

<연구 결과 보고서>

**THE USE OF CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY
IN CRISIS MANAGEMENT:
A CASE OF MARKS AND SPENCER UK**

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Master of Business Administration (MBA) with Advanced Practice**

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the work for this Project has been conducted at the Ulster Business School, the Ulster University at London branch. No portion of the work has been submitted in support of another degree or qualification at this or any other institute of learning.

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21/05/2023

RESEARCH ETHICS DECLARATION

The information contained here is, to the best of my knowledge and belief, accurate. I have read the University's current research ethics guidelines, and accept responsibility for the conduct of the procedures set out in the attached application in accordance with these guidelines, the University's policy on conflict of interest and any other condition laid down by the University's Research Ethics Committee or its Sub-Committees. I have attempted to identify all the risks related to this research that may arise in conducting this research, and acknowledge my obligations and the rights of the participants.

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to analyse how CSR developed before and after the COVID-19 crisis, to find out how CSR is used as a risk management strategy, and to make suggestions on how to promote future CSR activities based on this.

To this end, first of all, through media report analysis, it was confirmed that sustainable business became more important during the COVID-19 crisis, and society's demand for CSR increased. And as a result of analysing the annual CSR activities of M&S, a company subject to the case study, based on the frame derived from CSR theory, it was confirmed that CSR activities related to social issues that were considerate of stakeholders such as employees and local communities were strengthened during the COVID-19 crisis. In addition, consideration of social and environmental impacts in governance has been strengthened, such as the establishment of a new ESG committee. After overcoming the COVID-19 crisis by strengthening CSR activities, the economic indicators of M&S improved, confirming that CSR was effectively used as a strategy to overcome the crisis.

However, after the crisis ended, CSR-related indicators weakened, and CSR activities did not continue. This study not only confirms the strengthening of CSR activities during the crisis period but also suggests that to sustain them continuously, it is necessary to redesign CSR programs to reflect the changing needs of society.

Keywords:

CSR, ESG, Crisis management, Covid-19, M&S

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This business project examines how corporate social responsibility (CSR) was used as a crisis management strategy by examining the characteristics and performance of how companies' CSR activities changed in crises such as the COVID-19 crisis.

This chapter examines the background and importance of studying this topic and outlines the research method. It also presents the research aim, research questions and research objectives as a scope of research. And the structure of this business project report is described in brief for each chapter.

1.2 Background of the research problem

CSR is an important part of corporate development today. Public tolerance for corporate illegal activities is decreasing, and it is also required for companies to solve social and environmental issues while responding to society's demands. This also helps companies better locate themselves in the market and gain a higher reputation among consumers (Yu et al., 2022).

Various discussions and activities related to CSR continue in the international community. The international organization, United Nations is promoting CSR

and corporate sustainable development. The UN Global Compact, which began in 2000, is the world's leading and largest corporate social responsibility initiative, better fulfilling corporate social responsibility and promoting global sustainable development (Yu et al., 2022).

In particular, the COVID-19 pandemic, a global economic and social crisis that occurred in 2020, is considered to have provided a good opportunity for companies to effectively participate in CSR initiatives. The pandemic has shown that members of society are interconnected, and consumers have come to expect companies to take more charitable responsibilities (Bakerjian, 2022). Huang and Ye (2021) believe that the way a company operates its business should be adjusted to consider overall social welfare.

However, on the other hand, the primary goal of a company is to pursue its economic profits, which is contrary to considering the interests of society as a whole. In addition, investors may believe that engaging in CSR activities is not helpful to companies in the face of growing economic uncertainty caused by COVID-19 (Chen et al., 2021, cited by Chuah et al., 2022). By studying how CSR activities were promoted in a situation where the business environment of a company has become difficult due to a crisis such as COVID-19, it is possible to confirm whether CSR is just moral packaging or essential for corporate survival.

Brown and Crawford (2021) said that even after COVID-19, the business sector will continue to move toward sustainability, support for stopping climate change,

and stakeholder capitalism on corporate social impact. Even after the end of the COVID-19 crisis, climate risks are growing, and crises such as the Ukrainian war and the energy crisis continue. Even after the COVID-19 crisis, CSR is still an important issue as a strategy to overcome the crisis. Studying CSR activities in detail before, during, and after the start of the pandemic crisis is important to present CSR strategies that can increase corporate sustainability in the future.

1.3 Outline of Methodology

This study adopts a case study approach to study how companies did CSR activities in crisis situations such as COVID-19. To this end, Marks and Spencer (M&S), a representative company in the UK, is selected as a case study target company. Through literature review, various CSR-related theories are reviewed and the CSR frame necessary for this study is confirmed.

It also collects secondary data such as media materials, annual reports, and sustainability reports. The secondary data used in this project has the advantage of securing the reliability of the research results as reliable data such as press articles and reports distributed by companies after verification by specialized institutions.

In addition, through qualitative analysis of these secondary data, the performance of M&S's CSR activities is examined, and research is conducted on whether CSR was effective as a crisis strategy.

1.4 Research Aims, Questions and Objectives

1.4.1 Aims

The purpose of this business project is to examine CSR activities implemented by M&S, compare and analyse the characteristics of CSR activities before and after the COVID-19 crisis, identify how CSR activities have affected overcoming the crisis, and propose CSR strategies for companies to implement in the post-COVID-19 era.

1.4.2 Research Questions

- RQ1. Has society's demand for CSR increased during the COVID-19 crisis?
- RQ2. What areas of CSR activity have been strengthened during the COVID-19 crisis?
- RQ3. Has governance regarding CSR activities been strengthened?
- RQ 4. Has there been any change in CSR activities since the COVID-19 crisis ended?

1.4.3 Research Objectives

- RO1. To understand the changes in society's needs for corporate CSR after the outbreak of the COVID-19 crisis
- RO2. To compare and analyse the characteristics of CSR activities conducted by companies before and after the COVID-19 crisis
- RO3. To evaluate whether CSR activities were effective in overcoming the COVID-19 crisis
- RO4. To evaluate changes in CSR activities after the COVID-19 crisis and present CSR strategies that can be sustained in the post-COVID era

1.5 Overview of the chapters

The entire framework of this business project consists of five chapters.

- Chapter one: The first chapter addresses the meaning and significance of this business project on the CSR activities of companies during the COVID-19 crisis, as well as the aim and direction of the business project, including research questions and objectives.
- Chapter two: Theories related to CSR and existing studies related to CSR activities during COVID-19 are reviewed, and a CSR-related analysis framework for this study is established.
- Chapter three: The research philosophy, research approach, data

collection and analysis method, etc. are presented as the most suitable research methods for this research topic, and the reasons for adopting them are explained.

- Chapter four: This chapter presents findings from research on CSR during the pandemic crisis. Then, the results are analysed and critically discussed in connection with the results of the literature review results presented in Chapter two.
- Chapter five: The final chapter makes conclusions and suggestions. It presents a CSR strategy that can increase the sustainability of companies in the post-COVID era.

1.6 Conclusion chapter

This chapter first discussed the background and importance of promoting this study, and the use of CSR as a crisis management strategy. In addition, the aim of this study is to analyse the characteristics of CSR activities promoted during the COVID-19 crisis and their impact on overcoming the crisis and to present CSR strategies that can increase sustainability in the post-COVID-19 era. Research questions and research objectives that can achieve this research purpose were specifically presented. In the future, literature research and research methods will be reviewed, and data collection and analysis will be conducted. And based on this, conclusions and suggestions will be made.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Overview of CSR Theories

There are various definitions of CSR. In common, it is that companies must recognize the needs and concerns of stakeholders along with the pursuit of profit, and consider the needs and expectations of society (Blowfield and Murray, 2019). CSR was first defined by Bowen (1953, cited by Pasricha et al., 2018) as "the duty of entrepreneurs to pursue desirable policies, make such decisions, or follow the direction of action in terms of the goals and values of our society."

As globalization progressed from the 1970s, the need for social responsibility and transparency of multinational corporations increased, and CSR became widely discussed. Global events such as the creation of the European Environment Agency in 1990 and the implementation of the Kyoto Protocol in 1997 played an important role in the development of CSR, and certain topics of CSR such as corporate citizenship, stakeholder theory, corporate ethics and sustainability continued to develop. (Changar and Atan, 2021). In the 2000s, public awareness of CSR increased further due to corporate scandals such as Anderson, Enron, Lehman Brothers, and Siemens (Saha et al., 2019).

Recently, criticism of CSR practices has also been raised, which does not

sufficiently reflect the governance dimension (Blowfield and Murray, 2019). Socially responsible investors have come to argue that governance needs to be part of CSR. CSR concepts are dynamically changing to ESG (Environmental, Social, and Governance) concepts (Kazémierczak, 2022).

2.2 CSR Models

2.2.1 Carroll's CSR Pyramid Model

Carroll presented the most widely cited framework for CSR (Figure 1). It consists of four responsibilities: economic, legal, ethical and philanthropic, which should cover the various measures that must be taken to manage the relationship between business and society (Blowfield and Murray, 2019). Companies should also make profits, comply with the law, participate in ethical practices, and engage in charitable activities to become good corporate citizens (Carroll 1979, 1991, cited by Carroll 2016).

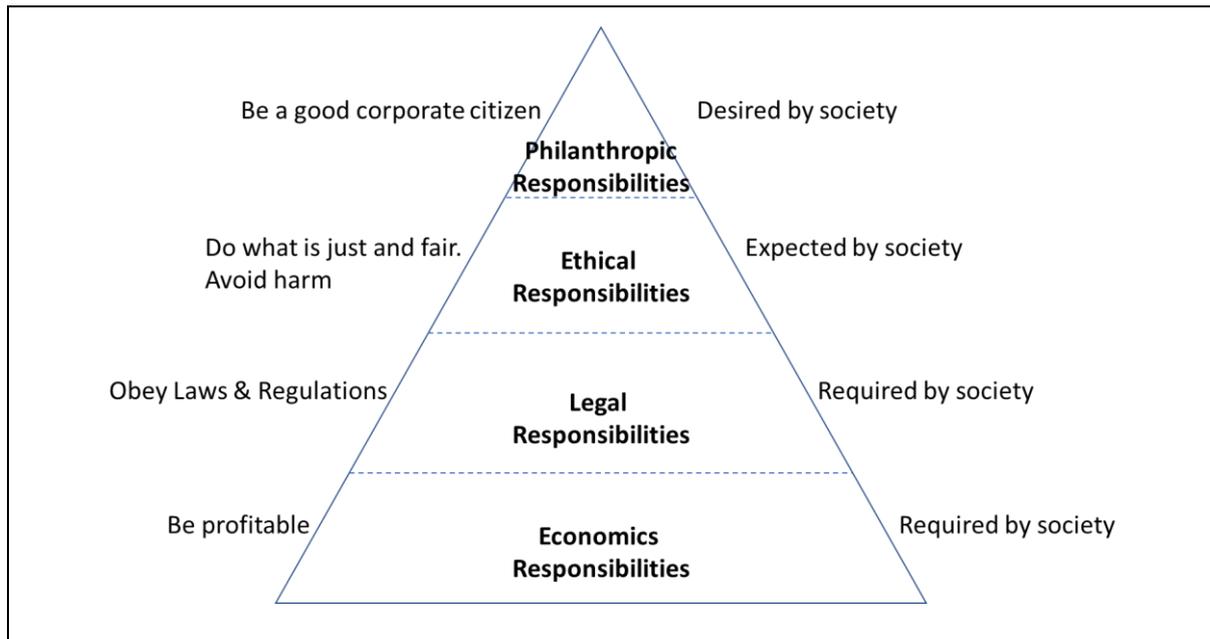


Figure 1. Carroll's Pyramid of CSR (Carroll, 2016)

① Economic responsibility

Economic responsibility is the fundamental responsibility of companies that produce and sell goods and services that society wants at a profit. If companies do not succeed economically and go bankrupt, their other responsibilities become meaningless. Therefore, economic responsibility is a fundamental requirement for businesses to survive in the competition (Carroll, 2016).

