Corporate Social Responsibility – A case study of Starbucks’ CSR communication through its corporate website

Bachelor Thesis in Marketing and Management Communication

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No. of characters:
Thesis: 54,329
Abstract: 3,492
Abstract

Organizations today are experiencing increased pressure from their surrounding environments to act as good social citizens while still being profitable. Acting social and ethical responsible has become an expectation rather than a differentiation strategy to obtain organizational legitimacy. Therefore, this thesis examines how the very successful global coffee company, Starbucks, communicates its CSR initiatives through its corporate website. The aim is to investigate what is communicated, what different online communication channels are utilized, as well as how the communication is framed to target different stakeholder groups.

In the first part of the report, after stressing the relevance of engaging in CSR activities and the importance of effective CSR communication, Schwartz & Carroll’s (2003) Three Domain Approach for CSR motives is briefly introduced. This gives an overview of why companies engage in CSR initiatives and what outcomes are expected.

Then, the thesis proceeds to the overall theoretical framework, comprised of a comprehensive communication framework model for effective CSR communication. This includes message content, message channels, as well as contingency factors, which entails company- and stakeholder-specific factors. Incorporated in this framework are aspects of Hallahan’s (1999) theory of framing, as well as Preble’s (2005) stakeholder approach. By integrating these theories into the framework, an ideal analytical tool for analyzing the content of Starbucks’ corporate website, in a way which addresses the problem statement, is generated. And by employing principles from the scientific approach methodological hermeneutics, the content analysis can focus on the sender (Starbucks) and the object of analysis/text (the corporate website) in order to interpret the message.

The second part of the thesis leads off by briefly presenting the company, Starbucks, in terms of scope, strategy, CSR approach and external environment, i.e. stakeholders. Following this, a four-part content analysis of Starbucks’ website is conducted based on the communication framework. It is divided into four parts, which represent the front page, two subpages and Starbucks’ CSR report.
It is derived from the analysis that Starbucks is engaged in a lot of different CSR initiatives, ranging from somewhat philanthropic community-service projects, to ethical sourcing programs, environmental concerns, embracement and encouragement of diversity etc. Starbucks has a long list of corporate relationships with various NGOs and CSR organizations, which require the company to follow different sets of ethical, social and environmental standards throughout its value-chain. Starbucks is also conscious about framing its CSR communication to fit different stakeholders’ needs and expectations, as well as it embraces the opportunities of online communication, e.g. two-way communication, multimedia features etc.

It is also concluded, however, that there might be a lack of salient self-beneficial motives to its various CSR initiatives. This could increase stakeholders’ skepticism, as they may perceive Starbucks’ engagement to be somewhat unrealistic and too philanthropic. By excluding self-beneficial motives, stakeholders may suspect ulterior motives, hence indicate a lack of transparent communication. On the contrary, Starbucks is emphasizing a long-term commitment to the CSR initiatives, as well as stressing CSR fit and importance of the social issues it is engaged in, which can counterwork stakeholders’ skepticism.

As an overall conclusion, Starbucks is a major player within CSR, and through its corporate website it is evident that the company is aware of the various tools online communication offers to increase the reach of the communication, as well as to expand the target audience. In addition, Starbucks frames it CSR communication to emphasize responsibility and relationships, as well as commitment, fit and relevance, which goes in accordance with the communication framework for effective CSR communication.

**Total no. of characters:**

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# Table of Contents

1. Introduction ................................................................................................................. 5
   1.1. Problem statement ................................................................................................. 6
   1.2. Scientific method ................................................................................................... 7
   1.3. Delimitation ............................................................................................................ 7
2. Theoretical framework .................................................................................................. 8
   2.1. CSR motives ......................................................................................................... 9
   2.2. Conceptual Framework for CSR communication .................................................. 11
      2.2.1. CSR Communication ...................................................................................... 11
      2.2.2. Contingency factors ....................................................................................... 14
3. Method ......................................................................................................................... 18
4. Brief introduction to Starbucks .................................................................................... 19
   4.1. Starbucks’ stakeholders ......................................................................................... 19
5. Content analysis of Starbucks’ corporate website ......................................................... 20
   5.1. Content analysis of Starbucks’ front page .............................................................. 20
   5.2. Content analysis of Starbucks’ community subpage .............................................. 21
   5.3. Content analysis of Starbucks’ responsibility subpage ......................................... 22
   5.4. Content analysis of Starbucks’ CSR report .......................................................... 23
6. Discussion .................................................................................................................... 27
7. Conclusion ................................................................................................................... 29
8. Perspective and future research .................................................................................... 30

References ....................................................................................................................... 31

Appendix 1 - Starbucks’ Community ............................................................................. 33
Appendix 2 – Starbucks Company Recognition ............................................................... 34
Appendix 3 – Starbucks’ Stakeholders ........................................................................... 35
Appendix 4 - Front page .................................................................................................. 37
Appendix 5 - Community subpage .................................................................................. 38
Appendix 6 - Responsibility options ............................................................................... 39
Appendix 7 - Responsibility subpage .............................................................................. 40
Appendix 8 - Responsibility report subpage .................................................................... 41
Appendix 9 - Environmental Stewardship subpage ........................................................ 42
1. Introduction

Over the past several decades, the corporate world has experienced a pronounced increase in focus on organizations’ ethical behaviors and responsibilities towards their environments. This is evident in the shift in focus from shareholder value (i.e. maximizing profit) to stakeholder value, where companies are striving at balancing people, planet and profit. The new tendency is a consequence of the fact that progressively more power rely with stakeholders, who demand transparency in organizational communication and expect companies to acknowledge their impact on their surroundings. These societal expectations pressure companies to act responsible with regards to their external as well as internal environments (Du, Bhattacharya & Sen., 2010; Issaksson & Jørgensen, 2010; Waller & Conaway, 2011)

The terminology for this organizational shift is Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), which Du et al. (2010) broadly define as “a commitment to improve [societal] well-being through discretionary business practices and contributions of corporate resources (p. 8). Since its introduction in the 1950s, CSR has increasingly gained importance and influence within the corporate world and has evolved from revolving mainly around philanthropy of powerful individuals to incorporating corporate social, ethical and environmental responsibility (Waddock, 2008).

Despite the rather complex categorization of the phenomena, CSR is generally perceived of as both ethical and moral correct, as well as it is an approach believed to be benefitting all stakeholders (Du et al., 2010; Waddock, 2008). Waddock (2008) found that today, a major part of corporations’ assets are found in intangible assets such as goodwill, reputation, and human capita, which supports the claim that CSR approaches are important for corporate success and legitimization. Again, the power of various stakeholders is emphasized since goodwill and reputation is constituted by how stakeholders perceive an organization, i.e. how the corporate communicative tools are interpreted. This furthermore illustrates that CSR is an important area within public relations (PR), when relating to the definition of PR as “… the process of establishing and maintaining mutually beneficial relations between an organization and [the]publics on whom it depends“ (Cutliip, Center & Broom, 1995, qtd. in Hallahan, 1999, p. 207).

It should be acknowledged, though, that PR theorists and practitioners have questioned and criticized this conception of CSR as an ethically correct approach. The arguments claim that CSR is not necessarily the optimal ethical approach as it is counteracting the goal of maximizing shareholders revenue, which is deeply rooted in the corporate paradigm (Mitra, 2011). This leaves corporations in a dilemma where they on one hand are facing a pressure from stakeholders, who demand transparent and responsible actions, and on the other hand pressure from shareholders, who expect performance and maximized profit. The
debate continues on how businesses can balance these conflicting goals and how they should communicate to the different stakeholders in a legit manner.

