

## The sustainability development dilemma in green public relations: part of CSR failure?

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**Abstract** This study explores the intricate intersection of sustainability development and green public relations (PR) within corporate social responsibility (CSR). Despite significant technological advancements in contemporary society, numerous organisations still face challenges in effectively implementing their CSR efforts, thereby impacting their social credibility. The author investigate the case of Theranos, a well-known company that exemplified failure in this domain, using VOSviewer as an analytical tool. Theranos serves as a singular case study for our analysis. Its downfall serves as a cautionary tale, highlighting the risks associated with companies that exploit sustainable development solely for their ambitious goals. Our study underscores the importance of integrating sustainable practices into company operations and viewing sustainability as an integral component rather than merely acknowledging its value superficially. This article examines moral and ethical concerns and best practices in green public relations, offering insights into the challenges organisations face in pursuing genuine sustainability and social responsibility.

**Keywords:** literature review; mapping; qualitative analysis; theranos; vosviewer analysis

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## INTRODUCTION

In today's society, businesses and organisations increasingly recognise the significance of adopting ecologically sustainable practices (Gatti et al., 2019; Sarfraz et al., 2023; Susilo et al., 2022). This recognition is particularly relevant given the global discourse on environmental issues. Green Public Relations (Green PR) has developed a strategic communication plan to enable organisations to align themselves with sustainable principles and demonstrate their commitment to environmental stewardship (Brunner & Smallwood, 2019; Pratama et al., 2023; Vita et al., 2023). Green public relations goes beyond traditional public relations by strongly emphasising highlighting, and advocating an organisation's environmentally conscious initiatives and practices (Saludin et al., 2013). This involves emphasising the positive aspects of the company's environmental impact and sustainability activities, with the primary goal of showcasing the organisation's dedication to environmental stewardship to various stakeholders, including consumers, employees, investors, and the broader public (Yavuz, 2009).

Transparency and authenticity are vital aspects of green public relations (PR). To maintain credibility, organisations must avoid greenwashing, which involves dishonestly exaggerating or fabricating environmentally friendly efforts (Gatti et al., 2019). Building long-term trust relies on authenticity (Vollero, 2022). Effective green PR involves communicating to stakeholders the importance of sustainability and the specific steps taken by the organisation to reduce its environmental impact (Yilmaz & Baybars, 2022). This goal can be achieved through various communication channels, such as press releases, social media platforms, and corporate websites. Green PR aims to actively engage stakeholders, including staff, in sustainability activities, collaborating with environmental groups, and gathering customer feedback—stakeholders who contribute become advocates for the organisation's green initiatives (Vita et al., 2023).

Proactive management and anticipation of environmental concerns are crucial aspects of Green Public Relations. The implementation of a crisis management plan can help organisations effectively address ecological issues and minimise damage to their reputation. Establishing clear and measurable environmental performance objectives is of utmost importance (Putri Mulia & Fauzi, 2021). In the field of public relations, it is essential for green initiatives to not only convey an organisation's commitment to environmental causes but also demonstrate tangible progress toward predefined environmental goals (Vollero, 2022; Yilmaz & Baybars, 2022). Implementing accountability measures enhances credibility (Chomać-Pierzecka et al., 2022).

Green Public Relations (PR) is crucial in promoting sustainability and driving organisational change (Yilmaz & Baybars, 2022). This article will examine four organisations, namely Patagonia, Tesla, Unilever, and



Google, to illustrate how they have embraced responsibility as part of their brand identity and effectively communicated their dedication to sustainability. These companies showcase how Green PR can foster a sustainable mindset and contribute to overall well-being through their operational strategies and communication efforts.

Patagonia is an exemplary case of Green Public Relations (PR). As a leading outdoor apparel manufacturer, the brand has consistently demonstrated a commitment to sustainability deeply rooted in its core values. Patagonia uses recycled materials in its product range, upholds labour standards, and encourages responsible consumer behaviour by advocating for the purchase of pre-owned items. These initiatives are prominently featured on Patagonia's website, social media platforms, and other communication channels. Patagonia effectively inspires consumers and businesses through tangible actions that illustrate its dedication to stewardship.

In recent years, Tesla has emerged as a trailblazer in environmentally friendly automotive advancements, guided by the visionary leadership of entrepreneur Elon Musk. Tesla's electric cars have not only revolutionised the automotive industry but have also solidified the company's reputation as a symbol of sustainability. Tesla's public relations efforts go beyond conventional methods. Elon Musk engages with the public through media, personally conveying the company's commitment to a sustainable future. Tesla strategically communicates to accelerate the transition towards sustainable energy solutions. By engaging with people, they shape perceptions and motivate individuals to embrace eco-friendly modes of transportation.