Some argue that this is the limitation of corporate responsibility. In other words, creating jobs and shareholder value under a free corporate system, and producing goods and services in a way that complies with the law is a unique way for companies to contribute to society. However, the idea that companies should at least consider how profits are generated as well as profitability is key

to understanding CSR in terms of corporate-social relationships (Blowfield and Murray, 2019).

② *Legal responsibility*

Legal responsibility is the obligation of a company to perform its economic duties within the boundaries of the law. Local, domestic and international laws provide for the rules relating to the activities of enterprises. Increasingly, regulations are being formulated on employment, environmental protection, anti-corruption, human rights and product safety.

However, CSR means more than legal compliance. In other words, it is about voluntary action, not mandatory action. Legislation is not comprehensive and is often the last means of solving social problems, so the law itself cannot define everything that society expects to be a corporate responsibility.

③ *Ethical responsibility*

Ethical responsibility is a corporate responsibility that goes beyond what legal compliance or economic rationality requires. In the case of environmental issues, companies in the past relied on what the government determined to be acceptable, but today they are responding beyond legal compliance in the face of the challenge of climate change.

④ *Philanthropic responsibility*

Philanthropic responsibility is based on the idea of returning to society through charitable donations as something like charity. Businesses engage in various forms of giving, such as direct donations of money, goods or services to stakeholder groups, employee volunteerism, or participation in community improvement programs. While these donations have altruistic motives, they participate in practical ways to enhance the company's reputation.

2.2.2 Triple Bottom Line

Most CSR theories admit that the basis of CSR ideas is the Triple Bottom Line (TBS) concept. TBS was introduced by the Brundtland Commission in 1987 and was officially named by John Elkington in 1994. Businesses have three functions: Profit, People, and Planet, and must assume economic, social, and environmental responsibilities (Książak and Fischbach, 2017).

This framework believes that a company's long-term success can be achieved when it analyses its operations and designs its strategy, including the environment and society. And, in order to create a holistic view of evaluating all aspects, the company's performance must be continuously evaluated in three areas (Mattera and Soto, 2022). The measurement of economic performance is sales, products, and share prices, the social measurement is employee training, health and safety, and contributions to the local community, and the

last environmental measurement is pollution, recycling, and waste targets.

① *Profit*

Profit is an essential requirement for a company to develop. The economic aspect of CSR is not just to make profits, but to make good use of them. Socially responsible companies can increase profitability, reduce costs, and expand further.

Uddin et al (2008, cited by Księżak and Fischbach, 2017) describe economic responsibility in three aspects. First, the higher the company's economic performance, the higher the salary, and the more money the company can put into socially responsible activities. The second is donations through taxes. Taxes can be seen as part of CSR's social contribution, not as an expense. The third is the avoidance of trust abuse activities. Once the reputation of a company is destroyed, it is difficult to recover. For example, when corruption in a company is discovered, perceptions of the company can change for a long time.

② *People*

People are social aspects, and CSR is a tool that plays a role in developing and maintaining good relationships between society and business. Social responsibility includes everyone affected by the company or people influencing

the company. Uddin et al (2008, cited by Księżak and Fischbach, 2017) describe social responsibility in terms of customers, employees, and communities. Customers should trust the company they want to buy from. CSR for employees takes care of employees' welfare and creates an environment where they can utilize the potential of the company's workforce through diversity management. Various forms of measures such as sponsorship, education, and donation can be taken for the community.

③ *Planet*

Everyone should be responsible for the natural environment, but companies are mainly responsible for it. The first cause of natural environmental damage is business. The least a company can do is minimize or eliminate harmful environmental impacts. At the same time, reducing waste and reducing water and energy use are also ways to help the environment (Księżak and Fischbach, 2017).

2.2.3 Stakeholder Theory

Stakeholders are individuals or organizations that are influenced by or have the power to influence corporate decisions and activities (Blowfield and Murray 2019). According to Freeman (1984, cited by Blowfield and Murray, 2019), effective management of stakeholders is essential to the survival and prosperity

of a company. Previous economic theories emphasized market competition and maximization of corporate market value, while stakeholder theory emphasizes cooperative relationships with stakeholders. The central idea of this theory is to build fair and lasting relationships with corporate stakeholders essential for value creation. This is a theory that explicitly integrates value creation at the economic level, relationship management at the social level and fairness at the moral level (Bridoux and Stoelhorst, 2022). A fair relationship in which the interests of these stakeholders are balanced has a positive effect on the company's performance (Donaldson and Preston, 1995, cited by Bridoux and Stoelhorst, 2022).

The various stakeholders that affect a company's business include shareholders, business partners, employees, suppliers, customers, communities, NGOs, government officials and the environment. CSR is used as a corporate mechanism to manage these stakeholders (Mahmad et al., 2021). The most important stakeholders of all ranges of stakeholders are employees of the internal stakeholder group and customers and communities of the external stakeholder group (Bulhart et al., 2019, cited by Mahmad et al., 2021). Reflecting the type of stakeholder, internal CSR is a "formal initiative for employees to participate and gain development benefits that show employer respect for employees," and external CSR means "practice focused on community, natural environment, and customer responsibility." (Deng et al., 2020, cited by Mahmad et al., 2021).

Recently, research on stakeholder governance theory has been actively conducted (Bridoux and Stoelhorst, 2022). The company is seen as a voluntary participation of stakeholders to create shared value, and governance is seen as the allocation of property rights to support shared value creation as much as possible. It also states that investments unique to an entity are important for value creation, and that corporate governance must protect all stakeholders to encourage such investments.

2.2.4 Relationship and Synthesis between Models

Table 1. The synthesis between CSR models

	Economic	Social	Environmental
<i>Carroll</i>	Economic Legal	Ethical Philanthropy	Ethical
<i>Triple Bottom Line</i>	Profit	People	Planet
<i>Stakeholder theory</i>	Shareholder	Employee Customer Community	Environment

As shown in Table 1, these models are not exclusive to CSR but overlap and complement each other. Carroll (2016) states that each stage of the CSR pyramid is a sustainable stakeholder framework that affects stakeholders and

future generations. The stakeholder model that emphasizes employees, customers, and communities can be seen as focusing on TPL's People. Stakeholders are subject to the influence of the company, but also subject to the influence. This is useful for explaining that stakeholders are both the target and driver of CSR activities.

Economic responsibility in the Carroll model and profit in TBL correspond to the original role of a company and are not emphasized much, but they are still important areas of responsibility. It was confirmed that providing products, services, and jobs that the market wants during the economic crisis caused by COVID-19 meets the basic expectations of stakeholders (Carroll, 2021).

TBL explicitly emphasizes environmental responsibility along with economic responsibility, and stakeholder-related responsibilities are emphasized through social responsibility, covering CSR more comprehensively. As shown in Figure 2, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) also uses the TBL approach to describe CSR as a way for companies to achieve a balance of economic, social, and environmental mandates and at the same time meet the expectations of shareholders and stakeholders (UNIDO, 2023).

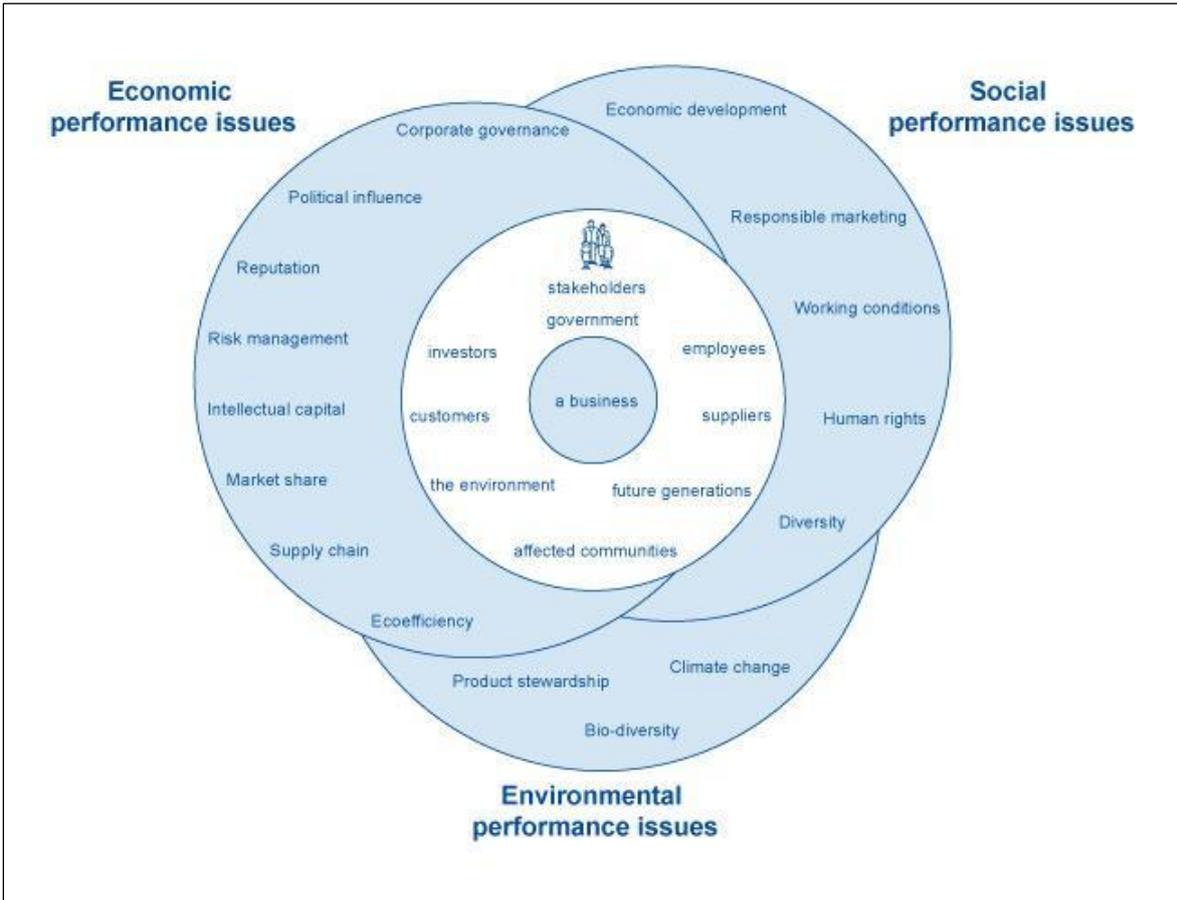


Figure 2. What is CSR? (UNIDO, 2023)

