

The Impact of CSR Communication by Ivorian Companies on the Reputation of their Brands: The Case of the Mineral Water Brand Céleste

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Abstract— Faced with competitive markets, companies are increasingly adopting CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) approaches in order to boost their performance, competitiveness and enhance their image with their stakeholders (Yeo, 2017). The Céleste brand's CSR communication campaigns are part of this approach. Thus, this study drew on stakeholder (Freeman, 1984), Triple Bottom Line (Elikngton, 1994), and affective response (Kim, Allen and Kardes, 1996) theories to assess the effects of the Carré d'Or Group's CSR communication on the reputation of its Céleste brand in Côte d'Ivoire. The results of our quantitative survey using a sample of 200 individuals show that this CSR communication serves a dual purpose. Not only does the Carré Group support the fight against cancer and blood donation operations in Côte d'Ivoire, but it also seeks to build a lasting positive reputation with consumers. In terms of managerial implications, this study further encourages the Carré d'Or Group to multiply its CSR communication campaigns, and above all invites all businesses to exploit CSR to improve or optimize their reputation with consumers, and why not, encourage them to purchase products. Scientifically, it should contribute to enriching the empirical database on the issue of the impact of CSR communication by companies on the positioning of their brands.

Keywords— CSR communication, Carré d'Or Group, reputation, stakeholder's theory, affective response theory.

I. INTRODUCTION

Blood donation and the fight against cancer in all its forms are among the key concerns of the Ivorian government. Firstly, in Côte d'Ivoire, the problem of self-sufficiency in labile blood products (LBS) remains a reality. Indeed, the Ivorian health system and the quality of care provided to patients suffer from recurrent shortages of blood products due to insufficient blood donations (Y. Kambé, 2021). This is why, in recent years, there have been increasing calls for donations to help hospitals meet patients' needs and avoid the worst (Y. Gourlay, 2022).

Cancer is also a major public health problem in Côte d'Ivoire, due to its high morbidity and mortality. According to the World Health Organization's Global Observatory of Cancer (WHO, 2022:10), the number of new cases in Côte d'Ivoire was estimated at 17,300, including 9,896 women and 7,404 men.

These two major concerns are driving Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) actions. Indeed, CSR, is defined by Bowen (1953) as "the obligation of businessmen to carry out their policies, make their decisions and follow courses of action which meet the objectives and values considered desirable in our society." (Quoted par A. Yeo. 2017: 7). A. Yeo (2017: 3) adds that "Corporate Social Responsibility is a renewed issue of organizational performance and governance." It is gradually becoming an essential means for managers to ensure the social, environmental and economic development of their organizations. CSR offers many areas of strategic reflection for

managers, who must transform them into competitive advantages (J. Igalens, 2012).

Faced with competitive markets, most large companies are constantly investing in CSR actions. They are increasingly adopting CSR approaches and environmental management systems in order to boost their performance and competitiveness, and to enhance their image with their stakeholders (A. Yeo, 2017: 3). This is the perspective of the Carré d'Or Group through the advertising campaigns for its mineral water brand Céleste, whose messages are formulated as follows: "Céleste supports the fight against cancer" and "Céleste supports blood donation".

Interested in evaluating CSR communication campaigns, we propose to answer the following question: What are the effects of the Carré d'Or Group's CSR communication¹ on Céleste's brand reputation? Or more specifically, to what extent do the "Céleste supports the fight against cancer" and "Céleste supports blood donation" advertising campaigns contribute to building a positive reputation for the Céleste brand?

Accordingly, this quantitative study aims to assess the effects of the Carré d'Or Group's CSR communication on the reputation of its Céleste brand among Abidjan consumers, based on stakeholder's theory (Freeman, 1984) and the affective response theory (Kim, Allen and Kardes, 1996), as well as Triple Bottom Line theory (Elikngton, 1994).

The paper is developed around the following points: the literature review, the theoretical position, the methodology

¹ In line with Morsing (2006), we define CSR communication as any communication actions designed and disseminated by the company itself about its CSR efforts.

used; and the analysis and discussion of the results of our questionnaire survey.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

A. Impact of CSR communications on consumer perceptions

Since the 1990s, CSR has emerged from obscurity, now displaying openness and transparency and expressing itself in the form of societal communication (Lantos, 2001). Operationally, this societal communication by companies uses various channels, from television advertising and billboards to sales promotions. According to Gabriel (2003), companies are making greater use of direct marketing, sponsorship, and public relations, which allow for greater flexibility in communication and closer proximity to consumers, whose perceptions are inevitably influenced by these forms of societal communication. Most studies have postulated that there is a strong negative impact of advertising non-civic acts (Swaen and Vanhamme, 2005). Folkes and Kamins (1999) show that describing a company as violating certain social principles (such as child labor) encourages consumers to form a negative attitude toward the company, regardless of the quality of the product sold. Swaen and Vahamme (2005) also confirm that an accusation of irresponsible activity leads to a deterioration in attitudes toward the company, the product, the intention to purchase, and trust in the company, regardless of whether or not the company has previously communicated its societal commitments. Mohr and Webb (2005) observe an asymmetry already postulated by Creyer and Ross (1997) in the effects of social commitments. Positive CSR performance has a positive impact on consumer attitudes toward the company and purchase intentions, while negative performance has a more negative impact.

