

**The Online Communication of Corporate Social Investment:  
How is the intricate task approached by South African companies?**

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**COMPULSORY DECLARATION**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Corporate Social Investment in South Africa has come to mean more than abiding by the B-BBEE regulatory requirements. It is a way for companies to showcase that their priorities move beyond profit-making, and stem into community upliftment. While actual contributions to CSI are of the most importance, CSI communication is a field that requires more strategy and focus than it did before. However, with no templates for the best online communication methods available, there is a wide range of types of message content and communication strategies. Utilising a mixed-method analysis, this paper explores the webpage communication of CSI in South Africa by conducting a content analysis of the CSI webpages of highly regarded South African companies, an in-depth semiotic and discourse analysis of two award-winning company webpages (Pick n Pay and Investec), and lastly a practical case study wherein a communications strategy was designed for national company, Ultra Liquors. This dissertation aims to explore the question: *How is CSI webpage communication approached by South African companies?* The research was approached through three sub questions: *What are the common themes, methods of communication, and types of content on the Corporate Social Investment webpages of highly regarded South African companies? How do Pick n Pay and Investec, both award winning companies in the CSI field, successfully communicate their altruistic values through their CSI webpages? Utilising Ultra Liquors as a case study, how does one approach creating a CSI communications strategy, and what are the essential factors that should be considered?* While there is significant academic research within the overall field of CSI, research into the communication of it is limited. However, companies and their stakeholders are beginning to pay more attention to it. This research aims to contribute to the limited research available in South Africa regarding CSI communication and highlight the importance of CSI communication and strategy – both practically and within the realm of academic research.

## **Key Words**

Corporate Social Investment; Corporate Communication; South Africa; Communication strategy; Signalling Theory; Online Communication; Social Responsibility

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

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In 2020 Microsoft donated over 1.4 billion dollars' worth of software and technical services to non-profit organisations globally (Microsoft, 2020). In 2018 an estimated 80% of South Africans donated to a charity or non-profit in the preceding 12 months (Charities Aid Foundation, 2019). By March 2020, South Africans had donated more than R2 billion to the Solidarity Fund, an initiative created to “mobilise South Africa in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic”. All, in less than two weeks (Solidarity Fund, 2021). Though the above examples are from two very different countries, these examples of philanthropy highlight that today's consumers want to give back to their communities and to the less fortunate (McCully, 2010). This mentality extends to businesses contributing to their wider communities (Wulfson, 2001).

The last decade has seen Corporate Social Investment (CSI) become more than a business requirement. While there are certain legal obligations imposed on companies – outlined in the Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment Act (B-BBEE) – there is an increase in companies exceeding outlined requirements (Mersham & Skinner, 2016). In 2020 alone, CSI expenditure is estimated at R10.7 billion; a 5% increase from 2019 (Triologue, 2020). Since the COVID-19 pandemic has taken a heavy toll on the country's economic activity, these statistics are significant. Despite these high levels of contribution, stakeholders are motivated by a sense of necessity, aiming to both retain and attract business to ensure economic survival (Du, et al., 2010). This selective pressure to ensure survival has afforded many stakeholders the opportunity to recognise CSI's role in forming loyalties and ensuring support through alignment with personal values (ibid.). This in turn raises questions of platform and messaging, requiring organisations to craft a new kind of CSI communication strategy.

In an increasingly competitive and critical market of stakeholders (from consumers to CEO's), a company must provide more than its successful product or service. Companies must contribute to the community at large, and in turn are expected to communicate about doing so. And, while their actual CSI is primary, communication strategy is strategic in that it engenders engagement and loyalty critical to survival. Recognition of this new resource requires a radical shift in communication strategy, as traditional modes are insufficient to the

task of exploiting this new resource. The following thesis argues for how and why the best kind of engagement to exploit this resource is the simultaneous embrace of Web 2.0 values, and rejection of traditional social media platforms like Instagram or Twitter. An argument will be made for corporate websites as the preferred communication mode, not based on an intuition, but on action research that saw the development of a website for the exact purpose of this kind of exploitation. With companies facing precarity in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, every opportunity needs to be leveraged. By far the greatest value that can be extracted from human resources is new insights. This thesis chronicles a project moving from these new kinds of insight to an effective user experience; all while identifying a unique research opportunity created by survival-driven CSI communication strategy.

### **i. Research Questions**

Utilising a mixed-method analysis, this study investigates CSI communication strategy by considering:

1. What are the common themes, methods of communication, and types of content on the Corporate Social Investment webpages of highly regarded South African companies?
2. How do Pick n Pay and Investec, both award winning companies in the CSI field, successfully communicate their altruistic values through their CSI initiatives on their webpages?
3. Utilising Ultra Liquors as a case study, how does one approach creating a CSI communication strategy, and what are some of the key considerations when creating a CSI communication strategy?

The thesis begins with a theoretical literature review (Chapter 2) exploring the history of CSR communication globally and CSI communication in South Africa. The literature review includes an analysis of various communication theories that are commonly utilised in CSR/CSI communication, such as the Signalling theory. Following the literature review is the research methodology (Chapter 3). This chapter outlines the methodological process utilised to investigate the research questions listed above. A three-fold methodology was utilised – namely a broad content analysis of the content on the CSI pages of prominent South African

companies or the branches thereof, an in-depth analysis of two companies that have been awarded for their CSI, and a practical case study wherein the researcher created a CSI communication strategy for the national company Ultra Liquors. Chapter 4 details the findings of the research and an analysis of said findings. In chapter 5 these findings and results are discussed further to fully unpack the information garnered from the research, and to investigate the findings in conjunction with the information in the literature review. Chapter 6 concludes this thesis by considering the limitations of the research, as well as recommendations for further research within the field.

The marketing and communications field of CSI has not been given significant academic attention – particularly within South Africa – even though it is the field that helps promote both the dissemination of information and brand loyalty (Irwin, 2003). This research aims to determine the current trends within the communication methods of companies CSI initiatives and apply findings practically to a strategy for Ultra Liquors. Through this research, the thesis aims to contribute not only to the broad field of South African CSI communication, but also to the use of modernisation of communication strategy. One final objective is for this research to broaden the academic field through the inclusion of Southern African examples. To achieve this, there is a heavy reliance on the application of well-researched Global North-Global South interaction theories.

## CHAPTER 2: DEFINITION OF KEY CONCEPTS

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In this chapter, a literature review contextualises the topic within accepted theoretical frameworks, the broader history of South African CSI, and current trends. Primary among these considerations are Stakeholder theory, Signalling theory, the four streams within CSR/CSI practices, and methods of CSI reporting and communication.

### **i. Defining Corporate Social Responsibility and CSI**

South Africa distinguishes itself in its approach to Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), not only by preferring variant terminology (Corporate Social Investment, CSI), and not only mandating CSI lawing but also by the nature of its definitional focus. Ndhlovu (2011) recognises that outside South African borders CSR references initiatives involving community, the environment, and social responsibility, while within South Africa CSI is a legal obligation that focuses on Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment (B-BBEE). By remarking on the need for “affirmative action and skills development to redress past apartheid ills,” Ndhlovu (2011, p. 73) recognises an inextricable link between CSI and the transformation of South Africa post-Apartheid. The need for transformation of South Africa is also noted by Mersham and Skinner (2016) who identify the positive role of large businesses in increasing black participation in the South African economy. This leads Hinson and Ndhlovu to define a uniquely South African view of CSI, where the practice is identified as the management of all internal company practices, whereas CSI refers to a company’s active involvement in community and environmental development (Hinson & Ndlovu, 2011). This is not the case outside South African borders. CSR in Europe and elsewhere adopts a voluntary character and integrates the aforementioned initiatives into both business operations and interactions with various stakeholders (Commission of the European Communities, 2003; Dahlsrud, 2008; World Business Council for Sustainable Development, 2000). The EU Commission (2011) more elegantly defines CSR as the “responsibility of enterprises for their impacts on society”. Within a South African context however, the word “investment” indicates that it is being done with the hope that something is received in return – from the likes of increased brand awareness, profits, or positive results from the investments

themselves. CSI is often viewed as a branch of CSR, yet its unique approach and growing significance over the last two decades has given it its own pedestal (Hinson & Ndhlovu, 2011).

Carroll's 1979 pyramid model is the preferred analytic for CSR. The pyramid focuses on four business responsibilities – (in descending order of importance) Economic, Legal, Ethical, and Philanthropic/Discretionary responsibilities (Carroll, 1979, 2016). Carroll is firm on defending why Economic considerations should supersede all others, stating, “economic responsibility to the society that permitted them to be created and sustained” (Carroll, 2016, p. 3). Should this responsibility be neglected, the business may collapse, triggering a domino effect for its community. Legal responsibility requires companies to abide by certain laws to operate (Carroll, 2016). In keeping with notions of freedom and private ownership, laws curtail unwarranted actions by companies, rather than prescribe set and rigid obligations. B-BBEE, within South Africa, would be encompassed within legal considerations. Legal is contrasted with ethical, the latter being where CSR (rather than CSI) can be positioned. This responsibility encompasses aspects that lie outside of laws and regulations, such as standards, values and principles that “reflect and honour what consumers, employees, owners, and the community regard as consistent with respect to the protection of the stakeholders’ moral rights” (Carroll, 1979) (Carroll, 2016, p. 3). In this responsibility, CSR is an expectation rather than a requirement (Ihlen, et al., 2011). At the top of the pyramid is philanthropic/discretionary responsibility, which encompasses “all forms of business giving” (Carroll, 2016, p. 4). As Carol (1979) highlights, this may not be a responsibility in the literal sense of the word, but rather an expectation of the public and other stakeholders. Furthermore, it covers a company's *desire* to contribute as opposed to just doing what is *expected* or *required* of them (Ihlen, et al., 2011). Although business interest in social responsibility might initially be motivated by concerns that fall in the upper two tiers of the pyramid, it is the two lower tiers that ultimately drive CSR/CSI.

As the current study is primarily concerned with the South African CSI communication conducted online, the Ethical and Philanthropic/Discretionary responsibilities must be prioritised. This is because those tiers of the pyramid engage external stakeholders, while the other two tiers are concerned with keeping the business running legally and economically. While companies of a certain size are required to release annual sustainability reports, having dedicated CSI communication pages on websites is not a legal or business requirement –

these are created with the intention of keeping stakeholders informed of corporate good works to positively influence a stakeholder's view of the company. Furthermore, companies that are authentic in their contribution to and communication of their CSI initiatives could both attract and retain clients and consumers, as well as harvest brand loyalty, which feeds into both company success and their philanthropic duties that help the community at large (Irwin, 2003).

## **ii. CSR & CSI Communication: History and Definition**

Despite CSR communication being nearly contemporaneous with CSR itself, CSR communication has only become a focus of strategic corporate communication and public relations in recent years (Ihlen, et al., 2011). Annual reporting on CSR involvement is a requirement for all Johannesburg Stock Exchange (JSE)-listed companies, however, the online CSR communication is not a requirement. Ihlen, et al. (2011) argue that while not required, online CSR reporting is incredibly beneficial for an organisation's reputation.

One definition for the term is as follows:

“A communicative practice which corporations undertake to integrate social, environmental, ethical, human rights and consumer concerns into their business operations and core strategy in close collaboration with their stakeholders.” (Nielsen & Thomsen, 2018, p. 493)

CSR communication fulfils a number of varying objectives, but one of the primary objectives is to minimise stakeholder scepticism (Du, et al., 2010). Audiences for CSR communications are notionally broad as they range from external stakeholders such as consumers, to internal stakeholders who may have significant funds invested in a company; however, content is relatively similar (Du, et al., 2010; Saxton, et al., 2019). A dichotomy emerges within stakeholders' expectations though, in that they desire both “concrete information” (Du, et al., 2010, p. 13) and “perception-based qualities” (Saxton, et al., 2019, p. 361). This implies that companies have to strike a balance between these two streams of information, which can be difficult when attempting to communicate information concisely.

Arvidsonn (2010) notes the relative scarcity CSI communication frameworks, despite significant growth in CSI as a field. Nielsen and Thompson (2018) argue that the lack of frameworks for CSR communication results in organisations being extremely unprepared for the task. This is concerning given the increasing prominence of CSR communications for stakeholders. Conducting a study of CSR communication in Stockholm, Arvidsonn (2010) found companies attempting to alleviate scepticism and provide clarity by communicating their CSR practices and results openly to various stakeholders (Arvidsonn, 2010). Arvidsonn (2010) also correctly predicted continued growth in CSR information. Awareness around social issues and social responsibility has steadily increased between 2000 and 2010 (ibid.), resulting in a greater level of selectiveness in people regarding which companies they support. Authenticity of CSI, both at the level of practice and disclosure, is both an expectation and a necessity for organisations that wish to have a meaningful and lasting relationship with their stakeholders.

Prior to the rise of online media, businesses universally lacked control of how they were reported about in mass media. This resulted in asymmetry between an organisation and its stakeholders, with distrust and negativity fostering rapidly because of control an organisation had over its public image (ibid.). The reach organisations had prior to online media was also minimal as they were reliant on examples such as print media and mail subscriptions. Mitigation strategies conducted in the media thus had very little impact given that their own communication methods would not reach the same size audience as messages in mass media publications (ibid.). The advent of online media has at least mitigated this condition somewhat by allowing companies response and engagement (Du, et al., 2010). Online media has given firms the ability to control their public image in a manner that is easily accessible to stakeholders, as well as the ability to maintain more control over how they communicate their CSR endeavours. Social networking sites (SNSs) are used to communicate CSR and CSI to a certain extent and are more frequently utilised by organisations in the Global North. However, in South Africa the most commonly used mediums for CSI communication are corporate websites as well as annual reports, hence the reason for the primary focus of this research being content published on corporate websites.

### **iii. CSI and brand loyalty**

CSI communication can foster brand loyalty amongst stakeholders (Irwin, 2003). Brand loyalty, or customer loyalty, refers to the commitment of a customer to a particular brand's products or services (Bilgin, 2018). Furthermore, it refers to behavioural loyalty (ibid.), a concept that explains how consumers come to repurchase particular brands. A customer that is truly brand loyal, incorporates the brand into their purchasing and communicative behaviour and can assist companies in gaining new clientele. This is done by speaking positively about a brand and recommending it to others displays what is referred to as attitudinal loyalty (ibid.).

One of the ultimate goals of marketing communications is to “acquire new customers, increase sales, strengthen word of mouth communication and create customer loyalty” (Tsimonis & Dimitriadis, 2014, p. 330). CSI communication has been identified as a method that has positive effects on brand loyalty amongst consumers. A study of CSR perceptions' impact conducted by Mandhachitara & Poolthong (2011) found a net positive effect on attitudinal loyalty – loyalty born out of a preference of one brand over any others. Sen & Bhattacharya (2001) found that CSR initiatives can have a positive direct effect on company evaluations and (to some extent) purchase intentions. Research into this specific field is not extensive in South Africa. Dapi & Phiri (2015) found increased knowledge of organisations' CSI initiatives may lead to enhanced brand loyalty. Schmetzl (2017), finds that consumer awareness of CSI contribution allows for seeing congruence between consumers' own values and those of the company's, which in turn fosters brand loyalty. If communicated well, ethical responsibility, one of Carroll's four core elements of CSR, can engender loyalty.

### **iv. Signalling Theory**

Signalling theory is useful for interpreting how corporate information is transmitted to stakeholders. This theory will be utilised extensively in the Findings and Analysis (Chapter 4) portion of this dissertation. Signalling theory aims for the reduction of information asymmetry between two entities – such as between an organisation and its stakeholders (Utgård, 2018). As already mentioned, a difficulty organisations face is not having full

control over how they are perceived. Similarly, external stakeholders face the challenge of evaluating the CSR information they receive. Communicating CSI is just one method of attempting to control this, and the Signalling Theory can be utilised to explain its benefits. Signalling theory involves four elements – a signaller who is inside an organisation, a signal that is transmitted, a receiver who receives and interprets the signal, and feedback that is returned to the signaller (Connelly, et al., 2011).

Large organisations are more likely to signal information to their various stakeholders, and it is also more costly for them to do so due to the effort required for information gathering (Utgård, 2018). A small manufacturing company, for example, should easily be able to assess the working conditions of their employees, whereas a large manufacturing company would require more extensive effort and costs towards determining that information. This kind of information is also not accessible to external stakeholders *unless* an organisation chooses to communicate it. Inaccessibility of this kind of information contributes to the presence of informational asymmetry. External stakeholders rely on an organisation to provide them with accurate, trustworthy information that will help to inform their overall decision about an organisation (ibid.). A lack of the information can feed into negative associations and scepticism. Should an organisation want to create a meaningful, long-term relationship with their clients or consumers, then signalling to them correctly is essential (ibid.) (Margolis, et al., 2009). Furthermore, certain studies conducted that have looked at the profitability of CSR communication have found that there is a positive relationship between the two, highlighting that bridging the gap between information asymmetry can benefit an organisation beyond maintaining a good reputation (ibid.) (Utgård, 2018).

Beyond signalling any specific content, CSI communication is a clear message to the audience in and of itself (Mahoney, et al., 2013). When audiences see that a company is communicating openly and authentically about their CSI and company values, it signals the company's overall commitment to their community, and their investment in doing so (ibid.). It is worth repeating CSI communication through corporate webpages or through SNSs is not mandatory, rather it is a voluntary decision made by companies that are aware of the potential positive effects (ibid.) (Clarkson, et al., 2011). CSI communication signals to audiences that the company in question prioritizes CSI, which in turn builds corporate legitimacy and good corporate citizenship. (Mahoney, et al., 2013).

However, Utgård (2018) highlights that it is no longer enough to signal to stakeholders with “general statements of good intentions” (p. 387), because stakeholders rely on more concrete information about CSR performance to inform their decision regarding their stance on an organisation (such as their true impact on the community regarding educational initiatives). As this research investigates the content available on CSI webpages, analysing content through the scope of the signalling theory – such as what message is being signalled through text and images, and what responses this could invoke – may provide insight into what the primary messages and themes are that are being communicated to stakeholders.

## **v. Corporate Communication Strategies: Corporate Legitimacy**

While a significant portion of corporate communications relate to social responsibility messaging, the field is much larger than just that. Prior to understanding the specifics of CSI communications, an understanding of corporate communications in general is beneficial to this research.

Internal corporate communication plays a significant role in an organisation’s perception by consumers and clients. Prior to the growth of online communication, organisations maintained little control over what was said about them publicly (Du, et al. 2010). By communicating to stakeholders through a range of online channels, organisations can manage their public perception to a greater extent and subsequently have more of an influence on their clients or consumers. According to Tao & Wilson (2016) and Kim (2011), organisations face a choice between communicating Corporate Ability (CA, their ability to provide goods and services) and communicating CSR, a demonstration of their good corporate citizenship. Kim (2011) found that some companies adopt a hybrid-approach combining CA and CSR communication. Both CA and CSR influence the associations that clients rely on to make decisions about a company (Tao & Wilson, 2016). Both methods also contribute to the corporate legitimacy.

Schuman’s (1995) highly regarded definition of “legitimacy” is a “generalized perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are desirable, proper or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs, and definitions” (Schuman, 1995, p.

574). A socially constructed concept, it is often viewed as the way organisations “seek approval for their acts from groups in society”, as well as how an organisations actions are perceived by the public (Kaplan & Ruland, 1991; Nielson & Thomsen, 2018). Within the legitimacy theory, pragmatic legitimacy is concerned with the functional elements of a company, and it is demonstrated by satisfying the consumers’ needs in this regard (Handelman & Arnold, 1999). This type of legitimacy is concerned with an exchange-relationship, such as the services one receives by providing compensation for said services (Schuman, 1995). Legitimacy theory also includes social (sometimes “moral”) legitimacy, which is gained by contributing to the community through CSR (Handelman & Arnold, 1999). Corporate communications have an invaluable effect on the legitimacy of an organisation. Communication, when utilised as a method of meaning creation, allows an organisation to explain and take control of the narrative they want their consumers to associate them with (Schuman, 1995). Furthermore, communication allows organisations to develop “shared meanings and understandings” with its various stakeholders, which creates an environment that allows for organisational growth (ibid.) (Tao & Wilson, 2016). When neither CA or CSR communications are available, the chance of organisational action being perceived as meaningful, stable, or trustworthy are significantly lower (Schuman, 1995).

