



Corporate Narratives in CSR Communication?

A Multimodal Analysis of CSR Communication of Mission-Oriented Companies on Online Platforms

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Abstract

The thesis explores online CSR communication of mission-oriented companies with the lens of multimodal discourse analysis in order to interpret both instrumental and constitutive nature of the semiotic modes of online CSR communication and its incorporation of corporate narratives. Analysis shows that corporate sustainability and ethical practices are commonly portrayed in their online communication, depicting these brands as front-runners in environment preservation and social responsibility. Through combining cause-based design, branding strategies and encouraging actions in their communication methods, mission-oriented companies portray themselves as ethically accountable entities within public space. Their narratives reinforce the ethical and environmental market landscape which might suppress or challenge viewpoints of the prevailing trends. Their common use of hedonic philanthropy suggests hegemonization of responsibility. This study adds to comprehend the way in which multimodal CSR communication by mission-oriented companies mirrors corporate narratives. Their portrayal of corporate responsibility as an empty signifier in CSR communication leaves room for further investigation into its constitutive landscape.

Keywords: Corporate narrative, Corporate Social Responsibility, CSR

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Abbreviations

CSR Corporate Social Responsibility

1. Introduction

It is a matter of concern for the society that capitalism, through its pursuit of profit maximization and cost efficiency, may lead to the creation of irresponsible actors and negative outcomes for societies. Instead of regulating or constraining market mechanisms, they suggest making "responsibility" visible on the market and letting demand from consumers solve what we call an irresponsibility paradox. The term used to achieve this visibility and transparency is corporate social responsibility or CSR.

CSR has been defined in varying ways, reflecting a complex interplay of principles, norms, and practices, affecting how corporate identities undertake social responsibility (Carroll and Brown, 2018). Among various conceptualisations of the CSR, a shared ground has been identified on three foundations: social, economic and environmental (Carroll, 1991). An organisation's CSR can be concentrated in either its internal processes such as employees, health benefits, governance or external practices such as supply chain, stakeholder relation and local community (Green paper: Promoting a European framework for corporate social responsibility, 2001 see Sargeeva and Kapetanaki, 2022). The concept extends beyond the procedures to the corporate application of responsibility, to the realm of text and talk, that describes and convey these procedures.

Communication has risen as a pivotal aspect of CSR over time, exerting its value for crafting business identities and legitimacy (Arvidson 2010; Capriotti & Moreno, 2007). Now the companies are expected to be environmentally and socially responsible and to take part in transparent communication about public concerns (Kim, Nam, & Kang, 2010). Communication acts as a tool to convey data employing whether written, oral, visual, statistical, or gestural elements (Rasyid et al., 2015). However, Communication itself can have deeper meanings embedded within it. Cox and Pezullo (2013) explain the aspects of communication as Instrumental or pragmatic communication which includes ways of interaction, in order to express a purpose that is focused on achieving specific goals. And Constitutive communication, which plays crucial role in how things are observed and comprehended. By influencing values and identities, constitutive communication can encourage a stronger motivation. It brings a specific viewpoint into play, can evoke emotions, promotes particular manners of relating with others; all these factors give rise to feelings which might motivate us to act. These two types of communication, pragmatic and constitutive, are not just ways to deliver information. They are essential in forming the way information is presented and interpreted. These methods show that communication has a strong influence on both

individual understanding as well as shared awareness about environmental problems and actions taken towards them.

1.1 Problem formulation

Carroll and Brown (2018) depict that studies show acceptance of CSR among corporate stakeholders. This underlines CSR's significant contribution in morphing consumer preferences, impacting purchasing choices and investments. CSR has been identified as an important element with tendencies to impact corporate reputation, market value, relation to consumers and investors, (Etter, 2013) as well as its ability to negatively alter market positioning if neglected, stressing its relation to the economic state of a business (PR Newswire, 2016) and underlining its importance for corporations.

CSR communication has shown a close link with creating corporate narratives as well. It has proved to play an important part in shaping companies' identity, influencing corporate image and public perceptions (Carroll and Brown, 2018) while also carrying out an integral role in the public's purchasing choices between products or services according to what the company portrays itself. There has been a rise in a new form of companies over the last few years which claim to have a 'double mission' mindset, expressing that they not only work for profits but are also guided by their will to make positive impact to the society. This makes them different from conventional corporate organisations that are mainly concerned with maximising shareholder value (Hussey, 2007; Brønn, 2001). The young "mission-driven" enterprises frequently incorporate their missions within their business models, bringing innovation and a strong sense of purpose (Deloitte, 2016). Even though these firms might seem smaller in size or comparatively newer in the market, it is perceived their missions bring competitive advantages which help in retaining employees and relationships with customers (Deloitte, 2016).

Online platforms like corporate websites and social media play a crucial role in CSR communication. Organisations have managed to incorporate the advancing digital platforms for CSR communication (Kim et al. (2010) stressed that a great number of organisations put aside considerable sections of their web pages to convey environmental and social responsibility. However, in current times, websites provide only a partial view of the CSR communication (Juska, 2018 see Nicoli & Komodromos, 2019). With CSR information, communication tools are intertwined, affecting one another (Jahdi & Acikdilli, 2009). With increasing adoption of web usage worldwide (Kemp, 2024; Petrosyan, 2024), organisations are compelled to employ a multi-channel approach; by using both corporate websites and social media platforms to extend information. Organisations also strive to deliver CSR narratives across multiple channels, infusing the messages containing organisational visions and strategies, with hints of emotion and elements that extend across mere profits (Sargeeva and Kapetanaki, 2022).

Hossian (2017) and Vara et al. (2016) emphasise that analysing corporate narrative based merely on ‘what’ is being told could create a hindrance in achieving in depth understanding as these narratives today, are often built with a combined use of text, symbols and visuals. Also, CSR communication has proven to have intensified over time, with the increasing popularity of its role in elevating corporate image and strengthening market value. Van Leeuwen (2015) states that the organisations today communicate information by employing multitude of methods. Corporate websites are composed of information that is made up of multiple semiotic elements depicting the need for a thorough analysis of these variable semiotic resources (Fernandez-Vasquez and Sancho-Rodriguez 2020). This perspective is crucial for analysing websites and other digital platforms where semiotic elements are intricately woven together.

Instrumental aspect of CSR communication is often acknowledged as pivotal however it often leaves out deeper discussions on how CSR communication construct deeper corporate narratives. It would be relevant to analyse how CSR communication content reconstruct responsibility.

1.2 Research Aim and Questions

This study thus aims to contribute an understanding of the role of multimodal elements of CSR communication in crafting corporate narratives and to develop insights into the emerging notions and meanings in online CSR communication of mission-oriented companies. With this study, I hope to answer the following research questions:

- What meanings and practices are depicted from the multimodal discourse of CSR on corporate websites and social media?
- To what extent does the online CSR communication of mission-oriented companies reflect corporate narratives?

1.3 Background

This section delves into the evolution, communication, and strategic integration of CSR within corporate landscape for a glimpse into how CSR’s stance in not only shaping corporate practices but also influencing public perception and societal values. Starting with the historical overview of CSR, tracing its development and the foundational principles that guide it. The concept of CSR has morphed overtime, incorporating moral principles, public perceptions and relations (Garriga & Melé, 2004; Esrock & Leichty, 1998). It is defined by The World Business Council for Sustainable Development as the commitment of business to contribute to sustainable economic development, while working with the company's employees, their families, local community and society as a whole in order to improve the quality of life. This underscores how closely knit these two constructs

are; business and society, two distinct yet intertwined entities, each guided by its own set of values and norms. The society expects certain outcomes from businesses' actions based on their needs and rights. The landscape of the CSR is extended in various directions, with companies even crafting their own scope of CSR making every report look different (Książak & Fischbach, 2017). Among various conceptualisations of the CSR, a shared ground has been identified on three foundations: social, economic and environmental (Carroll, 1991) also known as the Triple Bottom Line (TBL). This concept was introduced in 1987 in Brundtland Commission, stating that a company should be responsible for three features: Profit, People and Planet (Żak, 2015). It suggests that the business should be economic, social and environmentally responsible. The International Organization for Standardization (ISO) also launched ISO 26000 in 2010 which stated seven key interdependent areas of social responsibility including: organisational governance, human rights, labour practices, environment, fair operating practices, consumer issues and community involvement and development (International Organization for Standardization, 2010). It assists in defining what social responsibility means, facilitating businesses and organisations in turning these principles into successful actions. It provides the core subjects and issues of social responsibility and a guide for the companies for communicating commitments and performance related to social responsibility.

