Case study of Ben & Jerry’s communication of
Corporate Social Responsibility

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Summary

The increasing expectations from society to organisations to operate in a socially and environmentally sustainable manner have put corporate social responsibility, CSR, on the global agenda. In order for organisations to retain their “license to operate”, they need to consider their impact on all of their interfaces. One of the companies that is known for being a frontrunner within CSR is the ice cream company Ben & Jerry’s, acquired by Anglo-Dutch conglomerate Unilever in 2000. This thesis is based on the following research question:

*Analysing the textual framing as well as organisational and stakeholder characteristics that may influence the effectiveness of a text, how does Ben & Jerry’s communicate its commitment to corporate social responsibility through its online 2011 Social & Environmental Assessment Report?*

Thus, this thesis has as purpose to find out how Ben & Jerry’s frames its CSR communication to stakeholders of its online CSR report. The scientific approach applied to this thesis is that of methodological hermeneutics, meaning that the focus is on how the sender constructs the text.

Key theories to give a theoretical background of the field of CSR are Carroll’s CSR pyramid (1991) explaining what responsibilities CSR includes, Paine’s model for why companies engage in CSR (2003) and Schwartz and Carroll’s Three-Domain Model (2003), also elaborating on possible motives for engaging in CSR activities. The analysis starts off with a stakeholder analysis, based on Dawkins’ recommendations for what specific stakeholders look for in CSR reports (2004), as well as Cornelissen’s Stakeholder Salience Model (2011), identifying and classifying stakeholders according to their importance to the organisation. The central analysis is based on Du, Bhattacharya and Sen’s Framework for Effective CSR Communication (2010), which elaborates on factors that influence the effectiveness of CSR communication. These factors, including elements such as commitment, motivation, message channel, stakeholder characteristics and company characteristics, will be applied to the analysis of Ben & Jerry’s 2011 CSR report. The analysis also draws on elements from Halliday’s Register Analysis (Stillar, 1998) to further explore the possible effects of the chosen way of framing the CSR communication. In addition, examples of rhetorical appeals (Corbett & Connors, 1999) in the text will be explained, to look at the persuasion used in the CSR report, to further supplement the communication framework.
It is derived from the analysis that Ben & Jerry’s follows the general recommendation given by the theoretical framework used in this thesis, meaning that, from the scope of this thesis, the CSR report is found effective. This applies to both the aligning of the communication to the different needs of the primary stakeholders, being shareholders and investors, NGOs, CSR “experts” (e.g. think-tanks) and activist groups, and employees, but also to how, more technically, the communication is framed. Ben & Jerry’s emphasises the organisation’s involvement in several CSR activities, emphasising especially the scope and consistency of its commitment to the causes and in addition, emphasis is put on the motivation and CSR fit, which become known for readers more implicitly throughout the report. The apparently good reputation of Ben & Jerry’s, and the fact that the organisation positions itself wholly in terms of CSR, is likely to increase the effectiveness of any of its CSR messages, and possibly reduce stakeholder scepticism. On the contrary, it is found that the CSR report may lack indications of self-beneficial motives for engaging in CSR, as even though the intentions of Ben & Jerry’s business operations may be purely philanthropic, Du et al. (2010) found that stakeholders will be sceptical to read about such a seemingly “picture perfect” way of doing business.

The conclusions in this thesis should be seen as valid only within the scope of the thesis as the effectiveness of Ben & Jerry’s CSR report is judged solely on the basis of the theories used in this thesis. In order for the effectiveness of the CSR report to be analysed more generally, further research could include a reception analysis, measuring if readers of the report find the communication to be effective.
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1. Introduction

1.1 Motivation

Over the past decades, there has been a continuously increasing focus on organisations’ behaviour and obligations to society. The prevalence of corporate social responsibility (CSR) is growing, as organisations are encouraged and in some way obliged to recognise their responsibility, awareness and concern for society (Tench & Yeomans, 2009). Before the 1950’s, it was widely believed that an organisation’s sole responsibility was to provide the best financial return to its shareholders; a view that was still held by some scholars later on (Friedman, 1970). Yet, today with the emerging societal and institutional focus on CSR, resulting in for example the Global Reporting Initiative, organisations are pressured to pay attention to their social responsibility (Waddock, 2008). This means that organisations’, particularly large, successful organisations’, responsibility entails more than financial obligations, as when striving to be a socially and sustainably responsible organisation, and thus potentially obtain benefits (see e.g. Maignan, Ferrell & Hult, 1999; Tench & Yeomans, 2009), an organisation should endeavour to maximise profits, obey the law, be ethical and be a good corporate citizen (Carroll, 1991). Hence, whereas businesses’ attention has previously been towards shareholders, it is today widely acknowledged that more, if not all, stakeholders must be paid attention to and managed by organisations. In a world where the Internet has made transfer of information easier and more rapid than ever, still more power resides with stakeholders, who demand further transparency and responsibility from organisations. Large multinational organisations, holding great power and influence, are targets for increasingly many accusations and a constant scrutiny of their actions. Organisations are thus under a continuous pressure of living up to the expectations of society and to maintain their organisational legitimacy (Waddock, 2008), which can be done through not only committing to CSR, but also by making stakeholders aware of this commitment. As Du, Bhattacharya and Sen (2010) emphasise: “the business returns to CSR are contingent on stakeholders’ awareness of a company’s CSR activities” (p. 9). This stresses the importance of framing public relations and CSR messages in a suitable manner, tailored to the relevant stakeholders in the form of both content and context (Du et al., 2010).

One organisation that has been globally acknowledged for its engagement in CSR activities is the American ice cream company Ben & Jerry’s, which was acquired by the multinational consumer goods
organisation Unilever in 2000. Ben and Jerry’s is often mentioned as a prime example of successful management of CSR activities and the organisation has been granted many awards for its commitment. For example, in 1988, its two founders, Ben Cohen and Jerry Greenfield, were awarded “Small Business Persons of the Year” by Ronald Reagan (Ben & Jerry’s, 2013); it has won the Martin Luther King Junior Center for Non-violent Social Change in the US’ “Salute to Greatness Award”, the animal welfare organisation Compassion in World Farming’s “Good Dairy Award”, “Good Egg Award” and many more (Unilever, 2013).

1.2 Research question
With the previous section in mind, this thesis has the aim of addressing the following research question:

> Analysing the textual framing as well as organisational and stakeholder characteristics that may influence the effectiveness of a text, how does Ben & Jerry’s communicate its commitment to corporate social responsibility through its online 2011 Social & Environmental Assessment Report?

As can be drawn from the research question, the appropriate research strategy for this thesis is that of the case study, as the thesis focuses on one specific case, in one specific way. Yin (2003) explains that a case study is the most appropriate research strategy when “a “how” or “why” question is being asked about a contemporary set of events, over which the investigator has little or no control” (p. 9).

As mentioned, Ben & Jerry’s (in this thesis from now on sometimes referred to as B&J’s) is leading within the field of CSR, and therefore it will be interesting to analyse how the organisation chooses to communicate its apparently deep involvement in its “core values of social and economic justice, fair trade, sustainable practices, and peace” (Ben & Jerry’s SEAR, 2011).

1.3 Scientific approach
As can be seen from the research question upon which this thesis is built, this thesis focuses on how the sender, B&J’s, communicates its CSR activities through its CSR report to stakeholders. What can be derived from this is that the main emphasis is on how the sender constructs the text. Thus, the
receivers’ interpretation of the text is not the main focus, as the thesis analyses the content rather than the reception of the content. As such, this thesis draws on the scientific method of *methodological hermeneutics* (Palmer, 1969).

The aim of the social science approach hermeneutics is to understand through interpretation, and the focus is thus placed on understanding rather than explaining (Sherratt, 2005). The general hermeneutic beliefs are based on the ideas of Friedrich Schleiermacher, who created modern hermeneutics based on his interest in understanding texts through understanding the intentions, emotions and thoughts of the author in the moment of expression, which Schleiermacher considered the one true meaning of the text. In order for a text to be fully understood, Schleiermacher believed that it should be analysed both grammatically and psychologically, i.e. the language and the context as well as the background of the author should be understood (Sherratt, 2005). As this thesis analyses a specific piece of text composed by B&J’s, according to methodological hermeneutics, it should be possible to find the “true meaning” of this one text as intended by the authors. The hermeneutic circle is a method based on this very idea that a text cannot be understood separately, but only by relating it to the whole, i.e. the context, the meaning can be found. Palmer (1969) explains the hermeneutic circle in this way: “Understanding is basically referential operation; we understand something by comparing it to something we already know. What we understand forms itself into systematic unities, or circles made up of parts. The circle as a whole defines the individual parts, and the parts together form the circle” (p. 87). Thus, by analysing parts of a text and continuously relating it to the whole, the parts and the whole give meaning to each other and thus form a circular form of understanding (Palmer, 1969).

