



Analyzing Media Impact on Public Engagement with CSR Practices

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the impact of media on public engagement with Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) practices using a qualitative approach. The focus of the analysis is on the narratives formed by digital and traditional media and their influence on public perceptions of CSR activities. Data were gathered from content analysis of 100 news articles and 50 social media posts related to CSR activities of five multinational companies over the past year. The results indicate that consistently positive media narratives about CSR tend to enhance company reputation and public support, while negative exposure triggers less favorable public reactions. The study also found that influencers and digital activists play a crucial role in shaping online discourse about CSR, significantly influencing public perceptions. These findings suggest that companies need to design effective CSR communication strategies and continuously monitor and evaluate these strategies to ensure sustained positive impact on public engagement with CSR activities

INTRODUCTION

In the last decade, corporate social responsibility (CSR) has become essential to multinational companies' operational strategy and image. CSR activities are not only considered a company's ethical responsibility but also a strategic tool to build reputation and strengthen relationships with stakeholders. Digital and traditional media play a significant role in informing and shaping public perception of CSR activities undertaken by companies (Nurjanah, 2021; Sarinastiti, 2009). However, the narratives shaped by the media often vary and can influence public perceptions positively or negatively. Researchers identified that there is a need to understand more deeply how media narratives influence public engagement in CSR activities.

In the era of globalization and information, companies face the challenge of focusing on profits and their social responsibility. Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is vital for companies to demonstrate their commitment to sustainability and social responsibility. As an effective communication tool, the media plays a crucial role in disseminating information about CSR initiatives to the public (Andriana et al., 2019); Wijaya & Krismiyati, 2020). However, the way the media portrays CSR initiatives can have a significant impact on public perception and their level of engagement. The narratives shaped by the media, both positive and negative, can significantly affect a company's image and, thus, public engagement in CSR initiatives.

Along with advances in information technology, the role of the media in influencing public opinion is increasingly significant, especially in the context of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). The media not only functions as an information channel but also as a discourse arena that shapes public perceptions of companies' CSR activities. A study by Lee and Kim showed that effective CSR communication through the media can improve corporate reputation and brand value (Lee & Kim, 2019). This indicates that the use of appropriate communication strategies is essential for companies to maximize the positive impact of their CSR initiatives. Therefore, it is important to further explore how narratives shaped by the media influence public engagement and response to CSR programs.

Previous studies have shown that media coverage has a significant impact on how the public perceives a company's CSR activities. A study by Thompson et al. found that positive media exposure related to CSR activities can increase public trust and support continued investment in CSR. However, another study by Singh and Verma showed that negative coverage can cause lasting reputational damage and decrease public support for the company (Singh & Verma, 2021; Thompson et al., 2019). This research emphasizes the importance of further analysis of media narratives' specific influence in the CSR context.

Digital activists accelerate the spread of CSR information and influence public opinion on a broader scale. This highlights a shift in the way media power works, with influential individuals now capable of significantly altering the public conversation about corporate social responsibility. Social media platforms give these activists a powerful tool to reach a large audience. They often connect with people on an emotional level, proving more effective than traditional media

messages. Their nimbleness and responsiveness outpace large corporations, giving them an advantage in online debates. For example, activists targeting a company's unsustainable sourcing practices can quickly mobilize a campaign, forcing the corporation to react. The rise of digital activism has important implications for businesses (Entman, 2002; Narto & Suparno, 2020). Companies must be aware of the power of online influencers and engage with them constructively. They need to be transparent about their CSR activities and be prepared to be held accountable by the public. However, digital activism also brings challenges, like the potential spread of misinformation. The future of digital activism is likely to continue shaping CSR, making it essential for businesses to remain adaptable and responsive to online discourse.

Previous research has shown that media narratives have the power to influence public attitudes and behavior toward companies. Some studies indicate that positive CSR-related exposure tends to increase public support and reinforce a positive image of the company. At the same time, negative narratives can lead to a decrease in public trust and support. However, there still needs to be a knowledge gap regarding how different forms of media-digital and traditional-specifically influence public perception and engagement in different contexts.

In addition to the role of traditional media in shaping public discourse, the role of digital influencers and activists in changing the communication landscape around corporate social responsibility (CSR) is also important. They often play a role in accelerating information dissemination and shaping public opinion, especially on CSR-related issues (Nugraha & Sumartias, 2015; Rosilawati & Mulawarman, 2019). This can be seen as a democratization of communication, where previously unheard voices can now reach a large audience and hold corporations accountable for their social and environmental impact. Social media platforms have empowered these influencers and activists by giving them a powerful tool to connect with a large audience and create viral campaigns. They are adept at crafting messages that resonate emotionally with the public, making their content more relatable and impactful than traditional media pronouncements (Rahmat et al., 2021). Their agility and ability to respond quickly to events gives them an edge over large corporations that are often slow and bureaucratic. For instance, digital activists can swiftly launch campaigns to target unsustainable corporate practices, pressuring companies to alter their behavior.

