

PR STRATEGIES FOR MANAGING REPUTATION IN ALIGNMENT WITH SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS REPORTING (SDG 12)

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Abstract

In the context of transparent and highly competitive business world, corporate reputation has emerged as an important intangible asset of today. The PR initiatives are being embraced as more strategic in basing the corporate reputation, especially sustainability commitments. N sustainability development reporting under SDG 12: Responsible Consumption and Production is a case analysed in this paper as involving crossover reputation management, PR practices and sustainable development reporting. The literature has noted that even these sustainability reporting systems such as the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI), and integrated reports can be observed as critical to accountability as associated with accountability but such should also be created with appropriate PR strategies that can read such technical information to readable and credible and information that can be easily understood by stakeholders. It is also found that reputation is enhanced when PR communication is genuine and supported by facts but differ when organizations involve themselves attacks of greenwashing or symbolic communication. The research is based on the theory of stakeholder, legitimacy and reputation management theories, and places an argument in that PR tactics should transition toward symbolism promotion to substantive practice, which encourages dialogues, upwardness, and protracted relations among stakeholders. The study finds that the convergence of PR strategies and SDG 12 reporting is a reputational requirement as well as a channel through which organizations can gain legitimacy and sustainability in a global economy that is sustainability-oriented.

Keywords: Public Relations, Corporate Reputation, Sustainable Development Goals, SDG 12, Responsible Consumption and Production, Sustainability Reporting, Stakeholder Engagement, Greenwashing, Corporate Legitimacy, Reputation Management

Introduction

Corporate reputation has emerged to the current business world characterised by transparency and blatant interconnection as one of the most useful intangible businesses. Sustainability and responsible and accountable business practices are aspects of a company that are now being assessed by stakeholders, including but not limited to consumers and investors as well that include regulators and civil society. In this context, the public relations (PR) theories are found to be crucial towards identity shaping, sustaining and safeguard of corporate image by proper communication of corporate values, policies and achievement accomplishments. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) developed by the United Nations have entailed an

international policy that has helped in steering companies towards sustainable development over time. Most of them also include SDG 12: Responsible Consumption and Production where responsibility in resource management, waste minimisation and responsible ways of maintaining the supply chain is highlighted (Steyn and Niemann, 2014). To companies, reputation management strategies and SDG 12 reporting cannot be considered optional anymore but are stipulated as necessary in keeping their responsibility and winning the trust of stakeholders. This has increased Godhead rank, of a company besides conducive in alignment with greater community anticipations of ecocentric mindfulness, moralile, and ecological invention.

The major problem that PR professionals have has, therefore, been setting the communication strategies in such a way that simultaneously safeguard the reputation of the organization and at the same time honestly disclose its sustainability efforts. Open and equal communication on SDG 12 is able to enhance reputation capital and low or shallow communication would expose firms to the risk of reputation damage including being branded as greenwashing. Yet the PR strategies grounded in terms of authenticity, access of stakeholders and integrated reporting are highly significant in enhancing a difference between sustainability functionality and the outlook of the society. The paper discusses the way PR strategy can be employed on reputational management of organizations in line with how it is correlated with SDG 12 reporting. The research is aimed at illuminating the opportunities to use PR as more than a promotion instrument by organizations, but as a model to impose accountability, legitimacy, and the capacity to tree-stand after a scandal by providing insights into the practices of successful PR, communication systems, and strategy support.

The 21st-century organizations are working in such an environment where there has also never been as much transparency, as there is digital interconnectedness, or as much stakeholder demands place on the organization. Image has become an important intangible asset where consumers base on trust, investors on confidence, employees on loyalty, and competitiveness in the whole. However, reputation is delicate, unlike traditional financial capital because with continued practice of ethics and open communication, reputation can be hardened, whereas, disregard of ethics, conduct, or unclear communication between stakeholders or management can easily destroy it. Against this backdrop, public relations (PR) campaigns are now compulsory in managing the reputation as well as in ensuring that the discourse of the corporate is aligned towards the societal demands concerning value and sustainability. The present research article dwells on how the PR strategic approaches can be adapted into swimming techniques to regulate the corporate image in favor of SDG 12 reporting (Steyn and Niemann, 2014). The study with theoretical frameworks, case studies and communication practices will help focus light on how PR can be utilized by the organizations as a strategic work of governance and accountability other than being an instrument of promotion. The hypothesized findings of the study are concentrated around the intelligence of the interconnection between the corporate reputation/sustainability reporting on one front, or between the PR on the other front, with an ultimate consideration of how organizations can legitimize themselves regarding developments in socio-economic pace and quantity.