As this thesis focuses on the sender’s intentions with the text and the understanding of these intentions, the thesis primarily applies the scientific method of methodological hermeneutics. However, part of the analysis in this thesis is based on a methodology typically associated with the social science of *social constructionism* (Burr, 2001), with the textual analysis drawing on a critical discourse approach. Even though this may at first seem to create conflict, one might argue that the methodology of discourse analysis fits well with the scientific method of methodological hermeneutics, as discourse analyses seek to investigate the communicative choices made and the discourse created by the sender when creating a text, and thus this method may be used in understanding the intentions of the sender. As such, writing this thesis from a methodological hermeneutic point of view actually does not exclude the use of discourse analysis, but rather the two can be used complementary.
1.4 Structure

This thesis will be structured following the principle of point-by-point, going into each point of the thesis respectively, though with some links to other points, as the writing process is iterative and as each point is in some way or another related to others (Fowler, 2007). Following this introductory chapter, the thesis gives a theoretical background and theoretical discussion of the field of public relations and, especially, CSR, going into definitions of CSR and investigating different motives for engaging in CSR activities. After that, the thesis goes on with a short presentation of Ben & Jerry’s. Then, the analysis will be conducted, starting with a stakeholder analysis of B&J’s stakeholders for its CSR report 2011. The stakeholder analysis has its own chapter, as it is considered important to have established the context of the text before analysing it. The stakeholder analysis is followed by the central analysis based on Du et al.’s (2010) Framework for Effective CSR Communication, in which elements from Halliday’s Register Analysis (Stillar, 1998) and rhetorical appeals (Corbett & Connors, 1999) will be included. Throughout the thesis, the context of the text and the stakeholders will be addressed through theoretical discussions, as to adhere to the hermeneutic scientific philosophy. The thesis will end with a conclusion and discussion of the results.

1.5 Theoretical framework and analytical tools

The following section consists of an overall presentation of the main theories used in this thesis.

The short discussion concerning public relations will primarily be based on Tench and Yeomans’ textbook “Exploring Public Relations” (2009), as this textbook includes several views on PR.

For defining corporate social responsibility, among others, Carroll’s Pyramid of CSR (1991), which is a widely recognised theory about the various responsibilities of businesses, will be described to look into the responsibilities CSR entails.

Paine’s model with four clusters and one factor describing the motivation for organisations to shift towards CSR (Paine, 2003 in Morsing & Beckmann, 2006) will be used to investigate possible motives for organisations to engage in CSR activities. To shed light on these possible motives, also Schwartz and Carroll’s Three-Domain Model of CSR (2003), which is a critical refinement of Carroll’s Pyramid of CSR (1991) will be included.
The stakeholder analysis will be based on literature on CSR reports, Dawkins’ (2004) suggestions for what specific stakeholders look for in CSR reports and Cornelissen’s *Stakeholder Salience Model* (2011), aiming at identifying the stakeholders of B&J’s 2011 CSR report, how large an influence these might have, and how to possibly manage their expectations.

The central analysis of B&J’s communication of its CSR engagement will be based on B&J’s publically available Social & Environmental Assessment Report (SEAR) 2011. The research question will be addressed through a content analysis based on Du et al.’s *Framework for Effective CSR Communication* (2010), which goes into depth with the factors that influence the effectiveness of CSR messages (see figure 1 below).

![Figure 1. A framework of CSR communication](source)

Du et al.’s framework is based on extensive reviews and synthesis of existing research and literature within the field of CSR, and it seeks to give managers a deeper understanding of key issues related to the effectiveness of CSR communication. This thesis will go into the elements in the left box
of the model, looking at what elements of the message content B&J’s emphasises, and investigating the CSR report as a message channel. Also, the thesis will analyse the contingency factors surrounding the analysed text, being the influence of the characteristics of the stakeholders and the organisation. The box on the right of the model will not be analysed as such, because it is not considered valid to measure the direct effectiveness of B&J’s CSR report based on the analysis in this thesis.

In the analysis, elements from Halliday’s Register Analysis (Stillar, 1998) will be integrated, as to focus on the framing of B&J’s view of reality more closely, as a supplement to the overall CSR communication framework. This theory goes into detail with the text and through this textual analysis, the intentions and thoughts of the sender in the moment of execution can, in some degree, be exhibited. It is especially when analysing the message content that elements from Halliday’s Register Analysis are relevant. Halliday’s Register Analysis organises language resources by three general functions: the ideational function, which represents the sender’s view or framing of reality; the interpersonal function, which concerns the relationship between sender and receiver; and the textual function, which consists of the language resources that are used to make the text coherent (Stillar, 1998). The textual function will not be elaborated on and used in this analysis, as it is not relevant for the scope of this thesis to examine how B&J’s makes its text coherent. Likewise, the interpersonal function will not be used, as the established relationship between sender and receiver is not judged relevant for this thesis. The ideational function will be used in this analysis to complement the analysis of the message content, in order to obtain a more precise view of how Ben & Jerry’s perceives and frames its idea of reality, including its own influence on this, as the theory by Halliday also points to an explanation of what the framing of the text means in terms of effectiveness. Within the ideational function there are four functions (Stillar, 1998):

- **Process types** are used to present the senders ideas of reality and these types include action processes, which accounts for what actions the sender takes (in order to achieve something), mental processes explains how the sender philosophically understands the world, and relational processes are used to express how the sender relates phenomena to each other.
- **Circumstantials** show the background or circumstances for a certain event or action.
- **Time frame and perspective** can give the reader an idea of whether the sender is focused on the past or the future, and whether the actions taken are seen as completed or if the sender sees improvement and development as a more iterative and on-going process.
Concept taxonomies are used to construct a conceptual field through categorical relations, and by using these, the reader further can obtain an idea of how the sender “sees the world”.

Finally, the analysis will include some explanation of examples of rhetorical appeals used in the CSR report. These elements will be based on Corbett and Connors’ (1999) explanation of the “three modes of persuasion” originally described by Aristotle, being appeal to people’s reason (logos), appeal to people’s emotions (pathos) and appeal through the sender’s personality or character (ethos).

1.6 Delimitation

This thesis has certain delimitations that will be noted in the following.

The conclusions of this thesis will not represent B&J’s general CSR communication, as, due to page limitations, this thesis focuses only on one out of many possible communication channels, namely the CSR report, and only through one theoretical perspective. There has been no contact to the case company, and the thesis is written, and the analysis conducted, based on secondary sources. The thesis is mainly based on the sender’s point of view, and though it could have included a reception analysis, due to the chosen scientific tradition of methodological hermeneutics, this is not appropriate in this thesis.

2. Theoretical background

The following section will provide some background information about public relations and corporate social responsibility.

2.1 Public Relations

“There is no one universally agreed definition of public relations” (Tench & Yeomans, 2009, p. 4), which is also the reason why there has been much debate about what PR actually is. Many academic definitions emphasise the fact that PR is to build good relationships and mutual understanding between a company and its most important stakeholders by managing communications (Tench & Yeomans, 2009). However, there has been some debate whether PR is also about persuading people into thinking or behaving in a particular way, which is something that is not mentioned in most academic definitions. As persuasion has been very important in the history of PR (Tench & Yeomans, 2009), one might
argue that a definition of PR, if one such can be made, should incorporate the effects of public relations.

In line with the fact that no one definition of PR exists, the importance of PR is debated. It is not as easy to estimate the value of a PR program as for example an advertisement, and therefore organisations sometimes fail to understand the value they can gain by managing communications effectively (Beardsley, 2004). Beardsley (2004) argues that “when value is viewed from the perspectives of usefulness, worth and importance, it becomes clear that while it may be difficult to precisely measure the benefits of a PR program, it is actually quite easy to estimate the consequences of failing to communicate. Organisations that believe their presence alone is sufficient to keep them in the public view, and fail to manage their communicative activities, will be noticed only at random, or worse, not at all” (p. 41).

Public relations first and foremost help companies build and maintain an image and communicate with stakeholders two-way to build good relationships (Newsom & Haynes, 2010). Building and maintaining a good image is especially important with the increasingly fierce competition caused by globalisation, and thus, public relations seem more relevant than ever.

### 2.2. Corporate Social Responsibility

As mentioned in the introduction, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has become increasingly important for organisations in today’s business environment. As changes in the climate and environment occur, the role of businesses is put into spotlight. Important stakeholders for a company now do not only include employees, customers and shareholders, but also members of the communities in which the company operates, as the company is part of the infrastructure in society and therefore must consider its impact on it (Tench & Yeomans, 2009). As more and more people expect organisations to engage in CSR (see e.g. Porter & Kramer, 2006; KPMG, 2011; Edelman, 2008), it can be beneficial to be socially and sustainably responsible, especially if the stakeholders of the organisation are made aware of this.

Even though the concept of CSR is widely used, there is no universally agreed definition, and hence, many definitions of CSR exist. Tench and Yeomans (2009) define CSR as “an organisation’s defined responsibility to its society(ies) and stakeholders” (p.99), and it seems that this view on CSR is the most general view that exists, namely that CSR is the organisation’s “status and activities with
respect to its perceived societal obligations (Brown & Dacin, 1997, as cited in Morsing & Beckmann, 2006, p. 17).

One of the most well known explanations of CSR is Carroll’s CSR pyramid (1991) (appx A). According to Caroll (1991), a “corporation has not only economic and legal obligations, but ethical and discretionary (philanthropic) responsibilities as well” (p. 40). Thus, in order for a company to call itself corporate socially responsible and have this considered legitimate, the company has to address the entire range of obligations businesses have to society. The four levels of responsibility can be depicted as a pyramid, as seen in appendix A.

In general, it is clear that CSR is about organisations moving beyond the traditional view of businesses’ role as simply creating a profit while obeying the law, and rather, organisations should live up to the increasing expectations of all of their stakeholders, which now entails still more groups of people and societies. With globalisation, the Internet and new social media, stakeholders, and especially consumers, have gained more power over brands (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). This and other factors increase the need for organisations to not only manage their stakeholders, but merely involving them, as e.g. Morsing and Schultz (2006) propose with their stakeholder involvement strategy: “we suggest that there is an increasing need to develop sophisticated two-way communication processes (sensemaking and sensegiving) when companies convey messages about CSR. While one-way information on corporate CSR initiatives is necessary, it is not enough” (p. 325). Thus, organisations should ideally strive to reach mutual understanding, by using the two-way symmetric model of PR communication, seeing the two groups communicating (organisation and stakeholder) as equal parts in the communication process (Grunig and Hunt, 1984 as cited in Windahl, Signitzer & Olson, 2009, p. 118).