As this research is concerned with the content available on CSI webpages in South Africa, the above theories will likely be beneficial in the analysis and understanding of the data collected. This research is only including content related specifically to CSI within the analysis, so specific CA content will not be purposefully included. However, it will be interesting to determine whether there are webpages that include a hybrid approach to their communications, even if they are fundamentally dedicated to CSI communications.

## **vi. CSI Communication Strategies**

For over a decade academics and professionals have encouraged organisations involved in CSR to communicate this to their stakeholders (Du, et al. 2010). Organisations have multiple platforms and methods at their disposal to communicate their CSR/CSI initiatives. However, as Arvidsonn (2010) points out, there are very few practical or theoretical frameworks available that companies can utilise to guide them in their CSI communications journey. To a

certain extent, how an organisation chooses to communicate their CSI initiatives is a particular choice based on the type of company and the environment it wishes to foster for its clients and consumers. As Hartman, et al. (2007) point out, “Companies seeking to engage in CSR may consider many contextual variables such as national culture, geography, or social and economic morays in deciding which CSR perspective to adopt” (Hartman, et al., 2007, p. 375). There are, however, a number of guiding principles that can be utilised to begin the process.

Hartman, et al. (2007) conducted a study in which they analysed perceptions of the motivations behind CSR communication. They identified seven types of messages that can be conveyed within CSR communication and argued that organisations should attempt to disseminate information that covers most, if not all of the categories (Hartman, et al., 2007). These categories are as follows:

“(a) CSR is in the company’s long-term strategic interest (whether due to explicit stakeholder pressure, implicit benefits from particular stakeholder groups, the creation of a stronger social fabric in which to run the business, and other impact factors); (b) CSR reduces the risk to the firm of negative impact to reputation from other quadrants of the firm’s activities, of legal liability, of diminished stock value from negative publicity; (c) CSR protects a firm’s reputation or brand image; (d) CSR may allow the firm to attract and retain valuable employees and maintain high morale; (e) CSR reflects a corporation’s social contract-based obligation to “offer something back” to the community in which it does business; (f) CSR is the right thing to do, according to universal values, fundamental values of a particular social network, and/or a particular corporation’s values; and (g) CSR offers an exchange between the corporation and its stakeholders, offering the stakeholders valuable corporate support (in a variety of forms) in exchange for permission to operate and grow in that community.” (Hartman, et al., 2007, p. 377).

The categories above highlight that there are several message types that organisations can choose to communicate. However, Ilhen, et al. (2011) point out that placing too much information can be detrimental to the initial goal of an organisation’s social responsibility communication. On the other hand, silence on the matter would be a form of communication

in and of itself (Ilhen, et al., 2011). Both too much and too little information can foster scepticism amongst stakeholders, which can affect the legitimacy of a company. CSI communication is just one method used by organisations to help grow their perceived legitimacy. However, navigating the balance between framing CSI practices as an organisations own desire and moral obligation to give back to society and, on the other hand, a self-interested task that benefits the organisation at large is where many organisations encounter difficulty (Nielsen & Thomsen, 2018).

Beyond the types of information that companies can disseminate through CSR/CSI communication, there are also different methods of communication. While there are several theories concerned with CSR communication methods, this research looks at communication strategies that are linked to the Stakeholder theory. A stakeholder, as defined by Freeman (1984), is any individual or group who can affect or are affected by the decisions of an organisation. The last two decades have seen an increased focus on engaging with stakeholders with the intention of creating long-term, meaningful relationships (Morsing & Schultz, 2006). Irwin (2003) justifies the reasoning for the increased focus by highlighting how effective CSR communication and marketing techniques can influence brand loyalty and positive reputation. There are three different types of CSR communication strategies that utilise the Stakeholder theory as guidance, with each strategy involving stakeholders to a different extent (Morsing & Schultz, 2006). Each strategy is explored below.

### *Stakeholder-Information Strategy*

The Stakeholder-information strategy is a one-way communication strategy wherein information is given to the stakeholder that they either support or oppose (Morsing & Schultz, 2006). The stakeholder is not consulted before or after the information is disseminated. Organisations that utilise this method of communication are not necessarily attempting to persuade their audience, but rather inform them “as objectively as possible” about their organisation (ibid.). The general assumption within this strategy is that stakeholders are influential to the extent that their exposure to the communications will either result in support for the organisation (such as increased purchasing habits or public praise of the organisation), or it will result in opposition (such as lack of support or possibly demonstrations against an organisation) (ibid.) (Smith, 2003). The information communicated is decided by top management alone, as there is a belief that merely informing

stakeholders of the CSR work being done is sufficient to build a strong stakeholder relationship.

### *Stakeholder-Response Strategy*

The Stakeholder-response strategy involves two-way communication; however, it is asymmetric as an organisation disseminates information and subsequently asks for feedback (Morsing & Schultz, 2006). The stakeholder is involved, but only partly, with some research arguing that the idea of this strategy truly involving the stakeholder is merely window-dressing (ibid.). While there is engagement with the stakeholder (opinion polls, surveys), the two-way communication element is merely feedback from stakeholders as to whether the organisation has improved – or needs to improve – its CSR efforts, as well as what stakeholders accept and tolerate. By using this strategy, the organisations' primary intention may be gleaned information to make themselves *appear* more attractive to their stakeholders as opposed to genuinely involving stakeholders in the process of improving their CSR efforts and communication efforts (ibid.). The risk accompanying this strategy is that an organisation will often ask questions “within a framework that invites predominantly the answers it wants to hear” (ibid.). This strategy is one that is frequently used for CSR communication, which makes it beneficial to the current study investigating online CSI communication.

### *Stakeholder Involvement Strategy*

Last is the Stakeholder involvement strategy. Of the three strategies this is the most proactive and arguably the ideal strategy, but it is the least utilised. It involves the stakeholder to a far greater extent than the previous two strategies, by inviting stakeholders to actively participate in conversation with the organisation around the topics of CSR/CSI. As opposed to the Stakeholder-response strategy wherein the primary goal is to better an organisations appearance, this strategy facilitates an ongoing discussion that involves persuasion – from both an organisation and its stakeholders – for each group to make a change (Morsing & Schultz, 2006). This strategy takes the relationship with the stakeholder to a new level of involvement as utilising it implies that an organisation aims to both influence and be influenced by its stakeholders' responses. While this strategy shares the Stakeholder-response strategy view that expectations should be gathered and investigated, the stakeholder involvement strategy does not believe that expectation to be sufficient. Rather, this strategy

suggests that companies “engage frequently and systematically” with their various stakeholders so that decisions are made that involve mutual, rational agreement, and consent from both sides (ibid.).

While all the above strategies are utilised to a certain extent, the two-way communication strategies are less likely to be used than the one-way communication strategy. Most South African organisations that publish information relating to their CSI utilise a corporate website, with some experimenting with SNSs. For this reason, an understanding of the first strategy is beneficial to this research, as the types of messaging being published on corporate websites is one of the primary focuses.

#### *Web 2.0 Values applied to a Post Web 2.0 Setting.*

It is important to note that over the past decade trends have moved in the direction of acknowledging Web 2.0 as a given, and maybe even somewhat dated. This dissertation acknowledges that there is no academic novelty in considering Web 2.0. However, this dissertation must at the same time acknowledge that the values of Web 2.0 – personal connection with a narrative broadcasted to followers who have opted-in – remains an overarching cultural and design principle. Web 2.0 is thus not considered for its novelty but for its enduring architecture of meaningfulness when it comes to social media. The last decade has seen a notable shift in the communication methods of organisations. The numerous capabilities of social media communication means that organisations must constantly navigate and evolve with the changes. For CSI communication, the primary communication channel is still corporate webpages (Nwagbara & Reid, 2013). They allow companies to give clear and accurate information to their consumers on a platform that is easy to navigate and that they are likely more comfortable with, as opposed to SNSs. However, SNSs have altered the way in which people communicate with each other, and how they communicate with organisations. Consumers used to be passive receivers of information, with feedback only being possible if it was requested directly from an organisation through a poll or survey (Morsing & Schultz, 2006). A defining feature of SNSs is that it allows consumers to be actively involved in conversations with organisations – a factor that assists in showcasing how transparent a company is with their audience (Capriotti, 2017). This also means that the control that the internet initially gave organisations over their public perception has dissipated slightly.

The phenomenon and growth of SNSs allows organisations to communicate more with their stakeholders. As Marshall McLuhan (1964) identified, the chosen medium of communication is a message in and of itself. Using SNSs to communicate with one's audience signals an organisations transparency and the value they place on stakeholder involvement. However, it also allows consumers to both gather significantly more information about an organisation prior to making decisions about supporting them and allows them to be involved in conversation. In the realm of CSI communication, organisations must face the challenge of maintaining the level of authenticity they display on their webpage across their other platforms. Furthermore, they must understand that they are subject to significantly more public scrutiny, as the public now have a plethora of platforms they can use to learn about a company. While utilising Web SNSs for CSI communication is still in the early stages of use, it will be interesting to note whether any South African organisations have started to make use of SNSs for CSI communication.

## **vii. Challenges of CSI communication**

While there is significant literature dedicated to the benefits of CSR/CSI communication, it is not a field that is free of criticism both academically and within mass media. "CSR is used as a PR weapon to help corporations maintain market power, when it is precisely that power that is the problem" was written in *The Guardian* (Mathiason, 2006). This perspective is unsurprising, given that one of the main intentions of CSR communication is to encourage brand loyalty, and to convince consumers to support an organisation due to the good deeds it commits itself to. This section of the review of literature looks at a range of the challenges faced within the field of CSR/CSI communication – both internationally and in South Africa specifically.

### *Stakeholder Expectations*

One of the main challenges identified within modern CSI communication is the heightened expectations of stakeholders in relation to CSR/CSI involvement and the communication thereof (Scherer & Palazzo, 2009). This relates primarily to very large companies (such as

multinational corporations, MNEs), as their influence on globalised economies and communities is much greater. Globalisation can be defined in many ways, with Kaul (2011) defining it as “the extension of trends and influences (such as ideas, concepts, knowledge, ethics and technology as well as behaviours)” across various cultural and national barriers (p. 2). One of its main characterisations is an increase, globally, in interconnectivity, and interactivity, as well as the practically instantaneous exchange of information that we are accustomed to. Two views of globalisation are the Utopian view and the Dystopian view, with each view arguing the positives and benefits versus the negative impact on society respectively. In the realm of CSR and globalisation, in the early 2000s both internal and external stakeholders started to become increasingly aware of the impact large MNEs could have on various global communities (Scherer & Palazzo, 2009). This resulted in stakeholders calling for more MNEs to be involved in giving back to global communities that they affected with regard to the fields of healthcare, education, human rights, and environmental sustainability (ibid.). Should organisations have ignored these calls, it would have resulted in losing large consumer bases, and increased negative press that would tarnish their corporate reputation.

The last decade has seen public scrutiny of CSR activities grow extensively to include businesses that are small to medium in size, and amongst that is scrutiny of CSR communications. As highlighted by Scherer & Palazzo (2009), the challenge organisations face is both how much they contribute to their social responsibility initiatives as well as how much they communicate to their stakeholders. The signalling theory covered earlier highlights how one purpose of signalling is to close the gap of information asymmetry between the signaller and the receiver, but communication strategy is required as both too much and too little (or no) information can allow scepticism and scrutiny to grow. Stakeholders are reliant on CSI communications to keep them informed about an organisations’ movements, which makes the communication methods incredibly important.

### *Altruism versus Business Benefits*

A fundamental reason for organisations contributing to CSI is the benefit to their business. In South Africa, having a good B-BBEE rating, which is reliant on a good CSI contribution, makes a company more favourable for employees and investors (Ayra & Bassi, 2011; Littlewood & Holt, 2018). Furthermore, there is research that shows how CSR contributions

can have a positive effect on an organisation financially (Du, et al., 2010). The communication of CSI contributes to these elements. Fundamentally, CSI communication should work to improve brand loyalty, attract new customers, and in turn bring more profits to an organisation (Littlewood & Holt, 2018). The challenge that organisations face is to not make these goals obvious within their communications and remain as authentic as possible. With audiences becoming increasingly sceptical of the motivations behind an organisation's social responsibility involvement, the field of CSI communication remains a tricky one to navigate. An organisation's primary objective is to bring in profits (the economic responsibility); however, within their CSR/CSI communication, it is favourable to instead communicate about ethical and philanthropic responsibilities as they appeal more to the audience (Adams, 2015; Carroll, 2016).

### *CSR in the Alcohol Industry*

This section relates specifically to the practical case study included in this research. While research into the South African alcohol industry and CSR/CSI is very limited, there is some research that looks at the marketing potential of CSR within the industry.

The alcohol industry has been involved in CSR/CSI activities for over two decades. However, in the last decade there has been a notable expansion in their activities. This shift was attributed to the World Health Organization's (WHO) Global Strategy to Reduce the Harmful Use of Alcohol (founded in 2010 and readdressed in 2021), as well as the International Centre for Alcohol Policies (an organisation that ran until 2015) who proposed and disseminated certain commitments to incorporate into CSR strategy based on WHO's global strategy outline (WHO, 2021; Pantini, et al., 2017). The commitments were:

1. The reduction of underage drinking
2. Strengthening voluntary codes of marketing practice
3. Providing consumer information
4. Responsible product innovation
5. Drinking and driving countermeasures
6. Support to retailers to reduce the harmful effects of alcohol

The above information pertains to why alcohol companies may select certain fields to focus their CSI on that relate specifically to their industry. However, most companies also recognise the role they play as a citizen within their community – beyond that of alcohol misuse and the prevention thereof (Pantini, et al., 2017). While selecting which initiatives to focus ones CSI initiatives on is a challenge in and of itself, the communication and marketing of said initiatives imposes further difficulties. The use of CSR/CSI in marketing and communication within this industry is due to a number of factors, such as increased regulations and restrictions pertaining to advertising alcohol products, the stakeholder desire to be kept well-informed about a company’s social responsibility, and the possible positive effects the marketing can have on a company as a whole (Juščius & Kondratyuk, 2012).

Previous research regarding the impact of marketing and communicating CSR/CSI within the industry has yielded mixed results. Similar to CSR in other industries, it is a field that is subject to significant scepticism and scrutiny. Research has found that some of the main reasons for incorporating CSR/CSI into marketing is for business gain, such as enhancing corporate image – in the same way that advertising is utilised (Pantini, et al., 2017). Furthermore, research has identified that corporate philanthropy and the marketing thereof is a common tactic utilised in targeting emerging and youthful markets because of the possible business benefits (Yoon & Lam, 2013). These reasons substantiate why there is scepticism surrounding the issue of CSI in the industry. However, research has also identified that including CSI into alcohol marketing and communications techniques can yield successful results IF it is done so successfully (Pantini, et al., 2017). Therefore, creating a strategy for the communications is essential.

A valid observation to keep in mind is that in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic certain views and theories should be reinvestigated with the pandemic taken into account. The pandemic has shifted the way in which businesses operate, and in South Africa in particular it has brought our country’s unequal society to the forefront of our attention. While this research is not focused on the pandemic, it is noted that certain theories should be revisited through a new lens in order to include the effects of the pandemic on business and society. This dissertation is guided by an extensive body of literature that focuses on a range of theories and research involved in the field of CSI communication, including Utgard’s (2018) research into the Signalling theory, Schuman’s (1995) and Palazzo & Scherer’s (2006)

research on Corporate Legitimacy in the realm of CSI, and the challenges and unique characteristics of CSI in South Africa as discussed by Ndhlovu (2011). These three articles and concepts, along with the remaining literature, highlight the complexities and intricacies that effect the realm of CSI communication.

## CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

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Several reasons govern the choice of corporate websites as CSI communication channel in this study. This chapter details the research methodology utilised to aid in answering the research questions outlined in Chapter 1. Firstly, CSR/CSI communication has been globally recognised as a fundamental element of corporate communication; both in fostering brand loyalty and in maintaining transparency. Secondly, within South Africa, CSI communication is conducted primarily through corporate websites rather than SNSs or social media.

Using a mixed-method analysis, this research sets out to answer three primary research questions (stated in Chapter 1). Content, semiotic visual and discourse analysis are used in series to examine the visual and written content on the primary CSI webpages of South African companies and further to investigate CSI communication actioned by Ultra Liquors, all to answer three research questions. RQ1 determines the type of content that notable South African companies prioritise. Conducting deeper analysis, RQ2 determines how two companies' CSI initiatives appeal viscerally to stakeholders. RQ3 addresses a practical case study to explore how a CSI communication campaign is developed. RQ1 analyses both text and visual information on CSI webpages to define what companies define as appealing to stakeholders. RQ2 considers Investec and Pick n Pay; both award winners for CSI initiatives. Here content analysis might prove insufficient, hence semiotic and discourse analysis is relied on. RQ3 can only be approached through a researcher developed analytical process (outlined in Chapter 4) focused on developing personal insight into the strategic and creative process underpinning CSI communication.

### **i. Website Content Analysis**

Qualitative Content Analysis (QCA) has reliably been utilised across multiple academic fields. In media studies, it dates back to the 1920s as a method of studying propaganda. It is now used to research the content of many media and communication platforms – from interview content to news articles, and social media to name a few (Macnamara, 2005).

A majority of larger South African companies (or South African branches of companies) have webpages dedicated to their CSI portfolio. However, no fixed template means no set standards determining language or content.

For RQ1, the primary CSI webpages on corporate websites were included in the sample. As it is divided into Non-Governmental (NGO) perceptions of CSI initiatives, and recognition of strategic CSI, the Trialogue Business in Society Handbook was consulted to establish selection criteria (Trialogue, 2020). These criteria ultimately focused sampling on the top companies, ranked according to CSI, by NGOs and Corporates. The first sampling procedure produced 16 webpages. In the second sample, Trialogue award a company annually that has been successful and commendable within the field of CSI. To ensure that an adequate sample size was being utilised, the award-winning companies and the runners up from the last three years were included in the sample. While some of the companies were already within the sample pool, others were new and brought the list up to 21 companies (see Addendum A for webpage hyperlinks). The final sample pool of companies for the content analysis are detailed in the table below.

<b>Companies included in Webpage Content analysis</b>	
AECI	Nedbank
Anglo American	Old Mutual
Coca-Cola	Pick n Pay
Discovery	South African Breweries (SAB)
DSTV	Sasol
FirstRand	Shoprite
Growthpoint	Transnet
Investec	Vodacom
Merchants Group	Woolworths
Momentum	WNS Limited
MTN	

While “corporate social investment” is preferred by the majority of South African companies, “corporate social responsibility” remains an alternative. Those companies that have moved away from the CSI/CSR nomenclature have embraced terms like “community involvement”, “sustainability”, “social investment”. Some companies prefer communicating their CSI by referencing their foundations (e.g., Vodacom Foundation).

Such variance was considered during data collection. All company webpages were located through a Google search. For companies that operate globally, their pages dedicated specifically to South Africa were located. All webpages were saved to a separate bookmark on Google to ensure easy access to the content. Saved webpages were prepared for extraction before being coded through NVivo.

The way that companies presented their CSI data differed across webpages. Certain webpages had one comprehensive (or minimalist) page dedicated to their CSI, while others had webpages that included links that expanded sections to reveal more information. Content that was not included in the analysis were links to full CSI reports. As the research is primarily concerned with the content on CSI landing webpages, the reports were not relevant to the analysis. Images included on the webpages were given descriptions on NVivo at the location that they appeared within the textual content.

The platform utilised to assist in the content analysis is NVivo. This application is specifically designed for qualitative content analysis, and it assists researchers in recording data and locating themes (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2011). Furthermore, it links data together so that researchers can draw general conclusions from the content analysis. The application does not conduct a full qualitative analysis, but it assists researchers substantially in drawing out certain themes and common occurrences within the data sample (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2011). Having all the data saved within one space also makes the locating of information much simpler for researchers. A primary benefit of this application is that it makes the process of textual content analysis substantially easier, as the researcher does not have to manually record and determine which content is most salient within a sample. Within NVivo, one creates nodes – folders with specific classifications that allow researchers to store and locate all information that relates a specific category. Nodes allow one to determine which themes are most and least prevalent within a research sample. In total, 18 primary Nodes were created for this research, with certain Nodes having secondary categories. Some Node

categories were selected and created prior to beginning coding based on information within the Trialogue handbook. Others were created during the coding process if prominent themes were identified. The categories and their descriptions can be seen in the table below.