Background to the Study

Brand management is now more complicated in a time when information goes viral on the internet and via social networks and companies have to endeavor to manage their reputation actively, openly, and in a well-organized way. Being considered as a powerful tool of publicity, PR has grown into a fundamental strategic role in the organization which contributes to the establishment of trust, stakeholder engagement and mitigating risk. At the same time, the topic of sustainability in the world has become more salient due to the introduction of such an agenda as the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015 (Doorley and Garcia,

2025). In addition to the business goals connected with the financial goals, the business organizations are now supposed to make a positive impact on the welfare of the society and on the environment. Among these aims, SDG 12: Responsible Consumption and Production is very specific to securing better non-connections between economic development and environmental destruction, limits wastefulness, and promotes sustainable production and consumption habits in all the industries. To accomplish this, corporations must make immense dedication because they have chains of supply, the use of resources, and production patterns that directly affect the results of global sustainability.



The convergence of corporate reputation and sustainability reporting is of especial relevance in the past few years. Consumer-related, investor, regulation and advocacy pressure is honest with doubtful sustainability assertions, and calls upon verifiable implementation, clear and conforming reporting systems. As a result, the concept of sustainability reporting and SDG 12 as its alignment has appeared as a potential critical drive through which businesses have sought to show responsibility and bolster their reputational capital (Sawir et al. 2024). Nevertheless, the publication of sustainability reports is not enough on its own, these measures will need to be properly communicated, put into context, and considered in the larger frames of the reputation management models using outstanding PR. For the PR professionals, in this case, are critical in forming the organization discourses around sustainability. They should also make sure that communication does not stop at token pledges rather real practices, positive results and active stakeholder involvement. Meanwhile, the process is complicated by facing the issue of greenwashing, information overload, and mistrust of the stakeholders. Failure by organizations to ensure that PR initiatives are aligned with genuine sustainability performance implies the possibility of losing reputational value, facing regulatory important inquiries, and losing trust among the stakeholders. On the other hand, the ones that effectively implement SDG 12 commitments in their communication plans will be able to improve legitimacy, brand value as well as ensure a long-term social license to conduct business (Arduini et al. 2024). As such, the precedents of the given study explain the subsequent necessity to explore the topic of how PR strategies can be applied in order to regulate reputation potentially ushering in SDG 12 reporting. Placing PR in the wider scope of an effective sustainability governance approach, the proposed research aims to reveal the best practices along with the obstacles and opportunities to be experienced by the organizations when aligning communication procedures with the responsible consumption and production agendas.

Need of the Study

The modern interconnected and densely open business world is rather global, which is why the organization is not only evaluated based on its financial verification, but also its social and environmental care. As the issue of climate change, depletion of resources and poor consumption habits increases, businesses are experiencing a lot of pressure to support the tenets of sustainability. SDG 12: Responsible Consumption and Production is the central aspect of this agenda since it deals with the concerns of how companies utilize resources, how they manage the wastes and even the impact they have on consumers. Nevertheless, as numerous

organizations assert their adherence to SDG 12, the urgency and transparency of the communication and efforts are one of the topical issues (Doorley and Garcia, 2025).

Why such a study is necessary is based on the fact that the concept of sustainability and responsible corporate conduct has become an increasingly significant aspect in the definition of brand image. The present world business map demands various stakeholders e.g. consumers, investors, regulators and civil society to place more demands on the organizations in this regard to reflect transparency and accountability in its operations. SDG 12: Responsible Consumption and Production is one of the key topics in a sustainability agenda of corporations because it directly asks the company to use sustainable production models, waste reduction, and propose responsible consumption. Nevertheless, even when most businesses declare their adherence to SDG 12, often there is a distinction between reporting, communication, and practice, which can result in the distrust of the stakeholders (Farhi et al. 2023). Greenwashing risk which involves organisations over-asserting or over-representing their sustainability actions coupled with a need to have credible and strategic communication further in immunities the ability of competent and professional communication. At that, reputation emerges as a vital strategic resource that either becomes empowered with owing to the sincere communication on sustainability or badly harmed by the false statements. Though sustainability reporting has been extensively researched, little has been done by researchers regarding the contributions of PR strategies to the management of the reputation, based on its alignment with SDG 12. Thus, this paper is required to close this gap and provide information about how to make use of PR as promotional or means of accountability, stakeholder engagement, and the long-term legitimacy of organizations. Academics, practitioners and policymakers will find the findings useful since they were the results in the shortest time limiting communication and reputation management with sustainable development in an increasingly dynamic global setting.