Organisations may improve business performance and enhance reputation by using PR and communications more effectively to build an understanding and awareness of a company’s general values and actions among stakeholders. Especially, as Porter and Kramer (2006) emphasise: “when looked at strategically, corporate social responsibility can become a source of tremendous social progress, as the business applies its considerable resources, expertise, and insights to activities that benefit society (p. 80).

Many explanations of why organisations should engage in CSR activities have been devised, though the motivation for engaging will differ from organisation to organisation.
Paine (2003) in Morsing and Beckmann (2006) differentiates between four clusters and one factor that can be motivating for engaging in CSR (Morsing & Beckmann, 2006, p. 19) (appx B). The four clusters are based on a business-economic logic, including risk management, i.e. eliminating risks stemming from e.g. critical stakeholders and the media; civic positioning, i.e. to gain legitimacy in civil society; market positioning, i.e. better positioning compared to competitors; and organisational functioning being internally focused, striving to improve motivation, business procedures etc. within the organisation. The additional factor is the better way to conduct business, a motive grounded in ethics and values, engaging in CSR simply because it is seen as “the right thing to do”, thus not requiring any business rationalisation (Morsing & Beckmann, 2006).

Schwartz and Carroll (2003) have proposed another approach on motives for engaging in CSR, namely the Three-Domain Model (appx C). This model is a refined version of Carroll’s Pyramid of Corporate Social Responsibility (1991), which was described earlier. The Three Domain Model comprises three main responsibility areas, being economic, legal and ethical, following the CSR pyramid, except the philanthropic responsibility in the pyramid is subsumed under the ethical and/or the economic domain in the Three-Domain Model (Schwartz & Carroll, 2003).

The economic domain has as motive to gain profits. This includes organisations that carry out CSR activities because they are estimated to have a direct or indirect positive impact on corporate finances. This purely economic motive relates to Friedman’s (1970) claim that the only social responsibility of organisations is to increase profits and returns to shareholders. Today, the economic motive is not preferable and accepted in society, as stakeholders now do not only include shareholders, but a lot of other groups as well, who demand more from organisations (Tench & Yeomans, 2009).

The legal domain has as motive to obey the law and/or avoid litigation. Thus, an organisation engaging in CSR based on this motive would for example implement working and operational standards that comply with legal expectations and laws. One might argue that this motive would be seen as more accepted than the economic domain, seeing that the law is at least obeyed. However, this domain is not seen as the ideal, as improving society is not a vested interest of the organisation, but rather, following this motive, certain CSR activities are seen as obligatory.

The ethical domain has as motive to maintain organisational legitimacy in society. This is done by responding to the expectations of all stakeholders concerning ethical and social responsibilities, which is not an easy task. As can be seen from the model, the domains can be overlapping. The ideal
motive for CSR would be in the middle of the model, where all three domains overlap, and thus, activities are directly or indirectly profitable, all laws and regulations are obeyed and all stakeholders’ needs are met (Schwartz & Carroll, 2003).

The below table 1 compares the two views on motives for CSR, though solely based on reading about the theories:

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<td>Organisational functioning</td>
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**3. Ben & Jerry’s – a values-led business**

The following section will provide an overview of Ben & Jerry’s as an organisation.

Ben & Jerry’s is an American based ice cream company established in 1978 by two school friends. The company started off very modest and small, but grew more and more popular, having more than 80 ice cream scoop shops in the US and a few other countries ten years after its establishment. As a result, it was acquired by the Anglo-Dutch conglomerate Unilever in 2000 (Unilever, 2013). B&J’s engages in a wide variety of CSR activities, from raising awareness about global warming, using waste to generate energy and using climate-friendly and energy efficient freezers, to continually participating in community service projects and supporting marriage equality (Ben & Jerry’s, 2013).
Furthermore, B&J’s has its own foundation, the Ben & Jerry’s Foundation, which is part of carrying out the mission statement and values of the organisation (Ben & Jerry’s Foundation, 2013).

B&J’s has always been known as a very socially responsible organisation, and it defines itself as being “values-led”. According to the founders of the organisation, “values-led business is based on the idea that business has a responsibility to the people and the society that makes its existence possible. More all-encompassing and therefore more effective than philanthropy alone, values-led business seeks to maximise its impact by integrating socially beneficial actions into as many of its day-to-day activities as possible. In order to do that, values must lead and be right up there in a company’s mission statement, strategy, and operating plan” (Cohen & Greenfield, 1997, p. 30). From this quote, and the Cohen and Greenfield book in general, it seems that B&J’s engages in CSR from Paine’s “the better way” motive (Morsing & Beckmann, 2006), and Schwartz and Carroll’s middle domain (2003), operating from primarily the ethical motive, but also obeying the law and gaining economic benefits from this strategy.

4. Analysis

In this section, B&J’s 2011 Social and Environmental Assessment Report will be analysed focusing on how, in terms stakeholders, textual elements and the composition of information, the organisation communicates and emphasises its commitment to CSR. Appendices F-O include screen shots from the online CSR report and are structured following the original report. Examples from the text can thus be seen in their original context in the ascribed appendices.

4.1 Stakeholder analysis

As pointed out in the theoretical background, CSR is very much about focusing on stakeholders. This can also be said about communications in general. According to Newsom and Haynes (2010), “clarity is the number one aim of writing style” (p. 104). They argue that if the audience of any text does not understand the message, the sender’s efforts will be wasted. Most CSR reports have as purpose to establish a good reputation, to inform stakeholders about the CSR initiatives put forward by the organisation and to create an image among stakeholders that the organisation is a relevant societal actor (Bivins, 2007). This is highly important, as accordingly, “the future of any one company in today’s society depends critically on how it is viewed by key stakeholders such as shareholders and
investors, customers and consumers, employees and members of the community in which the company resides (Cornelissen, 2004, p. 9 as quoted in Nielsen & Thomsen, 2007 p. 39). It is therefore important for organisations to develop and foster good relationships with stakeholders and know how to manage them and their needs. In order for the analysis of B&J’s 2011 CSR report to be as precise as possible, and to adhere to the tradition of hermeneutics, it is important to gain some knowledge about the context and the possible receivers of the text, which can be achieved through a stakeholder analysis. There has been much ambiguity around the question of who actually reads CSR reports, and thus who the stakeholders of CSR reports are. In general, it is believed that shareholders, investors, especially socially responsible investors (SRIs), NGOs and other CSR-“experts”, and increasingly also employees, are the primary stakeholders and thus the ones that are most likely to actively seek information about organisations’ CSR commitment in CSR reports (see e.g. Dawkins, 2004; Edelman, 2008). Head of CSR research in the British market research company MORI, Dawkins (2004) has set up some guidelines on what specific stakeholders look for in CSR reports. The guidelines are based on MORI’s British research within the field, but despite the fact that B&J’s is an American based organisation, it is believed that investors and other stakeholders interested in CSR reports read CSR reports for the same purpose across nations. Even though organisations in the United States and in the United Kingdom engage in CSR in different ways (Matten & Moon, 2008), it seems that the disparity is decreasing (Morsing & Beckmann, 2006). Also, the cultural difference between the UK and the US is really low (aprx D), and in addition, B&J’s is operating all over the world. For these reasons, it is stated valid to use the research from MORI to continue the stakeholder analysis of B&J’s CSR report. The findings of the MORI research will be combined with Cornelissen’s Stakeholder Salience Model (2011) to gain an overview of the primary stakeholders of B&J’s CSR report and their possible priority and need for attention.

Following the general belief about the audience for CSR reports, Cornelissen’s (2011) stakeholder model can be used to define the importance of these stakeholders (aprx E). Cornelissen’s Stakeholder Salience Model (2011) identifies and classifies stakeholders according to their salience to the organisation, with salience being defined as “how visible or prominent a stakeholder is to an organization based upon the stakeholder possessing one or more of three attributes: power, legitimacy and urgency” (p. 45). The most salient stakeholders have the highest priority and therefore need more
attention. In table 2 below, a classification of the primary stakeholders for B&J’s CSR report is presented.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stakeholders</th>
<th>Look for</th>
<th>Salience of stakeholder</th>
<th>Priority</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shareholders and investors</td>
<td>- Relevance of CSR to strategy and bottom line</td>
<td>Significant: dominant stakeholders</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Leading within some fields</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NGOs and CSR “experts” (e.g. think-tanks), activist groups</td>
<td>- Evidence of impact of CSR programme: Indicators, benchmarks etc.</td>
<td>(Potentially) Dominant stakeholders</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- External evaluation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Integrated approach</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Adherence to official principles</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employees</td>
<td>- Progress</td>
<td>Current employees: dominant stakeholders</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Employee involvement</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Shareholders and investors are dominant stakeholders and have a high priority for many organisations (Cornelissen, 2011). Dominant stakeholders are powerful and have legitimate claims, for which reason they have a strong influence. For example, Unilever can be seen as part of this group, and according to B&J’s CSR report, there are several special requirements from the parent company, e.g.: “The shared goal of all three parties is to increase the total QoR score at a rate faster than the rate of the Company's
sales growth — as required by the unique acquisition agreement between Unilever and Ben & Jerry’s” (appx I). Shareholders and investors should continually be informed and communicated with, so as to always be in a dialogue with them and align expectations. According to Dawkins (2004), shareholders and investors look for the relevance of the CSR engagement to the organisational strategy and bottom line. Ben & Jerry’s CSR report does not touch a lot upon the economic benefit of its activities, which reflects the recurring pattern in B&J’s CSR communication. However, in the CEO letter, it is indirectly stated that the organisation and its practices are profitable: “Making and selling the highest quality ice cream profitably in a competitive marketplace is not easy; but doing it in line with our Social Mission requires extraordinary commitment and passion from everyone in the Ben & Jerry’s community. I am grateful to have that high level of commitment from our Ben & Jerry’s team around the world” (appx F).