The evaluation of the characteristics of each CSR model and the considerations to be considered in this study are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Evaluation of CSR models

	Evaluation
Carroll	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • From economic responsibility to philanthropic responsibility, it deals with corporate social responsibility as a whole. • Governance can be explained by economic and legal

	<p>responsibilities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Responsibilities overlap and are not separated by CSR-related communication targets.
Triple Bottom Line	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All aspects of CSR, including the economy, society, and environment, are explicitly covered. Social responsibilities related to stakeholders need to be divided in more detail
Stakeholder theory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Useful in analyzing CSR activities by stakeholders subject to CSR activities. It does not provide an analytical framework for governance that has recently been highlighted

2.3 CSR as a crisis response strategy

2.3.1 Response to Crisis Using CSR Before COVID-19

During natural disasters or economic crises, companies provided benefits to society through charity activities. Gao (2011, cited by Mahmud et al., 2021) states that for more than 50 years in the United States, universal corporate charitable donations are the oldest form of social responsibility for an organization, and companies regard them as an expression of social responsibility and consciousness. Muller et al. (2014, cited by Mahmud et al., 2021) explain that corporate charitable donations are focused on a variety of

social crises, such as the donation of medicines to combat AIDS and the distribution of resources for disaster relief in the event of various disaster situations around the world.

When crises occurred due to various natural disasters and human failures around the world, such as the 2004 Asian tsunami and the 2005 U.S. Hurricane Katrina, companies conducted various CSR activities to help employees, customers, and local communities (Mahmud et al., 2021). The corporate charity disaster response provided during Hurricane Katrina was one-third of all public and private support, and the market evaluated it positively (Manuel and Herron, 2020).

2.3.2 Response to CSR during COVID-19

Forbes (2020) noted that the pandemic crisis has forced businesses to think about their purpose and values throughout their entire business. As a result, businesses have increased the development of social responsibility initiatives, and more businesses are feeling pressure to meet consumer expectations to operate with a stronger social conscience. In the pandemic crisis, companies responded to the crisis mainly by changing their business models to produce philanthropic or high-demand products (Manuel and Herron, 2020).

① *Philanthropic responses*

Many businesses participated in charitable activities by donating to support healthcare workers, food banks, and schools (Table 3).

Table 3. Donation activities (Manuel and Herron, 2020)

- Marriott: Free room support for paramedics in severely affected areas
- Kimberly Clark: Donates \$500K to support the training of cleaning professionals working in high-risk areas
- American Airlines: Free vacation package for frontline healthcare workers in New York
- PepsiCo: Donating funds to support colored communities negatively affected by the Pandemic and lockdown
- Amazon: Donating laptops to elementary school families in areas where schools are closed
- AT&T: New high-speed healthcare network offers nurses and doctors a free 3-month service

CEOs of some companies struggling with COVID-19 voluntarily cut their basic salaries (Table 4).

Table 4. Voluntary Salary Cut (Manuel and Herron, 2020)

- Airline industry: United Airlines, AK Air, Southwest, JetBlue, Allegiant, Spirit, IndiGo and British Airway
- Travel Industry: Lyft, Marriott, and Wyndham Hotels and Resorts
- Others: GE, Disney, Comcast

In most cases, however, the CEO maintained stock options that could be higher than the base salary, and while senior managers at these companies received stock options, lower-level employees were fired or temporarily laid off. In other words, during the COVID-19 period, some companies strengthened their ethical and philanthropic responsibilities of the Carroll model. On the other hand, there were some companies that lacked protection for employees who were important stakeholders.

② *Transformational responses*

Some companies have developed new business models, such as changing their products and services to meet the needs during the COVID-19 period. This corporate response can be explained in terms of Carroll's economic responsibility and TBL's Profit-level responsibility (Table 5).

Table 5. Business model change (Manuel and Herron, 2020)

- Ford, GM, GE, 3M Company, United Auto Workers Union, and Ventech:
Form Various Partnerships to Produce Shortage Ventilators

- 3M Company: Promises to Expand N95 Mask Production
- IBM: Developing Rapid Supplier Connect technology to help identify and mitigate healthcare supply chain shortages
- United Airlines: Turning Cargo Handling Facility Into Food Distribution Facility
- Exxon: Increase production of raw materials needed to produce gowns, masks and hand sanitizers
- Apple, Google: Collaborate on Developing Contact Tracking Technology to Help Limit COVID Spread
- Walmart, Burger Kings, UPS: Modifying policy to remove signature requirements and cards on payment to reduce risk of transaction infection

Recent studies on CSR during the pandemic suggest that the crisis has put a test to what true CSR is (Shin et al., 2021). The first is whether CSR activities will be strengthened. In the event of a crisis, companies are likely to pursue short-term profits due to financial burdens, and to reduce long-term investments such as CSR investments. However, in times of crisis, companies' participation in CSR has the advantage of increasing their value by creating 'reputational capital'. The public expected companies to play a more active role during COVID-19. A special report on the Edelman Trust Barometer in the early days of COVID-19 found that 78% of respondents expected companies to act to protect their employees and communities (Edelman, 2020).

The next step is how to develop CSR activities. Based on the stakeholder theory, Mahmud et al. (2021) said that CSR during the pandemic period should focus on activities targeting stakeholders. Bakerjian (2022) said that the important issue is not whether to invest resources in CSR, but in the direction of investing resources in CSR to achieve beneficial social, environmental, and financial purposes in general. This can be seen as emphasizing the need to focus on practical discussions on what CSR activities to strengthen, not whether CSR is necessary.

2.4 Conclusion chapter

Through this chapter, major theories related to CSR and the contents of existing research on CSR during the pandemic crisis were reviewed. CSR-related theories explain various aspects surrounding CSR. And during the COVID-19 crisis, companies responded to the crisis by strengthening CSR activities. In order to study what specific CSR activities were developed during the COVID-19 crisis, it is necessary to approach them from a practical perspective that can be used to establish CSR strategies. To this end, based on the Triple Bottom Line model and stakeholder theory, activities related to social and environmental responsibility should be centered, and governance should also be considered an important axis of CSR activities.

The analysis framework of this study reviewed based on this is as follows. Based on TBL, it approaches three frameworks: economic, social, and

environmental issues. In particular, economic issues are reviewed based on governance, and social issues are analyzed by dividing them by stakeholders (Figure 3).

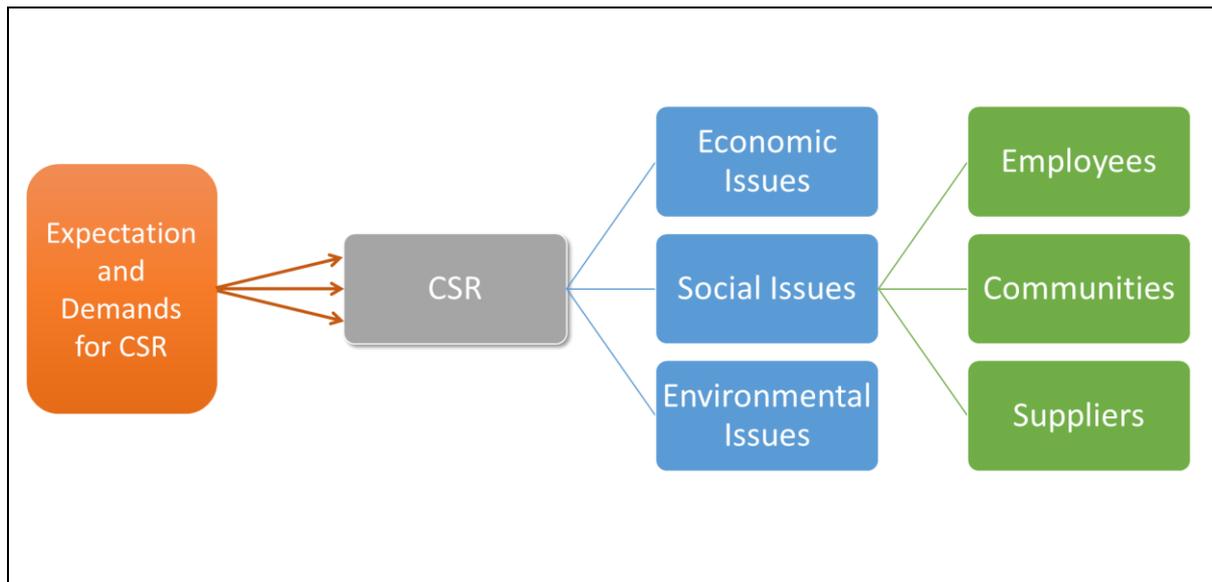


Figure 3. The framework of this study

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

According to Saunders et al. (2018), research is performed to discover things and increase knowledge in a systematic manner. Being systematic is based on logical relationships. To do this, it is necessary to explain how the data is collected and used, why the results obtained are meaningful, and explain any limitations associated with the data. And discovering something means that there must be real results in research, especially when it comes to business. In order to obtain practical research results, it is necessary to select the most effective research method to achieve the research goal and collect and analyse data accordingly.

Although research methods to collect and analyse data are important, these research methods are not just neutral tools but are linked to perspectives on social phenomena (Bryman and Bell, 2015). Research philosophy includes important assumptions about the way the world is viewed, and these assumptions support research strategies and research methods chosen for them (Saunders et al., 2018). Therefore, the design of research methods should start from a philosophical perspective.

In this chapter, as shown in Figure 4, Saunders et al. (2018)'s research onion model is used to explain the method of this business project. First, the research

philosophy of this project is explained. Secondly, it outlines the research approach and describes which approach is effective for this project. Third, the research method is presented, and fourthly, how to collect and analyze data and ethical considerations are explained in detail.