Various theories have also been employed by several studies to catch the varying interpretations of CSR and complex correlation between businesses and society in an approachable context. Carroll (1991) stresses that the diverse CSR theories deliver frameworks for contemplating the correlation and its influence. Mele and Garriga (2004) offer four categories to classify the diverse CSR theories including Instrumental, Integrative, Ethical, and Political.

Instrumental CSR theories are grounded in a conventional economic approach, emphasising the link between CSR and economic aspects. As emphasised by Kramer and Porter (2006), these theories view CSR as a tactic to build reputation and to mitigate risks to gain financial advantage. Here the CSR is viewed as a strategic tool, seeking profit-oriented paths (Garriga & Melé, 2004). Integrative CSR theories acknowledge the interdependence of businesses and the society. Integrative CSR identifies societal preferences and policies, leveraging them by incorporating societal expectations into corporate functions (Mele & Garriga, 2004). The authors further state that these theories promote social interactions through which corporations can enhance legitimacy. Ethical theories stress the moral view of CSR where social responsibilities are superior to potential economic objectives and are prioritised as inherent ethical duties for the benefit of the society (Mele & Garriga, 2004; Norman & MacDonald, 2004). Political CSR theories are grounded in the notion that the corporations have a powerful political role in society, suggesting that the role of CSR have evolved to take socio-political stance such as defending citizen rights (Scherer and Palazzo, 2011) and handling other societal issues (Mele & Garriga).

1.3.1 CSR Communication Theories

By exploring instrumental and deliberative CSR communication theories, this section will highlight the strategic approaches involved in CSR messaging. Which is crucial to understand the role and significance of CSR communication in shaping public perception and conveying corporate narratives in a transparent and interactive digital landscape. CSR communication continues to rise as an important part of strategic communication (Nicoli & Komodromos, 2019), acting as a crucial component for serving societal interest as well as advancing corporate image (Rasyid et al., 2015). The language employed in CSR communication impacts corporate practices and social perceptions, stressing the need to understand its stance within the CSR context (Siltaoja, 2009). Being a pivotal component in CSR initiatives, communication modes are being continuously adapted by the organisations to be able to keep up with the ever altering and competitive market (Nicoli & Komodromos, 2019).

There are diverse theories encompassing multiple views of CSR communication which are classified into two broad categories: Instrumental and Deliberative (Jahdi and Acikdilli, 2009). Instrumental CSR communication theories form a corporate-driven perspective (Golob et al., 2015; Glozer et al., 2019; Lock & Seele, 2016), where CSR communication aims to meet corporate objectives, acting as an information transfer tool and conveying the technical elements of CSR. Instrumental approaches can serve power to the companies to create narratives and steer the agenda (Feldner & Berg, 2014) often compromising on the notion of transparency towards the stakeholders. (Glozer et al., 2019). Deliberative CSR communication focuses on ethical perspectives and stakeholder engagement (Jahdi and Acikdilli, 2009) and is viewed as crucial to interactive communication (Glozer et al., 2019) making CSR communication disperse from mere technical data and compliance to reach stakeholder-oriented discourse (Scherer & Palazzo, 2011; Lock & Seele, 2016). These concepts provide insight into the diverse ways CSR messages are structured and conveyed through different formats which is crucial for evaluating how these communications translate CSR initiatives into messages and for analyzing the translation of multimodal CSR communication.

1.3.2 Mission-Oriented Companies:

Mission-oriented companies integrate social responsibility into their mission statements. Analysing their online CSR communication is crucial for recognizing how businesses with claims of dedication to social responsibility, convey it. Stakeholders want businesses to do more than just make money; they should pursue goals that benefit workers, communities, and the wider world (Boeger and Hunter, 2018). It is important for an organisation's principles on social responsibility to become part of its mission statement and overall strategic plan if it is dedicated to being socially responsible (Brønn, 2001). Mission-oriented businesses have become successful following increased demand from consumers who prefer buying ethically sourced products while knowing exactly what went into making them (Russo, 2010a). Such companies differentiate themselves by genuinely committing

towards achieving higher level objectives as well as practising responsible supply chain management thereby creating niche markets where traditional competitors find it hard to compete with them. Mission-oriented companies are chosen for analysis for their explicit commitment to social responsibility, making it intriguing to analyze how this commitment is reflected in their online CSR communication.

1.3.3 Online CSR communication

Digital technologies have revolutionized how companies communicate their CSR efforts, making use of multimodal media to engage with stakeholders. Evolving digital technologies have altered CSR communication leading the corporations to make use of constantly advancing communication channels to convey their social responsibility, with rapidly increasing engagement in interactive communication (Esrock & Leichty, 1998; Nicoli & Komodromos, 2019). Being able to reach bigger audiences on social media, affecting perceptions, engaging in dialogue and collecting feedback (Esrock & Leichty, 1998; Nicoli & Komodromos, 2019). Lee (2016) provides a thorough distinction between controlled (e.g. websites) and less controlled (such as social media) channels, depicting the impact of using varying channels of communication on the reception of CSR messages. Organisations go through heightened exposure to the public eye, while being provided with vast opportunities for both informational and interactive communication with their stakeholders (Moreno & Capriotti, 2009) with possibilities of enhancing corporate image and better market value (Jahdi & Acikdilli, 2009). Corporate websites are an important and adequate channel for conveying CSR information (Zerfass et al., 2016) and provide interactive engagement functions to the stakeholders (Pollach, 2005). Understanding of the evolving landscape of digital CSR communication is useful to recognize the significance and effectiveness of various digital channels for analyzing how multimodal CSR communication translates into messages that may or may not depict corporate narratives.

1.3.4 Corporate narratives

Now to understand if CSR communication translates into messages that resonate the companies' narratives, it is crucial to understand the concept of corporate narrative first. Jenkins (2023) defines it as a powerful tool that allows an organisation to deliver its values, mission, and history to stakeholders. Gill (2015) attaches a similar notion to corporate storytelling saying that it is "a process of crafting and conveying "an organisation's message by using narration about the organisation, the past, visions for the future...to reinforce an opinion or behaviour". Hagel (2021) however, states that corporate narrative is not exactly a story. The author suggests that stories usually have a common structure with a start, middle and an ending whereas corporate narratives are generally more open-ended as well as directed to the demands and understanding of the customers. This concept is supported by the evolving nature of narratives as mentioned by (BLASTmedia 2024) that the organisations have now stretched their narratives to include trendier

as well as important topics like cultural branding, purpose-driven messaging, inequality and climate change. Corporate narratives have become extremely dynamic factors involved in the company's branding, market positioning and communication strategy (Jenkins 2023). The concept of corporate narrative has been defined as a story, written truthfully, that captures the gist of an organisation and the society it serves (Dearnell, 2021). The author stresses that it reaches beyond the mission statement to communicating the company's identity and helps people understand what the organisation stands for. Recognizing and understanding the idea of corporate narratives and their significance is crucial to progress in this study, in order to be able to recognize and identify their presence in the digital CSR communication artefacts to be analysed.

2. Theoretical Framework:

CSR communication on online platforms is composed of varying elements. As mentioned earlier, online media provides a platform to interact and utilise multiple modes to convey data. The narratives are constructed rather than represented, employing multiple modes. Scholars agree that relying solely on language for meaning is limiting and a comprehensive understanding emerges only when we consider the collective impact of all semiotic elements (Kress, 2009; Ledin, 2020; Van Leeuwen, 2015; O' Halloran, 2011). suggesting that for an in-depth understanding, meaning-based analysis should be conducted.