Also, the CSR report does in some instances indirectly comply with the wishes of the shareholders and investors: e.g. two of the goals: “Goal 2: Make ice cream that’s aligned with our values” and “Goal 3: Take the lead promoting global sustainable dairy practices” (appx G), and the section about eggs: “As one of the earliest companies to commit to cage-free, we were ahead of the market and had to make the change in stages so the cage-free egg industry could catch up with our demand” (appx K). These quotes indicate a CSR-company fit, as well as an aim of being a frontrunner in its field.

There are not a lot of examples of the impact of B&J’s CSR activities in the report, meaning that the needs of NGOs, CSR “experts” and activist groups are not met in this respect. This stakeholder group is also classified as dominant stakeholders, as they can possess a lot of power, and therefore B&J’s might benefit from providing more details of the output of what the organisation does. NGOs and activist groups can be powerful, especially in cooperation with the media: a fact Porter and Kramer (2006) touch upon: “Activist organizations of all kinds, both on the right and the left, have grown much more aggressive and effective in bringing public pressure to bear on corporations” (p. 80). An example in the report where this stakeholder group’s needs are actually met is: “In this public report, we share key indicators within the QoR that best illustrate our progress in each focus area – and an indication of the yearly change in the QoR score. […] In Ben & Jerry’s style, we won’t shy away from reporting key indicators even if they show that we’re not measuring up to our own standards” (appx I). Here B&J’s states that the communication is as transparent as possible and that the company has made a framework for measuring the performance of the CSR activities. Also, some external evaluation is included in the
report, though it was found impossible to evaluate the numbers and progress, which B&J’s also honestly states: “Ben & Jerry’s engaged Ernst & Young to examine the Quality of Results indicators disclosed in the Social and Environmental Assessment Report. However, due to the items discussed below, Ernst & Young was not able to, and did not express an opinion on the indicators. You can read their Disclaimer of Opinion here, which we accept. It indicates that we were unable to satisfy their requirements for sufficient evidence to enable them to conclude that the indicators we present in this report are fairly stated” (appx F).

Current employees are dominant stakeholders, as they especially together can hold great power over the organisation. Today, where the Internet makes it possible for individuals to be heard, a dissatisfied employee may end up spoiling an organisation’s reputation. In contrast, satisfied employees may be very important for an organisation, as happy employees can function as advocates for the organisation (Dawkins, 2004). Thus, making employees aware of CSR activities is important, and they have a high priority. In CSR reports, employees look for progress and initiatives implemented to improve employee conditions, which is also covered in B&J’s report: “Ben & Jerry’s is committed to paying all of its full-time manufacturing workers a livable wage. In 1995 we established a method for calculating a livable wage benchmark for Vermont” and “Ben & Jerry’s is an equal opportunity employer that values diversity in our workforce” (appx O).

B&J’s seems to know what topics to focus on in order to communicate to more stakeholders. However, one may argue that there is a lack of information about how the CSR activities impact the reputation and finances of the organisation, though this information may possibly be found in Unilever’s financial annual report.

**4.2 Analysis through Du et al.’s Framework for Effective CSR Communication**

Du et al. (2010) have created a conceptual framework for CSR communication, analysing different factors that influence the effectiveness of CSR communication, with the overall categories being CSR communication, contingency factors and communication outcomes (see chapter 1.5). The following section will present an overview and the actual analysis of the relevant parts of the framework for this thesis, including elements from Halliday’s Register Analysis (Stillar, 1998) and rhetorical appeals (Corbett & Connors, 1999), as mentioned in chapter 1.5.
Du et al. (2010) stress that two key stumbling blocks for organisations to gain strategic benefits from CSR engagement are low awareness of CSR activities among stakeholders and stakeholder scepticism towards such activities. In order to overcome these challenges, more aspects were analysed, and these will now be used to analyse B&J’s SEAR 2011.

4.2.1 CSR Communication

The first part of Du et al.’s (2010) framework concentrates on the specific message content and the channel(s) that are used to distribute the message.

4.2.1.1 Message Content

The message content of CSR communication can focus on a social cause itself or an organisation’s involvement in a social cause. However, most CSR communication emphasise the latter, thus associating the organisation to a cause, which is also what B&J’s mainly does throughout the CSR report: e.g. “In January 2011, Ben & Jerry’s was one of the founding companies of Business for Democracy”, “Royalties are paid to World Vision, a Christian humanitarian organization helping communities worldwide to reach their full potential by tackling the causes of poverty and injustice” (appx M).

4.2.1.1.1 Commitment

Du et al. (2010) state that organisations should communicate the importance of any issue engaged in and the organisation’s level of commitment to any CSR activity by emphasising factors such as commitment, impact, motives and fit between the cause and the organisation.

CSR commitment includes the amount of input, the durability of the association and the consistency of input. The CSR commitment will give the readers an idea of how committed the organisation actually is to a cause, and thus whether the engagement is sincere or merely a quick marketing stunt to increase profits (Du et al., 2010). For example, Webb and Mohr (1998), as cited in Du et al. (2010) found that stakeholders often use the durability of a cause to judge the motives of an organisation, meaning that longer-term commitments to a cause are seen as being driven by a sincere concern for society, whereas short-term commitments are seen as merely exploiting a cause to make profit.

The amount of input is stressed in many instances where B&J’s explains its activities. For example, the organisation uses action processes to explain what it does and in what scope, in the
“Materials” section: “[…] we have focused on making sure all of the paperboard […] is coming from environmentally friendly sources” (appx L) and likewise in the “2011 Highlights” section: “Just about every egg that Ben & Jerry’s uses in the base mix of our products now comes from certified cage-free or free-range farms. We are still working to solve the logistical challenges to get the last 1% of our eggs […] to cage-free” (appx G). In these examples, B&J’s emphasises the scope of input, making readers aware that it is as much as 99% of the used eggs that come from cage-free farms. By adding the scope, especially in the form of numbers and statistics, Ben & Jerry’s makes use of the persuasive appeal logos, making the text more credible by appealing to readers’ logic (Corbett & Connors, 1999). This persuasive appeal is used in almost every section of the CSR report, in the paragraphs “Quality of Results”, which evaluates the actual performance compared to the goal.

As mentioned in chapter 3, B&J’s has since its establishment been a values-led business, committing to doing business in an economically, socially and environmentally sustainable way. This gives the organisation an advantage when producing a CSR report, as many of its stakeholders probably know this, and therefore believe that B&J’s CSR activities are not just a temporary marketing stunt (see more about this in the section about contingency factors). In other words, situated ethos (Corbett & Connors, 1999) is in the text, in that B&J’s takes an expert status by being known as an organisation with long experience within the field of CSR. The readers of the CSR report is reminded of durability of the general CSR engagement in the section “Our Company”, where B&J’s writes: “Ben & Jerry’s has been making ice cream since 1978[…] Though we’ve never strayed from the boys’ original dream — to create unique and euphoric ice cream flavors while making a positive impact along the way — we have grown and changed in all sorts of ways” (appx H). The durability of specific actions is also stressed throughout the report, giving a time frame for the activities. For example, it is emphasised in the “Community Involvement & Activism” section that B&J’s and its employees have engaged in different kinds of community service, social activism and the like for over 30 years (appx M). Also, in the “Caring Dairy” section B&J’s stresses durability: “For over two decades, we’ve been buying milk for our Vermont production from […] and we have required all of our farmers to pledge not to treat their cows with rBGH, an artificial growth hormone” (appx J), and in the “Materials” section: “For years, Ben & Jerry’s has been working to reduce the negative environmental impacts of our packaging materials” (appx L). By adding a time frame for the organisation’s commitment to CSR
in general, and more specifically, B&J’s is presented as being sincere in its motives to engage in CSR (Webb & Mohr, 1998).

In the CSR report, B&J’s accentuates the consistency of its CSR engagement by developing an ongoing perspective (Stillar, 1998), meaning that the organisation stresses the fact that its engagement is not completed, but rather that it will always be dominant in its values and way of doing business. This is also evident in the specific sections, for example in the “Materials” section, where B&J’s emphasises the continual nature of improving procedures to do good for the environment: “We are confident that we can continue to improve our primary packing materials […] in the years ahead” (appx L). In addition, under “Environment & Climate”, B&J’s stresses the consistency of its activities: “We continue to devise and pursue innovative plans to reduce the greenhouse gas emissions associated with our business to respond to the urgent challenge of climate change” (appx N).

4.2.1.2 Impact

Another emphasis in CSR communication can be impact (Du et al., 2010). Organisations can focus on the output of their CSR activities, i.e. the impact of the activity on the stakeholders of this activity. In general, the CSR report from B&J’s does not explicitly stress the exact importance of the causes that are supported, but rather the importance of what B&J’s does within the field of CSR is more implicit throughout the text, through e.g. the QoR evaluations. One might argue that this makes good sense, as stakeholders of CSR reports to a large extent are mostly concerned with the image of the organisation, and the progress within CSR (see stakeholder analysis). However, NGOs and activist groups probably would like to see that what B&J’s does actually makes a difference and is relevant. If the primary stakeholders included consumers, it might have been a good idea to focus a lot on the societal impact of the activities, as this would highlight the difference consumers can be part of making, if buying a B&J’s product (Du et al., 2009, as cited in Du et al., 2010).