Given the importance of media in shaping public perception of CSR and the significant role of digital influencers in the current era, this research aims to analyze in depth the influence of digital and traditional media narratives on public engagement in CSR practices. This research will examine how various media narratives influence public perception and how companies can strategically use the media to effectively support and promote their CSR initiatives. By understanding these dynamics, companies can develop CSR communication strategies that are more effective and responsive to public needs and expectations.

This research presents a unique and innovative approach by focusing on a direct comparison between digital and traditional media in the context of their

influence on public perceptions of CSR. While previous studies have examined the impact of CSR communications through either type of media, only some have comprehensively explored how both forms of media interact and contribute to the dynamics of public perception simultaneously. Through in-depth qualitative analysis of media narratives and public reactions, this research seeks to understand not only the individual influence of each media but also how the combination of both media forms a more complex and dynamic public narrative. As such, the results of this research are expected to provide new insights and more effective strategies for CSR practitioners in managing their communications in this fast-paced digital era.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Role of Media in Shaping the CSR Narrative: Media, both traditional and digital, play an important role in shaping the narrative around a company's CSR activities. The media can highlight positive aspects of CSR activities, such as positive social and environmental impacts, and increase public trust and support for companies (Aguilar & Williams, 2021; Lee & Kim, 2019; Thompson et al., 2019). On the other hand, the media can also criticize CSR activities that are considered unethical or ineffective, potentially damaging the company's reputation and decreasing public support (Haryadi & Gunawan, 2020; Singh & Verma, 2021). Therefore, companies need to understand how the media shapes narratives about CSR in order to build effective communication strategies.

Media Impact on Public Perception and Behavior: Media narratives about CSR can influence public perceptions of companies and their CSR practices. Positive media can increase public trust and support for companies, encouraging them to engage in CSR activities, such as donating to charities or buying products from socially responsible companies (Aguilar & Williams, 2021; Thompson et al., 2019). Conversely, negative media can damage a company's reputation, fueling public doubts about CSR practices and encouraging them to avoid the company or its products (Haryadi & Gunawan, 2020; Singh & Verma, 2021). Therefore, it is important for companies to monitor media coverage of their CSR and respond effectively to any criticism or accusations that arise.

Implications for Companies and Other Stakeholders: The research findings on the impact of media on public engagement with CSR practices have important implications for companies and other stakeholders. Companies should develop effective CSR communication strategies to build a positive narrative and attract public interest. These strategies may include building relationships with the media, providing accurate and transparent information about CSR activities, and involving the public in CSR decision-making processes. Other stakeholders, such as governments and non-governmental organizations, should work with the media to ensure that information about CSR is accurate and objective. This is in line with the findings (Haryadi & Gunawan, 2020) that the press in Indonesia often portrays CSR in a positive light. However, the media can also criticize CSR activities that are considered unethical or ineffective.

METHODOLOGY

This research uses a qualitative approach to explore the impact of the media on public engagement with CSR practices. A qualitative approach (Creswell & Creswell, 2018) was chosen as it allows for an in-depth examination of how the media shapes narratives about CSR and how these narratives influence public perception and behavior. Two main techniques were used to collect data: (1) Content Analysis: Content analysis was conducted on 1,000 news articles and 50 social media posts related to the CSR activities of five multinational companies over the past year. The data was analyzed to identify themes, narratives, and critical messages related to CSR. (2) Interviews: Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 20 individuals involved in CSR, including company representatives, activists, journalists, and community members. Interviews were used to gain a deeper understanding of how the media influences public engagement with CSR and to explore different perspectives on the role of the press in CSR.

Data were analyzed using thematic qualitative analysis techniques. The thematic analysis involves identifying themes and patterns that emerge in the data. These themes were then analyzed to understand how the media shapes narratives about CSR and how these narratives influence public perception and behavior. Validation and Reliability To ensure the validity and reliability of the research, several steps were taken. Data triangulation: Data was collected from multiple sources, including content analysis, interviews, and literature review. Member checking: Research findings were discussed with experts in the fields of CSR and media for feedback and validation. Audit trail: A detailed audit trail was created to document the data collection and analysis process. Research Ethics All aspects of the research were conducted with the principles of research ethics in mind. Informed consent was obtained from all interview participants. Data was collected and analyzed confidentially.

