CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY COMMUNICATION ON SOCIAL MEDIA

A rhetorical analysis of A.P. Moeller-Maersk A/S’ Facebook page ‘Maersk Group’

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ABSTRACT

According to Coombs (2012), social media is responsible for the growing tendency of crises appearing and being managed online, also called social media screw-ups () or paracrisis (Coombs 2012). From all these corporate failings on social media, almost 50 percent are related to sustainability or corporate social responsibility (CSR). A good reason for the growing trend of crises “living” in social media is that corporations’ legitimacy on social media is challenged by the growing army of consumer watchdogs online (Coombs 2012: 65-66). It keeps the pressure on social media managers to communicate effectively about CSR. Due to this evolution of web 2.0, content has become a central tool for organizations engaging with stakeholders through social media. If they want to operate in web 2.0 and meanwhile keep the good reputation (Morsing et al. 2008; Coombs 2012), they need to create compelling content. Stakeholders rule the world of social media, and they demand a socially responsible action. And the larger stakeholder groups, the more challenging it will be to meet all expectations - a particular challenge for global multinational companies, such as the A.P. Møller-Maersk Group. The scepticism towards CSR communication on social media has given birth to a paradox of CSR communication (Waddock & Googins – in: Ihlen et al. 2011), also called the ‘Catch 22’ by Morsing et al. (2008), who explain that companies are caught in-between the reasonable importance of communicating about CSR and the fact that there is a huge risk of receiving bad publicity too. According to Waddock & Googins’ paradox, the fallen trust in particularly large and multinational companies, e.g. Maersk Group, has made it less likely that a company’s CSR message will be believed by stakeholders today (Ihlen et al. 2011). There is a credibility gap, and this thesis investigates how this gap is avoided. My problem statement sounds:

In a context of stakeholder scepticism especially towards large multinational companies and the paradox of communicating corporate social responsibility (CSR), how does Maersk Group attempt to maintain its license to operate in the global society with its CSR communication on Facebook?

This problem statement is addressed by the specific research questions: What rhetorical strategies does Maersk Group on Facebook use to persuade the audience about its CSR messages? And how? How does Maersk Group engage its stakeholders on Facebook? And finally, how does Maersk Group use storytelling to support persuasion?
Investigating a case of an exceedingly successful company, the Maersk Group on Facebook, the case study is an **exemplary single-case study** which belongs to the **descriptive** types of case studies (Yin 2012). The case study is placed within within the ontological paradigm and secondarily the epistemological and subjective paradigm, which are both naturally placed in the postmodern thought of social constructivism, where methodology is influenced by qualitative methods.

**Part I** introduces the overall topic of CSR communication on social media, the fact that it is being challenged by sceptical stakeholders and that content and form is vital to gain the good reputation, which is connected to legitimacy and license to operate. License to operate is the overall purpose of communicating CSR; therefore it is the main theme of **part II**. In part II, license to operate will be defined, described and compared to legitimacy, and it will be clarified how it depends on reputation. In this connection, the concepts of CSR, CSR communication and social media are defined, described and discussed in order to understand exactly how communication of CSR on social media is a means of gaining the so important license to operate. Next, **Part III** will similarly describe, define and discuss how persuasion and the underlying rhetorical strategies are vital for changing perceptions of people. It will further identify rhetorical strategies (supported by narratives and pictures) that are effective tools for persuading people that a message is trustworthy. **Trust** is identified as the main purpose of persuading people via CSR messages in order to gain a license to operate. In **Part IV**, the research design is presented and in **Part V**, an analysis will deductively research how Maersk Group uses rhetorical strategies (as well as narratives and pictures) in its CSR communication. Finally, in **Part VI**, a conclusion and discussion will sum up the results in order to find out how Maersk Group’s CSR communication is a means of establishing a license to operate for the company.
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PART I

[Diagram with steps: Introduction, License to operate, Research design, Rhetorical strategies, Rhetorical analysis, Conclusion and discussion]
1 INTRODUCTION

“People want participation, not propaganda,” Scott says (2010: 23). And namely, participation and interacting with your stakeholders are important new rules of marketing and PR. The old marketing and PR forms of one-way communication are long gone and has given way for a new and especially online form of PR mixed with marketing, which is two- or more-way communication at the right time with the right content – just the way your stakeholders want it (Scott 2010). But when engaging in these new waves of communication, a company must especially be aware of the risks involved, which BP learned in 2006, according to Warner & Yeomans (2012: 8): “As BP learned, in this era of blog storms and Facebook furores, where customer gripes can quickly grow into PR headaches, and a single, unpopular corporate decision can result in a costly boycotts, all corporate screw-ups are social.” Warner & Yeomans (2012: 8) write about the new term ‘Social media screw-up’ which they define as “[…] a reputation-bruising crisis that unfolds in the social media.” The term is similar to the term ‘paracrisis’, described by Coombs (2012) as a crisis that appears on social media and is managed there in full view of stakeholders (whereas typical crises are managed invisibly to stakeholders). According to Coombs (2012), social media is responsible for the growing tendency of crises appearing and being managed online. From all these corporate failings on social media, almost 50 percent are related to sustainability or corporate social responsibility (CSR), more precisely 23 out of 50 cases (Yeomans 2012). These many instances of screw-ups elucidate that the new online landscape requires an evident change in the way companies operate, especially in the way they communicate about sustainability (Yeomans 2012.) Warner & Yeomans (2012) support this view by stating how many organizations fail on social media and thereby losing customer faith, patience and reputational value. They leave the full responsibility of the paracrisis in the hands of humans, namely the social media managers and the way they produce text. A good reason for the growing trend of crises “living” in social media is that corporations’ legitimacy on social media is challenged by the growing army of consumer watchdogs online (Coombs 2012: 65-66). It keeps the pressure on social media managers to communicate effectively about CSR.

“Web sites generally reflect Web 1.0 rather than Web 2.0. Web 2.0 refers to applications that promote user-generated content, sharing of that content, and collaboration to create content,” according to Coombs (2012: 20). With this rise of Web 2.0, the importance of sharing content in social media such as YouTube, LinkedIn, Facebook or Twitter has increased. Content has therefore become a central strategy tool for organizations engaging with stakeholders through social media.
If they want to attract stakeholders and keep the good reputation, online content is the way forward. According to Handley and Chapman (2012), it is highly important that companies create online content as a primary part of marketing. But existing in social media demands that you know how to act in the viral world, and that is by creating compelling content: “The sooner you realize that you are not in control of what goes viral, the better. What you can control is the form your content takes and whether it is compelling,” (Handley & Chapman 2012: 114).

But for companies, web 2.0 is a challenging world to operate in and meanwhile keep the good reputation (Morsing et al. 2008; Coombs 2012). Stakeholders rule the world of social media, and they demand a socially responsible action. Therefore, social media is like a ground full of mines for companies (Coombs 2012). And the larger stakeholder groups, the more challenging to meet all expectations – a particular challenge for global multinational companies, such as the A.P. Moeller-Maersk Group. Especially in Europe, companies are documented as very cautious in communicating CSR initiatives. Morsing et al. (2008) explain this by the fact that European companies are still moving towards explicating and articulated CSR strategies, in contrast to USA. The scepticism towards CSR communication on social media from companies’ side is also explained by the paradox of CSR communication (Waddock & Googins – in: Ihlen et al. 2011). This paradox is called the ‘Catch 22’ by Morsing et al. (2008), who explain that companies are caught in-between the reasonable importance of communicating about CSR and the fact that communicating about CSR much of the time brings the company brand into the risk of receiving bad publicity in the media. The catch is illustrated in Figure 1 below. According to Waddock & Googins’ paradox, the fallen trust in particularly large and multinational companies, e.g. Maersk Group, has made it less likely that a company’s CSR message will be believed by stakeholders today (Ihlen et al. 2011). There is a credibility gap.
It is even proven that Danes are the most sceptic citizens to whether companies should communicate their CSR initiatives or not (Morsing et al. 2008). Warner & Yeomans (2012) explain the reason why companies are holding back on CSR communication this way: “[…] companies are petrified of screwing-up, and that fear is magnified when their social responsibility is put under the microscope. It’s not hard to understand their reticence. Twenty-three of the case studies in our new book, ‘#FAIL: The 50 Greatest Social Media Screw-Ups’, are sustainability or CSR-related,” (Yeomans 2012: para. 4).

However, social media is not only a risk. It can also be a huge advantage. The social media world makes the real world smaller, because in here, global organizations can create close relations to stakeholders (Li & Bernoff 2008). Communicating about CSR can therefore be a means of establishing legitimacy in society. It is therefore increasingly important for companies to address the strategy of CSR and thereby operate the concerns of stakeholder groups in order to maintain societal legitimacy; otherwise the company will not survive in the long-term (Werther & Chandler 2006). In Denmark especially, CSR is the most important driver of corporate reputation compared to other countries and exactly 96 percent of the Danish public believes that Danish companies should take on social responsibility, according to Morsing et al. (2008). Also the Reputation Institute says that CSR remains a key driver of corporate reputation (Reputation Institute).

Despite of the risk of receiving bad comments directly from Facebook members online, Maersk Group communicates on a regular basis about its CSR activities on Facebook, as can be seen in Appendix A.
2 THE CASE

The A.P. Moeller-Maersk Group is a worldwide conglomerate that operates in 140 countries with 152,000 employees within the industries of shipping, energy, logistics, retail and manufacturing (Maersk Group c). Maersk Group’s umbrella covers the core brands Maersk Line (one of the world’s largest shipping companies), Maersk Oil, APM Terminals and Maersk Drilling (Maersk Group a). On Maersk Group’s website, the company describes sustainability as one of its strengths driving continued success and future growth (Maersk Group a). On page 36, sustainability is defined in similar terms as CSR and citizenship; hence theory of CSR will be used to analyze the case.

![Image 1: Maersk Group’s businesses](Maersk Group a)

The Maersk Group won two global prizes in 2012: one for the ‘Best Social Media Campaign of the Year’ and ‘Community Presence’ (Joshi 2012) and the second for the best CSR-report (Høj 2012). Especially the largest brand ‘Maersk Line’ under the Maersk umbrella has been awarded success on social media, explained by Jonathan Wichmann, Maersk Line’s Head of Social Media, as plain existence instead of marketing: “Right from the beginning we were very conscious of the fact that social media is about communication, not marketing. It’s about connecting and engaging, not about pushing your products,” (Joshi 2012: para. 7). Again, it is clear that connecting and engaging with stakeholders is important. Wichmann continues: “We never thought of it as a campaign, but rather as a way of being, a presence. If you treat social media as an add-on in the marketing department you’ve missed the point,” (Joshi 2012: paragraph 8). Also in 2011, Maersk Line won an award for the ‘best integration of sustainability in company strategy’ (Maersk Line). Panel member Mr. Ajoy, Vice President of Tata Consultancy Service, explains Maersk Line’s success with CSR this way: “The company is committed to embedding sustainability and CSR into operational
and strategic decision making and there is a strong link between its CSR and business goals. We were particularly impressed by Maersk Line's commitment to raising standards across the industry,” (Maersk Line: para. 3). Based on this clear success within CSR and social media, I have chosen Maersk Group as the case for this research, more precisely the Group’s Facebook page “Maersk Group”, which I will refer to as “Maersk Group FB” in the rest of the thesis. Realising the fact that Maersk Group is successful in both CSR and social media as well as having a membership of more than 1.4 million fan members on its Facebook page, Maersk Group FB clearly stands forth as a successful example which can provide readers of this thesis with insightful knowledge to successful CSR communication on social media.

The following paragraphs present Maersk Group’s strategic approach to CSR communication on social media, predominantly Facebook, by representative Anna Christina Granholm-Brun, who is positioned in Maersk Group Marketing and Branding as Corporate Brand Manager.

2.1 Strategic approach by Maersk Group

As many others, Anna Christina Granholm-Brun realizes that companies are in a critical position on social media and therefore need to be aware of how they communicate (Appendix C: 3): “A company needs to understand who their customers are. They need to understand that now customers have the loudest (!) voice that they've ever had. They can go on social media and say anything they want about a company, and if the company is not there to be present and respond and join in the conversation, then suddenly it could potentially have damaging effects on the company’s image.”

2.1.1 Use of storytelling

When it comes to telling good stories about CSR initiatives on Facebook, Anna Christina Granholm-Brun is not shy about how successful Maersk Group is (Appendix C: 2-3): “In the Maersk Group social account, we do a pretty decent job at telling global (!) stories” and once in a while “[...] make sure that it’s brought to a local level.” Granholm-Brun argues this by stating that the strategy chosen is “[...] presenting the content in a form that is connecting to them” or “[...] on a channel where that person is spending their time.” According to her, the primary questions for thinking the stories strategically into social media in general with a purpose of aiming at stakeholders are: “Where are they? And what are they thinking about? What do they need from us?” “It’s more and more becoming a focus for us in the company. And I think a global shift for a lot of companies,” she confirms in the interview and explains further: “We’re a company which operates in transport and energy, and we’re a conglomerate. And all of that sounds incredibly dry
until you start to unveil the stories behind that, and that comes from just telling the fascinating stories of how an orange comes from a tree in Brazil and ends up in the juice cup of a little girl in Denmark.” She finalizes her answer by stating how opening up to this world is important and how storytelling and being more outside-in focused is something that Maersk Group will continue pursuing.

2.1.2 Transparency and credibility

This new openness and transparency of Maersk is a whole new dimension and as Granholm-Brun describes it (Appendix C: 4), Maersk Group is “[...] opening up more to a degree, where we’re not just opening up to comments and conversation, we’re hosting it. And that sends a very strong signal,” - a signal of transparency. As she describes the company’s history as starting out being a non-comment company that wouldn’t answer stakeholders’ questions about the company’s business conducts. It was a formal and closed company. And today,Granholm-Brun describes the company as transparent: “Transparency is full openness. And you’re open about everything. So, what we did is we transformed even further into a company which is now inviting conversations, and which is following one of our values which is to be upright about what we’re doing [...]” She described the importance of transparency this way: “When you’re open about that, you build not only credibility, but trust. And trust is what we’re looking to achieve [...] in terms of something more practical and more hands on, the way that you respond and the way that you handle conversations in communication overall is so integral to how credible you are as a company. “

3 PROBLEM DEFINITION

As we see, CSR on social media has in recent years grown into being widely known as a part of both corporate communication, branding and, with the evolution of web 2.0, now also online communication. As we see, large multinational companies have increasing responsibilities as demanded more and more by stakeholders, which presents a very special communicative challenge for companies. Furthermore, CSR communication on social media is not deeply examined nor highly defined in the literature of communication. Therefore, a need exists for new, more complex and nuanced definitions of this communication phenomenon. Maersk Group stands forth as a great case example for this thesis’ research with proven success on both social media and within CSR reporting. Since a large multinational company like Maersk Group communicates CSR with success, it is interesting to investigate, how Maersk Group builds its good reputation through CSR communication. This thesis’ problem statement therefore reads:
In a context of stakeholder scepticism especially towards large multinational companies and the paradox of communicating corporate social responsibility (CSR), how does Maersk Group attempt to maintain its license to operate in the global society with its CSR communication on Facebook?

This problem statement is addressed by the following specific research questions:

- What rhetorical strategies does Maersk Group on Facebook use to persuade the audience about its CSR messages? And how?
- How does Maersk Group engage its stakeholders on Facebook?
- How does Maersk Group use storytelling to support persuasion?

The different strategies will more precisely answer how Maersk Group’s messages build credible images and a reputation of trust, since these are the direct outcomes that guide the license to operate. With the “how”-approach, I choose to research the form of communication and not substance, as distinguished by Yin (2003). This purpose of form provides knowledge to the pragmatic side of CSR communication on social media and can therefore help readers to understand how a successful large Danish multinational company on social media communicates CSR with use of rhetorical strategies, engagement on social media and storytelling as a tool for avoiding the para-crisis and maintain a license to operate in society.

4 DELIMITATIONS

According to Ib Andersen (2005), delimitation is the notion of sorting out all relevant information and removing the less relevant, so that it is possible to simplify and create clarity. This thesis went through the following delimitations to create clarity of how Maersk Group uses rhetorical strategies to improve its CSR reputation via Facebook.

Firstly, Maersk Group has established CSR as one of its fundamental values of its entire corporate brand, which is why CSR could also be researched in other areas of Maersk Group such as branding (e.g. brand identity), marketing (e.g. advertising), products or innovations.

Secondly, I choose to focus on a single case study, which analyzes only one unit, e.g. an organization (Andersen 2005). Focusing on a smaller unit of analysis will bring more quality and depth to results, which is needed in a rhetorical analysis. Further, the case study is delimited to the years of 2011-2013, because Maersk Group was first established on Facebook in 2011. This
provides me with an interval of three years for my study, which is reasonable enough since online communication trends shift quickly.

Thirdly, the case of Maersk Group is delimited to the Facebook page Maersk Group. I am aware that Maersk Group’s other social networking sites, such as YouTube, Twitter or Instagram, could have provided me with a broader knowledge about Maersk Group’s CSR communication on social media, but Facebook was chosen due to the limited space and time resources of this thesis project, as well as the fact that it is Maersk Group’s most popular social media with over 1.2 million followers (Maersk Group c).

Fourthly, the CSR units of analysis are delimited from other Facebook posts unrelated to CSR, e.g. posts concerning job positions. The criteria for collection will be explained later on page 44. Had I used all Facebook posts, results could have given answers to how Maersk Group’s rhetoric influences its entire corporate reputation.

Fifthly, the thesis is delimited in the qualitative analysis from including a deeper interpretative analysis (e.g. discourse or content) of the interview with Anna Christina Granholm-Brun, since it is only used as an overall strategic insight to discuss the results in this thesis. Further, Anna Christina Granholm-Brun was chosen for the interview on the basis that she is one of the key persons responsible for the communication and branding of the Maersk Group on social media including Facebook. I am aware that the interviewee could as well have been another colleague of hers.

Finally, the thesis focuses on Maersk Group over Maersk Line. I realise that Maersk Line has won more prizes for its CSR and social media communication than Maersk Group has (Maersk Group d), but my reasoning for placing focus on Maersk Group is reasonable. Knowing that communication influences reputation, Maersk Group on Facebook provides me with an insight into the entire corporate CSR reputation, where Maersk Line as a daughter-company to Maersk Group would only give insights into a limited part of that corporate CSR reputation.

5 TERMINOLOGY

In this thesis, I make use of the central terms legitimacy, license to operate, reputation, CSR communication, social media and rhetoric. The central term of these is CSR communication. It is connected to Reputation in the way that it is a means of establishing reputation if communication is consistent over a longer time. If reputation is perceived positively, it is a means of establishing legitimacy, which has the same meaning as license to operate. On social media, CSR
communication is particularly challenged and depends on effective trustworthy and persuasive rhetoric.