Conversely, Unilever, a corporation operating in the consumer goods sector, has strategically embedded sustainability as a fundamental element of its corporate strategy. The company's Sustainable Living Plan establishes ambitious goals to reduce its environmental impact and enhance the well-being of one billion individuals. Unilever's Green PR initiatives encompass regular updates on progress, active engagement with stakeholders, and the implementation of campaigns to promote sustainable living practices. Through ongoing stakeholder interaction and frequent progress reports, Unilever underscores its enduring commitment to social responsibility. Their dedication illustrates how corporations can integrate sustainable practices into their operations effectively.

Similarly, Google has made notable strides in its quest for carbon neutrality and the advancement of energy programs. Google emphasises initiatives by actively procuring renewable energy sources through its Green Energy Purchasing Program, which helps offset the company's greenhouse gas emissions. Google's dedication to stewardship is evident through transparent disclosure of energy consumption and substantial investments in renewable energy sources. Not only do Google's green public relations (PR) efforts underscore its commitment to sustainability, but they also set an inspiring example for other organisations to



prioritise environmental responsibility. In doing so, Google establishes a benchmark for corporate environmental activities through its exemplary leadership.

In the context of the examples above, namely Patagonia, Tesla, Unilever, and Google, these companies illustrate how implementing Green PR can drive significant transformations in organisational sustainability efforts. These companies have positioned themselves as sustainability leaders by seamlessly integrating sustainable practices into their operations, effectively showcasing their commitment to responsibility and inspiring stakeholders. The efforts undertaken by these businesses serve as compelling illustrations for enterprises looking to adopt Green PR strategies and work towards building a sustainable future.

While Green PR offers numerous advantages, organisations must navigate certain challenges. The risk of being accused of greenwashing is a major concern. To maintain trust, organisations must ensure that their environmental actions are meaningful and verifiable. Striking a balance between profitability and sustainability can be challenging. Instead of portraying environmental responsibility as a trade-off, Green PR should demonstrate how it aligns with business success. Changing customer attitudes towards sustainable products and behaviour may take time. Effective Green PR initiatives must target and overcome biases and communication gaps (Nakajima, 2001).

Green PR is an effective tool for companies aiming to portray themselves as environmentally responsible. Businesses can enhance their public image and contribute to the global sustainability movement by employing transparent communication, involving stakeholders, and setting measurable targets. The examples of Patagonia, Tesla, Unilever, and Google demonstrate that successful Green PR involves a strong commitment to environmental responsibility, consistent communication, and a genuine desire to make a positive impact on the planet. As environmental awareness continues to rise, Green PR is poised to play an increasingly significant role in shaping the reputations and success of companies worldwide.

The COVID-19 pandemic has profoundly impacted the global landscape, leading organisations and industries to reassess their policies and values (De Leon et al., 2021). As societies recover from the crisis, there is a heightened emphasis on sustainability and corporate responsibility. Green Public Relations (PR) has emerged as a crucial strategy for companies looking to align themselves with environmentally sensitive principles while rebuilding their reputations in the post-pandemic era. In the months following the outbreak, there has been a noteworthy shift in consumer behaviour and expectations (Ahmad & Abdullah, 2014). People have become more environmentally conscious and actively seek out companies that support sustainability. This transition presents a valuable opportunity for businesses to incorporate Green PR strategies into their communication efforts.



In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, consumers have developed a greater appreciation for transparency and accountability. Green public relations (PR) encompasses an organisation's communication efforts to demonstrate its commitment to sustainable practices. This involves transparently sharing the organisation's ongoing environmental initiatives and goals. Transparency builds trust and fosters a sense of responsibility, both of which are crucial for implementing Green Public Relations (PR) effectively. Organisations are required to showcase their current or recently adopted sustainable projects. Presenting these initiatives through public relations channels reinforces a commitment to environmentally conscious values, including reducing carbon emissions, implementing sustainable manufacturing methods, and responsibly sourcing resources. Case studies and success stories can serve as effective means of disseminating practical strategies for achieving sustainability.

Green PR extends its reach beyond external communication to encompass internal stakeholders, especially employees. Cultivating a culture of sustainability within a company not only enhances its image but also signifies a genuine commitment to green principles. Activities initiated by employees, such as volunteer programs or the adoption of sustainable working practices, can be highlighted in public relations efforts. Collaborating with like-minded companies and organisations further enhances the impact of green public relations campaigns. Businesses can create a collective force for driving positive environmental change by forming strategic alliances. These partnerships contribute to achieving sustainability goals and provide opportunities for expansive public relations initiatives that reach a broader audience.

Incorporating educational components into Green PR is essential, in addition to self-promotion. Organisations can use their platforms to raise environmental awareness, offer information on sustainable living, and provide eco-friendly guidance (Aronczyk & Espinoza, 2019). Companies can gain credibility and facilitate positive change by positioning themselves as providers of relevant information. Green PR places a strong emphasis on the integration of innovative and environmentally friendly technology. Investing in green technology, energy-efficient operations, or practices aligned with the circular economy sets an organisation apart in the market and underscores its commitment to developing sustainable solutions.