2.1 Multimodality and Visual Grammar

*Table 1: Summarised framework for multimodal analysis using social semiotics and visual grammar
Source: adapted by Yang (2016) and Kress & Leeuwen (1996)*

Semiotic Mode		Meta-function mapping	
Different semiotic elements of communication contributing to the meaning		Different functions of language contributing to meaning	
Mode	Description	Meta function	Description
Textual	Vocabulary, narrative structure	Representational	Provides the ideational function of communication, depicting participants and processes as involved.
Visual	Imagery, colour use, layout, and symbolism.	Interactive	Reflect the relationships and engagements with the viewer, including elements like gaze, angle, distance.
Auditory	Music, sound effects, voice tone, and pace, tone.		
Spatial	Proximity, alignment, and use of space within the communication medium.	Compositional	Relate to the overall design and integration of elements. with layout, framing, and differential salience

Gestural	Body language, facial expressions		
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Van Leeuwen (2015) explains multimodality as the phenomenon where language and multidisciplinary modes such as sound, image, interpersonal signs and different symbols are intertwined and used in discourse, thereby describing multimodality to be the variation of modes that can impart meaning to the communication. It provides tools for exploring how these different modes of communication work together to make meaning. Each semiotic mode of communication has its own advantages and disadvantages in expressing meanings as stated by Yang (2016). Multimodal Discourse Analysis is a technique employed in analysis of semiotic modes. Studies recommend that the level of understanding we get from one mode of communication tends to be incomplete if all modes of communication are not given a thought to appreciate diverse inputs of meaning (Kress, 2009 & Ledin, 2020). Researchers such as Kress, van Leeuwen, and O’Toole among others have deciphered these modes as ‘grammar’, providing a framework for investigating their functions (Leeuwen 2005). Due to the multimodality of communication, multidisciplinary collaboration is needed including art, musicology and non-verbal communication studies, to be able to decode various semiotic devices to achieve the overall meaning of a communication piece.

Social semiotics of multimodality, a concept narrated by Yang (2016), inspired by Kress and van Leeuwen that uses Halliday’s systemic functional linguistics to illustrate that each mode of communication has its strengths and limitations in conveying meaning. The concept of social semiotics provides the tools to analyse the construction of meaning. Kress advocates this view by stating that “in a multimodality approach, all modes are framed as one field, as one domain” (Kress, 2000). Kress and van Leeuwen claim that like grammars in oral languages, visual elements rely on composition, the use of colour, and placement to structure information and define the outcome. This perspective not only expands the scope of multimodal discourse analysis but also makes understanding the construction of meaning in multimode communications even clearer. Kress & van Leeuwen (1996) refine these linguistic principles to the visual communication language making the visual grammar. The authors affirm that the visual elements, just like words, have a structured format into which the detailed analysis can be applied and provide the framework for analysing the grammar of visual design, demonstrating that visual elements can be deciphered and analysed with the similar systemic accuracy as linguistic items.

Yang (2016) expands on the application of visual grammar to the multimodal discourse, considering representational, interactive, and compositional metafunction. This theoretical base is essential for comprehending the structured nature of both textual and visual communication. Representational Meanings are

linked to the ideational metafunction presented by Halliday (1994). It is focused on how the reality of the participants and processes is communicated. Kress and Van Leeuwen's visual grammar allows use of representational metafunction which is grounded on the notion that visuals also possess their own "grammar". This grammar can be used to understand "how visuals narrate actions or delineate concepts" (Halliday, 1994). The representational metafunction is divided into two processes: the narrative process and the conceptual process". As explained by Yang 2016, Narrative process is about storytelling through visuals. It hints at movement or events happening while the conceptual process is about describing the gist of things, often in a more static or timeless way. By distinguishing between narrative and conceptual processes in visual grammar, Kress and van Leeuwen provide a framework for analysing the different ways images can function in communication. Interactive Meanings provide a glimpse into the level of interaction with the audience, focusing concentration on factors such as the tone of the communicator and its opinion on the important issues. Compositional Meanings are associated with the layout, spatial arrangement of the communication elements, the sequence of elements or scenes, etc (Yang 2016).

2.1.1 Modes of Communication

Drawing from Kress (2010) and (Yang 2016), multimodality considers the diverse modes employed in communication. These modes contribute uniquely to conveying meaning, with not one of them being any less significant than the others in the communication process (Kress 2010). The following five semiotic modes of communication identified by The New London Group (1996) provide comprehensive analysis tool for multimodality:

- Textual Mode: Involves analysing verbal choices like vocabulary and metaphor, alongside discourse organisation techniques, to understand how texts guide interpretation and fulfil specific goals.
- Visual Mode: this one examines the use of visual resources, including images, colour, and page layout, highlighting how visual choices contribute to the overall thematic coherence.
- Spatial Mode: Focuses on the arrangement of spatial resources, such as the layout and organisation of objects, emphasising how spatial decisions impact viewer engagement.
- Gestural Mode: Explores body movement choices, including gestures and facial expressions, to understand how they convey information or focus attention.
- Aural Mode: Investigates sound features, such as music and sound effects, to discern how they influence content perception.

3. Methodology:

3.1 Approach

The approach adopted in this study considers language to be important in the construction of social reality. The qualitative method, as described by the author, is typically inductive; involves collecting data from several sources, and then making sense of it (Cresswell and Cresswell, 2018). This research adopts a qualitative approach with a focus on analysing the communication artefacts of meaning from corporation's construction of CSR as opposed to focusing on the reception of the discourse. Analysis of a qualitative nature involves an intricate and organised examination of data gathered from diverse methods (Cresswell and Cresswell 2018). It is best suited for exploring complicated matters that are not simple to measure. This study is to observe the multimodal artefacts of a company's CSR communication and analyse what role they play in establishing narratives related to the company's image and actions. To understand the multiple meanings within these communications and to answer the research questions, qualitative is the appropriate choice of methods.

3.2 Data Collection

The data collected in this study is drawn from two different online platforms: corporate websites and social media (specifically Facebook). Mission driven organisations have well established Facebook pages dedicated to communicating CSR and their philanthropic foundations on social media. The primary data used in this research consist of images from Facebook posts and corporate websites. Similarly, the material collection from web pages was carried out by going through every hyperlink or page and identifying the videos with a CSR message.

3.2.1 Criteria for choosing a social media platform

Along with Corporate websites, Facebook (now also known as Meta) is selected as the social media platform to be employed to collect Corporate Social Responsibility content for this study, by considering following factors:

1. Cross-posting is a common method employed by companies (Farahbakhsh, Cuevas, & Crespi, 2015), thus having profiles in multiple online platforms does not guarantee unique content.
2. Facebook is the commonly used social media platform (Greenwood et al., 2016), with one of the largest user bases among social media platforms; currently more than 3 billion users around the world (Meta, 2024; Kowal et al., 2020). According to Semrush (2022), 400 new users joined Facebook every minute on average in the year 2021, suggesting the numbers will significantly grow with time.
3. Facebook provides a flexible interface for its users to convey data and interact, allowing a range of content modes like text, pictures and videos (Meta 2024) hence the users can share text messages, images, and other sorts of media (Good, 2013). This aspect is crucial for this study as it aims to analyse multimodal CSR content.

3.2.2 Criteria for choosing companies.

Mission-driven companies claim to embody a mission that is aligned to serve social or environmental impact with their product and processes, developed to support this mission (Deloitte, 2016). The criteria used for the selection of mission-driven companies is inspired and developed from the criteria employed by Deloitte (2016) which provides an approach to identify mission-led companies. It is further developed to incorporate the use of online platforms as this study aims to target online CSR communication. Thus, the criteria require the company to have

1. stated an intention to bring a positive social, ethical or environmental impact as the main purpose of its operations.
2. active and updated Facebook profile and official website and
3. public communication of its initiatives and their impact to its stakeholders

Using this criteria, the following five companies were chosen.

Tony's Chokolonly

Tony's Chokolonly was established 15 years ago and describes itself as following a mission to promote fair labour practices and to eradicate child labour from chocolate industry (Pavlin Avdić, 2021). The company expresses support against modern-day slavery and claims to be operating, not for money or to sell chocolate, but to make the world a nicer place (Appiah, 2017). It states that it is dedicated to operationalising slave-free and Fair-Trade practices in the chocolate industry (Tony's Chokolonly, n.d). The company employs both, its established website and a lively Facebook profile.