<b>Node</b>	<b>Node Description</b>
Access to Further information	<i>Mention and inclusion of links to more content and further information</i>
B-BBEE & Legal	<i>Mention of B-BBEE requirements, and legal requirements</i>
Basic Resources	<i>Mention of resources, and/or access to resources (water, food, electricity, etc.)</i>
Community	<i>Mention of community, such as community development, community contribution, community involvement, etc.</i>
Direct Quotations	<i>Use of direct quotes</i>
Education	<i>Mention of education and/or educational initiatives</i>
Environment	<i>Mention of the environment, contribution to environmental sustainability, lowering environmental impact, etc.</i>
Expenditure	<i>Mention of company expenditure on CSI initiatives</i>
External Organisations	<i>Mention of work with external organisations (NPO's, government, etc.)</i>
Health	<i>Mention of health-related issues, such as healthcare, access to healthcare, child health, etc.</i>
Images	<i>Images included on CSI webpage</i>
Race	<i>Explicit mention of Race</i>
Responsibility	<i>Mention of responsibility</i>
Small Businesses and Job Creation	<i>Mention of CSI contribution to aiding Small Businesses and Job Creation</i>
Socio-economic Dev.	<i>Mention of Socio-economic development</i>

Sustainability	<i>Mention of CSI efforts geared towards sustainability</i>
Transformation	<i>Mention of transformation</i>
Women empowerment and GBV	<i>Mention of Women Empowerment and/or reference to Gender Based Violence initiatives</i>

## ii. Semiotic Visual and Discourse Analysis: Pick n Pay & Investec

The way a webpage presents its content to viewers can exhibit which features and information an organisation prioritises, as well as indicate the first impression they want viewers to have once landing on the page (Tan & Wei, 2006). Furthermore, as a webpage is often one of the first platforms visited by a current or potential customer/client, the placement of content can have a significant impact on the way that a brand is perceived by stakeholders (Garett, et al., 2016).

To assist in answering RQ2, a full semiotic analysis of the webpage layout, as well as a visual and critical discourse analysis of the visuals and language, were utilised to analyse the CSI webpages of Pick n Pay and Investec. Both webpages are also included in the general content analysis outlined above; however, due to their success within the CSI field, they were selected as the case studies for RQ2. Pick n Pay was also an ideal case study as it is a direct competitor of Ultra Liquors – the company utilised in the practical case study. Furthermore, while the organisations are within different fields of business, they were both awarded for academic CSI initiatives. This contributes to the comparative analysis.

Since the scope of this dissertation is not linguistic in nature, a full, detailed and rigorous semiotic analysis is not undertaken. Instead, the term “semiotic” is broached in a more generalized sense to mean a study of signification. A semiotic analysis was utilised to explore the layout of the pages. A semiotic analysis looks at the signs and symbols present within a data sample, as well as the various interpretations thereof (Chandler, 1994). First, the webpages were analysed denotatively, with notes being taken on the layout, images used, and the visual emphasis of certain elements. This included analysing the use of iconic and

symbolic signs, such as webpage placement and what the placement alludes to (ibid.) (Tan & Wei, 2006). Following the denotative analysis, the structure, images, and language were analysed in depth. The webpages were analysed on Google on a desktop, as this is the way an audience views the content. Screenshots of the webpages were also saved. The layout of a webpage has been shown to have a significant impact on how audiences interpret and interact with the content (ibid.) (Dailey, 2004). More specifically, it is proposed that cues given on a webpage can cause a behavioural response of either approach or avoidance of the information given (ibid.). Following the analysis of the page layout, a visual analysis of the images and visuals on the webpages was conducted. This includes a denotative analysis (looking at who or what are within the image) and a connotative analysis, which looks at the symbolic layers within an image (Leeuwen & Jewitt, 2004). Conducting a semiotic analysis of the sample webpages assists one in determining (to a certain extent) the information that the selected companies prioritise for their audiences. Furthermore, utilising a semiotic analysis allows one to go beyond the textual analysis of a webpage, and includes the images, graphics, and layout utilised – all of which contribute to the experience a viewer has when scrolling through a page.

Included in the analysis of these webpage is a critical discourse analysis of the language. The general content analysis was designed to determine the most prominent themes across South African CSI webpages, whereas the critical discourse analysis included in the in-depth webpage analysis investigates the language while taking institutional and sociocultural contexts into account (Carvalho, 2008). Discourse has been identified as a form of social practice, being that the way a text is written and displayed depends on current social contexts (ibid.). The discourse utilised influences the interpretation of the content and can possibly influence the audience's behaviour – for example, the purchase decisions. For the discourse analysis, the associations attached to certain words, such as “community” or “transformation” are important, as these associations determine how audiences will position themselves in relation to the content.

### **iii. Ultra Liquors CSI Communication Strategy**

The final phase of data gathering involved the Ultra Liquors practical case study. Established in 1985, Ultra Liquors is a B-BBEE compliant alcohol retailer that works in both consumer retail and in wholesale. To reach B-BBEE compliance, a company must contribute 5% net profit after tax, spread over three areas – namely Enterprise development, Supplier development, and Socio-economic development (Kitching & Abreu, 2021). They have been involved in CSI for a number of years, but their only communication of it had been to those in senior management. Due to internal stakeholder pressure, as well as a general understanding of current trends in corporate communications, Ultra Liquors wanted to start actively communicating their CSI.

With the above information in mind, I approached them with the proposal of creating a communications strategy for their CSI initiatives (detailed further in Chapter 4). After the creation of the strategy, I was subsequently involved in the process of creating and organising content for the communications roll out alongside their external marketing and communications agency. At the time of writing, their website had yet to launch officially. However, the majority of the work has been completed and I am currently working collaboratively with the marketing agency in the creation and organisation of content. The company have a webpage and are active on all popular SNSs. Working personally on a CSI communications strategy has given me direct insight into the process of the CSI communication of a major national South African company, which includes personal accounts from senior management, the process utilised by the communication company, and the accounts of the organisations that work with Ultra Liquors.

As the company had never communicated about their CSI initiatives before, multiple avenues within print, broadcast, and online media that could be explored. Prior to deciding which platforms would be best for their communication needs and being briefed on the extent of their CSI involvement, I established which initiatives they worked with and in which fields they focused their efforts. When Ultra Liquors became involved with CSI, they made the decision to seek out experts within the fields that they want to support. An example of this is the Alexandra Education Committee (AEC) in Johannesburg – an organisation that identifies and funds promising children in Alexandra and its surrounds through their high school career

(AEC, 2021). Ultra Liquors funds five children through the programme. Similarly, is the SAILI organisation, wherein Ultra Liquors also funds five students. Theories that were utilised in the creation of the strategy were the Stakeholder Theory, Signalling theory, and various corporate communication methods that have been identified as successful in academic research. To further consult the strategy, the CSI communication of some of Ultra Liquors competitors were analysed. Their biggest competitors are Makro and Pick n Pay liquor.

Following the creation and approval of the strategy, work began on the gathering and approving of content from the organisations involved. This was done in collaboration with Ultra Liquors' externally sourced marketing agency. Over the course of July and August 2021, the organisations were contacted via email to inform them of the process and to address any issues or queries that they had (see Addendum D for examples). This was a fundamental step as a number of the organisations are focused on childhood education, as well as child healthcare. Viewing the organisations as a group of stakeholders, the Stakeholder involvement strategy was utilised. I wanted the organisations to be actively involved in the communication process, to ensure that the information that would be communicated to the public aligned with their values.

Ultra Liquors were a particularly illuminating case study due to a number of factors. Firstly, as they had never communicated about their CSI initiatives before, it presented a unique opportunity to create a strategy from the ground up. Secondly, as they function within the alcohol industry – an industry already under intense scrutiny in South Africa especially due to the relationships between alcohol and domestic and gender-based violence, as well as the high levels of alcohol abuse nationwide – the level of care taken in the communications was extensive (Business Tech, 2019). Coupled with the sensitive nature of many of their supported initiatives, the process of creating and rolling out the strategy was meticulous. Furthermore, it allowed me to gain an in-depth insight into the CSI process of a national organisation.

## CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

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The research methods outlined in Chapter 3 yielded multiple interesting findings. In this chapter the findings of each research method are outlined and explained further through an analysis of the data gathered. While each research method explored a different area of CSI communication in South Africa, similar themes were located through the data analysis.

### **i. Webpage Content Analysis**

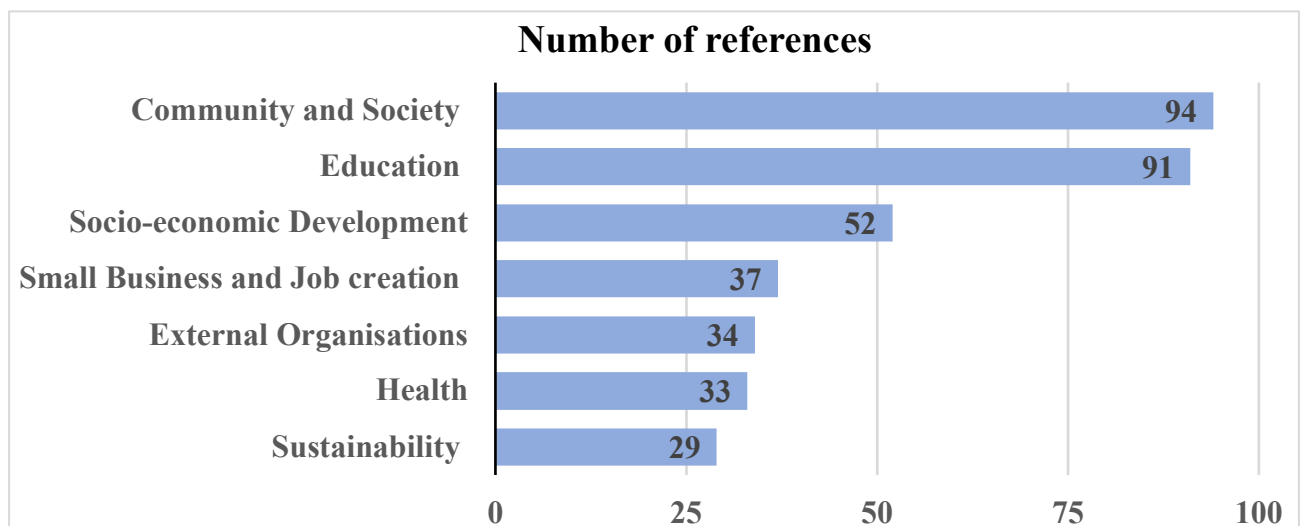
This research first aimed to determine what dominant and subordinate themes were present textually and visually on highly regarded South African company CSI webpages. It aimed to contribute to answering the question: *What are the common themes, methods of communication, and types of content on the Corporate Social Investment webpages of highly regarded South African companies?* Through a content analysis of the textual and visual information available on the webpages main CSI landing pages, this research aims to unpack which themes are given high salience and which themes are not. The content analysis garnered the following results:

1. Community and educational values were found to be the most prominent: references to “our communities”, building communities, and contributing to education were heavily referenced. Mention of External Organisations, Socio-economic development and Sustainability also received substantial coverage.
2. The use of photographs was particularly prevalent, specifically of Black and Coloured people, women, and children. However, there is very little mention of Race and Women empowerment on the webpages.
3. Information intended to validate a company’s contributions – such as Expenditure, Access to further information, and External Organisations – were relatively prominent.
4. “Women empowerment and Gender-based Violence” received minimal textual mention; however, women were heavily present within the images.

1. *The prominence of Community and Education, with notable mentions of External Organisations, Socio-economic Development, Health, and Sustainability*

One of the primary purposes of the qualitative content analysis was to determine which themes and content received the most salience on the webpages. As websites are often an individual’s first avenue of research when taking interest in an organisation’s CSI (Saat & Selamat, 2014), determining the type of content that is both made available and given prominence on said webpages can contribute to determining and understanding what information companies deem as most appealing and beneficial to stakeholders (Dailey, 2004). The graph below illustrates the most prominent nodes (excluding the image node as that is addressed later), as well as the number of times they were referenced.

Graph 1



Performing content analysis while using NVivo indicated textual prominence of the node “Community and Society.” Of the 21 pages in the sample, 20 had content that was coded into the “Community and Society” node. The only webpage that did not have content referenced to the “Community and Society” node was South African Breweries (SAB). The node was also referenced a total of 94 times across the webpages, highlighting the prominence of the node even further. Certain webpages placed more emphasis on the node than others. Almost 45% of the content on Shoprite’s webpage involved the term “community” or “communities”, with the term being referenced 15 times in the “Community and Society” node. It also received significant prominence on the webpages of Merchant Group, Anglo

American, and WNS Limited, with between 21% and 24% of the content relating to the node. Phrases that were referenced in the node included the likes of the following:

*AECI*: "...investing in effective community-focused organisations and initiatives, through the development and upliftment of vulnerable communities surrounding its operations." (AECI, 2021)

*Anglo American*: "To be productive, safe, responsible and sustainable, our operations must live alongside thriving communities." (Anglo American, 2021)

*DSTV*: "Our approach to social responsibility is focused on the relationships we have with our employees, our communities, and our customers" (DSTV, 2021)

The "Education" node was the second most prominent; referenced on 18 of the sample webpages, a total of 91 times. There were subcategories within the education node, namely "primary school", "high school", and "tertiary". However, the vast majority of the information was related to education in general as opposed to the subcategories. The prominence of this particular node was expected for a number of reasons – the main reason being that the education sector received the most funding from CSI expenditure in both 2019 and 2020 (Trialogue, 2019, 2020). In both years, an estimated 50% of CSI expenditure went towards education. The next nodes that received notable prominence were "Socio-economic development", "External Organisations", and "Sustainability"; they were referenced on 17, 16, and 15 of the webpages respectively. The prominence of these categories throughout the webpage sample bring a number of elements to attention about CSI communication on corporate webpages.

A fundamental element of CSI is an organisation addressing their impact on their community by contributing to social, community, and environmental change (Dahlsrud, 2008). Of particular significance to stakeholders is an organisation's direct impact on communities within which they operate. For this reason, the strong emphasis on "community" throughout the webpages is unsurprising due to the emphasis of the concept in CSI in general. The prominence of the "Community and Society" node implies that South African companies are focusing on emphasising their commitment to their communities. Looking at this in relation to the Signalling theory, it appears that organisations are attempting to signal to their

stakeholders that their commitment to their community is of prime importance. The extensive and consistent use of the term not only emphasises their commitment to their communities, but it also suggests that organisations deem the term to be a significant one when shaping stakeholder perceptions – which is a prominent factor of CSI reporting. The prominence of the “Education” node can be looked at in the same light. As a node, “Education” does more than just allude to the expenditure on the field within CSI. It emphasises that the organisations deem education to be a subject that will stand them in good stead with stakeholders. By giving education significant salience on the webpages, organisations are signalling to their audiences that they are invested in nurturing the future generations of South Africa, subsequently signalling that they are invested the future of South Africa as a whole.

The prominence of both “Community” and “Education” on the webpages implies that the sample companies deem those two subjects to be the most appealing to stakeholders, as it is most likely that emphasised information will be more readily remembered. Furthermore, the prominence implies that the companies deem the information to be the most beneficial to audiences in understanding the organisation. As Dailey (2004) points out in his research, information that is given prominence on webpages can assist in determining what information companies deem as most beneficial and appealing to viewers. Based on this research, the focus on the themes of “Community” and “Education” suggests that the sample companies deem these subjects to be the most appealing and beneficial. Additionally, the focus could imply that companies deem these two themes as having a positive effect on maintaining a favourable public perception, as well as contribute to fostering stronger brand loyalty.

However, the emphasis on the term brings another concept into the analysis. Through CSI communications, organisations are aiming to alleviate scepticism and create a favourable image of themselves to stakeholders. Interwoven with this is the concept of being a good corporate citizen. Similar to the complications that arise when defining CSR and CSI, there are also debates surrounding the definition of corporate citizenship (CC) (Matten & Crane, 2005). It is often defined in three views – namely the limited view, the equivalent view, and the extended view. The limited view equates CC with philanthropy and community involvement; the equivalent view equates it with CSR; and the extended view equates it with a “reconceptualization of business-society relationships” (Valor, 2005, p. 194). Matten and

Crane (2005) identified a number of issues within the three views – namely that the definitions often failed to truly interrogate the use of “citizenship” in the definition. They suggested a different definition of the term CC based on their review of the current theories, stating that “CC describes the role of the corporation in administering citizenship rights for individuals” (Matten & Crane, 2005, p. 173). This definition recontextualises the concept of CC as corporations not being citizens themselves, but rather enablers of particular aspects of citizenship within a community.

While they are often viewed synonymously, there are slight differences in what they refer to – namely that CSR primarily refers to how businesses organise and manage their various operations with the intention of having an overall positive impact on society, whereas CC is utilised to describe the contribution an organisation makes to their community, or society as a whole (MyHub, 2019). A commonly accepted notion is that organisations that have a successful and strong CSR/CSI branch meet the requirements of being a good corporate citizen, making CSR/CSI a branch of CC. The prominence of the “Community” node can allude to the possibility that the sample companies are attempting to convince their audiences of their significant role within South African communities, as well as their commitment to the communities as a good CC. As the various definitions of the term CC allude to, for an organisation to be perceived as a good CC it should contribute significantly to community and societal growth. The significant emphasis on the node in the data collection suggests that contributing to this perception is a priority for CSI communication amongst South African companies.

The prominence of the nodes “Education”, “Socio-economic development”, “Health” and “Sustainability” bring further results to light. As previously mentioned, the prominence of “Education” alludes to a focus on nurturing South Africa’s future generations, and in turn can have a positive effect on audience perceptions of the companies in question. The focus on the above-mentioned nodes has a similar effect. Examples of these themes referenced within the webpages are as follows:

*AECI*: “Socio-economic development (SED) is a national and global imperative which is embedded in the ethos of the AECI Group.” (Socio-economic development) (AECI, 2021)

*Momentum*: “In South Africa, the youth unemployment rate is a looming crisis that requires intervention from all spheres of our society. This is why we support programmes that tackle youth unemployment and skills development.” (Socio-economic development) (Momentum, 2021)

*DSTV*: “We are deeply invested in these relationships, knowing that our sustainability as a company is grounded in the commitment of our people” (Sustainability) (DSTV, 2021)

*Merchants Group*: “We believe by giving back to our community we’re able to create meaningful and sustainable changes to lives.” (Sustainability) (Merchants Group, 2021)

While the prominence of “Education” highlights a focus on an investment in the youth of South Africa, the prominence of “Socio-economic development” and “Sustainability” (as is shown in the examples) places the focus on an investment in South Africa’s future in a broader sense. Looking at the main priorities of CSI in South Africa, this focus is unsurprising. The term CSI is uniquely South African, and the word “investment” is utilised instead of “responsibility” for a reason. Following the end of Apartheid and the implementation of B-BBEE, the focus of CSI in South Africa shifted from an almost sole focus on education and healthcare (particularly HIV/AIDS) to a more well-rounded approach, with a particular emphasis on sustainability and developing those who had been previously disadvantaged (Ndhlovu, 2011). The term “investment” implies a long-term, meaningful commitment, whereas “responsibility” (while still widely used in South Africa) implies that it is more of an obligation. South African companies wanted to align more with the former as it was found that stakeholders responded to it more positively (Mersham & Skinner, 2016). With this in mind, it is unsurprising that the above nodes were prominent, as they reiterate a primary goal of CSI in South Africa. Furthermore, the prominence of the nodes “Socio-economic development”, “Health” and “Sustainability” – all of which have implications of long-term investment – not only emphasise the sample groups focus on long-term investments, but also that they deem the themes to be beneficial and appealing to the audience.

Circling back to the node “Community”, its prominence could also allude to a further intention of the CSI communication on corporate webpages. As defined in Carroll’s (1979) CSR pyramid, the primary responsibility of a company is to be profitable – even when it comes to social responsibility. The hope is that by engaging in CSI, a business will gain greater turnover, and subsequently create more profit. A challenge faced in CSI communication is that this is not the message companies want to disseminate to their audiences. The heavy focus on community values alludes to the top two tiers of Carroll’s (1979) CSR pyramid of responsibilities – namely Ethical and Philanthropic/Discretionary responsibilities. By focusing communications on the aforementioned responsibilities, it is implied that companies deem them as more appealing to external stakeholders. Placing emphasis on “Community” and its values also signals to stakeholders that a company’s ethical and philanthropic responsibilities are of the most importance, as opposed to their Legal and Economic responsibilities. The minimal presence of information relating to B-BEE, as well as other legal obligations, substantiates this further.

