



The Effectiveness of CSR Communication in Telecommunications Networks: A Case Study of Indosat Ooredoo Hutchison

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ABSTRACT

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In the context of the increasingly competitive and accountability-demanding telecommunications industry, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) communication is a crucial element in building trust and social legitimacy. This study explores and evaluates the perceived effectiveness of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) communication strategies implemented by Indosat Ooredoo Hutchison (IOH), particularly during its critical post-merger period. Adopting a qualitative, multi-method approach using triangulation, the research involved internal and external stakeholder surveys alongside netnographic observation of social media responses. Findings indicate that IOH's CSR communication is generally perceived as effective: most external stakeholders (78%) found the information transparent and easy to understand. Social media, with Instagram (45%) and Facebook (25%) as leading platforms, proved highly influential for CSR content. While message credibility was noted, service-related complaints often undermined perceived sincerity. Most external respondents (73%) reported an improved brand perception due to CSR initiatives. However, internal stakeholders expressed a strong desire for deeper involvement in CSR planning. Practically, the study suggests optimizing communication platforms and diversifying content to strengthen legitimacy and trust in this highly scrutinized sector.

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INTRODUCTION

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has progressed beyond charitable activities to become an essential strategy within modern corporate management, particularly in public-facing sectors like telecommunications (Rohyati & Suropto, 2021; Susanto & Ardini, 2016; Tsinga-Mambadja et al., 2024; Vallaster, 2017; Van Der Merwe & Al Achkar, 2022). For Indosat Ooredoo Hutchison (IOH), CSR functions not only as a reputational asset but also as a means to create shared value aligning societal benefits with long-term business goals (Oueslati et al., 2023; Lee, 2022). The year 2024 marks a pivotal period for IOH following its merger, during which public confidence and stakeholder relationships must be carefully managed. Transparent and consistent CSR communication becomes crucial in affirming the company's identity and stability during this phase of organizational transition. This study explores how IOH utilizes CSR communication not merely for branding but as a strategic tool for stakeholder engagement and legitimacy building (Ajayi & Mmutle, 2020; Crane & Glozer, 2016; Macca et al., 2024; Verk et al., 2021).

Previous studies have extensively explored CSR communication from various angles. For instance, Kim (2022) emphasized the role of transparency in enhancing internal

stakeholder perceptions, while Oueslati et al. (2023) highlighted the importance of message consistency and responsiveness in franchise networks. Others, such as Marschlich and Hurtado (2025), examined the effect of third-party certifications on CSR authenticity. However, few studies have specifically addressed CSR communication in the context of post-merger integration in the telecommunications sector, particularly in emerging markets like Indonesia. Moreover, existing research often focuses on external stakeholders, neglecting the critical role of internal stakeholders in co-creating CSR narratives.

Nevertheless, companies face increasing skepticism from stakeholders regarding the authenticity of CSR efforts. When there is a disconnect between communicated intentions and actual practices, organizations risk triggering the so-called “boomerang effect,” which can damage credibility and stakeholder trust (Oueslati et al., 2023). This is reflective of the broader “CSR paradox,” where stakeholders demand transparency but are simultaneously suspicious of corporate motives (Marschlich & Hurtado, 2025). As such, IOH’s communication strategy must prioritize sincerity and authenticity to avoid perceptions of greenwashing (Famularo, 2023; Chon & Kim, 2021). To maintain trust and reinforce its social license to operate, IOH must ensure its CSR messages are credible, accessible, and reflective of actual impact. This research investigates the perceived effectiveness of IOH’s CSR communication from both internal and external stakeholder perspectives, focusing on indicators such as transparency, responsiveness, and authenticity. By examining these perceptions, the study offers actionable insights into how telecommunications companies can strengthen legitimacy and stakeholder trust through strategic CSR engagement (O’Shea, 2025; Oueslati et al., 2023).