Figure 2: Terminology

Source: Own contribution

6 SCIENTIFIC FRAMEWORK

The thesis is rooted in the scientific frame of social constructivism and hermeneutic. With this scientific approach as a basis, I choose the theoretical and methodological frame that will lead the thesis from the problem statement to the conclusion. The next paragraphs will clarify the scientific frame.

6.1 Social constructivism

Both Thurén (2008) and Nygaard (2012) state that by taking a social constructivist approach, the thesis bases its research on the understanding that social media are a construct of the social relations between humans (thoughts and language) and that knowledge itself about these constructions is also a social construction. Knowledge and understanding about these social constructions existing in human relations can be created by researching the communication
between humans. And by creating knowledge, this thesis itself will thereby be a social construction and take part in the creation of knowledge about concepts of the world and thereby also create reality. It is a ongoing dynamic process. Nygaard (2012) also emphasizes that research should happen independently from the researcher, since he/she is not a part of the construction of analysis (Nygaard 2012). This is the reason why I conceptualize ‘rhetoric’ on social media as a cross field between different theories and propositions - and not based on individual’s evaluations of it. Furthermore, I do not ask whether knowledge gained from researching these social relations on Maersk Group FB are true or not, but instead how they are formed and constructed, since social constructionists always get their raw material from the reality. Therefore, I do not need to question if data is true or not (Thurén 2008). However, I do acknowledge that I (as well as the interviewee and individuals in general) will not be able to create knowledge without it being influenced by my own realizations and pre-understandings as researcher of the case. This is why the thesis also takes a hermeneutic position.

According to Nygaard (2012), a hermeneutic position means that it is impossible to remain entirely objective in research since an individual’s own experience and pre-understandings of the world will always indirectly influence interpretations, also in an “objective” research. This way, hermeneutic turns strongly away from positivism because it does not view humans as scientific objects that can be understood as stones or atoms by measures. Meanings (about humans or texts) must be interpreted in relation to the context, in which meaning is created in and is an expression for. This ‘hermeneutic circle’ is the ongoing relation between text and its context, where the text as a part of the whole is understood by looking at the whole first – the context. Therefore, analysis in a hermeneutic position is a dialectic process, where interpretation changes between the part and the whole (Nygaard 2012). With this understanding of humans and language from a hermeneutic and subjective point of view, I am aware that my own beliefs and thoughts about the world will unconsciously influence the way I conduct my research e.g. the way I categorize data. I try to meet this problem by carefully structuring my analysis deductively and argue for the relevancy of the steps that I make throughout the research. I will describe deduction as a method further on page 45.

Returning to social constructivism, there are two paradigms to choose from: An epistemological and ontological. The epistemological paradigm views knowledge about reality as a construction in itself and the ontological paradigm sees reality itself as a construction (Nygaard 2012). Within both paradigms, Collin (2003 – in: Nygaard 2012) talks about a physical and social reality. This
thesis chooses an approach within both paradigms about the social reality, but primarily within the ontological paradigm. I do believe that there are people from whom I can learn about the strategy behind the communication on Facebook, which is described through an interview with Anna Granholm-Brun, Corporate Brand Manager in Maersk Group Marketing and Branding. But this interview is only used to support my discussion of the findings in the case-study research. I therefore, primarily believe that the social relations that I examine exist in Maersk Group’s communication on Facebook, which is investigated to create knowledge about that social reality. But likewise, I realise that this thesis being communication itself is also a social construction of reality which could be investigated to produce new knowledge. Focusing on this thesis’ contribution to scientific knowledge in itself, it investigates a social ontological construct (reality) and thereby creates a social epistemological construct (knowledge about reality). I do not doubt that there is a physical world which I can investigate, but having chosen a primary ontological belief, I do not create knowledge through interaction or negotiations with individuals (epistemological).

With an ontological position, I investigate the world more objectively. I am aware that people are individuals and can have different views on the matter. If I interviewed several of Maersk Group’s social media managers, I would have gotten different views on how they build their messages. And maybe they have intentions, but do they walk the talk? I assume they do since Maersk Group is so successful. However, to avoid these doubts, I choose the more objective ontological focus of analyzing the Facebook posts directly. This brings out more objective results, as I am the only individual that can affect findings. I could have chosen the more epistemological view if I for instance wanted to know more about the intensions of managers behind the page. But in this thesis I want to know the actual pragmatic form of the messages. And how these messages in themselves can tell us more objectively about how Maersk builds a trustworthy image through rhetorical strategies on Facebook. I am aware, though, that my own pre-understandings will affect the interpretation process, no matter what paradigm I would have chosen. But this is inevitable, since I need to include myself as researcher when doing a qualitative analysis. Therefore, I am aware of the fact that my knowledge of Maersk Group’s rhetoric is adjusted and developed during the analysis process as I get cleverer. This view has a central place in social constructivism and is another reason for why hermeneutic and social constructivism work logically together in research (Nygaard 2012).
Summarized, I place the research in this thesis primarily within the ontological paradigm and secondarily the epistemological and subjective paradigm, which are both naturally placed in the postmodern thought of social constructivism, where methodology is influenced by qualitative methods.

7 METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

According to Nygaard (2012), the methodological approach will affect the horizon of understanding created in this thesis. Having this in mind, I will now explain why I choose the qualitative research approach, and further how this approach is implemented pragmatically throughout the analysis, deductively. This deductive method will guide the structure of the thesis, presented in the final paragraph.

7.1 A qualitative research approach

Qualitative research is “more adaptable, unfolding as it goes along” than quantitative research is, according to Daymon & Holloway (2011: 26). They further explain that the quantitative research is characterized by a tightly pre-structured line of enquiry determined by a hypothesis or a set of objectives, and the quantitative structure in advance of the analysis is a form of ‘recipe’ or formula for how the study should develop and be conducted. Opposite to this, they describe the qualitative research as enabling a dynamic analysis where the collected empirical data leads the way through analysis letting it unfold itself for an understanding of the data as it is.

Quantitative methods are numerical measurements, statistical analysis and the search for cause and effect often conducted with the use of questionnaires, or standardized interviews and observations. That method mainly belongs to the positivist researchers who believe in quality through measurement, whereas interpreters such as social constructivists focus on meaning and therefore also usually choose the qualitative methods. Opposite to positivists who go from a general hypothesis to examine a particular phenomenon, social constructivists (within the interpretive paradigm) go from a particular unique phenomenon to the general and develop hypotheses forth going during the analysis process (Daymon & Holloway 2011). Based on this mindset for the thesis, I choose to disregard ‘grounded theory’ as the qualitative research approach, since this would require me to begin with only ‘hunches’, not with a basis of theory, which is what I need to conduct for the analysis that I aim for. Instead, I choose rhetorical analysis supported by a smaller amount of narrative and multimodal analysis as the qualitative analysis methods. These methods allow me to test theory on the empirical data and to examine how data
exists in its own context. Rhetorical, narrative and multimodal analysis will be further described on page 45.

During the qualitative analysis process, a constant interplay between ongoing analysis and data collection takes place, which is why qualitative research is dynamic – also called ‘iterative’. This interplay especially happens between the theory and the data collected (Daymon & Holloway 2011). However, as Silverman (2010 - in Daymon & Holloway 2011) argues, “[...] just because qualitative research is flexible, there is no excuse not to come up with a clear sense of purpose from the outset [...]” Daymon & Holloway (2011) support this view when stating that qualitative data analysis, including data such as transcripts of interviews, photographs, multimedia information or websites, is a process that brings order to a great variety of data by organizing, structuring and construing meaning. In other words, structuring data makes the data more meaningful, and it is thereby possible to gain an understanding of it. The structuring of data collected for this thesis will be explained on page 46.

7.2 A case study research

My methodological approach consists of a case study, which is relevant for investigating a specific phenomenon in its natural context (Daymon & Holloway 2011), such as communication on social media. There are three different overall types of case studies: The explanatory, the exploratory and the descriptive case study (Yin 2012). Since the thesis looks into a case of an exceedingly successful company (Maersk Group on Facebook), the case study is an exemplary case study which belongs to the descriptive types of case studies (Yin 2012). Furthermore, the case study is a single-case study, since only one unit is analyzed – Maersk Group on Facebook (Andersen 2005). The reason for choosing a single-case study rather than a multiple-case study is that the single case represents a ‘critical test of a significant theory’ (Yin 2003: 41). The primary questions to a case study asks “how”, “why” or “What is going on here?” (Daymon & Holloway 2011; Yin 2003), from which “how” is my chosen question form. Daymon & Holloway (2011) distinguish between two ways of researching case studies: A snapshot, where an incident or event at a brief moment in time is studied, or a longitudinal study, where a situation over time is studied. This thesis’ case study is a longitudinal study because it focuses on Facebook posts over a period of three years, from 2011 to 2013. And it is investigated as it is in its natural context, which is identified as web 2.0 of social media.
According to Yin (2003), the advantage of a case study is that it deals with evidence over which the investigator has little or no control, whereas e.g. an experiment deals with investigator-manipulated behaviour, e.g. in a laboratory. Daymon & Holloway (2011) identify advantages in a case study, such as extending knowledge of a communication phenomenon in its context and that it brings nuances of professional communication to life by describing a piece of reality. In the case of Maersk Group on Facebook, a case study research can give an understanding of both the phenomenon of Maersk Group’s CSR communication on Facebook, but also how this phenomenon is affected by the context of social media. This approach is therefore suitable for this thesis, since I want to examine both sides of the case: how Maersk Group uses rhetorical strategies (supported by narratives and multimodality) in its messages to maintain a good reputation as well as how these strategies are affected by the context of the dynamic web 2.0 of social media. With a social constructionist approach, the research is also able to indirectly say something about the social relations that Maersk Group has with its stakeholders, but this is not the focus of this thesis. Last but not least, this case study, like case studies in general, gives insights into an area, which is not yet researched. (Daymon & Holloway 2002) This un-researched area is Maersk Group’s Facebook page from which I have collected empirical data for analysis. A clearer description of this thesis’ qualitative research methods will be described next.

7.3 Rhetorical analysis

The qualitative content analysis “[...] offers a means of revealing features that are hidden or latent in the content, such as irony, rhetorical and stylistic devices, metaphors and figures of speech or constructs associated with visual images,” as stated by Daymon & Holloway (2011: 277-78). According to Hijmans (1995), rhetorical analysis is a means of discovering these content features and more precisely answering the question of how a message is structurally presented both visually and textually. Relying on structural characteristics of the text, rhetorical analysis is a stylistic analysis researching how the communicator, Maersk Group, has made certain choices to form and present its message. Focusing on the form of the message, rhetorical analysis analyzes distinctive features such as composition, form, use of metaphors and structure of argumentation or reasoning. What is evident here is that the features of rhetorical analysis are primarily concerned with the qualities of the plain text, but it can also work with narrative or interpretative analysis too. There are three ways to use rhetorical analysis:

1. If a text refers to a broader (social) context, which can be mediated by a sender, for instance social institutions or the cultural climate
2. If emphasis is laid on the construction and syntactical properties
3. If pragmatic aspects of language use are stressed including communicator choices, practices and strategies.

This thesis clearly chooses the third and pragmatic aspect of rhetorical analysis. Doing so, the analysis can uncover Maersk Group’s language use - more precisely, what rhetorical strategies are used in order to build trust. It is important to note that it is difficult to distinguish among discourse and rhetorical analysis, since discourse is often the object of rhetorical analysis, as in the case of this thesis where the units of analysis are Facebook posts.

7.3.1 Narrative analysis
Hijmans (1995) states that rhetorical analysis and narrative analysis go well hand-in-hand, because both word-use and storytelling are means of structuring a message and thereby both fulfil a purpose of persuasion. Like rhetorical analysis, narrative analysis also focuses on formal structure, Hijmans says (1996), but from a narrative perspective. Narratives have a marked beginning and ending, it involves characters and a plot with a pattern of result. Narrative analysis is “a method concerned with the description of the logical and chronological structure of the course of events and the development of a story,” Hijmans says (1996: 96).

7.3.2 A Social Semiotic analysis of Visual Communication
In order to analyze how pictures support the rhetorical strategies and storytelling, an analysis is needed of how the pictures are linked with words. For this, the method social semiotic analysis is most relevant. Social semiotic analysis is like rhetorical and narrative analysis a means of structuring an argument. It acknowledges the fact that pictures and words can represent each other, both ways, with the use of linking (van Leeuwen & Jewitt 2001) and especially focuses on meaning in text and visuals. For an understanding of meaning in both text and visuals, iconography understood with Ferdinand de Saussures’ sign will be used for analysis as described by Ditlevsen et al. (2007). According to Hijmans (1997), semiotic analysis is concerned with the deeper meaning of the message, resulting in the referential nature and symbolic meaning as the core subject of analysis. A more detailed explanation of Saussures’ sign will be described on page 63.

7.4 Structure of the thesis
The thesis chooses a deductive method, meaning that it will first present relevant theory and propositions, describe it and then test it on empirical data (Ankersborg 2011). This way, theory designs the analytical research. With an inductive method, the structure would have been more unstructured, dynamic and led by discussion points (Daymon & Holloway 2011). Hereby, I
influence my own pre-understandings to understand the unit of analysis, Maersk Group’s rhetoric (supported by use narratives and pictures) in CSR posts on Facebook, better from a context of the paradox of CSR communication in general and the growing scepticism towards large multinational companies, especially on social media exemplified with the new concept of the para-crisis by Coombs (2012). Doing so, I realize how the context influences rhetoric, also in the case of Maersk Group on Facebook, and I use my pre-understandings as a resource for analysis (Daymon & Holloway 2011). Building theory this way as a basis for my analysis, I develop my own pre-understanding and thereby melt it with theory to create a new horizon to see data from a new, more relevant and useful perspective (Nygaard 2012). With a deductive method, I will base results on a logical coherence among theory and data. If there is logical coherence, where rhetorical strategies are identified in the data, conclusions about the data are considered valid. Choosing a social constructionist point of view on the world along with a deductive method, I will work down from a theoretical as well as a context point of view in order to collect and categorize data. This enables a further understanding of the social relations that the communicative Facebook messages are a part of, and hence influenced by. The analysis thereby becomes the connector between the content of CSR and the context of social media and stakeholders, which has the purpose of gaining a positive reputation. The framework of this thesis research is therefore divided into six main parts: Introduction, License to operate, Research design, Rhetorical strategies, Rhetorical analysis and finally, conclusion and discussion. For the reader to follow, a model (see Figure 3) will visualize the thesis structure and localize each particular part with a darker blue colour.
Part I will introduce the overall topic of CSR communication on social media, the fact that it is being challenged by sceptical stakeholders and that content and form is vital to gain the good reputation, which is connected to legitimacy and license to operate. License to operate is the overall purpose of communicating CSR; therefore it is the main theme of part II. In part II, license to operate will be defined, described and compared to legitimacy, and it will be clarified how it depends on reputation. In this connection, the concepts of CSR, CSR communication and social media are defined, described and discussed in order to understand exactly how communication of CSR on social media is a means of gaining the so important license to operate. Next, Part III will similarly describe, define and discuss how persuasion and the underlying rhetorical strategies are vital for changing perceptions of people. It will further identify rhetorical strategies (supported by narratives and pictures) that are effective tools for persuading people that a message is trustworthy. Trust is identified as the main purpose of persuading people via CSR messages in order to gain a license to operate. In Part IV, the research design is presented and in Part V, an analysis will deductively research how Maersk Group uses rhetorical strategies (as well as narratives and pictures) in its CSR communication. Finally, in Part VI, a conclusion and discussion will sum up the results in order to find out how Maersk Group’s CSR communication is a means of establishing a license to operate for the company.
7.5 Theoretical considerations
Developing theory as a part of the design phase is essential for case studies, and the complete research will eventually embody a theory in itself of what is being studied (Yin 2003): Maersk Group’s CSR communication on Facebook. Theories within the fields of PR, marketing and corporate communication/branding illuminate the concepts of legitimacy/license to operate, reputation (ethos) and social media (word-of-mouth). These concepts describe the context of Maersk Group’s CSR communication and provide an understanding to why Maersk Group has chosen specific rhetorical strategies. It enables a more in-depth knowledge of how rhetorical strategies work as a tool for building legitimacy and a license to operate in society. Theories within the field of persuasion communication illuminate what rhetorical strategies (including engagement in social media, multimodality and storytelling) can be found in Maersk Group FB’s posts (text and pictures). These theories and proposition especially provide a relevant basis with which it is possible to uncover how Maersk Group pragmatically builds trust. Finally, the first-provided theoretical frame of branding, PR and marketing will serve as a scope within which the thesis results can reveal a wider value of communicating CSR on social media. With these most relevant theories selected as point of view, it is possible to collect the most relevant data to answer the research question in the best possible way.

7.6 Empirical considerations
The data collected from Maersk Group FB in the form of Facebook posts are documentation or messages of communication that I do not have control over. It is empirical data collected as it is in its natural environment; formed already on Facebook by Maersk Group. This way, results provide knowledge of a piece of reality. A specific focus has been given on the communicative messages only – on how the Facebook posts were produced, externally from its authors. This way, it is possible to look more objectively on how messages are formed and not be influenced by how Maersk Group strategically wanted messages to turn out. The objective message form is what stakeholders are exposed to only. Exclusively from external communication, stakeholders perceive images of the company and add on to the entire corporate reputation. In the first part of the research, empirical data is collected based on a definition of CSR, and in the second and case-based part of the research, the empirical CSR data will be divided into six dimensions according to Maersk Group’s own definition of sustainability.
In the introduction, an insight into Maersk Group’s strategic approach behind the messages is provided. The interview was only used as a referencing context for the rhetorical analysis to see
how results would eventually confirm the strategy of Maersk Group, which is why the interview has not been further analyzed and used as direct empirical data. However, since it is used as a secondary source, it does call for an explanation to why this is a reliable source. The interview was conducted over Skype with the interviewee Anna Christina Granholm-Brun, Corporate Brand Manager in Maersk Group Marketing and Branding. It was recorded on a recording device and hereafter transcribed. The transcription of the interview is abstractive in its form for it to be easily read. Mumbling was left out and words which Granholm-Brun emphasized were marked by an exclamation mark “(!)”. Before the interview, I sent the pre-defined questions to her. During the interview these questions where used as guidance for the conversation which is named a semi-structured interview. It is called so, because it is neither an open every-day conversation nor a closed questionnaire (Kvale & Brinkmann 2009). Being non-directive and less structured, the semi-structured interview is qualitative and thereby differs from quantitative interviewing, which is more directive and structured (Daman & Holloway 2011). The interview guide which was given beforehand does not need to be followed strictly because it aims at understanding the interviewee’s perspectives of the case in a collaboratively way (Daymon & Holloway 2011; Kvale & Brinkmann 2009). Compared to the quantitative researcher, a qualitative researcher is a traveller and explorer, not a mine digger (Kvale & Brinkmann 2009).