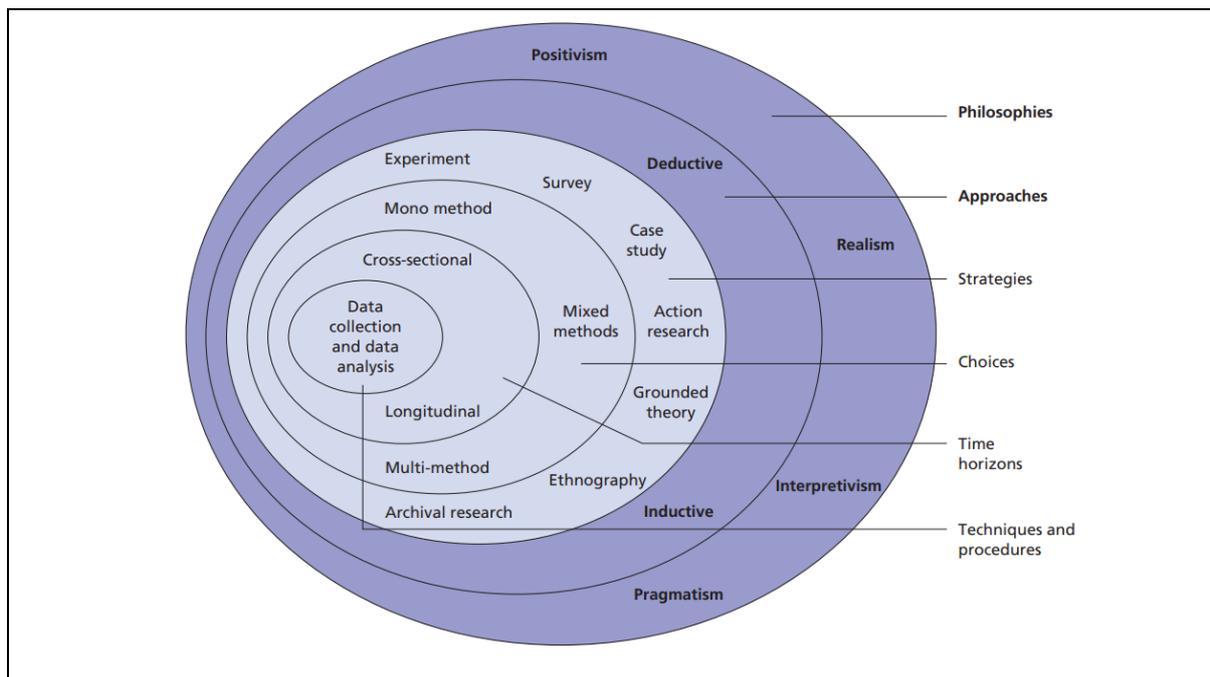


Figure 4. The research onion (Saunders et al., 2018)

3.2 Research Philosophy

The philosophical perspectives of business studies include positivism, realism, interpretivism and pragmatism. Positivism is the philosophical stance of natural scientists, which sees that social reality is empirically observable, and that general laws can eventually be discovered just like the laws of natural science. Realist philosophy is a field of epistemology similar to positivism in that it sees

that there is a reality independent of human consciousness and assumes a scientific approach to the development of knowledge (Saunders et al., 2018). Interpretivism understands the world as an interaction between people and between people and society (Maxwell, 2006; Bogdan and Biklen, 1992; Guba and Lincoln, 1985; Merriam, 1988, cited by Antwi and Hamza, 2015). Unlike positivism, which observes externally typed behaviors, it is a philosophy that focuses on finding out the meaning of an actor's behavior. Finally, pragmatism chooses the perspective that best answers the research question. In other words, both observable phenomena in positivism and subjective meanings in interpretivism can provide useful knowledge depending on the research topic, and focus on applied research that selects and utilizes these various positions as necessary (Saunders et al., 2018).

This study adopts interpretivism as a philosophical basis. Interpretivism, in particular, is based on symbolic interactionism, which sees us as in the continual process of interpreting the behavior of others with whom we interact, and of the social world in which that interpretation mediates our meaning and behavior. Interpretivism is considered appropriate as a philosophy for research on business-related social behaviors by entering the social world of the research subject and understanding their world from their point of view (Saunders et al., 2018). This study, which studies how the company subject to the case study responds to crises such as COVID-19 and the demands of stakeholders related to it, from the CSR perspective, is a study on the interaction of the social world,

so the philosophy of interpretivism is appropriate.

3.3 Research Approach

Research approaches include deductive and inductive approaches. The deductive approach is a method for developing theories and hypotheses and for testing hypotheses, based primarily on positivist philosophy. It is the dominant research approach in the natural sciences, characterized by elucidating causal relationships between variables, collecting quantitative data, using highly structured approaches, and selecting samples of sufficient size for generalization. On the other hand, the inductive approach is based more on interpretivism philosophy as a way to gather data and develop theories. It interprets the meanings humans attach to events, collects qualitative data, has a flexible structure that allows for changes in research emphasis as the study progresses and is characterized by no need for generalization (Saunders et al., 2018).

This study aims to collect corporate CSR cases and data during the COVID-19 period, analyse the theoretical implications suggested by the data, and develop existing CSR-related studies through the latest cases. Therefore, the inductive approach is appropriate for this study.

3.4 Research Method

Research methods include quantitative research methods and qualitative research methods. According to Antwi and Hamza (2015), quantitative research methods are based on a positivist paradigm. It is a deductive research method that focuses on quantifying social phenomena and collecting and analysing quantified data to verify hypotheses and theories. On the other hand, qualitative research methods are more interested in understanding the meaning of social phenomena based on the interpretivism paradigm. It is an inductive research method through the collection and analysis of non-numerical data, using tools such as case studies, observations, and focus group discussions.

In this study, a qualitative research method as shown in Figure 5 is used. In relation to the company's CSR activities during the pandemic, it is conducted as a case study targeting a specific company. Case studies are useful in gaining a richer understanding of the context of the study and the process being implemented (Morris and Wood, 1991, cited by Bryman and Bell, 2015). A qualitative research method is suitable for research on CSR activities in the midst of the COVID-19 crisis that has been going on until recently.

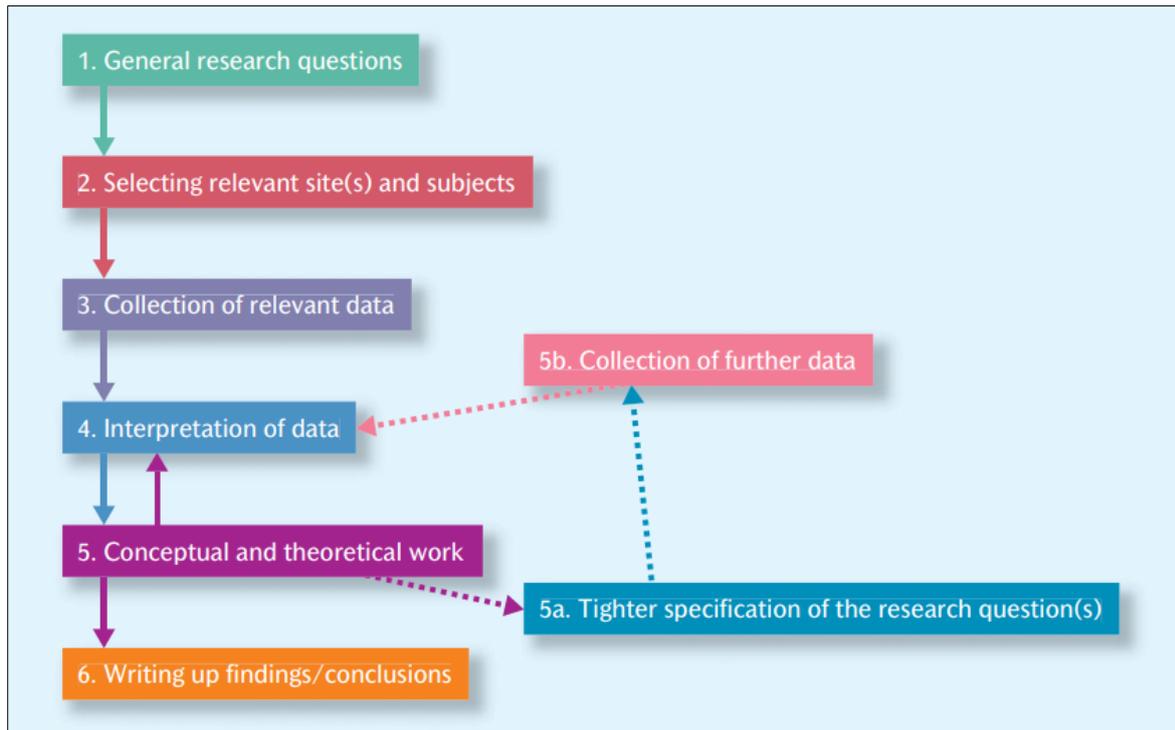


Figure 5. An outline of the main steps of qualitative research (Bryman and Bell, 2015)

3.5 Data Collection

This project will focus on secondary data collection. According to Saunders et al. (2018), secondary data refers to data already collected for other purposes. Secondary data includes both quantitative and qualitative data and can be either raw data or processed data in some form. In business research, secondary data is often used as a case study strategy. There are three types of secondary data: document data, survey-based data, and data collected from multiple sources. Using secondary data has the advantage of being able to access high-quality data with little cost and time. It can also provide comparative and contextual data and can provide unexpected findings. However, information

that is not necessary for the research purpose may be collected, and the original purpose may affect the data representation method.

This study analyses the changes and characteristics of CSR activities of case study companies, and data on the CSR activities of the companies concerned is needed. To this end, it is possible to collect primary data by conducting interviews with stakeholders in the company or directly conducting a survey targeting stakeholders. However, access to this is difficult, and excessive time and cost may be required. On the other hand, companies are announcing through various reports to actively publicize their CSR activities. The data in the report includes various quantitative and qualitative data, such as performance data prepared by the company and survey data targeting stakeholders, etc., and reliability is secured as data that has undergone a verification process from an external institution. In this study, it is useful to collect and utilize data such as annual reports, sustainability reports, newsletters, reports produced by case study organizations, and press articles as secondary data.

3.6 Data Analysis

The secondary data collected for this business project includes some quantified and quantitative data, but in general, it is qualitative data as textual data about the company's CSR activities. Quantitative data can be analysed using tables and diagrams. On the other hand, qualitative data is usually analysed by grounded theory. According to Bryman and Bell (2018), coding, which

decomposes data and assigns names, is a key process in grounded theory. The ongoing process of comparing collected data with concepts and categories in use supports the process of developing new theories based on the data (Saunders et al., 2018).

