

Full Length Research Paper

Corporate social responsibility as an invention of public relation: A case of Econet and National Railways of Zimbabwe (NRZ)

Caven Masuku* and Painos Moyo

Midlands State University, Media and Society Studies Department, Zimbabwe.

Accepted 16 July, 2013

This article examines the relationship and relevance of CSR and PR at Econet and NRZ in Zimbabwe. It focuses on how CSR can be perceived by people, especially in Zimbabwe as an invention of PR. CSR which is modern PR is guided by reciprocity between the corporations and their publics in an effort to create mutual understanding and goodwill between corporations and their publics. The study is based on two corporations namely, Econet and NRZ, whose business is immensely influenced by PR and CSR programs, which operate as effective communication strategies with their stakeholders for organisational success. PR is the core of the two corporations in Zimbabwe, essentially suitable for creating corporate citizenship to maximise profit. The study would be informed by four theories namely Carroll's model of CSR, two-way symmetrical models, open systems approach and public opinion. Further, the study applies triangulation through the use of both qualitative and quantitative research methods to obtain information for reality and validity purposes. There is a vast need, to trace PR activities in CSR, from the initial planning stage, to determine whether these activities tally well with the corporate goals and objectivities, in serving the public, in a bid to create mutual understanding with the corporation. In this context, the question often asked on whether CSR programs are more than just a mere manoeuvre through which companies aim to acquire a positive public image, beat competition and run high, can be contested. We argue that CSR can be considered to be a new solution identified by the PR department, to improve the image of the organisation by appealing to the sentimental side of the public, in solving social problems. In Zimbabwe, the PR departments at Econet and NRZ, initiate and execute duties similar to what was observed by Clark (2000). He argued that CSR like PR seeks to represent an opportunity of improving the efficacy of activity of the corporate world.

Key words: Public relations, communication, corporate social citizen, corporate social responsibility, corporate identity, monolithic identities, stakeholder and sustainability

INTRODUCTION

CSR and PR are nowadays referee points in the communicational and image building activities of companies within the context of communities, in which they operate. The term "Public Relations" is defined as the management function that establishes and maintains mutually beneficial relationships between an organisation and the

publics on whom its success or failure depends (Broom, 2009:7). Babes-Bolyai (2011:5) says that, PR proposes to build and maintain a long term positive image, reputation and popularity of companies, so that all categories of the public have a most transparent and clear vision of the company and its activities. Corporate

*Corresponding author. E-mail: masuku.caven@gmail.com.

social responsibility is a generic concept referring to the business organisation's concern and active two-way involvement with the social, economic and political force which influence the environment within which it exists (Lubbe and Puth, 1994:179-180). Corporate social responsibility, sometimes called corporate social investment, reflects excellent public relations that is referred to by Grunig (2001). Corporate social responsibility has got six salient aspects namely; community involvement, development and investment, involvement and respect for diverse cultures and disadvantaged people, corporate philanthropy and employee volunteering, customer satisfaction and adherence to principles of fair competition, anti-bribery and anti-corruption measures, accountability, transparency and performance reporting and supplier relations for both domestic and international supply chains (<http://www.mallenbaker.net/csr/definiton.php>). In addition, CSR intends to meet various social problems facing the communities where the company operates, in order to help improve their quality of life. It is important in this article to note issues that make CSR to sound similar to PR, especially by looking at how the two concepts are handled by corporations. Frankental (2001) talks about the place and department attributed to CSR activities within the organisation: an indication of the real value that companies attach to CSR. CSR is usually located within the external affairs, corporate affairs and community affairs departments. In other words, it is seen as an adjunct of PR, a function of a company's external relationships, a peripheral activity, and not something that needs to be embedded across the organization horizontally and vertically. The study will respond to the following questions among others; To what extent are PR campaigns at Econet and NRZ perceived as CSR campaigns by the PR practitioners? How can PR practices at Econet and NRZ be viewed as an overlap of CSR practices? How are the perceptions of PR and CSR campaigns at Econet and NRZ improving the company's image? However, it can be observed and argued that the border between PR and CSR is a sensitive one. With regards to Econet and NRZ PR's department roles in Zimbabwe, it emerged that there are no relations between the two, and that CSR is a mere PR manoeuvre. This fulfils the belief that CSR is an invention of PR, and will remain so. From the assessment deduced from questionnaires, structured and unstructured interviews and a documentary analysis of the PR departments at Econet and NRZ, it was discovered that they are responsible for the implementation of CSR programs. Again CSR programs just like in PR, are meant to cultivate mutual understanding between the corporation and the public. On the other hand, like PR, CSR is also used for healthy and effective communication. These two concepts, PR and CSR, reinforce corporate citizenship, apart from sprucing the corporation's identity and image. Clark (2000) argues that CSR like PR, seeks to present an opportunity of improving the efficacy of activity of the

corporate world. The review of the evolution of PR and CSR by Clark (2000), revealed the existence of four action steps for both PR and CSR as follows: While PR defines the problem, on the other hand, CSR acknowledges the problem. Again while in PR there is planning and programming, in CSR they analyse and plan. Both PR and CSR deal with action and communication. Communication is important, and appears to both CSR and PR, especially when dealing with their stakeholders to maintain mutual relationship and understanding, in order to maximise profit that benefits all major stakeholders. The forth last important issue to both PR and CSR is that, while PR evaluates the programs, CSR mainly deals with their implementation. The four steps of action of PR and CSR, are the ones which make them to be viewed as the same.