This study explores and evaluates the perceived effectiveness of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) communication strategies implemented by Indosat Ooredoo Hutchison (IOH), particularly during its critical post-merger period. By examining how internal stakeholders (such as corporate communication teams) and external stakeholders (including customers and the general public) interpret IOH’s CSR messages, the research seeks to uncover key factors that contribute to the credibility, transparency, and authenticity of these communications. The study further intends to assess whether such communication efforts succeed in fostering trust, mitigating skepticism, and enhancing the company’s social legitimacy amid rising concerns about greenwashing and corporate insincerity. The significance of this research lies not only in its contribution to the theoretical understanding of CSR communication—through the integration of signaling theory, stakeholder theory, and the AA1000SES stakeholder engagement framework—but also in its practical value for communication practitioners. The findings provide actionable insights for organizations operating in high-scrutiny sectors like telecommunications, helping them design more effective CSR messaging strategies that align with stakeholder expectations, minimize reputational risks, and reinforce long-term brand equity in an increasingly transparent and socially conscious marketplace.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative approach to explore stakeholder perceptions of Indosat Ooredoo Hutchison’s CSR communication. Data were collected through three main methods: (1) open-ended questionnaires distributed to internal stakeholders within

the Corporate Communication Division; (2) a customer survey targeting external stakeholders using similar open-ended instruments; and (3) netnographic observation of public responses to CSR content across IOH's social media platforms like Instagram, Facebook and YouTube. The internal sample was selected using total population sampling, involving 25 communication personnel, while the external sample was obtained through convenience sampling, comprising 74 customer respondents.

For data analysis, thematic analysis was used to identify patterns in qualitative responses, while lexical analysis was conducted using Voyant Tools to interpret dominant words and sentiment in social media comments. This triangulation method ensured a comprehensive understanding of communication effectiveness from both organizational and public perspectives.

To guide the thematic analysis, six main aspects were identified based on the literature and theoretical framework: transparency, message credibility, stakeholder engagement, channel effectiveness, perceived CSR impact, and authenticity. Each aspect is operationalized into specific indicators, as outlined in Table 1.

Table 1. Framework for Analyzing CSR Communication Effectiveness

No.	Aspect	Description	Dimension	Indicator	Reference
1	Transparency	The level of openness of the company in delivering CSR information	Information Disclosure	- CSR information is communicated openly and honestly. - Includes program impacts and achievements.	Connelly et al. (2011); Kim (2022)
2	Message Credibility	Stakeholders' perception of the trustworthiness of CSR messages	Consistency & Trustworthiness	- Message source is trustworthy - Consistency between words and actions - Responsive to criticism	Famularo (2023); Marschlich & Hurtado (2024)
3	Stakeholder Engagement	Active involvement of stakeholders in the CSR process	Dialogue & Participation	- Stakeholders are involved from the planning stage - Two-way communication	AA1000SES (2015)
4	Channel Effectiveness	Effectiveness of communication channels used to deliver CSR messages	Accessibility & Media	- Information is easily accessible - Delivered through appropriate	Lim (2023)

No.	Aspect	Description	Dimension	Indicator	Reference
				and popular media	
5	Perceived Impact	The perceived impact of CSR communication by stakeholders	Reception & Influence	- Enhances corporate image - Encourages participation - Increases public understanding	Oueslati et al. (2023)
6	Authenticity	Perception of the genuineness and sincerity of the company's CSR messages	Sincerity & Moral Consistency	- Not perceived as greenwashing - Claims are aligned with reality - Open to criticism and evaluation	Marschlich & Hurtado (2025)

Source(s): Table by authors

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION (10 PT)

Findings

Analysis of Stakeholder Perceptions of CSR Communication

The results of this study indicate that Indosat Ooredoo Hutchison's CSR communication is generally perceived as effective across multiple dimensions, though several areas still present opportunities for improvement. In terms of transparency, most external stakeholders (78%) agreed that the CSR information shared by IOH is clear, honest, and includes tangible outcomes, reflecting a positive alignment with the principles of accountable communication. Regarding message credibility, respondents particularly from media circles appreciated the company's consistent and responsive messaging; however, recurring service-related complaints on social media often undermined the perceived sincerity of CSR efforts.