4.2.1.3 CSR motives

CSR communication can, in addition to commitment and impact, focus on motives, which can be helpful in reducing stakeholder scepticism (Du et al., 2010). CSR is seen by many as done to improve businesses’ bottom line, i.e. that the motivation for philanthropic activities is purely economic (Schwartz & Carroll, 2003). Research from Ellen et al. (2006) and Porter and Kramer (2006) shows that stakeholders know that organisations have more motives when engaging in CSR, and that CSR activities usually benefit the organisations. Consequently, an organisation may be best off by
acknowledging in its CSR communication that its CSR activities are beneficial both to the supported CSR cause, but also to the organisation itself (Porter & Kramer, 2006).

Throughout B&J’s CSR report there is an indirect theme, which regards the organisation’s motivation for engaging in CSR. As mentioned previously, Ben & Jerry’s has always been engaged in CSR in some way, and this seems to be reflected in everything the organisation does. In the CEO letter, CEO Jostein Solheim makes use of a mental process (Stillar, 1998), to describe the thoughts behind the way B&J’s does business: “What I am most proud about is that this report clearly shows that our Company is making decisions and taking risks in line with our core values of social and economic justice, fair trade, sustainable practices, and peace” (appx F). This statement indicates that B&J’s motivation for engaging in CSR is ethical, meaning that the organisation engages in the activities that it itself considers as its duty or obligation (Schwartz & Carroll, 2003). In Ben & Jerry’s case this seems to entail relatively more CSR activities than many other organisations. However, this is not the only motive that appears when analysing the CSR report, as B&J’s three-part mission, as stated in the “2011 Highlights” section, reveals another motive, namely an economic motive (Schwartz & Carroll, 2003). The second part of the three-part mission is: “Our Economic Mission asks us to manage our Company for sustainable financial growth” (appx G). Combining these two motives results in the economic/ethical motive (Schwartz & Carroll, 2003), which suits the CSR strategy of Ben & Jerry’s well, which the former CEO describes in his book in this way: “The motivation for giving back had always been genuine. At the same time, it was proving to be an effective marketing strategy. There was no doubt that our customers were more inclined to buy our ice cream and support our business because of how we, in turn, supported the community” (Lager, 1994, p. 126). Still, as mentioned in chapter 3, it is assumed that B&J’s strives to always obey the law when carrying out its activities, even though this is not the primary motive, for which reason the motive would be the middle domain (Schwartz & Carroll, 2003). As some of the stakeholders of the CSR report have economic motives for reading the report, whereas others have more ethical motives, an expressed economic/ethical motive seems highly appropriate for this type of CSR communication.

4.2.1.1.4 CSR fit

Du et al. (2010) state that it is important to communicate the CSR fit, i.e. the logical association between the CSR activity and the organisation, if one such exists. This is so, as stakeholders expect such a fit, and as a lack of logical association between the organisation and its CSR activities is likely
to make extrinsic motives more outstanding, which increases negative reactions and scepticism towards CSR activities (Du et al., 2010).

The CSR activities that B&J’s shows support for in its CSR report can be divided into different groups. From the report, it is evident that B&J’s strives to improve the ingredients it uses in its products, the materials it uses for the product packaging, the way the organisation can give back to the communities in which it operates, and finally, the impact its operations has on the environment and climate. There is a natural fit between the ingredients in B&J’s products and the organisation, and this is also the case with the packaging materials. Both groups are key to the final products of B&J’s and are therefore natural places to try to improve. Also, the aim to reduce the environmental impacts of its business is directly related to B&J’s business operations and procedures, for which reason a CSR fit is present. The deep-rooted and well-known values of Ben & Jerry’s make the community involvement and activism B&J’s engages in seem logical: a link which is also presented in the CSR report under “Community Involvement and Activism”: “Our co-founder, Ben Cohen, once said, “Business has a responsibility to give back to the community from which it draws its support.” Jerry Greenfield, our other co-founder, once asked, “If it’s not fun, why do it?” In many ways, these two ideas capture the yin and yang of Ben & Jerry’s formula for success. And they have inspired our Company and our employees to all sorts of community service, social activism, and fun for over 30 years” (apx M).

In general, the message content of B&J’s CSR report focuses on the organisation’s involvement in several CSR activities, emphasising especially the scope and consistency of its commitment to the causes. In addition, emphasis is put on the motivation and CSR fit, which become known for readers more implicitly throughout the report.

4.2.1.2 Message Channel

Organisations can choose a variety of communication channels to communicate their CSR activities. Generally, the choice is between internal or external communication channels, or a combination. The advantage of internal channels, which include annual reports, CSR reports, press releases and the like, is that the content is controlled solely by the organisation (Du et al., 2010). The disadvantage is that these forms of channels are seen as less credible by stakeholders, as information can be presented in any way the organisation likes it to (Du et al., 2010). In contrast, external channels such as Word-Of-Mouth from e.g. employees and customers, and media coverage from independent media and social
media platforms are seen as more credible because the content is not wholly controlled by the organisation (Du et al., 2010).

Ben & Jerry’s uses several channels to communicate its CSR activities, including its website, its online CSR report, press releases, advertising, product packaging and the social media platforms Twitter and Facebook. Using more channels to communicate CSR activities seems to be increasingly important, as according to KPMG’s International Survey of Corporate Responsibility Reporting 2011, “companies that continue to utilize only one channel of communication for their CR reporting will quickly find that they are losing ground to competitors who offer their data across multiple forms of media that appeal to a wider variety of stakeholder groups” (p. 20). This analysis focuses only on B&J’s online CSR report, though the fact that the organisation uses other media platforms will be kept in mind.

The CSR report as a means to communicate CSR activities is widely used: “95% of the 250 largest companies in the world (G250) now report on their corporate responsibility (CR) activities” (KPMG, 2011, p. 6). As mentioned in the theoretical background, CSR has never been defined in one universal way, but CSR reporting as a discourse is moving towards being a framework with its own infrastructure (Waddock, 2008), though even more guidelines and standards will, according to KPMG (2011), be beneficial in enabling comparability of the quality of information and quantitative performance in CSR activities. The current most used global standard for CSR reporting remains the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) guidelines, which is used by 80% of the G250 (KPMG, 2011).

In Ben & Jerry’s CSR report, it is not stated whether or not the report is created on the basis of the GRI guidelines. However, the report does include some elements required of the GRI, as for example a CEO letter, B&J’s CSR vision and mission, and performance indicators (Bivins, 2007). B&J’s uses a web-based approach for its CSR report, publishing it online on its website. According to research by CSR Europe (2009), a web-based approach for reporting CSR offers unlimited accessibility for stakeholders, unbound by time and space, which leads to an enhanced user experience that is further enhanced by multi-media options and customisation, and possibly an easier facilitation of dialogue between the organisation and a dispersed stakeholder group. Ben & Jerry’s makes use of some of the advantages of reporting online, as for example the CSR report has a “Share” button. Through this, readers of the report can share the content on various social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn to name but a few. In addition, the online report contains links to other parts of B&J’s website, further
increasing the dynamics of the report and in some degree customising the reading experience to the needs of the specific reader.

One thing that KPMG found surprising in its global CSR report study is that only 46 % of the G250 companies use assurance to verify and assess their CSR data and performance (KPMG, 2011). This is found surprising, as one might have thought that organisations would be interested in demonstrating the quality and reliability of their CSR data, when CSR reporting is becoming more important in the way stakeholders and investors perceive corporate value (see e.g. KPMG, 2011; Du et al., 2010; Dawkins, 2004). Ben & Jerry’s CSR report does include an assurance by the accounting firm Ernst & Young, however, as mentioned before, the Report of Independent Accountant was not completed, due to a lack of necessary evidence. It is impossible to determine what this does to the credibility of the report, as this will be very much influenced by more factors in the perception of each specific stakeholder. On the one hand, it increases credibility that B&J’s honestly states that the assurance was not accomplished, and on the other hand it weakens the credibility of the performance indicators and benchmarks throughout the report, as it has only been validated internally in the organisation. For the same reason, the channel in itself, being internal, is not the most credible, but the credibility of B&J’s CSR communication cannot be judged from only one out of more channels, but should rather be seen as a part of the whole, as the hermeneutic tradition also prescribes (Burr, 2001).

4.2.2 Contingency factors

There are several factors, other than the way the message is conveyed, that can influence the effectiveness of CSR communication. In Du et al.’s CSR communication framework (2010) these are called contingency factors. The contingency factors are divided into two groups: company characteristics and stakeholder characteristics. As the hermeneutic circle prescribes, a text can only be understood by relating it to the context. Even though the scientific tradition of this thesis is that of methodological hermeneutics, focusing on the intentions of the sender, one must acknowledge that the context and the recipients of a text will influence how the text is received, not to be mistaken for this to necessarily be the true meaning of the text.

4.2.2.1 Company characteristics

According to Du et al. (2010), the character of the sender of a text will often influence the effectiveness of CSR communication, especially when the text is company-controlled, as CSR reports
are, because “company-controlled message channels are more likely to trigger these company-specific knowledge structures” (p. 14). The company characteristics that possibly influence the effectiveness of CSR communication include corporate reputation and CSR positioning, which will be elaborated on and analysed in the case of Ben & Jerry’s in the following.