Public relations helps an organization and its publics to adapt mutually to each other. It is an organisation's effort to win the cooperation of groups of people. On the other hand, it helps organisations to effectively interact and communicate with their key publics. Econet and NRZ have PR departments that are used to effectively communicate with major stakeholders and implementing CSR programs. The *British Institute of Public Opinion* says that "Public relations are a deliberate, planned, and sustained effort to establish and maintain mutual understanding between an organization and its public". Reddi (2009:4) defines public relations as the management of a two-way communication process between an organisation and its publics, to promote the corporate mission, services, products, reputation and gain public understanding. Cutlip et al. (2000:1) note that 'public relations' is the management function that establishes and maintains mutually beneficial relationships between an organization and the publics on whom its success or failure depends. In addition, Cutlip et al. (2000:50) assert that, as a management functions public relations encompasses the following;

- Anticipation, analysing, and interpreting public opinion, attitudes, and issues that might impact, for good or ill, the operations and plans of the organization.
- Counselling management at all levels in the organisation with regards to policy decisions, courses of action and communication, taking into account the public ramifications and the organization's social or citizenship responsibilities
- Researching, conducting, and evaluating on a continuing basis, programs of action and communications to achieve the informed public understanding, necessary to the success of an organisation's aims. These may include marketing, financial, community services and so forth. Again, public relations practitioners are required to produce specific changes in awareness, opinion, attitudes and behaviours inside and outside the organisation. Therefore, it is important in this study, to explore how some of the issues mentioned here by Cutlip et al. (2000)

are practised through reciprocal communication. It is important in this article to assess how CSR is an invention of PR. Looking at the major functions of PR and CSR, there is no doubt that the two concepts are similar.

Sietal (1995:4) suggests that, “public relations can be defined in terms of four specific functions namely; [a] Research, [b] Action, [c] Communication and [d] Evaluation. PR therefore applies the R-A-C-E approach that involves researching attitudes on a particular issue, identifying action programs of the organization that speak to that issue, communicating those programs to gain understanding and acceptance, and evaluating the effects of the communication efforts on the public.

According to Reddi (2009:4), it can be observed generally, that all the above definitions of PR comprise the following six broad elements, which give us a working definition of PR. Just like in PR, the six elements indicated below correspond well with CSR.

1. Organisation
2. Corporate mission, service or products
3. Publics-Internal and external
4. Management
5. Two-way communication process
6. Public acceptance and mutual understanding

However, the study will use triangulation. Both qualitative and quantitative research methods will be used to tap information from the relevant population. The study will find out the extent to which the connection between corporate social responsibility and public relations are visible at ECONET and National Railways of Zimbabwe (NRZ). In addition, the study will find out the opinions of Public relations departments at ECONET and NRZ, regarding the connections between CSR and PR. Again, the extent at which CSR campaigns at ECONET and NRZ are perceived as PR components will be focused at. Therefore the purpose of this study is to establish the relationship that exists between Corporate Social Responsibility and Public Relations. It is also the aim of the study to find out the departments at both ECONET and NRZ that are directly responsible for implementing CSR programs. The study will assess whether public relations as a discipline, is an invention of corporate social responsibility or the other way round.

Corporate social responsibility and public relations; Conceptual framework

Carroll (1979), proposed a four part definition of CSR that was embedded in a conceptual model of CSR. Carroll' (1979) notes that, the differences between four types of CSR are economic, legal, ethical and discretionary. The first category that Carroll (1979) delineated, is a responsibility that is economic in nature. For instance, providing a return on investment to owners and shareholders,

creating jobs and fair pay for workers, discovering new resources, promoting technological advancement, innovation, and the creation of new products and services. The legal responsibility is the second part, and entails expectations of legal compliance and playing by the rules of the game. Laws therefore circumscribe the limits of tolerable behaviour, but they neither define ethics nor do they “legislate morality” (Solomon, 1994). Ethical responsibility encompasses activities that are not necessarily codified into law, but nevertheless, are expected of business by societal members, such as respecting people, avoiding social harm and preventing social injury (Lantos, 2001). The final type of responsibility is where firms have the widest scope of discretionary judgement and choice. On the other hand, the two-way symmetrical public relations model by Grunig (2009:2), uses research, listening, and dialogue to manage conflict, and to cultivate relationships with both internal and external strategic publics, more than a one way asymmetrical communication. According to Grunig (2009), PR like CSR, is ethical and promotes ethical and socially responsible organisational decisions and behaviours. However, Grunig (2001:14) asserts that, the principle of a two-way symmetrical communication, that describes the communication strategy that is most effective in building a long term relationship that satisfies both the organisation and its public, is similar to CSR which seeks to meet the needs and demands of the organisation and its public. Haywood (1984/1991), a well respected public relations practitioner, and author, has described public relations as; “The projection of the personality of the organisation and the management of corporate reputation”. Hence in achieving this, the organisation seeks to shape the attitude, opinions and interest of stakeholder group with which it is involved, which is the other part of CSR.