From the internal stakeholder perspective, there was a strong desire to participate more actively in the early stages of CSR planning, which supports the principle of inclusivity under AA1000SES. This indicates untapped potential for leveraging employees as CSR advocates. In terms of channel effectiveness, social media emerged as the most influential platform, with 85% of respondents accessing CSR content via Instagram and Facebook. Yet, the effectiveness of these platforms is sometimes reduced due to the overwhelming presence of service-related criticisms that dilute the visibility and impact of CSR content.

On the aspect of perceived impact, approximately 73% of external respondents stated that IOH's CSR communication improved their overall perception of the brand, especially due to initiatives like digital literacy training and support for MSMEs.

Table 2. Respondents' Perceptions of CSR Aspects

Aspect	Indicator	Data Source	Findings	Interpretation
Transparency	- Open, honest disclosure. - Outcome clarity	Customer survey (n=74), open-ended	78% of respondents felt CSR messages were transparent and easy to understand. Quotes: "They explain what the programs actually do."	CSR content is perceived as clear and factual, indicating success in reducing information asymmetry.
Message Credibility	- Trustworthy source. - Consistency between words and actions.	Survey & journalist feedback	Journalists praised the communication team for responsiveness. Some customers noted inconsistency when service complaints dominate online spaces.	IOH's CSR messaging is generally trusted, but brand credibility can be undermined by service issues.
Stakeholder Engagement	- Involvement in planning. - Two-way communication.	Internal survey (25 employees)	Employees desire involvement in early planning. Quote: "Let us co-create the program narratives."	High potential for internal advocacy if staff are engaged as CSR collaborators, not just executors.
Channel Effectiveness	- Accessibility. - Relevant and consistent channels	Netnography (FB, IG, YT), survey	85% of respondents access CSR via Instagram/Facebook. Yet, social media is also dominated by service complaints.	CSR content reaches the audience, but signals can be diluted by service-related dissatisfaction.
Perceived Impact	- Improved brand image. - Encourages support	Customer survey	73% said CSR improved their perception of IOH. Respondents were more aware of digital literacy and MSME programs.	CSR contributes to positive brand association, especially when programs are relatable and impactful.
Authenticity	- Sincerity of message - Avoidance of greenwashing	Customer survey, netnography	Some skepticism remains. Quotes like "CSR is good, but network is still slow" show disconnect between CSR and core service experience.	To be viewed as authentic, CSR must align with core business values and address customer pain points.