Divine Chocolate

Divine Chocolate is a Fairtrade chocolate company, notable for its special business method that emphasises co-ownership with cocoa farmers. This company is a social enterprise that describes itself as a company driven by a mission which is to facilitate the prevention of exploitation in the cocoa industry (WBM, 2014). Established in 1998, it states to have earned recognition due to dedication towards enhancing the lives of those who grow cocoa by direct ownership (Divine Chocolate, n.d.). It further claims to be operating for the promotion of farmer-owned businesses and empowering them through sustainable livelihood (Wills, 2015), giving farmers a share in the profits. Divine Chocolate also illustrates the presence of diversity and inclusion in its organisation structure, having a good number of women in important positions, both at cooperative level as well inside the company itself.

Alter Eco

Alter Eco, a company that expresses dedication to sustainability and ethical methods, states to be founded with the mission to provide good-quality, organic food products while also looking after social and environmental welfare (Business Wire, 2016). This business claims to be at the forefront of regenerative farming practices, stating that it aids in fighting climate change as well as fostering stability among those who farm sustainably (Alter Eco n.d.). In the structure, the existence of strong governance is claimed by the company, to make certain of ethical practices, transparency and engagement in its mission-driven business model (Business Wire, 2016). The company is also, as it describes itself, conscious of environmental responsibility and that it has come up with compostable packing answers and an operational footprint that is carbon-neutral, expressing dedication to lessen effects on the environment (Alter Eco n.d.).

Dedicated Brand

Dedicated Brand claims devotion to making modern, enjoyable designs that are good for the environment. The main mission, as it states, is to show that fashion can be both fun and sustainable, so that fashion can be made in an eco-friendly way without compromising style (Dedicated Brand, n.d.). It presents itself to be committed to change the fashion industry by using sustainable methods in all parts of their production and supply chain and to using materials and procedures that have low impact on the environment (Dedicated Brand, n.d.). It shows that it follows a business model wherein financial prosperity is aligned with care for nature and societal accountability. Dedicated expresses belief in the future of sustainability and recognizes that the little changes have power to save the planet (Dedicated Brand, n.d.).

Bee's Wrap

Bee's Wrap company makes wraps that are claimed to be good for the environment and are made from organic cotton and other natural materials to be

used as a substitute for plastic wrap. The company was founded in 2012 with the aim, as expressed by it, of decreasing the use of plastic in kitchens by providing an alternative that can be washed, reused and broken down naturally into soil components. It displays its dedication to social and environmental performance, responsibility, and clearness. The goal is said to be generating good results for the workers, community and environment. Their wraps are claimed to be useful and environmentally friendly substitutes to plastic that can be composted when they are no longer needed, aiding in lowering landfill waste.

Table 2: Criteria for choosing mission-oriented companies. Source: Deloitte, 2016

No	Name of the company	Criteria 1: intention to drive positive impact stated within its mission	Criteria 2: Active Online Platforms		Criteria 3: Content on its initiatives and impacts
			Facebook	Website	
1	Tony's Chocolonely	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
2	Dedicated Brand	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
3	Altar Eco	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
4	Bees Wrap	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
5	Divine Chocolate	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Online content is composed of a variety of topics, including traditional advertisements and mere branding from the companies, making it complex to gather relevant data. For collection of CSR content from the corporate websites and Facebook accounts of the selected companies, the classification given by United Nations Global Compact was utilised. This classification of CSR brings forth ten principles that merge into 4 areas: human rights, labour, environment and anticorruption (United Nations Global Compact, nd. see Książak & Fischbach, 2017). This classification acts as a comprehensive guide for the companies and their stakeholders to navigate through the vast division of CSR practices and communication and has proved useful in identification of CSR related data among other content made public online by the companies. Among the principles constituting these 4 categories, are included: protection of human rights, elimination of forced labour, child labour and discrimination at workplace, precautionary and preventive approach towards environmental issues and elimination of corruption and bribery. 30 artefacts from websites and Facebook profiles of the 5 chosen companies were collected.

3.3 Analysis

Multimodal Discourse Analysis, involving an examination of various semiotic elements such as language and imagery, will be employed to analyse CSR communication on corporate websites and social media platforms. Every use of semiotic elements carries underlying power dynamics, suggesting that a multimodal approach to discourse analysis can effectively unpack the ideological operations across various forms of semiotic expression (Ledin, 2020). Once the data is gathered, the first step is to identify the semiotic modes in every artefact by observing key elements like symbols, words, colour, images, form and spatial orientation. Every mode then went through analysis based on the three metafunction to understand its meaning. First to understand the message being portrayed by looking at the elements as they are shown (representative meaning). This step also involved identifying if the artefact uses a story process (motion, showing actions or events) or a concept process (still, showing classifications or symbolic meanings). Then investigated the interactive meaning by considering what kind of relationship the element strives to create between this image and its audience. Lastly, the arrangement and visual structure of the semiotic element, how it is placed or framed to highlight or prioritise parts of message was explored. To understand the gist of the analysed data (Robson and McCartan (2016), I acquainted myself with the resulting information to see recurring patterns and then applied coding. For coding I used colour labelling which after processing, led to the structuring of analysed data based on the identified themes.

A structured methodology for applying the theoretical insights from social semiotics and multimodality to the analysis of CSR communications is utilised. This table outlines a framework for examining the collected data, drawing on the theoretical underpinnings of Kress & van Leeuwen (1996) and Yang (2016).

Table 3: Analysis framework. Source: adapted by theoretical underpinnings of Kress & van Leeuwen (1996) and Yang (2016).

Semiotic Mode	Metafunction mapping	Potential Impact on CSR Communication
Textual	Representational	Conveys specific information, sets the tone, and outlines the narrative, level of clarity and understanding.
Visual		Engages emotions, reinforces brand identity, and illustrates a notion visually.

Auditory	Interactive	Affects mood, enhances message retention, and adds emotional depth, emphasis on some elements.
Spatial	Compositional	Organises info hierarchically, guides attention, and emphasises or prioritises key elements, readability.
Gestural		Humanises the brand, adds authenticity, and promotes engagement

3.4 Methodological Reflections:

Reflecting on the process, method and the scope of this research, I believe thoroughness is crucial while exploring the theoretical framework and applying it to gather meaning. However, there are certain limitations to this study. The interpretation of semiotic elements is naturally subjective. Possible prejudices and the time needed for analysis might affect how reliable findings are (Aydin-Düzgit & Rumelili, 2019). Analysing discourse to interpret meaning itself has limited generalizability and there is often a risk of not fully understanding the context (Aydin-Düzgit & Rumelili, 2019). People interpret semiotic resources where their own subjectivity can be affected by things like cultural background, study interests and personal experiences. Therefore, different social groups and cultural situations may create different understandings. The idea expressed by Kress (2003), saying "form is not semantically neutral," also hints that all modes can be influenced by culture and history. This implies their use and understanding may show significant differences across settings. It highlights an important factor, while visual grammar aligns with linguistic structures in theory, how it works practically includes dealing with complex interaction between form and meaning. Hence the translation of semiotic elements in visual forms requires a fine balance. This is because the apparent meanings and affordances of visual elements have the ability to lead to distinct understandings that are not fully predicted by linguistic systems.

My method is designed to be adaptable but being based on existing knowledge, it might not completely apply to the upcoming advancements in digital communication (Aydin-Düzgit & Rumelili, 2019) with possibility of changing semiotic modes and their use in the online media. This study also focuses on mission-oriented companies which could limit how the results can be used in industries that did not pass the criteria. For Multimodal discourse analysis, even though it recognizes the concept of many possible meanings within communication, depending upon the receiver of the message (Chouliaraki, 2010; Fairclough, 2013), this study does not consider interactions happening at the point of reception. It mostly examines how CSR information is given but does not include thoughts and interpretations coming from people who are meant to receive the information. To

deal with these missing parts, coming studies might use ethnographic ways to investigate how CSR initiatives and the way they are communicated affect stakeholders. This could involve their views and narratives into building better understanding of CSR communication.

3.5 Ethics and Reflexivity

This study tries to employ clear methods of research for generalise-ability. However, there is a limitation on how far the use of these findings can be extended. This study, with a sample size of 30 communication artefacts from five corporations, does not aim to make generalisations about the whole industry or wider CSR practices. It specifically focuses on understanding how mission-oriented companies craft and communicate CSR initiatives via online platforms. Assessing the data quality, the material comes from publicly accessible social media channels tied to official company profiles and their official websites, making it authentic in nature (Scott's 1990) . Collection of data only includes materials which are publicly available, reducing the presence of ethical conflict. The study recognizes that the communication discourse is both 'constructed' and 'constructive,' as stated by Gill (1996). Ainsworth and Hardy (2004) comment on how our academic identities affect discourse analysis, while Grant et al. (2004) stress that any single research project cannot entirely capture all complexities within language and discourses themselves. Therefore, I am aware of these restrictions and limitations of my study and see them as chances for future research.