8 QUALITY OF THE RESEARCH DESIGN

According to Nygaard (2012) and Thurén (2008), quality of a research depends upon two things: reliability and validity. Reliability means that research can be repeated with the same results (Yin 2009: 40). Since the research design rests on reliable theory and a reliable case of a highly successful company within CSR communication, repetition of this particular case study should be possible. It is, however, still important to remember that the results will unconsciously be influenced by the researcher’s (my) pre-understandings of the world. That being said, this problem can be met to some extent by clearly and systematically explaining how research was conducted and with what theory basis. Therefore, it is important to explicitly explain this pre-understanding and thereby visualize the subject (the researcher). Further, it is highly important to clarify and argue for the meaningful steps in the research process. However, it is impossible to clarify every single step in the process, which is why the researcher can only aim at describing methodology as best as possible (Nygaard 2012). Therefore, I aim at explaining every step of my research on page 44. Validity is, on the other hand, the extent to which findings can be generalized. This thesis is externally validity, meaning that I use a broad theory as a domain to
which my single-case study’s findings can be *analytically generalized*. Therefore, the definition that I collect data by can help to find other cases to which the results will then be generalizable. But since the case is an *exemplary* case, results will very likely be hard to replicate on another case. Single cases are typically criticized for offering a poor basis like this for generalizing (Yin 2009). This is not a problem in this case, though, since my data covers the entire palette of Maersk Group FB’s CSR posts. Analytical generalization is actually not needed, because the findings will stand strong enough on their own. On this basis validity of results is confirmed.

Other companies should only use this thesis as an insight into how Maersk Group targets the paradox of CSR communication. And perhaps use it for inspiration, while remembering that the explicit content and strategies (language and rhetoric) should always be especially considered for the specific company in focus. Since Maersk Group can change the communication form or Facebook could change the communication platform one day, a last important thing to remember is to make clear that the results are only tentative and not definite. Anything is possible, and the findings must therefore be viewed as only tentative. Rhetorical strategies found in this analysis are assumed only suitable for Maersk Group FB.
PART II
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The main focus of this thesis is to find out how Maersk Group achieves a license to operate through its CSR communication on Facebook. In this second part of the thesis, the basis for this focus is clarified and discussed – what is license to operate, and what does it depend upon? License to operate will be defined in relation to legitimacy, reputation and social media. Thereby, the conceptual and physical context of Maersk Group on Facebook is presented to understand the whole metric of CSR communication on social media, especially since theories on this particular area are limited. A wider understanding of how CSR communication is influenced by social media is especially needed, and in this connection it will be stated and argued that by aiming on particular stakeholders, Maersk Group FB is indeed a channel from which it is possible to establish a license to operate (legitimacy). Finally, corporate social responsibility (CSR) will be defined in order to provide the basis for how the units of analysis will be collected.

9.1 LEGITIMACY – A LICENSE TO OPERATE

In this paragraph, legitimacy is defined in order to understand how it provides a license to operate in society for companies. Furthermore, legitimacy’s dependency on reputation is described, to lead to an understanding of how CSR communication eventually is not just a tool for building a positive reputation, but also for building legitimacy and license to operate.

According to Cornelissen (2011: 243), legitimacy is defined as “social acceptance”, which is a result that comes from behaving in ways that promote and build trust between the company and the community. A trustworthy behaviour means adhering to regulations but also community norms and expectations. These expectations are also described as a ‘psychological contract’ by Cornelissen (2011: 242). By living up to the psychological contract, a company achieves social acceptance from stakeholders in a company’s community and thereby also gains legitimacy to operate in that community. The gained legitimacy is therefore further called a ‘license to operate’ (Cornelissen 2011: 234). If a company has the social acceptance of legitimacy, it stands more powerful during crises, as stakeholders are more willing to give it the benefit of the doubt (Cornelissen 2011: 243).
9.1.1 Reputation – an attractive outcome

Reputation on the other hand is defined as “[...] an evaluation of an organization and its ability to deliver a particular good,” (Cornelissen 2011: 243). Reputation does not capture the same dimension that legitimacy has of adhering to norms and behaviour expected by community. However, reputation is a way to establish the belief that a company is able to live up to expectations, where legitimacy is the acceptance that a company actually does live up to expectations. Furthermore, reputation is an overall evaluation of a company, which is build over time from immediate and present perceptions (images) of the company (e.g. on Facebook):

“Corporate image is the immediate mental picture that audiences have of an organization. Corporate reputations, on the other hand, typically evolve over time as a result of consistent performance, reinforced by effective communication [...]” (Cornelissen 2011: 132). Figure 4 below by Morsing et al. (2008) shows the six dimensions that drive the establishment and maintenance of a positive reputation among stakeholders. These dimensions are social responsibility (CSR), emotional appeal, products and services, workplace environment, financial performance and vision and leadership. However, three of these six dimensions are important key drivers. Morsing et al. (2008) argue that products and services followed by social responsibility are the most important drivers for the third dimension and primary key driver for reputation, emotional appeal.

Figure 4: The six dimensions of reputation

Source: Morsing et al. 2008: 100
The Reputation Institute measures companies’ corporate reputation with the tool *The Global RepTrak Pulse* – the model of this tool describes the central and close relationship between emotional appeal and reputation more clearly, which you see below in Figure 5:

![Figure 5: The Global RepTrak Pulse](source)

The dimensions of emotional appeal are defined by Morsing et al. (2008) as *feel good about*, *admire and respect* and *trust*. These are similar to the Reputation Institutes’ key perceptions *feeling*, *admire*, *esteem* and *trust*. Among these factors of emotional appeal, Goodman & Hirsch (2010: 35) identifies trust as a particularly important aspect when trying to build a good reputation with communication: “A strong relationship of trust closes the gap between perceptions of the company and its performance.” They further argue that bad corporate behaviour can lead to the eroding of public trust for the company and its loss of license to operate. Based on this, *trust* is therefore the most important purpose of general corporate communication, but especially CSR communication. This is supported by the next paragraph which presents *The Semiotic Model of Branding* – a model of how you build the trusting relationship *ethos* through a realigned brand identity.

### 9.1.2 The Semiotic Model of Branding

With old marketing and PR forms of web 1.0., corporate image, reputation and brand in general were previously produced and created through one-way communication. Consumers were exposed to messages and understood it as it was: presented with no possibility of giving feedback to the sender. There was no way to bend messages or identities of companies. Now with the new PR-marketing of web 2.0., identities are more dynamic because of social media and user-generated content. Consumers are today also a means of creating a company’s image and thereby
its identity, if companies are willing to listen and use the feedback from consumers to adapt to expectations.

Coombs (2012) views CSR communication on social media as a good way to enable monitoring of stakeholders’ expectations and thereby give a good insight into the psychological contract that companies should live up to in order to maintain a license to operate. And if a company is able to run CSR efforts in a successful way, CSR is according to Goodman & Hirsch (2010: 117) also a very powerful tool for good brand stewardship. Goodman & Hirsch (2010) understand the good stewardship as the good reputation and thereby the external perceptions of a company. They also explain that a good reputation is dependent upon the internal perceptions that a company has of itself. There must not be a misalignment. This balance is what a company must always strive to stabilize in corporate communication that CSR communication is a part of.

The Semiotic Model of Branding by Heidi Hansen (2012 - See Figure 6) shows how the alignment between a company’s brand identity and a company’s communication is the way to establish trust in the brand. The ethos mix equals the perceived images and reputation of the company. Therefore, this model is relevant to understand a wider purpose of Maersk Group’s CSR communication.

Heidi Hansen (2012) describes The Semiotic Model of Branding as a circular process built on three dimensions: The ethos mix (image and reputation) is created through a PR and marketing-consciously produced communication mix (the organization’s communication), which reflects the identity mix (the organization’s identity). The communication expresses the company’s image-wish and thereby influences stakeholders’ perceptions and expectations of what they can expect of the company. The brand is physically created in the receiver’s decoding of the communicational message. For this decoding, the relation between the communication mix and ethos mix is essential, especially to meet the paradox of communicating CSR.
In *The Semiotic Model of Branding*, communication is continuously adjusted to consumer’s perceptions. Hansen (2012) explains this with the *realigned ethos*. In rhetoric, she says, there is an *introductory ethos*, a *concluded ethos* and a *realigned ethos*. The *introductory ethos* is the previous perception and knowledge the consumer has of the company, e.g. Maersk Group, before it enters in any interaction. The *concluded ethos* is a result of the interaction consumer has with the company. The interaction can either confirm/strengthen the previously held beliefs or it can change in a positive or negative way. If ethos is changed, the consumer now has a realigned ethos and expectations for the company will have changed, which the company will meet next time they interact. The realigned ethos based on new expectations is called “Me” in the model. This should be used by companies to adjust their corporate identity including CSR efforts to be able to meet stakeholders’ expectations next time they interact in communication. The adjustments are marked by “I” in the model. Based on The Semiotic Model of Branding, CSR communication should aim for either strengthening stakeholders’ ethos (perception) as it is, if positive, or change it in a positive way. The following paragraphs will provide a more detailed understanding of the case Maersk Group FB, and how it is a means of establishing legitimacy for Maersk Group.

9.1.3 Placing Maersk Group FB in a context

“Often a case study is associated with a location, a set of people such as a social or professional group, an organization or a community,” (Daymon & Holloway 2011: 115). The case
Maersk Group on Facebook – an exemplary case study

study is an online community, more precisely the community *Maersk Group* (Maersk Group FB). Maersk Group FB is situated in the online social networking site *Facebook*, which is placed within a wider context of the global society grown by the internet (web 2.0; See Figure 7). Having already been introduced to web 2.0, it will be relevant now to gain a deeper understanding of Facebook and the Facebook page, Maersk Group FB.

![Figure 7: Context of Maersk Group FB](image)

*Source: Own contribution*

9.1.3.1 *Facebook - a social networking site*

Social media is defined as providing “[...] the way people share ideas, content, thoughts, and relationships online. Social media differ from so-called ‘mainstream media’ in that anyone can create, comment on, and add to social media content. Social media can take the form of text, audio, video, images, and communities,” (Scott 2010: 38). The more precisely defined social networking sites are a subset of social media (Scott 2010). On social networking sites, it is easy for people to create an individual profile by which they can virtually network with offline and new online friends. Facebook is a social networking site similarly to Twitter, LinkedIn, ComScore, MySpace and many more. Facebook relates people to each other online, it enables sharing of content, ideas and thoughts, and anyone can create content if they have a Facebook profile. Facebook posts mainly consist of text and images, even though it is possible for people to share audio and videos as well. This is the case for Maersk Group FB as well. Besides the individual profiles and relationships, individuals can also join a community such as a group, a fan-page or an event.
Social networking is extremely popular all over the world (Scott 2010). According to Scott (2010) Facebook has reached 275 million visitors worldwide by 2010 and over a 100 million people log onto Facebook every day, at least once. We should not go further back than 2006 to find that Facebook was actually a closed networking site for students only, he says. Surprisingly enough, simply because it has grown into being very established in people’s minds globally. However, Facebook is not used for the individual explicitly anymore. Also companies are moving in to connect with communities and stakeholders directly (Scott 2010: 175), as is shown in this image:

![Image 2: Companies are present on Facebook](source: Facebook 2013)

The advantage of Facebook pages is that it gives group members the possibility to individually decide from who they want to receive information, if it’s Burberry, Starbucks or Maersk Group for that instance. And the sender is not spamming people with unwanted information, since receiving messages has already been chosen by the members by liking the pages or joining the groups (Scott 2010: 177). Further, Facebook pages and online communities in general can provide the community feeling of being connected to other people feeling the same for that brand and thereby members of that group share a bond – they are a part of a family, Sernovitz says (2009). These feelings of a family bond surrounding a brand are the most effective feelings for word of mouth. E.g. brands like Harley Davidson, Macintosh and Nikon are said to be the strongest WOM-brands. They have a strong community feeling surrounding the brands, especially offline shown in hats, tattoos, stickers, events, rallies, etc. (Sernovitz 2009: 13).

### 9.1.3.2 The Maersk Group – a Facebook page

The Facebook page for this case study represents the entire group of A.P. Moeller-Maersk, called the Maersk Group in short. I have chosen to call the Facebook page the Maersk Group FB for a clear understanding of when I am talking about the Maersk Group as a company or of Maersk Group as the Facebook page, Maersk Group FB.
The most important and core stakeholders of Maersk Group FB are Maersk Group’s current and future employees. This is presented in the Maersk Group social media case by LBi Denmark (b), which is a marketing agency that has Maersk Group as one of their biggest clients (LBi Denmark a). It is also clearly stated in the section called Mission on Maersk Group FB that it targets (future) employees (Maersk Group c):

> For more than 100 years, our deeply held values have governed the way we deal with our employees, customers, and society in general. Our employees may come from every corner of the world, and we may work in many fields and business areas, yet we all share the same set of basic values.

Even though all three stakeholders (employees, customers and society) are mentioned here, they go on telling more about employees. Since employees are mentioned first in a row of three stakeholder groups tells us that they are the primary stakeholders of Maersk Group FB. Adding to this, job postings for future employees are a key content for the stakeholders of this page, which clearly shows a purpose of attracting new employees: “Welcome to the official Maersk Group page. Like our page for the latest news, updates and job postings within Maersk Group,” (Maersk Group c). The Maersk Group FB defines itself as located in a context with stakeholders on three levels: Employees, customers and society. This will be mapped to gain a better and wider understanding of Maersk Group FB’s context in the following paragraph.

However, there is an important critique point by Warnick & Heineman (2012: 47-48) that social media as “[…] a medium is more than just a context in which communication occurs, it is constitutive feature of the discourse itself.” Thereby, language and rhetoric is formed by the medium itself, hence communication on social media can be seen as not just communication within a context but a particular constitutive genre. This will be explained further on page 53, and I thereby realize that context is constitutive and influences discourse, hence rhetoric.

### 9.1.3.3 Mapping Maersk Group FB’s stakeholders

Globalization and technology is the wider context of any organization with a raising effect on the importance of CSR. According to Werther & Chandler (2006: 4), this wider context entails the societal stakeholders (communities, government and regulators, nonprofits and NGOs, environment) that companies need to attain to. Within this context, companies’ most important stakeholders are the organizational stakeholders (employees, managers, stockholders, unions) in the centre and hereafter the economic stakeholders (customers, creditors, distributors and
suppliers) (see Figure 8). The economic stakeholders are therefore also an important means of connecting the organization with the outer societal stakeholders and by this maintaining legitimacy to act in the entire community surrounding the organization (Werther & Chandler 2006).

By this, Maersk Group obtains a legitimate place in the global scene by attaining its communication on Facebook to all three stakeholders: the organizational (employees), the economic (customers) and the societal (communities). Thereby, it is assumed that Maersk Group FB is a great means of establishing legitimacy in the market, and thus, CSR as a strategy depending on legitimacy is a reasonable communication strategy to implement on Maersk Group FB. In the following part, CSR will be defined in order to create a basis for data collection.

9.2 CSR – A BROAD EMERGING CONCEPT

The research of this thesis is delimited to analyzing messages related to corporate social responsibility (CSR). This is why a clear definition of CSR is important in order to enable a structured data-collection and further analysis. The Reputation Institute calls it citizenship, Morsing et al. (2008) calls it social responsibility and Maersk Group calls it sustainability. But what is the covering definition for these different terms?
9.2.1 Defining CSR

According to Matten & Moon (in: Crane & Matten 2007 b), the concept of CSR overlaps with concepts such as business ethics, corporate philanthropy, corporate citizenship, sustainability and environmental responsibility. That CSR is a broad concept is supported by Goodman & Hirsch (2010: 116), who say that corporate citizenship, corporate social responsibility and sustainability are just three names for the same thing: “the central tension in contemporary society’s view of what corporations need to do to deserve a license to operate.” Therefore, social responsibility in the model of reputation by Morsing et al. (2008) is lined with CSR as well as sustainability. These concepts derive from the concept of citizenship, says Cornelissen (2011: 235-36), which is an earlier concept of contributing to society. Cornelissen explains further that corporate citizenship rests on a long and respected tradition of integrating citizenship in political theory. CSR, the corporate citizenship of today, does not have a direct political agenda like before. Today, citizenship is to a higher degree influenced by stakeholders, which is another reason for the development of CSR. Cornelissen (2011: 236) defines Today’s CSR as driven by stakeholders’ appeals to companies of continuously delivering “a wider societal value beyond shareholder and market value alone.” This view of CSR being more than a driver for profit is supported by Werther and Chandler (2006: 7), who define CSR as “the broad concept that businesses are more than just profit-seeking entities and, therefore, also have an obligation to benefit society.” Cornelissen (2008: 236) further defines CSR as “the continuing commitment by business to contribute to economic development while improving the quality of life of the workforce and their families as well as the community and society at large.” In large, citizenship, CSR or sustainability are all names of the same meaning: companies serve society in order to obtain license to operate and they do so by living up to stakeholders’ expectations beyond a purpose of profit. According to Maersk Group, license to operate is gained by delivering sustainability efforts within the six dimensions safety, climate and environment, diversity, human rights, anticorruption and responsible procurement, which according to Maersk Group and prizes won follows the ten CSR principles by the UN Global Impact (Maersk Group f). As a part of these sustainability efforts, Maersk Group has incorporated its social responsibility that covers the dimensions global labour principles, diversity and inclusion, community involvement and Human rights. The fact that CSR is a wide concept incorporating sustainability argues for the fact that CSR theories presented in this thesis are similarly relevant for analyzing sustainability communication of Maersk Group, as it is relevant for analyzing the obvious CSR communication.
To be able to collect data according to CSR content, I will therefore use Maersk Group’s own sustainability definition of CSR content as a statement for data collection. Using a statement for collection, I make sure that I collect most relevant data related to CSR. In part 3, the collected units of analysis will be presented and systematized into relevant categories to provide a logic overview for a better qualified analysis. And to understand the direction towards this answer, the next part of the contextual framework of Maersk Group FB gives an understanding of how CSR communication is a means of establishing the positive reputation and avoiding the crisis.