The open system model is relevant and influential to both PR and CSR. Masuku (2010:35) states that the open system approach casts public relations in the role of bringing about changes in both environments and the organisation, as a result of environment inputs. CSR just like PR functionalities, attempts to preserve and promote a favourable image of the organisation in the community on the hypothesis that, if an organisation is “liked,” the public will continue to absorb the organisation to the environment and not with supplying information to the organisation about the environment (Cutlip et al., 2000:240). In addition, PR calls for an open systems approach, changing both the organisation and the environment, which is also exactly what CSR does. In an open system approach, management properly remains the “large wheel”, but the small wheel that is PR, may occasionally be capable of influencing the large one (Cutlip, 2000:243) An open system uses the “two way communication” approach, meaning that communication is reciprocal. Therefore in the study, both Econet and NRZ, through their PR just like CSR, apply an open

system in their practice and implementation of CSR programmes. Puth (1994:41) discusses the “systems approach” which is similar to an “open system”. The system approach has its roots in General Systems Theory, a scientific approach which originated in the period between the World wars. It addresses any system, whether inorganic, social or cognitive. A system is a set of objects or entities that interrelate with one another to form a whole (Puth, 1994:41) PR just like CSR at Econet and NRZ, comprise of objects (parts, elements or members), attributes (qualities and properties of the system and its parts), relationships (mutual effects and constraints of each part of the system upon the others) and environment (the system within an environment which may affect the system and be affected by it). Therefore this makes it true to a greater extent that CSR is an invention of PR, since both concepts deal with the four components such as object, attributes, relationships and the environment.

The concept of public opinion is based on the ability to influence individuals’ decisions and the ability to manage their intake of information, coupled with quality of organisational performance (Puth, 1994:82). Public opinion is traditionally defined as the sum total of individual opinion concerning a matter of common interest (du Plessis, 2000). The opinion can reflect goodwill or ill will towards an organisation issue. From this viewpoint, the collective opinion of the majority of these individuals is described as public opinion. Generally, social, political, economical, technological and civic changes take place within the social system. CSR like PR programmes objectives, of most, are either to change or to neutralise hostile opinions, to crystallise unformed or latent opinion, or to conserve favourable opinions, be reinforcing them. Persuasive messages from PR practitioners and CSR programmes presented via the media may provide the appearance of consensus as part of the attempt to mobilise public opinion.

Background of the study

Historically speaking, CSR’s origins can be traced back to the year 1930 to 1940, but it was perceived as a field of research several years later. Specialized literature distinguishes four phases of publication in the field as; (a) Gestation and innovation in the 1960’s (b) Development and expansion in 1972 to 1979, (c) Institutionalization, in 1980 to 1987, and (d) Maturation in 1988 to 1996. According to Carroll (1999), the evolution of the CRS construct, started in the 1950s, which marks the modern era of CSR. A chronology of major authors that have contributed to the development and evolution of the CSR concept, has been put together by Carroll, who in 1999 did a large scale research, having as its objectives the building of a definition for the CSR concept. Carroll (1999) says that the definition of CSR expanded during

the 1960s and proliferated during the 1970s. The history of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is as old as trade and business itself. Freedman (1962) argues that CSR as an issue has been around since commerce began in the nineteenth century. Davis (1960:70) argued that CSR is a nebulous idea that should be seen in a managerial context. Further he asserts that some socially responsible business decision can be justified by a long complicated process of reasoning as having a good chance of bringing long-run economic gain to the firm, thus paying it back for its socially responsible outlook. Frederick (1960:60) states that CSR in the final analysis, implies a public posture toward society’s economic and human resources, and a willingness to see that those resources are used for broad social ends and not simply for narrowly circumscribed interests of private persons and firms.

Kotler and Lee (2005-5) state that according to KPMG, a US professional service firm, a 2002 survey of the Global Fortune top 2005 companies indicated a continued increase in a number of American companies reporting on corporate responsibility in 1998. In 2002, 45% of these companies issued environmental, social, or sustainability reports compared with 35% in their 1999 survey. One milestone was that, Smith (2005) identified issues that contributed to the evolution of “New Corporate Philanthropy” as the US Supreme Court decision in the 1950s that removed legal restriction and unwritten codes, which up to that time had restricted corporate contributions involvement in social issues. Prior to 1990’s decision regarding the selection of social issues support tended to be made based on themes reflecting emerging pressure for “doing good to look good”. Corporations would commonly establish, follow, and report on a fixed annual budget for giving, sometimes tied to revenues or pretext meaning (Masuku, 2011:2). Funds were allocated to as many organisations as possible, reflecting a perception that this would satisfy the most constituent group, and create the most visibility for philanthropic efforts (Kotler and Lee, 2005:5)

PR may be said to be a 20th Century phenomenon, or as an American concept, its roots go back to ancient Babylon, Greece and Rome. Ivy Lee (1906) is considered to be the ‘grandfather’ of modern PR, for she worked to end the ‘public be damned attitude’ (Wragg, 1992). Beginning in the early 20th Century, Ivy Ledbetter Lee, often given the title of the first public relations practitioner, expressed her views on the relationship between business and their publics, and said that companies must properly inform consumers (<http://www.globalpr.org>.) Large companies, just like Econet and NRZ, also formed public relations departments, based on how many of the world’s largest agencies are founded. Edward L Bernays (1819-1919) states that PR is the attempt by information, persuasion, and adjustment to engineer public support for an activity, cause, movement or institution.