4.2.2.1.1 Corporate reputation

Corporate reputation, conceptualised as “a collective representation of a firm’s past actions and results that describes the firm’s ability to deliver valued outcomes to multiple stakeholder” (Gardberg & Fombrun, 2002 as cited in Du et al., 2010, p. 14), moderates CSR message effectiveness as ”it often serves as a pre-existing schema upon which stakeholders rely to interpret ambiguous information about the company” (Fombrun & Shanley, 1990 as cited in Du et al., 2010, p. 14). Therefore, a CSR message from an organisation with a good reputation will often have increased positive effects compared to an organisation with a bad reputation.

When looking at Ben & Jerry’s reputation, as with any organisation, there are both supporters and critics. The general reputation of B&J’s among the American public seems to be good. B&J’s has a reputation of being “one of the most environmentally conscious companies” (American Public University System, 2010), having “built a reputation for caring more about people than profit” (Roberts, 2010) and having “developed a reputation for social activism” (Moore, 2009). These are but a few quotes that can be found in the media stating that B&J’s has a reputation of actually doing business based on the core values that were set by its founders in 1978. However, there are also critics of B&J’s, who believe that the company does not “walk the talk”. It is hard to find examples of critique of B&J’s online, and the critiques that can be found are often related to the acquisition of B&J’s by large multinational Unilever in 2000, accusing B&J’s for “selling out”. Today, though, B&J’s seems to have proved that the acquisition did not make the company discontinue from engaging heavily in CSR, with a successful acquisition allowing B&J’s to operate in accordance with the original values of the organisation (see e.g. Mirvis, 2008; Austin & Leonard, 2008). Assuming that B&J’s has a good reputation, the organisation will probably benefit a lot from this, making any CSR message seem more credible and genuine (Du et al., 2010). As B&J’s operates within the food industry, the effectiveness of its CSR messages will not as such be moderated specifically because of the industry, as much as might for instance a company operating in the oil or tobacco industry (Du et al., 2010).
In general, the good CSR reputation of Ben & Jerry’s will help the organisation receive positive reactions towards new initiatives, but might also help in times with accusation and critique.

4.2.2.1.2 CSR positioning

CSR positioning, which refers to “the extent to which a company relies on its CSR activities to position itself, relative to the competition, in the minds of consumers” (Du et al., 2007 as cited in Du et al., 2010, p. 15), also often influences the effectiveness of CSR communication. As mentioned before, Ben & Jerry’s states to be a “values-led” business. B&J’s goes beyond simply engaging in CSR, and its core image is that of being socially and environmentally responsible, making its CSR values dominate its way of doing business. This, according to Du et al. (2010), is likely to increase the effectiveness of CSR communication, as the before-mentioned stakeholder scepticism is reduced, because the authenticity and credibility of CSR messages is greatly enhanced. Therefore, it is quite possible that the very strong CSR positioning of B&J’s helps increasing the effectiveness of B&J’s CSR report.

4.2.2.2 Stakeholder characteristics

The context of the receivers of CSR communication will influence the effectiveness of CSR communication, as the effectiveness very much depends on how the message is received, and what actions are taken as a result of this (Du et al., 2010). Du et al. (2010) emphasise three stakeholder characteristics that influence CSR communication effectiveness, namely stakeholder type, issue support and social value orientation. Issue support, which concerns the stakeholders’ knowledge of and support of a supported issue, is a very subjective and individual matter, which is also the case with social value orientation, which can be defined as “individuals’ stable preferences for certain patterns of outcomes for oneself and others” (Van Lange et al., 1997, as cited in Du et al., 2010). Therefore, it is not possible to determine whether the effectiveness of B&J’s CSR report is moderated positively or negatively as a result of the stakeholders’ support of B&J’s activities and their social value orientation, and this thesis will therefore not go into this. Regarding stakeholder type, as mentioned in chapter 4.1, it is important for organisations to tailor CSR communication to the different needs of various types of stakeholders. Likewise, in chapter 4.1, an elaboration of whether B&J’s does this in its CSR report can be found.
Conclusion and discussion of results

The analysis in this thesis revealed which aspects of its CSR activities Ben & Jerry’s focuses on in its 2011 CSR report. In general, the original core values of B&J’s are the dominant theme in the CSR report. In the stakeholder analysis, it was found that this will please especially NGO’s, CSR “experts” and activist groups, as well as it may delight employees, as the organisational culture in B&J’s is built up around those exact values. On the other hand, shareholders and investors may lack some concrete evidence for how the CSR activities benefit the financial situation of the company, which the CSR report does not really elaborate on. This may well be a tactical move from B&J’s, as the organisation then appears more sincere in its motive to engage in CSR. Also, one might argue that stakeholders such as shareholders and investors, seeking numbers and statistics confirming a sound financial position, will be likely to look for these in financial annual reports, which contain these exact data (Collier, 2009).

The analysis based on Du et al.’s (2010) Framework for Effective CSR Communication showed that B&J’s CSR report focuses on the organisation’s involvement in different causes. The amount of input of the commitment is stressed by means of action processes adding a scope and appealing to the readers’ logos. Situated ethos and examples in the text emphasises the long experience and thereby durability of B&J’s commitment, as well as the consistency of its efforts, which is further accentuated by an added timeframe and ongoing perspective in the text. The impact of the commitment on the stakeholders is not highlighted in the text, but rather it is implicit, shifting the focus more to the motivation of B&J’s to engage in CSR. The report shows that B&J’s primarily operates from an ethical motive, and that the CSR activities it engages in has a logical fit to its original mission and values. Even though the analysis showed that the CSR report revealed traces of an economic motive, one might argue that, seen separately, the CSR report has a lack of salient self-beneficial (economic) motives, which according to Porter and Kramer (2006) is important to emphasise along with the ethical or philanthropic motives, in order to avoid stakeholders suspecting ulterior motives. Drawing on the theoretical framework of this thesis, a solution to this possibly increased stakeholder scepticism, may be to include more information on how the CSR activities benefit the organisation, so as to not present an image of the organisation that may be seen as naïve in stakeholders’ opinion. As the analysis in this thesis is based only on one message channel, namely the CSR report, the conclusions drawn should be
seen only as valid for the effectiveness of the CSR report, and not for B&J’s CSR communication in general. The apparently good reputation of B&J’s and the fact that the organisation has positioned itself wholly in terms of CSR is judged to be helpful in receiving positive reactions in the future and reduce scepticism. It is hard to say how the characteristics of the stakeholders will affect the effectiveness of the CSR report, as the values of stakeholders are very individual. However, in the stakeholder analysis in chapter 4.1 it was found that B&J’s tailors the communication to the stakeholders in an appropriate way, fulfilling all but needs as described by Dawkins (2004).

In conclusion, B&J’s CSR report follows the general recommendations of the theoretical framework of this thesis, and therefore, the CSR communication may be found effective. However, future research related to this topic may investigate how the readers of the CSR report perceive the report, thus applying the philosophical hermeneutic scientific approach to a reception analysis, to see if the CSR report is also effective in the eyes of the receivers. Also, it would be interesting to include more of B&J’s CSR communication channels to gain a more general view of the organisation’s way of communicating CSR. Finally, an interesting aspect could be to include a competitor analysis, to compare more ways in which CSR can be communicated.
References


**Images on front page:**


Appendix A – Carroll’s CSR pyramid (1991)


Why do companies engage in CSR?

Civic positioning:
Legitimacy in civil society, “license to operate”

Market positioning:
Distinction?
Stories, Corporate brands

Risk management:
More critical stakeholders, globalisation, the media

“The better way”:
Simply because it is the right thing to do

Organizational functioning:
Quest for employee involvement, motivation decentral structures

Appendix C – Schwartz & Carroll’s (2003) Three Domain Model of Corporate Social Responsibility

![Diagram of the Three-Domain Model of Corporate Social Responsibility]

Appendix D - Cultural differences between the UK and the US

The table beneath shows the cultural difference between the United Kingdom and the United States as analysed by Geert Hofstede (Hofstede et al., 2010), whose cultural dimensions theory is widely used and recognised within the field of culture. Though the analysis of cultural differences should not be seen as reflecting the one and whole truth, it is in this thesis used as a general overview of how large the difference between the UK and US cultures is. As can be seen, the difference is very low, which is the reason for why the research findings from British MORI will form as a basis for American based Ben & Jerry’s.

Appendix E – Cornelissen’s Stakeholder Salience Model

Source: Cornelissen (2011) p. 46
Appendix F – CEO letter

A Letter From Our CEO

November 28, 2012

Welcome to Ben & Jerry’s Social and Environmental Assessment report for 2011. The data we report here is collected every year for Ben & Jerry’s independent Board of Directors and our leadership team, to honestly evaluate whether we’re living up to our Company’s Social Mission. Overall, I am very pleased with the progress we are making.

We’re happy to share this report with you in hopes that it might offer some inspiration, some entertainment, and maybe even a few valuable lessons. Most of all, we hope this report helps keep the socially responsible business revolution going!

If you’re looking for the headlines, we’re proud of many things in 2011:

- Our excellent progress in transitioning to Fair Trade ingredients in many of our products;
- Our support for the Occupy movement;
- The growth of our Caring Dairy program with dairy farmers in Vermont and the Netherlands;
- Our introduction of a new, environmentally-friendly freezer to the United States;
- Our activism in support of fair trade agreements, peace-building legislation, and democratic reform.

We also stumbled a few times in the past year. For example, our global progress towards FSC packaging was slower than we planned and due to sticky logistical challenges, we’re stuck at 99% in our progress towards sourcing cage-free or free-range eggs for all of our products.

I hope you will read more in the Highlights section and perhaps even dig into the details in the body of the report that follows.