9.2.2 Background on CSR

According to Werther & Chandler (2006), CSR emerged in the 1960s-70s. It began in the US, where corporations facing emerging crises of legitimacy led to the emergence of CSR. As a result of increasing concerns about corporations’ negative impacts on society, USA attempted to ‘civilize’ the corporations and thus became one of the key powerhouses behind the rise of CSR. This rise of CSR was also influenced by globalization – an affect which Thomas Friedman called the ‘era of globalization 3.0’, which covers the revolution of communications technology (Werther & Chandler 2006: 27). Werther & Chandler (2006) explain further how the revolution enabled stakeholders to monitor corporate operations and express their individual messages effectively to corporations. This increased stakeholders’ demands of corporate improved action, and the communications revolution became a great leveller for corporate power. Since then, CSR has been up and down in popularity in literature, but the trend has grown significantly over the past decade in articles and books. As an example, the collection by Crane & Matten testaments an emerging institutionalization of CSR as a field of scholarship with publications from the mid to late 2000s (Crane & Matten 2007 a: Xviii). And since CSR is in a continuing state of emergence, as of 2007, it is not yet characterized as dominated by a particular theoretical approach, assumptions and method: “It is a field without a paradigm,” according to Crane & Matten (2007 a). But it is not necessarily a weakness, because the field is obviously still in a state of emergence (2007). Crane & Matten further estimate that a greater degree of dominance by a particular paradigmatic understanding of CSR may become more evident in the coming years – and hereby, defining textbooks and handbooks as well. Today, CSR is still a concept that is here to stay according to Ole Sohn, the previous Danish Minister for Business and Growth. He says that in times of crisis, CSR has come to stay, since there is a growing tendency for transparency and how that profit is achieved (Høj 2012). Crane and Matten’s collection on CSR was produced as “an exercise in defining the scope, key themes, and core content of an ill-defined field,” (Crane & Matten 2007 a:
Similarly, this thesis will provide a further institutionalization trying to define CSR as it is practiced through social media, by Maersk Group FB.

### 9.2.3 Critique points

The Reputation Institute’s view on CSR as only one factor out of seven factors affecting reputation and a similar definition by Morsing et al. (2008), where CSR is one in six drivers of reputation, is criticised by Coombs (2012). Coombs believes that CSR is increasingly playing a *key role* and integral aspect both in conceptualization as well as in reputation management. Hence, he argues that social media are very useful tools for scanning and monitoring crisis threats and therefore also that social media is a means of meeting stakeholders’ expectations, which both CSR and reputation are dependent upon. Indirectly, Coombs argues that CSR communication manages crises, because a good reputation can dampen crises and help companies through turbulent times. His point of view is definitely worth discussing with this thesis’ results, since newer theories such as Coombs (2012) and Yeomans (2012) both discuss the clear fact that bad CSR communication is definitely a driver of bad reputations and crises as well. And with this view, is CSR then not also a key driver for positive reputation, in this world of web 2.0? Maybe CSR should be placed in the centre of reputation just after emotional appeal – and what would this mean to CSR communication?

### 9.3 Communicating CSR in Web 2.0

Due to the *Catch 22* and precautions of companies finding it difficult to communicate about CSR, Morsing et al. (2008) has established two models describing two different processes for companies to meet the problem of *Catch 22*. One process explains the process of communicating CSR to stakeholders, and the other process describes the CSR involvement of stakeholders in the concrete CSR activities representing an *inside-out* approach. The first process mentioned is relevant for this thesis’s problem statement of exploring Maersk Group’s communication. However, knowing that Maersk Group FB targets mainly present and future employees, it can be assumed that the Maersk Group FB is already following this model and hereby contributes to pride amongst employees and personal identification by communicating corporate CSR initiatives. However, this second process belongs to another thesis investigation of Maersk’s internal integration of CSR, thus more content than form, and will not be described any further here.

Morsing et al. (2008) describe the first overall process of CSR communication as being further divided into two important communication processes when targeting different stakeholder groups to achieve a favourable CSR reputation in a *Catch 22* context. These two are *The Expert*...
**CSR Communication Process** and *The Endorsed CSR Communication Process* (Morsing et al. 2008: 97; see Figure 9). The first process of expert CSR communication is *directly* targeted towards an exclusive group of experts and elite readers such as politicians, local authorities, the media, etc. According to Morsing et al. (2008), communication towards this group of experts is necessary in order to move into the second *indirectly* process of *endorsed CSR communication* which is aimed at reaching the larger groups of stakeholders in society covering customers and the general public. The indirectly process of communication is based on the fact that “*Danes favour companies that communicate their social responsibility in a less bold style,***” (Morsing et al. 2008: 105-6).

Figure 9: A Model of CSR Communication

9.3.1 WOM is the socially endorsed CSR communication

According to Andersen (2011), consumers of today trust more on their best friends’ recommendation of a company than on some journalist. This form of marketing yourself indirectly to consumers and not through an expert such as a journalist, but through a private person, Andersen calls word-of-mouth (WOM). He describes how it has emerged due to the technological development of the internet (web 1.0) and since then the development of social media (web 2.0), and how it has changed communication from push to pull. That change covers a shift from a previous time where consumers received communication as one-way communication by which companies themselves interpreted and framed messages with no possibility for the consumer to discuss or influence these messages. It was pushed from companies to consumers. Today,
Andersen (2011) further states that consumers are increasingly more actively involved with the communication they get: they are more marketing-conscious and understand motives behind. Therefore, they have more expectations towards companies and more often give companies feedback on whether they are satisfied or unsatisfied with its content (pull). It actually shows according to findings by Nielsen (2007 – in: Andersen 2011) that Danes are the most sceptic consumers in the world, perhaps increased by possibilities of disliking ads in your mailbox (see Image 3).

Image 3: Ads – No thanks

Source: Post Danmark A/S

WOM is a concept that emerged online, but it should not be misunderstood as only existing here. It is actually only happening in an extent of 20 percent online while the last 80 percent happens offline in conversations with friends and relatives after interaction online, (Sernovitz 2009). With the social web 2.0 development and the increasing involvement from stakeholders, the concept of user-generated content has grown.

As mentioned on page 5, “Web 2.0 refers to applications that promote user-generated content, sharing of that content, and collaboration to create content,” (Coombs 2012: 20). User-generated content is produced by customers or other visitors of a site. A company can invite the audience to create content for them e.g. in a video competition and this way get much great content for the site. Product reviews and ratings generated by the users can add the sense of community, interaction and liveliness that is very effective for brand awareness - “[…] a depth and breadth that’s hard for staff writers to replicate,” (Handley & Chapman 2012: 91). However, it still demands that the company engages in its communication efforts by responding and interacting with the participants. But companies also need to stay awake, since the encouragement to create own-interpreted content about the company can quickly result in negative attention too – all depending on how your company is positively or negatively perceived (immediate images and
long-term reputation). Opening up for conversation can back-fire, especially if you have not crafted community guidelines with clear, specific rules as to how members of the community should act appropriately. (Handley & Chapman, 2012: 90-92) According to Coombs (2012), as well as Handley & Chapman (2012), consumers of today have become the private watchdogs, which is a role previously obtained by the journalists only.

Referring back to the model of expert CSR communication and endorsed CSR communication by Morsing et al. (2008), WOM is similar to the indirect endorsed CSR communication (see Figure 10). This means that when driving WOM, the member in a social media group, such as Maersk Group FB, is the expert and all other Facebook members are the endorsed end-users (consumers or general public).

Morsing et al. (2008: 108) found that Danes are sceptical to the form of “pure top managerial rhetoric,” which again is an indicator of an increasing number of highly-involved stakeholders and that the endorsed CSR communication process is crucial. Recognizing this, expert stakeholders play a role in generating and disseminating a “favourable image of the company” in an indirectly way (Morsing et al. 2008: 108).

![Figure 10: The social CSR communication process](image)

### 9.3.2 Critique points

A critique to the model by Morsing et al. (2008) is that it only explains who communication is directed towards (experts) and not how communication is formed from these experts towards the endorsed stakeholders such as customers and the general public. Looking The Framework of CSR Communication by Du et al. (2010), form is still left as an unanswered matter. The model is said to
enable companies to communicate more effectively and more precisely increase awareness of and improve unfavourable attributions towards companies’ CSR activities, which can lead to consumer loyalty/advocacy behaviours, people seeking employment or investing in the company (Du et al. 2010). But since it only takes account of message content (what to communicate), message channel (where to communicate) as well as stakeholder and company characteristics in order to achieve the positive reputation, it seems to me that theories on CSR communication are more focused on content and external factors than the exact form of CSR messages. I therefore add the form of communication to the model (see Figure 11), which I understand as vital for CSR communication (and reputation, legitimacy and license to operate). This form of CSR communication is what will drive companies to the internal outcomes that represent the aligned ethos from Hansen’s Semiotic Model of Branding (2012). And it should especially be done by noticing social media (incl. Facebook) as a new message channel and driver of word-of-mouth.

Despite of recognizing the framework’s lack of form of CSR communication, the model by Du et al. (2010) is still relevant for this thesis research because it focuses on how CSR communication should be implemented. I do not question the existing content- and process-based parts, since this is not relevant for my question. However, companies must remember to include the form of communication, such as rhetorical strategies used to persuade readers about messages. Placing CSR communication in a process of socially endorsed CSR communication and as communication relying on not just message content, message channels as well as stakeholder and company characteristics, this thesis will research more. It will research the form of CSR communication that Maersk Group FB has chosen in order to reach the outcome of a positive reputation of trustworthy CSR.
Maersk Group on Facebook – an exemplary case study

Figure 11: The Framework of CSR communication

Source: Own contribution and translation - Du et al. 2010: 11
PART III
10 RESEARCH DESIGN

A rhetorical analysis has been chosen as the most relevant and primary method to discover Maersk Group FB’s different persuasive strategies. These strategies are used by to improve Maersk Group’s reputation of trustworthy CSR. In the following paragraphs, the research design for analysis will be described structurally for a better understanding and clarity of quality in the research. It will be described according to the three following phases: How data was collected, how it was categorized and finally, how it was coded in order to structure results.

10.1 Phase 1: Data collection

An amount of 65 posts were collected from Maersk Group FB within a period of three years covering 2011 to 2013. The period was chosen since Maersk Group FB only exists since 2011. All posts are presented in Appendix A, categorized according to Maersk Group’s six sustainability dimensions:

1. Safety
2. Climate and environment
3. Diversity
4. Human rights
5. Anticorruption
6. Responsible procurement

The 65 posts make up the whole collection of CSR-related messages on Maersk Group FB, which is why the analysis provides valid results. And no categorization is possible or useful. Table 1 shows how each dimension is defined and divided into key areas by Maersk Group. According to these definitions and key areas, data was collected and thereby provide a complete picture of Maersk Group’s CSR communication on Facebook.

Table 1: Definitions of Maersk Group’s sustainability dimensions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DIMENSION</th>
<th>DEFINITION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Safety</td>
<td>“We believe that each and every accident can and should be avoided. We must ensure that our employees can return home unharmed at the end of every work day.” (Maersk Group f: 28)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key areas are:
- Process safety (accident when working)
Maersk Group on Facebook – an exemplary case study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Climate and environment</th>
<th>“We recognise the risks climate change poses to society and our business as well as the need to shift to a low carbon economy. We support the position that adequate efforts must be made to limit global warming.” (Maersk Group f: 34)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Key areas are:           | • Major oil spills  
                          • Fuel consumption  
                          • CO₂ emissions (carbon)(ibid.)                                                                                                                                                                      |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Diversity</th>
<th>“[...] we aim to reflect the communities in which we operate and attract talent from the broadest pool possible.” (Maersk Group f: 43)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Key areas are:           | • Gender  
                          • Ethnicity/nationality (Maersk Group f: 44)                                                                                                                                                          |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Human rights</th>
<th>“We respect human rights and work to ensure that we do not contribute to human rights violations.” (Maersk Group f: 40)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“In practice, a large part of the human rights agenda is covered by other programmes such as health and safety, responsible procurement, labour principles and anti-corruption, or simply responsible business practices.” (Maersk Group f: 41)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Anticorruption</th>
<th>“Our policies leave no doubt about our position on corruption: we work against all forms of corrupt practices, including bribery and facilitation payments.” (Maersk Group f: 48)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Key areas are:           | • Fraud  
                          • Bribery  
                          • Facilitation payments                                                                                                                                                                              |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responsible procurement</th>
<th>“The A.P. Moller - Maersk Group is working on mainstreaming responsible business practices in our supply chains.” (Maersk Group f: 50)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Key areas are:           | • Supply chain  
                          • Tax                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
In the analysis, data will be categorized according to theory. Mayring (2000: 13) calls this a **deductive category application**, which brings the prior formulated, theoretical aspects of analysis in connection with the text. The deductive procedure of categorization is described in Figure 12 and shows how the first step of categorization rests on a definition (of sustainability by Maersk Group) and hereafter a coding will follow. Coding in qualitative analysis can in some situations be analyzed further with a quantitative aspect of frequency.

**10.2 Phase 2 and 3: Categorization and coding – an example**

Based on the definition of the sustainability dimensions provided in Table 1, the following posts were categorized (phase 2) and coded (phase 3) as belonging to the dimension **safety**. The posts concern training of employees to be able to act in risky situations (August 16 and July 31 - 2013), how Maersk Group helps its employees back into safety (July 19 and July 17 - 2013), and finally, symbolism of safety (July 26 - 2013).
Table 2: Categorization and coding – an example

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Post</th>
<th>Safety</th>
<th>Persuasive tools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>August 16</td>
<td>Presenting the Maersk Supply Service water show… also known as the fire-fighting systems test. Image by M. MacInnes.</td>
<td>Ethos: Pride, humour, character, serious, “Presenting” Metaphor: Fire-fighting system is a show, “known as”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 31 -</td>
<td>Did you know we can fit our whole ship crew into one of our “Free fall” lifeboats? See more on how we take action in emergencies here: <a href="http://mrsk.co/159YJLF">http://mrsk.co/159YJLF</a></td>
<td>Ethos: Knowledge, pride “Our” and “whole”, “Did you know?” Logos: objective facts – “See more” Claim: “we take action” Foot-in-the-mouth effect: “Did you know?”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 26 -</td>
<td>Welcome to Maersk Medley – a collection of our best stories, tweets and images from around the globe. Enjoy! <a href="http://mrsk.co/1c8ZIv">http://mrsk.co/1c8ZIv</a></td>
<td>Picture is a symbol: warmth, comfort, secure, “in harbour” Pathos: “Welcome”, “best”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 19 -</td>
<td>The crew of Emma Mærsk will never forget the night of February 1, 2013. Read their version of events, when the ship began taking on water in the Suez Canal: <a href="http://bit.ly/16Oe5RI">http://bit.ly/16Oe5RI</a></td>
<td>Storytelling Transparency Pathos: “never forget” Logos: e.g. “February 1, 2003” Fear-relief structure, curious of link (what happened? Story with no ending)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 16 -</td>
<td>When the cargo vessel Rena sank off the coast of New Zealand last year, it was our Svitzer unit that came to salvage the wreckage. Read the story here: #maersk <a href="http://mrsk.co/12DU1TX">http://mrsk.co/12DU1TX</a></td>
<td>Storytelling, Transparency Fear-relief: “salvage”, hero, pathos Logos: link, “Read the story here” (imperative)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Appendix B

With a deductive categorization and a following rhetorical coding, the analysis in PART V depends directly on the following overall theoretical parts in this thesis:

- PART III: Theoretical basis for data collection and categorization (CSR definition)
- PART IV: Theoretical basis for rhetorical coding (rhetorical strategies)
PART IV
11 ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

As stated by Handley & Chapman (2012) in the introduction on page 7, the form of communication as well as compelling content are vital for communicating on social media in which companies have no control of what goes viral. This thesis will focus on the form of communication. Thereby, it chooses a pragmatic aspect of rhetorical analysis, as stated on page 19. Doing so, the thesis will use the following theories and propositions about rhetoric and persuasion as a basis for the deductive qualitative content analysis of Maersk Group FB’s CSR-related posts.

11.1 Rhetoric – the art of public persuasion

“Since ancient Greece, rhetoric has been concerned with the study of how persuasion occurs,” Warnick & Heineman say (2012: 40) and explain that Aristotle defined rhetoric as “an ability to see the available means of persuasion,” (2012: 93). In those days, persuasion was mainly studied in political speeches and gave an understanding of political change. Many of the concepts from back then are still today foundational for the rhetorical theory such as the three appeal forms ethos, logos and pathos (Warnick & Heineman 2012). Rhetoric is a concern with these and other “available means of persuasion”, Warnick and Heineman point out (2012: 93). Also Perloff (2010: 26) calls the ancient Greek rhetoric “the art of public persuasion” - rhetoric is the old name, and persuasion the modern name (2010: 27). Traditional persuasion was intended for the political speech and has been developed since then to be used in general communication. Especially, social scientists have supplemented persuasion, which is now characterized by both persuasion rhetoric (of the sophists’ belief) and psychology (of Plato’s belief) still acknowledging the dual approach of persuasion, which Aristotle was the first scientist to develop a perspective on (Perloff 2010: 27). As an example, The Yale Model of Communication and Persuasion has been developed by Carl Hovland and colleagues at Yale University (Appendix D: Stone & Lukaszewski 2009) with three steps that an individual must go through to be considered persuaded about the communicative message including its rhetorical strategies. According to Stone and Lukaszewski (2009), the model is one of the most widely cited models of communication. And according to Perloff (2010: 29), Hovland was the first social scientist to develop a new perspective on Aristotle’s belief of the dual approach to persuasion. Stone and Lukaszewski present Hovland’s definition of communication as persuasion with audience in mind: “a process by which a communicator transmits stimuli (usually verbal) to modify the attitudes and behaviors of other individuals (audience).” Comparing this definition to The Framework of CSR Communication by Du et al. (2010) on page 43 and The
Semiotic Model of Branding by Hansen (2012) on page 31, it is a common thought for all three theories that communication has a persuasive purpose. Communicators, here among CSR communicators, aim to change audience’s thoughts. This is supported by Simons & Jones (2011: 173), who view CSR communication as a *paradigmatic form* of persuasion. Following Du et al. (2010), CSR communication wants to change stakeholder’s mind (internal outcomes) concerning awareness, attributions, attitudes/identification and trust. Following Hansen (2012), CSR communication (as a part of corporate communication) aims to achieve ethos (image and reputation). Hence, there is a common purpose of changing audience’s attitudes and behaviours, which Hovland (Stone & Lukaszewski 2009) strongly agree with. In his model, Hovland divides the outcome into *opinion change, perception change, affect change* and *action change* (Appendix D: Stone & Lukaszewski 2009). Hovland’s four wishful dimensions of accepted persuasion all belong to Perloff’s more general *attitude change*, which includes trust. The attitude trust is the wanted outcome from Maersk Group FB’s persuasion communication – this thesis has already identified trust as a key driver of positive reputation. As Hovland distinguishes between different types of attitude, Perloff distinguishes (2010: 24-26) between the following three effects: *shaping, reinforcing* or *changing* attitude of an audience.