This is why Barthel (2004) invites companies to focus their ethical policy on three fundamental areas, namely: a commitment to values, i.e., ethics is a moral code of “living together,” a mindset imbued with the values of justice, respect, and consideration; a relational commitment, because ethics is also the pursuit of a relationship of trust, marked by justice and impartiality, with all of the company's internal and external stakeholders; a societal commitment, because ethics ultimately aims to take better account of ecological balance and health by improving control over the company's negative externalities. We agree with this author that the implementation of an ethical policy promotes an improvement in the company's overall performance in terms of image and the quality of its relationships with its stakeholders.

As part of the issue of managing the impacts of Covid-19 in the university environment, N'Zué (2020) conducts a semiological analysis of the advertising posters for SATOCI's CSR communication campaign at Félix Houphouët-Boigny University. This study showed that SATOCI's CSR communication campaign not only contributes to stopping the spread of the Covid-19, but above all, intentionally promotes the LOTUS brand's image and sales at Félix Houphouët-Boigny University. It is precisely in this context that our research evaluates the impact of the Carré d'Or Group's CSR advertising on the Céleste brand reputation among consumers in Abidjan.

B. Céleste's CSR communication campaigns

The Carré d'Or Group was founded by the late Ibrahim Ezzedine, who wanted to build a group of companies to contribute to industrialization and job creation in Côte d'Ivoire. Its activities began in 1988 with a store selling various goods. The Ivorian Mineral Water Production Company in Côte d'Ivoire (CIPREMCI), the group's fourth firm, was one of the six companies that he founded through his efforts. Founded in 2005, this company is based in Bonoua and produces mineral water known as “Céleste.” This section presents the Carré d'Or Group's CSR advertising for its Céleste brand. These are the Group's two most publicized CSR initiatives in support of Céleste in Côte d'Ivoire.

The first (Figure1) is the “Céleste supports the fight against cancer” campaign. In partnership with the Ministry of Health and Public Hygiene, the Carré d'Or Group supports the fight against cancer by pledging to donate XOF 2 (\$ 0, 0036) to the ministry for every bottle of Céleste water purchased. Indeed, on the advertising poster signed by the Carré d'Or Group below, we can clearly see, among other elements: the messages “Céleste supports the fight against cancer” and “1 bottle purchased, XOF 2 donated” with the cancer symbol; a bottle of Céleste water; the logo of the Ministry of Health and Public Hygiene, next to which is written “IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND PUBLIC HYGIENE.”

The second societal communication initiative is the campaign “Céleste supports blood donation.” Since 2013, in partnership with the National Blood Transfusion Center (CNTS), the Carré d'Or group has been supporting blood donation by organizing blood donation drives and assisting the CNTS during our blood drives. Indeed, on the advertising poster (Figure 2) signed by the Carré d'Or Group below, we can clearly see, among other elements: Céleste's messages “Céleste supports blood donation,” “ALREADY 160,054 BAGS DONATED” written inside a heart symbolizing donation; the CNTS's appeal “Give blood and save lives”; and the CNTS logo next to which is written “CARRE D'OR PARTNER SINCE 2013.”



Figure 1: Poster “Céleste supports the fight against cancer”
(Source : <https://web.facebook.com/CarredOrGroupe>)



Figure 2: Poster “Céleste supports blood donation”

(Source: <https://web.facebook.com/CNTS.RCI/>)

C. Theoretical framework

This study is based on three theories: the Stakeholders’ theory (Freeman, 1984) and the Triple Bottom Line (Elikngton, 1994) for CSR, as well as affective response theory (Kim, Allen, and Kardes, 1996) for advertising. For Freeman (1984), stakeholder’s theory refers to “any individual or group of individuals who can influence or be influenced by the achievement of the organization's objectives” (cited by N'zué, 2020, p.234). Freeman (1984) emphasizes that only a true understanding of the goals of stakeholders can help managers achieve a company's objectives.