This study categorizes the company's CSR as the main analysis framework presented in CSR theory and compares it by year and by field to derive the differences and characteristics of CSR before and after the pandemic period. Then, the analysis is conducted using the grounded theory method.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

Research ethics is related to whether a researcher conducts ethically and responsibly at each stage of determining the research topic, designing the research, obtaining permission to access organizations or individuals, collecting data, analysing data, and writing research results. do. And research should be conducted in accordance with the university's research ethics code (Saunders et al., 2018). Common research ethics issues include participant privacy, voluntary participation, guaranteeing confidentiality and anonymity of data, the impact of data collection, analysis, and reporting methods on participants, and behavior and objectivity as researchers.

This study is qualitative research centered on secondary data using official data disclosed by the company through its website, and no ethical issues related to

the participants arise. Instead, an important ethical issue in this study is maintaining objectivity in the analysis and reporting stages. Data manipulation, such as not adopting the collected data arbitrarily or making false statements, is prohibited. In addition, care should be taken not to include personal information that has not been disclosed. In addition, research must be conducted in accordance with the framework set forth in Ulster University's Code of Practice for Professional Integrity in the Conduct of Research (UU, 2022).

3.8 Conclusion chapter

In this chapter, the methodology of this study was presented step by step based on the research onion frame of Saunders et al. (2018). First of all, based on the philosophy of interpretivism, case study methods are adopted as an inductive approach and qualitative research method. In detail, data collection targets secondary data whose reliability has been secured through high quality and verification procedures. Data analysis uses qualitative data analysis methods based on grounded theory. Through this, the best methodology for conducting this research on corporate social behavior most effectively was established. In addition, research is conducted in consideration of ethical issues of research, such as maintaining objectivity at each stage of research and conducting research without violating the research ethics code of Ulster University.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the results found through secondary data collection on the CSR activities of M&S, a case study target company. For the secondary data, annual reports and sustainability reports published on M&S's website and articles reported in the media of the Financial Times and The Guardian are used (Table 6). It examines CSR-related issues raised by the media before and after COVID-19 and reviews the characteristics of what CSR activities M&S has specifically conducted. In addition, the results are analysed in connection with the literature research results presented in Chapter two and discussed critically.

Table 6. List of secondary data

Secondary data	Details
1. Press articles	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Media: Financial Times, The Guardian• Period: Jan. 2020 ~ Dec. 2022• Classification: CSR, ESG, M&S keyword search• Analysis object: General CSR-related articles (24), CSR-related articles On M&S (33)
2. M&S newsletter	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Source: Press Releases on M&S website (https://corporate.marksandspencer.com/media/press-releases)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Period: Jan. 2019 ~ Dec. 2022 • Analysis object: 44 newsletters with CSR-related content (stakeholders, environment, etc.)
3. M&S Annual Report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2018/2019 Annual Report (M&S, 2019a) • 2019/2020 Annual Report (M&S, 2020a) • 2020/2021 Annual Report (M&S, 2021a) • 2021/2022 Annual Report (M&S, 2022a)
4. M&S CSR report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2018/2019 Plan A report (M&S, 2019b) • 2019/2020 Plan A report (M&S, 2020b) • 2020/2021 Plan A report (M&S, 2021b) • 2021/2022 Sustainability report (M&S, 2022b)

4.2 Overview of the Company

M&S is a UK-based multinational retail company specializing in the sale of high-quality food, clothing, and household goods. It provides services through 1,487 offline stores and online stores in the UK and around the world and operates in more than 100 markets worldwide. And it employs 65,000 people, and its customers are about 30 million a year (M&S, 2022a).

Prior to the outbreak of COVID-19, M&S was facing difficult social and environmental management along with economic performance, with sales declining and high waste levels hurting food sales margins (Eley, 2020). Sales have been on the rise since overcoming the COVID-19 pandemic. It has partnered with Microsoft to become a digital priority company amid the changing

megatrend and is strengthening online delivery. It is also conducting restructuring programs, reducing the number of full-line stores that sell a variety of products and focusing more on food stores (Passport, 2020).

The reason for choosing M&S as a case study is that the clothing manufacturing industry is a representative industrial sector in the UK where CSR movements emerged, and the UK government also prepared an Ethical Transaction Initiative involving trade unions and NGOs. (Knudsen, 2018). In addition, M&S has been selected as the best retail brand in YouGov's UK Retail Ranking (Gordon, 2021) and has been carrying out CSR activities for a long time. M&S's responsible business begins in the 1930s when welfare packages for all employees were developed. Since then, it has continued to support the community, and in 2007, it launched a sustainable initiative to solve environmental, social, and ethical problems called Plan A (M&S Archive, 2023).

Table 7. Timeline of M&S's CSR Activities

Year	Contents	Target
Early years	Provided market stall workers with gas to heat their food and wooden boards to keep them standing so they don't get cold feet	Employee
1930s	Launch welfare and benefit packages for employees: including benefits such as employee canteens, departmental holidays, and medical services such as doctors, dentists, and extraction specialists * Revolutionary in the UK before NHS	Employee

1937	4,000 Spanish children evacuated to Southampton following the Spanish Civil War, donating over 17,000 pieces of clothing and merchandise, helping local store workers care for and distribute children	Communities
1939~1941	Raising funds for war materiel	Communities
1957	Coverage of Red Cross supply flights carrying food to Hungarian refugee camps in Austria	Communities
1965	Introduced free cervical screening for female employees aged 35, expanded to female employees aged 25 and older in 1967 * Test not yet offered by NHS	Employee
1972	Began to raise concerns with suppliers about artificial additives in protein	Suppliers
1979	M&S chairman told shareholders: "We recognize our social responsibility and help the communities in which our customers and employees live" and implemented a year-round giving policy, including raising more than £70,000.	Communities
1997	Became the first major UK retailer to supply free range eggs only	Suppliers
2004	Launch of Marks & Start: More than 10,000 work experience placements, continued annually, as a work experience program to help the homeless, people with disabilities, single parents, and the young and unemployed find work	Communities
2005	Raised annually through the Shelter Christmas Food on the Move campaign * £8.6 million raised for Shelter from 2005 to 2016, 1 in 5 helpline calls being made by M&S donations	Communities
2006	All teas and coffees sold in the store are Fairtrade, and only Fairtrade sugar is used in jams and marmalades.	Suppliers/ Communities

	Initiate Look Behind the Label campaign to inform customers of M&S policy on ethics and manufacturing issues	
2007	Launch Plan A: Present 100 ethical and environmental commitments planned to be achieved in 5 years	Environment
2008	5p carrier bag fee introduced, all money raised goes to environmental charity Groundwork	Environment
2013	Launched Make your Mark scheme in partnership with The Princes Trust, providing skills and training to unemployed young people to enter the job market	Communities
2016	Partnering with Neighborly to redistribute unsold food into the community to help charities like food banks, community centers and hospices	Communities
2017	Share the DisabledGo Access Guide with detailed information on store accessibility for people with disabilities and caregivers	Communities
2019	Launched a plastic take-back initiative to allow customers to return non-recyclable plastic packaging to stores of their choice.	Environment
2020	Responding to the COVID-19 pandemic, donating to the NHS, running a free food delivery service for NHS staff	Communities
2021	One of the first companies to sign a brand promise to leave the Uyghur region, calling for action against human rights abuses, under the promise that their supply chains are sustainable and ethical. Pledge to provide additional support to families with an additional £5 for every £15 lunch voucher provided through the UK Government's Free School Meals Scheme	Suppliers/ Communities

4.3 Presentation of Finding

4.3.1 Key CSR Issues During COVID-19 Crisis

From 2020 when COVID-19 began to 2022 when the COVID-19 crisis eased, overall issues related to CSR and ESG and issues related to M&S were analysed by the Financial Times and The Guardian through keyword search.

Table 7 is the CSR outlook from the media during the COVID-19 pandemic. Some predicted that CSR and ESG would decline amid the economic recession following the outbreak of COVID-19. However, there are more opinions believing that sustainable business is still important. Furthermore, in order to overcome the crisis, it was confirmed that collaboration with stakeholders, which is the main strategy of CSR, was emphasized and the social role of companies was strengthened. In particular, from 2021, media reports related to greenwashing increased and emerged as a risk factor related to CSR.

Table 7. The Perspective of CSR in the COVID-19 Crisis in the Media

	Contents
ESG decline	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• ESG is just a luxury and ESG is expected to disappear during the recession.• Sustainable products have a price premium, which could derail the green consumer trend as inflation forces consumers to buy cheaper products.

<p>ESG remains important</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many companies have claimed to be serving society as well as shareholders and now is the opportunity to prove it. • The current crisis has led to the evolution of corporate roles to the social side. • MSCI's global director of research points out that companies with high ESG rankings have outperformed their competitors during the crisis. • ESG becomes mainstream in the COVID-19 crisis. • The way to protect a company's reputation during the pandemic is to value consideration for employees and suppliers. • The pandemic strengthens business cases for employee investment. • Stakeholder collaboration helps companies and society thrive, and when the economy is in survival mode, stakeholder cooperation, and corporate cooperation are essential. • The price premium for sustainable products is decreasing. • In Japan, interest in social enterprises has increased due to the pandemic. • Environmental, social and governance standards are important issues even in the challenging circumstances of the energy crisis, climate crisis and global conflict. • Energy crisis, growing global recession not dampening support for feared sustainable investment.
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Next, CSR issues related to M&S were classified by sector (Table 8). Of the 33

cases reported in the Financial Times and The Guardian over the past three years, 16 were reported in 2020, the first year of the outbreak of COVID-19. There were many social issues centered on stakeholders and economic issues such as business model transformation and governance to overcome the crisis. Since then, the number of reports has decreased to four in 2021, but in 2022, the number of reports has increased again to 13 as supplier-related issues and environmental issues expanded (Figure 6, 7).

Table 8. The M&S's CSR issues in the media

	The main contents
Economic issues	<p>Governance matters</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overcome crises with simplified internal governance and quick decision-making • Cut the management's stock award
Social issues	<p>Stakeholder related matters</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There was a large-scale staff reduction in the early days of the corona, but a wage increase for employees to support living expenses amid the recent energy crisis. • Due to the COVID-19 crisis, supplier employees were in a more vulnerable position, raising the need for support. Recently, issues regarding the human rights of supplier employees have been continuously raised.
Environmental issues	Response to climate change, waste reduction, etc.