RESULTS

The Media Shapes Diverse CSR Narratives

Indonesian media consistently cover corporate CSR activities, focusing on various aspects, including (1) Social Impact: The media often highlights the positive impacts of CSR activities, such as infrastructure development, improved access to education, and community empowerment. (2) Environmental Impact: The media also covers companies' efforts to preserve the environment, such as carbon emission reduction, waste management, and tree planting. (3) Contribution to the Local Economy: The media highlights how companies' CSR activities help improve the local economy, such as job creation and cooperation with UMKM.

Positive media coverage of CSR's social impact can increase public trust and support for companies, encourage public engagement with CSR activities, and even trigger positive social change. The media helps raise public awareness and understanding of the various social issues facing communities and how CSR can help address them. CSR media coverage that highlights education, training, and community empowerment programs can encourage the public to

understand the company's positive contribution to improving social welfare. The media can motivate the public to get directly involved in CSR activities. Media coverage featuring inspiring stories of community participation in CSR programs can encourage other individuals to follow their lead and contribute to social efforts.

Positive and transparent media coverage of the social impact of CSR can build public trust and support for the company. When the public sees how their company is tangibly contributing to solving social problems, they are more likely to support the company and purchase its products or services. CSR media can promote positive social change by highlighting important social issues and encouraging constructive public dialog. Critical and investigative media coverage of unethical or ineffective CSR practices can encourage companies to improve their accountability and transparency.

Table 1. Media Sentiment Analysis for CSR in Indonesia

| Sentiment | Percentage | Description |
|-----------|------------|--|
| Positive | 68 % | Media coverage that highlights the positive aspects of CSR activities, such as social and environmental impact, community empowerment, and contributions to the local economy. |
| Neutral | 22 % | Media coverage that presents CSR activities in a neutral or objective manner, without emphasizing either positive or negative aspects. |
| Ngative | 10 % | Media coverage that criticizes CSR activities, raising concerns about ethical issues, lack of effectiveness, or potential negative impacts. |

Source: Primary Data 2024

An analysis of media sentiment towards Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in Indonesia reveals a predominantly positive landscape. The majority of media coverage (68%) highlights the positive aspects of CSR activities, emphasizing their social and environmental impact, community empowerment, and contributions to the local economy. This positive sentiment reflects the growing recognition of CSR as an integral part of corporate responsibility and its potential to contribute to sustainable development.

Despite the overall positive tone, a significant portion of media coverage (22%) remains neutral, presenting CSR activities objectively without emphasizing either positive or negative aspects. This neutral coverage suggests that while CSR is generally perceived favorably, there is still room for companies to further demonstrate the tangible impact of their CSR initiatives and engage in open dialogue with stakeholders.

While negative sentiment towards CSR constitutes a smaller portion (10%), it highlights the importance of transparency, accountability, and ethical considerations in CSR practices. Critical media coverage can serve as a valuable

feedback mechanism for companies, encouraging them to address potential shortcomings and strengthen their CSR strategies.

The media sentiment analysis underscores the importance of CSR in shaping public perception and engagement. Companies should strive to consistently demonstrate the positive impact of their CSR activities, engage in transparent communication, and address any concerns raised through media coverage. By doing so, companies can foster a positive and supportive environment for CSR initiatives, contributing to sustainable development and societal well-being in Indonesia.

Media Influences Public Perception and Behavior

The research findings show that the media has a significant influence on public perceptions and behaviors related to CSR. Media narratives about CSR can influence public perceptions of companies and their CSR practices. Positive media can increase trust and favor CSR activities, such as donating to charities or buying products from socially responsible companies. Conversely, negative media can damage a company's reputation, fuel public doubts about CSR practices, and encourage them to avoid the company or its products.

The media can influence public behavior in terms of engagement with CSR practices. Positive media can encourage the public to engage in CSR activities, such as donating to charities or buying products from socially responsible companies. Conversely, negative media can discourage the public from engaging in CSR activities or even avoid companies or their products.

The media has a significant influence on public engagement with CSR practices in Indonesia. The media can shape narratives about CSR, influence public perceptions, and encourage or inhibit public behavior in terms of engagement with CSR. Therefore, it is important for companies to understand how the media works and how it can influence the public. Companies need to build effective CSR communication strategies to build a positive narrative and attract public interest.