Stakeholder groups, such as conscious consumers, activists and investors, put major pressure on organizations to live up to the high expectations concerning CSR (Du et al., 2010). With the world being increasingly globalized, businesses, environments, people and profit are highly interlinked and seen in tight context. Major organizations, with great power and influence, are targets for different behavioral accusations and their actions are being scrutinized. This puts even higher pressure on such businesses to attempt to live up to the societal expectations and sustain their organizational legitimacy (Suchman, 1995; Waddock, 2008). Simply engaging in CSR activities is not enough though, as stakeholders’ awareness hereof is essential, but not given. Therefore, the PR practitioners must focus on framing their messages in appropriate ways and tailor them to specific stakeholder groups, as well as consider what channels to utilize in order to accomplish this (Du et al., 2010, Hallahan, 1999).

1.1. Problem statement

On the basis of the above mentioned, this thesis seeks to address the following problem statement:

How does Starbucks communicate its CSR initiatives through its corporate website?

Starbucks is interesting, in this relation, because it is a successful global company with a position as a market leader. As a consequence, Starbucks has received a lot of attention from various stakeholder groups. Starbucks has acted on this increased pressure and is now engaged in several CSR initiatives, expressed through various communication tools on its corporate website. The aim is to analyze how Starbucks has utilized various communication tools to articulate its efforts to specific stakeholder groups, in a legit, transparent and persuasive manner.
1.2. Scientific method

Seeing that the problem statement takes its point of departure in Starbucks as the sender of the CSR communication, and that the analysis centers on how the sender communicates its CSR initiatives through its corporate website, the relationship in focus is that between the sender (Starbucks) and the text (the corporate website). This means that receivers’ interpretation is not the focal point in the analysis, as it is a content rather than a reception analysis.

Based on this, the scientific approach for this thesis is Schleiermacher’s methodological hermeneutics (Palmer, 1969). By applying the principles of methodological hermeneutics, the aim is reconstruction of the author’s mental schemas, that is, to understand the intentions of the sender of the message. Henceforth, ontologically this approach assumes that there is only one true meaning of the text, which is ‘injected’ by the sender. On the epistemological level, this meaning can be reached through interpretation of sender’s intended meaning, which is obtained through ‘The Hermeneutic Circle’ (ibid, p. 86). This methodology defines the process of understanding parts and relating them to the whole unit through interpretation of the grammatical dimension and the psychological dimension in order to understand the intentions of the sender (ibid, 1969).

1.3. Delimitation

The scope of the theoretical field of CSR is broad and more or less indefinable, which consequently requires certain limitations set for this thesis, in order to provide a focused analysis. More or less all concepts within the public relations discourse lack one overall definition, which makes the field even broader. Consequently, the definitions of the various concepts in this report are not necessarily the most correct ones seen in all eyes, but they have been applied due to an evaluation of a contextual fit judged by me as author.

In addition, the conclusions reached in this report must be critically viewed, as neither the process, the findings nor conclusions have been validated by peer reviews. The analysis is solely based on a case study of Starbucks’ corporate website. This leads to another limitation with regards to the material which has been analyzed. A company can communicate its CSR initiatives through various communication channels. Hence, in order to get a comprehensive view of its communication, all channels must be included in the analysis. But due to page limitations, the focus of this report is only on Starbucks’ corporate website (USA version), which excludes advertisement, in store communication etc., as well as evaluation of packaging and presentation of products is left out.
2. Theoretical framework

The organizational environment today is constituted of multifaceted companies and organizations, which are all interdependent on each other and the environments in which they operate. This tightly bounded societal structure is conceptualized as a systems approach to organizational structure, which emphasizes that an organization must cope with constant pressure from its ever-changing environment. Organizations influence each other in terms of expectations about performance and increasingly also about ethical correct behavior and responsible actions (Suchman, 1995). One way companies can respond to these societal expectations is through their CSR activities and communication hereof, in order to obtain organizational legitimacy (ibid, 1995). Suchman (1995) defines legitimacy as a “... generalized perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are desirable, proper, or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs, and definitions” (p. 574). This illustrates the effects a CSR strategy can have on how an organization is perceived among its stakeholders, and that legitimacy not only affects stakeholders’ reactions toward an organization, but also their interpretations and opinions of it (ibid, 1995).

A CSR strategy includes both the CSR activities and equally important the CSR communication to various stakeholders, in order to increase their awareness. This is essential as stakeholders are the primary reason why companies engage in CSR to facilitate organizational legitimacy. Furthermore, a company’s communication strategy is critical in terms of framing the CSR messages in a way that facilitates stakeholders’ interpretations in alignment with the intended message. Thus, there is a major pressure on the PR practitioners’ communication skills, as there is a lot to consider and even more at stake. Isaksson and Jørgensen (2010) stress that business ventures must understand what types of messages their website audiences give highest priority and credibility. This is a very difficult task in relation to CSR communication, primarily due to the nature of CSR as a very broad and company-sensitive phenomenon. Du et al. (2010) explain it by comparing corporate ability-related information about products, services, innovation etc. with CSR information and state that “CSR information reveals aspects of [a company’s]corporate identity that are not only fundamental and enduring, but also often more distinctive by virtue of their disparate and idiosyncratic bases” (p. 10). This not only stresses how CSR communication is a complex matter, but also represents the risk of stakeholder-skepticism if the communication is inefficient.

All the above mentioned aspects and complications of CSR communication will be addressed in the following sections by applying theories on the given agendas. In addition, an interpretation of how these theories can be combined to comprise a comprehensive analytical tool for analyzing Starbucks’ CSR communication will be presented.
2.1. CSR motives

Before entering the discourse of effective CSR communication, it is relevant to briefly state the motives behind companies’ engagement with CSR. To do this, the ‘Three Domain Approach’ (Schwartz and Carroll, 2003) will be applied. This approach is a refined version of Carroll’s (1991) popular ‘Pyramid of Corporate Social Responsibility’, which has been modified based on critical constraints identified by various theorists.¹

The Three Domain model (figure 1) comprises the three main responsibility areas: economic, legal and ethical. Philanthropy, which is the forth area in the original model, is no longer classified as an individual area, as it is subsumed under the ethical and/or economic domain (Schwartz & Carroll, 2003).


The economic domain (motive: to be profitable) includes those activities which are intended to have either a direct or an indirect positive economic impact on the company. This can be seen in terms of maximizing shareholder value or maximizing profit. Activities with a direct impact need not be much explained as it refers to any action, which will resolve in an immediate increase in either profit or

¹ Refer to Carroll (1991) citation in the reference list for an elaboration on the original version
shareholder value. The indirect economic impact, however, is less definable. It can be activities, which improve a company’s image and then eventually lead to increased sales, or activities improving the conditions for suppliers or other members of the value-chain, which in turn increases the quality of the products/services offered by the company. There are many examples of CSR activities, which can have an indirect economic effect.

In this relation, it is reasonable to argue that the motives behind CSR activities are fundamentally economic in nature. This argument has its origin in Friedman’s (1970) theory, which centers on the claim that the social responsibility of business is to increase its profits. However, this approach is, as aforementioned, no longer enough. Several contemporary theorists agree that companies, who act based on economic interests alone, often neglect to realize the impact their operations have on stakeholders, societies, and nature and thereby damage their legitimacy (Waddock, 2008; Marrewijk, 2003; Schwartz & Carroll, 2003). Therefore, the two other domains are important to include as well.