Econet Wireless Holding Limited, is a cellular network

operator, and main subsidiary of Zimbabwe Stock Exchange-listed Econet Wireless Holding Limited (EWH), a company with interest in telecommunications and other sectors of the Zimbabwean economy. The company's network was launched on 10th July 1998, and the holding company listed on 17th September 1998, and is now one of the largest listed companies on the Zimbabwe Stock Exchange (ZSE) in terms of market capitalization. In line with its Christian-based vision and mission, Econet has a broad strategy for social and community development called "Econet in the Community" through which the company supports a diverse range of charitable causes, which include children orphaned by HIV/AIDS, religious and church organisations, as well as an annual scholarship program that provides financial assistance to the bright students selected from schools and universities in the country's ten provinces under the Joshua Nkomo Scholarship Fund (JNSF). All their CSR programmes are implemented by management in collaboration with the PR department.

National Railways of Zimbabwe (NRZ), grew out of a number of different companies, most of which were originally formed by the British South Africa Company (BSAC) in terms of the Royal Charter granted to it on October 29 1889. Over the years, these underwent amalgamations and changes of ownership. NRZ is controlled by the government of Zimbabwe, and has programs that are meant to benefit the community, such as the (National Railways of Zimbabwe: Historic Milestone). The development of the National Railways in Zimbabwe was directed by several considerations, among which was the need to serve the towns, mines and farms, which were fast being established before the turn of the century, and to link the landlocked country with sea-ports in Mozambique and South Africa (National Railways of Zimbabwe 1997:6). On April 1947 the then Rhodesian Government acquired the assets of Rhodesia Railways Limited and on 1 November 1949. The undertaking became a statutory body known as Rhodesia Railways. On 1 July 1967, the system was divided at the Victoria Falls Bridge, with Zambia Railways in the north and Rhodesia Railways in the south (Baxter and Turner, 1967). Rhodesian Railways was redesigned Zimbabwe Rhodesia Railways on 1 June 1979 and finally National Railways of Zimbabwe on 1 May, 1980 soon after the attainment of national independence (Bolze, 1968).

METHODOLOGY

Econet and NRZ are two corporations in Zimbabwe that have distinct PR, and they implement CSR to create mutual understanding with their major stakeholders. It can be argued that Econet and NRZ through their PR departments, implement CSR programs to harness corporate identity which can be defined as a symbol and nomenclature used to identify the two corporations with their people. Both Econet and NRZ have CSR programs that cover a wide range of services such as education, health, sports and environment.

In terms of methodology, the study used triangulation which

integrates qualitative and quantitative research methods in order to attain results that are closer to validity and reality. Qualitative and quantitative data would be used to check on the accuracy of conclusions reached at, about whether CSR is an invention of PR. Again, this would allow the study to prove the extent at which CSR can be perceived as an invention of PR based on empirical evidence drawn from the study population. The study used questionnaires; interviews and documentary analysis for data gathering purposes. Questionnaires made it easy to collect large quantities of data from a considerable number of respondents who are the PR workers at NRZ and ECONET, together with the other targeted population. The results collected through questionnaires were quantified. On the other hand, interviews enabled the study to extract simple factual information on the similarities between CSR and PR as two disciplines with a lot in common. In this study, we used electronic questionnaires that we distributed to the respondents, using Monkey Survey through Facebook. Ten PR personnel from both NRZ and Econet were randomly selected and questionnaires were sent to them online. Again, we randomly selected 40 PR practitioners and 40 university graduates to respond to the questionnaires. Using "random sampling" the researcher ensures that each sample unit has an equal chance of being chosen to take part in the research (Holborn and Haralambos, 1995:831). Through random sampling, we identified the heads of the PR departments together with their subordinates at NRZ and ECONET Zimbabwe whom we served with questionnaires on Monkey Survey through Facebook. In this case, the targeted audiences were divided into males and females, top and middle PR practitioners. This enabled the researcher to control the variables seen as important. The questionnaires incorporated both open-ended and closed ended questions that both probed the attitudes and behaviour of respondents and sought to quantify results. Out of 90 questionnaires distributed, only 75 were adequately responded to and returned. Lack of control over the nature of respondents caused respondents to email back inaccurate information to the PR department at Econet and NRZ. Again interviews were conducted through Skype and Facebook. At list 50 respondents were interviewed on Skype and Facebook and the response rate was overwhelming. The reason for using these interviewing methods, was because of their effectiveness in eliciting qualitative data about whether CSR is an invention of PR, especially looking at Econet and NRZ PR departments. The main questions respondents needed to answer were about similarities and differences between PR and CSR. This enabled us to understand whether PR practitioners, as well as university graduates, understand the definition of the two concepts and their purposes for mutual understanding, corporate identity and corporate image.

Documentary analysis was used to analyse how the interviews and questionnaires responses, especially from Econet and NRZ PR personnel, tallied with their organisations business ethics. This also enabled us to realise whether Econet and NRZ practise PR with clear tasks of initiating and implementing CSR programs to benefit both corporations and their major stakeholders.

FINDINGS

The findings of the study in response to one of the key questions that sought to find out the extent to which PR campaigns at Econet and NRZ can be perceived as CSR campaigns by the targeted population of the study. Out of 10 questionnaires to the PR personnel at Econet and NRZ, 40 questionnaires to PR practitioners and 40 university PR graduates, the analyses drawn from their responses reflect that PR and CSR have a lot in common, and can be defined using four action steps. It

Table 1. Four action steps by the PR and CSR departments at Econet and NRZ.