This thesis’s will devote its analytical frame to Hovland (Stone & Lukaszewski 2009) and Perloff (2010) to stay true to Aristotle’s dual approach to persuasion. Among Perloff’s persuasion effects, purpose it to *shape* a response – an attitude towards Maersk Group’s CSR. It could be identified as Hovland’s perception change, but as Perloff describes it more generally, I choose to understand it as *attitude change*. The deeper understanding of what kind of attitude is changed is not important here, when the thesis researches *how* trust is built and not *why*. In the case of Maersk Group FB, audience has chosen to be a part of the community – the Facebook page. Hence, they already know about Maersk Group and have a previous attitude toward the company. Purpose is now to *shape* this attitude in a positive direction to either *reinforce* a position of already held beliefs or *change* an attitude. But persuasion rarely occurs over night (Perloff 2010: 25). Neither does trust – it is developed over time from respectful relationships (Cornelissen 2011: 243).

Therefore, it is similar to reputation in the way that image is a sub phenomenon of reputation, and credibility is a sub phenomenon of trust - which is so important for CSR. Trust is dependent upon the immediate image of *credibility* in the CSR messages, as reputation is on images (Günther & Howard – in: Ihlen et al. 2011: 215). Besides understanding trust as trusting in individuals or organizations, trust can also be understood in aspects of technical and sociotechnical systems.
such as a car or the German railway. However, Credibility is understood and limited to trust in a
text only. Summarized, if a company like Maersk Group can be consistent in its use of credible CSR
messages, the credible messages will over time be a means of establishing the reputation of being
trustworthy in conducting CSR.

Since the analytical units are messages on Facebook (posts), the direct problem that I need to
analyze is how Maersk Group builds credible messages (images) with persuasion tools (rhetorical
strategies supported by storytelling and pictures) - in order to gain trust (reputation).

But what affects rhetoric? This can be answered by the rhetorical situation and ethos by Øyvind
Ihlen (- in: Ihlen et al. 2011: 147). The rhetorical situation is how rhetorical utterances are
influenced by their context and ethos is how corporations attempt to enhance their credibility
when they communicate about CSR. As stated with The Semiotic Model of Branding by Hansen
(2012) on page 31, ethos is the target of CSR communication - and my focus in this thesis. But I
also emphasize the rhetorical situation. Namely, that web 2.0 and social media as a context has
changed the use of rhetoric, hence I will integrate theory on this in the analysis. In a way, I
thereby integrate the rhetorical situation (context) and ethos (how) in order to meet the changes
of web 2.0 for rhetoric. A final aspect of persuasion is ethics. Perloff (2010: 36) briefly describes it
as being honest: “You’ll be more effective if you’re honest,” which originated with Aristotle.

11.2 Persuasion – the definition

It has been a main point of this thesis to argue for why it is important for companies to engage in
CSR on social media: to gain a license to operate (organizational legitimacy). But this legitimacy is
only gained if communication is effective and messages are accepted as credible (and over time
trustworthy), especially because stakeholders are very sceptic toward CSR. Messages therefore
need to be formed to persuade stakeholders, which is why persuasion is an important
communicative strategy for anyone communicating CSR on social media.

Perloff (2010: 12) define persuasion as: “[...] a symbolic process in which communicators try to
convince other people to change their attitudes or behavior regarding an issue through
transmission of a message, in an atmosphere of free choice.” With his definition, Perloff (2010)
explains that persuasion is a process; a message is transmitted from a sender to a receiver. And it
is symbolic because it takes time to change people’s attitudes, and the new attitude needs to be
learned. He compares a persuader to a teacher, but also explains that people choose to learn by
their own free choice. However, he still identifies persuasion as social influence – the sender of
the message will try to form messages with an intention to influence receivers’ attitudes or behaviours. If receivers have a feeling that they must comply with communicator’s message and do it even though they do not want to, coercion happens - not persuasion, as Perloff (2010) differentiates between. Persuasion, he says, also overlaps with a third type of social influence: propaganda. But propaganda is typically described by mass influence through mass media, whereas persuasion occurs in mediated settings or interpersonal and organizational contexts.

The attitude, which communicators aim to change, is defined as “a learned, global evaluation of an object (person, place, or issue) that influences thought and action,” (Perloff 2010: 43). It is not behaviour - it is a psychological construct, but also not purely emotional affect. It is a “state of readiness that guides and steers behaviour in certain predictable, though not always rational, ways,” Perloff says (2010: 43) and points out that it is definitely not to compare to pure behaviour: “[…] people have thoughts, cognitive structures, and a variety of emotions, all of which lose their essential qualities when viewed exclusively as behaviour,” (2010: 42). He further explains that attitudes are learned over time - individually, because it is learned through cultural and social upbringing. However, attitudes can be expressed through thoughts, feelings and behaviour and they may also be contradictory towards the same issue (Perloff 2010). Finally, Perloff says that attitudes are complex and for this reason, researchers speak of “attitude systems” that consist of the subcomponents beliefs, feelings, intentions to behave, and behaviour itself (Perloff 2010: 45) – dimensions that are similar to Hovland’s attitude system. They both believe that our behaviour is a way we can confirm our own beliefs for ourselves – like joining a Facebook community, where we strengthen our own beliefs and identify with the course of our action of liking the page. Can it gives us values?

11.2.1 Digital rhetoric

The new media has given rise to new digital genres. Especially among these, the new discipline digital storytelling belongs. It is different from original storytelling in the way that it is the receiver who controls how the story evolves (pull communication), not the sender, as in traditional one-way media, such as a television advertisement (push communication). This is stated by Hansen (2012). Online, she adds, digital storytelling is created in interaction between the sender and receiver. Until now, stories have typically been structured in certain ways for certain purposes, but the structure of events is now defined by the receiver. This interactive relationship is depicted in Lindberg’s Communication Model (Hansen 2012: 318 – see Figure 13), where the sender offers different products of communication, which the receiver can then determine the structure of
him-/herself. Lindberg’s Communication Model refers mainly to communication from a website, but it can also depict a Facebook page with Maersk Group as sender and the overall cultural context as Facebook. Similarly to Hansen’s Semiotic Model of Branding, there is feedback (which Lindberg calls feed forward) from receiver to sender, who therefore has the possibility to adapt the next communication product to stakeholders’ perceptions.

Figure 13: Lindberg’s Communication Model

Source: Own translation - Hansen 2012: 318

Bjarke Myrthu (2004 - in: Hansen 2012) compares digital storytelling to watching a movie in the cinema – the receiver of the movie has chosen to be exposed him-/herself, in contrast to watching a movie in television. On television, you might just watch the movie because there is no better. In the cinema, you actively choose the movie; you go there and you pay for it. A second way, new media has changed communication, is with the emergence of hypertext. According to Hansen (2012), hypertext is used as an architectural and structural element in a story, which is built up by links. This is a feature of a third new genre of digital storytelling, which I will describe further on page . A fourth way, in which new media has changed communication, is by giving growth to new genres, such as the Facebook genre that is characterized by commenting, sharing and liking. This creates a discourse of dialogue and interaction. How companies communicate effectively within this new discourse, is explained later on page 57 by Li & Bernoff (2008) with engagement strategies. Like rhetoric, genre also has its origin in the classical Greek, where it referred to poetry, drama and epic. Hence genre is understood as a function of a text, being
expressive/emotive (poetic), conative (drama/action) or referential (epic) (Collins & Hollo 2000). During the twentieth century, the concept of genre developed from a field of literature to the area of register analysis. Today, genres are based on culture, since they evolve and adapt to the changing needs of society. The new genres of digital text emerge because “[…] a medium is more than just a context in which communication occurs, it is constitutive feature of the discourse itself,” (Warnick & Heineman 2012: 47-48). Thereby, language is said to be formed by the medium itself – as Collins & Hollo also state, genres in language are based on culture. Therefore, traditional rhetoric designed for studying speeches and written text is not entirely applicable to new media, according to Warnick & Heineman (2012: 40): “Studying how persuasion works in digital contexts is both similar to and markedly different from studying persuasion in a speech, in a television advertisement, or in a courtroom,” (Warnick & Heineman 2012: 41). Warnick & Heineman mentions James Zappen, author of Digital rhetoric: Towards an integrated theory, who criticises the fact that today’s emergent theory in the rhetoric field consists of discrete components rather than complete and integrated theory in its own right. It is therefore important, when addressing rhetorical uses on social media like within this thesis, to integrate theory of rhetoric with theory of social media. This is why, the book groundswell – winning in a world transformed by social technologies by Li & Bernoff (2008) will be integrated in the Yale Model of Communication and Persuasion along with the more traditional rhetorical strategies. In this case, it is also important to remember that web-based discourse might not always share the same rational argumentation and persuasion as traditionally. Thus, “[…] applying traditional communication models like Toulmin’s Model of Argumentation or The Elaboration Likelihood Model (Petty & Cacioppo) won’t always yield productive results,” (Warnick & Heineman 2012: 41). These two models should therefore be discussed to what extent they are applicable, when applied.

12 PERSUASIONAL AND RHETORICAL STRATEGIES

The Yale Model of Communication and Persuasion was developed by Carl Hovland and colleagues at Yale University. In the model, they emphasize how attitude change occurs in a series of three steps: 1) Attention, 2) Comprehension, and 3) Acceptance. Persuasion is only effective if recipients go through all three steps. (Appendix E: Stone & Lukaszewski 2009)

12.1 Attention

To get a receiver’s attention, credibility is important. This is influenced by source factors, because recipients are more likely to attend to the communication when sources have high credibility
Based on research by James McCroskey in Perloff (2010: 167), “a credible communicator is one who is seen as an expert, is regarded trustworthy and displays goodwill toward audience members.” Therefore, Maersk Group has to perform expertise, trustworthiness and goodwill in order to form their messages to be perceived as credible. This was deemed particularly important for CSR communication. Firstly, to communicate expertise, the communicator must communicate knowledge (ibid). Linking expertise to the source can be done by using ethos appeals, says Jørgensen & Onsberg (2008: 72). Secondly, to communicate trustworthiness, the communicator must demonstrate honesty, character, and safety (Perloff 2010: 167). Character is similar to charisma – something that characterises a special person. It is defined by Perloff (2010: 157) as: “a certain quality of the individual personality by virtue of which he is set apart from ordinary men and treated as endowed with supernatural, superhuman, or at least exceptional powers of qualities.” If a communicator has character and charisma, this person (or organization) has powerful influence. Perloff (2010) mentions Martin Luther King, Barack Obama and even Hitler as characters with charisma who have profoundly affected audiences. Thirdly, to communicate goodwill, stakeholders must be convinced that the communicator cares for and have listeners’ interests at heart (Perloff, 2010: 168). E.g. the fact that a communicator takes a matter serious or the use of pathos appeals (Jørgensen & Onsberg 2008) can build goodwill. Since pathos and ethos appeals are good strategies to gain attention with, these will be explained in the next paragraph along with logos appeals.

12.1.1 Ethos, pathos and logos appeals
According to Jørgensen & Onsberg (2008), ethos appeals endorse the communicator’s personality or character and can be done by using rhetorical elements that enhance expert knowledge, moral character and engagement in the receiver. Furthermore, ethos is in especially used to establish credibility of the communicator, and it is not restricted to the situation only, but also before and after. Therefore, it will be easier to get acceptance from a receiver that holds previously positive attitudes towards the communicator. Ethos appeal compared to ethos by Hansen (2012) has more to do with the inner qualities than outer appearances. Pathos appeal includes the receiver by basing argumentation on his or her emotions and moods such as anger, joy, excitement, pity or cheerfulness. When ethos appeals to stable emotions, pathos appeals to spontaneous and more affect-based emotions in the situation. It is often characterized with value-loaded word choice such as adjectives, Jørgensen & Onsberg (2008) explains. It is often also supported further by text-external elements such as sound or pictures. Of these two appeals, ethos, and usually also pathos, must be present for argumentation to succeed. As an example, a purely logos-argument based on
pure objective information does not work, if the communicator is untrustworthy, Jørgensen & Onsberg say (2008). However, they further explain that ethos can be build by logos, if the communicator consistently argues factually and carefully. The three appeal forms are interdependent (Jørgensen & Onsberg 2008). Finally, if receivers are opponents to your argument, logos is the best strategy to begin with, whereas pathos is best, if you already have them on your side. However, when it comes to attention on social media, there are other engagement strategies to consider if a company wants to communicate goodwill on social media. These are listening, talking and energizing as proposed by Li & Bernoff (2008).

12.1.2 Listening, talking and energizing
Li & Bernoff (2008) calls today’s internet crowd ‘the groundswell’, meaning a trend that people interact on the internet. It is a completely new way in which people relate to companies and vice versa. They differentiate the groundswell from previous internet trends in the way that it is interactive and people aware: it is faster and connects people for example in applications like Facebook. This is what the thesis introduced as web 2.0 in the introduction. When communicating on social media, you need to engage in your audience who are influenced by the groundswell. Rhetorical strategies are not enough to create attention and interest in your messages: “If you don’t enter the groundswell with a specific goal, you will fail,” Li & Bernoff assures (2008: 70). They propose listening and talking (interacting) as the first two strategic objectives towards a successful social media use, but they also propose Energizing, Supporting and Embracing as the next three; proposing five in all. However, energizing is emphasized as the most important strategy of these last three (Li & Bernoff 2008).

1. Listening to the groundswell should be used as a preparation to any communication online. This is where a company researches to get consumer insights.
2. Talking with the groundswell is a tool for spreading the company message – e.g. that Maersk Group’s CSR is trustworthy, but in general answering questions and comments. Shows that you listen.
3. Energizing the groundswell is done by finding the company’s enthusiastic customers and turning them into word-of-mouth machines.
4. Supporting the groundswell can be done by setting up supporting tools to help customers support each other.
5. **Embracing** the groundswell is done by integrating customers in business conduct and production. This is the most challenging goal and serves best for companies that have current success with one of the previous four goals (Li & Bernoff 2008).

Li & Bernoff (2008) emphasize the critical importance of **listening** – and that **not** listening is even criminal. Therefore, listening is what you must base your online communication on and always carry out. When listening, you find out what your brand stands for, because “*your brand is whatever people say it is,*” (Li & Bernoff 2008: 93). This way, to understand how to adapt your CSR to stakeholders’ expectations, companies need to listen. And every conversation that you engage in by listening also includes **talking**. “*Listening to the groundswell and then speaking through traditional media and advertising is like responding to a friend’s whispered confidence with a bullhorn,*” (Li & Bernoff 2008: 98). It is not accepted by users in the groundswell if you only shout (one-way communication) and do not talk back (two-way communication). If you shout, they will continue the conversation online without you. There are several channels to engage the groundswell, such as social networks, posting a viral video, blogging or creating a community (Li & Bernoff 2008). A key to succeeding in social networks, like Maersk Group FB does, is “*to help people spread your message and to measure the results,*” (Li & Bernoff 2008: 106). This is where the third strategy, **Energizing** comes in. “*Energizing the groundswell means tapping into the power of word of mouth by connecting with, and turning on, your most committed customers [...],*” says Li & Bernoff (2008: 131). If a customer is energized, he/she becomes a viral marketer; motivated to spread positive brand associations to his/her contacts. And people will believe him/her, because the word-of-mouth from family, friends and colleagues are the most trusted sources (Li & Bernoff 2008: 130-1; Nielsen 2012). Since word-of-mouth generates a much faster spread of brand awareness, it is the most powerful tool to boost your business. But what should the company then do to charge these enthusiasts up so they will spread the word about the brand including CSR initiatives? Li & Bernoff (2008) acknowledge that there are many ways to energize companies’ specific stakeholder groups and that it is dependent upon the company’s specific goals of its social media existence. How a company pragmatically energizes for advocacy behaviour through its content is explained more precisely with Due et al. (2010) in the next paragraph. The final two strategies of Li & Bernoff (2008) (*supporting*, which is used to establish the dialogue in-between stakeholders only, and *embracing*, which covers an integrated dialogue between the company and stakeholders, will not be further described. In the case of CSR communication on Maersk Group FB, neither of these two strategies is implemented. Maersk Group FB is a social network between the company and its stakeholders, not a community for
stakeholders only. Therefore, it does not have a supporting goal. The last goal of Embracing is not present either. The page is not used to discuss CSR initiatives and efforts from a strategic point of view and stakeholders are therefore not purely integrated in Maersk Groups’ CSR business; Maersk Group decides itself and then communicates it. But since the lack of Supporting and Embracing is realized, Maersk Group FB will only be analyzed according to the first three steps: Listening, talking and energizing. These are also very relevant and important, since these steps are enough to feed word-of-mouth. And a positive word-of-mouth is valued a very important tool for CSR and reputation in general.

12.1.3 Energizing for advocacy behaviour

When it comes to CSR communication, Du et al. (2010) say that a company can foster consumer loyalty and turn consumers into company/brand ambassadors, if it is a good citizen. But before consumers are willing to actively engage in this advocacy behaviour (e.g. word-of-mouth and resilience to negative company news), the company needs to persuade consumers that it is indeed a good citizen. Word-of-mouth is very effective for CSR communication, as presented on page 58. But how does a company pragmatically persuade consumers to be ambassadors? What are the drivers of word-of-mouth? According to Sernovitz (2009: 6-9), there are four rules of Word-of-mouth marketing, where interesting and sharable content, customer service and honesty are the key words:

- Be interesting
- Make it easy
- Make people happy
- Earn trust and respect

Content marketing as described in the introduction, part I on page 5-7, explains the first rule be interesting: The content needs to be compelling. The second rule make it easy describes that a company should make its content sharable with a super-simple message and a memorable topic. The third rule make people happy is probably the most important purpose of word-of-mouth according to Sernovitz (2009: 49): “Word of mouth is on the rise because marketers have finally begun to understand that a happy customer is the greatest advertisement.” The fourth rule earn trust and respect is very important for CSR communication as a part of the key reputation attributes by Morsing et al. 2008 and The Reputation Institute. The way of earning trust and respect is according to Sernovitz especially by being honest in communication as explained by his Honesty ROI, which a company needs to follow to stay honest towards its stakeholders. The
Honesty ROI states that a company must say who it presents, say what it really believes and never lie about who it is. This way, honesty is a way to ensure authenticity and transparency by not trying to be someone else and therefore very important for creating the most effective communication and to avoid reputation damage (Scott 2010: 191). Authenticity and transparency are two important key factors for effective CSR communication on social media. Qualman (2011: 203-4) explains that kids growing up today could be labelled the “Glass House” generation, because “with social media, the world is a gigantic glass house.” People are constantly connected via the internet and therefore demand immediate, simple and constant communication. This is what matters to them, us and everyone. Conversations only last for minutes and are real-time, such as tweeting from New York during the storm Sandy in 2012 (Journalism.org 2012). And with this development, people also demand companies to be more open and comfortable enough to let go of the control online. Companies should join the conversation on social media. Qualman (2011) explains that it will not be perfect every time, thus if communication is only good 90 percent of the time, users will understand. “In fact, negative comments help add credibility,” Qualman states (2011: 204). The openness and “the degree to which information is available to outsiders” is called transparency (Ihlen et al. 2011: 253), and being human (including flaws) is authenticity. As quoted by Werther & Chandler (2006: 55), “we are approaching a theoretical state of absolute informational transparency. ...As individuals steadily lose degree of privacy, so, too, do corporations and states. ...It is becoming unprecedentedly difficult for anyone, anyone at all, to keep a secret.” And they further explain that this new always-on and open communication is increasingly extending CSR concerns and awareness, and thereby reducing fraud, corruption and abuse of power – and scepticism, furthermore. The result of more transparency, they say, will be “an ever widening, free flow of information in a globalizing world,” (Werther & Chandler 2006: 55). Similarly, demonstrating authenticity is important, and having it deeply integrated within the organization’s business practices should be a key in CSR messages (Ihlen et al. 2011). Authenticity is understood as the consistency between performance and outcomes with stated values such as CSR, Ihlen et al. say (2011). This is a key to creating credibility. However, Ihlen et al. (2011) conclude that organizations will never be one with their messages described by the traditional “walk the talk” alignment. Ihlen et al. (2011) realise that due to a world of new media, stakeholders scream for consistency and authenticity, but in new media where a company brand has so many tongues in so many different media, it is impossible to align the action perfectly with words. This gap in alignment can serve as a guidance and goal for where the company wants to
go, Ihlen et al. (2011) say and realise the development as a possible surprise to PR communicators who have been used to having full control of corporate messages, until now.