Literature Review

Concept of Corporate Reputation

Corporate reputation has become one of the most important intangible assets in the contemporary business environment, which has an impact on the image of the organization that is developed by the stakeholders. BlackBerry generally understands it as being the aggregate evaluation of the past activities, performance, and the future of an organization, which generates expectation of what it will do to provide value. Veh et al (2019) illustrates a corporate reputation is a summary of the past activities and performances of a company that presents the capability of the company to produce the results that are valued to various stakeholders. This highlights the fact that reputation does not manifest itself in a short duration but rather it is built over time as a result of harmonic conduct, communication, and stakeholder experiences. Image and identity are some related concepts of reputation. Whereas corporate identity shows the way an organization represents itself and the image portrays perceptions held about an organization by outsiders at a certain instance in time, reputation is more long-term and builds over time as a result of the interactions of stakeholders. Having a good reputation is also a kind of reputational capital that help the firms to gain trust, invest, maintain clients and gain competitive edge. On the other hand, reputational harm may lead to financial loss, decrease in stakeholder confidence and future struggles as far as the legitimacy of an organization is concerned.

The increase in the value of reputation in the 21st century can be associated with the development of globalization, digitalization, and the strengthening element of social speculation. The introduction of social media and online presence gave the stakeholders first-time access to the information about the corporation and an opportunity to influence the narratives as it appears. It is an environment that has increased the vulnerability of reputation meaning that crises, ethics violations, environmental scandals can escalate to become global

reputational risks soon. Ethical governance, sustainability, as well as social responsibility have in donor years become closely intertwined with the image of a corporation. Organizations are also being rated based on how they perform the roles of protecting the environment, consuming responsibly and delivering fair labour services other than focus on financial performance. This paradigm change indicates the tendency of applying the concept of sustainability to the process of forming the perception of stakeholders, in which the reputation is not supported by marketing or financial success but proved contributions to the goals of sustainable development (Pires and Trez, 2018). Hence, the idea of corporate reputation gives the persuasion of why organizations are inclined to spending in strategic PR and sustainability communication. With all SDG 12: Responsible Consumption and Production being the case, reputation ensures that companies display accountability, present sustainable consumption/production, and stand out among other marketplaces.

Role of Public Relations in Reputation Management

PR has transformed much more in the sense that during publicity and media relation, PR had a very limited role to play as it was strategic and had a major role in determining the reputation of an organization. Nowadays, with the environment of increased stakeholder awareness and transparency in the information flow, PR does not focus on sending any message but is interested in fostering and supporting the trust, credibility, and long-term relationships with various audiences. Theorists like Grunig and Hunt (1984) highlighted the transition to two-way symmetrical communication, the dialogue, and understanding between organizations and stakeholders and established its non-directional basis of successful PR (Rank, 2016). PR involves a proactive representation of attitude towards an organization, its image, identity, value and practice. PR practitioners become a boundary spanner as they beyond comprehend stakeholder issues and expectations, and transform them into communication plans in a company. Through this, PR does not sit well to just proclaim organizational gains but also act as an accountability and legitimacy device.

The other aspect of PR that has a direct influence on reputation management is crisis communication. When crisis in any type of organizations, such as failure in operations, ethical scandals or even controversies over environmental issues, PR interventions and responses mainly affect reputation as determined by the speed, transparency, and sensitivity of PR responses. Successful crisis communication systems are associated with minimizing reputational risks by overcoming the spread of misinformation, ensuring the responsibility of the organization, and proving itself as an organization meeting the concerns of various stakeholders. The PR is important in the context of sustainability in reporting on corporate promises and the attainment of corporate goals (Abliza, 2020). With organizations taking more initiatives on environmental and social issues, the validity of these initiatives will go by the way in which they are presented. Long-term PR activities may shed light on how to be a responsible consumer and producer, train effective stakeholders on sustainable decision-making, and affirm how the organization is internationally affined with other objectives of globalization like SDG 12. Nonetheless, PR should not be too persuasive in its storytelling combined with being factual in reporting since these preventions stories can create suspicion and lead to bad reputation causing lack of trust. In general, PR has become an inseparable part of the process of reputation management that helps to close the gap between the organizational activity and the perception of stakeholders (Abliza, 2020). PR boosts reputational capital and both helps the organization be resilient in long-term sustainability, by incorporating the idea of sustainability into the PR story, facilitated dialogues, and open communication. By doing so, PR policies contribute as instruments of promotion as well as a facilitator of ethical management and scrupulous reputation-making.