Public Relations	Corporate Social Responsibility
Defining the problem	Acknowledgement of a problem
Planning and programming	Analysis and planning
Action and Communication	Answer in terms of policy development
Evaluation of program	Implementation

emerged that PR is just like CSR at both Econet and NRZ in their practices and approaches are guided by four steps that have a lot in common, as indicated in Table 1.

Four action steps by the PR and CSR departments at Econet and NRZ

From the research findings, similarities between PR and CSR can be summarized clearly by the above diagram. The PR departments at Econet and NRZ, just like in CSR, use four action steps in their activities. The research findings deduced that, PR departments just like CSR, use four action steps in their day to day activities when dealing with their publics. The research findings indicate that while PR departments at both Econet and NRZ define the problem or opportunity as their first step, on the other hand, CSR acknowledges the problem. It is clear that though the problem discussed here comes in various angles, the most striking factor is that both PR departments at Econet and NRZ, just like their CSR programs, deal with the problem at the preliminary stage. It is the problem that influences their implementation of CSR programs. Secondly, the research also found out that, while PR in their second step deals with “planning” and “programming” on the other hand, CSR deals with “analysis” and “planning Thirdly, while both PR departments at Econet and NRZ focus on “Action” and “Communication”, on the other hand, CSR deals with Answer, in terms of policy development. The fourth and last stage which PR departments at Econet and NRZ focus on, is “Evaluation” of the program, while CSR focuses on “implementation”. We found out that because of these similarities, that occur between PR departments at Econet and NRZ, just like their CSR programmes, it is apt to declare that CSR is an invention of PR. Out of 50 distributed questionnaires to the PR department personnel at Econet and NRZ, 40 respondents agreed that it is true to perceive CSR as an invention of PR. The respondents also argued that no one can talk of CSR without looking at the role of PR departments in defining the problem through research, planning and analysing the longevity and strength of their CSR program, in enhancing corporate image and identity. Again, the respondents also argued that in all CSR programs implemented by their corporations, PR is involved in collecting information from the stakeholders in what they look forward to, from their corporation in the form of CSR

programs. Communication that seeks to establish mutual understanding between the corporations and their stakeholders is conducted by their PR departments using various channels that allow access to their publics. For instance both Econet and NRZ use the newspapers, websites and mobile phones to disseminate CSR programs messages to their publics. It can therefore be concluded that PR departments at Econet and NRZ through CSR programs, bring dividends to the company reputation, and the responsibility of identifying the problem and communicating it to different types of stakeholders about CSR activities, lies in the hands of PR departments.

Two way-communications by PR's department and CSR programs

The responses from the interviews that were conducted with 20 PR practitioners ‘at Econet, 20 PR Practitioners at NRZ and 10 University PR graduates, indicates that PR uses two way communication just like CSR in dealing with the problem in an attempt to enhance the organisational image and reputation (Figure 1). Out of 50 interviews that were conducted the response rate was good.

Out of the interviews that were conducted with 20 Econet PR personnel, 10 of them were females and the other 10 were males. All of them agreed that PR just like CSR activities, use two way-communications in dealing with their stakeholders in addressing certain issues that seek to improve the reputation of their organisations. Again out of 20 PR interviewees at NRZ, 10 of them were females and the other 10 were males. All of them just like at Econet, agreed that PR similarly to CSR activities uses two-way communication. 10 university PR graduates, who comprised 5 males and 5 females, also agreed that both PR and CSR use two way communications.

The study findings also indicated that the two corporate organisations’ PR departments adopted the two-way symmetrical model just like CSR, to communicate with their publics through the use of their organisations web - learn all problems and trap-questions related to own system, in order to meet the public's interests. The findings of this study also reflect that PR departments at Econet and NRZ, like their CSR programs, all support the management in their attempts to stay informed about the image of their own institutions, and to react accordingly.

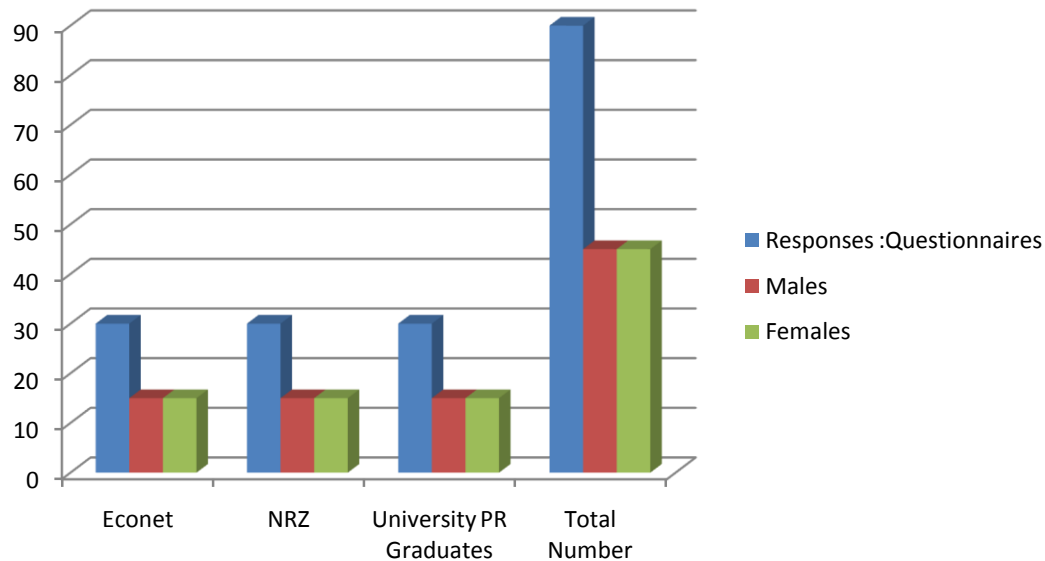


Figure 1. Use of two-way communication by PR and CSR Programs at Econet and NRZ.