4. Findings:

In this section, the results of the analysis are presented in order to understand to what extent does the online CSR communication of mission-oriented companies reflect corporate narratives and what meanings are depicted from the multimodal discourse of CSR on corporate websites and social media. Data analysis using the aforementioned theoretical framework led to five themes, based on which, I have structured this section. These themes are as follows:

- Cause-oriented design
- Branding
- Humanising the message
- Cause and Contrast marketing
- Hedonic Philanthropy

4.1.1 Cause-oriented Design

The collected data shows recurring patterns of incorporation of the good cause, whether ethical, social or environmental, in brand's design and images, being utilised to communicate CSR efforts on the online platforms. For example: Figure 1 shows a person holding a chocolate bar labelled "What does injustice mean to you?" Here, the chocolate bar is the focal point, striving to address social issues of justice and universal equality through the design of its wrapper. Another example is depicted in Figure 2, where text on the chocolate wrappers aims to evoke conversation by asking what the issues of "injustice" and "inequality" mean.

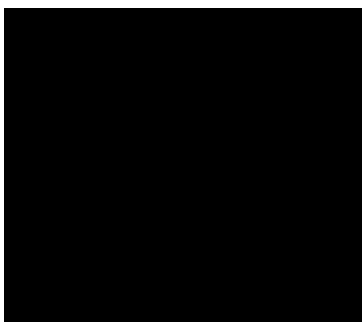


Figure 1: Tony's Chocolonely (2022).

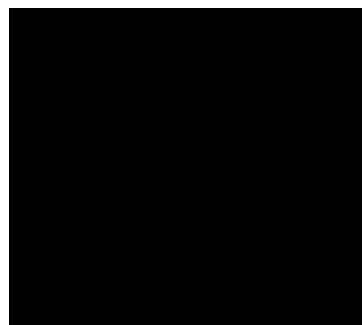


Figure 2: Tony's Chocolonely (2022)

Similarly, Figure 3 depicts the purchase of chocolate as a participatory act in the fight against exploitation in the cocoa business. The attractive chocolate bar wrappers feature certification symbols, multicoloured patterns, and writings

implying co-ownership by farmers of cocoa, encouraging customers to align their ethical standards with the products they buy.

The text on the wrapper and the chocolate bar in Figure 4 emphasizes key attributes of the product, such as flavour and cocoa content, along with statements of co-ownership by cocoa farmers and certifications. The uncovered chocolate bar, with logos and writings such as “EVERY BAR DIRECTLY IMPROVES THE LIVES OF FARMERS” engraved on it, portrays the brand’s commitment to ethical practices.



Figure 3: Divine Chocolate. (n.d.)



Figure 4: Divine Chocolate. (2022)

Figure 5 uses the product’s “ocean inspired prints” to portray it as conscious of ocean safety, commodifying the “plastic free” movement for marketing purposes and potentially expanding its customer base, particularly among those concerned with plastic waste in oceans. The artefact itself contains blue hues, which are also prominent in the wraps and background, symbolizing oceans and displaying the product as being sustainable and a contributor to oceanic preservation.

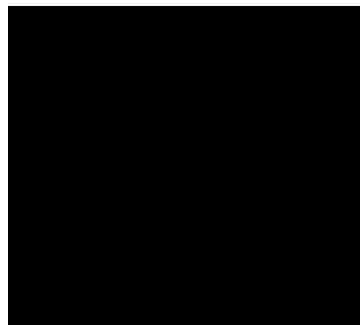


Figure 5: Bees Wrap. (2023)

4.1.2 Branding:

Building Brand's certain Persona

There is a repetitive trend of portraying the brand as socially responsible among the figures analyzed, indicating attempts at branding.

For example, the text in the caption of Figure 6 emphasizes the company's active stance against slavery and child labour, fostering the idea that the brand is actively contributing to social issues and promoting ethical practices in the cocoa industry.

Similarly, the text in the caption of Figure 7 highlights the company's contribution to recyclable packaging. However, the post represents only one aspect of the environmental footprint, omitting other phases of production, possibly to capitalize on online trends.

Figure 8 shows a bold, attention-catching statement, "THIS EGG HAS NOTHING TO HIDE," asserting the brand's transparency. Additional text in smaller, darker fonts provides phrases regarding the company's just payments to farmers and fairness, indicating that the production processes align with ethical farming practices. The figure of a larger unwrapped chocolate egg alongside smaller eggs in coloured wrappers displays the Easter products, portraying transparency and openness.

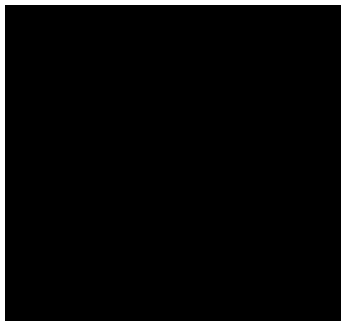


Figure 6: Tony's Chokolonely. (2022)

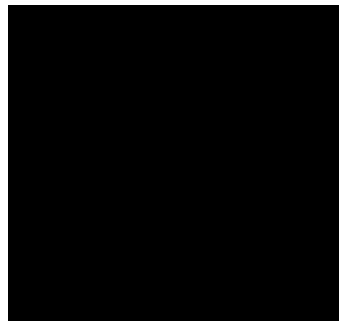


Figure 7: Tony's Chokolonely. (2021)

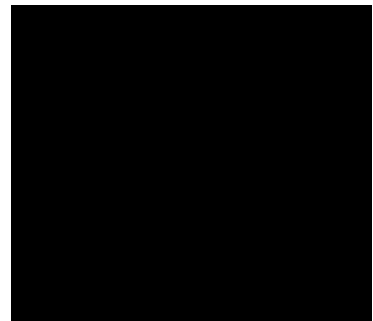


Figure 8: Tony's Chokolonely. (n.d.)

The text in Figure 9 on the brand's web page explains its sustainable products and practices. The wording reflects the brand's dedication to openness and ideals, establishing an expectation for moral behaviour. Details like the use of 100% recyclable and certified organic materials support the brand's sustainability, aiming to develop its reputation among sustainability-conscious consumers. The text starts with a general commitment to sustainability and then specifies material usage and the variety of goods. It urges consumers to think about fashion's environmental effects beyond material choices, potentially strengthening the brand's transparency and openness while promoting its diverse products.

Planet-friendly wardrobe

Our sustainable clothing brand is built on transparency, honesty, and sticking true to our values. All of our modern clothing, has been designed with the planet in mind.

We use organic, chemical-free cotton certified by GOTS. Organic cotton clothing uses much less water than regular cotton and emits almost 50% less carbon dioxide, making it a no-brainer for us to use. All the polyester we use is 100% recycled so that you don't have to worry about adding to the planet's plastic problem. We also love using "TENCEL" Lyocell, a super sustainable fabric made from wood pulp that's durable, breathable, and incredibly soft.

Our ethical fashion collection provides you with all the key pieces you need for a planet-friendly wardrobe. We've got your basics covered with organic cotton T-shirts, socks, and plenty of cozy sweaters. But we also have clothes to match your lifestyle and fashion preferences. Our puffer jackets are perfect for the dark, cold months in the city (we are a Swedish brand, after all), and our flowy dresses and patterned resort shirts are simply must-haves on a warm summer city.

Our mission to make clothing kind

It's no secret that fashion is a shady business. Filled with harmful chemicals, and in-human working environments. An industry that for the past 30 years has been a nice to the bottom – and the textile industry now accounts for 10% of global carbon emissions. We wanted to show that it didn't have to be like this. Clothing can be kind, and we're here to prove it.

Armed with an eco-conscious team, a love of contemporary clothing, and plenty of pop music to keep us going, we've created a brand that is thoughtful from start to finish. We only work with suppliers that share the same values, and that are certified by reliable and legit social standards. Long-term partnerships that allow us to grow together and build trust. By doing this, we can sleep easy knowing that everyone involved in our brand is treated with respect.