The 7 Different Types Of Public Relations (PR)



Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Corporate Responsibility

Since 2015, every worldwide sustainability agenda paradigm has taken a shift with the development of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which have been capable of providing a global formula of addressing the most pressing problems that include poverty, inequality, climate change, and environmental degradation. The SDGs (consisting of 17 goals and 169 activity targets) allude to governments, civil society, and businesses in collaboration to install a more inclusive, secondary, and robust world. Unlike other development models, the SDGs are constructive in motivating the participation of the business community as a major contributor to sustainable development with specific consideration of the role of corporations as solution providers that may enable balancing the sphere of economic and social progress and sustainability of the nature (Lu et al. 2021). Otherwise, SDGs are actually the business opportunity and business requirement. First of all, the SDGs adherence will help the companies demonstrate to their stakeholders that they are responsible in their business, and that will increase the level of trust to the company and legitimize it in the recently awakened markets. In corroboration, due to the lack of engagement with SDGs, companies are now susceptible to reputational risk, regulatory tensions, and most probably suffer victimization to sustainability-based investments. The SDGs inclusion in the business strategy are not only essential to the competitive existence and durability in the resource-scarce world, but a prerequisite, implied by the scholars (Lu et al. 2021).

In this connection, the corporate responsibility is diversified in this area being fields beyond the dimension of traditional philanthropy to also cover the domain of sustainable business, responsible supply chain, acknowledging the ethicalness of labor practice yet is also at the

domain of transparent reporting. Trying to report their role, most organizations attempted to restructure their environmental, social, and governance (ESG) policies using such tools, as Global Reporting Initiative (GRI), UN Global Compact, and integrated reporting framework. Moreover, coming up with such initiatives does not merely manifest accountability, but can be considered reputation building applications since the stakeholders resort to SDG alignment as a criterion more frequently to evaluate the credibility of corporations (Mishra, 2021). However, the SDGs still suffer the challenge of being operationalized in business. It is a continuous dilemma with firms not targeting the priorities between 17 goals, setting these strides forward, and guaranteeing the promises achieved as actual outcomes. In addition, having a risk of superficial adoption whereby organizations adopt SDG terminologies and fail to apply them to its strategy and operations raises suspicion of its stakeholders and prompts the question of reputational opportunism. That is where the cost-effective communication means and PR strategies enter the picture as they provide the opportunity to express real intentions, precondition the way the developments should be placed, and initiate stakeholders into the significant discussion of the sustainability initials. Thus, the SDGs have transformed the meaning of corporate responsibility but its centre is no longer on financial performance, but comprehensive depiction of the environmental and social dimensions. The organizational ability to meet and correspond to their contributions and more so in such areas like SDG12: Responsible Consumption and Production is now an aspect that dictates the corporate image and the sustainability in the global market.

SDG 12: Responsible Consumption and Production

The responsible Consumption and Production (SDG 12) is one of the most urgent and sometimes demanding goals in the 2030 Agenda of the United Nations. It puts working capital on the adverse need of disconnecting economic growth with environmental decadence by guaranteeing efficacious utilization of natural resources, minimizing the production of wastes, and advancing sustainable living. The SDG 12 targets indicate sustainable management of natural resources, food waste, environmentally sound management of chemicals and waste, promotion of sustainable practices in procurement, and consumer awareness, on sustainable consumption (Gasper et al. 2019). SDG 12 has operational and reputational imperatives to corporations. Using the operational lens, SDG 12 involves business entities reorganising their production lines, efficiency in the use of resources, and the adoption of circular economy concepts whose main objective is to optimise recycling, reuse, and the reduction of waste. Reputationally, SDG 12 fits reveal that a company is focused on sustainability and, as such, increases their credibility with stakeholders and brand equity in markets where growing consumer environmental awareness. It has been found that consumer tend to legitimize the brand as a responsible consumer whenever the brand proves to be responsible in terms of consumption and production, and the concerned stakeholders like investors and regulators judge companies acting upon SDG 12 indicators.