Two-way communications is both achieved through the use of research as well as healthy and ethical communication techniques as basic instruments. Econet and NRZ websites through PR departments consist of their CSR programs that allow stakeholders to be engaged in a dialogue. A reciprocal relationship can be built and this is facilitated by feedback channels opened by both organisations. The few publics interviewed by the researchers, indicated that given the fact that both PR and CSR deal with public opinion, and are part of management, they are convinced that the two concepts are the same. Both PR departments at Econet and NRZ admitted that all their programs for CRS are based on research to address the needs of their publics. PR is again largely guided by research to fully address the stakeholders' needs. Therefore PR is equally similar to CSR.

Information elicited through interviews in this study, revealed that CSR just like PR, deals with an open system. The open system approach cast public relations in the role of bringing about changes in both the environment and the organisation as a result of inputs similar to CSR. Here PR, like CSR, attempts to preserve and promote a favourable image of the organisation in the community on the hypothesis that if the organisation is "liked" the public will continue to absorb the organization's output. It can be deduced that two way-symmetrical communication in PR just like in CSR, calls for an open system approach that changes both the environment and the organisation's image. Relations between the organisation and its publics are maintained or changed on the basis of reciprocal output-feedback adjustment. We also found out that PR like CSR has got a potential to act in an advisory capacity in order to have an impact on decision making.

PR and CSR boost the sales and reputation of an organisation

Information elicited through interviews and questionnaires in this study revealed that CRS is also known as Corporate Social Investment (CSI), because the organisation invests in a specific cause to uplift the community, and in the process, increase its profit. Mersham et al. (1995:78) say that the PR practitioner manages CSR programs of the organisation in order to create its favourable corporate image. Both Econet and NRZ in the questionnaires and interviews conducted, admitted that CSR/CSI like PR contribute positively to their organisations. The PR department from Econet and NRZ indicated that CSR programs alongside with PR;

- increase community participation in cause-related activities by providing promotional support and use of distribution channels.
- enhance corporate image and clout.
- build a strong corporate reputation
- create a strong community relations

Econet and NRZ as corporate organizations express their social commitments by representing the value elements of their social resources. The findings of the study proved that while Econet through their PR department have five positive impacts for practising CSR, NRZ have two positive impacts for practising it.

Can PR be an overlap of CSR?

In response to how PR practices at Econet and NRZ can

Table 2. PR as an overlap of CSR.

Organisations	Responses: Questionnaires	Males	Females
Econet	30	15	15
NRZ	30	15	15
University PR Graduates	30	15	15
Total Number	90	45	45

be viewed as an overlap of CSR practices, out of 90 questionnaires distributed to the respondents, it emerged that PR and CSR activities are an overlap (Table 2). 90 respondents reflected that PR as CSR at Econet and NRZ in Zimbabwe function in Confucius relational model. The model specifies the importance of working with the community and culture and cross community or cross districts. Cross districts refers to the contracts in rituals which caused relations that reinforce dialogue, contract and philanthropy. 45 males and 45 females respondents from the questionnaires cited the Capernaum Trust and Joshua Nkomo Scholarship Fund for education by Econet Zimbabwe and the NRZ scholarship as some of the programs through PR that makes CSR an overlap of PR. Dialogue as an approach used in PR and CSR by Econet and NRZ from the findings of the study, is achieved by PR through CSR programs at Econet and NRZ. Both the ethnic groups like Shonas, Ndebeles, Kalangas, Nambias and many others, have been dialoguing with the two organisations in Zimbabwe. PR just like CSR at Econet and NRZ uses dialogue in dealing with their key stakeholders. Responses through questionnaires reflect that in Zimbabwe, PR like CSR at Econet and NRZ, practise philanthropy. Philanthropy is charitable giving to the community in the form of donations, sponsorship and giving to the needy in the society. Both Econet and NRZ through their PR departments have been giving bursaries to needy brilliant children to further their education at tertiary institutions, donating to the blind and HIV/AIDS victims in Zimbabwe. Respondents indicated that PR like CSR at Econet and NRZ assist to mend ties with the community from “weak relations” to “solid relations”.

Another common aspect as identified in the research is the fact that both PR and CSR bring dividends as regards the company reputation. Similarly, the responsibility of communicating with different stakeholders with regards to CSR activities, lies in the hands of the PR practitioners. Information elicited through interviews, indicates that CSR like PR, relies on communication, a process that has to be thought, applied and evaluated depending on all categories of groups interested in the company and their needs, both aiming at increasing efficiency and have similar goals. Noordhoff (2005:100) states that corporate communication is the management instrument by means of which in the most effective way, all consciously used

forms of internal and external communication, are adjusted to each other, in such a manner that the organisation reaches and keeps the intended image with its most important target groups. Responses from questionnaires reflect that PR and CSR overlap, in that both deal with planned corporate communication which deals with different departments, like Marketing, Human Resources, the Board of Directors and the Financial Department. Representatives of these departments at Econet and NRZ often have their own ideas about the identity and image of the organisation. In this study, it is clear that at Econet and NRZ both PR and CSR programs are willing to improve the quality of the organisation relations with their major stakeholders through effective corporate communication. Again in both corporations, PR and CSR departments, company top management are involved. It is through such findings that we agreed that PR and CSR activities are complementary. Again all respondents through interviews, despite their age, sex and educational level agree that PR and CSR are meant to enhance corporate image, reputation, popularity and promotion. Information collected through documentaries agrees that PR and CSR overlap within the activities of the two corporations in Zimbabwe.