### 12.2 Comprehension

According to the second step in the Yale Model of Communication and Persuasion (Appendix D: 135), message factors can influence how people comprehend a message. A message is formed by the following three factors: structure, content and language (Perloff 2010). Message structure is in persuasion build with arguments, but today’s online evolution of web 2.0 has made argumentation much more complex with hypertext and hashtags that make it possible for argumentation to go in multiple uncontrollable directions (Carter 2003). As Perloff (2010: 187) says: “They can use graphics, links, and navigational aids to help people organize message arguments.” I do realise this, but since focus of the thesis is on the initial message only, the many further possibilities with links and navigation will not be analyzed.

Toulmin’s Model of Argumentation can provide the relevant understanding of how arguments are structured with use of text and pictures. But what is argumentation used for? When communicating, argumentation is used to explain a point of view and answer the question “why?” (Jørgensen & Onsberg 2008: 11). Argumentation is therefore very commonly used to structure persuasive messages, also called argumentatio, which has the purpose of gaining the receiver’s acceptance for your argument (ibid.). And in balance with the previous definition of persuasion, the communicator of an argument should notice that the receiver has a free choice to whether he/she will give consent to the argument or not. Thereby, Jørgensen & Onsberg (2008: 12) realize argumentation as a dialogic process and not manipulation. Communicators have the task of asking whether the rhetorical uses are coordinated according to ethical norms and professional quality criteria. To describe argumentation, Stephen Toulmin developed the Model of Argumentation, which says that an argument always will include three elements: claim, support and warrant (Own translation from Jørgensen & Onsberg 2008: 16). The claim is found in a text by asking what does the communicator want receiver’s consent for? The support is found by asking what does the communicator base the claim upon? And the implicit warrant is found by asking how does one get from support to claim? First when all three elements are present, implicit or explicit, it can be called a strong argument that makes rhetorical persuasion effective (the warrant is normally implicit).
Figure 14: Toulmin’s *basic* Model of Argumentation

![Diagram of Toulmin's basic Model of Argumentation]

*Source: Jørgensen & Onsberg 2008: 16*

Figure 14 shows Toulmin’s *basic* Model of Argumentation, but there is also an *extended* Model of Argumentation, which contains three further elements: Backing (for the warrant), a qualifier and a rebuttal (own translation - Jørgensen & Onsberg 2008: 27; see Figure 15). While the first three are always present in an argument, these last three are optional.

Figure 15: Toulmin’s *extended* Model of Argumentation

![Diagram of Toulmin's extended Model of Argumentation]

*Source: Jørgensen & Onsberg: 27*

Qualifiers are found by asking *how sure is the communicator of the claim?* Rebuttal is found by asking *in what case is the claim not valid?* And the backing is found by asking *What terms does the communicator hold for the general rule in the warrant?* (Jørgensen & Onsberg 2008: 29).

Returning to the second strategy of comprehension, *message Content* builds on rhetorical strategies such as evidence, narratives, fear appeals or guilt appeals (Perloff 2010: 187). *Evidence* especially changes attitude when it is linked to a highly credible source and it is often a support for a claim that the communicator has. “*Evidence consists of factual assertions, quantitative information (like statistics [...]), eyewitness statements, testimonials, or opinions advanced by credible sources,*” (Perloff 2010: 188). If people are high-involved in processing the message, evidence needs to be of quality. But people can also accept a message for affective reasons when
they go along with it, just because “it includes so many numbers, so it must be right.” If people are low-involved in the message, evidence serves as peripheral cues that impress with facts. However, the communicator should never try too hard by overloading the argument with evidence, or else credibility will be lost, Perloff emphasizes (2010). Narratives have a strong effect on attitudes. They engage the audience’s emotions and imagination, when telling about an individual’s personal life experience. Narratives are not purely based on facts and sometimes they are graphic and visual, which Perloff (2010) says are more persuasive and compelling than statistics. Because narratives evoke strong emotional images in the mind, they are easier to access from memory than statistics and thereby influence attitude to a greater extent. This is why pathos appeals wins over logos. As Perloff says “[…] we are all storytellers and avid story recipients” (2010: 191).

However, storytelling like evidence can be overloaded and thereby interfere with reception of the message. Nevertheless, Hansen (2012) emphasize that storytelling (another name for narratives) is a means of creating the attractive content that stakeholders will engage with, which is highly important today in web 2.0 to energize the audience for advocacy behaviour. Not to forget, Perloff (2010) says that the most effective strategy includes both evidence and storytelling. But how are stories then best told? And has it not changed now with the evolution of web 2.0? Fear appeal is the next content factor. This appeal threatens people to act, whereas guilt appeal arouses empathy which induces individuals to act out a helping behaviour. Both are very effective rhetorical strategies to use when trying to persuade people to change an attitude, because fear and guilt both evoke deep-felt, negative emotions within people. When fear and guilt are evoked, the individual can feel pain (“I am scared”) or unpleasantness (“I ought to…”) and will therefore do what he/she can to stop it. But fear appeals do not work on every individual; it does not always connect with the individual’s beliefs about the problem. Therefore, it is important that the communicator presents evidence for why the individual should feel fear. And a fear-relief strategy is the most effective: If you scare someone and then reassure them (fear-relief), it is possible to change a dysfunctional behaviour. However, fear appeals do not work alone; the communicator must also convince and use evidence to support the claim that the recommended relief will alleviate the threat (Perloff 2010: 198). Thereby, fear-relief appeals are argumentative and both the fear as well as the relief should be supported by evidence, says Perloff (2010).

The words chosen for messages can also influence attitude. When it is powerful, language is even essential for a communicator to perform credibility, competence, dynamic and attractiveness (Perloff 2010: 212). Persuasion in language is increased with speed of speed, powerless versus powerful language, intense or political language. However, speed of speech only concerns oral
speeches or videos and is therefore not a part of the analysis and will not be described any further. Similarly, political language as well is not relevant describing any further, since Maersk Group FB does not communicate political issues, but has an organizational agenda. However, the language that politicians often make use of is the simple language with short sentences. This is always important in persuasive communication, since it enhances understanding and makes the communicator more down to earth, speaking in receiver’s language, more informally (Perloff 2010). Active sentences are used to keep language simple and easier to understand, whereas passive sentences take longer time to process correctly and are harder to understand (Percy & Elliot 2009). Powerful language is on the other hand very relevant for written messages. If language does not attribute a confident communicator (powerless language), the audience is less likely to perceive the communicator as credible and thereby the message too. However, powerless language is more persuasive than powerful language, when the communicator uses it as a strategy to generate goodwill rather than being the expert. It can be used to give more personality to the text and downplay the authority of the communicator, says Perloff (2010). Powerful language could include hesitation forms such as “Uh” and “Well, you know”, hedges such as “Sort of” and “I guess”, tag questions such as “Don’t you think?” or disclaimers such as “I’m no expert, of course” or “I know this sounds like a stupid question, but...”, (Perloff 2010: 212). Another rhetorical strategy, language intensity, includes metaphors, strong and vivid language and emotionally charged words to persuade (Perloff 2010: 213).

12.2.1 Metaphors and visual persuasion
Perloff explains that a metaphor is a linguistic phrase of the form ‘A is B’ and that such a comparison transfers attributions from B to A. This rests on the traditional understanding of Ferdinand de Saussure, the founder of modern semiotic. He was the first one to define any sign as consisting of a unit that has two sides: expression and content (Ditlevsen et al. 2007: 34), also called the denotative meaning (direct meaning of the word) and connotative meaning (thoughts and emotions) by Gass & Seiter (2011: 142). Expression stands for content as “A is B”. But for Ferdinand de Saussure’s sign to be considered a symbol, it must be established as a common world-understanding for the receiver to be able to establish the relation between the content and the expression of the sign (Ditlevsen et al. 2007). A common-known expression is the symbol of a rose (A) that also stands for love (B). Perloff further explains that messages containing metaphors are more effective in changing attitudes than the normal literal language. It increases the audience’s interest in the message and helps to structure the argument, he explains. Besides powerful metaphors, intense language rests on specific, graphic language, emotion-laden words
Maersk Group on Facebook – an exemplary case study

and extremity. “Language intensity may have particularly strong effects when people do not have well-developed attitudes on the issue, are low in involvement, and are exposed to appeals from credible spokespersons,” (Perloff 2010: 215). Metaphors therefore play an important role in general branding and is a part of the communication mix in Hansen’s Semiotic Model of Branding (Hansen 2012). The symbolism that a company portrays itself by will become the associations that receivers will connect the brand to. Symbols are representations of the brand that receivers can identify with and use in their own identity creation. This is what makes people join a brand on e.g. Facebook, and why Maersk Group is so attractive to join and follow - because the company provides successful symbolism that is valuable. Metaphors are especially incorporated in storytelling, because it creates clearer pictures in the minds of the receivers and also with visuals such as pictures that are both a means of visualising the symbols to a greater extent as well as emphasizing a narrative structure, where the text is A and stands for B, the picture. This is what van Leeuwen & Jewitt (2001) call representation, but it is very similar to Saussures’ concept of signs. Words and pictures are linked with signs. The way they are linked is important for structure and persuasion, because a picture link to words, e.g. in the form of explicitness, reason, or specification. There are many varied ways of linking. Most often the links are marked by conjunctions, such as reasoning is linked with words like ‘because’ or ‘therefore’. However, conjunctions are not always necessary; they can be understood from the context, van Leeuwen says (2005). With linking, a picture will always be either an elaboration or an extension of words. When elaborating, linking repeats or restates information for clarity, and when extending, it adds new information in a structure that is either temporal or logic (van Leeuwen 2005). Gass & Seiter (2011: 293) find images superior to words: “Pictures are more easily recognized and recalled than words.” The reason for images enabling a more effective persuasion is that images are processed via two different modes and can be recalled via either mode. They can especially recall emotions and move us in ways that words cannot. Symbolism (iconicity) is a way images can persuade. Besides this, it persuades with indexicality showing that action has been taken by an actor such as smoke coming out of the chimney as a sign of pollution or syntactically indeterminacy which describes the limitation that images can never depict the precise relationship between objects and this logic will therefore always be left to the receiver to interpret (Gass & Seiter 2011). Not to say that marketers do not know their manipulative tools, as Gass & Seiter realise, but words are definitely a way to make this logic explicit. Combining words with images is called multimodality (Ditlevsen et al. 2007: 149). In the analysis, the manipulative construction of images will not be
given any further attention as focus is laid on the meaning and thereby iconicity (symbolism), indexicality and syntactically indeterminacy.

### 12.2.2 Storytelling

In storytelling, one person will tell one version of a story and another person will tell another version. A communicator can take advantage of this and frame perception by choosing a particular version of a story. This is called “emplotment” (Hansen 2012: 112). Hence, it is not only rhetoric strategies and structure that impacts a message. There are also two different types of storytelling: Outer and inner (Hansen 2012: 120-22). *The outer storytelling* covers small stories such as how Kellogg’s first flakes were produced or how H&M educate young women as operators of sewing machines in its production countries. The small stories make facts more interesting and messages become easier to understand and remember. Therefore, companies often also invite stakeholders in as objective experts to tell their own small stories. This form of communication especially strengthens a company’s ethos (Hansen 2012). *Inner storytelling* is plainly used among leaders and employees internally in an organization and is therefore not relevant to describe any further. In connection with Hansen’s Semiotic Model of Branding, which included the Ethos mix, the external stories told by stakeholders are the ones that tell the company about its brand image and reputation (Hansen 2012). When stories are told externally by the company itself, it can make use of Rolf Jensen’s concept *dream society* (Hansen 2012: 133). The concept covers the future market where our heart chooses over our brains – individuals will choose emotional needs over functional needs. And this is something communicators can take advantage of. Especially since reputations are primarily driven by emotional appeal. Jensen identifies six dream markets that communicators can appeal to through storytelling:

1. Fairy tales and stories
2. Love, friendship and solidarity
3. Caring
4. Who-am-I
5. Safety
6. Attitudes

According to Hansen (2012: 133-34), the first market, *fairytales and stories*, appeals to people’s needs for adventure, such as mountain climbing, sports, out in space and experiences in general. It is with no cultural and national boundaries a global experience. The second market, *love, friendship and solidarity* appeals to the social need in humans, such as cafés, amusement parks, discos, music, film, flowers and Valentine’s Day. Places where people meet. The third market,
caring, is more emotional and is used for stories about health and health care, wellness and self-development and it has a purpose of caring, compassion, comforting, helping and bringing joy. The fourth market, who-am-I, appeals to people’s needs for belonging. It could be used for stories about how it is to work for Maersk Group and employer branding. Safety is the fifth market. It appeals to people’s needs to feel safe and calm in a changing environment and could concern unchangeableness, safety versus confident and permanent values, as well as stories about the good old days. The sixth and final market in the dream society belongs to attitudes. This could concern attitudes for organic products, environment, human rights, ethics, animal welfare, energy supply and much more. As is evident already, these types of storytelling are very suitable for subjects of CSR communication.

12.2.3 Digital storytelling

Today’s communication has taken new forms. It now uses graphical expressions, images, sound, text and interactivity (Hansen 2012). The strategic task of online communicators is to include the new technique into storytelling to create dynamic, vivid and continuous stories. This is the genre of digital storytelling, Hansen tells (2012). She further explains that digital stories are different from traditional storytelling in the sense that stories are created in interaction between sender and receiver. It is the receiver that controls how the story evolves; in what order and where to go via hyperlinks. This is exactly what Lindberg emphasizes with his Communication Model on page ?

The challenge is therefore to create the space, where audience finds your content compelling and credible due to high quality. Hypertext is a special feature of digital storytelling. It is a means of extending the story via the entire internet. If audience clicks on the link, the digital story opens up for further information and new links – and new story directions. The destinations behind the link can even be one-, two- and more-ways (Hansen 2012). It is therefore also a challenge to delimit the digital storytelling because of the endless possibilities of new directions in the story. The digital story is therefore viewed as an endless story. When focusing on the initial Facebook message only, hypertext is cryptic language. It does not make sense before actively clicked on. If present in the message, clicking on links should be curiously evoked as the first step in persuasion. Therefore, it is interesting to research how open-ended the messages are on Maersk Group FB. This way, hypertext is a means of creating attention for the next part of the story – it drives a narrative appetite for more. Being storytellers and story recipients, people naturally want the ending of a story (Hansen 2012). I realise the endless extension of a story with hypertext and its influence on word-of-mouth too, but I will not analyse the further links, because I have to delimit this research at some point. This is the same case when messages include hashtags. A hashtag is a
keyword marked by #. It is often assigned to a message with a function of metadata that “helps to describe an item and allows it to be found again by browsing or searching,” (Solis 2010: 314). As a contrast to hypertext, a hashtag is not cryptic language – the word actually has a function of describing the message further. When clicking on the hashtag, people are directed to the entire group of messages tagged with that specific keyword, whereby the story widens from new perspectives. Referring back to the hurricane Sandy in New York in 2012, the hashtag “#Sandy” was used by many people and thereby gave an overview of how people experienced the hurricane from different perspectives (Journalism.org 2012). Hashtags are like hyperlinks, a further extension of the story told. In the research of this thesis, my focus is on the Facebook messages as people first view them, before clicking any further. And I therefore strictly take into account in the analysis, how hypertext and hashtags have immediate effect for the audience as being architectural and structural elements that give appetite to click further; to see how the story evolves. A final element in Facebook posts is the picture, which is an element that makes the digital stories vivid and alive. Digital stories that use pictures as persuasive elements are called multimedia stories by Hansen (2012: 321). Multimedia stories make use of semiotic modi, which show something (the message/story) opposite to text which is read and dependent upon the reader’s imagination. Together with pictures, text explicates what is implicitly shown. Text can therefore put a focus on and frame what the audience should notice in particular.

12.2.4 Acceptance
If a message is accepted, the audience will have gone through all three steps in the Yale Model of Communication and Persuasion, and communication is effectively persuasive according to Hovland (Appendix D: Stone & Lukaszewski 2009: 135). For the third step of acceptance to be activated, audience factors have influence. The Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) by Richard E. Petty and John T. Cacioppo analyzes the audience’s ability to process a communication message in the given situation (Perloff 2010).

