and corporate communications. However, this may not always reflect the organization's true nature and its actual identity. The actual identity is discerned from the organization's actions and its interactions with people through its employees. When employees perceive a misalignment between the actual and ideal identity, they are noticeably less inclined to commit and achieve the company's objectives (Kiriakidou & Millward, 2000).

Schoenherr (2008) makes the case that an organization's size has an impact on the extent of its corporate identity initiatives and its capacity to embrace technological advancements, which in turn affects its performance. Likewise, the ownership of an organization is seen as a factor that shapes its identity, strategy, vision, and mission, and subsequently influences its performance (Andersson & Lööf, 2009).



Einwiller and Will (2002) discuss the strategic benefits of effective corporate identity, including strong reputation for products and services, solid financial performance, and a positive workplace atmosphere. Christensen and Askegaard (2001) add that emphasizing that a robust corporate identity offers several advantages to an organization, including adding value to products in a competitive market, building consumer trust and loyalty, attracting investments, drawing high-quality personnel, and fostering employee motivation. Other scholars have observed that establishing a robust corporate identity and image serves as a strategy for fostering positive attitudes toward an organization (e.g. Dowling, 2000; Kapferer, 2008; Van Riel & Balmer, 1997). From the ideas above, it is clear that effective corporate identity management (CIM) presents a potential pathway to gaining a competitive advantage.

In contemporary organizations, corporate identity serves as a means to convey the inherent attributes that provide an organization with its distinctiveness, stability, and coherence (Watkiss & Glynn, 2016). Melewar (2008) suggests that this is formed through a combination of factors, including cultural heritage, corporate strategy, a blend of corporate identity elements, corporate reputation, and organizational performance. The author also emphasizes that the external business environment has a significant impact on these factors.

Research suggests that Corporate Identity Management (CIM) and organizational culture are closely related (Waithaka, 2014). Corporate identity management is primarily concerned with defining what the organization is, which encompasses its fundamental principles as established in its strategies and culture (Cornelissen, 2020), Corporate culture looks at shared values, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors that characterize an organization and guide the interactions of its employees. Essentially,

corporate identity reveals the organization's essence, its values, its actions, how it operates, and its future direction (Melewar & Jenkins, 2002).

## **2.2 Communication and Corporate Identity Management**

Recent models of corporate identity management such as Van Riel's (1995) Corporate Communication Model and Olins' (1989) Corporate Identity Model have highlighted the pivotal role of communication in the management of corporate identity. In line with this, most organizations have been structured such that management and organizational communication are closely aligned with the corporate identity. While today's managers recognize the importance of creating a corporate identity, the communication process can pose difficulties for managers because of the necessity to present it to several different audiences (Kedidi & Torfve, 2005).

Many companies strive to synchronize all facets of internal and external communication (Cornelissen, 2020). This move towards harmonization stems from the fundamental belief that a consistent communication policy facilitates the creation of a favorable image of the company among its primary target publics (Riel, 1995).

In line with the above, a number of empirical studies have investigated the impact of communication on organizations' corporate identity. Halliburton and Ziegfeld (2009) assessed the strategies used by European multinational corporations in communicating their corporate identity across various countries via their corporate websites. Through a content analysis, the study scrutinized the tactics employed by the top 100 European listed companies in the United Kingdom, France, and Germany. This analysis involved comparing their primary ('parent') website with subsidiary websites. The results revealed that these companies embraced a 'glocal' approach, which displayed variations contingent on the company's country of origin and its specific industry sector.

The study emphasized the need for businesses to adapt to the ever-changing field of corporate communication in a global context.

Similarly, Balmer and Dinnie (1999) conducted a qualitative study to explore the potential relevance of corporate identity and corporate communication in the context of mergers and acquisitions. The study's findings illuminated several attempts to unify the concepts corporate identity and corporate communication which often falter due to excessive focus on short-term financial and legal considerations at the expense of long-term identity and communication concerns. An important takeaway from the study is the often overlooked role of leadership in shaping corporate identity and communication. It emerged that recognizing the impact of leadership issues is essential for understanding how these two concepts (communication and corporate identity) function in a synergy.

On the other hand, Stuart and Kerr (1999) revealed the advantages of aligning corporate identity with marketing messages, and indicated substantial barriers to the successful integration of corporate identity with marketing communications. These barriers included lack of client acceptance regarding the importance of integration, marketing managers' focus on short-term objectives, a multitude of individuals involved in managing the core corporate identity message, and an ad hoc approach to marketing communication. Based on the findings, the research reinforced the need for further exploration of corporate identity and marketing communications to bridge the gap between theoretical ideals and real-world corporate practices.

Also, Karaosmanoglu and Melewar (2006) highlighted the importance of the corporate identity mix in the corporate image formation. The findings of their study emphasized the intricate interplay between corporate identity mix and corporate image formation,

showcasing how a strong corporate identity can serve as a protective shield against the potential damage caused by unanticipated communication events. The study concludes that the components of a company's corporate identity mix, such as its logo, mission statement, visual aesthetics, and brand messaging, play a critical role in shaping the overall corporate image. The research sheds light on the dynamic and multifaceted nature of corporate image formation and observes that, a company's image is not solely determined by its carefully curated corporate identity but is equally influenced by the unpredictable forces of external communication. According to the authors, understanding and managing this delicate balance is paramount for companies seeking to establish and maintain a positive corporate image in an ever-evolving business environment.

Until recently, many practitioners viewed the concept of corporate identity as primarily concerned with how corporate visuals were employed to convey a firm's corporate personality. However, works by scholars such as Balmer (1995), Cornelissen and Harris (2001), He and Balmer (2007), Moingeon and Ramanantsoa (1997), Otubanjo and Melewar (2007), and Van Riel and Balmer (1997) have expanded the understanding of corporate identity beyond its visual aspects. As demonstrated in a study conducted by Otubanjo and Melewar (2007), corporate identity is now perceived as the deliberate manifestation of a company's personality through a diverse range of communication channels within the corporate identity mix (Melewar, 2003). These channels encompass various elements, including corporate advertising, corporate visuals, corporate events, guided editorials, sponsorships, office interiors, architecture and employee behavior (Melewar & Jenkins, 2002; Van Riel & Balmer, 1997).

Informal corporate identity is a recently recognized phenomenon that emerged from the utter disregard by business organizations for the critical role of employee behavior

within the overall corporate identity strategic planning process. It is reflective of the unconscious, unintended and undeliberate expression of a firm's corporate personality through the channel of employee behavior. The notion of employee behavior in this context refers not only to unspoken human actions such as body gestures, body postures and facial expressions but also visual impression including quality of dressing and appearance. The philosophy behind the concept of informal corporate identity stems from the notion that everything, including all human behavior, communicates (Podnar & Melewar, 2010).

Otubanjo and Amujo (2012) contributes to the field of corporate identity by providing insights into how the expression of informal corporate identity through employee behavior can derail the total corporate identity communications process. The researchers adopted a qualitative approach to examine the nature of corporate identity in informal-formal lines contexts, and how this results in an aligned or misaligned corporate identity system. The study revealed a limited understanding of how formal and informal corporate identities work collaboratively. The authors argue that informal corporate identity is dysfunctional to effective strategic corporate identity management because it has the uncanny capability to create misalignment of identity and image within the stakeholder network. Thus, it emphasizes the ambivalent role of employees as capable of projecting positive or negative tendencies in the corporate identity process.

Balmer and Gray (2000) also conducted a qualitative research with the purpose of introducing a novel, integrated strategic framework on Corporate Identity Management. The framework was to shed light on the pivotal and strategic role of corporate identity in relation to corporate communications, corporate image, the identities attributed to stakeholders, and the subsequent behaviors that result from these interactions. The

study integrated a diverse range of disciplinary and theoretical perspectives, encompassing the legal theory of the firm, theories from the social identity branch and stakeholder theory. The study observed that when corporate identity is perceived as prominent, stable, and internally coherent, there is a greater propensity for stakeholders to identify with and internalize that identity. The finding is in line with Jo Hatch and Schultz's (1997) assertion that, the way managers connect with an organization influences how stakeholders, such as employees and customers, see and feel about the organization. The study's conclusion emphasized that while there is no infallible method to guarantee the effective safeguarding of corporate identity, it is crucial to recognize the significance of corporate identity and the ongoing need for its management. A pivotal principle highlighted in the study was that corporate identities are not static but dynamic in nature and can be influenced by external factors such as government interventions, economic and technological changes, personnel shortages, and intensified competitive environments.

The rising importance of Corporate Identity communication among businesses and the growing reliance of communication (Bravo, Pina, et al., 2012) has led to several works focusing on specific organizational contexts. For instance, Mohammed et al. (2016) looked at the extent to which hotels utilize corporate websites for corporate identity (CI) communication. Given the exploratory nature of the study, the study used a qualitative approach to analyze the website contents of 123 hotels in Hong Kong to determine the extent to which the hotels utilize these websites to transmit information about their identities. The results indicated that corporate identity information relating to corporate design elements such as logo and slogan was communicated by all the sampled hotels. However, information relating to the other dimensions of Corporate identity such as corporate structure, strategy, culture, and behavior was communicated

by less than 60% of the hotels. Furthermore, a relationship was found to exist between Corporate identity communication and the type of hotel operation. That is, significantly higher proportions of chain affiliated hotels were more communicative of their Corporate identity elements than their independent counterparts. Also, among the hotel classes, midscale hotels were found to be the least communicative of their Corporate identities. On the basis of the findings, the study concluded that the selected hotels in Hong Kong do not make full use of their corporate websites to communicate their Corporate identities, especially the independent and lower-ranking hotels. From a practical standpoint, these findings can be used to enrich the information contents of hotels' websites so that the benefits of CI communication can be realized.

In a similar vein, Herstein et al. (2007) conducted a case study outlining a comprehensive approach to creating a new corporate identity for a prominent hotel management company in Israel, Fattals Hotels, with particular emphasis on putting its corporate communication process into action. The research revealed that corporate identity communication operates on four distinct levels. These levels encompass both internal and external aspects and span the divide between formal and informal channels. The study emphasized the importance of considering a diverse spectrum of communication channels, encompassing both internal, external, formal and informal avenues. The study contributes to the ongoing development of best practices in corporate identity management, helping corporations to adapt and thrive in a competitive environment.

The literature reviewed in this section underscores the delicate balance required between corporate identity components and communication events (Karaosmanoglu & Melewar, 2006; Körver & Van Ruler, 2003). For instance, Balmer and Gray's work in 2000, along with studies by Mohammed et al. (2016) and Halliburton and Ziegfeld



(2009), highlights the dynamic nature of corporate identity and its impact on corporate communications and stakeholders' perceptions.

### **2.3 Drivers of Corporate Identity Management**

Corporate identity management is propelled by a myriad of dynamic drivers that collectively shape and define an entity's public persona (Karaosmanoglu & Melewar, 2006).

The forces of globalization, acting as a catalyst, demand that organizations establish an identity that resonates across diverse cultures and reaches varied stakeholders (Hatch & Schultz, 2003). This necessitates a meticulous approach to identity management that goes beyond geographical boundaries (Melewar & Jenkins, 2002). As businesses operate on a global scale, the consistency and coherence of their identity become paramount, ensuring a unified image that transcends cultural contexts (Hatch & Schultz, 2010). Nakra (2000) found that globalization of markets makes product offerings and demands increasingly homogenous and encourages organizations to restructure in response to global competitive opportunities; creating strategies in order to manage and meet international demands. According to Nakra (2000), as liberalization of the world market continues and communications gets faster and the pace of technological innovations increases, people are confronted with more information and more choices than they can possibly handle in the time available. Beyond traditional media, corporations also navigate the complex terrain of websites, social media platforms, and mobile applications. The management of corporate identity extends, thus, into the digital realm, necessitating a comprehensive strategy that aligns with the nuances of online processes (Melewar & Karaosmanoglu, 2006)



According to the literature, Fierce competition within the market also serves as a pivotal force propelling organizations to heavily invest in effective corporate identity management (Riel, 1995). In a saturated marketplace as Riel (1995) notes, the ability to differentiate becomes a crucial factor for success. A clearly defined corporate identity not only sets a company apart from its competitors but also forges a meaningful connection with consumers, nurturing brand loyalty and trust (Balmer, 2012). As legal and ethical standards evolve, organizations must ensure that their identity aligns with these requirements (Boafo et al., 2020). A transparent and responsible identity not only mitigates legal risks but also fosters trust among stakeholders who increasingly demand accountability (Melewar & Akel, 2005).

It has been observed that employees, as crucial ambassadors of a company's identity, form an intrinsic driver for effective identity management (Hatch & Schultz, 2010). Engaged employees who understand and internalize the organization's values contribute significantly to the projection of a positive corporate identity. Their alignment with the corporate ethos enhances the authenticity of the brand (Hatch & Schultz, 2010). In the age of empowered consumers, corporate identity management extends to addressing the concerns and expectations of a vocal and influential public. Social media becomes a voice to amplify the consumer's voice, requiring organizations to be agile in managing their identity to maintain a positive public image (Van Riel & Fombrun, 2007).

Hatch and Schultz (2008) note that the landscape of mergers and acquisitions introduces unique challenges to corporate identity management. When organizations merge or acquire others, they often inherit diverse organizational cultures and brand identities. Successfully navigating these transitions require a strategic approach to corporate identity, aiming to create a unified and coherent brand image that reflects the newly

amalgamated entity (Argenti, 2014). Additionally, in the realm of dynamic markets, innovation and adaptability emerge as significant drivers for corporate identity management (Simões, 2016). It is imperative for companies to articulate an identity that not only mirrors their present values but also showcases their ability to evolve. To this end, Striking a balance between continuity and adaptability is essential to project an identity that aligns with stakeholders and remains pertinent in evolving business landscapes (Urde, 2009). Especially during turbulent periods, a firmly entrenched corporate identity acts as a stabilizing force, steering the organization through challenges and upholding stakeholder trust (Balmer & Greyser, 2006).

Simões (2016) observes that the principal drivers of corporate identity management include pursuit of competitive advantage, differentiation, and responsibility. His study found that proactive Corporate Identity Management yields significant outcomes such as stakeholder commitment, improved business performance, and a favorable image. Furthermore, both general and specific performance outcomes are associated with corporate identity and its management. Simões's (2016) research provides valuable insights into the intricate dynamics of Corporate Identity Management, emphasizing its pivotal role in shaping organizational strategies, stakeholder relationships, and overall business performance. The study underscores the interconnectedness of corporate identity with both strategic objectives and tangible outcomes, making a compelling case for the proactive management of corporate identity in contemporary organizational settings. In the literature, both corporate and brand identity are acknowledged as sources of differentiation and competitive advantage, prompting organizations to strive for a unique market position by distinguishing themselves from competitors and leveraging their strengths (Balmer & Gray, 2000). Companies also have responsibilities towards a variety of audiences such as stockholders, customers and employees, hence

they strive to manage their identity in order to continue to have mutually beneficial relationships (Harris & de Chernatony, 2001).

Similarly, a qualitative study by Siano et al. (2007) delved into the drivers influencing corporate reputation management within corporate governance structure. Their findings revealed that external influences like competitor actions, media coverage beyond the company's control, word of mouth, and actions of external entities and pressure groups collectively shape corporate image and reputation (Dowling, 1993; Markwick & Fill, 1997). Mass media, specifically, was highlighted as a potent influencer shaping corporate image and reputation through its coverage of organizational behavior. Essentially, the media and stakeholders wield significant influence over an organization's image, particularly as the media often amplifies stakeholder perspectives. Stakeholders, especially, hold substantial sway, projecting their viewpoints through media channels. According to the authors, a competitor highlighting its product's strengths while pointing out the weaknesses of another company's products can significantly damage the latter's image and reputation. The findings of the study are in line with the findings from Simões' (2016) study. Empirical studies have proven that even when individuals receive a piece of negative information about an organization that is well managed, they do not usually change their assessment about corporate reputation (Wartick, 1992).

Through a series of in-depth interviews with 32 individuals from twenty different organizations in different industries, Melewar et al. (2005) aimed to develop an understanding of the motives behind organization's pursuit of identity management as well as the benefits they can derive from a strong identity. The grounded theory approach of Corbin and Strauss (1990) was applied in the qualitative data analysis. The findings demonstrated that a robust and positive corporate identity can have several

advantages, including heightened employee motivation, increased labor flexibility, improved recruitment and retention of high-quality employees, a solid foundation for organizational culture during mergers and acquisitions, enhanced transparency in business practices, a competitive edge, improved relationships with other businesses, and facilitation of investments into the company in line with studies by Abratt and Kleyn (2012) and Gray and Balmer, (1998) As highlighted by Dowling (1995), the cultivation of corporate identity is a strategic management technique enabling organizations to effectively and distinctly set themselves apart from competitors in many ways. The study concludes that many businesses are acutely aware of the fact that a strong corporate identity can provide an effective basis for recruitment and motivational purposes as also found by Siano et al. (2007); Herstein et al. (2007) and Otubanjo and Amujo (2012).

The application of the grounded theory approach by Melewar et al. (2005) as advocated by Corbin and Strauss (1990), in the qualitative data analysis added a robust methodological foundation to the study by Melewar et al. (2005). The researchers effectively navigated the subjective realm of identity management, providing a nuanced understanding of the motives and outcomes associated with this strategic pursuit. The study highlighted the multifaceted nature of corporate identity's impact, encompassing not only internal organizational dynamics but also external relationships with other businesses and stakeholders. The research provided a comprehensive view of the strategic importance of corporate identity and emphasized that a strong corporate identity is not only a differentiator but also a facilitator of various organizational benefits.

Watson (2010) found that one major driver on which corporate identity and reputation management is hinged on is the leadership of the organizations, specifically the nature

of Chief Executive Officers. According to the researcher, the reputation of an organization is equal to that of the reputation of the Chief Executive Officer, hence, the first step for managing reputation is to have a reputable leader who will carry the reputation of the organization along. The findings also revealed that employees in organizations are key factors organization must consider in their reputation management process. According to Watson (2010), broadcast media and social media are important elements many organizations tend to neglect in the reputation management process. His study emphasized the vital need for organizations to prioritize cultivating a reputable leadership, fostering employee satisfaction, and actively engaging with both traditional and social media channels. Neglecting any of these aspects could leave an organization vulnerable to reputational risks that might be challenging to recover from, as evidenced by real-world instances.

Within the context of Corporate Identity Management, studies by Fombrun (1996) and Ferguson et al. (2000), accentuate the enduring nature of reputation-building and its fragility in the face of adverse events. These works underline the asymmetry between the considerable time required to cultivate a positive reputation and the swiftness with which this can be tarnished. Moreover, this asymmetry underscores the imperative need for proactive reputation management as an essential component of organizational strategy. It is suggested that knowing the top drivers of corporate identity and reputation management can help to enhance business objectives contributing to the bottom line (Van Riel & Fombrun, 2007). In line with this argument, Bechan (2008) looked at what communication managers in top listed companies operating in South Africa consider the top determinants of managing corporate identity and reputation. The paper draws links between managing organizational reputation and stakeholder management, and provides valuable findings for communication specialists working in positions of

management. A study by Dowling & Moran (2012) underscore the interdependence between an organization's reputation and its relationships with stakeholders. The authors revealed that effective management involves not only understanding stakeholders' expectations but also actively engaging with them to maintain a positive image. Authors such as Hatch and Schultz (2001) underscore the pivotal role competition plays in stimulating organizations to fortify and differentiate their identities. Balmer and Greyser (2003) also highlight that within the realm of corporate identity and reputation management, the influence of competitive forces is palpable. Scholars like Abratt and Kleyn (2012) emphasize that competition compels organizations to proactively manage their identities, ensuring alignment between internal values, external perceptions, and market positioning. Recognizing the centrality of reputation as a strategic asset and comprehensively understanding the determinants that shape its management are indispensable endeavors for organizations aspiring to thrive amidst dynamic competitive forces and stakeholder expectations. What these studies suggest is that failure to effectively manage corporate identity in a competitive landscape may result in dilution or misrepresentation of the organization's essence, thereby diminishing its competitive edge.