## *2. The use of Photographs, particularly of children, women, and people of colour*

Within the content analysis, images were given textual descriptions as NVivo is a textual data analysis tool and does not allow images to be put into the files. Images were included as they can valuable insight, and they have the ability to shape audiences’ perceptions of the content being viewed. Moreover, images supply additional information about the content that the sample companies may deem as having a desirable effect on their current and prospective clients (Rämö, 2011). The images were given descriptions based entirely on a denotative semiotic analysis, meaning they were described simply to convey the direct information the audience would be receiving. Examples of this are as follows:

*MTN*: “Image of young black school children in classroom” (MTN, 2021)

*Shoprite*: “Image of white woman assisting black children” (Shoprite, 2021)

Within the Node, there were the subcategories of “children”, “multiracial groups”, “people of colour”, “women”, and “other”. Images that fell under “other” were the likes of images of food, consumer goods, or general miscellaneous images. The reason for the selection of the

first two subcategories was because images of children and multiracial groups have been found to appear consistently in CSR/CSI communication strategies – both in involuntary company reports and in voluntary communications such as webpages (Rämö, 2011). The reason for having the sub-category “people of colour” was due to the nature of CSI in South Africa. As aforementioned, B-BBEE regulations (which shape many CSI initiatives) are in place to ensure the development of legacy victims of Apartheid. Therefore, it was anticipated that if there were images on the webpages, many of them would include people of colour. The subcategory “women” was selected for similar reasoning, given that the development of women in society is of global significance, and of particular significance in South Africa. Of the 21 webpages within the sample, 18 made use of images. The organisations that did not include images were FirstRand, Nedbank, and Woolworths. This observation alone highlights the significance that organisations place on images when it comes to disseminating information to their audiences. Across the 18 webpages, there were 89 images in total. Of these 89 images, 72 included people of colour, 35 included images of children, 37 included images of women, and 16 included multiracial representation. There was overlap with some of the images in the subcategories as an image that fell under “children” could also fall under the category of “people of colour”. The prominence of images of women will be addressed in the following section. The prevalence of photographs substantiates the limited previous research that has been done within the field of photography and CSI reporting.

The use of photographs on corporate website can have multiple effects, three of which are of particular relevance to this research. Firstly, images can convey information to audiences faster than textual information (Rämö, 2011). Furthermore, if there is textual information and images on a webpage, the images are likely to elicit the first response, followed by the text (Rämö, 2011). In the realm of CSR communication, images can initially inform audiences of company priorities – such as a focus on racial diversity, or on children. Secondly, images can substantiate textual information. On a webpage, the text and images are intended to be understood in conjunction with each other. An image alongside a paragraph can substantiate the textual information and can affect the audience’s response to the information they are receiving (Rämö, 2011). Lastly, images have the ability to elicit a more emotional response from the audience. This is particularly relevant when images of children are involved, due to the associations people make when they see images of children.

The first notable result was the prevalence of photographs that included racial diversity – the subcategory that received the most references in the images node. Images including humans in general have a positive effect on audiences as they are likely to be depicted as wholesome (Rämö, 2011). The images ranged from children in a school environment, to young adults working with technology, to images of employees. The prevalence of this category was expected to a certain degree, due to the main purpose of CSI in South Africa being the development and support of people of colour as a B-BBEE requirement. By giving photographs of racial diversity significant prominence, companies are visually signalling to audiences that a primary focus of theirs is support for those who have been previously disadvantaged. It signals to audiences that they are aware of the role they can play in assisting the disadvantaged. Furthermore, before the audience has had the opportunity to read the textual information available to them, the prominence of people of colour within the images informs them of a company's focus within their CSI. It is then likely that audiences will approach the textual information with a broad impression that the CSI content they are going to be reading will involve the development of the previously disadvantaged.

It should be noted that while images of Black and Coloured persons are abundant, the words denoting Black and Coloured persons are not. The node "Race" which was purely for textual mention of race was only present on three of the sample webpages, with eight references in total. The minimal textual mention of race suggests that the sample companies are hesitant to directly mention that they are placing significant CSI expenditure on the support and development of the previously disadvantaged within the country, despite the fact that it is a core principle of CSI overall. This could be for a number of reasons. It is possible that companies avoid referencing race in their textual content because they believe audiences will unpack the given textual content and conclude that the primary recipients of CSI expenditure are people of colour. Companies may also assume that their audiences are already aware that because of B-BBEE, their CSI expenditure goes primarily to the development of people of colour, even if it is not explicitly mentioned. As there is very limited research into this topic, it is difficult to prove either theory. However, the prominence of racial diversity within the images on the webpages conveys the message that the development and support of people of colour are a core element of CSI initiatives in South Africa. Similar to the earlier theory, companies may assume that by including many images of people of colour on their webpages, audiences won't require the textual substantiation that the support and development of people of colour is a priority. There may be a concern that the direct mention

of race will have negative consequences, given the very difficult and sensitive history of race in the country.

The second notable result was the prominence of images that included children. Although there were only 35 references compared to the 72 that included people of colour, that is 35 references across 18 webpages. The prominence of these images can indicate a number of things that a company may be attempting to convey to their audience. At a simple level, one can look at the correlation between the prominence of the “Education” node and the prominence of images of children. As previously mentioned, the “Education” node was the second most referenced node during data collection. While there were very few references that detailed whether primary school, high school, or tertiary education were the priority, the subject of education was prominent, nonetheless. The images that include children can have two effects in relation to the subject of education. Firstly, it can inform the audience that the youth are a CSI focus area prior to them reading the textual information. Youth and education are regularly associated with one another, meaning that the prominence of images of children could shape and guide the audiences thinking. Furthermore, the images of children can serve as “illustrative compliments to the written content” (Rämö, 2011, p. 379). The significant amount of textual information relating to “education” is complimented and substantiated further by the prominence of images of children. Furthermore, as many of the images include people of colour, there is an added implication that they are the primary youth population being assisted are those that were disadvantaged by the effect of apartheid. The images of children also highlight an alignment with B-BBEE regulations that must be adhered to. The primary goal of B-BBEE is to advance people of colour within South African society in an attempt to reconcile the effects of apartheid, and this starts with educating the youth. The prominent use of images of children carries the implication that the youth are a fundamental element of CSI within the sample group, which alludes to the sample pages abiding by the regulations set out in B-BBEE.

The prominent use of images of children can have further effects on the audience – particularly if a company is making use of said images in order to maintain current and foster more brand loyalty. Within CSI communication in particular, images can aid in presenting an idealistic version of a company to stakeholders prior to a stakeholder having even read the textual information (Chong, et al., 2019). Furthermore, a study in New Zealand found that “feel good” images, such as images of children, made regular occurrences in CSR

communication – highlighting that organisations are likely aware of the role that images of children can play in shaping stakeholder perceptions (Chong, et al., 2019). Images of children in particular have been shown to positively affect the way an audience perceives a company (Rämö, 2011). For audiences, images of children can signify a caring nature, as well as a focus on the future of a community (Rämö, 2011). As the majority of the companies within the data sample utilised images of children on their webpages, it is implied that they deem them as beneficial in the communication of their CSI. By utilising images of children, they are signalling to their stakeholders that not only do they care about the youth of today, but also that they are focused on the future of South Africa. The audience gathers these types of perceptions from the images, meaning that it they will likely approach the textual information with a positive impression of the company’s webpage.

### *3. The prominence of information that helps in alleviating scepticism – such as Expenditure and Access to further information*

The “External Organisations” node was relatively prominent within the data sample, making appearances on 15 of the 21 company webpages. Another node that received a notable number of references was “Access to further information”. Information referenced within this node included access to company CSI reports, links to social media pages, as well as links to further information about a company’s CSI in general. These nodes relate to information that could assist in validating the CSI information that a company makes available on their webpage. A further node that relates to this is the “Expenditure” node, as well as the node relating to B-BBEE and legal information. Expenditure was referenced in 10 of the 21 nodes, making it relatively prominent. However, “B-BBEE and Legal information” were only referenced on seven of the 21 sample webpages.

The literature review investigated some of the reasons for CSI communication. Amongst these were:

- attempts to reduce information asymmetry between an organisation and its stakeholders (Du, et al., 2010)
- it attempts to foster brand loyalty amongst an organisation’s stakeholders; (Irwin, 2003)

- it attempts to alleviate scepticism that is regularly associated with CSI communications (Utgård, 2018).

The prominence of “External Organisations”, “Access to Further Information”, and “Expenditure” have the ability to impact all of the mentioned reasons listed above. External organisations include the likes of NGOs that are supported or partnered with companies in the data sample, as well as government organisations that work with organisations. Examples of these coded within the data sample are as follows:

*Momentum*: “We partnered with our friends at WeThinkCode\_ to offer coding workshops, an in-demand skill in today’s jobs landscape.” (Momentum, 2021)

*Vodacom*: “Vodacom and the Department of Social Development (DSD) collaborated to launch the Gender-Based Violence Command Centre” (Vodacom, 2021)

The mention of organisations such as those above give stakeholders more information than mere claims made by any company. It gives stakeholders more information to base their perceptions of an organisation on and can assist in alleviating scepticism about an organisation’s contributions. By providing the audience with information that goes beyond just explaining what a company does for CSI, companies signal transparency in their CSI contributions and commitments. As discussed by Mahoney, et al., (2013), it is not just the message content that is important, but the act of communicating about CSI transparently and adequately that is a signalled message in and of itself. Furthermore, as Utgård (2018) points out, stakeholders rely on concrete information to inform their decisions about a company and their CSI involvement. Providing the audience with concrete information such as the above not only signals a company’s transparency and dedication to CSI, but it provides the audience with information they need and desire in order to inform their decisions and perceptions.

The same holds for the prominence of “Access to Further Information”. Many companies in the data sample provided further information, such as reports, social media accounts, or the ability to contact the company directly about their CSI contributions. Access to reports can be of particular significance in the realm of alleviating scepticism amongst stakeholders. Access gives stakeholders concrete data that validates webpage-delivered information. While it is unlikely that all those who visit a webpage will want to look at a CSI report, the simple act of

granting access indicates to stakeholders that a company is transparent in their communications and has nothing to hide. Interestingly, very few companies indicated a use of SNSs as means of CSI communication. Only Shoprite had a social media page – an Instagram account – dedicated to CSI. This indicates that South African companies have yet to utilise SNSs to their full potential in the realm of corporate communication.

As identified in the literature review, there are three popular CSI communication strategies – namely stakeholder-response, stakeholder-information, and stakeholder involvement (Morsing & Schultz, 2006). Stakeholder involvement has been identified as the most beneficial method as it allows for strong two-way communication. Other two strategies place the audience in a more passive role (Morsing & Schultz, 2006). Social Media, which allows for there to be significantly more communication between a company and its stakeholders, can be very beneficial to increasing communication and understanding stakeholder wants and needs, yet clearly very few South African companies are making use of it. Furthermore, it closes the circle of the four elements of the Signalling theory – namely the action of feedback being sent back to the signaller (Connelly, et al., 2011). Constructive feedback allows organisations to identify and correct or alter elements of the content being signalled to stakeholders and their actual involvement in CSI, which further highlights why an increased use of SNSs may be beneficial for companies that want to increase their reach with CSI communication (Öberseder, et al., 2013).

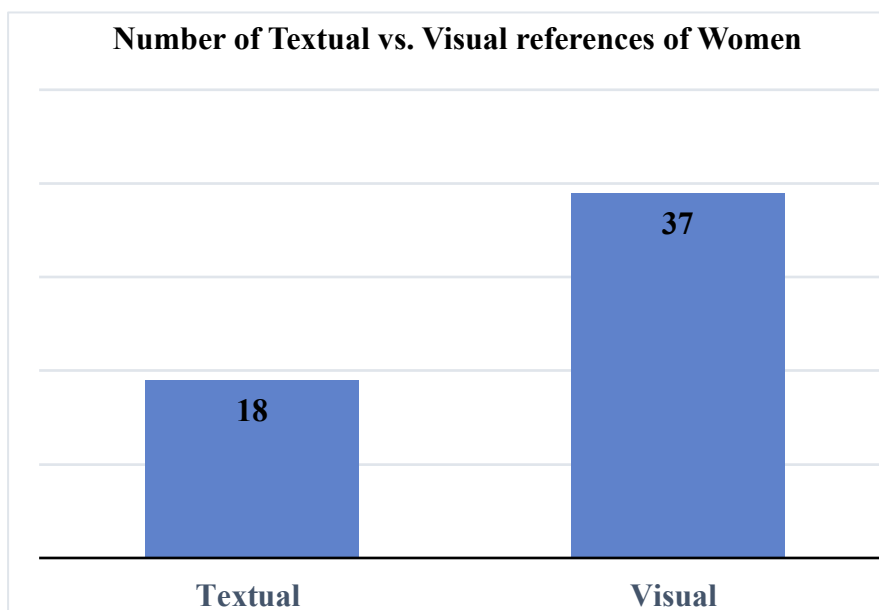
Why did “B-BBEE and Legal Information” receive far fewer references than the aforementioned nodes? This seems peculiar, especially given that other findings create an apparent contradiction – why would CSI be communicated elsewhere in a manner to gain consumer trust and yet here with “B-BBEE and Legal Information,” this is not the case. One reason for this apparent contradiction could be alerting audiences to a more fundamental, albeit misleading, contradiction. By showcasing B-BBEE and legal information audiences might come to believe that CSI work is only being done to ensure that a company is compliant with government regulation. While consumers appreciate transparency regarding CSR/CSI, they respond more positively to organisations that appear to be contributing to CSR/CSI for the top two levels of Carroll’s CSR pyramid – namely ethical and philanthropic responsibilities. It is no secret that prominent reasons for participation in CSI is for corporate benefit (the economic responsibility) and to abide by B-BBEE regulations (the legal responsibility) (Hinson & Ndhlovu, 2011; Ndhlovu, 2011). The minimal presence of “B-

BBEE and Legal information” may imply that organisations want to minimise the possibility of being perceived badly by audiences because their reasoning for contributing to CSI is tied to B-BBEE and Legal regulations. While mentioning B-BBEE and legal information may seem to validate a company’s CSI because it is tangible information, it is more likely that it will be received negatively and tarnish a company’s image. This hypothesis is based on Menon and Kahn’s (2003) research, which discussed how companies should focus their social responsibility messaging on the outputs of CSI involvement – for example, good academic results if a company works within education – and their commitment to CSI, rather than information that alludes to self-interest (such as the economic responsibility) (Menon & Kahn, 2003; Carroll, 1979).

4. *The lack of textual information about Women empowerment compared to the prominence of visual images containing women*

An interesting result from the analysis was the lack of textual information relating to women empowerment in South Africa. The graph below illustrates a comparison between the number of images there were of women, compared to the number of textual references.

Graph 2:



“Women empowerment” was a set node in content analysis, due to the emphasis that is placed on the subject both globally and particularly within South Africa. In the third financial quarter of 2021, it was revealed that South African women, regardless of race, are less likely to be in paid employment than men (StatsSA, 2021). Furthermore, men account for 66.9% of managerial positions in the country, and woman only account for 33.1% (StatsSA, 2021). The 2019 rape and murder of University of Cape Town Student Uyinene Mrwetyana, brought to light the ever-present spectre of gender-based violence in South Africa (Lyster, 2019). The node “Women empowerment” was only referenced 18 times, and it was only present on six of the 21 webpages. Comparing this to the prominence of “community” which was referenced 94 times across 20 of the 21 webpages, one can see the vast difference. Of the webpages that mentioned it, Vodacom had the highest number of references, with the company’s webpage accounting for 10 of the 18 total references. It also made up 27% of the content on Vodacom’s webpage. It was relatively surprising that the issue did not receive more salience in the data sample. The subject of “women empowerment” may have rose to prominence recently, but its prevalence dates back to the Apartheid era. The 1954- and 1994- Women’s Charters both called for a society wherein women were viewed as equals and not inferior to men (Williams, 2019). Williams’ (2019) article appears on the South African government website and goes on to highlight that empowering women involves dealing with the legacy of apartheid. Furthermore, women empowerment in the workplace is directly addressed in B-BBEE legislation. These examples highlight the importance of the transformation of women in South Africa, yet the textual content in the data sample suggest otherwise.

As per Graph 2, images of women were more prominent than textual content about women. Of the 89 images across the 21 webpages in the sample, 37 of them included or were solely of women and girls. This visually indicates to the audience that women are a focus area within CSI initiatives. Similar results were noted in relation to images of people of colour on the webpages, yet the lack of textual mention of race. If audiences were to take a broad glance at the webpages, it is likely that they will register the images prior to the textual content (Rämö, 2011). In doing so, they will see images primarily of the Apartheid disenfranchised, women, and children, which will shape their perception of the focus area of a company’s CSI. Though the youth receive notable mention through the “Education” node, the other two categories do not. This result indicates that companies want to visually allude to the idea that women empowerment is of significance within the CSI sector, even though the

lack of textual content relating to the subject may indicate otherwise. Photographs can be used to guide an audience's thought process, and in some cases distort our judgement of the content – particularly in social responsibility communication (Rämö, 2011). The above results indicate that companies want to visually guide our perceptions to believe that women and people of colour are two important focus areas in CSI, even though it is not textually mentioned. Further research would be required to determine whether the above observations truly reflect the focus areas of CSI in South Africa, but as this research was limited to the communication techniques utilised and the content directly available to webpage visitors, investigating the actual CSI focus areas was beyond the scope of research.

## ii. Pick n Pay & Investec Webpages: Signification and Discourse Analysis

The second element of research was a Signification and Discourse Analysis of the two most recent winners of the Trialogue Strategic CSI award, Pick n Pay and Investec. This analysis aimed to contribute to answering the question *How do Pick n Pay (winner of the Trialogue Strategic CSI award 2020) and Investec (winner of the Trialogue Strategic CSI award 2019) successfully communicate their altruistic values through their CSI initiatives on their webpages?* The sub questions were related to the communication tactics utilised by each company, as well as what information they prioritise. Following the analysis, the following results were found.

1. The different communication approaches validate research showing that there is no set way to disseminate information. Pick n Pay have gone with a detailed approach, whereas Investec have kept their information simple and clear.
2. The language and images on the webpages create a strong sense of Ubuntu and Community, which highlights the values each company prioritise. In relation to this, the discourse contains strong implications of each company's responsibility to their community.
3. While race and gender are never mentioned textually, the images associated with the textual information carry the implication that Black people and women are the demographic focus.

### *1. Diversity and Similarities in webpage content and layout: A comparison of Pick n Pay and Investec*

Following the analysis of the webpages, a number of observations were noted. While there were strong similarities in the type of content available on their CSI webpages, they made use of different visual and textual techniques to communicate information to the audience. Pick n Pay opted for an approach that included a significant amount of textual and visual information, whereas Investec opted for a very simple and clean aesthetic for their webpage. These differences highlight the alternative approaches that can be adopted for successful CSI communication. Further results and analysis are detailed below.

The first notable difference can be seen on the headers of the webpages. Pick n Pay’s webpage made use of an alternating header, that consisted of four topics – namely “Supporting small businesses”, “Responsible retailing”, “Building our communities” and “Sustainability”. Each topic had its own expansion on the primary webpage, which will be elaborated on later. Investec had one simple header that was titled “Our Communities” and accompanied by one image. The primary headers of each webpage can be seen in Figures 1 and 2 below.