12.2.5 Processing persuasive communication
For people to be influenced cognitively, motivation and ability to process the message are needed (Perloff 2010; Stone & Lukaszewski 2009). This is explained by the ELM (Perloff 2010: 136; Stone & Lukaszewski 2009: 136). For instance, if individuals are motivated (interested) and able to evaluate the content of the message, then they are highly involved with the message and they will centrally process the message, meaning that they will evaluate it carefully. On the other hand, if individuals are not involved or motivated, they will only be low-involved with the message and
not elaborate it any further. In that case, they will focus only on peripheral cues or heuristics (such as the communicators expertise, physical appearance or speaking style) to help them decide upon the message and whether they should accept it, (Perloff 2010; Stone & Lukaszewski 2009; see Figure 16). But Warnick & Heineman (2012) criticizes that acceptance of a message is either centrally or peripherally processed. It is either black or white: either the reader is involved or not. Warnick & Heineman (2012: 87) suggest that online processing can happen in parallel patterns, because we receive information from different sources. Once you read something on Facebook, the next second you read something on a website. And we base our perceptions of the present website story on the previous message given on Facebook. If you for example read an unfinished story on Facebook and go to a website from this message’s incorporated hyperlink which presents an unstructured website or even a dead link, then this new perception of unprofessionalism will affect the perception of the previously-read message on Facebook.
12.3 Complications for Persuasion

Firstly, people are given a “forewarning” (Perloff 2010: 129) before any company specific message on Facebook (or other channels for that matter), because people expect companies to try to persuade about their business – and especially, when it comes to CSR, we know people are especially sceptical – therefore, persuasion is even more challenged. It makes it harder for Maersk Group to persuade, when the audience is aware. They might (unconsciously) set up their minds beforehand to not accept arguments coming from Maersk Group concerning CSR. Secondly, Facebook messages are one-way communication in the first step. Maersk Group have decided beforehand to conduct CSR in a specific way and they communicate this to stakeholders via Facebook. They can decide to criticize it, but stakeholders have not been a part of forming the
content beforehand. Therefore, it will always be limited in what extent stakeholders have influence on what has already been communicated. However, they do have the possibility to ask into content by commenting on the messages or writing Maersk Group FB directly, which makes comprehension easier. Third, if a stakeholder is very interested in Maersk Group, he might also know how they defined their future goals and mission for CSR, not to mention code of conduct, and that they follow the ten principles of the UN Global Compact. Thereby, stakeholders are possibly alert to any wrong steps that Maersk Group may make, which is why the Maersk Group’s messages need to be correct every single time – not to mention persuasive and credible.

12.4 Coding agenda
Based on these theories and propositions, the analysis will be based overall on the three steps of persuasion: attention, comprehension and acceptance. Under each of these steps, it will be argued for what rhetorical strategies are used and how. The possible strategies are mentioned here, but there is a possibility that Maersk Group FB uses other strategies as well, which will then be identified and analysed. The following strategies will therefore serve as an agenda of coding as I analyze data, from Maersk Group FB as presented in Appendix A.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attention</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Expertise (Knowledge, ethos appeals, logos appeals)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Trustworthiness (Honesty, character/charisma and safety)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Goodwill (Caring, respect, pathos)</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Engage in the groundswell/WOM (Listening, talking, energizing)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Transparency (openness)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Authenticity (Letting go of control, being human/personal)</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Storytelling</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comprehension</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Structure (Argumentation, storytelling)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Content (Evidence, narratives/digital storytelling, fear and guilt appeals)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Language (Powerful vs. powerless, intensity, metaphors, images)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acceptance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Processing (motivation, ability)</td>
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</tbody>
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PART V
13 ANALYSIS

In the analysis, I will identify which rhetorical strategies as well as analyze how these are used in order to build trust. It will also be analyzed how visuals and storytelling are used to strengthen persuasion.

13.1 PERSUASION ANALYSIS OF MAERSK GROUP FB

We already know in connection with the definition of persuasion presented above, that each of the CSR posts on Facebook is a transmission of a message since it is communicated directly to an audience from Maersk Group as well as transmitted through Facebook. It is also an atmosphere of free choice, since members of Maersk Group FB can choose to like or dislike the page any time of their own free choice. By being a member of Maersk Group FB, people have chosen by own free choice to receive messages from Maersk Group on Facebook. And supposedly therefore, they have some form of previous interest in the company. It is also clear that by being present on Facebook, Maersk Group has a general purpose of communicating to and with stakeholders present there, and a particular purpose of building a reputation of trust concerning CSR as is found out in this thesis. Through communication, Maersk Group wants to persuade people to change their attitudes and behaviours in a positive way, in order to build a positive reputation – and by this, Maersk Group can maintain its legitimacy and license to operate.

13.1.1 Processing the message

Maersk Group FB members comment, like and share the posts (Maersk Group g). By doing so in a positive manner, Maersk Group FB’s messages must be assumed ‘accepted’ and as creating positive perceptions of the Maersk brand (image) and thereby reputation, which creates a license to operate. It is already assumed due to Maersk Group’s great success within both social media and CSR that the reputation is positive and that members of Maersk Group FB do engage in its members. However, if a message does not persuade the audience into believing that Maersk Group’s CSR is trustworthy, then stakeholders might decide to leave the page by un-liking it. Doing so, they will no longer be exposed to Maersk Group FB’s messages anymore and persuasion is no longer possible through this channel. The stakeholders that leave will need to be persuaded elsewhere again to once more believe in Maersk Group as a trustworthy brand and lead them to like the page. If acceptance is reached by a message, though, the audience has gone through all three steps in the Yale Model of Communication and Persuasion, and the speech is effectively persuasive according to Hovland (Appendix D: 135). For the third step to be activated,
stakeholders should both have motivation and the ability to process the message according to Richard E. Petty and John T. Cacioppo’s Elaboration Likelihood Model.

When a member of Maersk Group FB reads a post without scrolling further down on Facebook to other messages or turning attention to a whole other website on the internet which is also very easily done, he/she is motivated. But it depends on her previous interest in Maersk Group or CSR in general and if the message is compelling. The primary audience (expert CSR communication) who are members of Maersk Group FB, which Maersk Group FB speaks directly to, will all be highly motivated because they are very likely interested in Maersk Group as e.g. a brand, employer or large actor in society. Therefore, they will process centrally and persuasion will depend on arguments. A person, who dreams of a job within Maersk or a farmer in Brazil who is looking to be a client might very likely be highly involved in the message and process the message centrally too, but a general Facebook member not interested in neither Maersk Group nor CSR will process the speech peripherally and depend on cues like pictures and tone of voice.

13.1.2 Complications for persuasion

The mass-communication online can complicate attention towards a message, because there is much more noise surrounding individuals in the groundswell, as shown in Lindberg’s Communication Model on page 54. Especially on Facebook, where individuals can join many groups and pages, while they follow many of their friends’ messages already. It can be difficult for any message to gain attention, which is why the messages must be effectively persuasive. Another complication is edgerank; an algorithm created by Facebook to sort out in the messages that every individual receives on his/her personal news wall on Facebook (Facebook Algorithm 2012). If the individual does not actively engage in Maersk Group FB (or any other page, group or person), he/she does not receive as many posts from Maersk Group FB as it will sink in value and thereby be lowered in the hierarchy of news (ibid.). It will not be of primary interest to the individual when no action. At least, this is what Facebook has defined it as with the algorithm. Automatically, if the individual wants to receive the stories he/she must either comment, like or share – or just visit Maersk Group FB every once in a while. The more engaged, the more messages he/she receives.

It is similar to Google’s system for ranking search results, because it dictates what content will appear at the top of the news feed based relevance. Content is understood as an object and every interaction with it is an “edge”. Hence it is called edgerank (Edgerank Algorithm 2012). But how does Maersk Group FB’s CSR communication drive this engagement? The following analysis will go
into depth on Maersk Group FB’s use of rhetorical strategies (supported by engagement, storytelling and pictures) in order to persuade. It will take its departure in the six sustainability dimension of Maersk Group as well as the analytical coding agenda presented in the previous part IV.

13.2 Safety

Within the sustainability dimension of SAFETY, Maersk Group primarily uses the appeals ethos, pathos and logos as well as the fear-relief strategy, symbols of safety and logical linking. The ethos appeal is used to link the source Maersk Group with expertise and seriousness, as well as give it character of pride. An example is the message:

*Presenting the Maersk Supply Service water show... also known as the fire-fighting systems test. Image by M. MacInnes. (August 16 – 2013)*

*Did you know we can fit our whole ship crew into one of our “Free fall” lifeboats? See more on how we take action in emergencies here: [http://mrsk.co/159YJLF](http://mrsk.co/159YJLF) (August 31 - 2013)*

Both messages show that Maersk Group is proud of either to be “presenting” its information or proud of “our whole ship crew”. With the pronoun “our”, Maersk Group writes more informally and down-to-earth about the united group of employees, and with “presenting”, Maersk Group moves into the performance-genre, because it has something entertaining it wants to present – a show of fire-fighting. The fact that it is a fire-fighting system is quite serious, but by using rhetoric of entertainment, the drama and seriousness leaves the message for it to become more fun and easier to absorb. This is a use of Saussure’s referent and content (signifier and signified). The signifier is the text – but without it, the picture could as an example have been understood as the wings of an angel, metaphorically. But Maersk Group decides to signify the picture (the signified) with the sign “show” and “entertainment”.
In the second argument, another strategy used is the foot-in-the-mouth effect (Gass & Seiter 2011: 210). This has not yet been mentioned, but I find it relevant here, since several examples use this and not just in the dimension of safety. It is a clear sign of trying to achieve attention from your audience, by e.g. asking “How are you?” – or, as in this case, “Did you know…?” Audience is not asked first if they would like information about the “Free fall” lifeboats. Instead, Maersk Group asks an opening question that automatically achieves attention. Audience will think they need to know or maybe even see it a bit like a competition “Do I know it?” Another example of the foot-in-the-mouth effect is:

Looking back: Did you know that Clara Maersk was responsible for the largest single maritime rescue of human lives? On May 2nd, 1975 3.628 boat people were saved by Clara Maersk and taken aboard. Read more about the rescue here:  

In this message, there is also use of logos “Read more:…”, which structurally provides an extension of the story. We also know from the beginning that this is a story “Looking back:…” This story is of Rolf Jensen’s dream society, more precisely the market called “safety”. It is an old story from 1975 that shows that Maersk has provided safety for a long time: Clara Maersk “saved” people and they were “taken aboard”. This brings an emotional appeal of relief and comfort (guided by pathos appeals of positive loaded words like “saved” and “largest”) – a positive image about how safe and professional Maersk Group always operates, ever since 1975. Another story that uses the fear-relief is:

The crew of Emma Mærsk will never forget the night of February 1, 2013. Read their version of events, when the ship began taking on water in the Suez Canal:  

Here, the link is supposed to bring relief – at least we hope so, because the message gives a feeling of discomfort and worrying about if those people onboard are okay? Structurally, the link is the relief and the message itself persuasively takes advantage of the story-interested person in us. We want to know how it ends. The message emotionally involves us with the strong “will never forget”. As audience, I fast get a thriller-feeling “Oh no, are they hurt? What happened to them? What was so bad, they never forgot?” It is a very effective message. What is also interesting here, is that it provides a negative side to shipping: ships sink. Therefore the story serves as a transparent strategy – it is honest and provides a more balanced and authentic touch
to Maersk Group. It too is human and makes mistakes. Here is another example, where relief is given in the initial message

*When the cargo vessel Rena sank off the coast of New Zealand last year, it was our Ssvitzer unit that came to salvage the wreckage. Read the story here: #maersk http://mrsk.co/12DU1TX (July 16 - 2013)*

Symbols are also often used, as here:

![Image](image_url)

*There isn’t much we don’t put our people through at Maersk Training. Learn more about us here: http://www.maersktraining.com/ (June 22 – 2013)*

The image shows employees jumping off into the water; a sign of a good challenge. But instead of writing directly and descriptive, Maersk Group uses irony “There isn’t much we don’t put...” But there is much: They jump off into the water – and they do put their people through it. The irony towards how employees are trained gives an impression that Maersk Group really works hard and sacrifices itself and its employees for the safety of others during their training. However, according to Perloff 2010, humour should be very cautiously used in expertise, but works great with trustworthiness and likeability (goodwill). This message is therefore likely used to bring more personality to all the company-specific information. And towards future employees, it might even establish an image that training is fun at Maersk Group. And expertise is something that Maersk Group indeed has, as in this message, enhanced by the words “We know” and “just one”.

*We know that learning is always retained better when put into use – just one part of our philosophy here at Maersk Training. Learn more: http://mrsk.co/18tBrIk (June 11 – 2013)*

### 13.3 Climate and Environment

Moving on to the second dimension of Maersk Group’s sustainability, **CLIMATE AND ENVIRONMENT**, it is evident that it does have some similarities with *safety*, when using e.g. foot-in-the-mouth effect:
Can’t see any gas flares in this picture? That’s because Maersk Oil Qatar has reduced its flaring by over 90% since 2007: [http://mrsk.co/ZFN6tt](http://mrsk.co/ZFN6tt) *(February 26 - 2013)*

*Did you know that Triple “E” stands for economy of scale, energy efficiency and environmentally improved? We believe that this is the future of transportation. Help us win the Sustania Award. Vote here: [http://mrsk.co/T0sVNL](http://mrsk.co/T0sVNL) *(October 9 - 2012)**

It does seem like there’s focused more on convinving people about the responsibility aspect in this dimension, because the claims are more direct and explicit:

*The Qatari whale shark project is aiming to find out more about these giants of the dep. See the role Maersk is playing here: [http://mrsk.co/18gz70H](http://mrsk.co/18gz70H) *(June 26 - 2013)**

*We’re playing a role in researching one of the largest aggregations of whale sharks in the world. See these giants of the sea here: [Video](http://mrsk.co/18gz70H) *(June 21 – 2013)**

The claim is clear: Maersk Group is “playing a role”. Moving on to the next dimension, **DIVERSITY**, Maersk Group in particular makes use of the rhetorical strategies of Pathos and goodwill:

*Jennifer Menmuir, a graduate of Maersk Training, has literally ‘gone with the wind’. See how: [http://mrsk.co/17hIVHJ](http://mrsk.co/17hIVHJ) #maersktraining *(August 28 - 2013)**

*Sarah-Alice, Driller Trainee, Maersk Drilling*  Meet the cool Sarah-Alice, our first female Driller Trainee. She works on Maersk Developer in the US but went all the way to China to do the highest bungee jump in the world! *(July 17 – 2013)*

*Maersk Training Brazil is helping one athlete block, break and bend her way to the top. Read more here: [http://mrsk.co/17tmmiH](http://mrsk.co/17tmmiH) *(May 15 - 2013)*

The company shows that it cares for its employees – it is proud, which is emphasized with the pronoun “our” and the adjectives “cool” and “block”. All similar to these women is that they are positively described by Maersk with pathos appeals in the form of adjectives like “first female” and “highest bungee jump” and verbs like “gone with the wind”, “went all the way” and “break and bend her way”. These words are also expressions of will and power – strong loaded words that tries to establish an image of Maersk Group’s women to be strong, confident and successful. It also builds an image of Maersk Group as being caring and showing respect to women.
13.4 Anticorruption

Within the third dimension of sustainability, Anticorruption, it was only possible to find one post:

12 growth market countries, 1,300 delegates from around the world, 12 Maersk employees, “One Young World”: We joined the annual charity event to share ideas, thoughts and experiences about fighting corruption. Creating awareness can help us achieve the goal by working together. Watch our two employees from Nigeria and Philippines speak: [http://mrsk.co/Ptigr5](http://mrsk.co/Ptigr5) (October 15 - 2012)

In this message, Maersk Group uses logos, which is shown by facts “12... 1,300...” and goodwill established by caring and pride in employees from the words “we”, “us” and “working together”. These pronouns define Maersk Group and the employees as a community, one unity. This way audience will emotionally identify with belonging to Maersk Group. This is a use of pathos appeal (Jørgensen / Onsberg, 2008: 72) appealing to emotions. It is told with storytelling emphasized by mentioning facts in a row like in sport event like in a football game: “11 players, highly trained, have been waiting for this moment...”. Here, it is just told as “12 growth market countries, 1,300 delegates from around...” It sounds like they are setting up for a game of fight. And of course they are: They are fighting corruption. This is a metaphor which enhances persuasion. We can almost feel the tensions of the young people and the drive they have to fight corruption. No doubt, it will be a success.

13.5 Responsible procurement

Within the fourth dimension, Responsible Procurement, a use of logos and logical linking to pictures are the primary strategies:

*How Tesco and Maersk Line are working together to reduce carbon footprint from Tesco’s supply chain:*
[http://mrsk.co/NLAN7n](http://mrsk.co/NLAN7n) (July 23 - 2013)

*Recycling the equivalent of 168 Eiffel Towers. See how we do it here:*
[http://mrsk.co/10vvIIY](http://mrsk.co/10vvIIY) (April 13 - 2013)

*Maersk Line is using its dry and cold boxes more strategically to ship fewer “empties”. Read the article here:*
The objective logos appeal is found with words like “Read the article here” or “See how we do it here”. Thereby the link is again structurally an extension of the message. If audience choose to click on it, suddenly the message will appeal much more to you with logos appeals than if you e.g. stayed and studied the picture some more. It is also using facts like “168 Eiffel Towers”, but this brings the image and sign of The Eiffel Tower to mind. This definitely has some positive and beautiful attributions – much more than the crane of Maersk Group’s. Nevertheless, the positive attributions associated with The Eiffel Tower are linked with the crane of Maersk Group (and the brand itself). This is a trick, some might even call it manipulation, but however it works.

13.6 Human rights
It was not able to find any posts explicitly related to human rights. However, Maersk Group states in its CSR report that its human rights initiatives are described under the other five dimensions of sustainability and therefore an indirectly integrated part: “In practice, a large part of the human rights agenda is covered by other programmes such as health and safety, responsible procurement, labour principles and anti-corruption, or simply responsible business practices,” (Maersk Group f: 41).

13.7 Engagement
How does Maersk Group’s engagement of its stakeholders on Facebook support the rhetorical strategies? The more general terms of engagement in social media were listening, talking and energizing (Li & Bernoff 2008). And the more specific rules for energizing the groundswell were: 1) Be interesting, 2) Make it easy, 3) Make people happy and 4) Earn trust and respect (Sernovitz 2009).

The first rule, *be interesting*, says that content should be compelling. All posts are very compelling with the use of pictures. Pictures increase the possibility for users to be emotionally involved and so does storytelling. An example hereof was very interesting and compelling was with the use of storytelling, pathos, transparency, logos and fear-relief effect (Appendix A: Safety):

*The crew of Emma Mærsk will never forget the night of February 1, 2013. Read their version of events, when the ship began taking on water in the Suez Canal:*
However, it seems to be beautiful images that make messages more compelling, because the following two posts have almost twice as much likes and shares:

Therefore, it can be concluded that the beauty in pictures will win even over the finest rhetoric in words. The second rule, *make it easy*, says that it should be sharable with super-simple messages and a memorable topic.