In other studies, Ma and Osiyevskyy (2017) presented a conceptual paper with illustrative case examples emphasizing the importance of corporate reputation as a firm's key intangible asset leading to tangible shareholder benefits. Works by Fombrun (1996) and Ferguson et al. (2000) reinforce this notion, emphasizing how reputation serves as a foundation for shareholder gains, contingent upon a deliberately designed business model—a crucial driver for leveraging reputation. The conceptual paper introduced a typology associating corporate reputation with business model dynamics, highlighting the significance of aligning organizational strategies. This alignment,

echoing studies by Hatch and Schultz (2001), emerges as a pivotal driver for successful corporate identity management. The findings by the authors revealed that effective corporate reputation management is contingent on understanding distinct perspectives: the utilitarian and social dimensions. This aligns with drivers of reputation management, emphasizing the imperative for proactive strategies amidst evolving market dynamics, as highlighted in the work by Dowling and Moran (2012). Significantly, the conceptual introduction of a typology linking reputation and business models reflects a transformative shift in organizational strategy. This highlights a driver compelling businesses to reevaluate their models, aligning them closely with reputation management practices. The envisioned bimodal reputation distribution underlines the urgency for organizations to position themselves as top performers or adopt models resilient to reputational erosion—a critical driver in shaping identity management strategies.

From the literature examined, the management of corporate identity is driven by various factors including the pursuit of competitive advantage, differentiation, corporate responsibility, external forces such as competitor actions, media exposure beyond the company's control, word of mouth, activities of external entities, leadership styles of organizations, notably that of Chief Executive Officers and pressure groups (Balmer, 2012; Hatch & Schultz, 2010; Siano et al., 2007; Simões, 2016; Urde, 2009; Van Riel & Fombrun, 2007).

The studies examined also suggest that effective corporate identity management hinges on understanding and addressing drivers, relative to pressures of globalization, stakeholder demands, and corporate financial performance (Nakra, 2000). Being cognizance of the drivers of corporate identity management is crucial for organizations aspiring to thrive amidst dynamic competitive forces and stakeholder expectations.



## **2.4 Corporate Identity Management Processes**

Research indicates that Corporate identity management processes reflect organization's strategic efforts, encapsulating a series of intricate processes aimed at defining, communicating, and maintaining an entity's unique identity (Abratt & Kleyn, 2012). These multifaceted processes navigate the complex interplay between internal culture, external perceptions, and strategic positioning, influencing stakeholder relationships, market standing, and overall business performance (Urde, 2009). The initial process of identity definition involves introspection and analysis to crystallize these foundational elements (Balmer & Greyser, 2003). Companies delve into their core beliefs, ethics, and long-term objectives, crafting a distinct identity that resonates both internally among employees and externally with stakeholders (Melewar & Karaosmanoglu, 2006).

Numerous researchers have explored how corporations manage their corporate identity. Markwick and Fill (1997) theorized a framework for Corporate Identity Management and highlighted four fundamental components critical for effective execution of the corporate identity management process: corporate reputation, corporate personality, corporate image, and the interlinkages among these elements. The framework underscored the integral role of these components in shaping and sustaining organizational identity. The authors stressed the pivotal role of communication channels, messaging strategies, and branding efforts in effectively communicating the desired identity to stakeholders. They highlighted the need for these elements to consistently convey a unified identity to shape a positive reputation and image. The authors further proposed a linkage between identity and personality as a form of self-analysis. This introspective process allows organizations to discern their inherent qualities, capabilities, and directional aspirations. Whether approached through a



methodical, 'rational' process or through subjective, intuitive perceptions, the outcomes of this self-analysis were identified as a reflection of management's expertise, competencies, and ideological inclinations. Markwick and Fill (1997) emphasized the importance of a holistic approach in navigating the dynamic landscape of corporate identity management and advocated the harmonization of reputation, image, and personality.

Similarly, Shee and Abratt (1989) conceptualized corporate image process. They delineated three pivotal stages within the conceptual model of corporate image management: the establishment of corporate personality, delineation of corporate communication objectives, and the point of intersection between stakeholders and the company. At the heart of their model lies the foundational establishment of a tailored corporate philosophy, as espoused by Shein in 1984. Understanding this culture, as the authors emphasized, becomes imperative in shaping the company's image - a prerequisite for effective management of stakeholder perceptions. These insights converge with existing literature, highlighting the iterative nature of corporate identity management and its profound influence on organizational success. In essence, corporate identity management is an ongoing, multifaceted process that requires continuous evaluation, adaptation, and alignment with evolving market dynamics and stakeholder expectations (Urde, 2009). Simões (2016) adds depth by emphasizing that corporate identity management extends beyond mere creation; it necessitates living and embodying the identity throughout the organization's operations, influencing perceptions, relationships, and ultimately, the company's success.

Stuart (1999) explored the significance of the models of corporate image formation and corporate identity management that have been developed over three decades, in the development of conceptual thinking in the area of corporate identity management. The

models trace the development of Corporate Identity Management and provide practitioners, researchers and students with a rich history of such practices. Drawing insights from researchers such as Kennedy (1977), Dowling (1986), Shee and Abratt (1989), and Markwick and Fill (1997), Stuart synthesized these perspectives to construct a new model delineating the corporate identity management process. The authors outlined four models of corporate identity management process: Corporate personality, consisting of the corporate philosophy, corporate values and corporate mission; Corporate strategy, based on management communication, and incorporating top management vision, products and services, organizational structure, and corporate identity structure; Management and organizational communication applied with the resultant corporate identity consisting of mix of behaviors (of employees and management), symbolism and a communication plan; Management and interpersonal communications used to translate the reality of the identity into corporate images held by the various stakeholder groups. The researcher observed that the complexity of the models has increased, accentuating the need for practitioners to take a greater number of variables into account when developing corporate identity programs.

Van Riel and Balmer (1997) outlined three effective paradigms for managing effective corporate identity; the graphic design paradigm, the integrated communication paradigm and the interdisciplinary paradigm. Scholars such as Bernstein (1984) and Grunig (1992) stress the critical role of managing the corporate communication mix for effective organizational management. They collectively argue that a multidisciplinary approach is essential for strategically managing an organization's identity. According to the authors, senior managers are supposed to leverage the corporate identity mix comprising communications, symbolism, and behavior to oversee their organization's identity effectively. The breadth, complexity, and importance of corporate

communications was pointed out by Balmer (2017) who argued that organizations should communicate effectively with all of their stakeholders. Implicit in Balmer's (2017) comments, and those made more recently by Zerfass and Link (2022), is that the corporate communication mix and its management is crucial for the management of any organization. The authors suggest various areas ripe for empirical exploration within corporate identity research. These include understanding how corporate identity forms, extending corporate identity management techniques to diverse sectors like banking, national branding, and professional realms, as well as investigating the impact of strategic alliances on corporate identities. They advocate for an interdisciplinary approach in future studies, foreseeing a substantial, unique knowledge based on corporate identity. According to Topalian (2003, p.1120) “a successful corporate identity is a ‘living’ identity: a tangible reality that is a true representation of an organization and its aspiration which ‘breathes’ and changes with that organization over time”.

Simões et al. (2005) unveiled four distinct perspectives instrumental in managing corporate identity internally: The interdisciplinary perspective, the visual perspective, the organizational studies, and the marketing perspective. The interdisciplinary perspective involves integrating insights and methods from various disciplines to understand and manage corporate identity effectively. It acknowledges that corporate identity is multifaceted and requires input from diverse fields such as psychology, sociology, anthropology, and communication studies. The visual perspective focuses on the visual elements of corporate identity, such as logos, color schemes, typography, and other design elements. The organizational studies perspective examines corporate identity through the lens of organizational behavior. It considers how internal structures, processes, and cultures influence the formation and expression of corporate

identity. Organizational studies perspective emphasizes the role of leadership, organizational culture, communication channels, and employee engagement in shaping and managing corporate identity. The marketing perspective focuses on how corporate identity contributes to brand equity and competitive advantage. It emphasizes the strategic use of branding and marketing techniques to create a strong and distinctive corporate identity that resonates with target audiences. These perspectives converge, advocating an interdisciplinary approach, a viewpoint endorsed by several scholars on marketing approaches to corporate identity (Balmer, 2001; Hatch & Schultz, 1997; Moingeon & Ramanantsoa, 1997 ; Riel & Balmer, 1997). Van Riel and Balmer (1997) endorsed this approach, and delineates corporate identity as revealed through behavior, communications, and symbolism to both internal and external audiences. As organizations increasingly integrate knowledge across managerial domains (Hatch & Schultz 1997), the management of corporate identity necessitates a multidisciplinary approach (Riel & Balmer 1997). The literature further delineates the visual perspective, focusing on managing corporate symbols to convey strategic visual dimensions of identity to internal and external audiences. Moreover, organizational studies perspectives underscore the internal facets of identity, emphasizing meaning, emotion, and human aspects. Studies by Albert et al. (2000), Zaheer et al. (2003), Bergami and Bagozzi (2000), and Foreman and Whetten (2002) highlight the influence of organizational prestige, identity congruence, and values in shaping employees' identification and commitment. The corporate brand, as described by Ind (1997) and Chernatony (1999), is depicted as more than just outward manifestations, focusing on the core values that define an organization to provide strategic direction.

Gray and Balmer (1998) outlined three pivotal components that shape a corporation's identity: corporate image, media relations, and visual design. The authors emphasized

that establishing a robust corporate image requires a cohesive campaign that harmonizes formal communication systems. This includes the company's name, logo, signage, corporate advertising, and public relations initiatives. However, the cultivation of a favorable reputation demands more than effective communication; it necessitates the cultivation of an admirable identity forged through consistent performance over an extended duration. Within corporate communication strategy, media relations emerged as a critical facet (Capizzo & Sommerfeldt, 2021). This aspect typically falls under the purview of a specialized public relations department, whereas smaller entities often handle it informally through senior management. Highlighting the media's influential role as an intermediary in shaping a company's identity underscores the significance of media relations. The graphic system, as detailed in Gray and Balmer's (1998) findings, dictates both the quantity and type of logos employed, alongside the design style adopted for the company's literature, signs, and stationery. This encompasses the synchronization of typeface styles, photography, illustrations, layout, and color schemes across all the company's visual elements. The researchers concluded that, while strategic communication efforts contribute to creating an intended image, sustained meritorious performance over time is indispensable for cultivating a positive and enduring reputation within the minds of stakeholders.

The literature reviewed in this section focused on corporate identity management processes. Scheming through the findings from the various authors in the studies reviewed in this section, it has been observed that three elements are predominantly highlighted as the components of corporate identity management processes; visual elements, stakeholders, and corporate communications. From the studies reviewed, the first thing stakeholders relate to and see is the company colors as well as the visual design elements. The studies also highlighted stakeholders as the second most critical

element, underlining their indispensable role in an organization's existence. Additionally, the review stressed the significance of effective corporate communication, emphasizing its pivotal role in sustaining the organization's operations and preserving its identity. Mastering communication with stakeholders and utilizing appropriate channels for contact are imperative to the organization's continued functionality and identity maintenance.

## **2.5 Studies on Corporate Identity Management in Africa**

As Africa's economies continue to evolve and get integrated into the global market, companies navigate the complexities of building and managing their corporate identities (Beamish & Lupton, 2016). Otondi (2014) examined the importance of corporate communication in shaping corporate identity within the Kenyan National Highway Authority (KeNYA) using qualitative content analysis in Kenya. The findings revealed significant impact of corporate communication across various aspects in the KeNYA, including publicity in KeNYA materials, media liaison, web management, media relations, and stakeholder engagement. The study concluded that KeNYA's management was cognizant of the vital contribution of corporate communication to their corporate identity, leading to enhanced communication efforts in their corporate identity management processes. This highlights KeNYA's commitment to utilizing communication effectively as a strategic tool for achieving objectives and maintaining a positive corporate identity.

Similarly, Hawabhay et al. (2009) employed a qualitative approach to investigate the impact of corporate communications on the development of corporate identity and reputation within three large companies in Mauritius. The researchers conducted in-depth interviews, totaling 23, with key stakeholders in the three organizations including CEOs, marketing managers, communication managers, as well as external brand and

communication consultants, institutional investors, and journalists. The findings underscored the pivotal role of effective corporate communications in harmonizing and reinforcing the corporate identities of the companies. Consistent messaging and communication strategies were identified as significant contributors to presenting a cohesive corporate identity across diverse communication platforms. The researchers highlight the significance of strategic communication planning and implementation in achieving these objectives, stressing the need for companies to invest in robust communication strategies that reflect and reinforce their corporate identity effectively.

Chinomona (2016) examined the influence of communication on corporate identity and its effect on brand image in the Gauteng province of South Africa. Data were collected from 151 customers through questionnaires. Findings revealed that communication strongly influences corporate identity and brand loyalty with their combined impact having an overall effect on corporate image. The authors highlight the direct correlation between communication, corporate identity and brand image and emphasize that a strong and well-defined corporate identity positively influences brand image perception. According to the study, when stakeholders perceive consistency between a company's identity and its outward representation through branding, they are more likely to develop favorable associations and perceptions of the brand. This could be due to the fact that customers are likely to trust and be more loyal to brands with good corporate identity and image.

The observation made by Chinomona (2016) corresponds with the conclusion drawn by Karaosmanoglu and Melewar (2006) that corporate communication affects corporate identity, and when considered together, these elements shape the image of organizations.



Mutahi (2021) also utilized the mixed method approach to investigate the influence of corporate communication practices on the corporate identity of Equity Bank Limited (EBL). Two theories were applied to guide the study: organization identity theory and organizational image management theory. The findings revealed that EBL, through its communication, had facilitated teamwork and partnership with various stakeholders who were outside the formal structure of the organization. The researchers concluded that organizations should properly manage their communication and information flow within and amongst its numerous publics.

In Ghana, a quantitative study by Osei (2021) investigated the mediating role of communication on the relationship between corporate identity and brand performance of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs). Using a simple random sampling technique, data from 310 SME owners/managers within the Greater Accra region of Ghana were analyzed using PLS-SEM. The study revealed a positive relationship between communication and corporate identity; corporate identity and brand performance, brand orientation and brand positioning, brand orientation and brand values, brand orientation and brand vision, brand positioning and brand performance, brand values and brand performance, and brand vision and brand performance of SMEs in Ghana. The study concluded that organizations should consciously concretize their communication strategies by creating, developing and managing their corporate identity in an ongoing interaction with their customers to harness the full benefits of branding.

Boafo et al. (2020) examined the balance between corporate identity and corporate image and its impact on marketing performance of universities using Christian Service University College (CSUC) as the case study. Findings revealed a balance between CSUC's corporate identity and corporate image, as it positively impacted on the



university's marketing performance. The study concluded that universities must create a perfect fit between their corporate identity and corporate image.

The literature reviewed in this section underscored the critical role of corporate communication in shaping corporate identity and its subsequent impact on organizational performance and reputation. The findings provide valuable insights for practitioners and scholars seeking to understand and leverage the power of communication in organizational management and branding strategies. They emphasize the need for strategic communication planning and consistent messaging to reinforce a positive corporate identity across various stakeholders.

On drivers of Corporate Identity Management, Ajilore and Suleiman (2020) used mixed methods approach to examine corporate identity (communication, culture, strategy, and industry identity) management as a driver for student enrolment. The researchers used in-depth interviews and questionnaires to sample 18 public relations officers and 313,391 undergraduates from 18 universities. The findings revealed that communication and corporate identity management have a major influence on student enrollment. The researchers concluded organizations should strive to portray their identity and protect it. They highlighted the necessity for communication to align consistently with organizational identity and advocated for universities to prioritize the strategic development and projection of a distinctive corporate identity to attract students and bolster enrollment numbers. Corporate brands and reputations are important assets in enabling organizations to exploit opportunities and mitigate threats (Argenti & Druckenmiller, 2004). According to Balmer and Gray (2003) corporate brands are marks denoting ownership, image-building devices, symbols associated with key values; means by which to construct individual identities, and a conduit by which pleasurable experiences may be consumed. The corporate brand defines the

organization that will deliver and stand behind the offering, and will potentially have a rich heritage, assets and capabilities, people, values and priorities, a local or global frame of reference, citizenship programs, and a performance record (Aaker, 2004).

In line with Aaker's (2004) assertion Abratt and Kleyn (2012) examined corporate branding as a driver of corporate identity. The findings revealed that corporate branding is a major driver of corporate identity as it serves as a competitive leverage for organizations and also helps organizations to have good corporate identity and image. The study concluded that managers should be keen on their branding elements and ensure its consistency across all communication channels to help them align and optimize brand and reputation building efforts of their organizations. Brand management strategies significantly impact corporate identity, as discussed by Aaker (1996) in the context of building strong brands.

In Nigeria, Iyamabo et al. (2013) also investigated the drivers of corporate identity management and found competitive advantage, corporate reputation and corporate image as the major drivers of corporate identity management. Bick, Jacobson and Abratt's (2003) model integrates most of the elements (i.e., image, reputation, communication and culture) espoused by Riel (1995) for a successful identity management. In essence, organizations manage their identity in order to stand out in the industry they find themselves.

Mzembe et al. (2016) investigated the drivers of corporate Identity Management in the Global Tea Supply Chain with a case study on Eastern Produce Limited in Malawi. The findings revealed four main drivers of corporate identity management in the Eastern Produce Limited; Top management commitment to maintaining the organization's identity, Pressure from parent company (Camellia International Group), Reputation,

and competitive advantage. These findings underscore the multifaceted nature of corporate identity management in the tea supply chain and highlight the importance of various internal and external factors in shaping organizational identity strategies. Such insights are invaluable for businesses operating in similar industries seeking to enhance their corporate identity management practices for sustainable success.

In South Africa, Beneke et al. (2014) examined the drivers of corporate identity management and its impact on brand attitude and image in the south African beer market. Their findings highlighted interactivity as a prominent driver of corporate identity management, driven by a desire to cultivate customer loyalty and brand allegiance. The study revealed a positive association between corporate identity management and brand attitude, with brand attitude significantly influencing brand image. Insights from the study indicate that, beer marketers should prioritize engaging with customers to foster a favorable brand image and reputation.

The researches conducted by Makasi and Govender (2015) and Ajilore and Suleiman (2020) accentuate the pivotal role of corporate identity, particularly in the realms of communication and strategy, in shaping student enrolment figures. These insights underscore the imperative need for organizations to prioritize the cultivation and portrayal of a distinct corporate identity to enhance stakeholder engagements. Additionally, the literature accentuates the multifaceted nature of corporate branding, as explored by Balmer and Gray (2003) and Abratt and Kleyn (2012), highlighting its function as both catalyst for corporate identity development.