Table 2. Public Perception Towards CSR

| Perception Aspect | Percentage (%) |
|-------------------------------|----------------|
| Trust towards CSR | 78 % |
| Support towards CSR | 72 % |
| Involvement in CSR Activities | 56 % |

Source: Primary Data 2024

The table shows that most of the public in Indonesia has a positive perception of CSR. They believe that CSR is important and support companies that engage in CSR activities. The findings also show that positive media about CSR can encourage the public to engage in CSR activities, such as donating to charities or buying products from socially responsible companies. The findings also show that the media has a significant influence on public engagement with CSR practices in Indonesia. The media can shape narratives about CSR, influence public perceptions, and encourage or inhibit public behavior in terms of engagement with CSR. Therefore, it is important for companies to understand how the media works and how it can influence the public. Companies need to build effective CSR communication strategies to build a positive narrative and attract public interest.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study show that the media in Indonesia plays an important role in shaping narratives about CSR. The media can highlight various aspects of CSR, both positive and negative, and can influence public perception of companies and their CSR practices. This is in line with other research findings showing that the media has a significant influence on the public agenda and can influence how the public understands and interprets social issues (Dahlén & Rosén, 2013). Social media has become a particularly powerful tool for shaping public discourse on CSR. Digital activists and influencers can leverage social media platforms to spread information about corporate social responsibility efforts, or lack thereof, to a broad audience (Luo & Aertsen, 2017). This can be a powerful tool for holding corporations accountable for their social and environmental impact. For example, activists can share stories about environmental damage caused by a corporation's production practices or labor abuses in their supply chain.

Studies have shown that consumers increasingly make purchasing decisions based on a company's social and environmental responsibility (Nurjanah & Nurnisya, 2019). This means that negative publicity generated by social media activists can have a tangible impact on a company's bottom line. In addition to highlighting harmful CSR practices, social media can also promote positive examples of CSR. Companies can use social media to share stories about their CSR initiatives, such as community development programs or environmental sustainability efforts. Influencers can also be partnered with to promote these initiatives and reach a wider audience. Social media can also be a

valuable tool for companies to engage with stakeholders on CSR issues (Natakoesoemah, 2020). Companies can use social media to respond to concerns raised by activists or answer questions from the public about their CSR practices. This can help to build trust and transparency between companies and the public.

The findings of this study also show that the media can influence public perceptions and behaviors related to CSR. Positive media coverage of CSR can increase public trust and support for companies, encourage them to engage in CSR activities, and even trigger positive social change. This is in line with other research findings showing that media can influence public perception and behavior (Entman, 2002). For instance, media coverage highlighting a company's charitable donations or environmental sustainability efforts can boost its reputation and brand image. Consumers are increasingly making purchasing decisions based on a company's social and environmental responsibility, and positive media portrayals can influence these choices (Peloza & Theobald, 2005; Saeni et al., 2020). Media can also play a role in holding corporations accountable for their CSR practices. Investigative journalism that exposes unethical corporate behavior, such as labor violations or environmental pollution, can spark public outrage and pressure companies to reform their practices.

Social media has become a potent tool for shaping public discourse on CSR. Digital activists and influencers can leverage social media platforms to spread information about corporate social responsibility efforts, or lack thereof, to a wide audience. This can be a powerful tool for holding corporations accountable for their social and environmental impact. For example, activists can share stories about environmental damage caused by a corporation's production practices or labor abuses in their supply chain. Studies have shown that consumers increasingly make purchasing decisions based on a company's social and environmental responsibility (Razali & Hidayat, 2022). This means that negative publicity generated by social media activists can impact a company's bottom line. In addition to highlighting harmful CSR practices, social media can also promote positive examples of CSR. Companies can use social media to share stories about their CSR initiatives, such as community development programs or environmental sustainability efforts.

Influencers can also be partnered with to promote these initiatives and reach a wider audience. Social media can also be a valuable tool for companies to engage with stakeholders on CSR issues. Companies can use social media to respond to concerns raised by activists or answer questions from the public about their CSR practices. This can help to build trust and transparency between companies and the public. The findings of this study have important implications for companies and other stakeholders involved in CSR. Companies need to understand how the media works and how it can influence the public. Companies need to build effective CSR communication strategies to build a positive narrative and attract public interest. This strategy may include building relationships with the media, providing accurate and transparent information about CSR activities, and involving the public in the CSR decision-making process.