The COVID-19 pandemic underscored the importance of preparedness for disasters. Green communications should include strategies for addressing potential environmental emergencies or controversies. Proactively addressing environmental issues and promptly communicating changes helps companies maintain trust during challenging times.

The use of quantifiable metrics plays a crucial role in substantiating the efforts of green public relations. Organisations need to quantitatively evaluate and provide a comprehensive account of the



impact resulting from their sustainability initiatives, including aspects such as reducing the carbon footprint, managing waste, and engaging with the community. The presence of clear and measurable outcomes demonstrates a commitment to making substantial progress. In the post-COVID-19 era, the use of digital communication channels holds significant importance in Green Public Relations (PR). Social media platforms and online channels offer immediate and widespread accessibility. The use of videos, infographics, and interactive campaigns has the potential to effectively convey an organisation's environmentally sustainable initiatives to a global audience. Sustainability dynamics are continuously evolving. The effectiveness of Green PR strategies depends on their ability to demonstrate flexibility and an unwavering commitment to ongoing development. Regularly updating stakeholders on new sustainability goals, partnerships, and achievements helps maintain the relevance of the narrative and showcases a continuous dedication to environmental stewardship (Elgueta-Ruiz & Martínez-Ortiz, 2022; Tutton & Brand, 2023; Wei & Diddi, 2022).

As the world recovers from the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, adopting Green PR techniques is no longer a trend but a necessity for enterprises aiming to thrive in the new normal. The intersection of environmental ethics and public relations presents a unique opportunity for companies to rebuild trust, differentiate themselves in the market, and contribute significantly to a sustainable future. By embracing transparency, demonstrating sustainable practices, and fostering a culture of environmental responsibility, organisations can effectively navigate the post-COVID-19 landscape while positively impacting the world (Oh et al., 2023).

In response to the growing global concern for environmental sustainability, Green Public Relations (PR) has emerged as a vital component of corporate communication. As businesses increasingly acknowledge the necessity of aligning their operations with eco-friendly practices, the significance of Green PR in shaping public perception becomes ever more crucial. However, the ethical aspects of Green PR raise significant concerns related to authenticity, transparency, and accountability (Yavuz, 2009). This essay explores the ethical issues inherent in Green PR and provides a case study to illustrate these concepts. The cornerstone of ethical Green PR is authenticity. Greenwashing, a deceptive practice in which organisations exaggerate or falsely claim their environmental efforts, can harm the entire industry's reputation. Authenticity requires companies to commit to sustainable practices rather than merely exploiting them for advertising. Transparency in Green PR is essential for building trust. Transparency is fostered by disclosing environmental impact assessments, carbon footprints, and sustainability measures. Ethical communication involves showcasing achievements and acknowledging challenges and areas for improvement.



Assuming responsibility for environmental consequences is a key aspect of ethical Green PR. This entails recognising and rectifying any adverse impacts of business activities. Transparent reporting and accountability mechanisms demonstrate a commitment to continuous improvement. Ethical Green PR extends beyond the corporation to engage with stakeholders. Listening to concerns, incorporating feedback, and involving the community in decision-making are all integral parts of this approach. Genuine collaboration fosters a sense of shared environmental responsibility (Majd et al., 2016).

Patagonia, a well-known outdoor apparel supplier, has garnered acclaim for its commitment to environmental sustainability. The introduction of Patagonia's Worn Wear campaign in 2013 exemplifies the company's ethical approach to Green PR. The Worn Wear initiative by Patagonia underscores authenticity by encouraging customers to purchase used Patagonia clothing or trade in their old items for store credit. The company consistently advocates that the most sustainable product is one that already exists. This approach aligns with the circular economy principles and illustrates Patagonia's dedication to reducing consumption and promoting product longevity.

Worn Wear promotes transparency by enabling consumers to share their experiences with their well-loved Patagonia clothing. The campaign focuses on building a community that values durability and the stories behind each item rather than simply selling products. Patagonia is transparent about the environmental impact of its products, empowering customers to make informed choices. Patagonia's repair and reuse initiative further demonstrates the company's commitment to responsibility (St Nur Rahma & Siradjuddin, 2022). Rather than discarding damaged Patagonia garments, the company actively encourages customers to repair them. Patagonia takes responsibility for the entire lifespan of its products by offering repair instructions and services, reducing waste, and minimising environmental impacts. Worn Wear consistently engages with Patagonia's community of outdoor enthusiasts. Beyond selling products, the campaign fosters an awareness of shared values among customers. Patagonia emphasises its customers' involvement in the sustainability journey by promoting the exchange of well-worn gear, transforming them into active participants rather than passive consumers.