In Africa also, several scholars have examined the corporate identity management processes of corporations. For instance, Bick et al. (2008) conducted a study on corporate identity management processes in selected South African companies,

outlining four essential steps for effective implementation. The first step highlights the significance of defining the desired corporate identity, serving as a foundational decision guiding subsequent actions. This leads to the initiation of internal projects aimed at aligning core values, policies, communication guidelines, and organizational structures with the envisioned identity. The second step highlights the corporate identity management processes including corporate social responsibility initiatives, partnerships, collaborations and ethical decisions. The third step emphasizes adaptability, encouraging responsiveness to evolving trends, stakeholder demands, and regulatory frameworks. Lastly, motivating staff to embody the envisioned identity was found to be crucial, led by top management and facilitated through two-way communication processes. The authors suggest implementation methods such as staff training, internal workshops, and top management leading by example. Overall, Bick et al.'s (2008) study provides valuable insights into managing corporate identity in African corporate contexts, offering a structured approach that emphasizes alignment between envisioned identity and organizational practices, along with the cultivation of a supportive organizational culture.

Similarly, a case study by Le Roux (2005) examined the corporate identity management processes of an organization within the information technology (IT) industry in South Africa. The empirical investigation sought to identify the elements that influence corporate identity. According to the authors, corporate communications, clients and the media play a vital role in influencing corporate identity. Also, the findings revealed specific business attributes in corporate identity management processes including general business management, financial management, corporate marketing and corporate communications.

Abratt and Nsenki Mofokeng (2001) also conducted a qualitative study on how South African organizations manage their corporate identity management process. In-depth interviews with ten organizations were undertaken. The findings revealed that the corporate vision and mission are articulated through the organizations' corporate identities and personalities, and are ultimately reflected in the various images that the publics hold. Additionally, the study highlighted the significance of communication in the corporate identity management process. The authors concluded that, organizations should align their communication with their identity to foster a welcoming organizational culture to ensure stakeholder satisfaction.

In Ghana, Ayaawan (2018) looked at corporate identity on the web with a focus on telecommunications companies in Ghana. The findings revealed that telecommunications companies in Ghana have a significant online presence, with robust websites and active engagement on social media platforms. Additionally, the findings revealed that these companies maintain consistency in branding elements across their online platforms, such as logos, color schemes, and messaging and actively engage with customers through their websites and social media channels, providing customer support, gathering feedback, and fostering a sense of community.

Awugah et al. (2018) also examined corporate identity management processes of the University of Development Studies (UDS). The study revealed that the corporate identity and reputation of the University lie in its Community Development embedded programmes and the blended community-based teaching and learning model. Notably, the study discovered that 69.84% of the respondents agree that the current corporate reputation of UDS was good. The paper also found several approaches to enhancing the corporate identity of the university which include a well-design marketing strategy, market-oriented academic programs, lecture series, and quality research publications.

By identifying these approaches, the research offers actionable insights for UDS and similar institutions seeking to strengthen their corporate identity and reputation in today's competitive academic landscape.

The literature examined underscores the fundamental role of corporate identity management in achieving organizational success across different contexts and industries. It stresses the importance of defining core values, mission, and vision, as well as employing effective communication strategies, to establish a cohesive organizational identity. Scholars such as Awugah et al. (2018) and Abratt and Nsenki Mofokeng (2001) emphasize the need to align organizational practices with the desired identity and engage stakeholders through various communication channels. Additionally, the studies provide insights into tailored approaches for managing corporate identity, reflecting the evolving dynamics of digital engagement strategies and community-focused initiatives. Overall, the literature emphasizes the need for organizations to proactively manage their corporate identity to build trust, enhance reputation, and achieve competitive advantage. While much of the research on Corporate Identity Management in Africa has concentrated on South Africa, with studies by authors such as Abratt and Nsenki Mofokeng (2001), Beneke et al. (2014), Bick et al. (2008), Chinomona (2016), and Le Roux (2005), there has been relatively little exploration of corporate identity management practices in Ghana.

## **2. 6 Theoretical Framework**

The focus of this research is to examine the corporate identity management practices of MTN Ghana. In order to understand the issues more explicitly and provide detailed discussions, the corporate identity theory as espoused by Birkigt and Stadler (1986) underpins the study.

### **2.6.1 The corporate identity theory: Birkigt and Stadler (1986)**

The study is guided by the corporate identity theory as espoused by Birkigt and Stadler (1986). Birkigt and Stadler's (1986) model of corporate identity, proposed in 1986, remains a fundamental framework for understanding and managing corporate identity (Balmer, 1995). Scholars such as Balmer (1995), Blombäck & Brunninge (2009), Cornelissen and Harris (2001), Hatch and Schultz (2008), Melewar and Karaosmanoglu (2006), Moingeon and Ramanantsoa (1997) have used the corporate identity theory in their research underscoring the theory's significance. In the same regard, this theory was adopted to examine the corporate identity management practices of MTN Ghana.

The theory consists of three main components that interrelate to form the corporate identity of an organization; corporate behavior, corporate communication and corporate design.

Corporate communication within this framework refers to the strategic and coordinated efforts employed by an organization to convey its identity, values, and messages to internal and external stakeholders (Welch & Jackson, 2007). It involves the various forms of communication utilized by the company, including advertising, public relations, branding, and internal communications. Birkigt and Stadler (1986) highlight the importance of consistent and coherent messaging across these communication channels to convey and maintain a unified corporate identity. The authors emphasized effective corporate communication as a major component for maintaining the desired image and identity of an organization. Drawing from Goffman's (2002) self-presentation theory, which posits that individuals strategically convey information to shape positive perceptions of themselves, parallels can be drawn to corporate communication within Birkigt and Stadler's (1986) corporate identity theory which



says that organizations deliberately construct messages to resonate with their envisioned image or identity. This includes conveying values, mission statements, achievements, and narratives that project a positive organizational identity to stakeholders.

The corporate communication component within the theory integrates various aspects of both external and internal communications which is in line with Hatch and Schultz's (2002) organizational identity theory which emphasizes the importance of integrating external and internal communication in identity construction. Externally, it involves engaging with stakeholders such as customers, investors, and the media through avenues like advertising, PR, and social media to communicate the organization's values and offerings. Internally, the component focuses on fostering alignment among employees and departments through channels like newsletters, meetings, and intranet platforms to reinforce the organization's identity and goals. The authors stressed that messages conveyed internally and externally should align with the organization's identity, values, and objectives. In the case of MTN Ghana, evaluating how the communication strategies align with the company's actions and visual representation (design) can provide insights into how effectively these elements work together to create a cohesive and distinctive corporate identity.

On the other hand, according to Wheeler (2017), Corporate behavior encompasses the tangible actions and practices undertaken by the organization. This includes the products and services offered, business strategies adopted, corporate social responsibility initiatives, ethical standards upheld, decision-making processes, and interactions with stakeholders. It extends to the internal workings of the organization, such as its culture, values, and the way employees interact within the company. According to the self-presentation theory by Goffman (2002), organizations strive to



behave in ways that are consistent with the image they wish to portray, while also maintaining authenticity to avoid appearing deceptive. Hatch and Schultz (2002) further add that organizations act in ways that are consistent with their self-definitions to maintain internal cohesion and external legitimacy. Similarly, the corporate identity theory reflects the organization's underlying identity and values, which are shaped by the organizational identity process. This means that the actions, policies, and practices of the organization should reflect and reinforce the corporate identity as it shapes the reputation, trust, and credibility that the company holds among its customers, employees, investors, regulators, and the wider community.

According to Urde (2009), the visual representation and design elements of an organization constitute the corporate design. This includes the company's logo, color schemes, typography, architecture, and other visual elements that contribute to creating a recognizable and distinctive visual identity. Hatch and Schultz's (2002) Organizational identity theory acknowledges the role of symbols and artifacts in shaping organizational identity. It recognizes that visual elements such as logos, colors, and design aesthetics contribute to how organizations are perceived. Kapferer's (2009) brand identity theory examines how brands establish and maintain their identities through various brand elements such as logos, slogans, and brand personality. Analyzing MTN Ghana's visual elements, such as its logo, color schemes, typography, and overall design style, provides insights into how the company portrays itself visually as well as the consistency and coherence of these elements with their corporate identity.

#### **2.6.1.1 Relevance of the theory to the study**

Corporate identity theory is highly relevant to this research, particularly in the context of exploring corporate identity management practices of MTN Ghana. The theory provides a conceptual framework for understanding how organizations construct,

communicate, and maintain their identity. One of the key aspects of Birkigt and Stadler's (1986) model is the interconnectedness and interdependence of the three elements (corporate behavior, corporate design and corporate communication). They assert that a strong alignment and harmony among corporate behavior, communication strategies, and design elements are essential to establish a coherent and consistent corporate identity.

Several authors have contributed to the discourse on corporate identity theory. Hatch and Schultz (2008) expanded this theory to incorporate symbolic and substantive elements such as narratives, rituals, and material artifacts. Melewar and Karaosmanoglu (2006) also delved into the theory, advocating for an integration of both internal and external perspectives. They stressed the importance of aligning organizational culture with external brand image for effective corporate identity management. Additionally, Argenti and Druckemiller (2004) underscored the significance of communication in shaping perceptions and fostering trust among stakeholders within the framework of corporate identity theory.

Various authors have utilized the corporate identity theory in their research including Balmer (1995), Blombäck and Brunninge (2009), Cornelissen and Harris (2001), Hatch and Schultz (2008), Melewar and Karaosmanoglu (2006), Moingeon and Ramanantsoa (1997) underscoring the theory's significance. For example, Balmer (1995) utilized the theory in his study on corporate branding and connoisseurship. Also, Blombäck and Brunninge's (2009) research on the history of corporate identity was underpinned by the identity theory. Melewar and Karaosmanoglu (2006) also drew insights from the identity theory to study corporate communications, identity and image. This study therefore follows suit.

By using this theory, the researcher can explore the various strategies and practices MTN Ghana employs to create and maintain its corporate identity, such as its communication strategies and examine how the company defines its identity; how it communicates this identity to its stakeholders, and how it aligns its identity with its business strategy. Also, examining the corporate identity management practices of MTN Ghana through the lens of this theory helps elucidate how the company integrates the three elements in the corporate identity theory; corporate behavior, corporate design and corporate communication in their identity management practices.

Additionally, the theory provides a deeper understanding of how the organization uses its identity to achieve strategic goals.

## **2.7 Chapter Summary**

This chapter of the study examines previous related studies conducted around corporate identity management practices in order to tease out the evidential gaps in literature. Particularly, the literature review discusses works on communication and corporate identity management, drivers of corporate identity management, and corporate identity management processes. Additionally, the chapter examines the theory that underpin the study. The corporate identity theory served as the relevant lens for investigating and understanding the corporate identity management practices of MTN Ghana. The next chapter will consist of the research methodological procedures that were employed in the present study.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.0 Introduction**

This chapter discusses the methodological strategies that guided the study. The chapter rationalizes the research approach, the research design, sampling techniques, data collection and data analysis techniques employed in the study.

#### **3.1 Research Approach**

Creswell and Creswell (2022) defines a research approach as a comprehensive strategy that outlines the procedural elements of a study, covering facets such as data collection, analysis, and interpretation. Creswell and Creswell (2022) acknowledges three primary research approaches in the field of social sciences: quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods. The quantitative approach is characterized by the collection and analysis of data through numerical techniques, while the qualitative approach is centered on the generation of data in textual form and the subsequent exploration of the nuanced meanings embedded within this textual corpus (Creswell & Creswell, 2022; Lindlof & Taylor, 2017). Contrastingly, the mixed methods approach combines aspects of both quantitative and qualitative paradigms (Lindlof & Taylor, 2017). However, for the current study, a conscious decision has been made to embrace the qualitative research approach.

Patton (2014) explains qualitative research as an effort to understand situations in their uniqueness as part of a particular context and the interactions there in. This understanding is an end in itself, so that it is not attempting to predict what may happen in the future necessarily, but to understand the nature of that setting what it means for participants to be in that setting, what their lives are like, what is going on for them, what their meanings are, what the world looks like in that particular setting and in the

analysis to be able to communicate that faithfully to others who are interested in that setting. Merriam and Tisdell (2015) further emphasize that rather than determining cause and effect, predicting, or describing the distribution of some attribute among a population, qualitative researchers are interested in uncovering the meaning of a phenomenon for those involved, thus, qualitative researchers are interested in understanding how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences.

Drawing insights from Patton (2014) and Merriam and Tisdell (2015), this study delves into the subjective interpretations and meanings attributed by staff members in the corporate communication department of MTN Ghana on their corporate identity management practices. The focus lies in understanding their experiences, how they articulate and communicate their identity and the significance attached to these communication processes. Through in-depth exploration of participants' narratives and reflections, the researcher also sought to uncover the underlying meanings, values, and motivations that drive corporate identity practices in MTN Ghana. A qualitative approach helps to capture the richness and complexity of the participants' perspectives, which cannot be fully captured through quantitative approaches.

According to Denzin & Lincoln (2011), “qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them” (p. 3). Flick (2013) further asserts that qualitative researchers are interested in accessing experiences, interactions and documents in their natural contexts and in a way that gives room to the particularities of the experiences, interactions and documents and the materials in which they are studied. Flick (2013) further suggests that qualitative research seeks to gain insights, depict, and elucidate social phenomena by exploring the concepts 'from within' through various methods,

including analyzing the experiences of individuals or groups. These experiences may encompass every day or professional practices and can be investigated through the examination of everyday knowledge, narratives, and accounts (Huber et al., 2013). The qualitative approach, therefore, proves valuable in studying corporate identity management practices in the case of MTN Ghana, as it allows for a nuanced understanding of the subjective experiences and perceptions of individuals within the corporate communication department which allows for the exploration of the intricate dynamics of corporate identity management, including the strategies, approaches, challenges, and successes encountered offering insights that quantitative methods may overlook.

The researcher gathered data in the participants natural setting, the Head office of MTN Ghana, in Accra, specifically the corporate communication department. In this setting, the researcher refrained from exerting control or manipulation over the participants' discourses. Instead, the study adopted a discovery-oriented approach, wherein the researcher was introduced to new findings, ideas, and experiences, unfettered by predetermined agendas. Immersing myself in the participants' natural environment provided valuable conversations and deepened the understanding of the subject matter (Russell & Kelly, 2002).

### **3.2 Research design**

Qualitative research method has a variety of designs, including but not limited to phenomenology, ethnography, case studies, and content analysis (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). These research designs play the role of methodological guides, leading researchers through the entire research process (Creswell & Creswell, 2022). In line with this viewpoint, Brennen (2021) asserts that a research design acts as a fundamental blueprint, outlining the overall structure and approach researchers will use to address

the research questions at the core of their study. Yin (2018) further adds that research design is the systematic connection between the gathered data and the responses intended for the research questions.

According to Yin (2018), a research design involves setting the conditions for collecting and analyzing data relevant to the phenomenon of interest. Researchers frequently utilize specific research designs as crucial frameworks to ensure the acquisition of reliable data and the derivation of meaningful results (Abbott & McKinney, 2013). The choice of research design is mostly reliant on the nature of the research problem, the issues to be addressed, the participants, and the audience of the study as well as the researcher's personal experience (Creswell & Creswell, 2013). Based on Creswell and Creswell's (2022) argument, the research design that is appropriate for this study is the Case Study. The reason for this choice is that the objectives of the present study require a thorough engagement with the participants' knowledge to understand the corporate identity communication strategies, the drivers for these strategies and the processes for managing MTN Ghana's identity. A case study, therefore, makes it possible for this thorough engagement for specific details to be studied (Yin, 2018).

### **3.2.1 Case Study**

A case study reflects "a choice of what is to be studied" (Stake, 2005, p. 443). The 'what' is a bounded system, a single entity or a unit around which there are boundaries (Yazan, 2015). Miles et al. (2014) also think of the case as "a phenomenon of some sort occurring in a bounded context" (p. 28). A single case study is an in-depth, detailed examination of a single subject or case within a real-world context (Gustafsson, 2017). This method is often used in research to explore and understand complex issues, phenomena, or processes in a specific, focused way. Unlike multiple case studies, which compare and contrast multiple cases, a single case study allows for a deep dive



into one instance, providing rich, qualitative insights. Within this context, the current study centers on the headquarters of MTN Ghana (Accra), conceptualized as a bounded system represented by the physical building that encloses it, excluding considerations of other telecommunication networks or external influences. Following Miles et al's. (2014) conceptualization, the heart of this investigation lies within the corporate communication department of MTN Ghana.

In qualitative case studies, the investigator “explores a bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information (e.g., observations, interviews, audio visual material, and documents and reports), and reports a case description and case-based themes” (Creswell & Creswell, 2022, p. 97). Gerring (2011) further adds that a case study research is characterized by its flexibility, allowing researchers to adapt their approach based on the specific needs of the study. In a similar vein, this study involves in-depth, detailed data collection processes using multiple sources of information that will help the researcher strengthen the credibility of the study.

Stake (1995) postulates that a case study design should be used when it is impossible to control the behavior of the participants in the study. It is particularly useful for exploring complex social phenomena in their natural context and generating rich, detailed, and holistic descriptions and interpretations of the phenomenon under study (Yin, 2018). Merriam and Tisdell (2015) further adds that case studies searches for the meaning and understanding of the phenomenon under study, the researcher as the primary instrument of data collection and analysis, an inductive investigative strategy, and the end product being richly descriptive. The present study aimed to explore how MTN Ghana manages its corporate identity, along with the strategies and methods integrated into their management practices. The investigation will take place at the



MTN Ghana office, offering a natural environment for the participants to freely express themselves without limitations. The researcher will use vivid language to convey the complexity and nuances of the case, enabling readers to immerse themselves in the context. Additionally, this setting will allow the researcher to delve deeper into the corporate identity elements and practices of MTN Ghana as well as probe further for additional information that will aid in the research process. As Yin (2018) notes, the detailed nature of single case studies can lead to the discovery of new variables and relationships, contributing to theory development and refinement.

### **3.3 Sampling**

Lindlof and Taylor (2017) explain that sampling in qualitative research is predominantly purposive, meaning that researchers intentionally select participants or cases that are particularly relevant to the research questions. Given (2008) suggests that the sampling technique of a study should mostly be selected based on the research objectives. Considering the objectives and focus of this study, purposive sampling was deemed the most suitable approach to adopt. This method, as the name suggests, entails intentionally selecting specific items, data, or participants for study (Lindlof & Taylor, 2017; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Creswell (2013) further adds that purposive sampling involves the deliberate selection of individuals, groups, or cases that can best offer the information necessary to address the research inquiries. The researcher selected MTN Ghana as the focal case for this study due to its unparalleled status within the Ghanaian telecommunications sector. MTN Ghana is not only the sole telecommunications company listed in the prestigious Ghana Club 100, which ranks the top 100 companies in the country, but it has also consistently distinguished itself as a leader in corporate excellence. MTN Ghana's track record of accolades further solidifies its relevance as a case study. The company's recognition as "Number One Company of the Year" at the

17th edition of the Ghana Club 100 awards, and its subsequent ranking as the second company at the 20th edition in 2023 (GIPC, 2023), reflect its sustained leadership and innovation. Moreover, MTN Ghana's repeated accolades as the overall CSR company of the year and its consistent recognition as the Public Relations organization of the year at the National PR and Communications Excellence Awards highlight its exceptional commitment to corporate social responsibility and effective communication strategies (Abugri, 2018; Debrah, 2022; Dzokpo, 2019). These characteristics make it an exemplary case for examining the successful corporate identity management practices of a top-tier company in Ghana.