We'll even pack your pieces nice and tight so that we're not shipping air and wasting room in transit.

Every brand has a choice, and our choice is to be kind.



Figure 10: Dedicated. (2019)

Figure 9: Dedicated Brand. (n.d.).

Figure 10 depicts environmental activism by showing the brand taking part in a climate strike. The phrase “support your local planet” displays the brand as environmentally conscious and active. The figure portrays the brand as supportive of environmental activism and local initiatives, with the second part showing a crowd protesting for the environment. Posting this content on social media demonstrates the brand’s open support for environmental causes and leverages its actions during the strike to build an image of responsibility and attract consumers.

In Figure 11, the side-by-side look with the question “See the difference?” encourages people to think about earth-friendly farming. The words “eat chocolate, save the planet” emphasize the company’s role in helping fight climate change and enhancing farmers’ lives, portraying the product as a solution to social and environmental change.

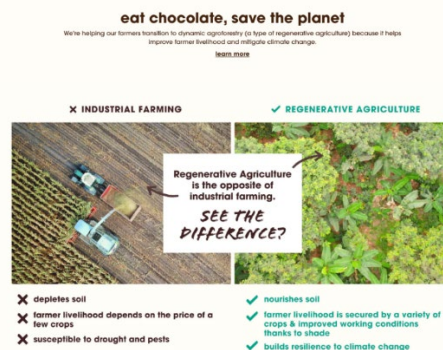


Figure 11: Alter Eco. (n.d.)

Multifaceted entities:

There is another recurring notion of building the brand’s certain persona. The collected data portrays the brands as similar to non-governmental organizations, giving them a persona that transcends the mere production of goods and creating a multifaceted identity that resonates with their audience while offering spaces for

meaningful conversations. This perception suggests that the brand is not just a production company, but an entity deeply embedded in the social fabric.

For example, in Figure 3, the textual mode with phrases asking viewers to choose weapons against social issues urges consumers to take responsibility, portraying consumer choices as a form of weapon with the potential to fight against exploitation. This can generate strong emotional responses, conveying action and empowerment to consumers. It shows the company's adherence to ethical standards by directing attention to the immediate connection between consumer choice and the social impact of their purchases, setting a call to action. Persuasive language motivates consumers to act, using terms associated with activism and social movements, inviting consumers to consider their purchases of chocolate as a means of defiance against exploitation in the cocoa industry. This figure encourages consumers to join a bigger cause for change by generating a sense of collective responsibility and empowerment through its expressions.

Figure 12 urges readers to learn about and interact with initiatives to enhance women's lives, promoting awareness about skill development and economic empowerment. Figure 13 creates a sense of ownership of the consumer's decisions and empowerment in their choices, fostering the importance of ethical and responsible consumption. Figure 4 portrays a tactic to spread awareness about the connection between social issues and steps towards their solution by placing ethical consumption as the point of focus.



Figure 12: Divine Chocolate. (n.d.)

Did you know Divine Chocolate is the only Fairtrade certified chocolate company in the world that is affiliated to cocoa farmers?

Kuapa Kokoo is a cooperative with over 100,000 cocoa farmers in Ghana who owns 20% of Divine Chocolate. They are also those who grow cocoa of the highest quality that we then use in our products.

[#choklad](#) [#rättvisemärkt](#) [#palmojefri](#) [#divinechocolate](#)
[#divinechoklad](#) [#kakao](#) [#jointhechocolaterevolution](#)
[#JoinTheChocolateRevolution](#) [#fairtrade](#) [#chokladensdag](#)

Figure 13: Divine Chocolate. (2022)

Facilitators of conversation

The data analyzed also crafts an image of the chosen brands as ethical and conscious entities that provide solutions and dialogues around critical issues. Their online CSR communication constructs a narrative that they are vital players in conversations around social responsibility, aligning with consumers' evolving values. The collected data shows patterns of using an inquiry-based approach and

providing open spaces for conversation, fostering curiosity, and encouraging the audience to take part in discussions.

For instance, in Figure 1, the text in the caption encourages viewers to engage in a campaign highlighting social issues of equality, justice, and humanity while displaying three new products. These products are positioned as catalysts for meaningful conversations promoting social justice and equality. The campaign aims to start conversations on social issues via product engagement, inviting the audience to participate. This potentially enhances a sense of participation and collaboration, portraying the brand as a facilitator of important dialogues.

Similarly, Figure 2 attempts to incorporate the product and chocolate consumption with efforts to spark broader discussions on social injustice, positioning the consumer as an advocate for change. The campaign uses product packaging as a conversation starter on social issues, portraying this as the first step towards social change.

Some artifacts engage attention by asking questions. The text in Figure 14 delivers a message about the company's dedication to slave-free production, inviting readers with call-to-action phrases like "The choice is yours" and asking "Are you in?".

In Figure 15, the text provides an educational narrative about the ethical concerns facing the chocolate industry, stressing social issues such as slavery on cocoa farms and disparities in the company's supply chain. Rhetorical inquiry ("Huh?! Slavery?"), which acknowledges the reader's possible astonishment, invites thoughts on understanding and awareness of the situation. Captions such as "tell me more" further ignite curiosity. This figure has the potential to increase awareness of the problems facing the chocolate business while also serving an educational function.

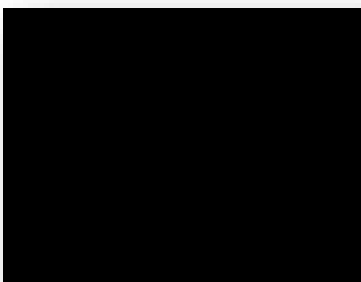


Figure 14: Tony's Chokolonely. (n.d.).



Figure 15: Tony's Chokolonely. (n.d.).

4.1.3 Humanising the message

Figure 16, together with the image of the farmer, which humanizes the brand, the content promotes the brand's image as socially responsible by adding an

element of emotional depth. It attempts to create a link between consumers and the people behind the product and their efforts, fostering a sense of connection. However, the farmer remains unnamed, which could either be to avoid focusing on individual identity to emphasize collective work or to solely promote the brand's socially conscious image and improve its market position. By choosing to display a close-up, seemingly authentic shot of the farmer, the brand strengthens its image of transparency and ethical responsibility.

The image potentially conveys a sense of authenticity, enhancing the message of ethical sourcing. It can impact the audience's perception of the farmer's life and struggles, sparking emotions that strengthen the company's image and its ethical narrative. The farmer's expression shows contentment and peace, and his posture hints at a sense of dignity and pride, which potentially indicates the brand's commitment to empowering farmers or a respected farmer being showcased to gain consumer trust and strengthen market reputation.

The person in Figure 1 stares directly into the camera, fostering a connection with the audience, evoking reflection, and potentially initiating talk about social issues. This adds a human element to the post, making it more relatable with the person acting as an intermediary between the brand and consumers.



Figure 16: Tony's Chocolonely. (2022)



Figure 17: Divine Chocolate. (n.d.)

In Figure 12, the picture of smiling, seemingly confident, and interacting female farmers provides a glimpse into the human impact of the brand's initiatives. This figure radiates authenticity by depicting local involvement.

Elias Mohamed, a cocoa farmer in Figure 17, shares an endorsement illustrating the beneficial effects of the company and fair trade on his life and occupation. With the farmer's name and title set against a colourful background, the quote highlights authenticity and conveys the story of how customer engagement directly influences the product's quality and commitment. By spotlighting the human element of the product, the quote encourages a personal connection between the farmer and the customer. The arrangement of graphic components emphasizes the testimony and

the person, reinforcing the message of impact and quality. The farmer's posture, stained clothes, and cheerful expressions potentially draw viewers to empathize with him, reinforcing the positive message of the quote.

In Figure 18, cocoa farmer Mercy Zaah is credited with a statement that effectively conveys the immediate benefits of fair trade, particularly regarding her children's educational prospects. Set against a colourful background, the text illustrates the practical benefits of fair trade by offering a concrete example of how consumer decisions can enhance lives. The picture of Mercy Zaah smiling and holding the product provides a powerful illustration of the validity of her approval. It implies a short chain between farm and consumer, creating a personal connection between the producer and the consumer. The composition harmonizes the text and photo, giving the fair-trade story a human appearance and aligning the consumer's view of the company with constructive social impact. These real-life examples are effective in validating the brand's ethical claims, appearing as part of a broader framework of openness and responsibility shared with consumers on the brand's webpage.