The legal domain (motive: to obey the law) refers to a company’s responsiveness to and compliance with legal expectations and laws about different standards. It includes both standards about waste, resources, working conditions, products, services, packaging, suppliers etc. Hence, the infrastructure of the environment in which an organization exists. These standards can be validated by various NGO’s, governments and other regulators, with whom a company cooperates.

The ethical domain (motive: to sustain legitimization) submits an organization’s ethical (and social) responsibility to its environment. This responsibility is the aggregated societal expectations from all stakeholders (external, internal, active, and passive), i.e. the ethical domain constitutes the complexity of CSR. This also explains why the economic domain is not sufficient if an organization wants to sustain its legitimacy. The motive of maximizing profit or shareholder value may always be present; however, it is vital that an organization incorporates and makes salient the ethical and legal domain in its CSR strategy as well, in order to comply with the societal expectations.

Figure 1 illustrates that the three domains are often overlapping, which is due to the interrelated nature of the concepts. An ideal CSR activity would consequently be present in the very middle where all three motives overlap.

Seeing as the motives behind CSR endorsement have been presented, the focus will return to the effective CSR communication framework.
2.2. **Conceptual Framework for CSR communication**

Du et al. (2010) created a conceptual framework of CSR communication, which explains the factors that are likely to influence the effectiveness of a company’s CSR messages. Three overall factors constitute the framework, namely CSR communication, contingency factors and communication outcomes (Du et al., 2010). The different components relevant for this paper will be explained in the following, as well as an interpretation of how aspects of Hallahan’s (1999) theory of framing can be integrated, in order to create a cohesive framework for analysis. Framing is a valuable tool for communication practitioners, as it can help shape the perspective through which the stakeholders interpret the CSR messages (Hallahan, 1999). This is possible because framing involves practices of exclusion and inclusion of specific social actors, actions, circumstances etc. in a context, in order to guide the audience towards the intended meaning of the communication. In addition, framing can be used to emphasize essential information for specific stakeholder groups, which then tailors the communication accordingly (ibid, 1999).

2.2.1. **CSR Communication**

The first part of the framework focuses on the CSR communication itself, i.e. message content and the channel(s) used to distribute the message (Du et al., 2010).

2.2.1.1. **Message content**

The content of CSR messages should clarify the level of the company’s involvement in the CSR activity(ies) by emphasizing one or more of the following factors; commitment, impact, motives and/or fit. To support these content-specific factors, companies can take advantage of rhetorically framing of attributes and responsibility.

Companies’ commitment to the CSR activities they engage in varies greatly in duration, consistency and input. This, in turn, has an influence on stakeholders’ perception of a company’s motives and the sincerity of its efforts. Duration, for instance, can help counterwork the critique of CSR as being a ‘the flavor of the month’ fix companies only engage in to increase profit (Du et al., 2010). Input can also differ significantly and determine how stakeholders perceive the sincerity of the efforts, however, not necessarily based on the amount of input itself, but rather in connection with durability. If, for instance, a company donates a relatively large one-time monetary amount to a social cause and leaves it at that, stakeholders’ suspicion is likely to intensify, seeing as input is high, but durability is low. However, if a company provides smaller amount of corporate and/or monetary resources in a long-term perspective and emphasize the impact hereof, the credibility of the motives behind increases. Consequently, stakeholders are likely to attribute positive associations to the company motives and the CSR initiatives (ibid, 2010). This goes in alignment
with the ‘Three Domain Approach’ described in section 2.1, which suggested that a combination of motives is the optimal approach for effective CSR communication.

Another approach is to emphasize the impact of the involvement, i.e. the output of the efforts. The output/benefits of CSR activities can be either a direct or an indirect consequence of the action. In addition, it can involve different stakeholder groups such as consumers, investors, environments, societies etc. However, as Forehand and Grier (2003) argue, stakeholder skepticism is reduced if companies indicate the self-beneficial consequences regardless, as stakeholders expect such always to be present. This shows that the company strives at balancing both people, planet and profit, which increases the credibility of the communication. Furthermore, CSR communication practitioners should mainly stick to objective facts and avoid the impression of ‘bragging’. If the messages seem unrealistic in comparison with the goal of maximizing profit, the legitimacy will arguably decrease and skepticism for ulterior motives will arise (Du et al. (2010).

Finally, Du et al. (2010) stress that a CSR fit, i.e. congruence between the social issue at hand and the company’s core business, is important to communicate. This is important because stakeholders generally expect companies to support and engage with societal issues that have a logical fit with their core corporate activities. This is supported by Porter & Kramer (2002), who add that the more a social issue relates to a company’s core business, the more it also leads to economic benefits. The authors further state that social and economic goals are interconnected and not inherently conflicting – as critiques of CSR would argue. Initiatives such as preserving the environment, securing proper working conditions and improving social and economic conditions in developing countries will create new markets for both sales and production, increase productivity and utilization of resources, as well as motivate employees to perform (Porter & Kramer, 2002).

If a company engages in CSR activities with no apparent fit, Du et al. (2010) argue the CSR messages should explain and emphasize the strategic link between the company’s business area and the social cause, and thereby reduce the risk of stakeholder skepticism. This is what Hallahan (1999) refers to as ‘contextual cues’, which can guide stakeholders to draw inferences that go in accordance with the intended message. If there, on the other hand, is a clear fit the company should make both firm-serving and public-serving motives salient. This will comply with stakeholders’ mental schemas, as they are expecting a balance between economic and ethical/philanthropic motives and therefore will attribute these in advance (Forehand & Grier, 2003). According to Hallahan (1999), expectations derived from people’s mental schemas can add additional meaning to a context – a mechanism referred to as ‘priming’. This provides a tool for communication practitioners to provide contextual cues to trigger these schematic expectations and thereby guide the stakeholders’ frame of reference (ibid, 1999).
Henceforth, the two framing mechanisms, contextual cues and priming, are essential for effective communication as these facilitate the goal of framing a company’s attributes, responsibilities and actions in the CSR communication.

2.2.1.2. Channel

Regarding the channel(s), through which a company chooses to communicate its CSR information, several considerations must be taken into account. Overall, companies can choose to communicate their CSR activities by utilizing either internal or external communication channels, or a combination of the two.

Internal channels include official documents such as annual reports, CSR reports, news releases and other formal documents. These can be accessible in printed formats or available at a company’s corporate website and the content is completely controlled by the company (Du et al., 2010). In addition, a company can make use of external channels such as traditional advertising in magazines, TV and radio. As advertisement is paid promotion, the company controls the content of the messages. Conversely, PR practitioners can utilize a number of channels through which the company does not entirely control the content of the messages. Such channels are typically word-of-mouth (WOM) of both internal stakeholders (employees and members of the value-chain) and external stakeholder (customers, interests groups, investors etc.). It can also be media coverage through independent media and various social media platforms online. The risk of using such channels is that the company cannot control how the communication is framed or if it supports the company’s reputation. On the other hand, the company does not pay these channels to communicate the messages, hence stakeholders attribute increased perceived credibility to the messages they receive (Du et al., 2010). Consequently, companies are faced with this bias of controllability and credibility, which they must address and attempt to balance.

As this report seeks to analyze Starbucks’ CSR communication through its corporate website, the next section will address the use of the Internet as a communication channel.

The World Wide Web has become a trendy channel for corporate communication, due to its wide reach and flexibility in terms of content, target audience, accessibility, as well as its low-cost nature. It is a highly effective communication channel to improve and strengthen a company’s image, reputation and relationships with its stakeholders and a corporate website should be seen as iconic representation of the company (Esrock & Leichty, 2000). An organization can through its corporate website tailor its communication to address multiple stakeholders simultaneously, as it can incorporate the diverse communication options including two-way communication with stakeholders (www.europa.eu; Esrock & Leichty, 2000).