While Patagonia's Worn Wear campaign exemplifies ethical Green PR, it is not without its challenges and concerns. Some argue that Patagonia's premium pricing may limit its products from reaching a broader audience, potentially creating an exclusive image of sustainability. Additionally, the overall environmental impact of the fashion industry remains a concern, even for companies with extensive environmental objectives (Boudin & Olsson, 2021).

Ethical principles in Green PR are essential for establishing genuine environmental stewardship and maintaining public trust. The ethical foundations of Green PR encompass authenticity, transparency,



accountability, and stakeholder engagement. Patagonia's Worn Wear campaign is an excellent example of how a company can incorporate these principles into its marketing strategy. As more companies adopt environmentally friendly practices, it is crucial to keep ethical considerations at the forefront to ensure that Green PR contributes positively to the overarching goal of environmental sustainability ("Public Health Administration: Principles for Population-Based Management," 2002; Schebesch & Şoim, 2022).

Green Public Relations (PR) and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) are closely intertwined because they aim to shape a company's public perception by showcasing its commitment to ethical values. Green PR serves as a means to inform the public about the CSR initiatives undertaken by an organisation. This entails promoting the organisation's actions and dedication to sustainability, which, in turn, enhances its brand image and fosters public trust—an integral aspect of a successful CSR strategy.

The effectiveness of Green PR hinges on the integration of CSR. When an organisation genuinely commits to responsibility, its efforts in Green PR are perceived as more authentic and credible. This underscores the importance of implementing CSR initiatives and transparently communicating them to the general public.

Demonstrating transparency by disclosing a company's efforts, outcomes, and setbacks reflects its integrity and commitment to achieving its social responsibility goals. Effectively managing transparency can be achieved by implementing Green PR strategies, which help establish stakeholder trust and credibility.

Green public relations (PR) and corporate social responsibility (CSR) are closely intertwined to enhance a company's image as an environmentally sustainable organisation. CSR focuses on adopting and implementing ethical business practices, while Green PR aims to convey these efforts to the general public. Integrating Green PR and CSR helps achieve objectives, enhances brand reputation, improves customer relationships, and ultimately leads to long-term business success.

This study examines the complex issues surrounding Green Public Relations (PR), discussing the challenges and dilemmas it faces and the potential opportunities it offers. The study aims to outline the landscape of Green PR, exploring its connections with corporate social responsibility, public awareness, and environmental sustainability (Boatwright, 2022; Jiang & Park, 2022; Morehouse & Saffer, 2023; Oh et al., 2023). It highlights the increasing scrutiny that Green PR faces from the general public and regulatory bodies. It also addresses the authenticity surrounding green claims and the risk of greenwashing. The text explores the dynamic nature of environmental concerns and the resulting demands on organisations to enhance their environmental initiatives.

The subsequent section of the paper delves into shaping a path for the future of Green PR, considering the identified challenges and



opportunities. The proposition suggests that the future trajectory of Green PR depends on achieving a harmonious balance between promoting an organisation's environmentally friendly efforts and ensuring their authenticity and relevance. The proposition asserts that adopting a strategic approach is essential, encompassing green initiatives' communication and implementation aspects. The study's findings indicate that the future trajectory of Green PR will be influenced by individuals who can adeptly navigate these ethical dilemmas, turn challenges into opportunities, and ultimately make significant contributions to fostering a more sustainable future. The statement above underscores the capacity of Green PR to exert a substantial influence on public attitudes and promote ecological sustainability within the corporate sector.

## **METHODOLOGY**

To conduct this analysis, the authors will employ Vosviewer technology, given the substantial literature involved. VOSviewer serves as a highly efficient tool for examining and analysing bibliometric networks. This software, developed by Nees Jan van Eck and Ludo Waltman at Leiden University, facilitates the exploration and comprehension of the structural patterns within scientific fields. It provides researchers with insights into fundamental aspects and the evolution of research domains. Due to its ability to uncover hidden patterns and connections within extensive volumes of scholarly data, this analytical approach has gained popularity in the academic sphere (Arruda et al., 2022).

VOSviewer is a versatile tool that uses data to construct networks, illustrating connections between entities such as authors, documents, or keywords. By analysing citation and co-authorship information, VOSviewer generates user-friendly representations that assist researchers in analysing their materials.

In the initial stages of a VOSviewer study, researchers collect bibliographic information from databases like PubMed, Scopus, or Web of Science. This information includes details about publications, authors, citations, and keywords. Once the data is gathered and organised, it is imported into the VOSviewer software. This tool transforms the data into network representations. One notable feature of VOSviewer is its ability to create various types of networks, including authorship networks and citation networks (van Eck & Waltman, 2010). Co-authorship networks enable researchers to explore relationships among scholars, while citation networks illustrate the dissemination of knowledge across publications. These networks are visually presented as graphs, where nodes represent entities such as authors, documents, or keywords, and edges depict relationships, such as co-authorship or citations.