Source(s): Table by authors

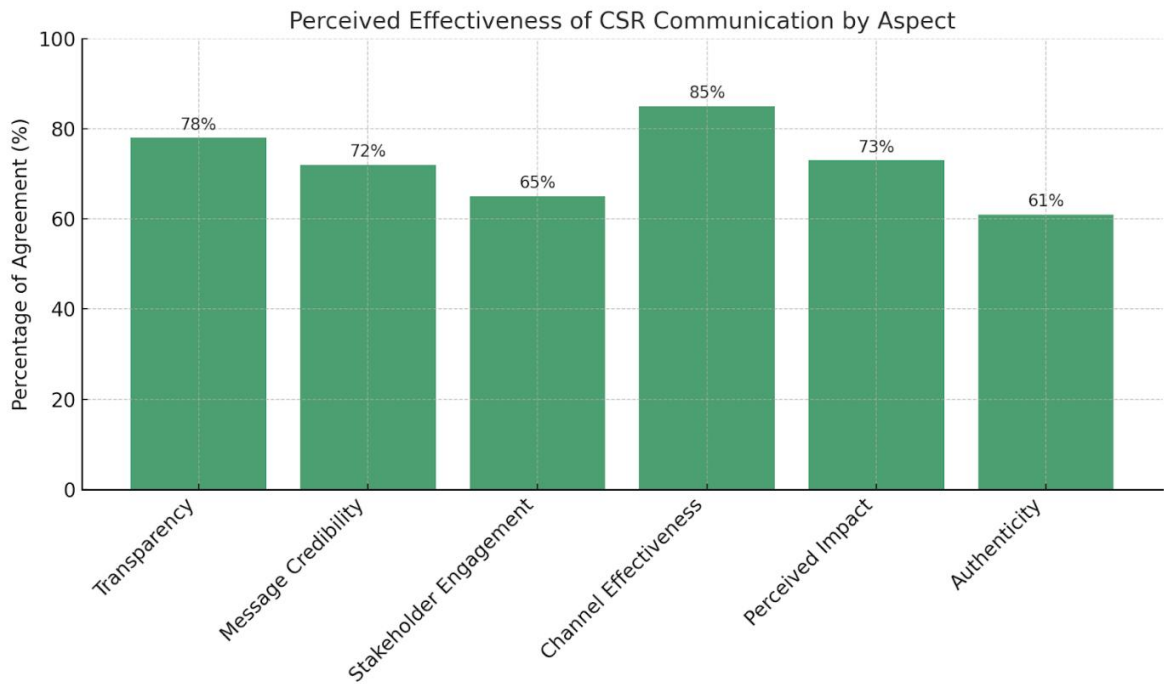


Figure 1. Preferred Channels for CSR Information Access
Source(s): Figure by authors

The distribution of communication channels through which respondents most frequently accessed information about Indosat Ooredoo Hutchison’s CSR programs. The majority of respondents, 45%, reported that they primarily received CSR content through Instagram, highlighting its role as a leading platform for stakeholder engagement. Facebook followed with 25%, indicating its continued relevance among broader demographic groups.

YouTube was identified by 15% of participants, likely due to its visual and narrative-driven content delivery, while 10% accessed CSR updates via the official website, suggesting that traditional corporate communication platforms remain important. Lastly, 5% mentioned email or internal messaging channels, reflecting limited reach for direct or internal communications.

These findings emphasize the importance of leveraging social media platforms, particularly Instagram and Facebook, for effective CSR outreach. It also suggests that IOH should optimize content strategy across these channels to ensure consistent, engaging, and credible communication with both internal and external stakeholders.

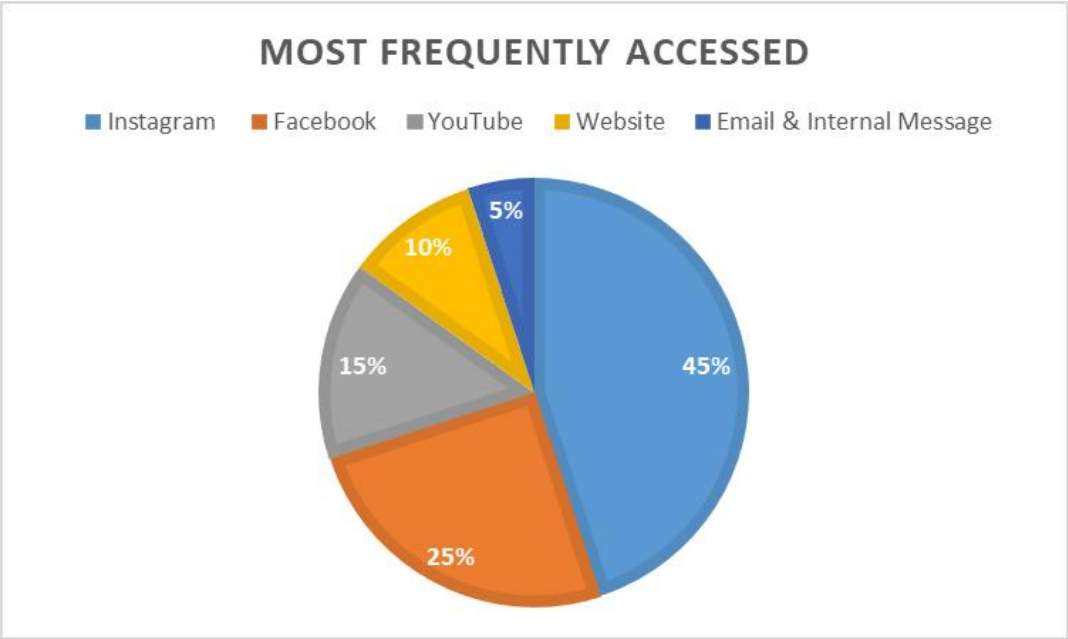


Figure 2. Distribution of Response Tones from External Stakeholders
Source(s): Figure by authors

The tone analysis of the open-ended responses from internal stakeholders reveals a predominantly positive perception of IOH’s CSR communication, though some constructive and critical feedback was also identified. Out of 74 respondents, the majority expressed favorable views, highlighting the clarity, relevance, and social impact of programs such as IDCamp and MSME empowerment initiatives. Responses like “*Sangat baik*” (*Very good*) or “*CSR programs reach remote communities and truly help*” reflected a clear tone of approval and appreciation. Referring to Lindgren et al. (2023) that a positive tone is characterized by words that express optimism, joy, approval, or confidence.