In terms of participant selection, the researcher specifically employed expert purposive sampling, a method that is used when a researcher needs to glean knowledge from individuals that have particular expertise (Rai & Thapa, 2015). The current study concentrates on participants from the corporate communication department of MTN Ghana. In sampling the participants, the researcher also adopted census sampling in addition to the expert sampling as all the participants in the corporate communication department were used for the study. These participants were chosen because they have deep understanding of the phenomenon being explored and were able to provide valuable insights into the strategies, challenges, and best practices associated with corporate identity management MTN Ghana, given their involvement in all communication-related aspects of the organization. Also, the documents used for the study, including the MTN Group integrated business report, newsletters and brochures were recommended by the participants as suitable documents for the study. These documents provided additional context and corroborated findings from the interviews, enhancing the credibility and depth of the research.

According to Daymon and Holloway (2011), a limited sample size offers the researcher the opportunity to capture specific and relevant responses and interpretations from participants regarding the issue at hand. Miles, Huberman and Saldana (2014) support this notion, suggesting that in qualitative research, smaller sample sizes are preferable to thoroughly and comprehensively investigate the studied phenomenon. The study sampled all 8 participants from the corporate communication department of MTN Ghana (Head Office, Ghana) to provide a diverse range of perspectives and ensure comprehensive coverage of the topic. These participants are; Mrs Georgina Asare Fiagbenu (Head of Corporate Communication); Ms Abigail Beckson (Winneba Branch Head); Mr. Ebenezer Asemani (Brand and Advertising Coordinator); Ms Afia Serwaa Asafo-Agyei (Media Relations Advisor); Ms Betty Evans Incoom (Controller, Retail Experience); Mr Lovelace Seth Mensah (MTN Community Shop Coordinator); Mr. Bismark Joe Appiah (Controller, Essiambra Branch Head) and Mr. Kennedy Kofi Ofosuhene (corporate services advisor).

The researcher adopted Miles, Huberman and Saldana's (1994) sampling strategy in selecting the participants and documents for the study.

Below is how the researcher used Miles and Huberman's (1994, p. 34) six strategies for sampling.

1. The sampling strategy should be relevant to the conceptual framework and the research questions addressed by the research. Expert purposive sampling was used because it is relevant to the theoretical framework and the research questions. The conceptual framework used that is the corporate identity theory, has three tenets which is corporate communication, corporate behavior and corporate design. The research questions for the study are also geared towards corporate identity communication,

drivers of corporate identity management and corporate identity management processes and the tenets in the theoretical framework addresses each of these research question. The expert purposive sampling was to get individuals who could speak on the corporate identity communication, drivers and corporate identity management processes of MTN Ghana and the participants from the corporate communication department in this study are the experts who could best provide answers to the research questions.

2. The sample should generate rich information on the type of phenomena being studied. Specifically targeting participants from the corporate communication department was deliberate, as they hold relevance to my research. These experts are well-versed in how the organization communicates its identity, given their involvement in all communication processes of the organization.

3. The sample should enhance the 'generalizability' of the findings. Concurrently, the chosen participants and their expertise will help broaden the applicability of the findings beyond the confines of this specific study, in terms of 'analytic generalization'. Their expertise in the field of corporate communication ensures that they can offer detailed insights into the corporate identity management practices of MTN Ghana. These insights hold relevance not only for researchers within this field but also for those in the telecommunications industry and the broader academic community. This amplifies the credibility and practicality of the research findings, facilitating their usefulness in informing decisions and understanding phenomena across diverse contexts, as analytic generalization suggests.

4. The sample should produce believable descriptions/explanations (in the sense of being true to real life). The documents used for the research were from the organization therefore they generate believable explanations as they are not altered and are in their

original form, rendering them valuable resources for this research. Also, the participants are interviewed first hand, and since they are in the corporate communication department, it makes them the right participants for the current study. Hence, their responses are believable.

5. Is the sample strategy ethical? With the sampling strategy used, that is expert purposive sampling, the researcher adhered to ethical standards. The participants were duly informed prior to data collection; also obtaining consent before any audio recording of participants' responses took place. Furthermore, sensitive information extracted from documents was appropriately concealed and not disclosed to any party.

6. Is the sampling plan feasible? The sampling plan is feasible as the researcher was able to retrieve the necessary documents and also conduct the interviews with the participants from the corporate communication department. Also, the researcher was not required to frequent the office as some of the interviews were conducted online.

### **3.4 Data Collection Methods**

Data collection methods refer to the systematic procedures and techniques used by researchers to gather information or data relevant to their study (Bryman, 2016). These methods encompass a wide range of tools and approaches, such as surveys, interviews, observations, experiments, and documentary reviews, tailored to capture specific data types and address research questions or objectives. Data collection methods are important, because how the information collected is used and what explanations it can generate are determined by the methodology and analytical approach applied by the researcher (Teherani et al., 2015).

Creswell (2013) details a “case study research as a qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded systems (cases)

over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection methods involving multiple sources of information (e.g., observations, interviews, audio visual material, and documents and reports)” (p. 97). In line with this assertion, the researcher employed two data collection methods: interviews and documentary review. This approach was chosen to gather data from multiple perspectives enabling informed and valuable interpretations.

### **3.4.1 Interviews**

Interview is significant in qualitative research because it provides the avenue to listen to the interviewee’s viewpoint regarding the phenomenon under study (Brennen, 2021; Lindlof & Taylor, 2017). According to Harrell and Bradley (2009), interviews are used to gather information on past or present behaviors or experiences and are further used to gather background information or to tap into the expert knowledge of an individual. In line with Harrel and Bradley’s (2009) argument, the research sought to gather information and also tap into the knowledge of the participants to enrich the study.

The study sought to find out the corporate identity management practices of MTN Ghana. A semi-structured interview was adopted to prepare an interview guide in advance for the interview (Braun & Clarke, 2013). According to Teherani et al. (2015), this kind of interview collects detailed information in a style that is somewhat conversational and is often used when the researcher wants to delve deeply into a topic and to understand thoroughly the answers provided. In line with the above statement, this research sought to thoroughly explore MTN Ghana's corporate identity management, aiming to comprehend the processes and methods employed in shaping and maintaining their identity.

Also, the researcher found that conducting interviews was the most appropriate data gathering technique for this research. This was due to the ability of the interviewer to establish a comfortable and trustworthy relationship with the participants, leading to the generation of valuable insights. The open-ended nature of the questions in the interviews allowed the participants to express their thoughts freely, without any restrictions. Moreover, the interviewer was able to inquire further on unclear issues that were necessary to achieve the objectives of the research. The face-to-face interaction further aided in the identification of changes in participants' tone and mannerisms, contributing to the research's credibility.

#### **3.4.1.1 Interview Process**

In order to gain in-depth understanding of the processes MTN Ghana uses in managing its identity, it was imperative to interact with those who are in the corporate communication department as they oversee corporate communication affairs within the organization. Prior to that, the researcher visited the organization with an introductory letter detailing what the research is about and what the information gathered will be used for. The researcher drafted a set of open-ended interview questions to guide the interview process and facilitate probing for unclear issues. The researcher coordinated with the participants to schedule convenient interview times, ensuring confidentiality and anonymity of participants.

Though face-to-face contacts between researchers and participants are typically common in conducting qualitative interviews (Creswell, 2014), recent studies suggest that virtual interviews, in essence, telephone, email and online interviews can also be very helpful and must be considered as an extension of the traditional method of collecting interview data since they also have particular strengths (interviewees can participate in the comfort of their homes, and online chats can be responded to in



participant's own time without being bounded by geographical gaps) (Braun & Clarke, 2013). The researcher conducted virtual interviews for all 8 participants primarily because of geographical distance which would not allow for the conventional face-to-face form of interviews for the participants. As part of the interview processes, I explained relevant terms regarding the study to the interviewees so they get fair insights pertaining to the background of the study. The researcher began with general questions about the participant's role, responsibilities, and understanding of corporate identity. The researcher gradually delved into the interview questions and encouraged participants to share examples and specific details related to their experiences. The researcher sought permission to record interviews to ensure accurate documentation. I also took detailed notes, capturing both verbal and non-verbal cues during the interviews.

As asserted by Brennen (2021), an interview is a decisively goal-oriented conversation between an interviewer and an interviewee with the objective of unfolding participants' opinions, viewpoints and experiences regarding a phenomenon. Against this backdrop, the researcher, for the sake of record keeping, relied on a note pad in transcribing the opinions and standpoints of the participants that were articulated during the interview sessions. The interview sessions were recorded with a Huawei Y9 Prime and each interview session lasted for about forty minutes. The researcher then acknowledged the participants' contributions and expressed gratitude for their participation in the study.

### **3.4.2 Documentary Analysis**

According to Daymon and Holloway (2011), documentary review is predominantly relevant to qualitative studies to produce rich and detailed data. Morgan (2022), also indicated that document analysis allows the researcher to thoroughly study documents in order to extract meaning, gain insight, and produce empirical knowledge. Documents



for research come in many different forms including advertisements, agendas, attendance registers, newspapers and press releases (Bowen, 2009). Documents also contain words and photographs that are captured without the involvement of a researcher (Bowen, 2009). Karppinen and Moe (2012) note that documents relevant for a study could take both written and audio-visual form. However, in this particular study, the researcher concentrated solely on written documents, specifically corporate Annual Reports (MTN Group Integrated Business Reports) and information on official website. These company materials were recommended and provided by the participants from the corporate communications department. Within these documents lay intricate details of corporate identity management practices, enriching the comprehension and interpretation of the gathered findings.

The information gathered from the documents provided information about MTN Ghana's corporate identity management practices as a way of corroborating the evidence generated from the interviews (Morgan, 2022).

#### **3.4.2.1 Documentary Review Process**

In order to analyze and comprehend the corporate identity management practices of MTN Ghana, documentary review was used in the current study. Annual reports and website stories from MTN Ghana was studied for this purpose. The following annual reports were downloaded from the MTN Ghana's website for the purpose of this research: the 2022 and 2023 editions of MTN Ghana's annual report. These reports were downloaded based on their availability, currency and contained data that the researcher could use to answer the research questions. The annual reports included messages from the leadership, such as the CEO's letter, financial statements, corporate governance disclosures, and discussions on corporate social responsibility (CSR), all of which contributed to the understanding of how MTN Ghana presents its identity. In

addition to the annual reports, the researcher retrieved information on Corporate identity management from MTN Ghana's website for analysis. It included various sections such as the "About Us" page, mission and vision statements, news updates, etc. The content of the annual reports and the website was reviewed in detail, with particular attention paid to sections that explicitly addressed corporate identity management as well as answered the research questions for the present study. Excerpts that answered the research questions were copied and pasted in a Microsoft Word document for later use in data analysis. The page numbers where each excerpt was copied were also indicated to add a layer of verifiability to the data collection exercise. Concerning the website, the contents were studied thoroughly to identify trends and information that met the research questions of the present study. The specific sections were copied and stored in a Word document. The excerpts from the websites were further used as answers or evidence for the research questions. To enhance the credibility of the findings, triangulation was employed. This involved cross-referencing the insights obtained from the annual reports with those derived from the participants and official website. Triangulation helped to verify the consistency of the corporate identity narratives. The findings from the documents were integrated with existing literature on corporate identity management practices to enrich the analysis and generate new knowledge. Finally, the findings from the documents were synthesized into a comprehensive report.

### **3.5 Data Analysis Procedures**

Creswell (2014) emphasizes that data analysis in qualitative research mostly involves preparing and organizing the data for analysis and reducing the data into themes through coding before representing the data in figures or in discussions. When attempting to analyse a group of experiences, thoughts, or behaviours across a data set, thematic

analysis is a suitable and powerful tool to employ (Braun & Clarke, 2012). The objectives of this study seek to examine the corporate identity management practices of MTN Ghana. In light of this context, this study relied on thematic analysis to interpret the information gathered from both the documentary review and the interview sessions.

### **3.5.1 Thematic Analysis**

Clarke and Braun (2013) propose that while there exist other fundamental methods for data analysis, thematic analysis emerges as particularly advantageous in qualitative studies as it allows for the researcher's perspective and expertise to be applied. Thematic analysis, as described by Clarke and Braun (2014), is a qualitative analytic approach used to identify, interpret, and present patterns or themes within data. This method entails systematically coding and categorizing data to identify themes and patterns of significance throughout the dataset (Clarke & Braun, 2014).

Braun and Clarke (2012) elucidated that the thematic analysis process entails the researcher's interpretation and comments on the compiled data. When conducting thematic data analysis, it is necessary to systematically explore the data after its consolidation to uncover patterns that are relevant to the investigated phenomenon (Creswell, 2013). This indicates that the researcher must recognize common recurring patterns or codes and offer detailed descriptions of these codes as part of the thematic analysis process.

The researcher followed Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis approach, which involves several key stages: familiarization with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and presenting the results.

In familiarizing with the data, the researcher reviewed all the collected data; interview transcripts, website and annual reports information. The researcher then transcribed the interview audios into written form and listened to the recordings multiple times, even after transcription, pausing in between the audios to understand every information being said. For the annual reports and website information, the researcher read and re-read the materials multiple times to gain a broad understanding of the content. After thoroughly engaging with the data, the researcher created summary notes. These summaries captured the essence of what is being communicated, focusing on the most salient points. This helped the researcher in distilling the large volumes of data into manageable insights.

Secondly, in generating initial codes, the researcher systematically reviewed the entire dataset, examining each piece of data (e.g., sentences, phrases and segments of text) to identify elements that are relevant to the research questions. After identifying the relevant pieces of data, the researcher assigned a code to each piece. For the first research question, the researcher identified codes such as design elements, consistency in communication, Internal communication of brand value, Employee training on core values, digital and traditional media. For the second research question, the researcher identified codes like Customer perception, Brand reputation, Competitiveness and Fraud Prevention. For the last research question, the researcher identified initial codes such as Community support emphasis, Corporate social responsibility (CSR), Community engagement. The researcher revisited the data multiple times, refining and adding new codes as new insights emerged. The researcher then organized the codes into groups. Similar codes were grouped together, and different categories were noted for further exploration in later stages. Once the initial coding was complete, the researcher reviewed the codes to ensure they are consistent and meaningful. The

researcher then reduced overly broad codes into more specific ones and discarded codes that were not relevant.

Subsequently, after generating initial codes, the researcher grouped these codes into potential themes. The researcher looked for relationships between the codes, asking questions such as: Do certain codes seem to cluster together? Do they tell a story? Do they relate to specific aspects of the research question? Based on these groupings, the researcher identified candidate themes. The researcher then wrote the candidate themes in a Microsoft word document and carefully arranged the initial codes under each candidate where they fit perfectly. These were initial themes that captured important elements of the data.

Additionally, the researcher returned to the data to review and refine the candidate themes. The researcher examined whether the data within each theme fits together meaningfully. The researcher also ensured that the themes are distinct from each other, ensuring that each theme captured a unique aspect of the data and does not overlap significantly with others. In doing so, some themes were merged and others were split. The themes that did not fit well with the overall analysis were discarded.

Furthermore, the researcher carefully defined each theme, clarifying what it captures and what it does not. The researcher selected clear and descriptive names for each theme. For research question one, the researcher identified three themes; Corporate design, Corporate behavior and Communication mix. For research question two, the researcher identified three themes; Image and Reputation, Remain Competitive and Prevent Fraudulent Activities. For research question three, the researcher identified three themes; Stakeholder and Community Engagement, Partnership and Corporate Social Responsibility. For each theme, the researcher wrote a detailed narrative that

explained the theme, supported by data excerpts. These narratives articulated how the themes were linked to the research questions and how they contributed to understanding the phenomenon being studied. The researcher reviewed the themes to ensure that, collectively, they provided a coherent story about the data, added value to the overall analysis and helped in answering the research questions.

Finally, the findings were synthesized into a comprehensive report that provided a detailed narrative interpreting each theme in relation to the research questions, objectives, and existing literature. This scholarly report presented the analysis in a coherent and meaningful manner, contributing valuable insights to the field of study.

### **3.6 Ethical Consideration**

According to Halai (2006), conducting ethically sound research involves upholding moral principles, hence the researcher must watch out for any potential threats to the participants' rights. Any type of research must follow ethical guidelines in order to minimize or completely eliminate harm. This is due to how crucial it is to protect any research's human subjects or participants (Orb et al., 2001). First, I contacted the Communications department of MTN Ghana as well as the management and informed them of my intent before the commencement of the study. Bell & Bryman, (2007) have mentioned some significant ethical needs which this study has duly observed. According to the authors, ethical research necessitates careful consideration of key principles including informed consent; privacy; anonymity; transparency; honesty; confidentiality and debriefing.

First, for informed consent, the researcher provided a verbal explanation of the concepts in the study and what the study entailed. This step is crucial to ensure that participants truly understand what they are consenting to. The researcher encourages participants to

ask questions or express concerns about the study, addressing any issues to ensure that participants feel comfortable and fully informed before making a decision.

Also, for privacy and anonymity, the researcher opted to use pseudo names instead of participants' actual names to safeguard their privacy. Eight participants were used for the study and the participants were identified as “MTN participant 1” through to “MTN participant 8”. Additionally, during the documentary review, precautions were taken to exclude any sensitive information from the data.

Additionally, for transparency and honesty, the researcher clearly defined the research objectives. This involved being explicit about what the study aims to achieve, the research questions, and the intended outcomes. Before participants agreed to take part in the study, the researcher provided them with clear and comprehensive information about the study. This included the study's purpose, the procedures involved, the expected duration, and what participation will entail. The researcher transparently communicated the benefits associated with participation and ensured that participants understand that their involvement is voluntary and can withdraw from the study at any time.

Furthermore, to ensure confidentiality, the researcher assigned pseudonyms to participants to anonymize their identities. Also, in reporting the findings, the researcher ensured that no identifiable information was disclosed.

Finally, for the debriefing stage, participants were informed about the full nature of the study. This included the study's purpose, the methods used, the main findings, and how their data contributed to the results. The researcher also shared relevant findings with



participants, particularly the study's outcomes that could benefit them in their identity management process.

### **3.7 Ensuring Trustworthiness**

One influential framework for understanding trustworthiness in qualitative research is provided by Lincoln & Guba (1985) in their work on naturalistic inquiry. They introduced the concept of trustworthiness as an alternative to traditional criteria used in quantitative research, that is validity and reliability. Lincoln and Guba (1985) proposed four criteria for establishing trustworthiness in qualitative research; Credibility, Transferability, Dependability and Confirmability. However, in this study, only three of Lincoln and Guba's (1985) trustworthiness criteria were employed: Credibility, Transferability and Confirmability.

1. Credibility: Credibility refers to the confidence that can be placed in the truth of the research findings. It is a key aspect of establishing trustworthiness in a study, ensuring that the research accurately represents the participants' experiences, perspectives and the context in which they were studied. To enhance credibility, the researcher employed techniques such as prolonged engagement and triangulation (using multiple data sources or methods) in order to accurately represent the audience perspectives.

- Prolonged engagement: The researcher dedicated time to building authentic relationships with participants, starting with informal conversations, such as asking about their day and work, before gradually transitioning into the formal interview process. Throughout the study, the researcher remained flexible and attentive to the participants' needs and comfort. For instance, when one participant's child fell ill, the researcher understood the need to reschedule the interview and maintained regular check-ins to offer support until the participant



was ready, both physically and mentally, to proceed. Additionally, when a key figure in the corporate communication department passed away during the interview period, the researcher respectfully paused the process, allowing participants time to grieve before continuing. The timeline was adjusted to ensure that participants felt valued and respected. The researcher remained engaged in the field until data saturation was achieved, ensuring a thorough and meaningful study.

