

- develop and apply effective self-regulatory practices and management systems that foster a relationship of confidence and mutual trust between enterprises and the societies in which they operate;
- support and uphold good governance principles and practice, and abstain from any improper involvement in local political activities.

Oversight will be provided by a Governing Board of the Commission, which will create a standard for CSR that is consistent with international standards and will integrate social responsibility into Nigeria's trade policies while respecting World Trade Organization rules.

However, given the present realities, this could be one of the solutions to the present challenges the oil-producing industry faces, because no self-respecting multinational company will wilfully violate the laws of the countries in which it operates.

The fourth prescription, and the least likely to occur, is an internal monitoring, or self-regulation, of corporate behaviour. This has yet to produce tangible results in Nigeria. Granted, global corporations had a good understanding of the interface between an environment conducive to business and its financial health. Therefore, it behooves corporations to explore avenues to project the very best in their practices as they acknowledge consistently the mutual dependence of their corporate interests and of those of their stakeholders.

Hartley (2005) analyses classic ethical violations, identifies paragons of good ethical practices and suggests four pointers for corporate behaviour modification: firstly, he recommends that multinationals eschew a heavy-handed stance in other countries, especially those in the Third World; secondly, being supportive of the host country will be compatible with the long-term interests of MNEs; thirdly, MNEs now have responsibilities as ambassadors of their countries of origin, whose images are affected by corporate practices; and, finally, non-management staff should increasingly resist the questionable standards of higher management. All of these actions can be internally accomplished by realigning corporate and community interests and monitoring them regularly.

Implications for a tentative research agenda for theory building

The Sullivan Principles and the United Nations Global Compact provide the framework for the equitable use of corporate resources in responding adequately to their responsibilities to communities affected by

their operations in particular and to the global community in general. Together, they require that corporations, among other things: (a) support universal human rights; (b) promote equal opportunity; (c) respect the freedom of association; (d) fight corruption; (e) protect human health and the environment; and (f) improve community life. This chapter concludes that asymmetrical (and occasionally unethical) CSR communications with key publics and audiences justify developing a (prescriptive) template that ensures that global corporations with major operations in Third World countries can improve their community-oriented practices, communicate their programmes more effectively to their audiences and publics, and maximize their own benefits from their social programmes. The behaviours of the three companies profiled in this chapter suggest utilitarian considerations – that is, they acted according to Mill's (1861) principle of utility, by which morality is determined by the greatest balance of good over evil and by doer-receiver happiness as the end of human action. Almost equally, those behaviours raise questions that could be framed within Kant's categorical imperative, which requires actions to demonstrate clearly where corporate loyalties, duties and responsibilities lie, and that all rational human beings be treated as ends in themselves, not merely as means. Are these loyalties, then, conditioned by corporate duty to a dominant coalition, to a broad spectrum of stakeholders or to society at large?

It is hoped that corporate leaders would consciously and strategically employ best communication practices in running their organizations. In much of Africa, and particularly in Nigeria, most organizations tend to interpret the value of corporate communications within the context of crises management, far removed from their emerging ongoing role in relationship-building in terms of brand loyalty and reputation enhancement. ExxonMobil and Shell, for example, evaded their responsibility by using scapegoatism in their reactive denial strategies in their crisis responses to the Ogoni people (Olaniran and Williams, 2008). Similarly, the top 100 information technology companies in India tend not to use creative and proactive CSR on their websites (Chaudhri and Wang, 2007). Yet the growing literature in relationship management alerts us to the importance of the relations with publics in public relations (Johansson, 2007), of a broadened view of corporation-stakeholder interaction (Haas, 2003) and of interpersonal communication theory as a guide to managing relationships, analysing interactions and establishing mutual trust with and confidence in stakeholders (Coombs, 2001; Ledingham, 2003; Toth, 2000). This inconsistency is borne out by the growing evidence on the fallout from perfunctory, tactical communication, bereft

of strong relationships, and by its consequences. As for entire CSR concept, it is left largely to multinational corporations, banks, telecommunications companies and growing national conglomerates. These multinational corporations are too cautious to communicate as much as they should, and their mode of communication is essentially targeted at the elites. The grassroots approach to communication, advocated by some of these companies, is more idealistic than pragmatic.

Several areas for research and, by extension, for theory-building are manifested in this CSR analysis. Firstly, what is the ethical rationale for the companies' approach to corporate communications? As Blackwood (2004) has reported, Canadian companies demonstrated double standards in their international operations, calling into question their undermining of, say, ethical universalism in their social responsibility programmes in Africa. Are such standards indicative of ethical relativism as the dominant ethical theory at play in the operations of MNEs in developing countries? In essence, what dominant ethical theory is manifested in the behaviours of MNEs in developing countries? Secondly, how does this rationale affect the perceptions of the corporate brand among key stakeholders? Thirdly, what dominant moral reason is indicated in ethical decision making associated with corporate operations, insofar as the latter affect other sectors of corporate behaviours and stakeholder relationships? Is such decision making consistent with, say, the three tests of deontology as outlined in this chapter? Fourthly, what core corporate values ensure that stakeholders will respond positively to corporate actions? Finally, what are the valid and reliable measures of CSR and its effects on corporate performance? The search for answers to those questions can be appropriately grounded in classical ethical theory, which can serve as the arbiter of corporate actions and conscience, and as the building blocks for theoretical searchlights on and guides to more CSR actions, particularly in fledgling, developing and emerging economies.

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