The VOSviewer display offers dynamic features, allowing scholars to explore the network in detail. They can focus on specific clusters, manipulate the network structure, and adjust the visual representation of nodes and edges. This adaptability facilitates the assessment of



bibliometric data, including intricate details. VOSviewer heavily relies on cluster analysis, which helps identify interconnected groups of nodes within the network. These clusters often represent subjects or subfields within a discipline. By examining the composition and interconnections of these clusters, scholars can gain insights into the framework of a particular field and discover emerging patterns or niche domains.

Furthermore, VOSviewer provides quantitative indicators to assess the importance of network nodes. Researchers can identify prominent authors or key papers, for instance, using measures like betweenness centrality or citation counts. This data is essential for understanding the significance and impact of specific entities within a scientific topic. Ultimately, VOSviewer offers an effective and user-friendly solution for bibliometric analysis (van Eck & Waltman, 2017). Researchers can uncover hidden patterns, identify research trends, and gain a deeper understanding of the structure and dynamics of scientific areas by transforming complex bibliographic data into visually meaningful networks. VOSviewer's interactive and dynamic nature makes it a valuable tool for investigators exploring the vast landscape of scholarly literature and making informed decisions about their research objectives.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **CSR Failure**

The concept of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has gained increasing popularity in the dynamic realm of business operations. Corporations are now expected to play a role beyond pursuing profits and actively contribute to the betterment of society. Environmental Public Relations (Green PR) is a significant component of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), focusing on a company's environmental efforts and its commitment to long-term sustainability. This article explores the narrative surrounding the downfall of a business in the realm of Green PR and the ensuing consequences. Green public relations is a specialised branch of the broader field of public relations, aiming to highlight a company's dedication to environmental sustainability and ethical corporate conduct. This involves engaging in discourse and advocating for initiatives to reduce the organisation's ecological impact, enhance its environmental efficiency, and foster a positive reputation among various stakeholders (Arruda et al., 2022).

On the other hand, CSR encompasses a broader range of company commitments, including economic, social, and environmental aspects. It signifies a company's commitment to ethical behaviour, accountability, and contributing to societal well-being. As environmental issues gained prominence worldwide, consumers became more concerned about the environmental impact of their purchasing decisions. Consequently, companies recognised the importance of aligning themselves with sustainability goals to meet consumer demands and maintain a



favourable brand image (Kim & Park, 2020). Green PR has evolved into a strategic tool for businesses to showcase their environmental efforts while emphasising their dedication to sustainable practices. Companies aim to position themselves as champions of environmental conservation by adopting eco-friendly production practices and investing in renewable energy sources.

The company initiated an early Green PR campaign, making ambitious declarations and commitments. They conveyed their dedication to reducing carbon emissions, implementing waste reduction measures, and allocating resources towards developing and using renewable energy sources. The company's management expressed a strong commitment to sustainability, highlighting the significance of corporate responsibility in the current environmentally conscious market. The organisation's initial venture into Green PR was met with great enthusiasm. The company received praise from consumers, investors, and environmental advocacy groups for its commitment to sustainable operations. The media portrayed the corporation as a leader in the corporate pursuit of environmental stewardship.

The company's environmental efforts fell short despite grand promises and sensational announcements. Investigations revealed that the corporation continued to engage in environmentally harmful activities, including resource misuse, inadequate waste management, and a lack of transparency in reporting environmental impacts (Wiese & Toporowski, 2013). Stakeholders were incensed when the company failed to align its actions with Green PR commitments. Initially, consumers who had embraced the company as a sustainability champion felt deceived and dissatisfied. Environmental activists and advocacy groups criticised the company for greenwashing, a technique in which firms exaggerate or falsely claim their commitment to ethical responsibility.

The failure of a company's Green PR practices can have far-reaching consequences, significantly affecting various aspects of its business. This article explores the intricate repercussions of a company's Green PR initiatives being deceptive and not aligning with genuine environmental objectives. Drawing upon pertinent literature and empirical research, this study aims to examine the diverse implications related to a decline in consumer trust, financial consequences, legal scrutiny, employee morale and retention issues, and the complex process of rebuilding trust (Buyaert, 2012).

The immediate consequence of a company's failure in Green PR is the erosion of consumer trust. Upon realising that the company's environmental claims were misleading or exaggerated, customers began to question the authenticity of the company's overall corporate communications. Disillusioned consumers may perceive a sense of betrayal, resulting in decreased trust in the company, reduced brand loyalty, and potentially a loss of market share.



The failure of a company's green public relations (PR) efforts can have significant financial consequences. Deceptive claims and unethical behaviour by the company may lead to investors choosing to divest from the organisation due to their growing dissatisfaction. The loss of investor confidence can result in a decline in the company's stock value and pose challenges in attracting new capital investments. The potential outcome for the company includes the risk of financial instability and difficulties in rebuilding investor trust.