What I am most proud about is that this report clearly shows that our Company is making decisions and taking risks in line with our core values of social and economic justice, fair trade, sustainable practices, and peace. Making and selling the highest quality ice cream profitably in a competitive marketplace is not easy; but doing it in line with our Social Mission requires extraordinary commitment and passion from everyone in the Ben & Jerry’s community. I am grateful to have that high level of commitment from our Ben & Jerry’s team around the world.

One final note: Ben & Jerry’s engaged Ernst & Young to examine the Quality of Results indicators disclosed in the Social and Environmental Assessment Report. However, due to the items discussed below, Ernst & Young was not able to, and did not express an opinion on the indicators. You can read their Disclaimer of Opinion here, which we accept. It indicates that we were unable to satisfy their requirements for sufficient evidence to enable them to conclude that the indicators presented in this report are fairly stated.

To provide you some context, the estimation methodology we use in this report is described in each section. Our staff works hard to ensure the accuracy of all data and our engagement is committed to furthering our social mission.
Appendix G – 2011-2012 Highlights

2011 – 2012 Highlights

Ben & Jerry’s operates on a three-part mission that aims to create prosperity for everyone that’s connected to our business: suppliers, employees, farmers, franchisees, customers, and neighbors alike.

Our Product Mission drives us to make fantastic ice cream— for its own sake.

Our Economic Mission asks us to manage our Company for sustainable financial growth.

Our Social Mission calls us to use our Company in innovative ways to serve the common good.

You can read the whole Ben & Jerry’s Mission Statement at www.benjerry.com/activism.

GOAL 2.
Make ice cream that’s aligned with our values.

Cage-free & Free-range Eggs. Just about every egg that Ben & Jerry’s uses in the base mix of our products now comes from certified cage-free or free-range farms. We are still working to solve the logistical challenges to get the last 1% of our eggs — those used in our Canadian production, our ice cream novelty bars sold in the U.S., and one “no-sugar added” flavor sold in U.S. scoop shops, to cage-free. Details are coming soon with our full cage-free eggs section.

Sustainable Packaging. For years, we’ve been working to reduce the negative environmental impacts of our packaging materials. A few years back we phased in Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certified paperboard for all of our U.S. pint containers. At the tail end of 2011, we made additional progress in this direction, beginning a year-long project to phase in FSC paperboard for our European 500 ml tubs. The FSC certification means that the paperboard comes from forests that are managed for the protection of wildlife habitat, maintenance of biodiversity, avoidance of genetically modified tree species, and protection of traditional and civil rights, among other Rainforest Alliance criteria for healthy forests.

GOAL 3:
Take the Lead Promoting Global Sustainable Dairy Practices
Appendix H – Our Company

2. OUR COMPANY

How We Work

Ben & Jerry’s has been making ice cream since 1978 when grade school buddies Ben Cohen and Jerry Greenfield opened their first scoop shop in Burlington, Vermont. Though we’ve never strayed from the boys’ original dream — to create unique and euphoric ice cream flavors while making a positive impact along the way — we have grown and changed in all sorts of ways.

Today, Ben & Jerry’s is owned by Unilever, and our packaged ice cream and novelties are sold in stores across the U.S. and in more than 30 other countries around the world. Our products are produced in pints, quarts, 500 ml cups, 2.4-gallon and 4.5 liter tubs, single-serve cups and individual novelties; and these are distributed in supermarkets, grocery stores, convenience stores, scoop shops, restaurants and other venues. Outside of North America, Ben & Jerry’s products are marketed and distributed by affiliated companies within Unilever, and third-party licensees in Israel, Hong Kong and Singapore.
Appendix I – Social and Environmental Results

3. Social and Environmental Results

Overview

In the past few years, Ben & Jerry’s has been working to develop a better way to measure our company’s progress towards achieving Social Mission goals. 2011 is the second year we are using our Quality of Results (QoR) framework for this purpose.

The primary purpose of the QoR is to give Ben & Jerry’s management, Ben & Jerry’s Board of Directors and Unilever management a clear scorecard by which to evaluate the company’s social and environmental performance. The shared goal of all three parties is to increase the total QoR score at a rate faster than the rate of the company’s sales growth — as required by the unique acquisition agreement between Unilever and Ben & Jerry’s.

For 2011, the QoR includes 13 components, each of which measures the social and environmental performance of a specific aspect of Ben & Jerry’s business, as follows:

- Dairy
- Sugar
- Eggs
- Chunks & Swirls
- Fruit
- Chocolate
- Flavorings
- Materials (Packaging & Office)
- Non-GMO transition
- Community & Activism
- Environment & Climate
- Minority Sourcing
- Franchisee Engagement

In this public report, we share key indicators within the QoR that best illustrate our progress in each focus area — and an indication of the yearly change in the QoR score. Our goal is to be as transparent as possible with the QoR data, but for a variety of reasons, we cannot share all the data publicly. In Ben & Jerry’s style, we won’t shy away from reporting key indicators even if they show that we’re not measuring up to our own standards.

The QoR is intended to be a measure of Ben & Jerry’s global business. In some cases, we do not yet have systems in place to measure social and environmental impacts everywhere we have a presence. We hope to expand the scope of the report each year as our capacity allows, with the ultimate goal to have a fully global QoR metric.

We readily acknowledge that the data we use to calculate our QoR scores - and the resources at our disposal for collecting and analyzing this data - have limitations. In addition, the independent assurance scope and process for 2011 data was the most rigorous we’ve ever undertaken in our company’s history, so in many cases, we ran right up against our limitations. Within each section of the QoR to follow, we explain the process we have used and where we think these limitations affect the reliability of our results.

We engaged Ernst & Young, an independent accounting firm, to examine the QoR indicators presented in the sections that follow. You can read the independent accountants’ Disclaimer of Opinion on this report here.
Appendix J – Caring Dairy

4. CARING DAIRY

Caring Dairy

Fresh cream and milk make up more than half of a pint of Ben & Jerry’s ice cream. So we’ve always tried to make sure our Company’s values — including support for safe and sustainable food production, family farms, and rural communities — are reflected in the milk we buy.

For over two decades, we’ve been buying milk for our Vermont production from the St. Albans Cooperative in Vermont, made up of about 450 family farmers; and we have required all of our farmers to pledge not to treat their cows with rBGH, an artificial growth hormone. In the Netherlands, where we produce ice cream for the European market, we buy milk from CONO Cheesemakers, made up of about 500 family farmers; rBGH is not even legal in the Netherlands, so it’s one less thing we have to worry about!

We’ve also been working with these dairy farmers in Vermont and the Netherlands for many years to help them push towards the leading edge of sustainable dairy practices. Our Caring Dairy™ program — now up and running in both places — supports farmers on their journey of continuous improvement in their social, environmental, and economic performance.

We also buy some dairy ingredients from two other suppliers for the ice cream we make in Unilever facilities in Canada, Nevada, and Missouri. These suppliers also provide us with milk from family farmers who pledge not to treat their cows with rBGH.
Appendix K - Eggs

6. EGGS

Eggs

Several years ago, Ben & Jerry's decided to switch to using cage-free eggs in our ice cream. We were convinced by the research that shows cage-free egg systems, combined with rigorous third-party certification, allow hens more opportunity to engage in normal behaviors such as roosting, scratching, and stretching their wings.

As one of the earliest companies to commit to cage-free, we were ahead of the market and had to make the change in stages so the cage-free egg industry could catch up with our demand. We also had logistical challenges of our own to solve. We went 'free-range' for our European egg supply in 2005; and we began to go cage-free in the U.S. in 2007. As of year-end 2011, we are very close to completing this conversion.

Process Notes:

The figures presented in this section are based on estimates of egg volumes needed to cover Ben & Jerry's production at each Unilever plant during 2011. These estimates are generated by combining production data for each Ben & Jerry's product with product formulas. It is not possible to rely on actual egg purchasing records because cage-free eggs are a 'shared ingredient' with other Unilever brands in some plants where Ben & Jerry's is made.

In Europe, some Ben & Jerry's egg ingredients transitioned to using Fairtrade sugar over the course of 2011. This transition makes it more difficult to get precise figures on the percentage of eggs purchased with Fairtrade sugar.

Quality of Results:

In 2011, on a global basis, we estimate that 98.8% of the eggs used in Ben & Jerry's base ice cream mix came from cage-free or free-range suppliers.

All of the eggs we use in the ice cream base of our European production – that's 100% - are 'free range' eggs, certified by

What's Fair Trade?

Fair Trade is a global movement to make sure small farmers in developing countries can compete and thrive in the global economy. When you buy Fair Trade Certified products in the U.S. (or Fairtrade Certified products elsewhere in the world), you can be confident that the farmers who grew the Fair Trade ingredients received a fair price for their harvest. In return, Fair Trade farmers agree to use environmentally sound farming practices, implement fair working standards, and invest in their communities. Fair Trade is a great model that's helping to ensure the global economy is serving people, not the other way around.
Appendix L – Materials

12. MATERIALS

Materials

For years, Ben & Jerry’s has been working to reduce the negative environmental impacts of our packaging materials. It has always been a challenge, given that our packaging must meet strict requirements for food packaging and also has to stand up to temperatures of 20 degrees below zero (F). In recent years, we have focused on making sure all of the paperboard used in our pint cartons and novelty boxes (our two largest packaging uses) is coming from environmentally friendly sources. Toward this end, we have phased in Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certified paperboard for all of our U.S. pint containers. The FSC certification means that the paperboard comes from forests that are managed for the protection of wildlife habitat, maintenance of biodiversity, avoidance of genetically modified tree species, and protection of traditional and civil rights, among other Rainforest Alliance criteria for healthy forests. We are still working to get FSC paperboard into the paperboard that we use in our Canadian, European, and Asian packaging. We are on track to have Europe’s packaging converted to FSC by year-end 2012.