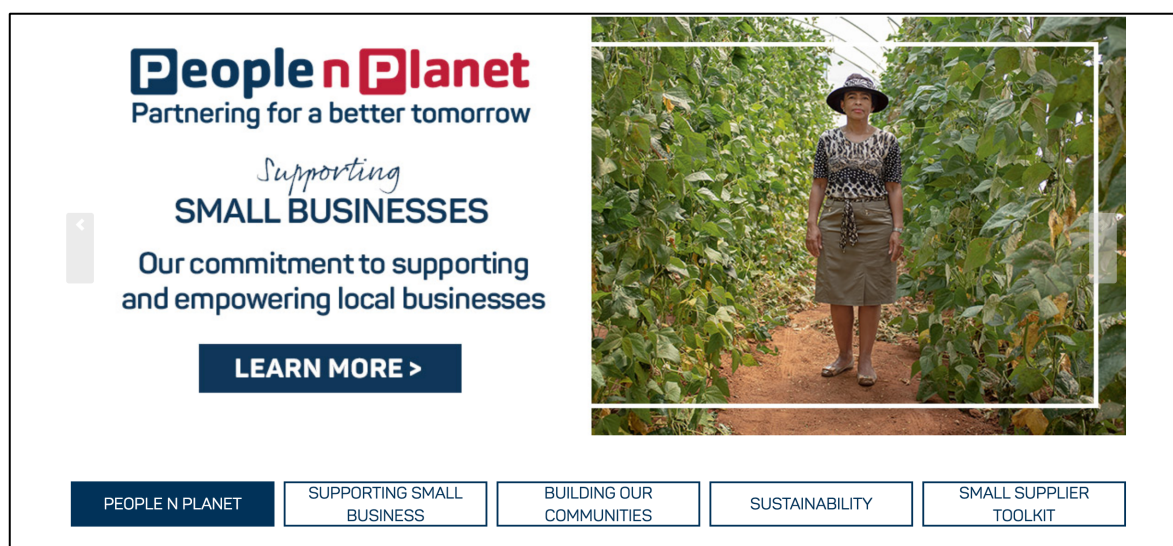


Figure 1: Pick n Pay CSI webpage header. Source: <https://www.pnp.co.za/peoplenplanet>

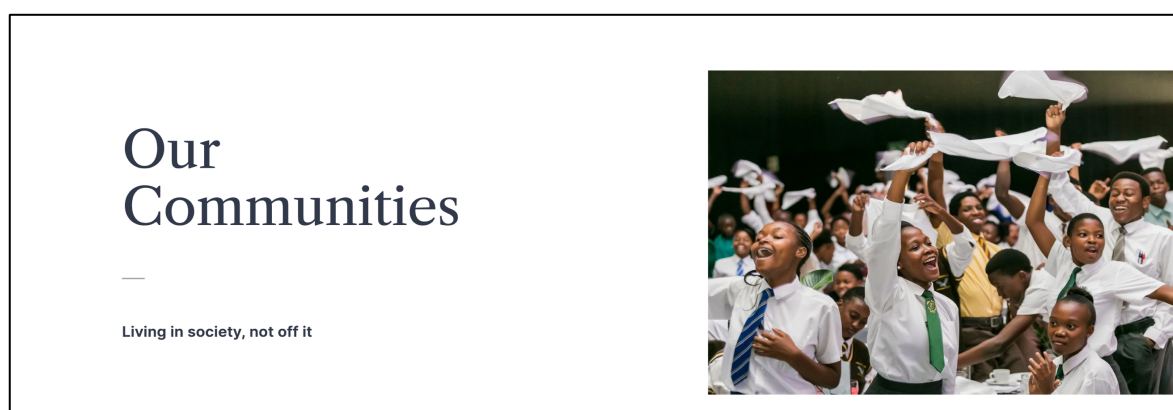


Figure 2: Investec CSI webpage header. Source: [https://www.investec.com/en\\_za/welcome-to-investec/corporate-responsibility/our-community.html](https://www.investec.com/en_za/welcome-to-investec/corporate-responsibility/our-community.html)

The visual structures seen above are consistent throughout the webpages of the two companies. Pick n Pay have opted for a great degree of visual detail. Alternatively, Investec have utilised a very simplistic approach. A possible reason for this is the nature of each companies CSI approach. Pick n Pay are focused on several fields – ranging from education,

to supporting small businesses, to tackling sustainability issues. Investec have a sole focus on education and entrepreneurship. The placement of content on a webpage is important, since not all visitors to a page are going to be dedicated enough to look through all the information (Tan & Wei, 2006). Badly designed and presented webpages tend to frustrate users as they struggle to locate important and relevant information. In webpage design, the most important information is placed at the top of the landing page as this is what the audience will see first (ibid.). Semiotically, the audience sees the iconic signs of a significant amount of textual information, along with multiple images that are intended to be associated with said text (Chandler, 1994). The significant number of images, which will likely be noted before the textual content, begin the process of shaping the audience's perception of the content.

Symbolically, Pick n Pay are highlighting their range of focus areas and their dedication to each of them, as they are each given prominence on the header of the page (ibid.). On the other hand, Investec's header visually indicates that they have adopted a simpler approach to CSI as they are entirely focused on education. The placement of an image of black school children at the top of the page symbolises both their involvement and commitment to the development of young black South Africans. These differences highlight the alternative methods companies can utilise to communicate their CSI information and indicates how alternative approaches to CSI can influence communication methods. However, a similarity noted in the page headers is the use of Black people within the images. Investec's sole header image is of school children, all of which are Black people. Pick n Pay's primary webpage header contains an image of a lone woman of colour. While the presence of race within the webpages will be discussed at a later stage, it is important to note that both Pick n Pay and Investec are signalling their demographic focus areas through the images they utilise at the top of the page. Both pages containing an image of Black people as the first image audiences see assists in shaping audience perceptions of the values that each company prioritise within their CSI sectors (Tan & Wei, 2006).

A communication tactic that both companies utilised was the association of almost all textual content with the images alongside them. While this was predominantly done by Pick n Pay, it was also exhibited by Investec. On the primary CSI landing page for each company, the page title is accompanied by an image (or multiple images in Pick n Pay's case), as is seen in Figure's 1 and 2. Furthermore, as one navigates the webpage, it is immediately noticeable that the images are intended to be associated with the majority of the textual content.

Quotations are accompanied by images of those quoted, and further images are utilised to align with various content across the pages. Examples of this can be seen below in Figures 3 and 4.

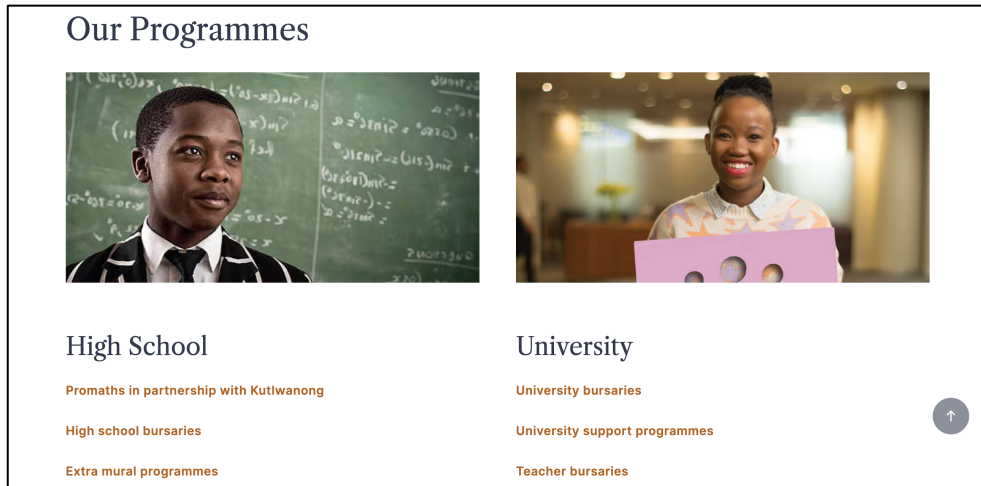


Figure 3: Investec CSI Webpage



Figure 4: Pick n Pay CSI Webpage

As can be seen in the figures above, images are utilised for various reasons; however, the tactic of utilising images is one seen regularly in communication methods. Referring to Figure 3, the audience is presented with two images that are intended to be associated with the text below them. Denotatively, the audience sees two Black people – a Black male who we can understand to be at school given his uniform and the presence of the chalk board behind him, and an older Black female in casual clothing, that we understand to be a university student given the text below her providing context. As the audience is exposed to

these images before the text and will likely respond to them prior to engaging with the text, the images can have a significant effect on how the audience interprets the text (Rämö, 2011).

Due to the “richness and appeal” of images, as well as their ability “express experiences and ideas in ways written words cannot”, photographs can influence an audience’s thought process prior to interacting with the text (Pink, 2007, p. 135). For example, as both individuals are Black people, audiences will make the association that the high school and university programmes are primarily if not solely focused on assisting Black people. Looking at the image of the young man specifically, iconically he is looking beyond the camera with light illuminating his face. Symbolically, he seems to be gazing into a bright future – which is substantiated by the text below. When associated with the information below the image, audiences will conclude that Investec’s high school programmes assist and allow individuals like the black male in the image to have a bright and successful future. Referring to Figure 4, the audience sees two images – namely of a white male and a white female – alongside two quotes. Within both images, the subjects are looking directly at the camera. The use of eye contact with the audience, coupled with the fact that the images are intended to be associated with quotes given by the subjects, allows the audience to feel as though they are being spoken to directly. This involves the audience more than a paragraph of text would, and more than if the images had not been included.

## *2. The Discourses/Values of Community & Solidarity, Ubuntu, and an Organisations Responsibility to Society*

The language use on webpages can have an effect on an audience’s perception of the brand. Furthermore, the prominence of certain themes and even words can impact what audiences remember the most. Superficially, webpage content appears to be providing the audience with a broad explanation of each company’s CSI. However, by conducting a deeper analysis of the discourse presented, results show that the companies have strategically interwoven certain discourses into the textual and visual content in order to appeal to the viewer and successfully communicate their altruistic values.

The first of these discourses is that of “Community & Solidarity”. Throughout the webpages, there is both a consistent use of the word “community” in its various forms, as well as phrases that carry an implication of community values. Examples of this are the likes of the title for Investec’s page, which is “Our Communities” and one of Pick n Pay’s rolling webpage headers which prioritises the phrases “Building our communities: Our commitment to building our communities”. It is also highlighted in certain phrases on the webpages, such as the two below:

*Investec*: “Giving back is part of Investec’s DNA. It’s part of who we have always been. We always want to live in society and not off it.” (Investec, 2021)

*Pick n Pay*: “Because we’ve known from day 1 that caring for our people, serving our customers, and participating in the communities we work and live in isn’t just a part of our business; it is our business.” (Pick n Pay, 2021)

*Pick n Pay*: “Transformation is about holding hands with our small suppliers and people. At Pick n Pay, we have a moral, social and economic imperative to serve our communities” (Pick n Pay, 2021)

The phrases that have been identified showcase the community values that are tied into the CSI programmes of the respective companies. Text has the ability to shape one’s perceptions, beliefs, attitudes, and values (Fairclough, 2003). With regard to CSI communication, text can impact a company’s public perception as it can work favourably to showcase the values a company wishes to disseminate to its audience. Looking specifically at the phrases above, the notable phrases that assist in creating the discourses in question are “We want to live in society, not off it”, “...caring for our people, serving our customers, and participating in our communities”, and “...holding hands with our small suppliers and people”. Each of these phrases could shape a viewer’s perception of the content and the respective company. If one delves deeper into the analysis, one can look at the structure of the phrase “...caring for our people, serving our customers, and participating in our communities”. By placing “caring for our people” first, Pick n Pay communicate to the audience that it is their main priority. This discourse also implies that the reason for CSI contributions is not for their economic responsibility, but rather for their ethical and philanthropic responsibilities. The discourse

assists in substantiating the altruistic values that Pick n Pay aim to promote through their communications.

A discourse that is similar to that of “Community & Solidarity” that was also identified as prominent in the analysis is a discourse of “Ubuntu”. A uniquely South African term, “Ubuntu” is a term from the Nguni language in South Africa, and while its direct translation in English is “humanity”, it is also a philosophy about life (Nussbaum, 2003). The most popular understanding of the term is “I am because we are”. At its core, it encompasses the belief that we all exist in order to coexist, and that we need one another to thrive. While this discourse was primarily seen on Pick n Pay’s webpage, it was also prevalent on Investec’s webpage through both the textual and visual content. On Pick n Pay’s webpage, there was significant textual content that contributed to the prevalence of the Ubuntu discourse, and one phrase directly mentions it. Examples of the discourse as seen on Pick n Pay’s webpage are as follows:

*“People and Planet: Partnering for a better tomorrow”*

*“We invite you to join us as we partner together to create a better tomorrow.”*

*“We walk with you on the **journey** to become a **successful and sustainable** supplier to Pick n Pay”*

*“The better we all become is based on the principles of **Umntu ngumtu nganantu**, I am a person because of the other people. We are committed to playing our part.”*

The first phrase is the name given to Pick n Pay’s CSI sector, with its motto being “Partnering for a better tomorrow”. The word “partner” is reiterated in the second phrase, and the same discourse can be derived from the third and fourth phrases, with the fourth phrase containing the phrase “Umntu ngumtu nganatu” – the Zulu version of the term “Ubuntu” (Nussbaum, 2003). The prominence of this discourse alludes to the value that Pick n Pay see in it and implies that the company deems it as a beneficial value to communicate to their audience. The discourse is also substantiated by images on the webpage, many of which depict multiracial groups of people. These images coupled with the textual content create a

strong discourse of Ubuntu, signifying Pick n Pay's commitment to working together with the South African community, as well as highlighting their altruistic values.

While Investec's webpage may not include as much information on it relating to this discourse, it is still present. A phrase that is repeated twice on their webpage is "Living in society, not off it". It is both their CSI motto, and it is found within the CSI head's on the webpage. Furthermore, there is the phrase "Investec's Corporate Social Investments (CSI) are central to the groups philosophy of making an unselfish contribution to society". As aforementioned, text has the ability to shape an audience's perception of an organisation. The textual examples given above from Investec's webpage showcase not only their community and altruistic values, but also contribute to the discourse of Ubuntu by highlighting their commitment to working with society. Similar to Pick n Pay, the use of three images of groups of people on the page also substantiate the presence of the discourse on Investec's webpage.

The final notable discourse on the two webpages is the implication of each company's acknowledgement of their responsibility to society, as well as the value that they see in it. Throughout both pages, there are phrases that both directly state and imply that the companies are aware of their reach in their communities, and that it should be used for community benefit. Examples of these phrases are as follows:

*Pick n Pay*: "Big business has a major role and responsibility to play in building and developing small businesses." (Pick n Pay, 2021)

*Pick n Pay*: "Large corporates have a responsibility to address the inequalities of the past." (Pick n Pay, 2021)

*Investec*: "Giving back is part of Investec's DNA. It's part of who we have always been." (Investec, 2021)

*Investec*: "To achieve this, we recognise that there needs to be a continuum of initiatives, starting from high school, moving to tertiary education and continuing through to young adult learning" (Investec, 2021)

The implication of an organisation's responsibility is also found in each of the headers on Pick n Pay's page with the repetition of the term "Our Commitment to...". Similar to the advertising field, repetition of a term assists in engraining it in the audience's mind. As can be seen in the above phrases, Pick n Pay have directly mentioned their responsibility, whereas Investec have used a more subtle approach. The phrases all carry the implication that each company is aware of their responsibility to society. This alludes to the concept of corporate citizenship – more specifically Matten and Crane's (2005) newer formulation of the concept. Instead of a company identifying themselves as a *citizen*, they identify themselves as entities that can assist in giving their community and individuals certain rights as citizens. In essence, they take on a responsibility to enable the community at large, particularly those in disadvantaged circumstances. The phrases identified above imply that each company is aware of their role as per Matten and Crane's (2005) definition of a corporate citizen. Furthermore, their communication of it implies that they deem it as beneficial in fostering positive perceptions of the company at large.

### *3. The use of Images on the webpages: Race, Gender, and other relationships*

Similar to content analysis, the images on the webpages consisted primarily of people of colour, with children and women also being heavily present. Investec's webpage consists of six images, all of which include Black people, and four of them consisting solely of Black people. At the time of writing, Pick n Pay's webpage consisted of 27 images, 18 of which included Black and Coloured persons. The subjects of the images range from employees at the companies, to individuals or groups partaking in work events, to images of those who benefit from each companies CSI divisions.

The strong presence of people of colour, and specifically Black people within the images was expected because of the nature of CSI in South Africa being primarily focused on their development and upliftment. However, it is not just the presence of people of colour, but the way in which they are depicted that is of importance. Referring back to Figure 2, which is Investec's webpage header, we see a group of youthful students of colour in the midst of celebrating. Most of them are standing and possibly dancing, and their mouths are open as if they are singing. This depiction of joyful Black students alongside "Our Communities" indicates that a fundamental part of Investec's communities is Black students. Furthermore,

the two images associated with their High School and University initiatives are of students of colour – one of which is looking into the distance, and the other who is looking directly at the camera and smiling. While their focus on education is spoken about further on the page, there is no textual mention of which racial demographics are targeted. The images suggest otherwise – specifically that children and young adults of colour are Investec’s primary focus in the realm of education.

On Pick n Pay’s webpage, the visual presence of Black people is also noted in employee photographs and photographs associated with the initiatives they support. While they have utilised the same strategy as Investec by letting the images give the audience significant information about the racial demographic they focus their CSI on, the image content and analysis also yields interesting results. Firstly, in many of the images, the subjects are making eye contact with the camera, as seen below.



Figure 5: Content from Pick n Pay's CSI webpage



Figure 6: Content from Pick n Pay's CSI webpage

Eye contact in images may seem like a simple coincidence, but it can have certain effects on the audience and their perception of the content. As we have seen, images can encourage a more emotional response from viewers (Rämö, 2011). Eye contact has the ability to bring the audience into the narrative of the image. In advertising, a model with a direct gaze with the audience is proven to yield more effective results than an averted gaze (To & Patrick, 2021). As corporate webpages are a form of advertising in and of itself, the same can be said for the effect the images have on the audience. In figure 5, there are two women who are both smiling directly at the camera. In figure 6, the cyclist in focus is looking directly at the camera with a serious expression. Both figures highlight how the audience can be drawn into an image by using eye contact.

A further notable result is the presence of women within the photographs. More than half of Pick n Pay's images included or were solely images of women. Additionally, at the time of writing, the primary image in their header was of a woman of colour looking directly at the camera. The same theme is seen on Investec's webpage, as within the primary header image a young girl is the main subject. Both examples, coupled with the significance of women visually on the webpages, indicate that women are an important element of each organisations CSI sector. However, there is little to no textual mention that the development of South African women is a CSI priority for either company. This is noteworthy as a point that promotes cognitive dissonance, given the significance of women and transformation not only in South Africa, but globally.

These data also echo results seen in the general content analysis. Reiterating Tan & Wei's (2006) research, information that is deemed the most important is given prominence on webpages. By placing a significant number of images including women on the webpages that are intended to be associated with textual content, the audience will likely conclude that women upliftment is a CSI focus area. Furthermore, Chong, et al., (2019) discuss that as photographs are deemed as a "transparent representation of reality", they can assist in emphasising a company's commitment to a certain field (pg. 328). Coupled with the concept of captioning, that provides more information to the audience for analysing a photograph, the audience will likely make links between textual and visual content, even if certain information is implicitly stated (Chandler, 1994). For example, if we refer back to figure 1 – an image of a woman of colour alongside the words "Supporting small businesses" – one

makes the immediate association between the woman and the text alongside her. Pick n Pay intended for the audience to make the association that in their support for small businesses, women-led businesses are a priority. Similarly, in figure 3, an image of a woman of colour is associated with the section that details the university initiatives Investec contribute to.

Placing the image of a woman of colour above that content indicates that Investec want the audience to associate women upliftment in university with Investec's CSI. These examples highlight how the companies have utilised the relationships between the textual and visual content in a manner that lets the audience come to certain conclusions themselves, which can contribute positively to a company's public perception.

### **iii. Practical Case Study: Ultra Liquors**

The third element of research aimed to answer the question: *Utilising Ultra Liquors as a case study, how does one approach creating a CSI communication strategy? What are some of the key considerations taken into account when creating a CSI communication strategy?* Detailed below is an explication of the CSI communications strategy created with an external marketing agency. Currently there is only a rough version of the webpage available to the public. However, all information for the platform has been gathered and refined in preparation for the roll-out of content. During interviews with the commercial director of Ultra Liquors, the following communication goals were identified:

- The company wants to communicate Ultra Liquors CSI initiatives clearly, authentically, and factually through online media
- The company wants to generate awareness of Ultra Liquors CSI initiatives amongst both internal and external stakeholders
- The company wants to drive brand loyalty amongst all stakeholders through their CSI communications
- The company wants to drive users online and to the SNS LinkedIn
- The company wants to encourage stakeholders to research Ultra Liquors CSI initiatives further

#### *The Developed Strategy*

When developing the strategy, there were a number of important elements that were considered throughout the process. To gain a full understanding of the structure of their CSI sector, I spoke in depth with the commercial director of Ultra Liquors. Where necessary, certain COVID-19 preventative measures were adopted to ensure the safety everyone involved. Where possible, online conversations were given preference. In early conversations with the financial manager and the commercial director, significant emphasis was placed on the facts that they valued:

- philanthropy (both within the company and through CSI)
- transparency
- contributing to Socio-economic development
- empowering the youth through education and alcohol awareness

Their main CSI focus is on education, both within the realm of alcohol awareness and education, as well as standard schooling. In an online meeting with the commercial director and the external advertising agency, the director spoke in depth about why education was so important to him. The company is motivated by the possibility of real socio-economic change within South Africa, which requires national access to a good education being addressed (Robinson, 2021). When speaking about their latest involvement within the education sector, he said, “this year we would like to increase our sponsorship of High School learners from disadvantaged backgrounds, to attend top government schools. Having piloted a number of sponsorship schemes for high school learners, we have found our greatest success has been achieved by partnering with NGO’s who specialise in selecting and supporting the learners through their high school years” (Robinson, 2021). Furthermore, the company is very involved in skills development and assisting black owned businesses. Statistically, their webpage received the most traffic out of all their online platforms (see Addendum C) (Ultra Liquors, 2021). While they are active on many SNSs, these SNSs were primarily used for store information, promotions, and competition information (Robinson, 2021).