**Legal Scrutiny of Companies Engaging in Deceptive Green PR Practices:** Government authorities and environmental regulatory bodies initiate investigations into alleged environmental violations and deceptive advertising practices. The potential legal consequences can be substantial, leading to significant financial penalties, damage to the organisation's reputation, and potential litigation that exacerbates the erosion of public trust.

Internally, when a company's Green PR efforts fail, it can lead to employee morale and retention issues. Employees who previously took pride in working for an organisation that prioritised environmental responsibility may now be associated with a brand accused of engaging in greenwashing practices. The disconnect between the organisation's stated values and actual actions can result in reduced employee satisfaction, a sense of disillusionment, and a higher employee turnover rate. The organisation may also face challenges attracting highly skilled individuals due to potential concerns among prospective employees about the company's commitment to sustainability.

**Rebuilding Trust:** After a public relations setback related to environmental concerns, the organisation faces the formidable challenge of repairing its tarnished reputation and reinstating trust among its customer base, investors, and the local community. To achieve this goal, the organisation must demonstrate a genuine commitment to implementing transparent and substantive environmental initiatives. Implementing robust, sustainable practices, active engagement in transparent communication with stakeholders, and acknowledging and rectifying past shortcomings are crucial steps in restoring trust and reaffirming the company's credibility as an authentic and responsible entity.

A company's failure in Green public relations has far-reaching implications for its business operations. The challenging recovery process is influenced by several factors, including the loss of consumer trust, financial consequences, legal scrutiny, employee morale and retention concerns, and the demanding task of rebuilding trust. Companies must recognise the importance of genuine environmental commitment and open communication to prevent such failures and establish lasting relationships with stakeholders. By prioritising authenticity and ethical conduct, organisations can mitigate the potential risks associated with Green PR failures and work towards



achieving significant sustainability goals. Green PR goes beyond image projection; it requires sincere dedication and effort. Consumers can discern authenticity, and any deviation from stated commitments can result in irreparable damage. Transparency in reporting environmental impact and sustainability efforts is crucial, as concealing or downplaying negative practices can lead to serious legal and reputational consequences. CSR, including Green PR activities, should be ingrained in the organisation's culture and operations rather than being a standalone marketing strategy. It should permeate all aspects of the company, from supply chain management to product development.

Companies should conduct regular internal audits of their environmental practices to ensure compliance with stated commitments. Accountability mechanisms must be in place to address any deviations promptly. Building a positive and enduring reputation requires active engagement with the community, collaboration with environmental organisations, solicitation of stakeholder feedback, and participation in industry-wide sustainability initiatives.

The failure of an organisation to implement effective Green PR strategies underscores the vulnerability of corporate reputations when faced with environmental lapses. Companies must understand that Green PR goes beyond superficial public relations efforts, encompassing a comprehensive approach to corporate responsibility in an era where consumers increasingly expect genuine dedication to sustainability. The consequences of such failures are a stark reminder that the cost of greenwashing includes financial implications and the erosion of market confidence, credibility, and long-term viability. As organisations navigate the landscape of corporate social responsibility (CSR) and environmental stewardship, it becomes evident that authenticity and transparency play a pivotal role. It is crucial to acknowledge that the effectiveness of Green PR depends on the alignment between public relations activities and the corresponding actions taken by the organisation.

### **The Theranos Controversy as Example of Green PR Failure**

Theranos Inc., once hailed as a revolutionary force in healthcare technology, experienced a meteoric rise and an equally spectacular fall. This downfall was not solely due to technological shortcomings but was exacerbated by a significant public relations (PR) crisis. The Theranos Green PR debacle serves as a cautionary tale underscoring the imperative need for honesty and transparency in business, especially in critical fields like healthcare. Founded in 2003 by the charismatic and ambitious entrepreneur Elizabeth Holmes, Theranos aimed to revolutionise the healthcare industry by making blood testing more accessible and affordable. The company claimed to have developed a groundbreaking device capable of conducting a wide range of tests with just a few drops of blood obtained through a simple fingerstick (Das & Drolet, 2022).



Theranos garnered immense attention and substantial investments, reaching a peak valuation of over \$9 billion. The company's board of directors included prominent figures such as former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger and former Secretary of Defense James Mattis, lending credibility to the enterprise. Theranos' appeal stemmed from its promise of convenient and cost-effective blood testing and its strong commitment to environmental sustainability (Straker et al., 2021). The company positioned itself as an advocate of "Green Diagnostics," emphasising waste reduction compared to traditional blood testing procedures. Theranos asserted that its system consumed fewer resources, generated less biohazard waste, and had a smaller ecological footprint than conventional lab testing.