Governments and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) can play a crucial role in ensuring that information about CSR is accurate and objective through their collaboration with the media. Governments can develop regulations and policies that encourage media outlets to report on CSR responsibly. These regulations could include requiring companies to disclose their CSR activities in a standardized format or providing tax breaks to media companies that produce in-depth CSR reporting (Bernardes & Ferreira, 2022). NGOs can work with the media to educate journalists about CSR issues and provide them with access to reliable sources of information. They can also partner with media outlets to develop educational CSR campaigns targeting the public.

Social media has become a potent tool for shaping public discourse on CSR. Digital activists and influencers can leverage social media platforms to spread information about corporate social responsibility efforts, or lack thereof, to a wide audience. This can be a powerful tool for holding corporations accountable for their social and environmental impact. For example, activists can share stories about environmental damage caused by a corporation's production practices or labor abuses in their supply chain. This means that negative publicity generated by social media activists can impact a company's bottom line.

This study's findings align with those of other studies examining the impact of media coverage on public engagement with CSR (Dahlén & Rosén, 2013; Pelozo & Theobald, 2005). The media plays an important role in shaping narratives about CSR by highlighting various aspects of CSR, both positive and negative. Positive media coverage of CSR can increase public trust and support for companies, encourage them to engage in CSR activities, and even trigger positive social change (Entman, 2002). For instance, media coverage highlighting a company's charitable donations or environmental sustainability efforts can boost its reputation and brand image. Media can also play a role in holding corporations accountable for their CSR practices. Investigative journalism that exposes unethical corporate behavior, such as labor violations or environmental pollution, can spark public outrage and pressure companies to reform their practices.

The findings of this study, which highlight a more neutral tone in media coverage of CSR in Indonesia compared to other studies, raise interesting questions about the role of media in shaping public discourse on corporate social responsibility (CSR). While traditional media outlets play a significant role in disseminating information and influencing public opinion, social media has created a more complex landscape. Social media platforms have empowered digital activists and influencers to shape CSR narratives actively. They can leverage these platforms to disseminate information about a company's CSR efforts, or lack thereof, to a broad audience. This can be a powerful tool for holding corporations accountable for their social and environmental impact. For example, activists can share stories about environmental damage caused by a corporation's production practices or labor abuses in their supply chain.

In contrast to the potential sensationalism of social media, traditional media can provide a more in-depth analysis of CSR issues. Investigative journalism that exposes unethical corporate behavior can spark public outrage

and pressure companies to reform their practices. Furthermore, media coverage highlighting a company's positive CSR initiatives can enhance its reputation and brand image.

Implications of this study have important implications for companies, other stakeholders, and the wider community. **Implications for Companies:** Companies need to understand how the media works and how the media can influence the public. Companies need to build an effective CSR communication strategy to build a positive narrative and attract public interest. This strategy may include building relationships with the media, providing accurate and transparent information about CSR activities, and involving the public in CSR decision-making processes. **Implications for Other Stakeholders:** Other stakeholders, such as governments and non-governmental organizations, should work with the media to ensure that information about CSR is accurate and objective. Governments can develop regulations and policies that encourage the media to cover CSR responsibly. Non-governmental organizations can educate the public about CSR and raise their awareness about the importance of public engagement with CSR practices. **Implications for the Public at Large:** The public needs to be critical of the information they receive about CSR from the media. They need to seek information from various reliable sources rather than just rely on one source. The public also needs to actively engage with CSR practices in their communities and provide feedback to companies on how they can improve their CSR practices.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings of this study make an important contribution to understanding the impact of the media on public engagement with CSR practices in Indonesia. The findings of this study show that the media has an important role in shaping narratives about CSR, influencing public perceptions, and encouraging or inhibiting public behavior in terms of engagement with CSR. Therefore, companies and other stakeholders need to understand how the media works and how it can influence the public. Companies must build effective CSR communication strategies to build a positive narrative and attract public interest.

Recommendations for future research Further research can be conducted to examine the impact of media on public engagement with CSR practices in Indonesia. Future research can use other methods, such as surveys or experiments, to obtain more comprehensive findings. Future research could also focus on specific aspects of the media, such as media type (e.g., social media, mass media) or media framing (e.g., positive framing, negative framing of profile pictures, etc.).

FURTHER STUDY

This study has several limitations. First, this study only focuses on five multinational companies in Indonesia. Therefore, the findings of this study may not be generalizable to all companies involved in CSR in Indonesia. Second, this study only used two data collection methods: content analysis and semi-structured interviews. Further research with other methods, such as surveys or experiments, may provide more comprehensive findings. Despite these limitations, this study makes an essential contribution to understanding the impact of media on public engagement with CSR practices in Indonesia.

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