Corporate websites have a broad array of audiences, including customers, employees, investors, media
etc., whom must be addressed differently. The stakeholder approach will be further elaborated in section 2.2.2, but the different communicative devices available through a website will be presented here. CSR reports for instance, are generally targeted at NGOs, investors, activists and such, as these stakeholders are actively seeking out information and critically evaluating the content of the communication (www.europa.eu). Other ways of communicating on a website is through two-way communication in form of blogs, feedback and ongoing dialogue with various visitors. Social media platforms such as facebook and twitter are perfect tools for this, as well as sharing through email, RSS and feed. These communication devices are less formal, hence proper tools for addressing employees and customers. Finally, visuals and multimedia options can be supporting CSR communication, as these can enhance user experience by enriched content and increased customization.

Evidently, the importance of framing within the corporate communication discourse is significant. PR practitioners can take advantage of the somewhat manipulative nature of framing and ensure that the different audiences’ attention is drawn to essential aspects of the messages and away from others. In this relation, however, it is important to keep in mind that one cannot not communicate, hence whatever is excluded from a CSR message might still ‘tell a story’ and trigger the mental schemas of the audience. It is particularly difficult to decide what to include and exclude, because something might be important for a specific stakeholder group, while being completely irrelevant for another (Esrock & Leichty, 2000). This is why it is crucial to distinguish between different stakeholder groups’ needs and expectations when tailoring the communication, respectively.

2.2.2. Contingency factors

In addition to message content and channel, some company- and stakeholder-specific factors are likely to influence the effectiveness of the CSR communication (Du et al., 2010).

Company-specific factors comprise corporate reputation and CSR positioning. These are very important to consider in relation to communication channel and the bias between credibility and controllability. Company-controlled channels are more likely to activate the stakeholders’ mental schemas about the company and attribute these to the interpretation of the CSR message (Du et al., 2010). Hence, official documents, e.g. reports on a corporate website, are ideal channels for CSR communication, in order to make the company-specific factors salient. The explanation hereof is that the mental schemas are constituted of pre-existing attributes based on e.g. memories, experiences, beliefs etc., which stakeholders draw upon in order to interpret CSR information. Hence, if a company has a strong reputation, stakeholders will use this existing information when interpreting the CSR communication and therefore attribute positive
connotations to the company when judging its activities (Du et al., 2010; Forehand & Grier, 2003). Conversely, if a company has a bad reputation it will influence stakeholders’ interpretation of the CSR communication negatively, i.e. the risk of skepticism increases. In addition to the reputation, the industry in which a company operates can also influence the effectiveness of CSR communication. This applies especially for companies operating in ‘sin-industries’, that is, industries which by nature are bad for the environment or for consumers’ wellbeing. These include industries such as fast-food, tobacco, oil etc. (Du et al., 2010; Morsing & Schultz, 2006).

Finally, a company’s position in the market has an influence on the communication, or more correctly what stakeholders expect of the CSR communication. Market leaders and major international and global organizations are exposed to significantly more observation and pressure from their organizational environments, because such businesses have a major impact on their surroundings. Their actions are therefore scrutinized, henceforth transparency, as well as concern and commitment is essential (Du et al., 2010; Marrewijk, 2003).

As touched upon previously, certain stakeholder-specific factors will also influence the effectiveness of the CSR communication, seeing as the key concept in the communication process – sender, message, context, receiver – is interpretation. All the above factors affect the effectiveness of CSR communication because they affect the way stakeholders interpret the messages and motives behind. Henceforth, stakeholder type and their motivation to process the CSR information will naturally influence their mental schemas and thereby their reading of the messages. These factors are more or less external to the company, which increases the complexity of CSR communication even further. Preble (2005) provided the following definition of a stakeholder “... any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the organization’s objectives” (p. 409), which highlights the need for dividing stakeholders into smaller groups in order to optimize the CSR communication. Stakeholders include customers (local, national and/or global), employees, members of the value-chain, non-governmental organizations (NGO’s), investors, media, local communities, activists and so forth. They differ in terms of their expectations of the company and its services, their information needs, their engagement in the company’s activities etc. As a consequence, they also respond differently to various communication channels, as well as the content and framing of the messages. In addition, the threshold of organizational legitimacy is equally dependent on

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2 Recognizing that this may be interpreted as being controversial in relation to the scientific approach for this thesis, it is included due to the fact that it is essential to know how different stakeholders approach CSR communication in order to frame it accordingly. This does not change the focus from the relationship between the text and the sender, but merely stresses the importance of keeping the receiver in mind, when creating the CSR messages.

3 Same as the above footnote
whether the company is dealing with an active or passive stakeholder group (Suchman, 1995). Therefore, it is essential that the CSR communication is tailored to stakeholders’ different interests, information needs, preferred channels and legitimacy demands (Dawkins, 2004; Suchman, 1995). Preble (2005) divided stakeholders into three groups; primary stakeholders (shareholders, investors, employees, customers and suppliers), secondary stakeholders (media and interest groups) and public stakeholders (governments and communities), which is a broadly accepted definition of stakeholder groups. The author suggested three additional stakeholder attributes, namely legitimacy, power and urgency, to contribute to stakeholder identification and salience. In theory, primary stakeholders have high salience, as they possess all three attributes due to their direct influence on the company. Secondary stakeholders possess almost equally high salience due to their indirect impact on a company, as they create the societal expectations and pressure a company is facing (Preble, 2005; Marrewijk, 2003). Dawkins (2004) refers to these as opinion-leaders, as they are the main influence on the general perception of a company and thereby can affect customers and other stakeholders’ behaviors and attitudes toward a company. Public stakeholders have salience in terms of their power, as they create the infrastructure for the operational environment. However, stakeholder salience is a company-sensitive concept, and should always be seen in relation to a given context.

The online research company MORI, conducted a research on stakeholders’ opinions of companies’ social reports, with the aim of providing an understanding of what different stakeholders look for in CSR reports (qtd. in Dawkins, 2004). These findings show that engaged stakeholders like NGO’s and CSR experts are predominantly looking for evidence of the impact of companies’ CSR activities and want to see detailed indicators, as well as benchmarks, targets, trends and case studies (economic and ethical motives). Furthermore, they appreciate stakeholder criticism and opinions of external audiences in order to create credibility and trust, as well as they value an integrated approach to CSR (ethical motives). Finally, they look for evidence that the company’s CSR activities are in alignment with various standards (legal motives) (ibid, 2004). Investors seek to find the relevance of the CSR activities for the company, i.e. the CSR fit and the impact it has on the bottom line, i.e. maximizing profit (economic motives). Activists are mainly concerned with the ethical motives and the transparency of the CSR communication. These are also proactively seeking out information and scrutinizing the company and its action. On the contrary, primary stakeholders are not actively searching for information about CSR, however, they still demand companies to act responsible and to communicate their initiatives (ibid, 2004). This makes it difficult for companies to target

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4 Salience refers to the degree to which managers give priority to competing stakeholder claims (Preble, 2005)
5 Ipsos MORI is a leading market research company in the UK and Ireland, a direct link to website is placed in reference list, corporate website: http://www.ipsos-mori.com/. Even though Starbucks is originally American, these findings have been judged relevant, as the cultural differences between the UK and the USA are rather low.
this very important stakeholder group, and alternative communication devices are necessary. The issue at hand is how to create awareness about the CSR initiatives amongst these stakeholders and pull their attention to the website and through the CSR communication. It has become an increasingly complex task, seeing as it takes more and more to stand out and draw the attention of the various stakeholder groups, due to the increasing number and scope of CSR communication tools (ibid, 2004). CSR reporting itself is no longer unique – the once strategic tool has gone mainstream and creative means must be applied if a company wants to be prominent (Du et al., 2010).
3. Method

In order to answer the research question, a content analysis of Starbucks’ website has been conducted. The focus of the analysis is multifaceted, based on the above-described communication framework. The analysis partly focuses on what Starbucks is communicating in terms of message content and how the company utilizes different communication devices to articulate its CSR activities to its various stakeholders. In addition, the focus is on how the communication is framed, i.e. what is emphasized and made salient, in order to address specific stakeholders’ needs. Therefore, before approaching the analysis, Starbucks’ stakeholders have been identified by applying Preble’s (2004) definition of stakeholder salience.