However, from the outset, Theranos' technology faced scrutiny. The scientific and medical communities were sceptical due to the company's lack of transparency and reluctance to disclose specific details about its proprietary technology. Journalists, particularly John Carreyrou of The Wall Street Journal, began investigating Theranos' claims, resulting in a series of exposés revealing the disparities between the company's assurances and its actual capabilities. In 2015, The Wall Street Journal uncovered that Theranos was not using its equipment for most of its tests. Instead, most of its services relied on conventional blood testing methods. This revelation severely tarnished Theranos' reputation and triggered official investigations (McGinn, 2022). The company faced severe legal and financial penalties as the truth came to light. Once celebrated as the world's youngest self-made female billionaire, Elizabeth Holmes was charged with fraud. Theranos had to lay off a significant portion of its workforce, and its valuation plummeted. The once-promising disruptor in healthcare became synonymous with controversy and dishonesty.

Green PR was pivotal in shaping Theranos' public perception as an environmentally conscious player in the healthcare industry. Reducing waste and carbon footprint in medical diagnostics resonated positively with consumers and investors. However, this facet of Theranos' narrative ultimately fell victim to the broader deception orchestrated by the company (Diamandis, 2015). Theranos' assertion of being an eco-friendly healthcare alternative was predicated on the notion that its technology was innovative and environmentally beneficial. However, the company's reliance on conventional testing methods meant that its environmental claims could have been more accurate and, at worst, intentionally misleading.

Theranos' environmental assertions lacked substantiated evidence or independent assessments. The company should have provided concrete proof supporting its claims of reduced ecological impact from its technology. This lack of transparency eroded trust and credibility. Theranos' marketing materials and public statements frequently emphasised its commitment to environmental sustainability. However, the glaring disconnect between the company's rhetoric and its actual



practices gave rise to suspicions that its environmental-friendly initiatives were largely a PR gimmick. Investors, customers, and even regulatory bodies trusted Theranos' environmental claims. Due to a failure to conduct thorough due diligence, the company perpetuated a narrative that ultimately proved to be false. The repercussions of the scandal not only affected Theranos' financial standing but also severely tarnished its reputation. Greenwashing its image compounded the negative public perception, making it challenging for the company to rebuild trust (Williams, 2022).

The Theranos scandal highlights the critical importance of conducting thorough research, maintaining transparency, and upholding ethical business practices, particularly in industries directly impacting public health. This incident of a Green PR disaster serves as a poignant reminder of the necessity for environmental commitments to be supported by concrete actions and demonstrable results. The Theranos case underscores the significance of accountability and transparency when communicating environmental objectives for companies, especially those in the healthcare and technology sectors. Theranos is a stark illustration of the potential adverse consequences of greenwashing on a company's reputation and long-term viability. In the aftermath of the Theranos scandal, regulatory bodies and investors have displayed heightened scepticism towards companies' claims of environmental sustainability. The healthcare industry has faced increased scrutiny regarding the credibility of technological advancements, prompting calls for thorough validation and transparency.

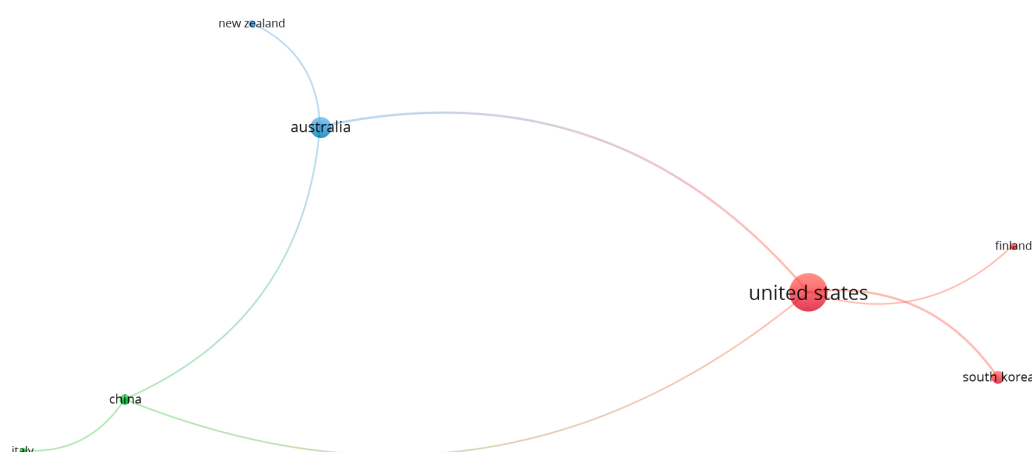
The rise and fall of Theranos Inc. represent a cautionary tale of unchecked ambition, dishonesty, and the consequences of prioritising image over substance. Theranos' Green PR tragedy is a clear reminder that companies must uphold ethical standards and deliver on their commitments, especially when those pledges involve environmental stewardship. Companies that emphasise transparency, ethical standards, and genuine dedication to sustainability are better positioned to establish and maintain trust as the business landscape evolves. Theranos' record, marked by broken promises and environmental misrepresentations, is a stark warning to enterprises aspiring to be industry leaders. A failure in Green PR may lead to financial catastrophe and long-term damage to reputation and trust.