- **Triangulation:** Using multiple methods, sources, investigators, or theories to cross-check data and interpretations. Triangulation helps to confirm that the findings are consistent and not the result of a single perspective or method. Within qualitative research, it is essential to use various methods such as interviews, focus groups, participant observation, and document analysis. This approach allows for cross-verification of findings. Look for patterns of agreement between different data sources, methods, or investigators. Consistent findings across different approaches increase the confidence in the results. When inconsistencies or contradictions arise, investigate the reasons behind them. Discrepancies might indicate the need for further exploration or might highlight complex, multifaceted aspects of the research topic.

2. **Transferability:** Transferability in qualitative research refers to the degree to which the findings of a study can be applied to other contexts, settings, or groups. To enhance transferability, the researcher employed purposive sampling to select participants who could provide in-depth and relevant information about the research question. The study included comprehensive details about the research process, including data collection, findings, analysis, and interpretation methods, allowing others to assess the potential applicability of the findings to their own contexts. Furthermore, the researcher

compared the study's findings with those of other research to highlight similarities and differences, demonstrating how the results might be relevant to different settings.

3. Confirmability: Confirmability refers to the degree to which the findings are shaped by the participants and the phenomenon under study rather than the researcher's biases, motivations, or perspectives. In ensuring confirmability, the researcher provided a detailed and transparent account of the research methods, including how data was collected, analyzed, and interpreted. Also, the researcher periodically reviewed the data and findings throughout the research process to ensure that interpretations remain consistent with the data. Additionally, the researcher presented the findings and interpretations in a clear and straightforward manner.

### **3.8 Chapter Summary**

This chapter focused on the techniques and approaches that were adopted to gather the data for this research. The chapter elaborated on why the qualitative research approach was selected to guide the study, as well as providing rationale for the choice of the research design and sampling techniques. This section also provided detailed description of how the data were gathered and analyzed. Ethical considerations that were observed in this study are also highlighted.

The next chapter will present the findings and discuss theses in reference to literature.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

#### 4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings that were derived through interviews and documentary reviews participants at MTN Ghana. Underpinned by Birkigt & Stadler's (1986) corporate identity theory, as well as relevant literature, this chapter elaborately discusses the findings that were generated in this research. The data were collected from participants from the corporate communication department at MTN Ghana. To ensure anonymity and confidentiality, pseudonyms were used for the participants instead of real names. I assigned the labels MTN Participant 1, MTN Participant 2 through to MTN Participant 8 to identify the interviews. Overall, nine themes emerged from the data and through the lens of the corporate identity theory, the data were examined and interpreted to answer the research questions that guided the study. To achieve the research objectives, the following research questions directed the study:

1. What are the strategies MTN Ghana uses to communicate its identity to its stakeholders?
2. What are the drivers of corporate identity management at MTN Ghana?
3. What processes does MTN Ghana adopt in managing its corporate identity?

#### **4.1 What are the strategies MTN Ghana uses to communicate its identity to its stakeholders?**

This research question sought to explore how MTN Ghana communicates its identity to its stakeholders, both internally and externally. With regard to this research question, the participants noted that while most people look to the tangibles when identity is being mentioned, MTN Ghana also looks at identity through intangibles means such as

language and tone of voice. Generally, the data revealed that not only is the organization's identity seen through visual elements but also human behaviors. Three themes were generated from this research question: Corporate design, corporate behavior and corporate communication.

#### 4.1.1 Corporate design

All the participants noted that MTN Ghana communicates its identity through a number of corporate design elements including the organization's logo, colors and symbols. For example, it was noted that the logo of MTN Ghana is an identifiable symbol in which the company associates its brand with, therefore, it is distinct and unique from all other companies. One of the participants for instance explained that MTN Ghana is distinctively defined by its logos, and as far as competitors are concerned that is what differentiates the company and makes it unique:

*Our logo helps our stakeholders identify us. Wherever you see our logo, you quickly know that this is MTN Ghana and that is another way we communicate our corporate identity (MTN Participant 6).*

*Currently, we have changed our logo from the previous one that used to be yellow, blue and white. Now it is basically two colors that we have; yellow and black so it is one element we use in our visual communication to our stakeholders (Participant 5).*

Another participant observed that the MTN brand is represented by “*our logo that is the primary representation of our brand*” (MTN Participant 8). The data also showed that the company's primary identity which is the logo has evolved with time. The participants revealed that the company adopts and manipulates its logo to suit prevailing conditions, especially within the digital space. It emerged that MTN Ghana did a rebranding and simplified the colors in their logo to black and yellow:

*If you look critically look at our current logo, that wasn't what we used about five years ago. If you preview our logo, you would see that it has changed from the blue and red originally known, it has been changed to black and yellow now and these colors reflect who we are as MTN (MTN Participant 1).*

This finding relates to Birkigt and Stadler's (1986) corporate identity theory. In the authors' conceptualization, corporate design is a key element of symbolism which includes all visual elements that represent the company, including such logos. This element of corporate design is a part of symbolism, which intersects with communication, a form of non-verbal communication that conveys messages about a company's identity.

Aside the logo, the participants highlighted the company's color as another distinguishing factor that masks MTN out from its competitors, noting that every Ghanaian associates the color 'yellow' with MTN Ghana:

*"We have our colors which are the yellow, white and black. If you look at our logos, we have the one that has the white background with the black and we have the yellow and black. So mainly, the colors are black and yellow and we play with the white as well to communicate our brand identity (MTN Participant 8).*

From the data, it became evident that there is largely only a few other companies or brands out there that push the yellow color as much as MTN does: *"that particularly brand color has become such a unique part of the company so much so that if you see a yellow umbrella, immediately your mind goes straight to MTN"* (MTN Participant 3) was one such response. Another participant had this to say:

*Our color is one way we communicate our identity and they are black and yellow. For example, you see the shirt I am wearing, it is*

*yellow and MTN is in it and you can either have it as white, black or yellow with the MTN design (MTN Participant 6).*

Significantly, Markwick and Fill (1997) validate this finding by stating that the concept of corporate identity is an organization's presentation towards stakeholders, and the means by which it distinguishes itself from similar organizations. Gray and Balmer (1998) affirm this assertion that corporate identity characterizes the organization and expresses its uniqueness, which is something that MTN has taken advantage of through its colors. The participants further revealed that the company uses a unique font consistently across its communication channels and that font family is called "*brighter sun*": *We have one font that we use as a business so for every communication sent via mail, the media or our social media handles, we use that particular font*" (MTN Participant 4). The participants shared that this font was specifically designed for the organization and is exclusively used by its staff, making it unavailable elsewhere.

This revelation can, for instance, be found in the excerpt below:

*Another unique identity to MTN is our font. The font family is called brighter sun which was developed specifically for the MTN brand when we were crossing over from our old brand and corporate identity to our new brand and corporate identity. You will find that that particular font is not something you will get on your normal set of fonts on your PC. It is something that we share internally and we try to use it internally (MTN Participant 3)*

In addition, the study revealed that MTN Ghana has specific ways in which they portray images on their website to reflect its identity. Participants in the study revealed that the organization tried to depict a unique kind of identity in terms of the imagery they use in their communications and advertisements and are also meticulous about inclusion, carefully selecting individuals in such communications or advertisements to represent

diversity in race, color, and body shape, among others. From the data, it came to light that internally, stakeholders are, for instance, conversant with “*seeing two people laughing and holding a device*” (MTN Participant 3) and this distinct form of identity has become the corner stone of the company so that even if an employee does not write MTN on the internal communication dashboard and just puts yellow and two people laughing holding a device, you would immediately notice it is MTN. MTN’s distinct identity therefore is always to use an image that has a device in it.

*In our adverts, we try to get people of different shapes and color, people who have “rasta”, bald people and so on. We also showcase women more to make them feel included in all our activities and programmes* (MTN Participant 2)

The push for inclusion of people from different backgrounds was also evident and corroborated in the documentary review: “*We aim to build a culture that reflects the diversity of the communities we serve and promote equal opportunities for all*” (MTN Ghana Annual Report, 2023, p. 68).

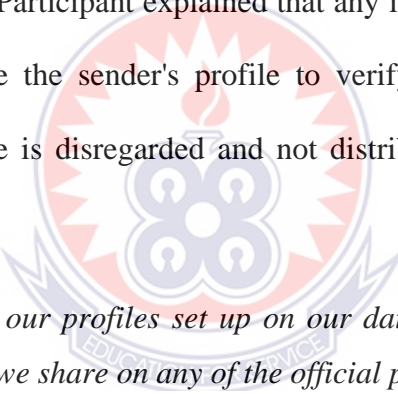
Another way the organization communicates its identity to its stakeholders is through its merchandise. For instance, one participant highlighted that while often overlooked, merchandise significantly represents the organization's identity. They mentioned items such as umbrellas, mobile money stands, and t-shirts as key examples. This finding is reflected in the excerpt below:

*One important aspect of our identity most people neglect is our merchandise. When you go through our trade, you will see our umbrellas, our mobile money stands and t-shirts which are all in our brand colors, that is yellow and black, to differentiate us from our competitors. These items sell the brand more and is mostly used in*



*our identification especially our mobile money stands* (MTN Participant 6)

The participants also disclosed that although attention mostly is drawn to physical things when design elements are mentioned, there are also intangible design elements that MTN Ghana uses in communicating their identity which includes language and tone of voice. The finding validates Balmer's (2017) findings that corporate design elements do not only involve the visible outward representations, but extends to incorporate other intrinsic characteristics that give the company coherence. An interesting finding that emerged was that, the company communicates through individual staff profiles which are shared securely with passwords to protect the organization's identity. Participant explained that any information shared internally or externally must include the sender's profile to verify its authenticity. Information without required profile is disregarded and not distributed to the general public. A participant observed:



*We all have our profiles set up on our database so any email or information we share on any of the official platforms, including our names, role and current business location shows so the other stakeholders will know that the specific employee they are dealing with is an MTN staff. The profiles are designed individually; the passwords are known only by the bearers to make every information we share on our platforms trustworthy* (MTN Participant 4)

Karaosmanoglu and Melewar's (2006) study revealed that the components of a company's corporate identity mix, such as its logo, mission statement, visual aesthetics, and brand messaging, play a critical role in communicating an organization's identity. The study found that MTN Ghana places so much importance on these elements as means of identification. The findings corroborate Mohammed et al.'s (2016) finding



that logo, slogans and colors are used in communicating identity. Also the findings are consistent with Karaosmanoglu and Melewar's (2006) findings that the components of a company's corporate identity mix, such as its logo and visual aesthetics play a critical role in the communication of an organization's identity. The company uses its logo, font and is particularly keen on their colors as it is the first and most important identity element most of their stakeholders resonate with. The company, therefore, ensures this is consistent across all their communication channels, including media channels and social media platforms. This supports Ayaawan's (2018) finding that telecommunication companies in Ghana maintain consistency in branding elements across their online platforms, such as logos, color schemes and messaging. Aside these modes of communication, the company uses images and company profile to communicate their identity.

#### **4.1.2 Corporate Behavior**

In line with Podnar and Melewar's (2010) findings, the present study also found evidence that MTN Ghana communicate its identity through their values, culture, staff behavior and mission statement. The participants reported that their identity is communicated through employee behaviors which validates the findings by Otubanjo and Amujo (2012) that employee behavior is crucial for identity communication as it can derail the total corporate identity communications process. Evidence from the data suggests that, generally, MTN Ghana has policies, procedures and principles that guide employee behaviors and activities within the business. The participants, however indicated that every MTN business unit has its own Policies, Procedures and Principles as well. The Policies Procedures and Principles guide what the company does on daily basis, and relative to behaviors and relationships with internal and external stakeholders: *"We ensure that we follow these policies to make our customers trust us*

*and stick with our brand*” (MTN Participant 4). Another participant was of the view that *“as an MTN front liner serving customers, it is important to behave in line with the values of the company, in a manner that the customer will sit back and say that, ah, this the experience I am expecting* (MTN Participant 1). There were also evidence in the documentary review to confirm this finding: *“We are committed to strengthening customer trust and loyalty in all we do by striving for excellence in how we deliver service to our valued customers* (MTN Ghana Annual Report, 2023, p. 46). The findings revealed that MTN Ghana prioritizes staff behavior due to their direct daily interactions with customers as it greatly influences customer perceptions of the brand which subsequently impacts the organization’s reputation and corporate identity. In tandem with this finding, research by Schaarschmidt et al. (2018) shows that aligning employee and organizational values enhances the organization's reputation, further demonstrating the significant influence of employee behavior on corporate identity.

According to the data, the established company values that guide the attitudes and behaviors of stakeholders, and which in turn shape the company's overall identity is conveyed to employees through management communication and to external stakeholders through the organization's visual elements, behavior, and communication initiatives to reflect the company’s identity as also espoused by Christensen and Cornelissen (2013). Data from both the interviews and the documentary review process revealed the corporate values of MTN as: *“Lead with Care, collaborate with Agility, CanDo with integrity, Act with inclusion and Serve with respect”*. In highlighting two of the values: *CanDo and Lead with Care*, a participant explained that the fact that MTN is a leader in the market does not mean the company has to have its way in terms of how things are done. The company ensures that it supports other operations to also grow:

*We have a policy like interoperability where we have other networks on our platform and people can send money from one network to the other. And we lead with care to ensure we maintain the brand. Also, when we started our mobile money service, people doubted its success but we ignited our CanDo spirit and for the past 15 years, everybody in the organization has been driving service, so when we say CanDo it means we just have to put our minds to it and execute* (MTN Participant 2)

Another participant noted that there are code of ethics and bonds just to make sure employees work with synergy and there is no conflict of interest. The participant however noted that since currently, the mission of the company has transitioned from a normal telecommunications company to a technology company, it was necessary that the business revisits its values which drives the organization and pushes employees to excel. The participant further noted that in terms of the value to *collaborate with agility*, “*MTN Ghana cannot be like robots, but has to collaborate with various groups of stakeholders to maintain its identity while also satisfying customers*” (MTN Participant 5). In terms of the value that depicts inclusion, a participant observed:

*So, at MTN, our values are very unique, we accept everybody in our team. Because MTN is an international business, we welcome people from all cultures, religion and tribe. We practice diversity and inclusion and that is one of our paramount values. We do not discriminate against any tribe, culture or religion. We act with inclusion* (MTN Participant 6)

In addition to the above, one other participant shared these insights as also established in the documentary review process:

*We communicate our brand identity through our values. We use the acronym Lyric for our brand values: Leadership, Integrity, Relationship, Innovation and CanDo. We innovate that’s why we are*

*always the first to do things; always creating. We believe we have a CanDo spirit that propels us to satisfy the needs of our customers (MTN Participant 8).*

*We encourage employees to strive for team collaboration and to be driven by a larger purpose and contribute to the organization's success in the long run (MTN Ghana Annual Report, 2022, p. 61).*

The concept of leadership by example was evident in the data. This revelation is consistent with the finding by Balmer and Dinnie (1999) that leadership places a significant role in shaping corporate identity and communication as it is essential for understanding how communication and corporate identity function. The findings showed that leadership is one key way the company demonstrates its values and identity, where the leaders in the organization lead in making sure they act right and communicate MTN as a reputable company to stakeholders, thereby, inculcating such behaviors in other employees: *“If it has to do with ethics, for example, the leaders themselves behave in an ethical manner”* (MTN Participant 5). Another participant puts it this way:

*The leaders are the brand owners; our executives, our Chief Executive Officers and they live the brand, breathe the brand and ensure compliance of it. They lead in representing the brand and help the staff work with the brand values and comply to them. They also ensure that the entire company is consistent with what the brand essence is and what is expected of everybody (Participant 8).*

The findings above are consistent with Watson's (2010) findings that corporate identity communication is hinged on the leadership of the organizations, specifically the nature of the executives in the organization. Watson's (2010) study further revealed that the corporate identity of an organization is equal to the identity of the executives, hence the first step for managing corporate identity is to have executives with good identity who

will carry the identity of the organization along. The findings reinforce the pivotal role of leadership in shaping and communicating corporate identity, as suggested by Watson (2010). The alignment with Watson's (2010) study underscores the essence of an organization's corporate identity as deeply intertwined with the identity of its executives. The executives' personal identity serves as a mirror for the organization's corporate identity, making it crucial for organizations to ensure that their leadership embodies the values and image they wish to project. This suggests that effective corporate identity management begins with cultivating strong, positive identities within the executive team, as these leaders are instrumental in carrying and reflecting the organization's identity both internally and externally.

Participants also revealed that the mission of MTN Ghana shapes the company's corporate identity in that the company explicitly conveys what the organization stands for and what it seeks to achieve. Additionally, they added that the mission of the company is to ensure that customers have an exceptional experience with the brand to keep them always glued. Bryson (2018) affirms this finding by accentuating that effectively managing corporate identity involves having a fundamental business philosophy ingrained in the organization's mission and vision statements.

The excerpts below from the participants buttress the findings from the data:

*Our mission is to make the lives of customers a whole lot brighter and that's what we stand for as a business. We always put our customers first and ensure that we expedite customer responses. We ensure we are always polite; the please and I'm sorry. Those magic words make our customers feel that we are really for them which makes them stick to the brand. We've also installed apps Ayoba, my MTN app and momo app just to make our customer's lives very*

*simple and easy and also to be in the digital space (MTN Participant 1)*

*As an organization, we strive to differentiate ourselves not only through our products and services but also through the mission we pursue. Our mission is clear and compelling: to make the lives of customers a whole lot brighter. This guiding principle is not just a statement but the very foundation upon which our business identity revolves (MTN Participant 2)*

*Currently what MTN stands for is to provide digital solutions that will make the lives of our customers very easier. As a retail experienced person whose core mandate is to provide excellent customer care delivery, I collaborate with my partners with agility to get this done on time. In the retail department, one of our mantra is “Aho” which means that we are ready to move and serve so anytime we are called upon, we deliver our mandate in line with the “ahoya” spirit (MTN Participant 4)*

*There are tons of apps out there, but few make your life as easy as the brand-new MyMTN app does. Managing your mobile life has never been this simple! (MTN, 2024)*

In addition, below are some evidence from the 2022 and 2023 annual reports of MTN Ghana that point to the fact that the organization communicates its identity through its mission:

*In 2022, MTN reaffirmed its commitment to leading digital solutions for Africa’s progress and providing its valued customers with the benefits of a modern connected life with the introduction of the eSIM which customers can request via the myMTN app. The introduction of eSIM cements MTN’s commitment to offering more value-added solutions for its growing customer base (MTN Ghana Annual Report, 2022, p. 23).*



*Our unwavering focus on investing in our people, new technologies, and innovation will ensure that we are well-positioned to meet the needs of our customers and take advantage of emerging opportunities (MTN Ghana Annual Report, 2023, p. 42).*

*We are committed in our efforts to foster a high-performance culture that is both rewarding and engaging to our people, while enabling a purpose driven organization that delivers sustained value to shareholders (MTN Ghana Annual Report, 2023, p. 69).*

One of the pivotal components of corporate identity is the organization's mission statement which serves as a concise declaration of the organization's core purpose, values, and long-term objectives. Within the framework of the Corporate Identity Theory as espoused by Birkigt & Stadler (1986), the mission statement acts as a verbal embodiment of the organization's identity, providing a clear and consistent message that aligns with other identity elements such as logos, slogans, and visual aesthetics. The theory outlines an organization's mission statement as a concise declaration of an organization's core purpose, values, and long-term objectives. Studies have shown that organizations with clear and well-communicated mission statements are more effective in establishing a strong corporate identity and achieving stakeholder alignment (Watson, 2010; Mohammed et al., 2016). These findings highlight that the mission statement is not merely a formal declaration but a strategic tool that underpins the entire identity communication process.