Although of importance, the issue of SDG 12 has been of great concern to most organizations. Global supply-chains are typically complex and disastrous and usually exemplified with unsustainable practices including overproduction, high packaging usage and dependency on natural indestructible resources. It is another disjuncture between the commitment of corporates, and its actual practice, with it argued that there has been an end up being greenwashed that promotes the idea of green in communication, whilst nothing of substantial change occurs in the ground. This then not only undermines the SDG 12 but also exposes the companies to reputation whims. The key here is the use of public relations and communication strategies which help in the elimination of the wall between the stakeholder perceptions and organizational activities (Kuefeoglu, 2022). PR aids organizations to establish themselves as responsible players in the sustainability arena by effectively communicating their sustainable

production practices, by involving stakeholders in a conversation and reporting progress. Nevertheless this has to involve some balance between persuasive reporting and factual reporting. Excessive use of marketing stories which cannot be substantiated can cause a reputational harm, whereas precise and coherent communication in accordance with international accounting standards will cause a reputational capital to rise. As such, SDG 12 is a reputational problem to companies and an environmental and social duty. Firms that manage to incorporate the notions of responsible consumption and manufacture in to their strategies and project such strategy via plausible PR practices are in a better position to enhance the legitimacy, inculcate trust in stake holders and gains enduring competitive advantage.

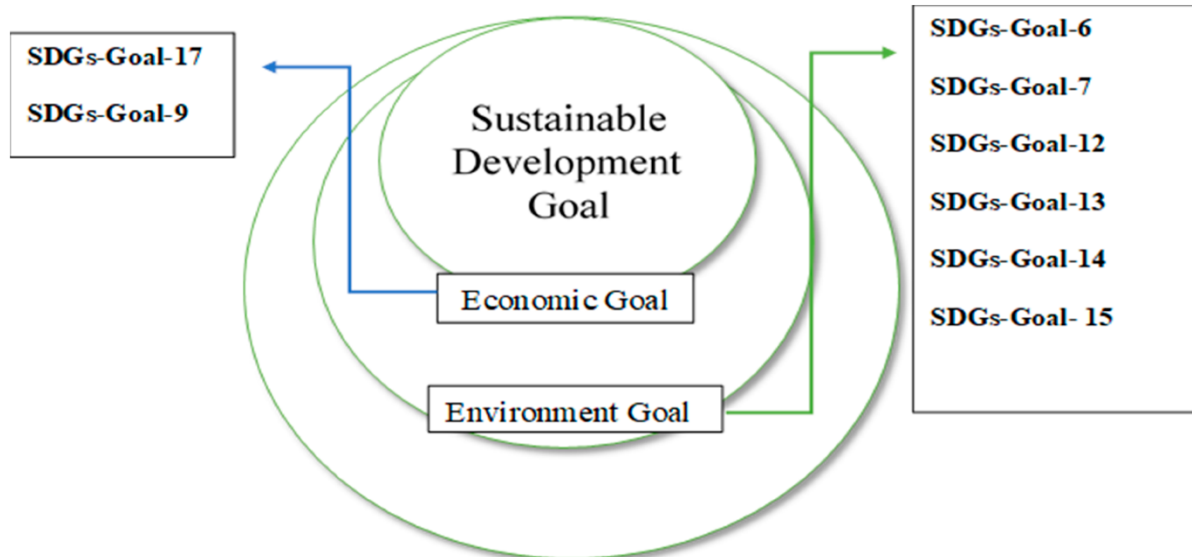


Methodology

The current study is a qualitative research that runs on a comprehensive review of published literature, theoretical views and insights based on case studies. The data was grouped together theologically using themes that identified repeated patterns and insights concerning three primary fields the conceptualization of corporate reputation and its determinants, the changing role of PR in the creation of reputation, and the inculcation of sustainability reporting, especially SDG 12, into the organization communication strategies. The Stakeholder Theory, Legitimacy Theory and Reputation Management Theory were used to inform the analysis and provide the guideline of how communication practices the organisation can engage in can help to develop the reputation and organizational legitimacy. This methodology is effective as it allows having a complete picture of the topic, weaving together already existing knowledge and practical experience, as well as the gaps in the current knowledge. Despite the disadvantages of using secondary sources, the qualitative review is a strong ground, based on the analysis of the potential support of PR strategies and their alignment based on SDG 12 reporting to improve the corporate reputation. These findings may be complemented in future researches based on an empirical case study, interview with PR practitioners, or a survey of the perceptions of the sustainability communication to the stakeholders.

Results and Discussion

Literature review shows that the corporate reputation is currently rated as one of the most priced intangible asset to the organizations, which affect trust, legitimacy and competitiveness of organizations in a highly interconnected and transparent global world. It has been found out that there is no longer any way to survive on financial performance or at least marketing bases only but there is a growing trend in linking reputation with the capacity of an organization to exercise responsibility and accountability.