Also known as Three Pillars (3Ps), the Triple Bottom Line CSR theory states that a company should be responsible for three features: Profit, People and Planet, that is economic, social and environmental responsibility. Those dimensions were detailed by Uddin, Hassan and Tarique (2008). The economic dimension encompasses three elements: the multiplier effect, which is particularly potent when a large number of individuals in the community are employed by that company, as well as tax and societal contributions, which means refraining from behaviors that erode trust. The social dimension includes such aspects as responsibility towards customers, responsibility towards employees, and responsibility towards community. Książak and Fischbach (2017, p.99) wrote:

Only if a company cares for all three aspects of Triple Bottom Line, can it be called sustainable, because all of them are extremely closely related. Caring for Profit and for People makes it equitable and fair, but omitting environmental protection dooms the Planet. On the other hand, tending only to Planet and People, and forgetting about the Profit, makes CSR policy bearable, but business needs profits to survive.

According to Cane (2013), if a company pays attention to Profit and Planet, discarding the People, it is viable and profitable, but in the long term can lead to the fall of employees’ morale and the breach of social contract.

As for the advertising dimension of our work, it is based on the theory of affective response (J. Kim, C.T. Allen, and F. R. Kardes, 1996). This theory, which is predominant in marketing research, is based on purely affective mechanisms. It stems from the initial work of Pavlov and Staats and Staats, who

claimed that subjects, based on their experience, had been influenced without awareness or cognition. They deliberately excluded statistical treatments, as the subjects reported being aware of the systematic relationships. In the context of advertising, direct affective transfer means that when faced with a brand or message, affective responses appear first. According to Courbet and Fourquet (2003), these responses then influence attitudes and beliefs towards the brand (N'Zué, 2020, p.234).

III. METHOD

The study conducted in Abidjan. Thanks to its port, Abidjan has experienced extraordinary development, attracting a large population that extends beyond national borders. This rapid and continuous development since 1950 has been driven by an influx of migrants, a large proportion of whom are foreign nationals. The driving force behind the city's spatial expansion has been, above all, the effort to create port and industrial facilities and spaces. Every effort is being made to make Abidjan a growth center and a reflection of Ivorian urbanization. In less than a century, it has become a major African metropolis, growing year after year as it still houses all the institutions of the Republic, pending the effective transfer of the administrative and political capital to Yamoussoukro.

Brenoum and Atta (2022) point out that the centralization of trade and administration in this city and the shortcomings of the distribution system in the interior of the country reinforce the idea among industrialists that the Ivorian capital remains the best place to invest. Due to this overwhelming superiority at all levels, there is significant population and spatial expansion. Because of its size, extent, and population, Abidjan is currently a megacity. The former city of Abidjan has 5,616,633 residents across its 422 km², while the autonomous district of Abidjan has 6,321,017 people living there over its 2,119 km². This makes up 21.5% of the population of the nation (RGPH, 2021) and accounts for 60% of the country's GDP (APA, 2015). Its population is distributed among the thirteen municipalities that comprise it: Abobo, Adjamé, Anyama, Attécoubé, Bingerville, Cocody, Koumassi, Marcory, Plateau, Port Bouët, Treichville, Songon, and Yopougon. It is five times the size of Paris, the capital of France and the biggest French-speaking city in West Africa, with 70,000 hectares of territory (Chenal, 2009, p.114).

The data collection tool is a questionnaire that focuses on two main points: evaluating the “Céleste supports the fight against cancer” campaign and evaluating the “Céleste supports blood donation” campaign. After creating the questionnaire using Google Forms, we used self-administration via online platforms (WhatsApp) to collect the data. Using Google Forms allowed us to automatically retrieve statistics from the collected data, which we summarized in 3D sectors.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Results

The results of the impact evaluation of the “Céleste supports the fight against cancer” campaign are presented on the one hand, and those of the impact evaluation of the “Céleste supports blood donation” campaign on the other.

1) *Evaluating the impact of the “Céleste supports the fight against cancer” campaign*

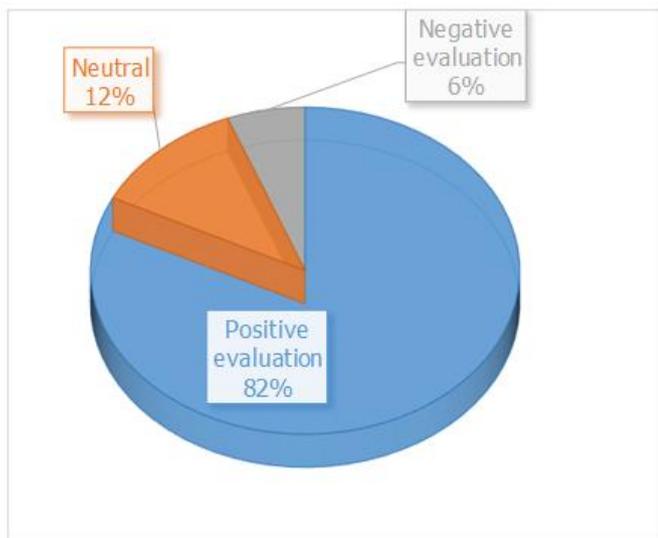


Figure 3: The impact of the “Céleste supports the fight against cancer” campaign
(Source : N’Zué and Adhepeau, juillet 2025)