The company webpage is the brand’s primary communication platform for CSI communication, and LinkedIn is the secondary platform. With regard to their website, aside from the fact that the webpage received the most traffic out of all their online platforms, their online store was also operated through their webpage. This meant that anyone wanting to look at their specials, online store, or stock, would have to visit the webpage. Furthermore, corporate webpages are still deemed as one of the best methods of communicating about CSI, as is also argued within this paper (Nwagbara & Reid, 2013). As it is also the most common CSI communication method in South Africa, it made sense to prioritise it. LinkedIn was selected as the secondary platform for two reasons. Firstly, it is a professional platform, unlike other SNSs. The professionalism that is associated with the platform implies that information on the site will likely be deemed as more authentic and believable. The second reason was that when the strategy was created, Ultra Liquors did not have a LinkedIn page. This presented a unique opportunity to create a page from scratch that was not aligned with

their alcohol sales and specials, which was the case with their other SNS's. The LinkedIn page could be dedicated to their CSI communications and to professional matters such as job openings, which would give a good impression of the company to various stakeholders.

Ultra Liquors works with multiple expert organisations such as NGO's. These companies are as follows:

1. SAILI Improved Learning Initiative (SAILI, 2022)
2. Alexandra Education Committee (AEC, 2021)
3. Footprints 4 Sam (Footprints4Sam, 2022)
4. SANCA George (SANCA, 2022)
5. Raising Consciousness (Raising Consciousness, 2022)

Outside of their CSI expenditure, they also support Socio-economic development through Inyosi Development, Aslina Wines, and various initiatives for staff development and support (Inyosi Development, 2021; Aslina Wines, 2021).

When the parent company Robinson Liquors (Pty) Ltd was founded in 1986, founder Colin Robinson embedded a culture of integrity and philanthropy into the business. As the company grew, they realised and acknowledged their social responsibility. Additionally, as their CSI involvement grew, they realised that by bypassing what they referred to as "school fees", they were able to yield far more successful results within their CSI portfolio than if they had attempted to approach the tasks themselves with very little experience and skills (Robinson, 2021). The company carefully selects organisations to work with, within the areas that they would like to focus their CSI efforts. My recommendations noted that the organisations should be at the forefront. Rather than speaking for the organisations, I was motivated by the greater authenticity of organisations speaking for themselves. This would signal to audiences that the organisations were the most important element of Ultra Liquors CSI, as opposed to Ultra Liquors merely summarising the work they do. Each organisation was asked to provide us with their logo, photographs that they had approved, as well as the various communication platforms that they utilised to inform audiences about their organisation.

For the webpage, the communications are to be kept simple, but effective. One of the primary intentions of the webpage is to encourage audiences to go to the initiatives webpages to learn even more. Firstly, the webpage and further CSI communications will fall under the headline “Ultra Cares”. This banner would encompass not only the CSI initiatives, but also the realm of industry and supplier development, and staff development. Sparsity of information was a concern as I felt it might lead to confusion or misunderstanding. Too much information however, can come across as having little strategy and could also result in important information getting lost within the content. The webpage will begin with an introduction to the CSI initiatives by the managing director. This introduction includes a brief history of the company’s CSI founding and experiences, followed by gratitude for the initiatives that are supported. After the introduction, the webpage would be divided into the following broad segments, with the reasoning detailed below:

1. Corporate Social Investment
2. Enterprise and Supplier Development
3. Staff Development

The primary reason for the separation of each segment was to ensure there was little room for confusion with regard to the company and their various social outreach initiatives. For example, while Enterprise and Supplier Development may seem to fall under the CSI banner as it is assisting disadvantaged communities, it is not technically within their CSI expenditure. The segmentation was also strongly encouraged by the commercial director and following research into other companies in the retail space, this was confirmed for the webpage layout. The creation of the strategy included researching how other companies within retail space communicated their CSI on their webpages. Companies such as Pick n Pay, Makro, and Distell were just a few of the examples that had segmentation on their webpages, supporting the decision to organise the Ultra Liquors webpage in that manner.

Under the CSI banner, each organisation has its own logo visible, as well as a summary written by the researcher. Due to the sensitivity of certain initiatives fields, we wanted to ensure that the information we intended to place on the Ultra Liquors webpage aligned well with the stakeholder values of each initiative. The best way to manage this was to keep each organisation informed and involved during each step of the strategy. Each summary will include a hyperlink to the respective initiative. For the summaries, the primary focus was on

the work that the initiatives do as a whole, as opposed to the specific involvement that Ultra Liquors have. One of the primary intentions of the webpage is to shine light on the organisations themselves, as the organisations are doing the true work within their various sectors. An example of the work is the SAILI organisation, which identifies underprivileged high schools in the Western Cape that have a high bachelors pass rate amongst their learners. Particularly promising students are then identified and offered funding and further assistance through their senior high school years. A further example is Raising Consciousness – an alcohol awareness organisation that focuses specifically on schools within underprivileged communities (Raising Consciousness, 2022).

The preliminary mock-up of the website, the first post on their newly developed LinkedIn page, and the strategy presented to the company can be found in Addendums B through to E. However, the insights gained during the strategic process highlighted the importance placed on CSI initiatives by both the company providing resources and funding, and the initiatives on the receiving end. The process will be further discussed in the following section.

This chapter has detailed the findings of each research method outlined in Chapter 3 and provided an analysis of said findings. Although this research was limited to a relatively small portion of South African companies or branches of companies, it has provided interesting insight into the field of CSI communication in South Africa. These insights are discussed further in Chapter 5.

## CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

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This chapter discusses the findings and analysis of data detailed in Chapter 4. While different research methods were used for each section, there were common themes that emerged throughout the data analysis. These themes are expanded upon in this chapter and highlight a number of interesting elements within the field of CSI communication in South Africa.

Signalling theory can capably explain the results generated by the study. The data clearly indicate that organisations within the sample are attempting to reduce the information asymmetry between themselves and their audience – particularly in relation to their primary CSI focus areas. By extension, the same data indicate companies are attempting to appeal to their audience and foster brand loyalty by prioritising this information. Signalling theory inherently suggest organisations attempt to reduce the amount of information asymmetry there is between the company and its stakeholders by effectively and strategically communicating certain information (Utgård, 2018). Utgård (2018) goes on to explain that it is no longer enough to just signal good intentions and general knowledge; concrete information and elements of humanity are desired by the audience. Looking at the primary themes of “Community” and “Education” within this research, it is clear that the sample companies are focused on these themes within CSI, and they are aware that signalling them to the audience can be beneficial to the business. The prominence of community and developing South African youth encapsulate the humane element desired by audiences in CSI communication. This aligns with promoting and fostering corporate citizenship – another important element of CSI that can make a company appear more desirable. Furthermore, the prominence of the nodes “access to more information” and “external organisations” not only provides the audience with concrete information, but it also highlights that an organisation values transparency with their stakeholders. The above information highlights that South African companies see the value in signalling their humane values and the value of transparency, which reinforces information relating the importance of strategic signalling as a whole.

The disparity between the textual content and the visual content is significant and needs to be interpreted. As identified earlier, images of women and Black and Coloured people were prominent, while textual information was not. While this research cannot prove the various

theories as to why this is, there is the implication that companies are hesitant to directly mention said groups due to the sensitivity of the topics. A strong presence of race (particularly Black and Coloured people) in texts could carry the implication that this is the only demographic that requires assistance and could be deemed offensive. A similar argument could be made for the lack of information about women in texts. On the other hand, as discussed earlier, the webpage images will likely be responded to first, meaning the audience will approach the textual content with the perception that the visual subjects are to be associated with the textual content (Rämö, 2011). The companies may have strategically utilised images to avoid the complications that could arise with prominent textual presence of race and women and would rather have the audience come to the conclusion themselves.

The content analysis aimed to answer the sub-question: *What are the common themes, methods of communication, and types of content on the CSI webpages of highly regarded South African companies?* By analysing the various themes that received significant salience, and those that did not, this research found that the sample companies textually prioritise themes of community, education, and transparency, and visually prioritise people of colour, women, and children. This indicates that companies deem these themes as having a positive effect on their brand perception, and potentially brand loyalty. The disparity between the textual and visual content suggests a hesitancy to broach certain topics that may be deemed as sensitive to audiences, yet this juxtaposes the themes of community and transparency that are so heavily prioritised in the textual content.

The second element of analysis aimed to investigate corporate webpages at a deeper level to determine not only what content is given prevalence, but to determine which values are heavily communicated and what methods of communication are utilised to disseminate said values and information to the audience. This element of research was approached by conducting a semiotic and discourse analysis of the two webpages. Pick n Pay and Investec's webpages were selected as case studies due to their success within the CSI field. Looking at these two companies comparatively was useful as while they operate within vastly different fields, both companies are primarily focused on Education within their CSI. Furthermore, as Pick n Pay is in retail, they provided an interesting comparison for the practical element of this research which is discussed at a later stage. However, there were limitations to utilising webpages as the primary medium of research, which will be further discussed in the following chapter.

Following the above-mentioned analysis of the two webpages, this research found that at face value, Pick n Pay and Investec opted for two very different approaches to their webpage layout and content, with the two approaches assisting in communicating their individual approaches to CSI. Pick n Pay's visually busy approach that included significantly more text and images than Investec visually indicates that they are involved in several fields with their CSI. On the other hand, Investec opted for a more muted approach, which assisted in communicating that their approach to CSI was simpler, given that their sole focus is education. This result alluded to previous research that notes the inconsistency in CSR communication styles because there is no set template or method that is most successful (Arvidsonn, 2010). However, the altruistic values and communication techniques they utilised display an array of similarities and allude to several elements within the South African field of CSI. Both companies place significant emphasis on the values of Community, Solidarity, Ubuntu, and their responsibility to society. Results yielded from the discourse analysis found that the aforementioned values were consistently interwoven in the textual content. This was noted through the consistent use of the word "community" by itself and in phrases, the use of phrases that position the organisation as one with their audiences, as well as the strong insinuations that each company is aware of their responsibility to their communities due to their size, reach, and earnings.

The final results yielded were in relation to the use of photographs – in particular the prominence of photographs containing people of colour, women, and the use of eye-contact in the photographs. Referring back to earlier discussions, the strong presence of Black people and women in the photographs insinuates that they are the two broad groups of priority within each company's CSI. A closer analysis of the photographs found that eye-contact was used strategically along with textual associations to involve the audience substantially, making them partially accountable in the process (To & Patrick, 2021). This also assists in substantiating the previous result relating to the prominence of the values of Community and Ubuntu, as the effect of eye-contact on the audience brings them into the narrative. However, a notable result was that although women and people of colour were most prominent in the images, neither were mentioned textually. As discussed earlier in this chapter, there appears to be an element of hesitancy to textually mention these two groups directly, and to rather allow the audience to come to certain conclusions through the images. Given that the development and support of Black people, and particularly Black women, is important in

both the South African community at large and in B-BBEE regulations, the fact that it did not receive essentially any textual coverage within the two case study webpages was a notable finding.

This portion of the research aimed to answer the question: *How do Pick n Pay and Investec, both award winning companies in the CSI field, successfully communicate their altruistic values through their CSI webpages?* Communication techniques and prominence of particular values are indicative of a number of factors within CSI communication. The results suggest that South African companies rely heavily on promoting favourable altruistic values (Community, Ubuntu, and overall responsibility) within their webpage CSI communications. This further suggests that companies deem the promotion of these values as beneficial in fostering brand loyalty and trust amongst their stakeholders. This aligns with Palazzo & Scherer's (2006) notion of corporate legitimacy, specifically social legitimacy, wherein organisations seek approval from stakeholders by developing shared meanings and understanding. By interweaving favourable values into their communications, companies are communicating humane characteristics that the audience can relate to, which can contribute to managing their public perception and in turn their corporate legitimacy to a certain extent (Palazzo & Scherer, 2006).

A uniquely South African element is the presence of Ubuntu. This term transcends cultural boundaries within South Africa and showcases how South African companies have understood Ubuntu's unique appeal to their audience. This allows South African companies to escape the cultural and ideological precepts alien to Africa. Results also highlighted the importance placed on images on CSI webpages. As Rämö (2011) discusses, images can be incredibly beneficial in communications as they elicit more emotion than text. The prominent use of images of Black people, children, and women is a method proven to be beneficial in CSI communication due to its positive effect on the audience. As images are often preferred for response over text, the use of images that highlight a focus on South Africa's future and those who have been previously disadvantaged by state systems indicate that the companies deem this type of imagery as being most effective in appealing to their audience (Rämö, 2011). Despite this, the lack of textual content about women empowerment and race alongside strong visual content suggests that South African companies are hesitant to approach the topics. This could be because CSI communications are consistently under intense scrutiny, therefore companies would rather approach (or not approach) certain topics

with caution instead of risking public backlash for statements made. To determine whether these assumptions have merit would require further research that goes beyond the scope of this paper.

The final element of research was the development of a communications strategy for Ultra Liquors. In designing Ultra Liquors' CSI communication strategy and designing the website that would effect that strategy, I was faced with a number of specific challenges. The fact that the company is within the liquor industry, coupled with the fact that they had never communicated about their CSI before, presented both challenges and opportunities. Companies within the liquor industry face more scrutiny in the realm of CSI than other fields (Pantani, et al., 2017). Significant care had to be taken as the role of the liquor industry in South Africa is a sensitive one, due to the role of alcohol in a number of systemic issues nationwide regarding alcohol abuse and its relationship to domestic violence (Rwafa, 2016). Furthermore, as they had never communicated about their CSI before, the rollout of information had to be strategic as to not come across as inauthentic. While the rollout of the strategy is still in the early stages, the process yielded a number of interesting results – particularly within the realm of the attitudes and desires of those within the company.

As discussed in Chapter 4, the primary goals of the webpage were to place the organisations supported by Ultra Liquors in the spotlight, to be transparent with the audience, and to ensure that their company values were being disseminated effectively in the content. Two core elements of the process were the involvement of the organisations from the early stages, as well as the consistent consultation with the commercial director. Two important factors that were abundantly clear from the beginning of the case study were the passion of the commercial director of Ultra Liquors and the gratitude of the initiatives Ultra Liquors support. The Stakeholder Involvement communication strategy in CSI communication is deemed as the most beneficial method of communication (Morsing & Schultz, 2006). Within this case study, the organisations are a fundamental group of stakeholders – and to Ultra Liquors, these organisations are the driving forces of change within their communities as they are on the ground doing the developmental work within their communities. Ultra Liquors are merely a vessel that gives these groups the opportunity to continue their work. Remaining transparent with them was essential to ensure that the communicated information was authentic and appealing to the audience. Furthermore, by keeping the organisations heavily involved in the development of the communications strategy, the positive relationship with

Ultra Liquors was strengthened further. Additionally, the rollout of the strategy was meticulously designed because the company had never communicated about their CSI before.

A sudden influx of information across their online platforms would be rather jarring and possibly foster scepticism about the company's motivation behind CSI communication amongst the audience, as it would be the first time the audience is hearing about it. The content on the webpage is being kept simple, with a short introduction from the commercial director followed by small summaries and links for the various organisations. Ilhen, et al. (2011) makes the point that organisations have to find the balance between too little and too much information, as either of those options could negatively impact the organisations goals. As this is the first time Ultra Liquors is communicating about their CSI, maintaining a simple and concise approach in the early stages is both cautionary and strategic, as we are unsure how stakeholders will react. Furthermore, in discussions with the commercial director and finance manager, both voiced their previous hesitancy to communicating about the company's CSI publicly – a further reason for which the communications would start slowly and include simple content (Robinson, 2021). The recently created LinkedIn page will be used primarily for CSI communication, with the professionalism of the platform hopefully contributing to the authenticity and seriousness of the CSI messaging that will be published.

This final portion of the research aimed to answer the question: *Utilising Ultra Liquors as a case study, how does one approach creating a CSI communications strategy, and what are the essential factors that should be considered?* Unfortunately, there will only be an indication of the impact of the communication strategy after it has been fully rolled out to the public; however, certain outcomes can assist in answering the above question. The case study suggests that gaining personal accounts of internal stakeholders, as well as the organisations involved, is incredibly beneficial to the process of creating an authentic and human-centric CSI communications strategy. The regular conversations with the commercial director of Ultra Liquors and the heads of the various organisations gave unique insight into the reasoning behind certain decisions – such as which organisations they support, and which information to prioritise – as well as insight into the altruistic values that feed into the CSI programme. Furthermore, particularly in a scenario wherein CSI is being communicated for the first time, it is beneficial to utilise a simple yet specific approach to the communications, as well as a staggered roll-out of information. With reference to Ilhen, et al's. (2011)

research, finding the balance between too much and too little information is essential. However, specificity is fundamental as it contributes to positive perceptions of a brand (Robinson & Eilert, 2018). What this case study found was that locating the balance was even more of a consideration since Ultra Liquors are in a heavily scrutinised industry and had never communicated about their CSI before. Furthermore, the case study proved how essential a communications strategy is. Approaching CSI communication is tricky; but approaching it within a field that has a relatively negative reputation in South Africa added to the challenge. Therefore, approaching CSI communication with a certain degree of caution – particularly in the early dissemination of information – was found to also be important to the strategy and content creation.

This overall objective of this research was to explore the question: *How is CSI webpage communication approached by South African companies?* While the results of the three-fold methodology do not answer the question fully (a task that would require a much broader research scope), they rather illuminate certain significant elements of CSI communication within South Africa. Strategic CSI communication in South Africa is becoming more widely used by companies, with one of the main reasons for which being that external stakeholders, such as consumers, desire more information about the topic before they foster loyalties with brands (Ihlen, et al., 2011). With the importance of CSI communication growing significantly, and the online communication opportunities available to organisations, analysing the message content and communication strategies has also grown in importance.

The first portion of this research (the content analysis) highlighted which broad themes and images are given the most salience on highly regarded South African companies – namely the prominent signalling of “community” and “education”, as well as images of children, women, and people of colour. The second portion of research (the in-depth semiotic and discourse analysis) yielded similar results and substantiated results from the first portion of research. The prominence of the values of community, solidarity, and Ubuntu align with previous research that identified that incorporating humane traits and values into the communications is both desired by stakeholders and beneficial to a company (Ihlen, et al., 2011). However, the disparity between the prominence of certain image versus textual content regarding women and people of colour raises questions. As audiences make connections between image and textual content on webpages, it is possible that the companies would rather the audience come to certain conclusions themselves rather than explain it textually. Another possibility is

that the companies are aware of the positive effect that particular images can have on an audience, and therefore utilise said images even if they do not fully align with the CSI they are involved in (Rämö, 2011). To address these possibilities, a much larger scope of research would be required. The final element of research (the practical case study) highlighted the importance of strategy and gave personal insight into the personal values that drive a successful CSI campaign. The contact with both the company and the NGOs they support provided invaluable information regarding the reasoning for certain decisions, the intricacy and caution required in the early stages of CSI communication, and the importance of involving internal stakeholders in the communication process.

As the discussion has highlighted, CSI communication is a complex and intricate process, wherein there are multiple strategic avenues that can be taken by companies. By critically analysing online CSI communication visual content, salient themes and discourses, and gathering personal insight into the CSI communication process, this research explores and provides insight into the growing field of CSI communication, both practically and academically. While there were a number of positive points of interest, this research also brought to light certain disparities that require more academic attention before being properly addressed. As public interest in this field continues to grow, and as more organisations identify and strategically utilise it to their advantage, research such as this paper may contribute to understanding the intricacies of the CSI communication field and how to approach it.