The content analysis itself is constituted of four interrelated parts, namely an analysis of the front page, two subpages and Starbucks’ CSR report. The analysis has been conducted by applying principles of methodological hermeneutics, as this scientific approach allows the analysis to center on the relationship between the sender (Starbucks) and the text/object for analysis (the website) and an interpretation of the meaning constructed in this consortium. This allows for the communication framework to be applied in order to evaluate if Starbucks is communicating its CSR initiatives in an effective way, on the grammatical and psychological dimension. The grammatical level has been analyzed in terms of Hallahan’s (1999) theory of framing communication rhetorically; hence focus is on the ‘word’-level. The psychological level has been addressed by application of the communication framework.

Starbucks’ CSR report has been analyzed by applying the guidelines derived from the online market research company MORI on what different stakeholder groups look for when reading CSR reports. This has been applied because the main target audience for the CSR report differs significantly in terms of needs and expectations from that of the primary target audience of the two subpages.

Finally, to determine the accessibility of different selected features on the website and its subpages, the number of ‘clicks’ to get there is used as measurement, as this reveals how user-friendly the composition is.
4. Brief introduction to Starbucks

Starbucks is a major global coffee company with its origins in Seattle, USA, but which now has more than 17,000 stores in over 55 countries. Besides from selling premium coffee, Starbucks has expanded its product line to include various warm and cold beverages, pastries, salads, breakfast, merchandise/accessories, gift items, books etc. In addition, Starbucks’ products are available in supermarkets and other retail stores. Starbucks is an established brand and a market leader within coffee and other blend-drinks. Its mission is “to inspire and nurture the human spirit – one person, one cup and one neighborhood at a time” (www.starbucks.com). Starbucks has incorporated this statement into its overall strategy and is continuously striving at complying with it – partly through its engagement in various CSR activities. This is highly evident throughout its corporate website where the company’s CSR activities are not comprised into one separate report, but rather integrated into the entire website, hence the entire representation of the company. Starbucks first entered the corporate responsibility paradigm in 2000, when it developed a partnership with Conservation International with whom Starbucks created its ethical coffee-sourcing guidelines. Since then, Starbucks has expanded its CSR partnership with several different organizations, as well as it has founded its own Starbucks Foundation6. Starbucks has also received acknowledgement for its efforts via public recognition7. From this, it is evident that Starbucks is engaged in several CSR activities and is recognized as a major CSR conscious corporation at the macro level in the corporate world. The following sections will provide an in-depth analysis of how Starbucks communicates these different activities to its various stakeholders through its corporate website.

4.1. Starbucks’ stakeholders

In order to evaluate whether Starbucks is tailoring its communication to its various stakeholders, these have been identified and categorized to an extent that goes in alignment with the scope of this report.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Primary stakeholders</th>
<th>U.S customers and employees.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Shareholders/investors, suppliers (coffee farmers)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary stakeholders</td>
<td>U.S media, activists, NGOs, corporate relationships8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public stakeholders</td>
<td>The U.S Government and local communities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Appendix 3 provides a table suggesting how Starbucks’ stakeholders can be prioritized based on Preble’s (2005) theory on stakeholder salience.

6 For a complete list of Starbucks’s community of CSR practices, see appendix 1
7 For a complete list of Starbucks’ company recognition, see appendix 2
8 Listed in appendix 1
5. Content analysis of Starbucks’ corporate website

The first part of the analysis will focus on the first level of the website, which is the front page. The content on the front page and the way it is presented, will determine if the reader’s awareness is triggered and if he/she is drawn further into the website. The second part of the analysis will focus on the deeper levels of the website, which encompass two subpages. These analyses will be based on the communication framework, as well as the stakeholder analysis. The third and final part will analyze the content of Starbucks’ CSR report by following the guidelines suggested by MORI (Dawkins, 2004). In addition, the motives behind the CSR activities will be identified, by applying Schwartz & Carroll’s (2003) Three Domain Approach.

All information and quotes throughout section 5 come from Starbucks’ corporate website: www.starbucks.com. A link to each page and subpage is present in the references.

5.1. Content analysis of Starbucks’ front page

In total, 8 different features with either a direct or indirect connection to Starbucks’ CSR communication were identified. Five of these explicitly present the connection to CSR in the headline/text and will be addressed firstly. They are marked with a red arrow in appendix 4. The first feature directly linked to Starbucks’ CSR is found in the top horizontal menu bar, which includes ‘Coffee, Menu, Coffeehouse, Responsibility, Card, Shop’. The word ‘responsibility’ itself immediately reveals the content of the subpage(s) the hyperlink leads to. However, as this part of the analysis centers on the first level, these subpages will be addressed later. This structure, where a company’s CSR initiatives are congregated in a separate section, is a very common approach to CSR communication and is nowadays found on the majority of corporate websites. However, this approach is mainly targeted at secondary stakeholders who actively search for CSR information and will most likely not trigger the interest of primary stakeholders, who seek alternative ways of attaining information. To create a more cohesive communication strategy encompassing multiple stakeholders, Starbucks must integrate its CSR communication with the overall representation of the company. The other four features directly linked to Starbucks’ CSR communication are examples hereof. These include the rather large multimedia feature presenting Starbucks’ ‘Global Month of Service’ initiative, the two boxes to the right saying “It’s time to give back” and “Help us give away $4 million”, and the hyperlink below saying “We like together, let’s give together”. All these ‘titles’ are directed at the reader and encourage participation by the way they are framed. They all include an external reference to the reader through imperative sentences (it’s time, help us, join us), as well as personal pronouns (we, us) and promotes teamwork and cooperation (together, help, join). These headings have been framed to emphasize the important social actors (the reader and Starbucks), the social action
(cooperation and teamwork), as well as framing of responsibility has been used in order to persuade the reader to participate in ‘making a difference in your community. The four features function as punch lines and do not communicate in detail about Starbucks’ commitment, but merely catch the reader’ interests. The phrasing ‘your community’ also functions as a contextual cue to identifying the primary target audiences. This indirectly refers to the societal obligations any individual has to its community, hence the primary target audiences are customers and employees (present and prospect). Supporting this, the features are placed on the front page, and it is not required that audience proactively search for the information.

The four features with an indirect cue to Starbucks’ CSR communication are marked with a blue circle in appendix 4. They include subscribing and sharing features (facebook, email etc.), as well as a shortcut to a blogging-subpage. These play important roles in creating awareness of Starbucks and its CSR initiatives, as well as in expanding the reach of the communication. In addition, these features utilize the benefits of the Web 2.0 in terms of engaging stakeholders in dialogue by exploring the options for two-way communication and relationship building. The target audiences for such features are Starbucks’ loyal customers, employees, as well as bloggers, NGO’s and activists, who wants to share the information one other social platforms.