When it comes to corporate behavior as a reflection of identity, the study found that MTN Ghana maintains a specific tone of voice, ensuring that it remains politically neutral and free from foul language to safeguard its reputation. As markets become increasingly saturated, the company strives to also speak with one voice to build a robust reputation:

*Our tone of voice is very essential to the brand. MTN does not affiliate itself with politics or extreme religious affairs. The tone of voice is very essential so much so that if you see an ad that has a very different tone then there is obviously something wrong (MTN Participant 3)*

*We speak with one voice. Before anybody speaks externally about the organization, the spokesperson as well as the communication has to be approved so that we can all be in sync and speak about the organization without any contradicting views (MTN Participant 2)*

In line with the above corporate identity behaviors, Hatch and Schultz (1997) emphasized the role of values in embedding local organizational meanings and representations. They highlight organizational identity behaviors as the collective, commonly-shared perceptions, feelings, and thoughts of members regarding distinctive values and characteristics. Echoing this view, Podnar & Melewar (2010) observe that corporate behavior serves as a powerful conduit through which an organization communicates its identity, encapsulating its values, culture, and strategic priorities. This behavior, manifested through actions, policies, and interactions, provides stakeholders with tangible evidence of the company's ethos and operational philosophy. The findings illustrate that corporate behavior is a crucial mechanism through which MTN Ghana communicates its identity. This perspective is supported by Erkmen et al. (2014) who emphasize that aligning employee behaviors with organizational values is essential for building and maintaining a positive corporate reputation. Birkigt et al. (1986) in their corporate identity model further explain that the behaviors and practices of a company reflect its core values and principles, shaping how it is perceived both internally and externally. Thus, corporate behavior is not merely a reflection of an organization's identity, but an integral component that actively shapes and



communicates it, underscoring the symbiotic relationship between what an organization does and how it is perceived.

#### **4.1.3 The Communication mix**

The findings indicate that MTN Ghana employs elements from the communication mix to convey its identity to stakeholders. Participants provided insights into how specific communication channels are utilized to communicate the company's identity, including advertising, social media platforms, the traditional media and other digital communication platforms. Melewar (2003) found that a company's personality can be manifested through a diverse range of communication channels within the corporate identity mix. These channels, as outlined by Melewar and Jenkins (2002), encompass diverse elements such as corporate advertising, visual branding, corporate events, sales promotions, traditional and digital media, sponsorships, employee conduct, some of which are consistent with the findings from this study. The findings are also in line with Birkigt et al.'s. (1986) corporate identity theory which emphasizes that organizations utilize these communication channels within the corporate identity mix to engage both internal and external audiences.

The data established that, externally, MTN communicates its identity through the adverts it put out:

*We communicate our brand identity through advertising. For example, we leverage our brand advertising campaigns this year during the Ghana month... We had a whole advertising campaign on that with some music, some traditional old Ghanaian songs as our way of selling our brand identity (MTN Participant 2)*

MTN Ghana also utilizes social media in their identity communication. Participants noted that MTN has well-designed fliers that are normally shared on our social media platforms whenever there are programs. For example, one participant observed that:

*Social media platforms are typically used to communicate our identity. Now because of trends on social media, most of our campaigns and communications are channeled through these platforms since they resonate with our customer base. There are consistent updates in terms of challenges, downtimes, campaigns on mobile money fraud, among others, to ensure our customers are well-informed and to keep us ahead of our competitors (MTN Participant 4)*

This finding resonates with Tajudeen et al.'s. (2018) study which found that companies use social media platforms such as Facebook, twitter, Instagram and Facebook messenger to communicate their identity and MTN Ghana is no exception. In line with Tajudeen et al. (2018) the participants described how they leverage social media platforms including Facebook, Twitter and Instagram for identity communication. The findings also resonate with argument by Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) that businesses utilize social media platforms for marketing and customer engagement strategies and to also distinctively stand out.

Despite the positive effect social media has had on the identity of the organization, participants also recount how it has negatively affected their identity which corroborates the observation by Lanier (2018) that social media platforms encourage negative behaviors such as misinformation. According to the participants, MTN faces lot of social media fake promotions which forces the company to always issue disclaimers:

*You find people using our logo and saying click on this link, MTN is going to give you free data, and all these links sometimes have malware and viruses on them. Because it has the organization's logo, people think it is authentic and they go ahead and click...they then just realize it is somebody's whole IT system on the site and this creates a dent on our image and identity (MTN Participant 4)*

The participants also shared that they use the traditional media and other means including storytelling, stakeholder engagements and field agents to express their identity. Participants for instance observed that MTN engages the media a lot through story telling:

*We do a lot of storytelling at MTN... if we have a major achievement or a new product is launched or there is something new that we want stakeholders to know, we try to tell a story out of it through our engagements... sometimes we issue a statement and share it with the media for them to publish across board (MTN Participant 2)*

*We go out for media interviews and these are ways of communicating our existence and identity to our stakeholders (MTN Participant 5)*

*We communicate our identity through our field agents and sales agents. Our sales and field agents go out, market our organization and inform our customers or our stakeholders about our intentions or what we stand for (MTN Participant 7)*

The data however indicated that the company has specific policies governing when or who can speak to the media. It was observed that the first point of call is the CEO, who is the official spokesperson of the company. If the CEO is not available, the corporate services executive speaks on behalf on the organization and if there are specific issues or technical areas, then the corporate services executive delegates somebody else to speak. The data showed that a staff cannot speak to the media or about corporate issues

without authorization. A participant explained that “*Even as a spokesperson, you need to be trained on how to engage the media*” (MTN Participant 2).

The findings above corroborate the argument by Fill and Turnbull (2016) that organizations effectively use the communication mix to communicate their identity by integrating these elements into a cohesive strategy that aligns with their brand values and objectives. According to the authors, a well-coordinated communication mix helps in presenting a consistent brand image, thereby strengthening the brand’s identity externally. Also, the findings are in consonance with Watson’s (2010) finding that communication mix elements especially broadcast media and social media are important elements used in corporate identity communication for organizations’ success. The findings revealed how MTN Ghana leverages the strength of each communication mix element to effectively engage with their external audiences, build strong relationships, and communicate their unique identity. This revelation supports the findings by Siano et al. (2007) that leveraging the strength of each communication mix element helps in building stakeholder connection and customer loyalty especially social and traditional media as these wields significant influence over an organization’s identity. Together, these elements create a cohesive strategy to effectively communicate with and influence the target market (Kotler & Keller, 2016; Belch & Belch, 2018; Andrews & Shimp, 2018).

The data revealed that internally, MTN Ghana communicates its identity through communication channels such as emails, WhatsApp, notice boards, official laptops and e-learning platforms. The data suggest that the company has a group email called “*the post master*”, where information about the company is shared with employees.

The company's "logo and colors always reflect in every email that is received or sent as a way of depicting MTN identity" (MTN Participant 6).

Other participants observed:

*We communicate information through our WhatsApp platforms just to make all employees abreast of what we are doing (MTN Participant 1)*

*We have an e-learning portal which gives us the ability to learn freely. We don't get to pay anything; it is paid for by the business. The portal is also used as a medium for sharing our values and who we stand for (MTN Participant 5)*

The participants also disclosed that the company's identity is communicated through official laptops. A participant explained that the company has weekly flash news where employees are given reminders on what is expected from "MTNers" on official laptops:

*"anytime that the screen logs out, you will see the dos and don'ts of an "MTNer" and that alone reminds you of what you are expected to do within the business and outside the business environment" (MTN Participant 4).*

The company leverages the screens of employees' official laptops as a reminder "of the identity of the organization as well as how to act to keep that identity" (MTN Participant 6).

Internally, the participants highlighted how MTN Ghana maintains consistency across the various communication channels through various forms of training sessions and enforcement through the company's brand guide:

*Internally, we ensure consistency through various forms of training sessions just to get us aligned with our identity as MTN (MTN Participant 1)*

*We have a culture of onboarding new role entrants through various training sessions. Once you are a new, you go through the HR induction training, then your business unit will also organize an induction training just to make you abreast of the policies and procedures that you need to (MTN Participant 4)*

*We do a lot of trainings. Whenever we have something new to communicate, we organize trainings to teach every staff so that we all speak with the same voice. (MTN Participant 6)*

*Enforcement is one way we ensure consistency which is making sure that everybody sticks to the plan. We have a brand guide...we call it the brand bible and we have a brands team that ensureS that all employees comply with brand guidelines. If posters, fliers, among other communication materials are produced, these go through the brands team to ensure that the right logo, colors, and company representations are used. We call them the brand police because if they see anything that doesn't represent the brand, they will have to take it down (MTN Participant 8).*

The findings resonate with Welch and Jackson's (2007) finding that effective internal communication is critical for ensuring that employees are informed, engaged, and motivated in identity management. Tuten's (2022) study also found that a cohesive approach across internal identity communication platforms is essential for maintaining a consistent organizational identity and effectively communicating with diverse audiences. In addition, authors like Kizito (2023) and Mishra et al. (2014) found in their study that internal communication is crucial for achieving both individual and organizational outcomes. They emphasize that effective internal communication leads to higher job satisfaction, better organizational performance and a good organizational identity. Simões et al. (2005) also discovered in their study that open and participative communication channels encourage employees to express their opinions which

strengthens their organization's identity. Smith and Mounter (2008) add that when employees understand and embrace the organization's identity, they become more committed and act as brand ambassadors both within and outside the organization. On his part, Quirke (2017) notes that internal identity communication helps to build trust and transparency, which are essential for a positive organizational culture and employee satisfaction. Through careful crafting, consistency, and strategic use of branding elements, communication channels can reinforce an organization's values, culture, and brand identity. Birkigt and Stadler's (1986) corporate identity theory also highlight the importance of consistent and coherent messaging across communication channels to convey and maintain a unified corporate identity. The authors emphasized effective corporate communication as a major component for maintaining the desired image and identity of an organization.

Communicating an organization's identity involves a strategic blend of visual, verbal, and experiential elements aimed at shaping perceptions and establishing a distinctive presence in the minds of stakeholders. Van Riel's (1995) Corporate Communication Model and Olins' (1989) Corporate Identity Model have the pivotal role of communication in the management of corporate identity. The authors emphasized the importance of integrating corporate communication efforts with corporate behavior and corporate design. When these elements are aligned and mutually reinforcing, they contribute to a strong and cohesive corporate identity. MTN Ghana exemplifies this approach by integrating communication with behavior and design to communicate their identity both internally and externally. By strategically aligning these components, organizations can cultivate a strong and differentiated identity that resonates with their target audience, fosters brand loyalty, and sustains competitive advantage in the marketplace.



## **4.2 What are the drivers of corporate identity management at MTN Ghana?**

The research question two sought to examine the drivers of corporate identity management practices at MTN Ghana. The participants shared interesting views on the drivers on corporate identity management and together with the documentary review, the researcher derived four themes; Image and Reputation Management; Sustained Competitive Advantage; Fraud Prevention. These themes aided the researcher to analyze the findings and tackle the research questions effectively.

### **4.2.1 Image and Reputation Management**

Image and reputation management came out strongly as the core drivers of identity management practices by MTN Ghana. The participants underscored the importance of brand reputation in the contemporary business world and the need to effectively manage the company's identity to appeal to stakeholders to ensure the company's brand is intact. Some participants were of the view that MTN Ghana is one of the top most telecommunications companies in Ghana now, and therefore, stakeholders would love to associate with the brand. Consequently, there was the need to always take steps to make the company's identity one of the best to consistently maintain its reputation. The participants also revealed that a good image and reputation as a results of the company's best identity management practices open several doors in terms of collaborations, networking opportunities, lobbying and to remain in business.

Some of the evidence from the data are highlighted below:

*We manage our corporate identity to maintain and enhance a positive image and reputation for MTN. Without a positive image and reputation, I'm not sure anybody will like to do business with us*  
(MTN Participant 8)

*We are the best telecommunications company in Ghana currently and that alone is a motivation for us to ensure that we consistently deliver our mandate in terms of various strategies to project our identity to consistently be the number one and best brand in Ghana (MTN Participant 4).*

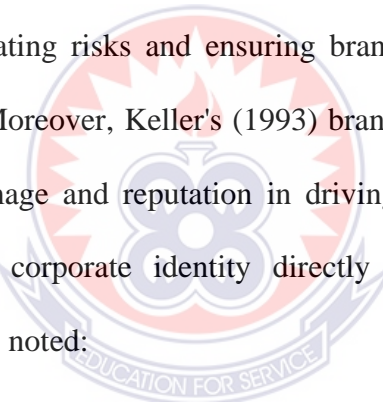
*If we do not have a good image and reputation, we cannot for example go to any government official or minister's office to make any request and...so basically a good identity helps to open several doors for us (MTN Participant 1).*

*Once we lose our license, all the over 500,000 people who are employed directly and indirectly by MTN would lose their jobs so we strive to manage our identity (MTN Participant 3).*

The finding, as observed from the data above, are in consonance with ideas in the literature that image and reputation management serve as foundational motivations in corporate identity management, since these influence how a company is perceived by its stakeholders, including customers, investors, employees, and the broader public ((e.g.). Dowling, 2016). Birkigt et al's. (1986) corporate identity theory also highlights the central role of image and reputation management in corporate identity. While image looks at perceptions, reputation goes beyond image by encompassing the collective perceptions and evaluations held by stakeholders based on the organization's actions and behaviors over time (Shamma, 2012). It reflects the organization's track record, ethical conduct, and responsiveness to stakeholder concerns. The findings from the participants also corroborate the finding by Balmer and Greyser (2006) that image and reputation are central elements that drive corporate identity management in organizations. Karaosmanoglu and Melewar (2006) also revealed in their study that image and reputation are critical for effective execution of corporate identity management and the interlinking among these elements. In Africa, Iyamabo et al.

(2013) in their study also established image and reputation as the major drivers of corporate identity management. Riel (1995) further emphasize the role of reputation in corporate identity management, arguing that reputation is built through consistent performance and effective communication. He emphasizes the need for organizations to actively manage their corporate identity to influence their overall reputation. These perspectives collectively highlight that image and reputation are not just superficial aspects of corporate identity but critical drivers that influence how organizations are perceived by their stakeholders and the broader public.

The participants further highlighted the strategic corporate benefits of a good image and reputation as a consequence of identity management including fostering stakeholder trust, mitigating risks and ensuring brand loyalty, as also observed by Mishina et al. (2004). Moreover, Keller's (1993) brand equity model underscores the importance of brand image and reputation in driving customer loyalty and market differentiation, linking corporate identity directly to competitive advantage. A participant, for example, noted:



*...our image and reputation help us win customer loyalty. If customers are satisfied, we get revenue and this helps us to keep on operating. If they are satisfied with our services, they say good things about us...word of mouth advertisement is powerful than any other media (MTN Participant 5).*

Knox and Maklan (2004) supports the findings above by emphasizing the role of image and reputation in creating a distinct identity that resonates with customers. They suggest that effective management of image and reputation leads to enhanced customer loyalty. Dowling (2016) echoes the sentiment that reputation reflects a firm's culture and performance more than superficial changes such as advertising or corporate signage.

He suggests that companies need to align their values with those of their customers to achieve a strong reputation. Moreover, Podnar and Melewar, (2010) argue that modern consumers expect companies to behave responsibly and this significantly enhances a company's reputation. The consensus among these authors supports Knox and Maklan's (2004) findings that image and reputation are crucial for creating a distinct identity. However, the emphasis is on authentic and substantive actions aligned with the company's values and stakeholder expectations rather than superficial changes. Generally, the findings confirm the argument by Melewar et al. (2005) that a robust and positive corporate identity has several advantages, including improved relationships with other businesses, and facilitation of investments into a company, in line with studies by Abratt and Kleyn (2012) and Simões (2016).

Consistent with the study by Bozkurt (2018), corporate image is a synthesis of what a company communicates and how it is perceived by its stakeholders. This means that while a company can control its communications, it must also be aware of how these messages are received and interpreted by the public. Van Riel and Fombrun (2007) argue that a strong corporate image can differentiate a company from its competitors, making it more attractive to customers, investors, and potential employees. Corporate reputation, on the other hand, involves evaluating the company's reliability, quality of products or services, financial performance, and ethical standards..Balmer's (2017) findings also revealed that image and reputation are crucial driving forces of corporate identity management processes as also established in this study. Melewar et al. (2018) also shared insights into how corporate identity shapes corporate image and reputation of organizations. These perspectives support the findings derived from the research that image and reputation are important drivers of corporate identity management.

#### 4.2.2 Sustained Competitive Advantage

Another important motivating factor that serves as a basis for MTN Ghana to manage its identity is for the company to remain competitive, as the data established. It emerged that the telecommunication industry in Ghana is very competitive, hence, there was the need for the company to always adapt to evolving trends and manage their identity. Participants indicated that the country now has telecommunications networks that are striving to become number one and even though MTN is currently leading the industry, if the company does not take issues of identity management with the utmost seriousness it deserves, it may be overtaken by others who are also working tirelessly to lead the sector. This, therefore, require strategies to stay relevant and ahead of competitors. “*I think the motivation is the need for us to stand out...*” was one such response (MTN Participant 1). Another participant had this to say:

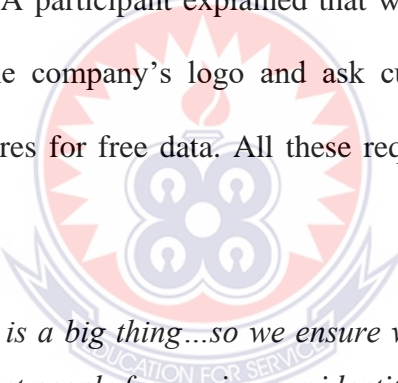
*We manage our identity to remain competitive...Our competitors don't give us any breathing space so we also want to ensure that we are always ahead of them...We have a lot of subscribers but that does not make us complacent...* (MTN Participant 5)

Similar to the findings by Kotler and Keller (2016), this finding emphasize the importance of differentiation in a competitive market. Thus, companies are driven by the need to remain competitive through a strong corporate identity which serves as a key differentiator, helping such companies to stand out in a crowded marketplace. Birkigt et al. (1986) in their corporate identity model also emphasize that visual identity elements in particular help stakeholders to easily identify and differentiate a company from its competitors. Kapferer (2012) also revealed that in competitive markets, managing a consistent and strong corporate identity is crucial to not only differentiate a company from its competitors but also create a strong emotional connection.

Moreover, Olins' (2017) findings affirms how competition compels companies to develop and maintain a distinctive corporate identity.