*It’s always an exciting occasion when one docks in the City of Angels. Image by Lance Cunningham. (May 9 – 2013)*

A post like this, was chosen based on the signified – that Maersk Group is an angel that protects you – thus, provides safety. The message is short and simple – a clear symbolic meaning and a stunning photo. However, on a future scale, a picture like this does not bring much awareness about CSR for users. But when talking about pure engagement, a post like this one is perfect. As you can see, it has almost 4,000 likes, a hundred comments and over 700 shares. This is pure
engagement. Graphics on the other hand, are not engagement-drivers. The following from September 27 – 2012 has only 600 likes, 52 comments and 44 shares.

The third rule, make people happy, is general “customer service” - answering people’s questions and being genuine. On Maersk Group FB, they are good at both listening and talking (Maersk Group g). Here, it is clearly evident that Maersk Group aims at responding every user. It is very consistent. In the next photo below, you can see that the responses are also kind, and Maersk Group is listening. “That’s a lot of containers” sounds one answer – showing clearly that they listened to the user’s story of how many containers he used to load in a shift. In the second answer, Maersk Group writes kindly to the person directly “Hi Jean”, and again it makes sure to give a sign of listening: “great to hear that he’s interested in joining Maersk.”
The fourth rule, *earn trust and respect* is something that is learned over time by being honest, and never lie. This is what builds a reputation of being transparent and authentic, and eventually builds a reputation of trust. As already stated, Maersk Group does communicate transparent messages e.g. of accidents – and as we see thereby, they are open and honest. They are also human beings and mistakes do happen once in a while. This is how Maersk Group builds trust and respect over time.
14 DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

In the following, the above-identified strategies are discussed in order to gain a wider understanding of how these strategies are means of building a license to operate. And just in this word “building” lays the real aspect. It is something that companies build themselves through communication with stakeholders. If they behave well and are good citizens, then stakeholders will give let them have license to operate – and hence, a positive reputation wins over negative publicity. On the other hand, if a company does not build the pillars (messages) strong enough, the house of reputation will crash and license to build again (operate) will go down with it too.

Social media has evolved a lot already since it emerged back in 2006. But it is still new to us every single day. Social networking sites, such as Facebook, continuously develop policies and rules for how to interact within the network. I find it hard myself these days to keep up with it.

In the analysis, it is proven that Maersk Group does successfully persuade its audience via Maersk Group FB. It builds credible messages in all of Hovland’s three stages: Attention, comprehension and acceptance.

Attention is attracted with rhetorical strategies of ethos, logos and pathos appeals. These are used to establish both fear-relief structure, symbolism (e.g. the meeting against corruption, which was metaphorically described like a game or fight. Another strategy that emerged was irony, which is also used to turn the representation away from what it actually was: a serious professional training. Logical linking, in this connection, is also present. A final strategy for attention was the foot-in-the-mouth effect, where communicator asks an introductory question that the receiver has to answer – or at least, they feel like they need to answer. Comprehension is made sure of with the use of short and simple language – and symbolism which make the messages much shorter and to-the-point. Metaphors in general also help understand a picture or a relation e.g. by logical linking – because it describes what should be seen in the picture. This way, comprehension is both easier and faster. Acceptance is gained because the last two steps are effective, and furthermore, Maersk Group FB’s members are highly involved with the messages, because they have chosen to be a part of the page themselves, by their own free choice. Processing will happen centrally, therefore arguments shall be strong. However, it is discussed by Warnick & Heineman (2012) that central and peripheral processing might happen simultaneously when online, but there is still only limited evidence for this (Gass & Seiter 2011), therefore I base my knowledge on the model as it is now, and Maersk Group’s members will therefore primarily
process the messages centrally. Knowing the brand beforehand, very likely as an extremely successful company, they will have high expectations and assume them to communicate effectively every time.

It fulfils all three steps of Hovland’s Yale Model of Communication and Persuasion and is therefore said to persuade its stakeholders effectively. But the social aspect is still not in on this. The theory of Hovland could as well be used to investigate persuasion in a newspaper. And it would still investigate words and pictures. But on social media, engagement is needed and according to Li & Bernoff (2008) this is done by listening, talking and energizing.

Maersk Group engages its stakeholders by being interesting. The way they do this is by producing compelling content – or should I say compelling pictures? Maersk Group FB’s posts are more compelling when including symbolism and pictures, which were highly effective with twice if not seven times as many likes, shares and comments. But the light of the fact that less-compelling and less-shared posts are filled with effective rhetorical strategies, then it might mean that Maersk Group has more success being varied in their messages; some including strong symbolism and others with much information, but many rhetorical strategies to increase interest in the more “boring” stuff. This information is off course also important, because how can consumers else be persuaded about the initiatives that Maersk Group make? The messages are also easy to understand and comprehend. They include short sentences, symbolism and pictures that almost speak by themselves. Furthermore, Maersk Group makes its stakeholders happy. It shows that it listens and answers (talks) in a genuine and friendly manner. And finally, messages are honest, transparent and authentic. Hereby, it can be concluded that Maersk Group’s messages build trust and respect, and Maersk Group is thereby successful in persuasion on social media – more precisely, on the social networking site Facebook. Therefore, it can also be concluded that Maersk Group FB’s CSR communication is a means of establishing a license to operate because it effectively attracts attention, builds comprehensive messages that are accepted as strong arguments. Furthermore, Maersk Group as the context also interacts effectively with its stakeholders by listening, talking and energizing, which are important drivers of word-of-mouth.
15 Critical review of results

The results provide a highly relevant, valid and fulfilled analysis of the case – and I can call it the case, because it is the case and nothing more, nothing less. All CSR posts have been collected for research. Some have been more highlighted than others, but all in all, every CSR post has been investigated as can be seen in Appendix B. But what can we then in particular use this case study for?

As has been clearly stated throughout the thesis, the paracrises live online until they are managed online. There’s no way to hide it. The social screw-ups will be seen, commented, liked and shared. And that is why it can be so damaging to your corporate reputation. The rhetorical strategies used by Maersk Group to establish an exemplary successful reputation of CSR (and license to operate) are strategies that should be learned from and used as inspiration. It is clear that large multinational companies can be successful on social media – at least, Maersk Group can. Maybe others can too? Based on these results, I am convinced that it is possible to gain a license to operate, also on social media, by building credible messages carefully formed but still with the authentic and transparent stories – it is important to show that you’re human, also when you’re multinational. However, it is important to remember that since this is an exemplary case study, there is not another one of its kind, and the rhetorical strategies should not be copied.

What other companies could learn from Maersk, though - if they are precautious of the online critique -, is to define their own policy for the page, the group, the forum, blog or the like. Maersk has developed a policy for how to behave when you are a member of the page: “Since we can’t monitor every posting or conversation, we realize that the occasional objectionable post will pop up from time to time. We therefore reserve the right to remove postings that are: […]” (Maersk Group e). This way, you can make sure that you have some control over the critique, by having already communicated your policy. Members have therefore legally by liking the page also accepted your policy.

15.1 Implications for future research

Being a complex concept, CSR communication is a very complex size. It would have been easier to research if the field was more delimited and concerning few aspects. Therefore, the thesis is a mirror of the complex concept and incorporates many of these crossing theories and propositions. I do not feel that it is yet a well-defined field like PR is, or marketing. It therefore takes different views on many objects. However, this is also what makes the area interesting.
it is not yet fully discovered and much is also left to discussion. Therefore, it could be interesting to research as an example how The Elaboration Likelihood Model has changed with new modes of persuasion on social media. Other areas more relevant for CSR communication on social media will be discussed in the following.

15.2 Areas of future research

Maersk Group states in its sustainability report in 2012: “During 2013, we will be engaging with stakeholders in a systematic and structured manner to obtain input in connection with the development of a new sustainability strategy,” (Maersk Group f: 24). This clearly shows that Maersk Group is developing on the area of CSR, but also that there are ways they can still improve. One way, is to make its Sustainability report more social, as an example. Another way is to develop its CSR initiatives with its stakeholders through dialogue, which is also one of Maersk Group’s goals of engagement for 2013: “We want to build trust in our company by engaging in transparent practices and open dialogue with stakeholders,” (Maersk Group f: 24). However, they do still today think persuasion, because stakeholders are not integrated initially in the stages of defining the company's CSR. Stakeholders are only allowed to react after the initial message from Maersk Group. And then discussion starts. But the development of CSR is going in a more dialogic direction.

15.2.1 The future strategic approach towards CSR

Paul Capriotti confirms (Ihlen et al. 2011) the new evolution of web 2.0. He says that due to the internet and social media, we have moved from traditional CSR communication to interactive CSR communication. However, he also confirms the paradox of CSR communication by describing that companies have not substantially changed their communication habits yet. They are not using all of the advantages the interactive, multidirectional and symmetrical communication can bring them. He suspects that companies use social media more for pure information and awareness about their CSR initiatives and behaviour and not for a dialogue about it. Not yet. According to Capriotti, the reason for this is the paradox of CSR communication: “In many cases, companies are reluctant to apply the full potential of these tools (such as blogs and forums), since this would imply an important loss of information control by the companies,” (Ihlen et al. 2011: 365). And he questions this precaution, since it is shown that consumers rely more on information on social media than on a company website. So why not engage more in the conversations with stakeholders? Until now, persuasion has been in focus. But Capricotti suggests that there is an increasing need for more transparency to meet the growing voices, demands and influences of
consumers on social media. Actually people trust NGOs or “someone like me” more than companies. This has made the voice of the individual louder than ever before. And what can a company do here? Capricotti suggest monitoring and evaluating the public discourse about your organization. The words out there are part of defining who you are in the eyes of consumers, so this is where a company can set in. Focus should be changed towards facilitating dialogue and interaction among the organization and its stakeholders. Companies must change the discourse from being persuasive and informative to being dialogic and conversational. It will have a positive effect on reputation, he says. “So, CSR communication must evolve from communicating CSR commitments, policies and actions towards helping stakeholders and organizations to engage in dialogue and joint decision-making processes about CSR-issues,” (Ihlen et al. 2011: 371). In the future, social media will be used for CSR as crowd-sourcing/voting tool for stakeholders to suggest CSR activities, or at least to give their opinion about it and thereby influence the companies’ decisions. And because of the loss of control, this strategy development needs more openness and honesty. “[...] it is better to be transparent, recognize failures and problems from the beginning and explain how the company’s behavior or attitude can be improved,” (Ihlen et al. 2011). But Capricotti also recognizes the challenge in this: “A key challenge is to evolve from CSR communication as a tactical tool for CSR management towards CSR communication as a strategic part of CSR management,” (Ihlen et al. 2011: 373).

Capricotti defines the future evolution in CSR communication as ‘Strategic communication’, which is “[...] a tool to facilitate and promote the collaborative building of CSR: establishing dialogic communication channels among the organization and its stakeholders to ask about the stakeholders’ needs and what the corporate responsible behaviour should be, at the same time stimulating participation and collaborative decision-making about CSR issues,” (Ihlen et al. 2011: 373). To meet this challenge, he proposes that companies can instead focus on developing innovative forms to facilitate and promote the dialogue and interaction with stakeholders. They should especially look at “their main interactivity features such as usability, information architecture or interaction tools to enable and generate permanent feedback and to engage in relationships,” (Ihlen et al. 2011: 374), and last but not least, integrate new media with existing and thereby use the whole palette of communication channels, cross media.

15.2.2 The social CSR report

A way that Maersk Group could create more engaging CSR content, could be to integrate their CSR report with social media, since the social CSR report is considered an important strategy tool
for companies to consider in the future, if they want to communicate effectively about CSR on social media (Wizness 2013). The possible integration of the CSR report in Maersk Group’s social media was also discussed in the interview with Anna Christina Granholm-Brun, Corporate Brand Manager in Maersk Group Marketing and Branding. According to her, it could very likely be a future strategy which is right around the corner.

In the interview (Appendix C: 2), Anna says that Maersk Group’s annual CSR report has a challenge of being “[...] very numbers based.” Despite of this she thinks the CSR report has done “[...] an amazing job to overcome this challenge,” and add to this that “We didn’t think social into it, but we thought about the power of storytelling within it. And that is, I would say, a stage of change that we hope to execute in future editions of the CSR report. Because you will notice that the stories within the report are still quasi-academic based, so they are still not entirely bite-sized for social.” With this thought about the future, Anna Christina Granholm-Brun estimated the social CSR report a future within Maersk Group’s future messages on Facebook and the Group’s other social media in general. However, she does emphasize that the current CSR report has been “[...] taken to a new level as you can see if you were to compare this years’ CSR report versus previous years,” and that they already did so by “[...] increasing our storytelling and visualizing to show what we’re doing,” as well as translating “[...] the stories into something that everyone can understand, and everybody can relate to.” The reason for why Maersk Group does not yet engage in the social CSR reporting is according to Anna Christina Granholm-Brun that “[...] it comes down to time and resources.” She is working with the sustainability department about a future development, which work she comments by saying that “they’re starting to learn more and more about the value of getting that CSR report out to not only more people but more relevant (!) people.” And she is helping them learn about reaching these relevant people, because she does not think that “[...] consumers use it as much as they could have if the content was more [...] accessible and approachable.”

15.2.3 Advantages or disadvantages?

“When there’s more openness, with everyone being able to express their opinion very quickly, more of the economy starts to operate like a gift economy. It puts the onus on companies and organizations to be more good, and more trustworthy,” says Mark Zuckerberg, one of the five co-founders of Facebook. (Kirkpatrick 2010: 287). He adds that “a more transparent world creates a better-governed world and a fairer world.” I am convinced that honest marketing makes all marketing more honest. Every little new step in that direction taken by especially large
multinational companies must have impact. It is like the wave of organic shopping that has become more and more a common thing, not just a trend – because, someone decided to be role models. If companies decided to communicate more honestly and open, I am further convinced that it can have the effect of decreasing stakeholders’ scepticism towards companies (Sernovitz 2009: 49-50). And eventually it will be more common for companies, also large multinational companies, to communicate about CSR on social media. And thereby, the paradox of CSR communication and the Catch 22 will erode. And I am sure that the consumer watchdogs have come to stay, so the pressure on responsible conduct and transparent communication will keep on, it is not just a trend. Another advantage of the development within CSR on social media, is that the growing pressure from stakeholder watchdogs on companies will create more innovative products and eliminate guesswork that defines old-school marketing and corporate communications (Warner & Yeomans 2012: 9).

CSR is critiqued by some as being no success, just pure makeup (The Economist 2005). And for some companies it might be – but they will in time not be able to continue so if they similarly want to become more transparent to meet stakeholders’ needs. If they are honest, stakeholders will see that the company is not a good citizen. Therefore, conduct CSR as a good citizen and you can also start being honest, transparent and authentic about it. The Reputation Institute support the view that companies should not hold back on communicating CSR: “There is real money in improving reputation through CSR.” However, the Reputation Institute also realise that companies are failing to leverage this. Therefore, companies should implement CSR communication in reputation strategy: “They are not linking CSR to their business strategy but instead, treating it as a separate initiative and investment. You don’t do CSR for the sake of CSR. You do CSR as part of your reputation management strategy to drive business growth, customer loyalty, and employee alignment” says Nielsen in the article hosted by the Reputation Institute (2).

16 CONCLUSION

The motivation for this thesis was a wish to investigate how companies become successful with CSR communication on social media. Especially the large multinational companies, because there is so much scepticism towards them and they seize a great challenge on that account. Also crises evolve more and more online open to the public and reputation is at stake. There is a great contrast between the American BP and Maersk Group, seeing the clear difference between a social media screw-up and a successful exemplary case. Maersk Group’s CSR communication is a
successful and important tool for building a reputation of trust and hence a license to operate in society. A license that a multinational company like Maersk Group does not survive without. Reputation is alpha omega.

But CSR communication on social media is not a widely researched area, neither theoretically or pragmatically. Therefore, I placed Maersk Group’s CSR communication on Facebook in a theoretical cross field to show that it drives many varied outcomes, positive or negative, and thereby gain the understanding that a CSR communication today is moving more and more towards the strategic approach and that more concepts might connect with it. It is already today a complex concept from which many outcomes depend, but who knows what more might come. Today, it is a concept from which concepts are dependent, such as reputation, legitimacy and license to operate as well as social media and stakeholders in the first part of the thesis. In this constructivist horizon, CSR communication is understood in different connections. It is a driver for reputation, indirectly for legitimacy and thereby also license to operate, and it is a driver of word-of-mouth advocacy on social media. It was emphasized that especially for CSR reputation, trust is identified as the primary goal. Upon trust, rhetoric indirectly has a strategic affect by building credibility that is a sub phenomenon of trust. Like images build reputation, credibility build in communication messages will build trust, eventually. Therefore rhetoric was highlighted as a very important and effective tool for building a reputation of trust around Maersk Group’s CSR, via Facebook.

CSR communication can be seen as a socially constructed concept that changes with media as its natural context. Therefore, CSR communication is a hybrid and dynamic concept, because it is developed within social constructions across different strategic and interactive theoretical approached. With this approach, I completed a research design in the second part of the thesis in order to map Maersk Group’s different rhetorical uses within CSR, identified as Maersk Group’s six dimensions of sustainability. With rhetoric, Maersk Group succeeds to persuade its audience and members on Facebook that it has first, credible messages and second, a reputation of trust, hence a license to operate. And it is very effective on social media as well by energizing the groundswell.

But tomorrow’s communication is more complex than as such. Therefore, CSR communication on Facebook or on social media in general shall not be seen as a complete and finished communication. It needs to be adapted to the user’s needs, because users control communication online. Hence, general communication on social media is created and developed in accordance to
its users and thereby a social phenomenon that is built as a response to the complex social construction.

Finally, I can conclude that CSR communication on social media is marked by an exciting shift in communication from tactical to more strategic uses. It will be exciting to see in the years to come where this development goes and where it takes Maersk Group and its CSR communication on social media. It is clear that it will not take long before we meet the company’s social CSR report. This will be the first exciting step. And it will be even more exciting to see how this can influence other companies to follow up. Who will be the first companies in the strategic CSR race? And who are the first ones to open up fully for dialogue about CSR initiatives and in which areas companies should engage. More and more, users will be involved. How will this happen? How will rhetoric look like? And in what ways, will it affect outcomes, such as reputation and word-of-mouth? No specific frame is created for CSR communication on social media – not yet, at least. But this thesis provides a good look into how a moment’s picture of a new, socially communication phenomenon that is becoming more and more impactful in today’s communication, both in Denmark, but also in Europe, whereas USA has been ahead for some time. Maybe America is the place to look for inspiration now to see how the strategic CSR communication should be implemented. This is another subject for another thesis. The world is dynamic and so is CSR communication and social media. Have you shared your voice online today?
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18 APPENDICES

Appendix A. Empirical data: Maersk Group FB’s CSR posts
Appendix B. Categorization and coding
Appendix C. Interview with Maersk Group representative Anna Christina Granholm-Brun
Appendix D. The Yale Model of Communication