The woman in Figure 19, carrying a child on her back in a natural setting, possibly a cocoa farm, offers a glimpse into the life of women and their responsibilities, making interactions with the image emotional and inspiring empathy and sympathy among the audience. At the same time, the woman's smiling face and the candid style of the photograph hint at the positive impacts of the brand's initiatives, making the accompanying text more meaningful. Both the text and the photo emphasize the human aspect of the brand's products, showing not only the positive impacts but also what it took to achieve them.

With a picture of seemingly cheerful cocoa farmers in Figure 20, the brand symbolizes the human side of the chocolate industry's production processes. Their joyous expressions radiate an impression of farmer empowerment through the brand's positive initiatives. These seemingly authentic initiatives indicate either systemic change, marketing tactics, or both.



Figure 18: Divine Chocolate (n.d.)

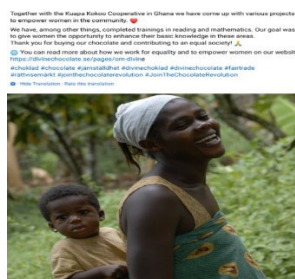


Figure 19: Divine Chocolate. (2022)



Figure 20: Divine Chocolate. (2023)

4.1.4 Cause & Contrast Marketing.

The analyses portrayed the attempts of marketing by associating the product with social or environmental causes. For example, Figure 21 portrays the brand as socially responsible, emphasizing its active stance against unjust industry practices, which can attract an audience particularly conscious and sensitive about social and environmental issues. Similarly, Figure 2 explicitly states being "100% free" of slavery and illegal child labour, a claim likely to draw the attention of conscious consumers. The text in this figure attempts to initiate conversations about social issues while promoting the context of chocolate consumption.

In Figure 22, the text emphasizes the brand's devotion to offering healthy and eco-friendly food, targeting people who care about the environment and prefer wholesome food. The environmental-friendly aspects of the products and their quality are highlighted using superlative terms like "greenest and cleanest" and phrases such as "food that restores rather than depletes," "good growing practices," and "lose the landfill."

The video artifact in Figure 23 attempts to raise awareness about the current crisis and position the brand and its products as fashion linked with morals and nature conservation, aiming to expand the consumer base among those mindful of sustainability when purchasing items. By presenting the consumption of ethical chocolate as a form of social responsibility, the post encourages activism among consumers. Taking advantage of celebrations and holidays can be a calculated move to advance ethical consumption and promote products, as seen in Figure 24.

Marketing the product while symbolizing social change and prompting ethical consumption, the content in Figure 14 presents a narrative of ethical responsibility and consumer empowerment, hinting that consumers can make a difference by choosing this brand. The text is motivational, advocating for a "plastic free" planet, and using the product's "ocean inspired prints" to remind viewers of the worthy cause, potentially commodifying the "plastic free" movement for marketing purposes and expanding the customer base, especially among those concerned with plastic waste in oceans.

Figure 15's text provides an educational narrative about the ethical concerns facing the chocolate industry, stressing social issues like slavery on cocoa farms and disparities in the company's supply chain. Rhetorical inquiries ("Huh?! Slavery?") acknowledge the reader's possible astonishment and invite them to ponder their understanding and awareness of the situation, igniting further interest with captions such as "tell me more." This approach likely prompts an emotional response among readers regarding the problems farmers face.

In Figure 9, the language is affirmative, trying to attract consumers by emphasizing their values, referencing the environment, critiquing current practices in the fashion field, and highlighting the brand's responsible social behavior. The

text begins by addressing the fashion system’s inherent problems and then articulates the brand’s principles and operational rules, providing a glimpse into the comprehensive implementation of sustainability across all business lines, portraying the product as eco-friendly throughout its life cycle.

The content of Figure 11 illustrates the significant gap between factory farming and regenerative farming, highlighting the negative impacts of the former and the benefits of the latter. Using signs like ‘X’ and ‘Check’ makes the comparison prominent and distinguishable. The text sets up a side-by-side list, encouraging people to consider the results of each farming method and explaining why regenerative farming is beneficial. The figure reinforces the message, with two contrasting pictures showing the outcomes of industrial versus regenerative farming.

Do you like dark chocolate? In that case, we recomn "Deliciously Smooth Dark Chocolate" with 70% coco

With this chocolate cake also comes benefits:

- ♥ Vegansk
- 🌱 Mark of justice
- 🚫 Free from palm oil
- 🌿 Only natural ingredients

Figure 21: Divine Chocolate. (2022)



Figure 22: Alter Eco. (n.d.)

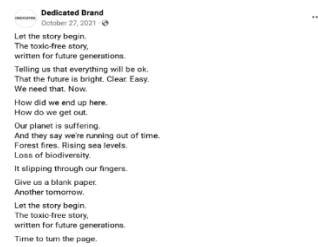


Figure 23: Dedicated Brand (2022)

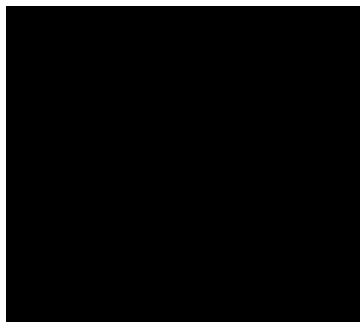


Figure 24: Tony's Chokolonely. (2021)

4.1.5 Hedonic Philanthropy:

The data shows a pattern of depicting messages of ethical consumption, social and environmental initiatives, along with promoting products as enjoyable. The analyzed data emphasizes that sustainable choices have the potential to increase consumer satisfaction, portraying ethical and sustainable consumer practices as accessible and appealing to the audience.

Figure 24 highlights major concerns regarding ethics in the chocolate industry by leveraging the festive Halloween ambience. The text develops a narrative that ties together Halloween, a joyful occasion associated with enjoyment, and chocolate consumption, with pressing social problems like child labour and modern slavery, urging viewers to consider the moral consequences of their choices. The text engages the viewer in a conversational tone designed to foster a personal connection while encouraging reflection on the moral implications of chocolate consumption. It further expands the narrative by transitioning from a humorous Halloween greeting to a deeper discussion of global labour concerns.

Figure 26 shows how Bee's Wrap can be utilized in practical situations by depicting it as a sandwich wrapper. The figure's use of colour conveys a happy, fresh, and healthy lifestyle, visually appealing and portraying the product as an eco-conscious and practical item. By symbolically linking the product to a well-organized and sustainable dining experience, the figure increases the product's attractiveness.

Similarly, in Figure 4, the text and visuals of the product, its packaging, and the image with a solid background convey a compelling message about the product, likely enhancing the audience's perception of its quality as it radiates refined and luxurious taste. The layout features a solid chic pink background with pink crystals or crumbs spread around the chocolate bars, effectively highlighting the Himalayan pink salt flavour and appealing to the audience. This builds on the knowledge of the brand's ethical sourcing, emphasizing taste as well as ethical consciousness.

The text accompanying product introduction strives to provide a glimpse into the taste profile of the product while listing various advantages, including being vegan, made of natural ingredients, and palm oil-free. It portrays the product as the ultimate organic and delicious option available. The text begins with a question about the viewer's preferences and then presents the product as best suited for their tastes and values (Figure 21). The video also highlights the product and its flavours while associating fighting exploitation with choosing the brand of chocolate, enhancing branding and potentially attracting customers (Figure 27).

The caption in Figure 28 portrays Bee's Wrap as an essential, everyday item that can be used to keep food fresh in outdoor environments. Figure 22 not only discusses values but also conveys an ethical brand image by employing phrases like "fair trade" and "recyclable and compostable packaging." The product is presented as organic, healthy, and high-quality food with a holistic view of nutrition, implying that it is good for one's body and mind as well as beneficial to the environment.