#### 4.2.3 Fraud Prevention

In line with the findings by Arvidsson (2010), this study also established that various forms of scandals resulting from fraudulent activities compel the company to engage in comprehensive identity management practices to prevent such occurrences. According to the data, fraudulent activities can significantly tarnish the company's image leading to legal repercussions and financial losses, among others, therefore, fraudulent activities serve as motivations for reassessments and restructuring of corporate identity management practices. A participant explained that with the spread of social media, some fraudsters use the company's logo and ask customers to click links which sometimes have malwares for free data. All these require unique brand elements to prevent fraud:



*Scams/fraud is a big thing...so we ensure we manage our identity well to prevent people from using our identity for the wrong reasons (MTN Participant 7)*

*...if fraudsters take over our brand identity, we will be in trouble. We want to say oh yeah this is the correct logo for Mtn and this is the link so its authentic... (MTN Participant 2)*

*...especially from our mobile money business, we want to prevent fraud. So if you do not have a strong identity or ensure that the identity is expressed in a particular way, it makes room for other people to copy and use your identity for fraudulent activities. There can only be one MTN and to maintain that uniqueness we have to make sure that we safeguard our secrets (MTN Participant 3)*

The findings align with Smith's (2018) finding, which emphasize that cyber scams, particularly phishing and identity theft, have a profoundly damaging effect on corporate identities, leading to a significant erosion of stakeholder trust. This is further supported by the findings by Cross, (2022), who revealed how online scams, including fraudulent websites and fake social media profiles, can severely undermine a company's corporate identity. Cross' (2022) study adds depth to these concerns by revealing that such scams not only confuse customers but also cause a substantial loss of brand equity and trust, posing long-term challenges for organizations in maintaining their credibility and reputation. Moreover, these findings underscore the broader implications of digital security on corporate identity management. In an increasingly interconnected world, the ability of organizations to safeguard their identity against cyber threats is crucial for preserving stakeholder trust and sustaining brand value. These studies suggest that proactive measures, such as robust cybersecurity practices and vigilant online monitoring, are essential components of effective corporate identity management in the digital age.

The data also highlighted robust internal controls in preventing fraud, as also suggested by Cohen et al. (2011). According to the data, regular training programs help stakeholders recognize potential fraud indicators and understand the consequences of engaging in fraudulent activities. According to Baker (2002) educating stakeholders about fraud risks and prevention techniques is essential. The findings revealed that to curb fraud, the company creates distinct identities so that these cannot be copied: *“For instance, we have our own distinct color and font which we maintain across all channels so those who are very familiar with the organization will be able to differentiate the fake from the original (MTN Participant 2).* It was also established that



the company does not share important identity documents with people outside the organization. Some of the participants observed:

*...what we do is, when people need the MTN corporate identity document, we share with them bits and pieces that they need. If I give the entire book to someone, tomorrow that person will be able to carbon copy our look, feel, talk and everything and that's bad for the organization (MTN Participant 4)*

*We have some strategic documents that espouse how we speak to brands and those documents are very sacred so if competitors get these documents, then it means we have failed woefully in safeguarding our identity, so we protect it with our life I would say (MTN Participant 5)*

*So, we educate our stakeholders to be aware mainly of the organization's logo and colors so that they are not defrauded. We always advise them to call us immediately they are not clear about certain issues or they encounter any problem (MTN Participant 7)*

The findings support the finding by Wells (2017) that effective communication can mitigate the negative impact of scams on corporate identity. The researcher found that companies that promptly and transparently communicate with stakeholders during and after a scam incident are more successful in preserving their corporate identity and rebuilding trust. According to Balmer (2001), companies must regularly reassess and adjust their corporate identity to respond to changes in market conditions, stakeholder expectations, and competitive pressures. This adaptability ensures that the corporate identity remains relevant and effective in achieving strategic objectives.

#### **4.3 What processes does MTN Ghana adopt in managing its corporate identity?**

This research question examined the processes MTN Ghana adopts in managing its corporate identity. On these processes, the study found evidence from the data via three

thematic areas; stakeholder engagement and community relations, collaborations and partnerships, corporate social responsibility. These themes are discussed in the following sections.

#### **4.3.1 Stakeholder Engagement and Community Relations**

The data revealed that corporate identity management processes at MTN Ghana involves integrating stakeholder engagement and community relations into the broader strategic framework of the company. This integration ensures that the company's actions are aligned with its identity and values, creating a cohesive and positive image. Participants explained that the various stakeholders of the company are engaged regularly every year through what the organization refers to as '*media and stakeholders*' forum, where stakeholders including regulators, the media, civil society groups, technology partners and community members are invited and given a brief on the company's performance for the year, performance in the previous year and plans and prospects for the coming year. These presentations are led by the company's CEO and the various stakeholders have the opportunity to ask questions. It was further explained that this '*media and stakeholders*' forum' is not only concentrated in Accra but across the various regions in the country. Apart from the high level engagements with opinion leaders, there are engagements with members within the various communities. In addition to these, the participants indicated that the company has started what it term '*catch them young series*' where similar engagements take place in secondary and post-secondary schools. Stakeholders are also given the opportunity to visit the company to learn identity managements processes first-hand. The ideas gleaned from the data are exemplified below:

*We engage all our stakeholders; civil society, organized business, media, suppliers, technology partners and most especially the National Communication Authority (NCA). For any branded information we put out there we ensure that we seek approval from the NCA because they are the regulators that represent the government and they are the main stakeholders that we work with when it comes to our visual or corporate identity (MTN Participant 4)*

*Every year, we organize media and stakeholders' forum so that everyone understands our mission, vision, belief statement...we don't leave our stakeholders out in all our engagements and communications (MTN Participant 4)*


*People also send us requests that they want to physically come to our office and see what we are doing here (MTN Participant 1).*

*We remain committed to working closely with shareholders and other stakeholders to continue to improve our governance practices and enhance long-term value for all stakeholders (MTN Ghana Annual Report, 2023, p. 41).*

Several authors have highlighted the importance of stakeholder engagement and community relations as integral components of corporate identity management processes. For instance, Balmer and Greyser's (2006) finding revealed stakeholder engagement and community relations as key elements of the corporate identity management process. Their findings reveal that a strong corporate identity is built through consistent and meaningful interactions with both internal and external stakeholders. In addition, Van Riel and Fombrun's (2007) findings discovered that managing corporate identity involves integrating stakeholder engagement and community relations into the overall corporate strategy. They suggest that companies that actively engage with their stakeholders and invest in community relations are better

positioned to build and sustain a positive corporate identity. Moreover, Morsing and Schultz's (2006) findings also revealed that engaging stakeholders in a dialogue helps companies to understand and meet their expectations. They emphasized that this two-way communication process not only enhances transparency but also builds trust and loyalty among stakeholders.

The participants gave interesting submissions on how they solicit and incorporate stakeholders' perspectives in the management processes. According to the submissions derived from the data, the company actively solicits and incorporate feedback from stakeholders, which fosters a sense of inclusion and value, increasing overall stakeholder satisfaction and support. The data suggest that engaging stakeholders in managing corporate identity processes build trust and loyalty as stakeholders feel their opinions are valued and considered. Also, this helps to identify potential issues and risks early, allowing the company to address such issues before they escalate:

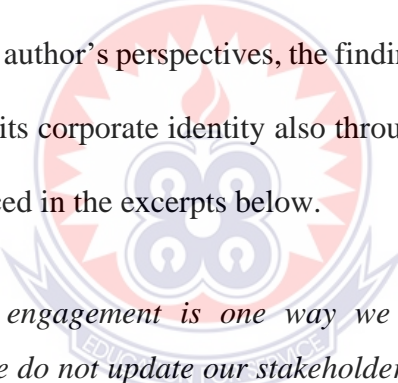


*We solicit ideas and feedback from our stakeholders...and this helps us to better our relationships with them (MTN Participant 7)*

From the data, the process of stakeholder engagement and community relations plays a pivotal role in the management of corporate identity. This approach does not only align the company's image with its intended identity and reputation but also fosters trust, loyalty, and satisfaction among stakeholders. As Cornelissen's (2020) finding reveal, effective stakeholder engagement is crucial for managing a company's corporate identity, as it ensures that stakeholders' perceptions are in harmony with the company's intended identity through consistent communication and interaction. Ditlev-Simonsen and Wenstøp's (2013) study further revealed the significant role of community relations in corporate identity management. They assert that by investing in stakeholder

engagements in identity management processes, companies can reinforce their corporate identity and reputation.

The literature suggests that Corporate identity maintenance is a crucial aspect of corporate identity management, ensuring that a company's image, values, and reputation remain consistent and favorable over time (Balmer & Greyser, 2003). This process involves continuous efforts to preserve, protect, and enhance the identity that a corporation projects to its stakeholders. Balmer & Greyser (2006) further add that consistent and coherent identity maintenance is vital for sustaining corporate reputation and stakeholder trust. Moreover, Freeman (1984), through his stakeholder theory, emphasizes the need for ongoing engagement with stakeholders to maintain corporate identity. In line with the author's perspectives, the findings from the study revealed that MTN Ghana maintains its corporate identity also through stakeholder and community engagements as evidenced in the excerpts below.



*Stakeholder engagement is one way we maintain our identity because if we do not update our stakeholders with what we do then they will not be familiar with the brand. For instance, when we changed our logo, we engaged our stakeholders so that they are away of the changes that have happened in our organization and that keeps them informed and part of the identity management process (MTN Participant 5).*

*We are able to maintain our corporate identity through consistent engagement with our stakeholders. We engage them to ensure that they are abreast of our colors, logo and everything MTN and we continuously monitor our stakeholders to ensure that the identity that we communicate is what they know and are aware of. This enhances closure with our stakeholders and also makes them more loyal to the MTN brand (MTN Participant 1).*

The data revealed that stakeholder engagement is a continuous process due to new policy directions and the fact that the various stakeholder groups also keep changing. According to the data the company maintains its identity by continuously engaging stakeholders through end of year soirees and other community engagements so that *“the company’s identity lingers in their minds wherever they go, and also, so that they think about MTN Ghana whenever they think of any telco brand* (MTN Participant 4).

In addition to the above findings, participant 4 had a different perspective. This participant revealed that MTN Ghana maintains its identity through government request. The excerpt below clarifies the finding by the participant.

*We maintain our corporate identity through Government requests. Sometimes the government makes a plea to our organization to support certain causes. In return, they use our colors, logos and identity to brand all their elements.* (MTN Participant 4).

On stakeholder engagement, media engagement in particular plays a critical role in maintaining and shaping a corporation's identity. Through strategic interactions with various media channels, companies manage their public image, reinforce their values, and engage with stakeholders effectively. This process involves crafting and delivering consistent messages that align with the company’s corporate identity while responding to public perceptions and feedback. Van Riel and Fombrun's (2007) finding revealed how media engagement is integral to corporate identity management. They suggest that consistent and positive media coverage reinforces corporate identity by shaping public perceptions and highlighting the company’s values and achievements. Argenti's (2014) finding also adds that developing and maintaining positive relationships with journalists and media outlets facilitates favorable coverage and enhance company’s corporate identity. This approach helps in managing how the company is portrayed in the media

and ensures alignment with its core values. Consistent with the author's perspective, the participants revealed that media engagement is a crucial element in MTN Ghana's management of their corporate identity, as evidenced in the excerpt below.

*We engage the media a lot. This strategic move enhances our corporate identity and market presence (MTN Participant 5).*

*We do not just engage the media whenever there is a concern or we are introducing something new. It is an everyday thing we do to maintain the identity we have built overtime. This engagement helps us adapt our strategies to suit the concerns of our stakeholders (MTN Participant 7).*

In addition, the participants shared that they are able to maintain their identity through engagement with one key stakeholder group, consumers and the quality of products made available to these customers:

*We always ensure that we particularly engage customers and also bring quality products that serve their interest to maintain our identity (MTN Participant 6).*

Hatch and Schultz (2003) propose that corporate identity maintenance is a cyclical process involving the alignment of vision, culture, and image. They suggest that regular evaluations and adjustments are necessary to ensure that these elements remain in harmony, thus preserving the corporate identity. In line with Hatch and Schultz's assertion, the participants disclosed that they monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of their corporate identity management efforts through surveys and this is evidenced in the excerpts below.

*We have the research reputation index survey that we do at the end of every year in October. We engage all the several stakeholders;*



*civil society, organized business, media, suppliers, technology partners, among others (MTN Participant 2).*

*On the customer side, we have what we term nps-net promoter score which means how one would recommend MTN to another customer and that is done every day. When a customer visits our branch, we send that person questionnaire to respond (MTN Participant 2).*

*We do surveys. We have monthly surveys, quarterly surveys. We do surveys internally to measure our brand health so for example we design questionnaires for staff to verify how well we are doing and externally too we send out questionnaires regularly to know how well the brand is doing (MTN Participant 6).*

In addition, the participants also shared that they monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of their corporate identity management efforts through constant monitoring.

The excerpts below reveal the participants' assertion.

*There is daily monitoring of media outlets and news in Ghana, Africa and the world so news items that relate to MTN or even our competitor are looked into and responded to if need be (MTN Participant 4).*

*There are different monitoring tools used so anytime the brand is mentioned, we get a popup message. We get daily monitoring reports from two different agencies. One from the Public Relations (PR) agency and one from the research agency (MTN Participant 8).*

Balmer and Greyser's (2003) finding reveal that stakeholder feedback is pivotal in understanding the impact of corporate identity on consumer behavior. They argue that regular feedback collection helps in identifying gaps between intended and perceived identity, thereby allowing companies to adjust their strategies accordingly. They also highlight the importance of analyzing feedback trends over time to detect shifts in perception and to respond proactively. He and Balmer's (2007) study further disclose

that customer feedback provides valuable data for evaluating the success of corporate identity management efforts. In line with Balmer and Greyser (2003) and He and Balmer (2007) findings, the participants also disclosed that customers' feedback help them monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of their corporate identity management efforts.

This assertion is supported by the excerpt below:

*When a customer visits the engagement center, we call and find out if the customer received good service. We then ask the customer to rate us from one to ten (MTN Participant 3).*

A participant shared an alternative perspective which suggests that MTN Ghana monitors and evaluates their corporate identity management efforts through auditing.

This is depicted in the excerpt below.

*Our managers or leaders can visit at any point in time to see how we are performing. Aside that, we do audit and business analytics... (MTN Participant 5)*

#### **4.3. 2 Collaborations and Partnerships**

The study also revealed that MTN Ghana forms collaborations and partnerships with other organizations and agencies in corporate identity management processes. As Cornelissen (2020) argues, partnerships and collaborations with credible entities can reinforce a company's identity. The findings revealed that MTN Ghana has agencies and partners it works with and therefore involves these partners in its corporate identity management processes. For instance, Huawei handles the high technological advancement issues for MTN Ghana. MTN Ghana has also partnered with small scale enterprises to establish a presence in specific communities. *"These partnerships help to combine resources, expertise, and technologies to drive innovation in our industry*

*and in identity management processes” (MTN Participant 7).*

The findings derived from the participants were in tandem with those observed in the documentary seen in the excerpts below:

*We are the committed partner to small, medium, and large private enterprises, multinationals as well as the public sector (MTN Ghana Annual Report, 2023, p. 31).*

*We have a lot of partners and as such we always have continuous evaluations of our partners to see if what they communicate is in line with our corporate identity management processes (MTN Participant 2)*

*Regular assessments help to determine our partnership's effectiveness and provide insights for future collaborations (MTN Participant 7).*

It was observed that collaborations and partnerships play a crucial role in the management of MTN's corporate identity, serving as strategic tool to foster innovation. The company leverages the strengths and resources of partnering entities to achieve mutual benefits. The findings align with Amey and Eddy's (2023) finding, which demonstrates that strategic alliances can significantly enhance a company's corporate identity by capitalizing on the strengths of partner organizations. Their study illustrates that such collaborations can improve brand visibility, credibility, and market positioning. Additionally, these findings are consistent with the finding of Nielsen and Neergaard (2018), who show that partnerships with non-profit organizations play a crucial role in corporate identity management. Their research highlights that these alliances enable companies to align their corporate values with social impact, thereby reinforcing their identity as socially responsible entities. Moreover, the results corroborate Ungureanu et al's. (2020) findings, which emphasize that collaborative

partnerships can drive differentiation and innovation. They argue that the effectiveness of these partnerships depends on clear communication, mutual objectives, and shared values between partners. Similarly, Valbuena-Hernandez and Ortiz-de-Mandojana (2022) reveal that inter-organizational collaborations positively affect corporate identity management. They also stress the importance of clear communication and alignment of identity-related goals for successful partnerships. These perspectives collectively underscore the vital role of strategic partnerships in shaping and strengthening corporate identity, highlighting the need for alignment, effective communication, and shared values to maximize the benefits of such collaborations.

#### **4.3.3 Corporate Social Responsibility**

The findings from the study revealed that MTN Ghana is keen on corporate social responsibility, recognizing its role in managing corporate identity. The data revealed that with the establishment of the MTN Ghana Foundation, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has evolved from a peripheral activity to a central component of corporate identity management (Bravo et al., 2012). Bhattacharya and Sen (2004) suggest that CSR activities enhance corporate identity by creating a favorable image among consumers. Companies that are perceived as socially responsible strengthen their identity, which in turn positively influences consumer behavior and loyalty. According to the data, CSR initiatives serve as a differentiating factor in the competitive industry we find ourselves, therefore, actively engaging in CSR helps MTN to stand out from competitors, attracting socially conscious consumers and investors while also reinforcing the company's identity as a leader in the industry. The participants further indicated that MTN Ghana ensures that it is socially responsible in the communities in which it operates. *“We don't just engage in CSR activities but we ensure that it aligns with our stated values and mission and what we stand for as an organization”* (MTN

Participant 6). According to the findings, this alignment enhances the authenticity of the company's corporate identity, as the stakeholders perceive our organization as genuinely committed to its ethical and social principles, as seen in the evidence below:

*We actively engage in CSR activities... When stakeholders observe our commitment to social responsibility, they tend to trust and support us the more which strengthens our corporate identity and fosters long-term loyalty and engagement (MTN Participant 4)*

*MTN continues to commit to improving the lives of Ghanaians through appropriate and sustainable socioeconomic interventions (MTN Ghana Annual Report, 2022, p. 35).*

*MTN's global policy is to set aside 1% of its profit after tax to fund the Foundation's activities (MTN Ghana Annual Report, 2023, p. 63).*

The findings corroborates the findings by Ijabadeniyi and Lotz-Sisitka (2020) that CSR activities are not just superficial but are embedded in the company's operations and identity, promoting long-term sustainability and social responsibility. This perspective underscores the significance of CSR as a crucial component of corporate identity management, emphasizing that genuine, strategic, and well-communicated CSR efforts can significantly enhance a company's reputation and stakeholder relations. Adams' (2004) study further revealed the importance of transparency in CSR reporting. Transparent reporting demonstrates accountability and commitment to ethical practices, reinforcing the company's identity as a responsible corporate citizen. In line with Palazzo and Scherer (2006) and Adams' (2004) findings, the participants shared how they ensure transparency in their corporate social responsibility initiatives which is disclosed in the excerpt below.

*We, at MTN have values we uphold and as such do things not for fame but to genuinely help people in need (MTN Participant 8).*

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) as a corporate identity management process is indispensable for contemporary businesses. It transcends mere compliance and philanthropic efforts, embedding itself into the strategic core of a company's operations and values. Authors such as Carroll and Brown's (2018) study revealed that CSR is not just about ethical or philanthropic actions but includes economic and legal responsibilities, suggesting a comprehensive approach to balancing these dimensions for sustainable business operations. Balmer's (2001) finding revealed the significance of CSR in shaping corporate identity, where the alignment of a company's identity, reputation, and corporate brand is crucial. In essence, CSR is not just a peripheral activity but a central component of corporate identity management for organizations.

Participants mentioned that one of the primary challenges in managing corporate identity is ensuring consistency across all channels and touchpoints. According to Balmer's (2001) finding, maintaining a unified corporate identity is particularly challenging in large, multinational corporations where different divisions and geographic locations may interpret and implement the corporate identity differently. This fragmentation can dilute the overall image and confuse stakeholders about what the company stands for.