In contrast, a smaller segment of responses reflected constructive suggestions, typically categorized as neutral. These comments did not express dissatisfaction but rather offered practical ideas for improvement. For example, respondents suggested increasing CSR exposure through social media or involving more internal teams in CSR program planning. Statements such as “*It would be better if promoted more widely*” or “*CSR can be expanded to other regions*” indicated engaged and thoughtful input without a negative sentiment.

A limited number of responses carried a negative tone, often pointing to perceived disconnects between CSR messaging and core service delivery. Negative tone reflects disapproval, frustration, or negative emotion directed at a company, product, or experience (Rambocas & Pacheco (2018)). Respondents in this category expressed skepticism, noting that CSR efforts might feel superficial when basic service issues remain unresolved. Remarks like “*do not understand Indosat's CSR program*” or feel “*uninformed*” highlight the importance of aligning CSR communication with real operational performance.

Table 3. Analysis of Respondents' Perception Tone

Respondent	Response	Tone	Justification
R1	Very good	Positive	Expresses direct approval with no criticism
R2	CSR programs reaching remote areas truly help communities	Positive	Highlights perceived benefits and social impact
R3	Collaboration with both local and national media is already well established	Positive	Acknowledges the breadth and quality of communication efforts
R4	It might be more effective if promoted more on social media	Neutral/Constructive	Suggests improvement without negative tone
R5	I think Indosat can expand CSR programs to a wider scale	Neutral/Constructive	Provides input for enhancement, not an expression of dissatisfaction
R6	More open and communicative	Positive	Commends the clarity and engagement of communication
R7	Already very good and transparent	Positive	Clear, unqualified praise
R8	Continuity is needed to create greater impact	Positive	Emphasizes long-term value, with a hopeful and supportive tone
R9	Indosat as a major company is entering the ESG space	Neutral/Constructive	States an observation without positive or negative judgment
R10	Campaign variations that provide positive impact to society	Positive	Recognizes the relevance and societal benefit of CSR initiatives
R14	Did not understand about Indosat CSR programs.	Negative	Respondent has never been exposed to information about Indosat's CSR programs
R30	The socialization and promotion of Indosat's CSR programs should be increased.	Negative	The respondent hasn't received any information about the Indosat CSR programs.

Source(s): Table by authors

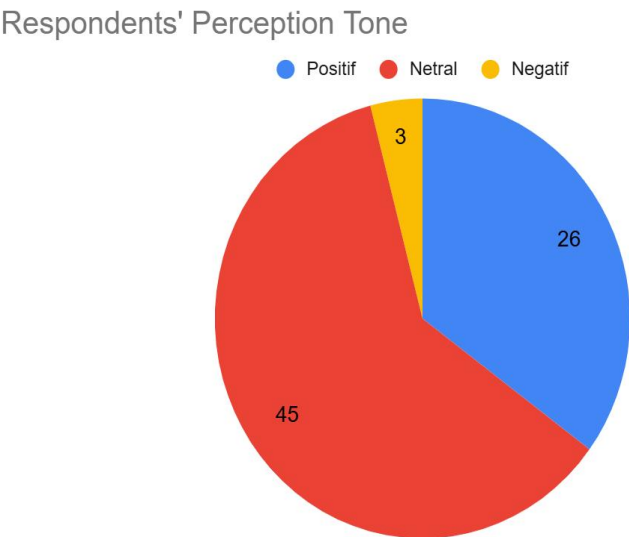


Figure 3. Word Cloud of Frequently Mentioned Terms in CSR Responses

Source(s): Figure by authors

Analysis of Social Media Comments

This study analyzed public reactions to IOH's CSR communication on social media (Instagram, Twitter/X, and YouTube) using a netnographic approach to collect user-generated content such as comments, likes, and sentiment responses to CSR-related posts. Lexical analysis was performed using *Voyant Tools*, a web-based text analysis environment (Sinclair & Rockwell, 2018). This tool allows for the identification of word patterns, frequencies, and collocations to understand the dominant themes and sentiments emerging from the collected text data.