The aforementioned titles directly linked to Starbucks’ CSR communication are all hyperlinks, which takes the reader to the ‘next step’. These subpages will be analyzed in the next sections.

5.2. Content analysis of Starbucks’ community subpage

Using the link to the Global Month of Service site, the user is taken to Starbucks’ Community Service subpage (appendix 5). This page entails the majority of Starbucks’ ethical and philanthropic initiatives. The headline, “Let’s make our communities strive” yet again directly addresses the reader through an imperative sentence combined with the personal pronoun ‘our’. Once more the message is framed in a way that plays on the readers’ emotions by implicitly emphasizing the obligation to participate in improving one’s own community. The sub-heading, “By working together, we can create (...) Join us in reaching our goal of 1 million community service hours per year by 2015” briefly describes the project and also communicates Starbucks’ commitment to the project in terms of both duration (by 2015) and input (1 million service hours per year). By further reading and clicking through the page, it is evident that this project is one of many Starbucks has initiated in cooperation with volunteers (both customers and employees). It is explicitly stated that the target audiences are employees and customers who are willing to spend anything from an hour to a lifetime’s engagement in projects, which are supporting communities all over the world.
Other important features on the site are marked in appendix 5 and include an overview of previous and on-going projects, which customers and employees can join, lead and share. There is a link to stories about previous projects, which has been implemented by Starbucks and various volunteers, as well as a guide to how to sign-up and join the project.

The accessibility in terms of ‘clicks’ is also good. From entering the front page to starting the sign-up process only requires two ‘clicks’, hence the accessibility is quick and easy.

5.3. **Content analysis of Starbucks’ responsibility subpage**

The content of this subpage is massive and it contains links to more than 20 other subpages. Therefore, the content chosen for analysis will be presenting the remaining content, as a complete analysis would outreach the page limitations for this paper.

By clicking on the ‘responsibility’ link in the top menu-bar on the front page, an oversight of all Starbucks’ CSR initiatives shows up (appendix 6). This gives the reader a great overview and makes it easy to navigate and find what you are looking for. It should be mentioned that the main target audience for this site was identified as shareholders, regulators and conscious consumers, who proactively search for CSR information. However, primary stakeholders are also targeted, as the site not only leads to a report, but to a broad platform of different CSR initiatives, which may interest different stakeholders. The main CSR subpage (appendix 7), has outnumbered options for the user to choose between and it can easily get a little overwhelming; this is why the overview mentioned before is a very effective and user-friendly ‘middle-station’.

The main feature on the responsibility subpage is a new version of the multimedia feature about the Global Month of Service project, with an underlying hyperlink to the above analyzed subpage. Placing a link to another subpage here, illustrates that Starbucks’ website does not only operate on a vertical level, but the user has the opportunity to move across on a horizontal level, i.e. navigate from subpage to subpage without having to return to the front page. In addition, the use of alternative communication channels online is likely to expand the target audience to encompass multiple stakeholder groups. Below the video clip is another heading, which guides the reader to the remaining parts of the subpage, i.e. Starbucks’ CSR activity in general. It says: “We’ve always believed that businesses can – and should - have a positive impact on the communities they serve”. In this statement, responsibility framing has been applied to emphasize why Starbucks is engaged in all the CSR activities presented further down on the page, i.e. it functions as a contextual cue to decrease stakeholders’ skepticism. Indirectly, the sentence is to affect stakeholders to believe that there are no ulterior motives to the different CSR activities; the reason why Starbucks is an active CSR player is simply because it has an obligation to positively impact its environment. Additionally,
by stating that ‘we’ve always believed that businesses [in general],’ Starbucks forces the reader to compare the company with other businesses’ CSR activities. As the readers are highly affected by all the company-specific contextual cues on the website, their mental schemas will automatically draw upon these to positively evaluate Starbucks.

Scrolling down the page, all the different CSR areas Starbucks is engaged in are briefly presented and provided with hyperlinks. The word ‘committed’ is used several times in the brief introductions to each area, which is then elaborated when entering the individual subpages. An example hereof is the introduction to the environment area: “We are committed to our environmental footprint and inspiring others to do the same.” Following the link to the environment subpage (appendix 9), the reader is met by the following text: “... as a company that relies on an agricultural product, it makes good business sense. And as people living in the world, it is simply the right thing to do”. Through these statements, Starbucks is communicating its commitment, decreasing stakeholders’ skepticism by emphasizing the CSR fit and justifying it by stating that it is the right thing to do for everyone. This holds true for all subpages on Starbucks’ website; the messages are framed to include commitment, strategic fit and outcomes.

On the left side of all subpages, there are links to either the CSR report, the list of Starbucks’ strategic relationships (e.g. appendix 9), or links to other initiatives, which encourages the readers to participate and/or take action (e.g. appendix 7). In addition, found on all pages is the opportunity to subscribe, follow or like on the aforementioned social media.

5.4. Content analysis of Starbucks’ CSR report
The last item for analysis is the CSR report, which can be attained from several subpages. The quickest way to reach it requires no more than two clicks – three clicks and it is downloaded; in appendix 6, a red arrow points toward a link, which leads to another subpage (appendix 8), which contains direct link to the report\(^9\). The primary target audiences of the report are Starbucks’ shareholders, prospect investors, regulators, NGO’s, activists and other CSR experts. These stakeholder groups are proactively looking for specific information about what Starbucks is doing and why, as well as the effect and legitimacy hereof. Due to this diverse target audience, Starbucks should balance the salience of ethical, legal and economic motives to address all needs. In section 2.2.2., the conclusions reached from MORI’s research were presented as guidelines to understand what specific stakeholders look for in CSR reports. These have been applied to Starbucks’ CSR report and the findings summarized in table 1. In addition, the CSR motives, which are made salient in the report by use of rhetorical framing, have been identified and presented in table 1 as well.

\(^9\) A link to the full report, is placed in the reference list
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stakeholder type</th>
<th>Look for in CSR reports</th>
<th>Examples from Starbucks’ CSR report</th>
<th>CSR motive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NGOs, CSR experts</td>
<td>Integrated approach (duration, fit, input) Benchmarks External evaluation Official standards Case studies Trends and targets</td>
<td>“While we know we are not perfect, and that the problems we seek to help solve are complex, we are committed to integrating our value into our company strategy, business practices and operations” “we have taken a holistic approach” “Farms and mills are evaluated by third-party verification organization” “we have formed relationships with like-minded organizations to help us magnify the moments of connection that remain at the foundation of our business”</td>
<td>Ethical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investors / Shareholders</td>
<td>Relevance CSR fit Affect on bottom line</td>
<td>“I have believed in a strong link between our company’s performance, our values, and the impact we have on the communities where we do business” “we can continue to evolve our business model and deliver shareholder value by creating value within the various communities where we do business”</td>
<td>Economic and ethical</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| | | | Economic (indirectly through an integrated approach) |
| | | | Legal (third-party involvement) |
| | | | Ethical |

| | | | Economic |

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“we know our success as a company is linked to the success of the thousands of farmers who grow our coffee”
“as always, we seek to lead where we can”

| Activists | Transparency | “Starbucks is concerned about climate change and the long-term impact it will have on coffee supplies and on the health of the communities where we do business”
“we have continued to use our scale for good in ways that go beyond our stores” |
|-----------|--------------|---------------------------------|
| Regulators | Indicators of standards | “we are committed to prioritizing social responsibility standards for the merchandise, furniture and other items found in our stores, as well.”
“Our approach is grounded in Coffee and Farmer Equity (C.A.F.E) Practices, our comprehensive set of more than 200 social, economic and environmental indicators”
“in 2011 we assessed 129 factories and found 38 factories failed our zero-tolerance standards. As a result we discontinued 26 factories” |
Besides these quotes, Starbucks’ future goals, present progress, as well as previous performance and impact are indicated by numbers, visual illustrations and explanations on pages 7-16 in the report. These goals and progress-indicators are presented for coffee purchasing & farmer support, community involvement, recycling & reusable cups and energy & water. Here, both case studies, targets and trends are presented, as well as Starbucks’ commitment in terms of both input, duration, impact and fit is emphasized. This holds true throughout the report, which the following example supports: “Through more than $7 million in donations and the distribution of more than 430,000 ‘indivisible’ wristbands in our stores, it is estimated that the program has helped to create and sustain more than 2,300 jobs in the program’s first three months.”