Public relations has become one of the most critical sources of reputation management moving away to be a publicity-based practice though adopted a strategic course of defining and establishing credibility, addressing stakeholder involvement, and alleviation of reputational risk, particularly in times of crisis (Gasper et al. 2019). Meanwhile, the emergence of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) has altered the demands on the corporations, as now companies are to implement the principles of sustainability in their business practice and reporting. Out of these objectives, SDG 12 The Responsible Consumption and Production one is of great importance due to the necessity of the organization to ensure effective utilization of resources, reduction of waste, and the promotion of sustainable supply chains.

These results indicate that as much as alignment to SDG 12 provides organizations with chances to maximize their legitimacy and reputational capital, it creates difficulties in the case of a discrepancy between the communication and practices. Sustainability claims are getting more scrutinized by stakeholders, and cases of greenwashing have brought the credibility aspect of corporations into question. In this respect, schemes of sustainability reporting such as Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) and integrated reporting have turned out to be a prerequisite tool of verifying accountability (Kufeoglu, 2022). Reporting is enough, but must be reinforced with PR strategies to make the sustainability activities understandable, and conversant and plausible to the interested parties. The other argument presented in the literature is that PR policies may enhance reputational benefits through orchestrating corporate investments in SDG 12 into captivating narratives that engulf both the stakeholder values and priorities, but a definite force ought to have quantifiable support that can enable them to maintain the entry level. The point discussed in this conversation is the fact that in the era of sustainability, the corporate image cannot be otherwise talked about but within the framework of transparent and genuine correspondence. Companies that have applied concepts of SDG 12 to PR policies cannot just enhance their trusts and legitimacy when implementing the concepts but go ahead to build resilience in the short to medium term of operating within competitive markets. Conversely, the failure to correspond sustainability performance and credible

communication sources put firms at stake of reputational risks and stakeholders distrust. Thus, the outcomes suggest that PR strategies of the organizations that aim to go beyond the symbolic communication will necessitate substantial engagement, i.e., dialogue and transparency as the factors to interact with stakeholders as the responsible actors in the sector of sustainability (Lu et al. 2021).

The results also provide support to the importance of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as a set of reference points on corporate responsibility. The SDGs have served as a global benchmark where businesses are becoming more and more rated since their inception that started in 2015. Of them, SDG 12 Responsible Consumption and Production is noted as key in corporate sustainability as it has made to decouple growth and resource utilization, minimize waste, and adopt the practice of circular economics (Veh et al. 2019). It has been shown in the literature that SDG 12 presents an opportunity as well as a reputation challenge: organisations that effectively incorporate responsible consumption and production principles into their strategies are likely to enhance their legitimacy, whereas those that do not keep their word face a risk of reputational blowback. It is argued in the discussion that organizations must therefore change to substantive communication, as opposed to symbolic communication. Reputational vulnerability is produced by means of symbolic communication that aims at proving an image of responsibility that is not supported by appropriate evidence. Substantive communication on the other hand is anchored on quantifiable sustainability gains, openness and stakeholder participation. The latter approach is more likely to earn companies the confidence and build their reputational capital, as well as gain a resilience in the competitive markets (Rank, 2016).

Conclusion

The research finds that PR strategies can no longer be done without in terms of handling corporate perception aspects in the paradigm of sustainability and SDGs, especially on SDG 12: Responsible Consumption and Production. Financial performance is no longer a enough measure of what sustains reputation but rather required inclusion of shows of commitment to sustainable practices, in addition to their communication ability that should be believed in by the recipients. Its results indicate that sustainability reporting models should not be ignored because they are not adequate until PR plans to ensure corporate practices are available, transparent, and able to attract stakeholders. The confrontation between real communication and a threat of greenwashing is one of the primary conclusions. Though directed towards creating a good image by the entities to achieve SDG 12, the stakeholders would easily contrast any inconsistency in promises and practices and condemn such. PR people therefore must strike a balance between conviction discourse and informational communications wherein the discourses are rooted on quantitative outcomes. The reputation management theories, the stakeholder engagement and legitimacy theories testify that authenticity, inclusivity, and accountability can be taken as the three main pillars of sustainable reputation-building. In conclusion, the PR strategies must be equated to SDG 12 reporting because the latter provides organizations with much more than with their reputational benefits because this tool allows them to provide their legitimacy, confidence and stability of these organizations in the future. This is in the form of a challenge and an opportunity to both the business, not only to contribute to a sustainable consumption and production but also as an opportunity to establish itself as an established, good citizen in an increasingly realising, global market.

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