PR and CSR bolster corporate citizenship

CSR as an invention of PR bolsters “*corporate citizenship*” and this is supported by Carroll (1999) who says that CSR should strive to make a profit, obey the law, be ethical, and be a good corporate citizen. The findings through documentaries and questionnaires indicate that at Econet and NRZ, PR and CSR overlap and enhance corporate citizenship. The two corporations in Zimbabwe have developed mutually beneficial, interactive and trusting relationships between them and their stakeholders. Employees, customers, communities, suppliers and government are satisfied. This fulfils Waddock (2003:3) is idea that corporate citizenship really means developing mutually beneficial, interactive and trusting relationships between the company and its many stakeholders through the implementation of the company’s strategies and operating practices. In Zimbabwe, Econet and NRZ stakeholders (and the natural environment) are treated with dignity and respect. All CSR programs from the two corporations in Zimbabwe are more discretionary, and consist of the charitable or voluntary actions in achieving social cohesion with all stakeholders. The two corporate organisations in Zimbabwe through their PR and CSR practices, have answered the following questions;

1. Is the organisation s “good people” with a perspective beyond a preoccupation of enhancing shareholders value it at all costs?

2. Is the company concerned about employees, the community and education?

It can be suggested that corporate citizenship is a two-way relationship between corporations and society which are oriented towards meeting community needs. Reddi (2009:159) notes that in fact, business organisations and the community have a symbiotic relationship, with one thriving on the other hand. It is in this context that corporate citizen has the responsibility to serve the cause of the society. As in the case of an individual citizen, a corporate citizen who has emerged from a corporate entity has similar legal and moral responsibilities towards the needs of the society.

Both Econet and NRZ have CSR programs for education that are implemented and monitored by PR departments in order to serve the cause of the society. Econet has two CSR programmes for education that benefit the public nationwide, while NRZ has one educational programme to benefit the entire nation. However, unlike Econet, NRZ has a nationwide education programme that provides grants to the employees' children. This program is meant to cushion NRZ employees from financial constraints, and enable them to send their children to tertiary institutions. Econet on the other hand, have implemented the Joshua Mqabuko Nkomo Scholarship Fund and the Capernaum Trust, which was formed in 1996 and is controlled by the PR department in collaboration with top management. In the Financial Gazette dated 14 April 2006 the Capernaum Trust Director Ms Stembeni Chirume asserted that the Trust was assisting children with education support up to tertiary level throughout all the ten provinces in Zimbabwe.

From the findings of the study, it is true that CSR is an invention of PR through education programs and this fulfils the open system theory, that asserts that organisations should interact with the environment for them to function well. Econet and NRZ PR departments, just like their CSR programmes, are interacting and responding positively to the needs of the stakeholders.

As part of CSR as an invention of PR to enhance Corporate citizenship, both Econet and NRZ have invested in community health. For instance, in 2008, Econet took a more direct and urgent role under a health and welfare programme to assist the publics who were affected by cholera. Using printed documentaries about Econet, the PR department at Econet offered an airtime distribution network to spread awareness by printing anti-cholera SMS messages that were forwarded to every mobile phone with Econet lines. On HIV and AIDS, Econet encourages the publics to avoid stigma attached to HIV and AIDS victims. NRZ has published health programs that were implemented through their PR department. This made us to believe that corporate citizenship is at the core of the two corporations reputations, in the manner in which stakeholders and shareholders are served.

CSR as an invention of PR augment corporate identity

In achieving corporate identity, the PR departments at Econet and NRZ have designed stakeholders' oriented CSR programmes that cement relationship with them. Corporate identity benefits the two corporations in many different ways, by telling their customers that "*We are here to stay*". Knapp and Campbell (2010) note that corporate identity is a sign of longevity, which is not only attractive to customers, but also desirable to potential investors. It is an indicator that you are serious about being successful, that you are a reliable leader in your country. Responses through interviews and questionnaires show that because of effective PR and CSR practices at Econet and NRZ, there is steadfast and clear visual identity. This has made the major stakeholders and shareholders of the two corporations to project Econet and NRZ as reliable and contemporary professionals.