The final page of the report is ‘About the 2011 Global Responsibility Report’ and explains the scope and boundaries of the report. Here Starbucks summarizes its choices of CSR initiatives, why it is relevant and why it is importance: “we’ve covered topics and issues that we believe are important to Starbucks and our shareholders” and “These are the areas where we can have the greatest impact and therefore are of the greatest importance to Starbucks, our customers and partners (employees), as well as non-governmental organizations and investors”.

6. Discussion

Based on the four-part analysis of Starbucks corporate website, it is evident that Starbucks is actively engaged in a series of CSR initiatives ranging from commitment to local communities, support for coffee farmers, concern for the environment and Starbucks’ impact on it, commitment to a number of official CSR standards, as well as embracing diversity. All these approaches are integrated into Starbucks’ business strategy and company culture.

Furthermore, it can be derived from the analysis that Starbucks is aware of its stakeholders’ different information needs and expectation, and it explicitly tailors its CSR communication to its various stakeholders. This is significantly evident on the responsibility subpage (appendix 7), where Starbucks’ different initiatives are divided into categories (Community, Ethical Sourcing, Environment, Diversity and Wellness). Customers, employees and the local communities are targeted through the Community section, as they can better relate to helping and engaging in their own communities, which the MORI research also concluded. The headings and subheadings tailored to these stakeholders throughout the website, also emphasize an obligation towards one’s own community, which evidently illustrates that Hallahan’s (1999) theory on framing of responsibility and attributes has been applied, in order to play on the readers’ emotions and consciousness. There is a major focus on ‘we’-communication, which is evident through the continuously use of phrases such as ‘together we can’, ‘join us’, ‘help us’ etc. This encourages teamwork and relationship building, which in turn can create a bond between the costumers/employees and Starbucks and thereby create loyalty. Starbucks’ suppliers (farmers) are directly targeted through the Ethical Sourcing and Diversity section, while the environment section is targeted at NGO’s and activist. Consequently, Starbucks is sustaining its organizational legitimacy by addressing all its stakeholders and complying with their expectations.

With regards to message content, the report introduces each CSR topic by highlighting Starbucks’ concern and commitment to improve the given issue. Then, the importance of taking action is stressed and finally indicators of what Starbucks is doing, have been doing and will do, as well as the impact of its actions are stated. This sequence of information frames Starbucks as a pioneer on several social and environmental issues and it highlights all the aspects of message content, which Du et al. (2010) suggested for increasing communication efficiency.

Through the CSR report, Starbucks also addresses its public and secondary stakeholders’ in terms of expectations and information needs. Indicators (e.g. numbers) of Starbucks input, commitment and the outcomes are provided, as well as Starbucks emphasizes the relevance of its engagement.
Based on Schwartz and Carroll’s (2003) Three Domain approach to CSR motives, it was evident that a company should stress a combination of existing motives, i.e. include both economic and ethical (and legal) motives. The ethical – and subsuming philanthropic – motives are highly salient in connection with all initiatives. The legal motives are emphasized through corporate relationships with various NGOs and ethical organizations, which require Starbucks’ to live up to specific standards throughout its value-chain.

Starbucks’ economic motives are presented mostly indirectly through an integrated and holistic approach, as well as in combination with its supplier’s success. However, one can argue that there is a lack of salient self-beneficial economic motives throughout the report and the website in general, which could cause stakeholders to be somewhat skeptical. It can be interpreted that the motives behind the CSR activities are presented as being too philanthropic, which can cause the stakeholders to suspect ulterior hidden motives. This potential issue could be addressed by providing information illustrating how the different initiatives benefit Starbucks by creating value (i.e. profit or shareholder value). On the contrary, it can be argued that Starbucks is addressing this aspect by emphasizing its long-term commitment to the various projects, as well as it stresses an integrated approach to CSR, which indirectly indicate that there are economic motives behind, seeing as the CSR initiatives are part of the overall strategy. But drawing upon the theoretical framework, it is evident that Starbucks should emphasize the economic motives more clearly, by providing additional contextual cues, which will support stakeholders’ interpretation of the hereof and diminish possible skepticism.
7. Conclusion

The first part of this thesis focused on explaining the relevance of CSR communication within the public relations discourse, by describing how organizations exist in environments, in which societal expectations are created to pressure companies to act both social and ethical responsible. Proceeding to the theoretical background section on effective CSR communication to a company’s various stakeholders, the scope of the problem statement was justified, as it focused on the importance of companies not only acting responsible, but also communicating their actions to their various stakeholders. It was evident that there are endless aspects to consider, running from communication content and channel, to distinguishing between target audiences’ preferences, expectations and needs, and then framing the messages accordingly.

The global coffee company, Starbucks, was chosen as case study due to its position as market leader within its field of business. In addition, the company is engaged in numerous social, ethical and environmental responsible activities, and is considered a major player within CSR. Starbucks has integrated its CSR initiatives as a part of its strategy, which is evident through its corporate website. As a global company, it has a wide range of stakeholders, who all have different information needs and expectations from the company.

Based on the four-part content analysis of Starbucks’ corporate website, it was determined that Starbucks is successfully differentiating its CSR communication and tailoring it to address these diverse stakeholder groups. Starbucks utilizes different online communication devices in order to expand its target audience and reach of its CSR communication. The content of the community subpage is specifically targeted at Starbucks’ customers and employees, while the CSR report, ethical sourcing and environmental stewardship sections are targeted at suppliers, NGOs, investors, regulators and activists.

It could be argued that there is a lack of salient self-beneficial motives and outcomes in the report and throughout the website, which can trigger stakeholder skepticism and suspicion of ulterior hidden motives. This could be an issue for Starbucks, as the company could be accused of non-transparent CSR communication. However, on the contrary, Starbucks’ long-term commitment to the different CSR project is continuously emphasized, as well as its integrated approach signals economic motives, seeing as its CSR approach is a part of the overall business strategy.
8. Perspective and future research

Regardless of the above analysis and following conclusion that Starbucks is communicating its CSR efforts effectively, an analysis based on the scientific approach philosophical hermeneutics, would reveal if this actually holds true for the receivers of the communication. By applying this version of hermeneutics, the relationship in focus would shift to that between the text and the receiver and the principles of fusion of horizon would allow for a reception analysis. This would require a thorough field research, but would most likely provide a better understanding of the effectiveness of the communication.

In addition, to conduct a comprehensive analysis of how Starbucks communicates its CSR activities, it would be interesting to include all the communication channels the company utilizes – that is, point-of-purchase, WOM, advertisement etc. and compare/contrast how the different channels are used, to what purposes and targeted at what stakeholders.