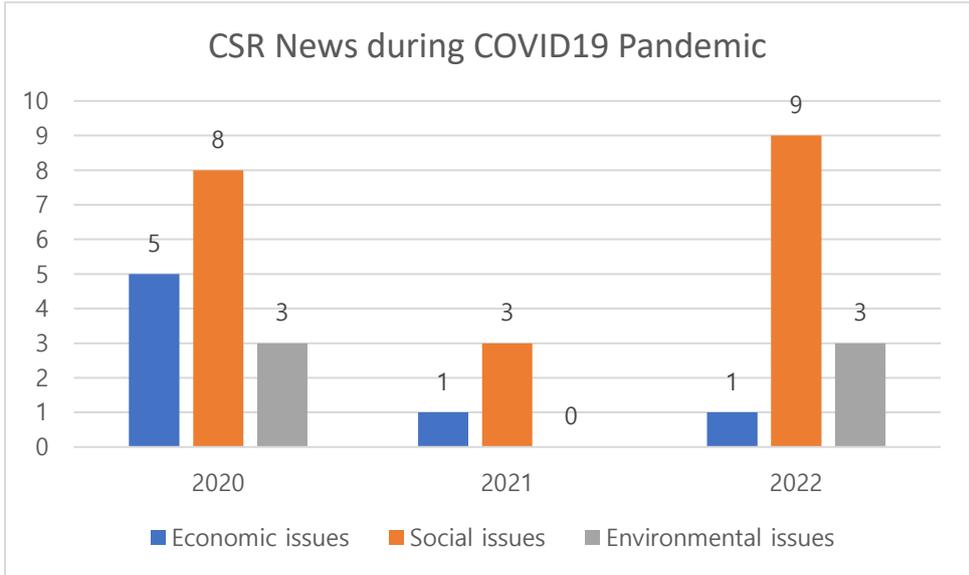


Figure 6. Media articles related to M&S's CSR

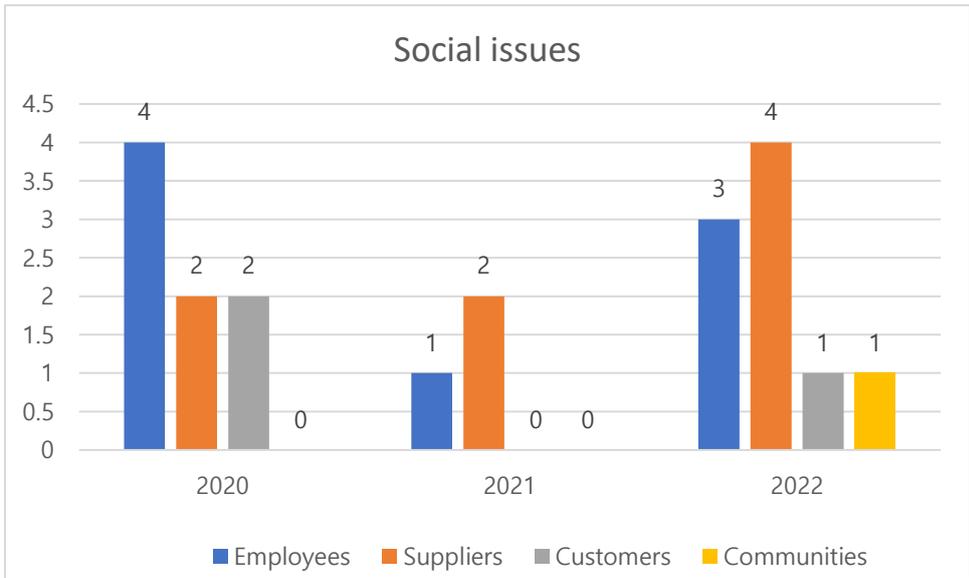


Figure 7. Media articles related to social issues of M&S

4.3.2 M&S' CSR Activities

From 2019 before the outbreak of COVID-19 to 2022, when COVID-19 weakened, an Annual report, Plan A report, Sustainability report, and press

releases that are released to the public through the website were analysed. Through this, the characteristics of how M&S responded during the COVID-19 crisis were confirmed.

First of all, compared to before COVID-19, the number of press releases related to CSR increased after the outbreak of COVID-19, and the proportion of press releases related to social issues was high.

In the first year of the pandemic crisis, there was a lot of content about communities, but since then, it has expanded to various fields such as suppliers, employees, and animal welfare (Figure 8, 9). This is similar to the trend of media coverage.



Figure 8. M&S CSR newsletter

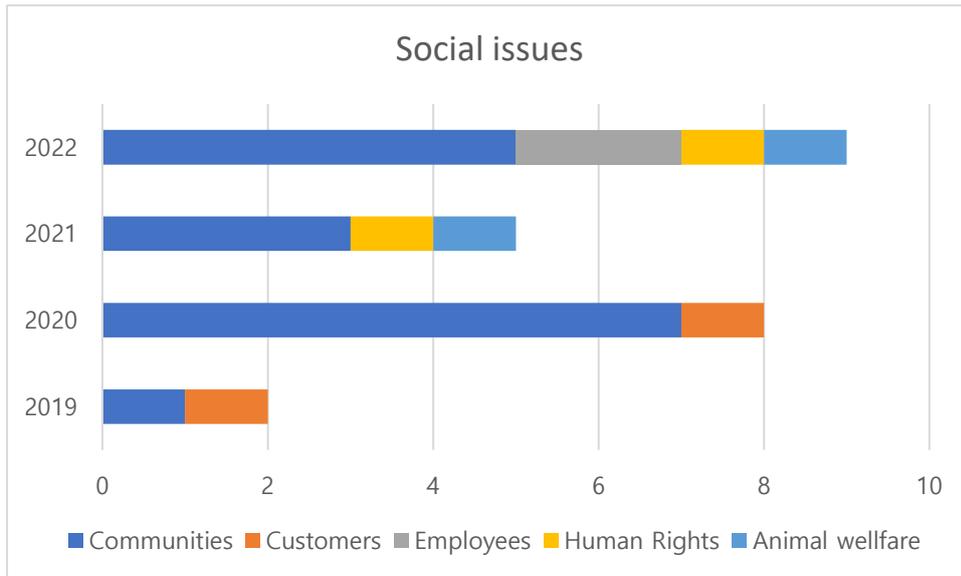


Figure 9. M&S newsletter related to social issues

Detailed information is examined by analysing the Annual report, Plan A, and Sustainability report. Specific activities are divided into economic, social, and environmental issues according to the TBL. Economic issues include governance, and social issues will be divided into customers, employees, communities, and suppliers according to stakeholder theory.

① Overview of CSR implementation of M&S

In 2007, M&S launched Plan A, which presented ethical and environmental commitments with a multi-year sustainable action plan. The name was given in the sense that there is no Plan B, and since then, through the Plan A report, CSR-related activities and their achievements have been informed to stakeholders and the public. In 2022, Plan A was reorganized to focus on

environmental issues, and comprehensive CSR activities were announced in the Sustainability Report. The Annual report includes Plan A's performance, non-financial information statement, and governance. Non-financial information statement contains information on a healthy and safe working environment, an organizational culture that promotes diversity and personal development, human rights of employees and supply chain workers, anti-corruption matters and applicable legislation (Table 9).

Table 9. M&S's commitment (M&S, 2022a)

	Regulations
Employees, internal organizational culture	People Principles, Code of Conduct, Responsible Marketing Principles, Equal Opportunities Policy
Human rights	Modern Slavery Statement, Human Rights Policy, Code of Conduct, M&S Global Sourcing Principles, Child Labour Procedure, M&S grievance procedure for Food and Clothing & Home supply chains, Confidential Reporting Procedures
Anti-corruption	Business Partner Anti-Bribery and Anti-Corruption Policy, Code of Conduct, Confidential Reporting Procedures

② *Economic Issues: Governance*

Economic performance is focused on governance. In 2020, a new reorganization was made to strengthen Plan A. And this was done by a more streamlined, central sustainability team and involved stakeholders in the review. Consistent with the business strategy and Plan A's sustainability strategy, the executive committee responsible for business operations was responsible for the entire sustainability program. These changes have strengthened the management of stakeholders in the COVID-19 crisis that occurred at the end of the fiscal year and enabled them to respond quickly to the crisis.

In 2021, when the COVID crisis intensified, the approach to sustainability was further activated as part of the business innovation program. The establishment of the ESG Committee in December 2020 showed that CSR was driven as a key strategy for M&S (M&S, 2021b).

Plan A was reorganized into a system that focuses more on environmental issues, as shown in Figure 10, in 2022 when it began to emerge from the COVID-19 crisis. In an ESG committee report, the CEO was responsible for the company's ESG programs, including climate change, and stated that climate change and the achievement of the Net Zero target were identified as strategic priorities. To this end, M&S has developed a multi-stakeholder plan that encompasses customers, employees, and suppliers.

In addition, from April 2022, in the UK, companies have been required to report

information under the framework set by the Climate-Related Financial Disclosure Task Force (TCFD). M&S released climate-related financial information in the Sustainable Report, a supplement to the 2021 Annual Report, in line with TCFD's recommendations (M&S, 2021a).



Figure 10. The Frame of Sustainability (M&S, 2022b)

③ Social issues

CSR activities for stakeholders have been strengthened since the outbreak of COVID-19. The CEO assessed that it is important that customers and communities expect M&S due to the COVID-19 crisis, and that customers, employees, suppliers, and communities are at the center of corporate decision-making.

Specifically, donations to the community have increased significantly. In 2020, when COVID-19 occurred, donations for workers in related industries such as the NHS also increased significantly. For the health of customers, M&S thoroughly complied with the government's policy on social distancing, provided delivery services for essential items, and provided support for vulnerable

customers. When the Ukrainian war broke out in 2022, it quickly provided £50,000 and in-kind support such as coats and thermal suits. However, donations decreased significantly in 2022 when the COVID-19 crisis ended.

Among stakeholders, special management of employees was required after the pandemic crisis. The pandemic crisis exposed employee vulnerabilities in economic and social aspects such as employment security and the working environment. M&S paid full wages to employees who were on self-isolation and temporary leave and supported telecommuting. In addition, efforts were made to allow employees to access work health apps for free and to strengthen communication with employees. However, the staff reduction that M&S had been trying to promote was carried out on a large scale during the COVID-19 period. The ratio of women among the reduced personnel was high, and the ratio of female senior managers also decreased during the COVID-19 period. The results of the engagement survey for employees were at a similar level during the COVID-19 period, but fell significantly after the COVID-19 period, confirming that the negative impact on the organizational culture remains. Senior managers from minorities increased to 8% during the COVID-19 period compared to before, but it can be seen that they have fallen significantly since the end of the COVID-19 period (Table 10).