An assessment of CSR as a strategic invention of PR

CSR like PR is a form of management that is defined by the ethical relationship and transparency of the company with all the stakeholders with whom it has a relationship, as well as with the establishment of corporate goals that are compatible with the sustainable development of society. In the study, CSR like PR, are influenced by society and business. From the questionnaires distributed to the respondents, it is clear that CSR as PR, interrelate itself with public information, reputation management as well as relation management. Findings of the study state that purposes and procedures of public relations are common with focus on CSR. Out of forty interviews conducted in the study, it can be deduced that the management function of PR can play a positive role in society, while CSR demands to reduce the self-interest of organisations in their preferences and actions within society. We also realised that CSR is an ethical foundation of PR and conversion towards CSR, which can be put together with the development of the modern mind of PR. From the perspective of development of CSR and PR can be divided into four stages;

- Corporate Social responsibility
- Environmental deterioration and issue management
- Corporate Social Justice and
- Corporate Social motivation

From the documentary evidence used in the study, the analysis model of the press-agentry and public messages belongs to CSR. The model of bidirectional asymmetry belongs to environment deterioration and issue management. In addition, the model of bidirectional symmetry belongs to corporate social justice and the model of community belongs to corporate social motivation. It can be observed that the PR theories can be synchronised

with CSR activities in order to achieve the corporate goals. The PR department at Econet and NRZ strongly argued that CSR, though it may look different from PR practices, it is an invention of PR which is strategic and falls under management. Frankental (2001) says that CSR is considered only when it is rewarded by financial markets. The market rewards those companies that bring change in their accounting system, not only because of financial presentation, but through initiatives as environment and social indicators. In the study, Econet and NRZ through their PR and CSR, get healthy attitudes from their consumers towards purchasing attention.

Conclusion

CSR is an overlap of PR, and the responsibility of communicating with various stakeholders about CSR programmes, lies in the hands of the PR departments at both Econet and NRZ. Both PR and CSR improve the quality of the organisation's relations with all their stakeholders. Again it can be noted that PR like CSR is a form of management that seeks to boost the image and reputation of Econet and NRZ in Zimbabwe. The two concepts of PR and CSR rely on reciprocal communication when dealing with their stakeholders. PR, being similar to CSR, is largely influenced by conviction, commitment, communication, consistency and credibility. In the study, both Econet and NRZ apply the 5C's in both PR and CSR programmes. In short, CSR and PR are considered as the instruments of work of the same whole, overlapping within the framework of a corporation's activities. Corporate social responsibility is a generic concept to the business organisation's concern and active two-way involvement with social, economic and political forces which influence the environment. Both PR and CSR deal with four action steps such as the problem, planning, action and implementation, although they differ in the manner they approach the four mentioned above concepts.

REFERENCES

- Babes-Bolyai (2011). Public relations and Corporate Social Responsibility: theory and Social Action. Chij-Napoca.
- Carroll AB (1979). A Three dimensional Model of Corporate Social performance, *Acad. Manage. Rev.* 4(4):494-505.
- Carroll AB (1999). Corporate Social responsibility: Evolution of a definitional construct.
- Cutlip SM, Center AH, Broom GM (2000). *Effective Public Relations*, Prentice Hall, New Jersey.
- Davis K (1960). Can Business afford to ignore social responsibilities? *California Manage. Rev.* (2):70-76.
- du Plessis D (2000). *Introduction to Public Relations and Advertising*, Juta. Cape Town.
- Edward B (1891-1995). (November 22, 1891 – March 9, 1995) was an Austrian-born American publicist, sometimes called "the father of public relations".
- Frankental P (2001). Corporate Social Responsibility- a PR Invention, *corporate communication: Int. J.* 6(1):18-23.
- Frederick WC (1960). The growing concern over business responsibility. *California Manage. Rev.* 2:54-61.
- Friedman M (1962). *Capitalism and Freedom*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Grunig JE (2001). The Role of Public Relations in Management and its Contribution to Organisational and Societal Effectiveness. USA. Maryland.
- Grunig JE (2009). Paradigms of global public relations in an age of digitalisation. *PRism* 6(2): http://praxis.massey.ac.nz/prism_online_journ.html.
- Holborn M, Haralambos M (1995). *Sociology Themes and Perspectives Fourth Edition*. London Harper Collins.
- Knapp L, Campbell EH (2010). *The importance of Corporate Identity*. USA. EHC Brand.
- Kotler P, Lee N (2005). *Corporate Social Responsibility*. John Wiley and Son. United States.
- Lantos GP (2001). "The boundaries of strategic corporate social responsibility", *J. Consumer Market.* 18(7):595–632.
- Lubbe GP, Puth (1994). *Public Relations in South Africa: A Management Reader*. South Africa. Heinemann.
- Masuku BM (2010). The Funding of a Public Service Broadcaster in View of Competition: A South African Perspective. 5: 2.
- Masuku C (2011). *Approaches and Practices of Corporate Social Responsibility by Econet and NRZ*. German. Lambert Academic Publishing.
- Mersham GM, Rensburg R, Skinner JC (1995). *Public relations, Development and Social Investment: Southern African Perspective*, Van Schaik, Pretoria.
- Noordhoff W (2005). *Corporate Communication Worldwide*. An Introduction. Netherlands Hollandse Hoogte.
- Reddi VVN (2009). *Effective Public relations and Media Strategy*. India. New Delhi.
- Sietal FP (1995). *The Practice of Public Relations*. Prentice Hall, New Jersey.
- Smith P D (2005). 'Philanthropy on the Go', *Ethical Investor: Corporate sustainability news and views*, No. 45: 20.
- The Railways in Zimbabwe 1879-1997 100 Years. Centenary Train-Bulawayo 4 November 1997.
- Waddock S (2003). *The Journal of Corporate Citizenship*. Boston College. USA. Spring 14705001.
- Wragg DW (1992). *The Public Relations Hand Book*. Oxford: Black Well Publishers Zimbabwe Output Magazine (the Pangolin Press, November 1983).