While our pint containers are not allowed to contain post-consumer recycled material because of food contact regulations, we are using 100% recycled paperboard in the boxes that we use for Ben & Jerry’s ice cream bars in the U.S.

We are confident that we can continue to improve our primary packaging materials, such as pints and 500 ml tubs, in the years ahead. Our long-term goals include using unbleached paperboard and finding food-safe renewable resins that can make our packaging fully compostable.

We are working to improve the packaging materials used in Ben & Jerry’s scoop shops, such as bowls, spoons, drink cups, and napkins. For example, in the U.S., we have used unbleached paper in our napkins for many years and our drink cups, while made of plastic, are recyclable and have been light-weighted to use as little material as possible.

In our corporate office, we have made significant strides in using environmentally friendly materials, including 100% post-consumer recycled and process chlorine-free paper; compostable dinnerware, green cleaning solutions, low-VOC paints, and environmentally sound flooring.
Appendix M – Community Involvement & Activism

13. COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT & ACTIVISM

Community Involvement & Activism

Our co-founder, Ben Cohen, once said, “Business has a responsibility to give back to the community from which it draws its support.” Jerry Greenfield, our other co-founder, once asked, “If it’s not fun, why do it?” In many ways, these two ideas capture the yin and yang of Ben & Jerry’s formula for success. And they have inspired our Company and our employees to all sorts of community service, social activism, and fun for over 30 years. Here is a look at a few of the ways we pitched in and shared our voice in 2011.

Ben & Jerry’s Foundation

Part of Ben & Jerry’s commitment to social and economic justice is our support of the Ben & Jerry’s Foundation, which makes grants to grassroots activists making positive change in their own communities. Through the Foundation, we're helping immigrant workers, neighborhood groups, farm workers and dozens of other groups around the country to get organized and fight for a fair deal.

Community Service Projects

Each year, Ben & Jerry’s employees work together on several large-scale community service projects - to fix, clean, build, and refresh things that improve the quality of life for our neighbors. Our Community Action Teams at our Vermont sites organized projects in 2011 with Vermont State Parks, Relay for Life, and Vermont Dairy Days, among other things.

At our annual Franchise Community Gathering, held in Las Vegas, Nevada, dozens of Ben & Jerry’s employees and hundreds of franchisees and scoop shop staff worked at the nearby St. Jude’s Ranch for Children on a variety of renovation, maintenance, and fundraising projects.

Ben & Jerry’s also gives employees paid time off for volunteering in the community on projects of their own choosing. Employees’ participation in our Bucket Brigade program hit an estimated 50% in 2011, up from 30% last year.

Social Mission Campaigns

Beyond hammering nails and painting fences, Ben & Jerry’s involvement in the community extends to activist campaigns around important issues that are aligned with our Company values. We’ve never been afraid to speak up for social and economic justice, safe and sustainable food, or peace! Here’s a look at where we were active in 2011.
DEMOCRACY

In January 2011, Ben & Jerry’s was one of the founding companies of Business for Democracy, a campaign to raise the voice of business leaders who are concerned about the corrupting influence of corporate money in American politics. On the first anniversary of the U.S. Supreme Court’s Citizens United decision (which gave corporations the green light to spend unlimited money to influence election outcomes) our co-founders, Ben Cohen and Jerry Greenfield, joined with dozens of other business leaders to sign a statement in support of a Constitutional amendment to overturn Citizens United. Since then, Business for Democracy has grown to include over 2,000 business leaders nationwide. In 2012, we will be taking a campaign to Get the Dough Out of Politics to the public to build the grassroots movement to overturn Citizens United.

OCCUPY

When protesters in New York City and other places took to the streets in the fall of 2011 to rally against increasing economic inequality in the United States, high unemployment, mortgage fraud, and too much corporate influence in American politics under the Occupy Wall Street banner, Ben & Jerry’s was one of the few companies (okay, maybe the only company) to voice our support. Our Board of Directors issued a direct statement of solidarity and we showed up in Zuccotti Park on several occasions to scoop ice cream for Occupiers. Later, with our co-founders Ben and Jerry leading the way, we provided ice cream to several other occupations around the country, including Seattle, Dallas, and Washington, DC, and material support to the Burlington Occupy encampment. In December, our CEO spoke at the National Press Club urging other companies to support the protests in the name of social and economic justice.

Royalties paid to nonprofits

Every day around the globe, in scoop shops, shopping centers, and grocery stores, a percentage of sales of certain Ben & Jerry’s products are directed to nonprofit charitable organizations, including Fairtrade organizations. These products include:

- All Fairtrade Certified flavors sold in Europe and Fair Trade Certified flavors sold in the U.S. contribute funds that support the work of Fairtrade/Fair Trade labeling organizations and around the world – in addition to Fairtrade premiums paid to farmers for the ingredients they grow for us.
- Phish Food® (global) – Some of the royalties from this flavor are paid to the Waterwheel Foundation’s Lake Champlain Initiative, which protects the health of this beautiful lake on Vermont’s western border, and its surrounding watershed.
- Stephen Colbert’s AmeriCone Dream™ (US) – Royalties are paid to the Stephen Colbert AmeriCone Dream Fund and its mission to benefit children, veterans, and the environment.
- Hannah Teter’s Maple Blondie (US) – Royalties are paid to World Vision, a Christian humanitarian organization helping communities worldwide to reach their full potential by tackling the causes of poverty and injustice. Hannah’s project through World Vision brings clean water and better sanitation to the rural community of Kiridong in Kenya.
- Dave Matthews Band’s Magic Brownies® (US) – Royalties go to Bama Works, a nonprofit organization that supports charitable programs in the Charlottesville, Virginia area including those serving disadvantaged youth, the disabled, protection of the environment, and the arts and humanities.
- Willie Nelson’s Country Peach Cobbler™ (US) – Royalties are paid to Farm Aid and its ongoing mission to support family-farm centered agriculture in America and to keep family farmers on their land.
Appendix N – Environment & Climate

14. ENVIRONMENT & CLIMATE

Environment & Climate

At Ben & Jerry’s, we are committed to reducing the environmental impacts of our business. For many years, we have invested aggressively in energy-efficient technology from cooling systems to lighting to water and waste management systems at our manufacturing plants. We continue to devise and pursue innovative plans to reduce the greenhouse gas emissions associated with our business to respond to the urgent challenge of climate change. We send dairy waste from our Vermont ice cream plants back to two of the farms that supply us with fresh dairy ingredients. Our waste is put into methane digesters with other farm waste - where it generates energy to power the farm!

In 2011, we were thrilled to learn that the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) approved our application to use hydrocarbon (HC) freezers in the U.S. These next-generation HC freezers are significantly more energy-efficient and use gases with lower global warming potential than standard freezers, which use hydrofluorocarbons (HFC). We’ve already got 250 of these next-generation HC freezers in a successful pilot test around the U.S. and now the path is clear to bring thousands more in the coming years and phase out of HFC freezers in our supply chain. In Europe, HC freezers are already in widespread use, including many that contain Ben & Jerry’s ice cream.

For the eleventh year, we offset all of the emissions associated with our Vermont manufacturing facilities and employee air travel with the help of Vermont-based NativeEnergy, a nationally recognized provider of high quality carbon offsets. All of our U.S. offsets support the development of new sources of renewable energy.

Meanwhile, in Europe, we have achieved ‘Climate Neutral’ status according to the standards of HiER, a consortium of 40 NGOs. This means we’ve committed to a demanding multi-year carbon emissions reduction plan and the purchase of Gold Standard carbon offsets for all of our annual emissions. Part of the plan includes the installation of a bio-digester at our manufacturing plant in Hellendoorn, the Netherlands, which will turn the factory’s dairy waste into energy.
Appendix O – Livable wage policy & more

18. LIVABLE WAGE POLICY & MORE

Here’s a little bit more information about Ben & Jerry’s that doesn’t fit into our larger Quality of Results metric but that we think is worth reporting.

Livable Wage Policy

Ben & Jerry’s is committed to paying all of its full-time manufacturing workers a livable wage. In 1995 we established a method for calculating a livable wage benchmark for Vermont. We defined it as the starting wage for a single person that will sustain a reasonable quality of life to include expenditures for housing, utilities, out-of-pocket health care, transportation, food, recreation, savings, taxes, and miscellaneous expenses. Since then, we’ve adjusted this livable wage annually to ensure the relative value is sustained in today’s marketplace. Ben & Jerry’s livable wage benchmark for 2011 was $15.34 per hour, up from $14.64 in 2010. This hourly wage translates to $31,907 per year. For comparison, at year-end 2011, the minimum wage in Vermont was $8.15/hr ($16,952/yr) and the national minimum wage was $7.25/hr ($15,080/yr).

Diversity

Ben & Jerry’s is an equal opportunity employer that values diversity in our workforce. One element of this commitment is our application of Affirmative Action practices to look for conspicuous imbalances in our workforce and take positive steps to correct them. Affirmative Action plans focus on equality in hiring, training, promoting, and compensating employees. We are proud to say that this year (and once again), for the facilities where we completed analysis, there were no areas in which statistically significant adverse impact to our employees were found.

DREAM

Within our South Burlington office, Ben & Jerry’s donates office space to DREAM, a nonprofit mentoring organization that matches college mentors with young people growing up in subsidized housing projects. DREAM staff have access to shared resources in the building, including the employee kitchen, meeting rooms, and photocopiers. We’re glad to be able to support its innovative and important work.