Table 10. The M&S's performance of social issues

Year	2018/2019	2019/2020	2020/2021	2021/2022
Total employees	78,597	75,505	69,577	66,210
Female	55,961 (71.2%)	53,219 (70.5%)	48,727 (70.0%)	45,484 (68.7%)
Total senior managers	137	126	136	161
Female	58 (42.3%)	52 (41.3%)	57 (41.9%)	69 (42.9%)
senior managers from ethnic minorities	5%	8%	8%	6.8%
gender pay gap	12.5%	12.9%	12.3%	12.5%
engagement	81%	81%	82%	62%

④ *Environmental issues*

Even before COVID-19, M&S has been carrying out activities for environmental achievements such as reducing greenhouse gases, expanding recycling, and reducing waste. In 2019, the ratio of recyclable packaging was 70%, food waste was 24% less than the previous year, and greenhouse gas was 360,000 tons, down 44% from 2007. In 2020, when the COVID-19 crisis began, response to social issues was relatively strengthened, but CSR activities related to environmental issues continued to develop. In 2021, when the COVID-19 crisis continues, the first disclosure of climate-related information under TCFD recommendations was also made. In 2022, Plan A was reset to focus on

becoming a net zero business in all operational and overall value chains by 2040, considering climate emergencies. In addition, the roadmap to reduce carbon emissions by 1/3 by 2025 and create net zero by 2040 includes plans to lead change through cooperation with stakeholders such as suppliers and customers. For example, in 2022, more than 500 stores were equipped with plastic recovery containers to help customers recycle more plastic, and a new incentive program was implemented to reward customers when they donated clothes.

Even before COVID-19, donations to surplus food, recycling rates, and greenhouse gas emissions were also reduced. However, as the economy recovers after COVID-19, emissions increased greenhouse gas emissions and operational waste increased by 25% (Table 11).

Table 11. The M&S's performance of environmental issues

Year	2018/2019	2019/2020	2020/2021	2021/2022
Donations of surplus in meals equivalents	2.8 million	5.2 million	11.8 million	14.8 million
packing recycled	70%	77%	87%	91%
greenhouse gas emissions	360,000 t	338,000 t	298,000 t	314,000 t

4.4 Analysis and Discussion of Findings

4.4.1 Analysis and Evaluation

The COVID-19 crisis was a crisis that not only companies but also stakeholders such as customers, employees, and suppliers experienced together. Lack of consideration of stakeholders also critically raised issues in the media and negatively affected corporate reputation, requiring CSR activities to consider stakeholders as a crisis-overcoming strategy.

M&S strengthened CSR activities related to social issues when the COVID-19 crisis occurred. Activities related to economic and ethical responsibilities for unpaid dividends, legal responsibilities for complying with the government's COVID-related guidelines such as distancing, and philanthropic responsibilities such as donations to the community were comprehensively implemented. CSR activities for stakeholders such as employees, suppliers, and communities were particularly active. M&S's CSR activities during the COVID-19 period were promoted not only to respond to the crisis but to become a key strategy for companies in the future. An ESG committee was formed and the consideration of corporate social and environmental impacts on governance was strengthened. Governance of M&S has helped to respond quickly and coordinated to the crisis. As we emerged from the COVID-19 crisis, responses to environmental issues were strengthened to cope with the climate crisis. Plan A, M&S's sustainable plan was reorganized with a single focus on the

environment, and climate-related information was preemptively disclosed.

These activities of M&S (Table 12) can be evaluated as a combination of economic, legal, ethical, and philanthropic responsibility-related activities listed in Carroll's social responsibility pyramid. In addition, M&S' strengthened management of customers, employees, local communities, and suppliers corresponds to the stakeholder theory that managing stakeholders is essential for survival. Economic governance and environmental net zero-related policies were also promoted, and activities for economic, social, and environmental performance under the TBL were comprehensively carried out.

This can be seen as responding to changes in society that require companies to play a more social role. It is also consistent with the results of a study (He and Harris, 2020) that after the pandemic crisis, CSR could be pursued with greater sincerity. It was confirmed that CSR activities were developed in a more expanded form, such as the protection of employees and consideration for employees of suppliers, which were more advanced than donations and changes in business models introduced as examples in previous studies.

In addition, as shown in Figure 11, it was confirmed that M&S' crisis response strategy, including CSR activities, was successful through the improvement of economic indicators while overcoming the COVID-19 crisis.

Table 12. M&S's response to COVID-19 Crisis

	Contents
Response system	Board, Operating Committee, Business Involvement Group, Crisis Management Team, Government Relations Team
Employee management	Full payment of wages to self-quarantine employees, support for working from home, payment of salaries to employees on temporary leave, strengthening communication with employees
Communities	Develop fundraising activities to support vulnerable consumers, NHS workers, etc.
Suppliers	Immediate payment to small food suppliers and campaign activities to support British farmers
Etc.	Compliance with COVID-related government guidelines (legal responsibility), non-payment of dividends (economic responsibility), etc.

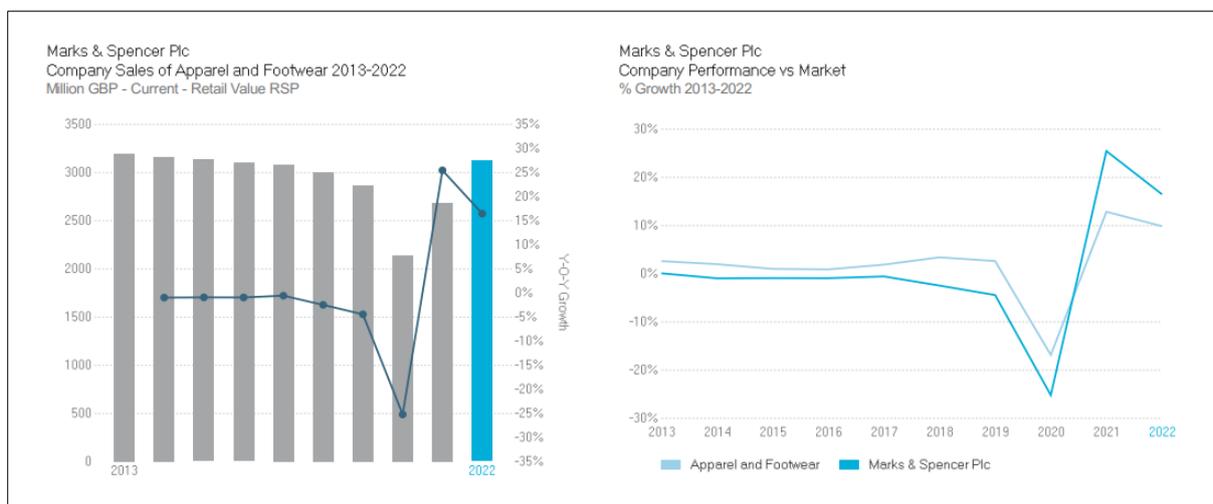


Figure 11. M&S's sales in Apparel and Footwear (Passport, 2022)

However, as a crisis response strategy, M&S's CSR activities changed in intensity and content after the crisis. CSR activities related to social issues did not work, such as a decrease in donations and a lack of improvement in diversity-related indicators within the organization. Regarding environmental issues, a stronger promotion system was established, and policies were promoted throughout the company, but the effect was not visible.

4.4.2 Discussion

This study contributes to confirming the existing discussion that CSR is effective as a strategy to overcome the crisis. CSR is centered on activities related to social and environmental issues, and governance is also organized in the direction of considering social and environmental effects. This shows that the main components of the Triple Bottom Line theory, Carroll's pyramid model, are the main contents of CSR activities. In particular, as can be seen from stakeholder theory, it was also confirmed that the main CSR strategy is to increase stakeholder participation and meet stakeholder needs.

In addition, although it was not emphasized relatively much in the existing CSR theory, it was confirmed that governance is an important basis for promoting CSR activities and is the driving force for CSR promotion. Governance needs to be emphasized as a basic factor leading social and environmental issues, not just one element of economic issues.

Even after the COVID-19 crisis, the energy crisis and the economic crisis caused by the Ukraine war continue. In order to sustain the performance of CSR activities, it is necessary to continuously monitor the changing needs of society and redesign CSR programs to meet the changing needs of stakeholders.

4.5 Conclusion chapter

In this chapter, M&S's CSR activities during the COVID-19 period and CSR-related issues raised by the media were analysed based on secondary data. Regarding the research questions, the following conclusions can be made.

First, the CSR was further emphasized with the outbreak of the COVID-19 crisis, and collaboration with stakeholders was required to overcome the crisis. M&S strengthened CSR activities in accordance with these social needs. Second, the COVID-19 crisis is a social crisis, and M&S strengthened its activities related to social responsibility. In particular, various stakeholder-related CSR activities have been carried out, such as increasing donations to the local community and strengthening the welfare of employees of the headquarters and suppliers. Third, an ESG committee was formed in relation to CSR promotion, and consideration of social and environmental impacts in governance was strengthened. Fourth, after the COVID-19 crisis, CSR has been continuously promoted by strengthening CSR activities in response to climate change, but some CSR-related indicators have shown poor performance.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Summary

The aim of this business project is to analyse how CSR developed before and after the COVID-19 crisis to find out how CSR is used as a crisis management strategy, and to make suggestions on how to promote future CSR activities based on this. To this end, a case study method was adopted as a qualitative study to analyze the CSR activities of M&S, a representative retailer in the UK. And the data used the officially disclosed secondary data. Media press releases were analysed to confirm society's needs for CSR, and press releases, annual reports, and sustainability reports distributed by M&S were analysed to investigate M&S' CSR activities.

5.2 Conclusions

There are four research objectives in this study. The first research objective is to understand the changes in society's need for corporate CSR after the outbreak of the COVID-19 crisis. The second is to compare and analyse the characteristics of CSR activities conducted by M&S before and after the COVID-19 crisis. The third is to evaluate whether CSR activities were effective in overcoming the COVID-19 crisis. The fourth research objective is to evaluate how CSR activities have changed after overcoming the crisis, and based on the

results, suggest strategies on how to develop CSR activities in the future. The research conclusions for each research objective are as follows.

5.2.1 Objective 1:

After the outbreak of COVID-19, the media's reports on CSR increased, and many of the reports said that the importance of CSR would increase. Specifically, there were the most reports related to social issues such as responses to stakeholders. When the economy is in trouble due to the COVID-19 crisis, consideration and cooperation with stakeholders such as employees and suppliers are essential to maintain the reputation of companies and overcome the crisis.

5.2.2 Objective 2:

When the COVID-19 crisis occurred, M&S strengthened CSR activities related to social issues. In addition, climate risks continued, leading to the reorganization of sustainable programs to strengthen environmental-related CSR activities. At the same time, new ESG committees have been created to strengthen governance to promote CSR activities as a more organization-wide strategy. As the disclosure of climate-related information became mandatory, the disclosure of related information was preemptively made in response.