As shown in Figure 3, of the 200 individuals surveyed, 82% rated the “Céleste supports the fight against cancer” campaign positively. Only 6% of respondents gave it an unfavorable rating. The remaining 12% of respondents gave neither a positive nor a negative rating. In other words, most (82%) of the 200 respondents believe that the Carré d'Or Group's Céleste brand cares about the health and well-being of consumers.

2) *Evaluating the impact of the “Céleste supports blood donation” campaign*

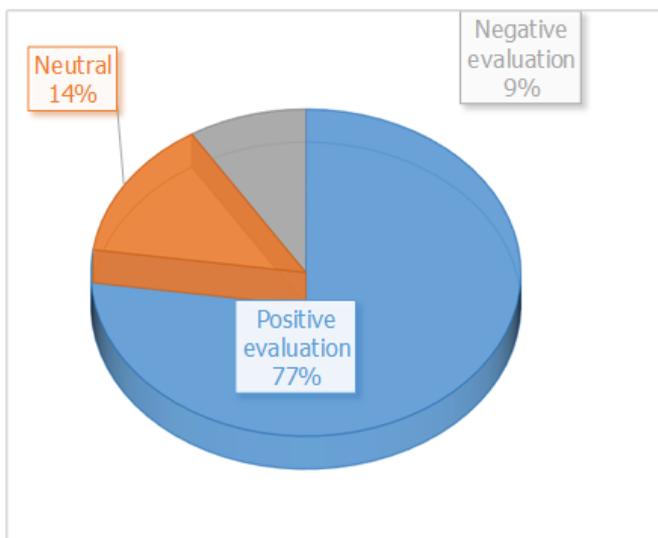


Figure 4: The impact of the “Céleste supports blood donation” campaign
(Source : N’Zué and Adhepeau, juillet 2025)

Figure 4 shows that, of the 200 respondents, 77% rated the “Céleste supports blood donation” campaign positively. Just 6% of respondents gave it a negative rating. The remaining 14% of respondents gave neither a positive nor a negative evaluation. In other words, here again, most (77%) of the 200 people

surveyed believe that the Carré d'Or Group's Céleste brand is concerned about the health and well-being of consumers.

B. Discussion

The results of our study show that Carré d'Or Group's CSR advertising has a positive impact on the reputation of the Céleste brand among consumers in Abidjan. In fact, almost all respondents believe that Carré d'Or Group's mineral water brand cares about the health and well-being of consumers. In other words, this brand can be characterized as a socially responsible company.

This study is in line with numerous other works, including Yeo (2017) and N’Zué (2020). According to Yeo (2017), companies are increasingly adopting CSR approaches in order to improve their performance and competitiveness and enhance their image among their stakeholders. N’Zué’s (2020) semiological analysis of SATOCI's CSR communication campaign at UFHB shows that this communication not only helps to stop the spread of the COVID-19, but above all, intentionally promotes the desirability and the purchase of LOTUS brand disposable tissues at UFHB.

We therefore conclude that the Carré d'Or Group uses CSR, as part of its support for the fight against cancer and its support for blood donation operations, to encourage consumers to desire and buy its Céleste brand more

V. CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

This quantitative study drew on stakeholder’s theory (Freeman, 1984) and affective response theory (Kim, Allen, and Kardes, 1996), as well as Triple Bottom Line theory (Elikngton, 1994) to assess the impact of the Carré d'Or Group's CSR communication on the reputation of the Céleste brand among consumers in the economic capital of Côte d'Ivoire. Our analysis shows that this CSR advertising campaign serves a dual purpose. The Carré Group supports the fight against cancer and promotes blood donation in Côte d'Ivoire, but above all, it intentionally seeks to build a positive reputation among consumers.

In terms of managerial implications, this study further encourages the Carré d'Or Group to increase its CSR advertising campaigns and, above all, invites all businesses to use CSR initiatives to improve or optimize their brand image among consumers and, why not, encourage them to purchase their products and services.

In terms of scientific contribution, this research should help enrich empirical databases on the issue of the impact of businesses' CSR communication on the reputation of their various brands.

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