Table 4. Analysis of Respondents' Perception Tone

Channels used for CSR communication	Number of publications shared	Number of Comments	Source(s): Social Media Content
Instagram	47	982	
Facebook	52	2,212	
X	35	131	
Linkedin	23	15	
Youtube	16	170	

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While the lexical analysis of overall social media discourse reveals a dominance of service-related complaints, it is important to note that comments specifically pertaining to IOH's CSR programs, as observed on relevant posts, often exhibit a positive sentiment.



Figure 4. Social Media Publication and Engagement Metrics

Source: Figure by Vooyant Tools

The results of this study reinforce previous findings that transparent and stakeholder-responsive CSR communication significantly enhances public trust and corporate legitimacy (Kim, 2022; Oueslati et al., 2023). Stakeholders in this research consistently recognized the clarity, accessibility, and perceived relevance of IOH's CSR content, particularly programs like IDCamp and MSME empowerment, which were widely disseminated via social media. This is consistent with findings by Salman and Ishak (2023), who demonstrated that digital CSR disclosures positively influence customer trust and engagement, particularly when perceived as credible and aligned with stakeholder values.

However, despite the generally positive tone, a paradox emerged: CSR content often competed with public dissatisfaction over service quality, especially on digital platforms. This mirrors the CSR communication dilemma described by Marschlich and Hurtado (2025), and supports the conclusions of Duque and Castro (2023), who found that ICT firms' risk being perceived as engaging in greenwashing when CSR communication fails to align with actual company performance. In the case of IOH, this misalignment poses a reputational risk, especially during a post-merger phase where stakeholder expectations are elevated.

The limited involvement of internal stakeholders in CSR planning, as expressed in this study, highlights a gap in the inclusivity principle outlined in the AA1000 Stakeholder Engagement Standard (AccountAbility, 2015). This observation also echoes the call by Ahmed et al. (2023) for a participatory model of CSR engagement, where communication is co-created with stakeholders not just delivered to them. In this context, Stakeholder Theory becomes particularly relevant, as internal stakeholder perceptions are shown to directly influence the authenticity and credibility of external CSR narratives.

Moreover, the tone analysis from this study is largely positive, yet marked by select skepticism reflects Chon and Kim's (2021) assertion that well-intentioned CSR efforts can backfire if stakeholders perceive a disconnect between message and motive. Salman and Ishak (2023) further reinforce this, showing that trust is mediated by how CSR disclosure aligns with both ethical expectations and operational transparency.

In summary, this study contributes to a growing body of CSR communication literature by affirming that effectiveness relies not only on clarity and frequency of messaging but also on perceived authenticity and organizational alignment. The integration of stakeholder feedback, both internally and externally, remains central to mitigating reputational risk and maximizing CSR's strategic value.

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that Indosat Ooredoo Hutchison's (IOH) CSR communication strategy effectively enhances the company's reputation, stakeholder trust, and social legitimacy, with strengths in transparent messaging, accessible channels, and relevant program content. However, to sustain and deepen this impact—particularly during the critical post-merger period—CSR communication should become more dialogical, inclusive, and closely integrated with IOH's operational realities to reinforce authentic identity and legitimacy. Management should address existing communication gaps by adopting a more sophisticated dissemination approach, including optimizing CSR web pages, creating dedicated social media accounts, diversifying content, partnering with media, and engaging remote communities, to broaden the reach and positive effect of CSR initiatives. Future research could examine the long-term outcomes of these enhanced communication strategies across diverse stakeholder groups and investigate how dialogical CSR communication influences stakeholder participation and organizational trust in post-merger telecommunications contexts.

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