## CHAPTER 6: LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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The pandemic lockdown that began on the 27<sup>th</sup> of March 2020 could be identified as a turning point, of sorts, between two kinds of CSI. Prior to March 2020, a shift already underway took on the proportions of a groundswell; CSI was quietly transformed from information-sharing to an exploitable resource that returned consumer loyalty and investment of attention. While this study outlined both the importance and pragmatics of this shift, certain limitations must be acknowledged before recommendations are offered. To conclude, a discussion of these limitations and recommendations are undertaken.

### **i. Limitations**

Qualitative Content Analysis (QCA) allows researchers to look beyond what is self-evident within their data and into elements, such as themes and prominent ideas (Mayring, 2004, p. 159). Quantitative Analysis (QA) benefits a research study when complementing QCA, by allowing quantitative data insights to not be lost. QCA however, does carry with it, greater limitations.

First, content is categorised by predetermined categories, derived primarily from the data itself usually through a close reading of the text (Forman & Damschroder, 2008). This study did not deviate from that course. The primary instrument in QCA is the researcher themselves (Ochieng, 2009), as QCA relies heavily on the skills of the researcher. Analysis is determined by researcher subjectivity rather than on an objective coding system. The researcher's demographic identification as a South African woman, their prior research in the field, and various additional factors invariably influence the categorisation and analysis of the data.

A second limitation can be found in semiotics as an analytical method. As Chandler (1994) observes, signs and symbols are understood within a certain time and are based on shared understanding, but such an analysis is not exhaustive. Too many factors that affect research outcomes – ranging from historical knowledge to cultural differences and contexts, all of which create multiple meanings – contribute to the fuller picture and are excluded by simple semiotic analysis.

A further limitation concerned the medium and relatively small sample size used. Only webpages were sampled, and while this decision is methodologically sound, it should be registered as a limitation. Given recent global shifts in CSI communication (or, as is preferred internationally, “CSR”), organisations have actively sought out SNSs like Facebook and Instagram (Capriotti, 2017). This is not the case with most South African companies, as only a few have begun to shift to Web 2.0 strategies and platforms. Sub-questions were designed to specifically study a range of foci from general content to implicit themes of corporate CSI pages. However, with many companies beginning to use SNSs as a tool, it may have been beneficial to include more online mediums within the data sample. This would have provided a comparison to the webpage analysis; however, the scope of this research did not allow for this.

The strategic process of developing a CSI communications strategy, as was done with the case study, comes with its own limitations. Although the researcher was the initial developer of the strategy, significant elements were contributed by company personnel and in-sourced third-party providers. The nature of workflow processes and campaign development is that agencies executed on the researcher’s design, raising the suspension of researcher-driven execution as a limitation. This mandated dependency of the researcher on marketing teams for final execution raised the further practical limitation of the researcher not being able to determine the rollout schedule. This in turn led to the unavailability of essential statistics that inform key metrics for success.

## **ii. Recommendations**

A recommendation for future research is for the inclusion social media analysis. As more companies make the shift to Web 2.0 platforms, research into the field will provide important insight into how companies are making use of platforms that allow the stakeholder to actively participate in the communication process.

While a primary goal was to explore the research questions detailed earlier, a further objective is to bring attention to the field of CSI communication. CSI communication consists of significantly more than a few positive messages on a webpage and telling

audiences what an organisation is involved in. It tells an audience what a company cares about and can shape audience perceptions of a brand. As CSI communication continues to evolve and gain more interest, this research encourages more exploration into the field, and specifically into online communication due to its continuous growth. What this research did not have the capacity to approach was audience perceptions of CSI communication. A final recommendation is therefore that this avenue is explored, which can assist in determining how audiences react to and perceive certain content.

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## APPENDIX

### *Addendum A: Content analysis: Links to Webpages*

Company name	Webpage hyperlink
AECI	<a href="https://www.aeciworld.com/socioeconomic-development">https://www.aeciworld.com/socioeconomic-development</a>
Anglo American	<a href="https://southafrica.angloamerican.com/our-difference/building-thriving-communities">https://southafrica.angloamerican.com/our-difference/building-thriving-communities</a>
Coca-Cola	<a href="https://www.coca-cola.co.za/sustainability">https://www.coca-cola.co.za/sustainability</a>
Discovery	<a href="https://www.discovery.co.za/marketing/discovery-foundation-site/index.html">https://www.discovery.co.za/marketing/discovery-foundation-site/index.html</a>
DSTV/Multichoice	<a href="https://www.multichoice.com/enriching-lives/connecting-with-our-communities">https://www.multichoice.com/enriching-lives/connecting-with-our-communities</a>
FirstRand	<a href="https://www.firstrand.co.za/society/social-investing/firstrand-foundation/">https://www.firstrand.co.za/society/social-investing/firstrand-foundation/</a>
Growthpoint	<a href="https://growthpoint.co.za/corporate-social-investment/">https://growthpoint.co.za/corporate-social-investment/</a>
Investec	<a href="https://www.investec.com/en_za/welcome-to-investec/corporate-responsibility/our-community.html">https://www.investec.com/en_za/welcome-to-investec/corporate-responsibility/our-community.html</a>
Merchants Group	<a href="https://www.merchantscx.com/corporate-social-investment">https://www.merchantscx.com/corporate-social-investment</a>
Momentum	<a href="https://www.momentum.co.za/momentum/about-us/csi">https://www.momentum.co.za/momentum/about-us/csi</a>
MTN	<a href="https://www.mtn.com/sustainability/sustainable-societies/social-investment/">https://www.mtn.com/sustainability/sustainable-societies/social-investment/</a>
Nedbank	<a href="https://www.nedbank.co.za/content/nedbank/desktop/gt/en/aboutus/green-and-caring/sustainability/sustainability-approach.html">https://www.nedbank.co.za/content/nedbank/desktop/gt/en/aboutus/green-and-caring/sustainability/sustainability-approach.html</a>
Old Mutual	<a href="https://www.oldmutual.co.za/about/old-mutual-insure/corporate-and-social-responsibility">https://www.oldmutual.co.za/about/old-mutual-insure/corporate-and-social-responsibility</a>
Pick n Pay	<a href="https://www.pnp.co.za/peoplenplanet">https://www.pnp.co.za/peoplenplanet</a>
South African Breweries (SAB)	<a href="https://sabfoundation.co.za/">https://sabfoundation.co.za/</a>
Sasol	<a href="https://www.sasol.com/sustainability/social-investment/sasols-social-investment-approach">https://www.sasol.com/sustainability/social-investment/sasols-social-investment-approach</a>
Shoprite	<a href="https://www.shopriteholdings.co.za/sustainability/communities.html">https://www.shopriteholdings.co.za/sustainability/communities.html</a>
Transnet	<a href="https://transnetfoundation.co.za/">https://transnetfoundation.co.za/</a>
Vodacom	<a href="https://www.vodacom.com/vodacom-foundation.php">https://www.vodacom.com/vodacom-foundation.php</a>
Woolworths	<a href="https://www.woolworths.co.za/content/article/good-business-journey/social-development/_/A-cmp206001">https://www.woolworths.co.za/content/article/good-business-journey/social-development/_/A-cmp206001</a>
WNS Limited	<a href="https://www.wns.co.za/about-wns/corporate-social-responsibility">https://www.wns.co.za/about-wns/corporate-social-responsibility</a>



## CSI COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

### CURRENT STATE

- Very limited communication of CSI initiatives
- Uninformed internal and external stakeholders
- Missed opportunities to add value to brand
- Missed opportunities to drive brand loyalty



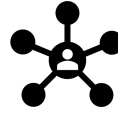
### GOAL STATE

- Wide communication of CSI initiatives
- Keep both internal and external stakeholders informed
- Increase brand value amongst consumers and staff
- Increase brand loyalty amongst consumers and staff



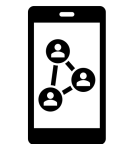
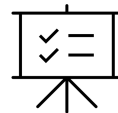
## 4 ELEMENTS

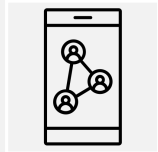
1. Communication Goals
2. External communications strategy
3. Internal communications strategy
4. Examples of content



## COMMUNICATION GOALS

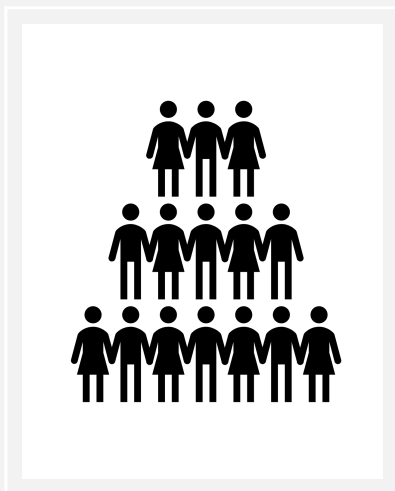
- Authentically and factually communicate Ultra Liquors CSI initiatives through online and print media
- Generate awareness of Ultra Liquors CSI initiatives amongst both internal and external stakeholders
- Drive brand loyalty amongst all stakeholders
- Drive users online and to social networking sites (Webpage and LinkedIn, etc.) – long term benefit
- Encourage stakeholders to research Ultra Liquors CSI initiatives further





## TARGET AUDIENCE: EXTERNAL

- Website users
- Email subscribers
- In-store attendees
- 25-34 primary group
- 18-24 and 35-44 secondary groups

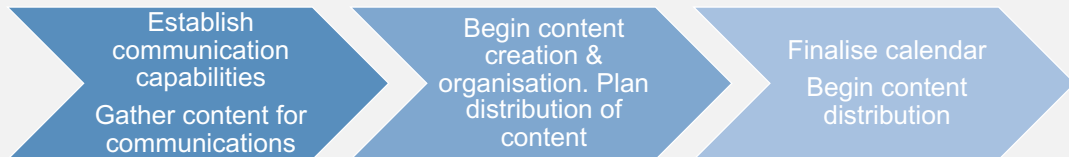


## TARGET AUDIENCE: INTERNAL

- Directors
- Senior management
- Managers
- Ground staff



## STRATEGY PHASES



## ORGANISATIONS

### Non-industry initiatives

- Alexandra Education Committee
- Footprints 4 Sam
- SAILI (latest initiative)
- Staff: skills & development + learnership with disabled individuals

### Industry initiatives

- Aslina Wines
- Inyozi Development
- Supplier and Enterprise Development

## FACTORS OF EXTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

- Website receives the most traffic
- Promotions and push notifications bring traffic to website
- Mobile access is popular
- Facebook: largest social media following +/- 176 000 followers



## COMMUNICATION CHANNELS & CONTENT: EXTERNAL

Website	In-store	Email	Social Media
Released in one go	Posters put up at beginning of month	Monthly	Weekly posts
A separate page on the website	Posters with images of the organisations  (begin in most prominent stores)	Monthly email about the CSI initiatives	Weekly post about a particular CSI initiative
NB: A word from the Directors at Ultra Liquor	Encouragement for in-store shoppers to go to social media/the website to learn more	Encourage subscribers to look at content on website and social media	Personal stories from organisation



## COMMUNICATION CHANNELS & CONTENT: INTERNAL



Newsletter	Email	“Let’s Talk”	Conference	Strategy meeting
Monthly release	Monthly release	Weekly or bi-weekly	Annual	Annual
Initial release: overview of organisations	Initial release: overview of organisations + hyperlink to website	First session: inform staff that each week they will receive a brief update on CSI initiatives	Section dedicated to CSI initiatives	Section dedicated to CSI initiatives.
Months following: 1-2 organisation updates	Months following: 1-2 organisation updates	Each week speak about a different organisation in brief	Detail each initiative, how they've grown, etc	Detail each initiative, how they've grown, what can change



## PROTOTYPE SCHEDULE: SOCIAL MEDIA

Platform	Date	Content type	Topic
LinkedIn	20 <sup>th</sup> September	Series of photos + text + hyperlink	Introduction to Ultra Liquors CSI
	27 <sup>th</sup> September	Photos + text + hyperlink	Story of AEC + Ultra Liquors
Instagram/Facebook (if LinkedIn received well)	22 <sup>nd</sup> September	Main feed post: image + text + hyperlink Instagram Story	Introduction to Ultra Liquors CSI
	29 <sup>th</sup> September	Main feed post: image + text + hyperlink Instagram Story	Story of Aslina Wines




Discovery FOR INDIVIDUALS FOR BUSINESS ALREADY A MEMBER? [LOG IN](#) [REGISTER](#)

HOME BANK MEDICAL AD GAP COVER PENSION HEALTH LIFE INSURANCE INVESTMENTS CAR AND HOME INSURANCE VITALITY PENSION PARTNERS

#PayItForward: Discovery gives 800 meals a week to communities in need

COMMUNITY July 2020



theforum@discovery has opened its kitchens and facilities to provide 800 meals a week to communities in the dire grips of hunger as a result of COVID-19. The executive events team has also started a second initiative to give essential items to people in need.

Click2Day People n Planet

HOME ABOUT RESOURCES EVENTS BLOG REGISTER / LOG IN CONTACT / SUPPORT

OUR STORY

### Who We Are

We are a team of devoted 'educators' who give our energy and expertise to improving opportunities for all learners. Each day we demand excellence from ourselves so that our contributions to our schools result in sustainable progress in classrooms, schools and systems.

We are humble about the challenges our schools face and realistic about the work needed to make a difference. Our team is plugged in across all provinces in South Africa and each member of the team is committed to delivering the highest standard of quality as we partner with our clients to serve our learners and communities.

[MEET THE TEAM](#)

Looking for FREE RESOURCES to help you get through #LOCKDOWN? [CLICK HERE](#) to access those now.



Sustainable Socio-Economic Development

### Sustainable Socio-Economic Development

The Daniel Development Trust came into being as a result of a 91-8882 Daniel-based black economic empowerment deal in 2009 between Daniel Limited and Wigbold (Pretoria International Portfolio Holdings). The deal was aimed specifically at providing economic benefits to women (via Wigbold) by Daniel staff who had been in the company's employ for at least one year.

[More about us](#)

[Our focus areas](#)


Sustainability report

### Our latest Sustainability Report

A detailed analysis of how we're tracking within our focus areas and performing against our goals.


[Download latest Sustainability report](#)

[View annual report archive](#)



Instagram


ultraliquors



Successful students in successful schools

Maths and science scholarships for low-income families

Learn about our approach and proven impact >




ultraliquors Introducing the latest initiative that we've partnered with – SAILI: South African Improved Learning Initiative. Click the link in our bio to learn more about them and the rest of the amazing initiatives we work with


Example Instagram posts

Instagram

ultraliquors



ultraliquors The development of our own staff is a key focus for us. Click the link in our bio to learn more about how we assist in the education and skills development of our staff members



# ULTRA-LIQUORS: CSI

## INITIAL COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

Since the company's inception, Ultra Liquors has not communicated its Corporate Social Investment initiatives to the vast majority of its stakeholders. The communication has been limited to an annual meeting with the most senior members of the company, leaving the rest of the employees and the consumers (two vital stakeholder groups) out of the communication loop. In the last decade, consumers have become more socially conscious, and in turn more aware of how the companies they support contribute to the upliftment of communities. On the other hand, internal stakeholders want to be kept informed about news within a company. It can also improve job satisfaction, organisational pride, and encourage positive word-of-mouth. Communicating ones CSI initiatives in an authentic, factual, and humble manner can help to not only keep various stakeholders informed, but also to alleviate scepticism surrounding a company's claims and promises.

Outlined below are the communication goals. These are what we are aiming for following the roll out of the communication strategy.

***Authentically and factually communicate Ultra Liquors CSI initiatives through online media***

***Generate awareness of Ultra Liquors CSI initiatives amongst both internal and external stakeholders***

***Drive brand loyalty amongst all stakeholders***

***Drive users to online platforms, namely the webpage and LinkedIn***

***Encourage stakeholders to research Ultra Liquors CSI initiatives further***

## CSI INITIATIVES INVOLVED

The initiatives that Ultra Liquors supports (both externally and internally) will be involved in the communication strategy. These initiatives are as follows:

### Non-industry initiatives

- Alexandra Education Committee
- Footprints 4 Sam
- SAILI (latest initiative)
- Staff: skills & development + learnership with disabled individuals

### Industry initiatives

- Aslina Wines
- Inyozi Development
- Supplier and Enterprise Development
- 

## EXTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

The way in which a brand presents itself to external stakeholders has an impact on both maintaining brand loyalty, and in gaining new customers. Now more than ever, customers want to see that the brands they support align with their personal values – particularly in the realm of Social Responsibility. In order to communicate Ultra Liquors current CSI initiatives to their external stakeholders, the following communications strategy is proposed. By authentically and factually communicating Ultra Liquors CSI initiatives through a number of channels, the loyalty to the brand will hopefully grow, as will the consumer base. It will also give the organisations they work with more publicity and encourage audiences to learn more about them. Current and future customers will be kept informed, see how their support for Ultra has a greater impact than they realise, and will see how Ultra maintains their value of sharing what can be shared.

## TARGET AUDIENCE

Ensuring one's target audience is essential, as the language, platforms, and content must cater for said audience. The target audiences are as follows:

- Website users
- Email subscribers
- Social Media users (LinkedIn)
- In-store attendees
- 25-34 primary group
- 18-24 and 35-44 secondary groups

## METHODS OF COMMUNICATION

To reach the external stakeholders, a number of communication methods will be utilised. While the primary platform of communication will be the website as research has shown this method to be the most reliable in the realm of CSI communication, the full list of communication methods is as follows

- Page on Website
- Social media platforms (specifically LinkedIn)
- Email
- Posters in stores

## STRATEGY PHASES

### PHASE 1:

- Establish online & print capabilities
- Gather content for communications

### PHASE 2:

- Begin content creation & organisation
- Plan the distribution of content

### PHASE 3:

- Finalise calendar
- Begin content distribution

## DETAILED BREAKDOWN OF PHASES

### **Phase 1: Establish broadcasting capabilities + gather content for communications**

- While there is a general outline for the type of content we want to communicate, as well as a flexible timeline, establishing the communication capabilities will have an impact on both how information is communicated and where it is communicated.
- Social media platforms: Ultra Liquors is active on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter.
- The same information is generally published on all 3 platforms, though Twitter and Facebook provide more detail
- In-store: how many posters can be out up? The primary purpose of the posters is to drive people to the website/social media sites
- Following the above, written, verbal, and visual content will be gathered from the following:
  1. Directors of Ultra Liquors
  2. Heads of initiatives supported by Ultra Liquors

3. Further members of the organisations to gain personal stories

**Phase 2: Content creation & organisation + Create communication timeline**

- The content gathered will be analysed, edited, and organised for handoff to the online media and print media teams
- The CSI page on the website will be released in one go, whereas the social media content will be posted based on a timeline over a few months
- The outline for the content on the platforms is as follows:

<b>Website</b>	<b>In-store</b>	<b>Email</b>	<b>LinkedIn</b>	<b>Other Socials</b>
A separate page on the website, released in one go	Posters with images of the organisations (a range)	Monthly email about the CSI initiatives	Weekly post about a particular CSI initiative	Weekly posts about a particular CSI initiative
A word from the Directors at Ultra Liquor	Encouragement for in-store shoppers to go to social media/the website to learn more	Encourage subscribers to look at content on website and social media	Personal stories from organisation	Personal stories from organisations
Separate sections for each organisation	Encouragement to subscribe to email (double benefit)	Summaries of each organisation's activities	Drive users to the website to learn more	Drive users to the website to learn more

**Phase 3: Finalise Calendar + begin content distribution**

The final stage involves finalising the content distribution calendar. This will include:

- Scheduling of posts on Social Media platforms
- Email to subscribers informing them about the new communications
- Distributing posters to various stores for display
- Release of the page on the Website (core communication method)
- Following the results

## INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

While external communications are important as they keep external stakeholders informed, internal communications are equally as important. Research has shown that around 80% of employees in companies would appreciate being kept up to date with company news. A successful company grows from the inside out – as is shown with examples like Absa.

The employees at Ultra Liquor already know a significant amount about what the company does to give back to them (stock loss initiative, buffalo programme), but what they may not be very aware of is the CSI initiatives that support both external organisations and their own colleagues. By keeping them informed about said initiatives, brand loyalty will continue to grow from within.