5.2.3 Objective 3:

Prior to the COVID-19 crisis, M&S was in a difficult situation both in terms of economic performance and management of social and environmental risks, with sales declining and high levels of waste in the food business being an issue. However, as the COVID-19 crisis was overcome, the actual economic indicators improved, and M&S' rapid decision-making governance was evaluated to have overcome the COVID-19 crisis. This shows that M&S's crisis response strategy, including CSR activities, was effective.

5.2.4 Objective 4:

After the COVID-19 crisis eased, CSR did not strengthen further. Regarding the environment, there is also a weakened aspect, such as more waste emissions as economic activity recovers. In addition, CSR activities related to social issues did not work, such as a decrease in donations and a lack of improvement in diversity-related indicators within the organization as a result of an engagement survey for employees. Suggestions for specific strategies related to CSR in the future will be presented below.

5.3 Recommendations

5.3.1 Create tangible results in relationships with stakeholders

First, a roadmap is prepared to continuously strengthen cooperative relationships with stakeholders and achieve tangible results of related CSR activities.

A crisis requires a quick response to the needs of stakeholders. Good relationships with stakeholders are important to overcome crises, maintain a good reputation in the market, and increase consumer loyalty. In addition, future crises, such as the climate crisis, are a risk to all members of society and require CSR activities with stakeholders. It is not just promoting M&S's CSR activities but strategies for M&S' key stakeholders to join together should be strengthened. To this end, a cooperative relationship with actual stakeholders must be established. In particular, it is necessary to build a stronger relationship with employees whose engagement awareness has declined after overcoming the COVID-19 crisis. To this end, a specific activity plan is presented so that employees can feel it. It is proposed to show that the organization has a concrete plan for employee diversity and human rights by presenting a roadmap to how long to increase the proportion of female managers and managers from ethnic minorities. It is also necessary to reflect the voices of stakeholders from the process of preparing a roadmap and to discover issues that stakeholders think urgently and additionally reflect them in the company's CSR strategy. The

roadmap will be prepared within six months and released through the Sustainability report in 2024.

5.3.2 Risk management of environmental issues

Second, it is necessary to prepare for risk factors such as greenwashing along with a stronger response to environmental issues. Environmental issues are already an urgent risk, and the government's related policies are strengthened, and public demand is increasing. As the importance of environmental issues grows, concerns about greenwashing are also increasing. In 2022, Tesco was also investigated for suspected greenwashing (FT, 2022). Environmental issues, in particular, are related to CSR's various frameworks, including economic responsibility to transition to net-zero business, legal responsibility to reduce carbon emissions in line with government policies and ethical responsibility to achieve beyond goals. In the future, the company's CSR capabilities should be shown by responding to environmental issues. To this end, it is proposed to increase the reliability of environmental-related CSR activity reporting by forming M&S's greenwashing monitoring team consisting of stakeholders such as customers, suppliers, and employees. It is proposed to discuss the formation of a monitoring team in the process of collecting stakeholders' opinions and creating a roadmap, and based on this, prepare a monitoring team within 6 months.

5.3.3 Strengthen CSR leadership

Finally, it is proposed to further strengthen leadership in promoting CSR at the level of governance. In order to continuously achieve environmental and social performance, CSR activities should not be deployed at a simple event level. Environmental and social issues should be reflected in the organization's strategy, and the focus of the strategy should be shifted to stakeholder-centered rather than shareholder-centered. It is necessary to communicate with shareholders and stakeholders at all levels of the business, consider their feedback and insights on important issues of the company and share them with the board as appropriate. First of all, CSR-related strategies should be included in the CEO's message and reflected in internal and external communication of the organization. In addition, it is proposed to reflect CSR activities in the internal incentive mechanism so that they are internalized into an important corporate culture.

5.4 Limitations

This study is a time series analysis of the CSR of the company subject to the case study based on the concept of time before and after the COVID-19 crisis. While it has the advantage of being able to analyse in-depth changes in the CSR of the company, its limitation is that cross-sectional analysis has not been made through comparison between other companies in the industry and comparison with other industries. There is a lack of determining whether the

target value of the company's CSR activities is appropriate and whether the performance on the indicators is insufficient.

5.5 Future Work

In future studies, it is necessary to examine the differences in CSR activities between industries through comparison with companies in other industries and to study CSR activities required by the industry.

In addition, a comparative study on CSR activities according to cultural differences by country is also needed. This requires companies that want to enter the global market with a global supply chain to develop more effective CSR activities that are more consistent with the country's cultural background. For example, in a culture where philanthropic responsibility is important, corporate philanthropic donation activities should be further strengthened, and in a culture where consideration for members of society is more important, CSR activities for stakeholders should be further strengthened. It may be difficult for the case of UK companies to work the same in other cultures. When consulting on CSR activities for companies in other countries in the future, it is necessary to study to help make suggestions suitable for the cultural conditions of the country in question, rather than simply introducing examples of various global companies. This study is also necessary to enter the global market and gain a good reputation through CSR activities appropriate to consumers in other cultures.

Reflection on Personal Learning

This project, the last task of my MBA course, was a process of confirming that I have grown and introspecting about what I need to grow further. Based on Gibbs' six-stage cycle (The University of Edinburgh, 2020), a theoretical framework for reflection, I will reflect on my dissertation writing process.



Figure 12. Gibbs' six-stage cycle

1. Description

This project started by setting the dissertation topic and direction based on the proposal written in the second semester. It took a long time to review other

research methods or other case studies to see if it was appropriate to proceed with the original proposal. After setting the direction, I went through some trial and error in preparing a frame to analyse the collected data. After going through this process, I was able to research effectively and finish this project on schedule.

2. Feeling

I had a hard time even before writing the dissertation. It was not easy to start because of the pressure of being an important process and the desire to do well. The subject of the dissertation I chose was related to the field I would work in when I returned to Korea, so I felt a lot of pressure to do well.

3. Evaluation

When the project was not progressing well, I tried to apply what I had learned during the MBA course. In particular, knowledge of Accounting and Financial subjects was required to analyse the company's annual report, and Managing People, Leadership and Changing, and Strategy subjects were helpful in understanding CSR theory. Along with this, I needed time to collect various data and immerse myself in my dissertation for a certain amount of time.

4. Analysis

Excessive pressure reduces work efficiency. But there are benefits to being motivated. In order to accept the burden and grow, it is absolutely important to take the time to look at the problem deeply and broadly. Creative ideas start by collecting various data and laying the groundwork. And it was important to make sure the direction was right from time to time. I tried to think flexibly so as not to keep insisting on the wrong direction.

5. Conclusion

By managing the process of carrying out this project, I was able to improve my ability to think creatively. For creative thinking, I tried to synthesize what I had learned and newly collected data, and this effort was effective. But pressure and stress management are still my weaknesses. I think I will be able to do better at mind control as I take on more difficult tasks in the future and gain experience in reaping results.

6. Action plan

When I return to Korea after completing MAB, I want to further develop my thesis project. I need to try to apply what I learned here to my work and to collect

and synthesize various related data. To this end, I plan to read books in various fields and continue to expand my knowledge. And I plan to use the experience, skills, and knowledge that I overcame difficulties in the MBA course to become better at mind control to manage negative emotions in myself and my employees. To this end, I plan to periodically review the experience and knowledge of the MBA course.

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Appendix: Ulster Business School Research Ethics Approval Form



Application for Ethical Approval for a Research Project Involving Human Participants (Ulster Business School Research Ethics Approval Form)

This form should be completed by the student undertaking the research in association with the student's supervisor. The form MUST be completed and signed at the end of the form before any research / fieldwork is carried out. Reference should be made to the University Guidance on Ethical Standards* for Research involving Human Participants.

The completed and signed Ethical Approval Form MUST be attached to the final dissertation report (the dissertation will not be marked if the Ethics Form is not attached in the Appendix).

Name of Supervisor:	Alfred M'beteh
Student Name:	Kyunghee Ju
Student ID:	B00858766
Project Title:	The use of Corporate Social Responsibility in Crisis Management: A case of Marks and Spencer UK

Course:	MBA with Advanced Practice		
Attendance Mode (FT/PT):	FT	Year of Study:	2 years
Project Type (PG/UG):	Postgraduate		

Summary of proposed research (including planned start and end dates):			
The main topic of this study is to investigate the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities. It compares and analyses CSR activities of Marks and Spencer, a leading UK retail company, before and after COVID-19. The analysis framework utilises major frames related to CSR such as stakeholder theory and triple bottom line. Annual Reports, Sustainability Reports, newsletters, and media articles related to M&S's CSR activities are collected, and secondary analysis is conducted. The results of the study can be used as a guideline for preparing a new CSR strategy in the post-COVID-19 era.			
Start Date:	13/02/2023	End Date:	21/05/2023

Does your proposed research involve any of the following (Please choose Yes or No):

Deception of participants? (i.e. do they understand the implications of participating in a research study?)	Yes / <input checked="" type="radio"/> No
Inducements to participate? (i.e. are participants being offered any 'prize' for agreeing to participate in the study?)	Yes / <input checked="" type="radio"/> No
Possible psychological stress? (i.e. will you be asking about potentially sensitive personal issues)	Yes / <input checked="" type="radio"/> No
Any other special circumstances?	Yes / <input checked="" type="radio"/> No

If you have answered "yes" to any of the above, please provide details regarding how you will deal with these issues?

Please provide details of the likely participants involved in the research (i.e. details of vulnerable groups* e.g. children, the elderly, people with a learning disability):

I collect secondary data, so there is no possibility that such participants participate in the study.

Please provide details and justification for the methodology to be used in the proposed research (please attach copy of questionnaires/interview routines):

This study collects CSR activity data during the COVID-19 era, analyses its meaning, and develops existing CSR-related research. To this end, a case study method is adopted, and secondary data are utilized. Case studies are useful for gaining a richer understanding of the context of the research and the processes in place (Bryman and Bell, 2015). Secondary data is often used in case study strategies, which have the advantage of being able to access high-quality data at low cost and time (Saunders et al., 2018). Annual reports and CSR reports related to CSR activities of the company collected as secondary data include various quantitative and qualitative data such as performance data prepared by the company and survey data targeting stakeholders, etc. They are also reliable data that have undergone a verification process from an external institution.

If you are using interviews no participant should be engaged or approached to take part in the research without obtaining informed consent (Please attach copy of information sheet and consent form or use the space below to provide justification why informed consent does not need to be sought):

In this study, an interview method is not conducted.

Confidentiality of Data (Please choose Yes or No): Yes

Have steps been taken to ensure confidentiality of data? (rationale for anonymity and data storage, etc)	Yes / <input checked="" type="radio"/> No
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Please provide details on what steps have been taken to ensure confidentiality of data:

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Signatures:

Staff / Supervisor:	Dr Alfred Mbeteh 	Student:	Kyunghee Ju 	Date:	17/04/2023
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