Another aspect, which would be highly relevant to include is the competition Starbucks is facing from other coffee companies. Competitors have not been included as part of Starbucks’ stakeholders in this thesis, which is a relatively important constraint, seen in light of a systems approach to the organizational environment. An analysis of Starbucks’ competitors and their CSR communication could provide Starbucks with an idea of how others are approaching it and prepare for prospect opportunities and/or threats.

As conclusion, it is important to stress that seeing as the environments, in which organizations like Starbucks exists, are ever-changing, a company’s communication efforts should be analyzed, reviewed and evaluated on a continuously basis and compared to the changing and evolving expectations and needs of stakeholders, in order to get a thorough and contemporary idea of its effectiveness.
References


**Non-scientific online articles**


**Websites:**


Appendix 1 - Starbucks' Community

The Starbucks Foundation:

- Create Jobs for USA
- Community Service
- Engaging Young People
- (Starbucks) RED
- Ethos® Water Fund

Source: www.starbucks.com/responsibility/community/starbucks-foundation

Relationships: (Starbucks’ area of collaboration with the following organization is either of community, ethical sourcing, environmental stewardship or community involvement)

- Abyssinian Development Corporation
- American Red Cross
- Business for Social Responsibility (BSR)
- Calvert Foundation
- Ceres
- Conservation International
- DonersChoose.org
- Fair Trade
- Global Green USA
- HandsOn Network
- Los Angeles Urban League
- Massachusetts Institute of Technology/Society of Organizational Learning (SoL)
- Mercy Corps
- Product(RED)TM
- Root Capita
- Save the Children
- Sustainable Food Lab
- UK Youth
- United States Green Building Council (USGBC)

Source: http://www.starbucks.com/responsibility/learn-more/relationships
Appendix 2 – Starbucks Company Recognition

“No. 1 Best Coffee,” Fast Food and Quick Refreshment categories
_Zagat’s Survey of National Chain Restaurants – 2009-2010_

“No. 1 Most Popular Quick Refreshment Chain”
_Zagat’s Survey of National Chain Restaurants – 2009-2010_

One of the “World’s Most Ethical Companies”
_Ethisphere – 2007-2010_

“Most Ethical Company, European Coffee Industry”
_Allegra Strategies – 2009-2010_

“Best Coffee House, Germany”
_Deutschland Institute for Service Quality – 2010_

One of the “100 Best Corporate Citizens”
_Corporate Responsibility Officer/Business Ethics – 2000-2010_

One of the “Global 100 Most Sustainable Corporations in the World”
_Corporate Knights – 2010_

One of “The 100 Best Companies to Work For”

One of the “Most Admired Companies in America”
_FORTUNE – 2003–2010_

One of the “Best Places to Work for LGBT Equality”
_The Human Rights Campaign – 2009-2010_

Appendix 3 – Starbucks’ Stakeholders

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Stakeholder type</th>
<th>Stake/interest (social, economic, legal/political)</th>
<th>Power / Influence</th>
<th>Legitimacy (legal obligation, moral right, at-risk status)</th>
<th>Urgency/ immediate attention</th>
<th>Salience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jennifer Cheslek (employee – engaged in volunteer projects)</td>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>Economic (her job) Social (part of a local community)</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leona Cruzado (customer – engaged in volunteer projects)</td>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>Economic (purchase power) Social (part of a local community)</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activist group</td>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>Social (part of the local community) Political (ethical conscious)</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High/ medium high</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The New York Times (Media)</td>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>Political (speaks for the government) Social (speaks for the communities) Economic (speaks for Starbucks)</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shareholders/investors</td>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>Economic state (profit &amp; shareholder value)</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Costa Rica coffee farmers (supplier)</td>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>Economic (suppliers) Social (ethical sourcing)</td>
<td>Medium/high</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US government</td>
<td>Public</td>
<td>Legal (regulators)</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local communities</td>
<td>Public</td>
<td>Social (targets of CSR output) Economic (could be dependent on CSR activities)</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Medium/high</td>
<td>Medium/high</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservation International (corporate partner for ethical sourcing)</td>
<td>Secondary Legal (sets standards) Economic (dependent of cooperation) Social (part of the community)</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Medium / high</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above stakeholder categorization, in terms of type, stake/interest and salience, reveals that in general, all Starbucks’ stakeholder groups have high or medium high salience with regards to its CSR communication. The primary stakeholders hold the highest salience, as they have both high power, high legitimacy and their needs require immediate attention from Starbucks. Consequently, these should be the primary target audience of the CSR communication.

It is also evident, however, that both secondary and public stakeholders have high salience as well, partly due to their power of Starbucks and the infrastructure of its activities, but especially due their influence on the primary stakeholders. Accordingly, these must also be considered as important audiences of Starbucks’ CSR communication.

It should be noted that this stakeholder analysis is merely based on my own evaluation, and a deeper empirical analysis may reveal alternative findings. However, for this thesis, it will be sufficient, as it provides a general overview of Starbucks’ stakeholders and their salience in relation to CSR communication.
Appendix 4 - Front page

Source: http://www.starbucks.com/
Appendix 5 - Community subpage

Let's make our communities thrive.

By working together, we can create positive change in our own communities and around the world. Join us in reaching our goal of 1 million community service hours per year by 2015.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Commitment</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Leader</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2012 Relay For Life of Western Michigan</td>
<td>1903 W Michigan Ave., Kalamazoo, MI</td>
<td>4/20/13</td>
<td>8 hours</td>
<td>Health &amp; Human Services</td>
<td>Debra Mckimmy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: [http://community.starbucks.com](http://community.starbucks.com)
Appendix 6 - Responsibility options

Appendix 7 - Responsibility subpage

Being a Responsible Company

Let's make communities thrive.
Join us for the second annual Global Month of Service.

We've always believed that businesses can - and should - have a positive impact on the communities they serve.
So ever since we opened our first store in 1971, we dedicated ourselves to striking a balance between profitability and social conscience. We continue to believe that the ultimate way to scale the power of brand is to share the good we do so that Starbucks and everyone we touch – can endure and thrive.

Source: http://www.starbucks.com/responsibility
Appendix 8 - Responsibility report subpage

Global Responsibility Report Goals & Progress 2011

Year in Review: Fiscal 2011

From our beginning as a single store in Seattle’s Pike Place Market in 1971, we have sought to be a catalyst for positive change in the many communities we serve. Now, with more than 17,000 stores in more than 55 countries and a growing business in consumer packaged goods, we find our reach is greater than ever. Just as important, we continue to believe that the ultimate way to scale the power of our brand is to share the good we do and how we do it so that Starbucks and everyone we touch—from customers to coffee farmers—can thrive and endure. Learn More

Appendix 9 - Environmental Stewardship subpage

Environmental Stewardship

We share our customers' commitment to the environment

And we believe in the importance of caring for our planet working with and encouraging others to do the same. As a company that relies on an agricultural product, it makes good business sense. And as people living in the world, it is simply the right thing to do.

Recycling

It's a big challenge and we're making big progress. We're trying to develop more environmentally friendly cups and are working hard to expand our recycling program in an effort to reduce the waste we create.

Energy

We are proud of the work we have done to be more energy efficient and we're committed to further minimizing our energy consumption and using renewable sources of energy to lower our impact on the planet.

Learn More About Energy Conservation

Water

We all have to work carefully with one of our most valuable natural resources and we're evaluating our

Green Building

Source: http://www.starbucks.com/responsibility/environment