The participants also revealed that another crucial challenge they encounter is network interruptions and this is further explained in the excerpts below:

*Network challenges resulting from fiber cuts. We have fiber that allows us to connect a lot more people than using the towers... fiber cuts cause service disruptions which make customers angry (Participant 3)*

*In our quest to give quality network, which is part of establishing our brand we usually have network challenges due to fiber cuts through road constructions, among others (MTN Participant 6)*

Cornelissen (2023) emphasizes that regulatory compliance is a double-edged sword. While it ensures ethical conduct and transparency, it also imposes constraints that can limit the flexibility of corporate communication and identity management. Also, the participants shared how regulatory compliance poses a significant challenge to their corporate identity.

This is depicted in the excerpts below:

*Sometimes we need to improve a service in a particular area but the regulatory authorities will not give us permit on time and this affects our delivery and ultimately our brand (MTN Participant 2).*

*There are also sometimes influences. If the regulatory body makes a request, we cannot say no because we are being regulated so government is another challenge or influence. Even if we want to get 5g, we need license (Participant 5).*

The participants further add that excessive exploitation is another challenge they face as a multinational corporation. This issue is further explained in the excerpts provided by the participants below:

*On our image, people think that we are big so we should be able to sponsor everything. This cuts across for events, organizations and the media. Everybody is expecting that when it comes to MTN, we should give them a lot of money (MTN Participant 3).*

*Everybody sees MTN as a cash cow (MTN Participant 6).*

Corporate identity management is a complex and dynamic process that involves creating and maintaining a coherent and consistent organizational identity. Authors like



Balmer and Greyser, (2006), Van Riel and Fombrun (2007) and Hatch and Schultz's (2010) findings provide valuable insights into the principles and practices of CIM. They underscore the importance of alignment, consistency, and adaptability in managing corporate identity to build trust and loyalty among stakeholders. Effective CIM requires a strategic approach, cross-functional collaboration, and continuous assessment to ensure the organization's identity remains relevant and compelling.

#### **4.4 Chapter Summary**

The chapter presented and discussed the findings from the data that was collected through interviews and document analysis on the corporate identity management practices of MTN Ghana. Underpinned by Birkigt & Stadler's (1998) corporate identity theory, as well as relevant literature on corporate identity management, the chapter revealed how MTN Ghana communicates its identity to its stakeholders, drivers of corporate identity management, and corporate identity management processes of MTN Ghana. The next chapter will present a summary of key findings in the present study, its conclusion, recommendations for MTN Ghana and academic considerations, and limitations or challenges that were encountered in conducting the study.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 5.0 Introduction

This chapter provides a summary of the study by highlighting key insights from the data gathered in the exploration of corporate identity management practices at MTN Ghana. It also offers recommendations that are based on the findings and that can have useful implications for corporate identity management processes at MTN Ghana, in the telecommunications industry in Ghana and in corporate Ghana as a whole.

The study, guided by three research questions, particularly focused on examining MTN Ghana's corporate identity communication, the drivers of corporate identity management, and the processes involved in managing the company's identity. The first research question explored the strategies MTN Ghana uses to communicate its identity both internally and externally. The second research question delved into the factors that drive corporate identity management at MTN Ghana, while the third investigated the processes involved in managing corporate identity. A qualitative case study approach was employed, utilizing interviews and documentary reviews as data collection methods. The data derived from the study were analyzed thematically based on Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis approach.

#### 5.1 Summary of Key Findings

In this section, the researcher distills the significant findings from the research, synthesizing them into a concise overview. The key insights presented here reflect the critical areas of investigation and are directly aligned with the research objectives. In an attempt to provide answers to the research questions that guided the study, the following key findings emerged:

The first research question, "What are the strategies MTN Ghana uses to communicate its identity to its stakeholders?" aimed to explore the methods and strategies employed by MTN Ghana to communicate its corporate identity to its various stakeholders. The researcher identified four primary themes in response to this question. Two of these themes, Corporate Behavior and Corporate Design are derived from Birkigt & Stadler's (1998) corporate identity model. The remaining themes, Communication Mix and Internal Communication, were identified as additional critical elements in MTN Ghana's identity communication strategy.

Karaosmanoglu & Melewar's (2006) study revealed that the components of a company's corporate identity mix, such as its logo, mission statement, visual aesthetics, and brand messaging are important elements of the corporate identity process. Similarly, the study found that MTN Ghana places considerable emphasis on its design elements specifically, its logos, colors, fonts, and symbols as these are central to its brand identification. The researcher observed that the logo and colors, in particular, are primary elements in MTN Ghana's corporate communication strategy. As such, the organization ensures that these design aspects are meticulously maintained and prominently featured across all communication platforms.

Additionally, the research uncovered several key insights into the effectiveness of the communication mix in conveying MTN Ghana's corporate identity. The communication mix, which includes advertising, digital media, and traditional media, was found to be integral in shaping and communicating the company's identity to both internal and external audiences. Each component of the mix contributes uniquely to the overall perception of the company, and MTN Ghana uses these elements in a cohesive manner to reinforce its corporate identity. Birkigt and Stadler's (1998) corporate

identity theory emphasizes the importance of consistent and coherent messaging across all communication channels to maintain a unified corporate identity. Consistent with this theory, the findings revealed that MTN Ghana strategically manages its communication efforts to ensure that all aspects of its corporate identity are accurately and effectively conveyed to its intended audience. Through training programs and enforcement policies, MTN Ghana ensures that its corporate identity remains consistent across its various branches, regions, and countries.

Furthermore, the first research question also revealed that MTN Ghana uses other intangible elements including language, tone of voice, values, culture, staff behavior and their mission. These elements according to the participants are considered just as important as the tangible ones, as stakeholders often focus more on attitudes and behaviors than on outward elements. To this end, MTN Ghana ensures that the behaviors and attitudes of its employees are always aligned with the values and identity of the brand. This aligns with the assertions of Podnar & Melewar (2010), who emphasize that every aspect of human behavior, along with all forms of communication, contributes to the overall corporate identity.

The second research question in this study aimed to explore the underlying motivations behind corporate identity management at MTN Ghana. Specifically, it sought to answer the critical question: "What are the drivers of corporate identity management at MTN Ghana?". The study revealed that image and reputation are crucial drivers of corporate identity management at MTN Ghana. The findings corroborates the argument by Balmer & Greyser (2006) that image and reputation are central elements that drive corporate identity management in organizations. These perspectives collectively highlight that image and reputation are not just superficial aspects of corporate identity

but critical drivers that influence how organizations are perceived by their stakeholders and the broader public. Mishina et al. (2004) emphasize the strategic importance of image and reputation management in enhancing credibility, fostering trust, and mitigating risks, thus reinforcing corporate identity. In addition, the findings revealed that their image and reputation helps them to maintain their customers and create strong business relationships with their partners.

The research also uncovered that gaining competitive advantage serves as a significant driver of corporate identity management for MTN Ghana. In the highly competitive telecommunications industry, which is characterized by rapid technological advancements, MTN Ghana is compelled to actively manage its corporate identity to stay relevant, retain customers, and maintain its leadership position. The findings suggest that this intense competition drives the company to continuously monitor both its own and its competitors' activities on social media, ensuring that it remains ahead and is well-represented in the public eye.

Moreover, the study uncovered that preventing fraudulent activities served as yet another critical driver of corporate identity management at MTN Ghana. The company was motivated manage its identity to prevent fraudulent activities including social media scams, MTN Mobile Money fraud, and other online fraud associated with the brand. Participants highlighted that such fraudulent activities often lead to a decline in subscriber numbers, as some customers lose confidence in the brand due to these issues. Consequently, MTN Ghana prioritizes identity management and takes conscious efforts to address these challenges to maintain its brand integrity. This finding aligns with Arvidsson's (2010) assertion that corporate scandals, particularly those involving fraud,

compel organizations to engage in comprehensive identity management to mitigate the negative impacts.

On the third research question which sought to explore the processes MTN Ghana adopt in managing its corporate identity, the study revealed that the organization actively engages in stakeholder engagement and community relations as key strategies. The research found that MTN Ghana makes deliberate efforts to connect with stakeholders and build strong relationships within the communities it serves. Cornelissen (2023) emphasizes that effective stakeholder engagement and community relations are grounded in a deep understanding of the company's core values and the strategic communication of these values to diverse stakeholder groups. This aligns with Grunig & Grunig's (2008) excellence theory, which advocates for two-way symmetrical communication, a model that promotes open, honest dialogue between organizations and their stakeholders. Consistent with this theory, the study revealed that MTN Ghana not only seeks out stakeholder input but also actively incorporates their feedback into its corporate identity management processes. Furthermore, the findings suggest that MTN Ghana views stakeholder engagement as a continuous process rather than a one-time effort. The organization prioritizes maintaining an ongoing dialogue with its stakeholders, ensuring that their evolving needs and expectations are reflected in the company's identity and operations. This approach not only strengthens trust and loyalty among stakeholders but also enhances the organization's ability to adapt to changing market conditions and societal expectations.

Additionally, the study revealed that collaborations and strategic partnerships with other organizations play a vital role in MTN Ghana's corporate identity management process. The company emphasized the importance of carefully selecting and evaluating

its partners to ensure alignment with its own values and standards. The research found that MTN Ghana seeks to safeguard its corporate identity from any negative associations that could result from partnerships, which is why they thoroughly evaluate the business practices of their partners. This vigilant approach underscores the organization's commitment to maintaining a strong and positive brand image.

The study further revealed that MTN Ghana places significant emphasis on corporate social responsibility (CSR), recognizing its critical role in shaping and managing their corporate identity. The research highlighted that MTN Ghana channels all of its CSR initiatives through the MTN Foundation, which operates as the company's primary vehicle for social impact. In alignment with MTN's global policy, 1% of the company's profit after tax is dedicated to funding the Foundation's activities. The Foundation is actively involved in three key areas: education, health, and economic empowerment. These findings reinforce the conclusions drawn by Ijabadeniyi and Lotz-Sisitka (2020), who argue that CSR efforts are not merely superficial add-ons, but are deeply integrated into the core operations and identity of the company, driving long-term sustainability and a commitment to social responsibility. This underscores the importance of CSR as an essential component of corporate identity management, highlighting that authentic, strategically aligned, and effectively communicated CSR initiatives can greatly enhance a company's reputation and foster stronger relationships with stakeholders.

Lastly, the findings disclosed that corporate identity maintenance is a crucial aspect of their corporate identity management processes ensuring that their image, values, and reputation remain consistent and favorable over time. The company achieves this through various means, including media engagements, responding to government requests, and active stakeholder engagement. Also, the study revealed that the



organization conducts regular evaluations and adjustments to ensure that their corporate identity elements remain in harmony, thus preserving the corporate identity. It was revealed that the organization monitors and evaluate the effectiveness of their corporate identity management efforts through surveys, constant monitoring, customer feedbacks and auditing. The research also identified some challenges MTN Ghana encounters in their corporate identity management processes which includes network interruptions, regulatory delay, excessive exploitation and non-compliance on the part of the employees and stakeholders at large.

## **5.2 Recommendation of the Study**

Based on the findings of this study, several key recommendations are proposed to improve the corporate identity management practices of MTN Ghana. The study has uncovered valuable insights that can guide the organization in effectively managing their corporate identity especially in a stiff competitive industry. These insights are not only practical for MTN Ghana but also serves as a valuable resource for academics and students interested in further exploring corporate identity management practices. It can also serve as a foundation for future studies on the importance of corporate identity management, offering a comprehensive understanding of how corporate identity can be utilized to strengthen the reputation and image of organizations and enhance their visibility in the broader community.

### **5.2.1 Recommendation for MTN Ghana**

Building upon the robust findings and compelling conclusions of this study, the researcher puts forth the following recommendations, poised for serious consideration by policymakers and industry stakeholders alike.

Firstly, MTN Ghana should ensure that its communication channels including advertising, customer service, social media, and traditional media deliver a unified and consistent message that reflects the brand's core values and corporate identity. Consistency across these platforms will not only reinforce the brand's image but also foster a stronger connection with its audience.

Furthermore, MTN Ghana is encouraged to weave elements of Ghanaian culture into its brand identity. By incorporating local languages, symbols, and traditions into marketing campaigns, the company can resonate more profoundly with local consumers. This cultural integration will enhance the brand's relevance and appeal, making it more relatable and engaging to its target audience.

Regular market research is another critical recommendation. MTN Ghana should invest in understanding evolving consumer preferences through continuous research. Adapting the corporate identity in response to these insights will ensure the brand remains relevant and attractive in a rapidly changing market.

Also, a robust corporate identity management strategy is essential. MTN Ghana should proactively monitor public perception and address any negative feedback or crises with agility. This approach will help maintain and strengthen the company's reputation, ensuring that it is perceived positively by stakeholders.

Additionally, MTN Ghana should be adaptable to shifting demands and feedback concerning its corporate identity. Embracing change and responding effectively to market dynamics will help the company stay competitive and aligned with consumer expectations.

Lastly, implementing advanced fraud detection technologies is crucial. MTN Ghana should leverage AI-driven monitoring and real-time transaction analysis to swiftly

identify and address fraudulent activities. This commitment to safeguarding customers not only enhances security but also reinforces MTN Ghana's dedication to integrity and reliability as cornerstones of its corporate identity.

### **5.2.2 Recommendations for Future Research**

Drawing upon the objectives, findings, and conclusions of this study, the researcher puts forth the following recommendations for future research endeavors.

Firstly, conducting a comparative analysis between MTN Ghana and other telecommunications companies both within Ghana and in various international markets could yield valuable insights. Such research would offer a broader perspective on how different markets approach corporate identity management and identify practices that contribute to competitive advantage. This comparative study could reveal unique strategies and challenges faced by different companies, enhancing our understanding of effective brand management across diverse contexts.

Additionally, future studies should explore the impact of digital transformation on corporate identity management at MTN Ghana. Investigating the role of digital tools such as social media, big data, and artificial intelligence can shed light on how these technologies influence brand strategies and identity. Understanding how MTN Ghana leverages these digital advancements to adapt its corporate identity could offer contemporary insights into modern brand management practices.

Furthermore, examining the role of stakeholder engagement in corporate identity management is essential. Future research could focus on how MTN Ghana interacts with various stakeholders such as customers, employees, regulators, and the community and analyze how these interactions shape the company's identity and reputation. This

study could provide valuable perspectives on the significance of stakeholder relationships in maintaining and enhancing corporate identity.

Another avenue for future research is the exploration of MTN Ghana's Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) activities and their impact on corporate identity. Investigating how CSR initiatives contribute to the company's brand perception could offer insights into the social dimensions of corporate identity management and how ethical practices influence public perception.

Lastly, future researchers should consider how emerging market dynamics—such as economic volatility, regulatory changes, shifting consumer expectations, and cultural shifts affect corporate identity management practices. Understanding these factors will help elucidate the unique challenges and opportunities MTN Ghana faces in managing its brand identity amidst a rapidly evolving environment.

### **5.3 Limitations**

The current study specifically focused on MTN Ghana, aiming to explore their corporate identity communication, the drivers behind their corporate identity management, and the processes involved. Consequently, the findings are applicable only to MTN Ghana. It's important to acknowledge that the situation and practices at other telecommunication networks may vary significantly from those of MTN Ghana. Therefore, similar studies conducted at other telecommunication networks might produce different results. Additionally, since this study employed a qualitative approach, the findings cannot be generalized to other telecommunication networks.

Additionally, the researcher dealt with some bottlenecks in getting research participants for the study. Essentially, after the researcher thought it prudent to collect data from

participants in the corporate communication department regarding the topic under discussion, it took some painstaking and tiresome efforts to get the participants to engage with the researcher due to their work schedules. The researcher had to make numerous follow-ups before being able to conduct the interviews.

Although these limitations posed significant challenges, they did not invalidate the data or the study's outcomes. It is important to emphasize that these limitations did not affect the research phenomenon or the credibility of the entire study. This study provides a clear explanation of MTN Ghana's corporate identity management practices and could serve as a valuable reference for future related research.

#### **5.4 Conclusion**

The study concludes that MTN Ghana places a strong emphasis on managing its corporate identity, ensuring that its activities consistently reflect the brand's identity. The company is highly attentive to how its identity is communicated, making sure that all internal and external communications align with and reinforce its corporate identity. Additionally, MTN Ghana prioritizes stakeholder and community engagement, actively participating in various corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives to uphold its commitment to social responsibility in the communities where it operates. In engaging with stakeholders, MTN Ghana fosters dialogue and thoughtfully incorporates stakeholder feedback into its policies, demonstrating a commitment to addressing and satisfying stakeholder needs. This study not only makes a substantial contribution to the literature on corporate identity management, with a particular focus on MTN Ghana, but also adds valuable insights to the fields of strategic communication, reputation management, and image management. The findings underscore the importance of

strategic communication and stakeholder engagement in sustaining a strong and credible corporate identity.

### **5.5 Chapter Summary**

This final chapter of the study offers a comprehensive summary of the key findings derived from the data analysis. It also presents the study's conclusions and provides targeted recommendations for MTN Ghana, as well as guidance for future researchers. In addition, this chapter addresses the limitations encountered during the research process, offering insights into areas that may benefit from further exploration. Summarizing the study's contributions serves as a crucial reflection on the study's overall impact and relevance in the field.



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## APPENDIX

### Interview Guide

**Research Topic:** Corporate Identity Management Practices: The Case of MTN Ghana

This topic focuses on the corporate identity management practices of MTN Ghana. More explicitly, the study investigates the strategies MTN Ghana uses to communicate its identity to its stakeholders, the drivers behind their corporate identity management as well as the corporate identity management processes. The following set of questions guided the study:

#### RESEARCH QUESTION ONE (CORPORATE IDENTITY COMMUNICATION)

1. Can you please tell me your name and your role at MTN Ghana?
2. Please provide an overview of MTN Ghana and what it stands for?
3. How does MTN Ghana define its stakeholders?
4. How does MTN communicate its identity to its stakeholders?
  - a) Corporate design (What are the visual elements that make the company unique and capture stakeholders attention?)
  - b) Corporate behaviour (How does the company demonstrate its purpose, philosophy values and culture? Through what means?)
  - c) Corporate Communication (How does the company communicate its identity to its various stakeholders?). Both Internal and External
5. How does MTN Ghana ensure consistency in its corporate identity across different departments, branches, and regions? How are stakeholders engaged in the process?
6. What role does leadership and top management play in shaping MTN Ghana's corporate identity management strategies?

RESEARCH QUESTION TWO (DRIVERS OF CORPORATE IDENTITY MANAGEMENT)

1. Why is corporate identity management important for MTN Ghana?  
What is the main purpose of corporate identity management for MTN Ghana?  
What factors drive MTN Ghana to manage its corporate identity?

RESEARCH QUESTION THREE (CORPORATE IDENTITY MANAGEMENT PROCESSES)

1. Does MTN Ghana have corporate identity management policies/Codes of conduct? If Yes, can you please provide details?
2. What are the specific processes for developing the company's identity?  
In terms of visual elements, corporate behaviours and corporate communication
3. What strategies does MTN Ghana adopt to maintain its corporate identity?
4. What measures does MTN Ghana have in place to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of its corporate identity management efforts?
5. Can you discuss challenges MTN Ghana faces in managing its identity, OR issues encountered in effectively communicating its identity to stakeholders?  
Are there specific industry trends that impact on MTN Ghana's corporate identity management practices?