### **Future and Prospects of Green Public Relations**

The prospects of Green Public Relations (PR) will primarily focus on raising public awareness about sustainable ecosystems and promoting environmentally responsible practices across different organisations. This goal will be achieved by capturing public attention, bolstering the organisation's reputation, and highlighting its dedication to social responsibility. Through the adoption of this strategy, organisations will recognise and fulfil their responsibilities towards their associated



communities and the broader society (DiRusso et al., 2022; Jong & van der Linde, 2022; Lim & Lee, 2022; Sule & Ridwanullah, 2023).



**Figure 1.** Countries Origin of Green Public Relations Publication  
Source: VOS Viewer Process by Author (2023)

Based on researchers' findings from VOS Visualisation, a significant portion of publications on Green Public Relations originate from the United States and other G8 countries (refer to Figure 1). However, the future discourse on Green Public Relations must be led by second and third-world countries, representing more than 80% of the world's population.

The growing importance of Green PR calls for a more strategic and focused approach. Public relations professionals should develop strategies rooted in a deep understanding of environmental issues, aiming to raise public awareness about these concerns and advance their organisation's environmental preservation initiatives (Capizzo & Madden, 2022; Chen et al., 2023; Dong et al., 2023; Harrison et al., 2022). In the process of crafting these strategies, PR professionals should collaborate with scientists, environmental experts, and policymakers to ensure that the organisation's environmental conservation efforts align with the expectations and needs of stakeholders (Cho et al., 2023; Clark et al., 2022; Ihm, 2022; Kice & Klyueva, 2022; Prahl et al., 2023; Yudarwati & Gregory, 2022).

Furthermore, the significance of transparency and openness cannot be overstated in the context of Green PR. Organisations can build public trust by engaging in transparent communication regarding their environmental preservation initiatives and disclosing their ecological protection goals and achievements (Kim & Bhalla, 2022; Lai & Yu, 2022; Meyer, 2022; Monehin & Diers-Lawson, 2022; Vollero et al., 2022; Wolf & Theunissen, 2023; Xu et al., 2023). This will enable organisations to effectively convey the effectiveness and sustainability of their environmental conservation efforts.



However, the future of Green PR needs to go beyond merely conveying messages about environmental preservation. The focus of organisations should expand to cultivate a culture that motivates various stakeholders, including customers, employees, and suppliers, to actively participate in the necessary actions to uphold the organisation's commitment to environmental preservation. This implies that Green PR will broaden its scope beyond the mere establishment of an environmentally conscious public image, thereby supporting and enhancing the organisation's concrete efforts in environmental preservation.

Green public relations (PR) is poised to become integral to future PR initiatives. Integrating Green PR into the organisation's comprehensive PR strategy will help align its business objectives with environmental conservation goals. This factor will play a significant role in assisting organisations in meeting their social responsibilities and acknowledging their contribution to a sustainable future (Harness, 2023; Harrison, 2023; Krishna & Amazeen, 2022; Lane, 2023; Macnamara, 2023).

By implementing these approaches, Green PR can play a crucial role in reinforcing an organisation's efforts towards environmental preservation, enhancing public awareness and support, and emphasising the organisation's commitment to social responsibility. The future trajectory of Green PR will focus on promoting environmental sustainability, highlighting an organisation's initiatives in this area, improving its public perception, and emphasising its dedication to social responsibility. This perspective underscores the potential significance of Green PR in future public relations efforts (Chomać-Pierzecka et al., 2022; Ivanitskaya & Erzikova, 2023).

## **CONCLUSION**

The future of Green Public Relations (PR) presents a range of possibilities and challenges. On one hand, it offers a significant platform for organisations to showcase their commitment to environmental sustainability and social responsibility. This platform enables companies to communicate their eco-friendly initiatives effectively, actively engage with stakeholders, and enhance their corporate reputation. However, there is growing scrutiny from both the public and regulatory bodies, posing a significant hurdle. The authenticity of environmental claims is continually examined, and any inconsistency between stated messages and actual practices can lead to accusations of greenwashing, which can harm an entity's reputation.

Furthermore, the evolving nature of environmental concerns adds complexity to the future of Green PR. As our understanding of environmental sustainability advances, organisations are increasingly demanding to enhance their efforts in this area. Public relations professionals must be adaptable and innovative to maintain the relevance and effectiveness of an organisation's green initiatives. The



ability to anticipate and adapt to these changes is crucial for upholding Green PR's credibility and mitigating potential negative consequences.

In summary, the future of Green PR depends on achieving a balance between promoting an organisation's environmentally-friendly efforts and ensuring their authenticity and relevance. Successful implementation of green initiatives requires a comprehensive strategy encompassing effective communication and efficient execution. The trajectory of Green PR in the coming years will be shaped by individuals who possess the skills to navigate these ethical challenges, effectively turning obstacles into opportunities and ultimately making valuable contributions to a more sustainable future.

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