## TARGET AUDIENCE

As a retail company, there are a number of groups that will be communicated to with different methods. These groups are as follows:

- Managing Directors
- Directors
- Managers
- Area Managers
- Store Managers
- Administration
- Ground Staff

## METHODS OF COMMUNICATION

As there is a rather diverse target group, there will be a range of communication methods in order to cater for the various groups. These methods are as follows:

- Monthly newsletter
- Monthly email
- “Let’s Talk” session
- Conference
- Strategy meeting

## STRATGEY

The majority of the strategy mirrors that of the external communication strategy. The primary difference is the outline for each communication method. The breakdown of content for internal communications is as follows.

<b>Newsletter</b>	<b>Email</b>	<b>“Let’s Talk”</b>	<b>Conference</b>	<b>Strategy meeting</b>
Monthly release	Monthly release	Weekly	Annual	Annual
Initial release: overview of organisations	Initial release: overview of organisations + hyperlink to website	First session: inform staff that each week they will receive a brief update on CSI initiatives	Section dedicated to CSI initiatives	Section dedicated to CSI initiatives.
Months following: 1-2 organisation updates	Months following: 1-2 organisation updates	Each week speak about a different organisation in brief	Detail each initiative, how they’ve grown, etc	Detail each initiative, how they’ve grown, what can change

## CONSIDERTAIONS

### Working with Children

- A significant number of the organisations that Ultra Liquor supports through their CSI are education focused, therefore involve individuals under the age of 18. A certain level of care must be taken in the communication of these initiatives

### Authenticity

- An important aspect of CSI communication is communicating content in a manner that is authentic. Research has shown that in certain cases, CSR/CSI communication has increased consumer scepticism, which is why maintaining an authentic and thorough approach is beneficial

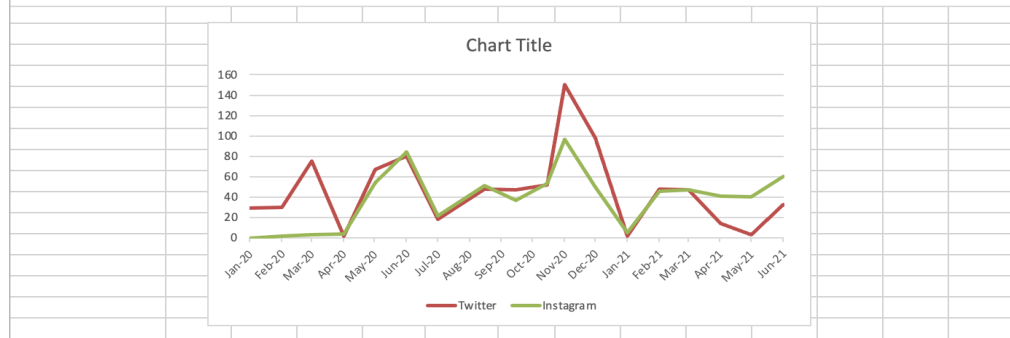
## Addendum C: Ultra Liquors Website and Social Media statistics

### Website Statistics

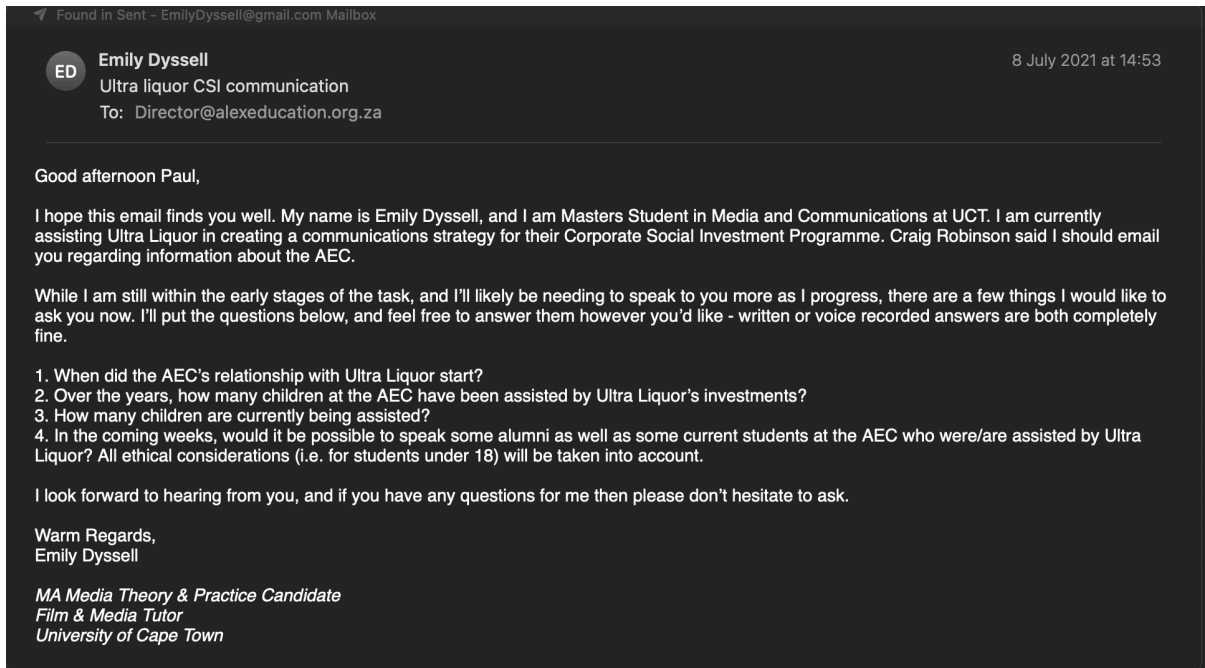
Month	Jun	May	Apr	Mar	Feb	Jan	Dec	Nov	Oct	Sep-20	Aug-20	Jun-20	Jun-20
<b>Black Friday PageViews</b>											Lock-down	Lock-down	Lock-down
<b>Users</b>	29,609	31,612	29,360	40,905	39,852	4,745	63,619	63,812	41,995	38,792	39,213	17,125	74,821
<b>New Users</b>	24,620	26,434	24,023	34,101	33,761	3,909	53,609	55,659	35,565	33,980	34,335	13,782	65,538
<b>Sessions</b>	39,583	42,739	38,682	54,451	54,245	5,457	80,616	85,062	55,517	49,176	51,667	20,725	96,794
<b>PageViews</b>	91,707	93,561	92,287	126,784	127,992	12,574	192,311	207,109	124,402	106,840	112,474	44,532	286,323
<b>Returning Visitors</b>	8,647	8,995	8,729	11,891	11,361	1,115	16,448	17,157	11,731	9,527	18,311	4,806	19,622
<b>Gauteng</b>	14,094	14,832	14,623	19,952	18,280	2,109	30,579	32,202	20,516	19,624	18,511	7,965	35,521
<b>Western Cape</b>	9,143	9,651	8,284	12,587	13,651	1,422	19,044	18,037	12,570	11,305	12,540	5,316	23,136
<b>Kwazulu-Natal</b>	3,834	4,147	3,616	4,879	4,330	477	9,282	8,462	5,214	4,395	4,507	2,026	8,818
<b>Eastern Cape</b>	1,295	1,493	1,302	1,881	2,049	269	2,594	2,727	1,925	1,749	2,049	764	4,428
<b>Free State</b>	481	552	518	678	560	56	887	1,038	753	609	632	274	1,161
<b>North West</b>	272	331	321	421	381	48	548	574	399	347	365	141	588
<b>Limpopo</b>	221	248	214	295	220	23	417	448	246	297	228	99	439
<b>Mpumalanga</b>	181	223	186	278	322	32	431	508	284	243	275	87	418
<b>Northern Cape</b>	26	27	27	49	28	9	62	75	32	28	26	12	68
<b>Cape Town</b>	8,632	9,068	7,850	11,874	13,065	1,315	18,120	17,174	12,004	10,814	11,840	5,049	21,958
<b>Sandton</b>	3,672	3,989	3,753	4,903	4,421	516	7,736	8,189	4,927	4,490	4,636	2,083	8,763
<b>Pretoria</b>	4,312	4,385	4,152	5,760	5,087	512	8,516	9,004	5,879	5,436	4,981	2,180	9,759
<b>Johannesburg</b>	2,348	2,322	2,605	3,687	3,642	491	5,943	5,937	3,550	3,879	3,456	1,036	5,547
<b>Durban</b>	848	974	803	1,131	1,103	94	1,821	1,801	1,296	1,226	1,270	572	2,767
<b>Centurion</b>	1,187	1,405	1,519	2,145	1,864	166	2,930	3,298	2,184	2,100	1,865	819	3,658
<b>Roodepoort</b>	822	919	927	1,228	1,053	133	1,819	2,026	1,218	1,114	1,108	443	2,137
<b>Gqeberha/PE</b>	954	1,105	954	1,420	1,548	211	2,000	1,997	1,431	1,349	1,623	603	3,525
<b>Randburg</b>	457	513	399	621	789	62	998	1,172	722	632	675	348	1,476
<b>Bloemfontein</b>	321	390	347	454	356	33	587	698	524	417	430	176	727

### Social Media Statistics

Acquisition - Social - Overview													
Social	Jun-21	May-21	Apr-21	Mar-21	Feb-21	Jan-21	Dec-20	Nov-20	Oct-20	Sep-20	Aug-20	Jul-20	Jun-20
Facebook	700	886	1,442	3,360	1,643	36	2,871	3,846	1,839	1,089	913	349	1,489
Twitter	33	3	14	47	48	2	98	150	52	47	48	18	80
Instagram	60	40	41	47	46	5	50	97	53	37	51	22	84
Instagram Stories	15	1	0	0	1	0	1	2	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Conversions</b>	<b>8,793</b>	<b>8,591</b>	<b>9,564</b>	<b>12,638</b>	<b>11,096</b>	<b>845</b>	<b>18,878</b>	<b>21,616</b>	<b>12,774</b>	<b>11,036</b>	<b>11,035</b>	<b>4,333</b>	<b>25,463</b>



## *Addendum D: Example email: Contact process with Ultra Liquors CSI organisations*



*Addendum E: Ultra Liquors CSI Webpage (under development)*

## Ultra Cares



Hello Ultra Liquors Community,







































We are pleased to announce the official launch of our Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) program, Ultra Cares.

At Ultra Liquors, we have always believed that it is important to shine a light on organizations we support that are making a positive impact within the South African community. Through our Ultra Cares program, we continue to show gratitude to these organizations and would like to invite you to visit our website and social media platforms to keep up to date on the amazing work they are doing.

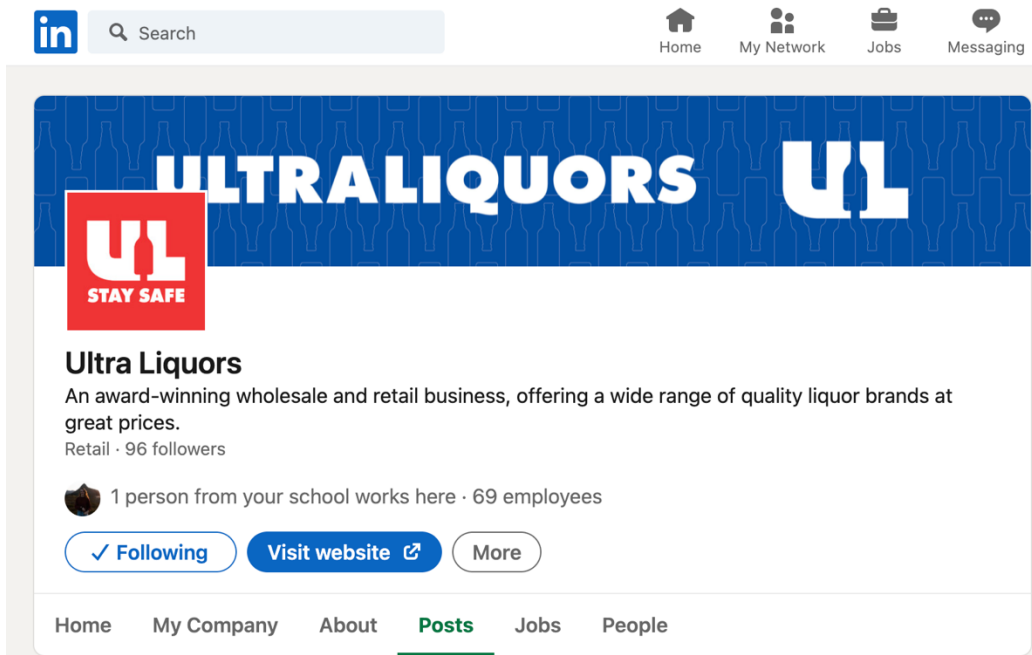
If you are interested in getting involved or would like to learn more, pop us an email or visit our website for more information.

Yours in trusted service,  
The Ultra Liquors team.

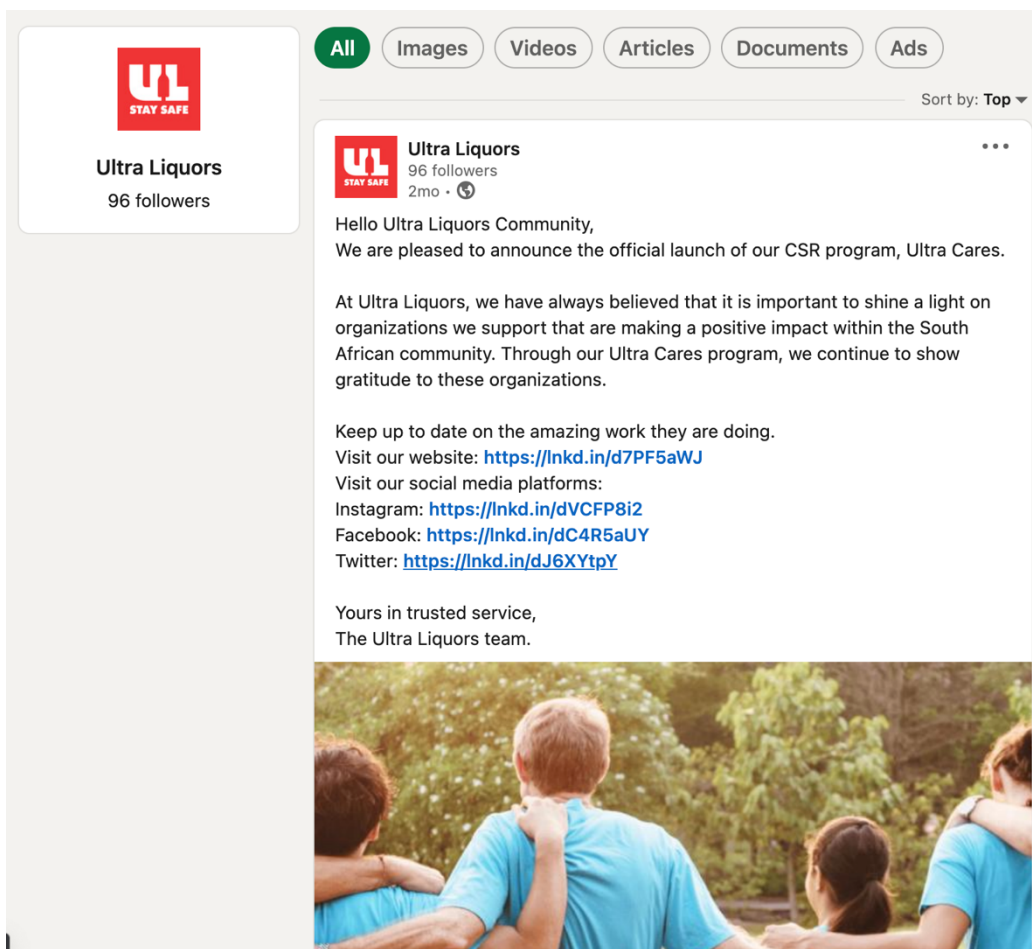
## Charities we work with

 <p><b>AEC</b></p> <p>      </p> <p><b>Alexandra Education Committee (AEC)</b></p> <p>The AEC is a wonderful NPO that believes "true potential is released through education". Their purpose is to provide underprivileged school children with academic and psycho-social support. Top performers are granted bursaries for their entire high school career.</p> <p><a href="#">Learn more</a></p>	 <p><b>SAILI</b> SA IMPROVED LEARNING INITIATIVE</p> <p>     </p> <p><b>South African Improved Learning Initiative (SAILI)</b></p> <p>SAILI is an organisation that believes in "improving the core of the public education system by utilising sustainable techniques". They identify academically talented students at low-income schools where the system is working well and provide support to students throughout their high school careers. By focusing on high-performing low-income schools, they can financially assist more children.</p> <p><a href="#">Learn more</a></p>	 <p><b>ASLINA</b> -BY NTSIKI BAYELA-</p> <p>      </p> <p><b>Aslina Wines, Ntsiki Bayela, and the Pinotage Youth Development Academy (PYDA)</b></p> <p>Ntsiki Bayela was the first black, female winemaker in South Africa. After graduating, she started her own winery, Aslina Wines, in 2016. Ultra Liquors has worked closely with the award-winning winery and winemaker since its inception. Ntsiki is a board member of the PYDA which provides technical training and assists in the personal development of children with job placement in the Cape Winelands.</p> <p><a href="#">Learn more</a></p>
 <p><b>SANCA</b> GEORGE</p> <p>      </p> <p><b>South African National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence (SANCA)</b></p> <p>SANCA is an organisation that aims to address the systemic issues related to alcohol and substance abuse in South Africa at its core. The organisation aims to successfully help those who have been affected by alcohol and substance abuse – both those who are the users, and those who are connected to them.</p> <p><a href="#">Learn more</a></p>	 <p><b>RAISING CONSCIOUSNESS</b></p> <p></p> <p><b>Raising Consciousness</b></p> <p>Raising Consciousness is a substance abuse awareness programme that is run in Masiphumelele, Western Cape. Through educational programmes and workshops, they hope to create a greater awareness for young people to understand and recognise the differences between use, abuse, and addiction.</p> <p><a href="#">Learn more</a></p>	 <p><b>INYOSI</b> EMPOWERMENT</p> <p>       </p> <p><b>Inyosi Empowerment</b></p> <p>Inyosi Empowerment is a service provider with a mission to create sustainable economic transformation. They identify and partner with qualifying black-owned small, medium, and micro-enterprises and provide them with access to funding, markets, and skills development. Furthermore, they connect with corporate investors and assist them in meeting their Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment goals.</p> <p><a href="#">Learn more</a></p>
 <p><b>Footprints 4 Sam</b></p> <p>      </p> <p><b>Footprints 4 Sam</b></p> <p>Footprints 4 Sam is an amazing organisation that assists underprivileged families with children who are living with life limiting conditions. Through the work of 6 initiatives, they aim to cultivate a healthcare culture of swift and broad-based intervention, improve early</p>		

## Addendum F: Ultra Liquors LinkedIn Screenshots



The screenshot shows the top portion of a LinkedIn profile for Ultra Liquors. At the top, there is a navigation bar with the LinkedIn logo, a search bar, and icons for Home, My Network, Jobs, and Messaging. Below this is a blue banner with the text "ULTRALIQUORS" and a large "UL" logo. To the left of the banner is a red square logo with "UL" and "STAY SAFE" below it. Underneath the banner, the company name "Ultra Liquors" is displayed, followed by a description: "An award-winning wholesale and retail business, offering a wide range of quality liquor brands at great prices." Below the description, it says "Retail · 96 followers" and "1 person from your school works here · 69 employees". There are three buttons: "Following" (with a checkmark), "Visit website" (with an external link icon), and "More". At the bottom of this section are navigation tabs: "Home", "My Company", "About", "Posts" (which is highlighted), "Jobs", and "People".



This screenshot shows a LinkedIn post from the Ultra Liquors company page. On the left side, there is a profile card for "Ultra Liquors" with 96 followers and the "UL STAY SAFE" logo. The post itself is titled "Ultra Liquors" and has 96 followers, posted 2 months ago. The text of the post reads: "Hello Ultra Liquors Community, We are pleased to announce the official launch of our CSR program, Ultra Cares. At Ultra Liquors, we have always believed that it is important to shine a light on organizations we support that are making a positive impact within the South African community. Through our Ultra Cares program, we continue to show gratitude to these organizations. Keep up to date on the amazing work they are doing. Visit our website: <https://lnkd.in/d7PF5aWJ> Visit our social media platforms: Instagram: <https://lnkd.in/dVCFP8i2> Facebook: <https://lnkd.in/dC4R5aUY> Twitter: <https://lnkd.in/dJ6XYtpY> Yours in trusted service, The Ultra Liquors team." Below the text is a photograph of four people (three men and one woman) wearing light blue t-shirts, standing outdoors with their arms around each other's shoulders, looking towards the camera.