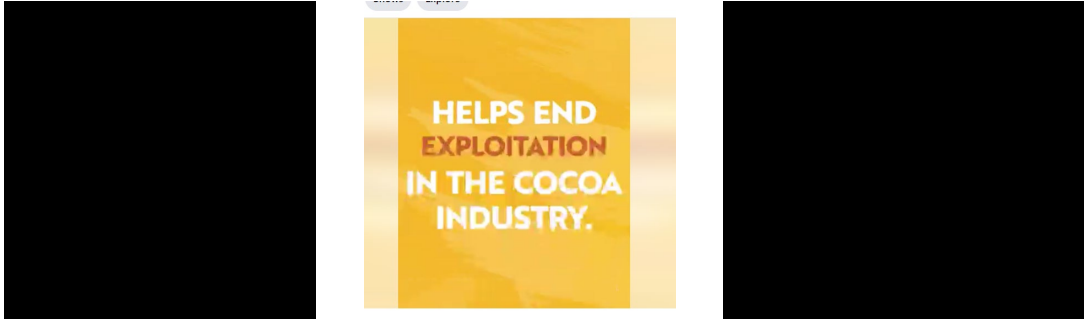


Figure 25: Bees Wrap. (n.d.) Figure 26: Divine Chocolate. Figure 27: Bees Wrap. (2023) (2022)

5. Discussion

This section attempts to answer the research questions. To what extent does the online CSR communication of mission-oriented companies reflect corporate narratives and what meanings and practices are depicted from the multimodal discourse of CSR on corporate websites and social media?

Analysis showed social and environmental values via portraying steps towards community involvement, sustainability and ethics in the industry as well as partnership with local groups. They depict the companies' efforts in fair labour practices, reducing carbon emissions, responsible sourcing, and contributions to local development. Findings show that the products are designed with messages and symbols that advocate for social justice and environmental responsibility, making the products not just commodities but symbols of larger social issues. portraying the brand as a proactive and socially responsible entity, building a reputation that goes beyond mere production. This multifaceted identity positions the brand like non-governmental organisations, suggesting a deeper social engagement and urging viewers to act against social issues. This proposes a sense of empowerment to consumers, showing that their choices can be impactful, fostering an emotional connection and a sense of agency. The analysed CSR communication positions the brands as facilitators of conversation, using their CSR communication to create spaces for dialogue on critical issues. This portrays the brands as the key player in the broader social discourse, aligning with evolving consumer values and promoting active participation in social justice initiatives. Humanising the brand to portray a sense of connection between consumers and the people involved in production, enhancing the brand's image as socially responsible. Similarly, the association of products with social or environmental causes attracts socially conscious consumers. While marketing the product by comparing the brand's practices with unjust industry norms, making it more appealing to those sensitive to these issues. Hedonic philanthropy is apparent, promoting the enjoyment of their products alongside their ethical and sustainable attributes. This dual emphasis on pleasure and responsibility suggests that consumers can find satisfaction in making sustainable choices, thereby enhancing their overall experience. The combination of these themes provides an understanding of how meanings communicated in online CSR communications build ethical brand personas. Online CSR communication allows companies to align their brand's

image with sustainability movements and ethical consumerism, impacting the industrial landscape. The ability to reinforce perceptions of their products as ethical and sustainable, while providing a platform for dialogue, gives these companies significant authority to establish norms in line with their business principles.

The connection between companies and society is fashioned according to companies' desires (Ihlen, 2011). Hence, online CSR communication can affect a company's stance in the market. It allows companies to pace their brand's image with sustainability movements and ethical consumerism while impacting the hegemonic space of the industrial landscape. The capability to reinforce perceptions about their products as ethical and sustainable, along with providing a platform for dialogue and starting new conversations, gives these companies significant authority, allowing them to establish reference points and norms in the community in line with their business principles.

This implies that CSR elements in online communication could be in practice to maintain corporate power yet also benefit society. CSR communication serves as a reflection of a company's self-perception and image construction. Crafting narratives in online CSR communication enables companies to shape their corporate image and influence market dynamics. As the findings suggest, companies strengthen consumer loyalty and enhance their reputation by aligning with stakeholder values and expectations. They promote their version of environmental and social stewardship as the preferred path, suggesting a model for responsible and ethical consumption.

The findings also establish that companies portray a dominant stance by promoting their version of environmental and social stewardship as the preferred path. This brings the possibility of creating a progressive, ethical, and eco-conscious market landscape where mission-oriented companies present themselves as environmental and social leaders in the industry, framing their solutions as the default model for responsible and ethical consumption.

Through hedonic philanthropy, corporations can develop an empty signifier of responsibility and transparency, which can be utilized by firms to sell their hedonic philanthropic products with less responsibility while maintaining the appearance of responsibility. CSR communication of mission-oriented companies on online platforms reflects corporate narratives which may contribute positively towards social responsibility and can influence the market landscape. Companies can shape consumer behavior and set industry trends by aligning with sustainability and ethical standards. The use of hedonic philanthropy, which commodifies responsibility for market positioning, opens paths for further studies.

6. Conclusion

To conclude, Online CSR communication from mission-oriented companies reflect inclusion of corporate narratives. Corporate sustainability and ethical practices are commonly portrayed in their online communication, depicting these brands as front-runners in environment preservation and social responsibility. Their narratives reinforce the ethical and environmental responsibility. Their common use of hedonic philanthropy within portrayal of corporate responsibility creates room for further investigation into its constitutive landscape.

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Appendix 1



Figure 1

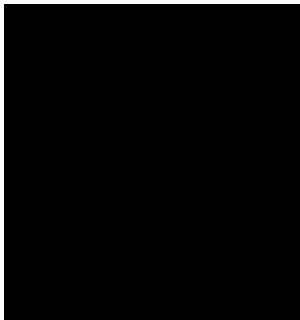


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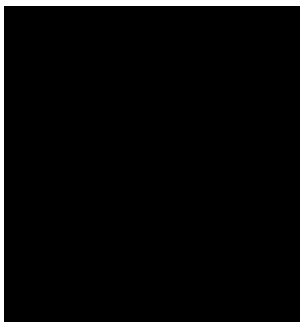


Figure 3



Figure 4

Figure 5

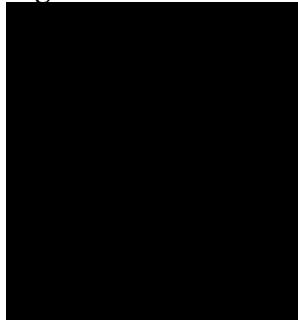


Figure 6

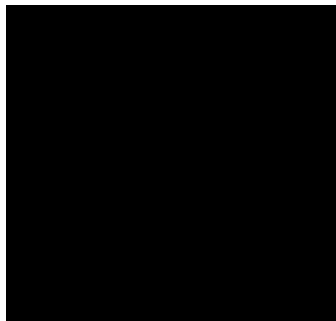


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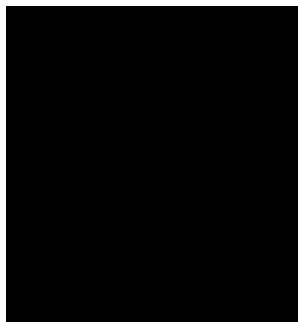


Figure 8

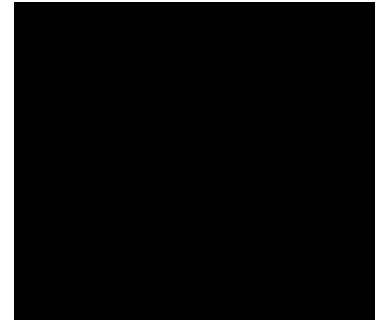


Figure 9

Planet-friendly wardrobe

Our sustainable clothing brand is built on transparency, honesty, and sticking true to our values. All of our modern clothing has been designed with the planet in mind.

We use organic, chemical-free cotton certified by GOTS. Organic cotton clothing uses much less water than regular cotton and emits almost 50% less carbon dioxide, making it a no-brainer for us to use. All the polyester we use is 100% recycled so that you don't have to worry about adding to the planet's plastic problem. We also love using TENCEL Lyocell, a super sustainable fabric made from wood pulp that's durable, breathable, and incredibly soft.

Our ethical fashion collection provides you with all the key pieces you need for a planet-friendly wardrobe. We've got your basics covered with organic cotton T-shirts, tees, and plenty of cozy sweaters. But we also have options to make you shine and fashion performances. Our puffer jackets are perfect for the dark, cold months in the city but are a Swedish trend, after all, and our flowy dresses and patterned resort shirts are simply must-haves on a warm summer day.

Our mission to make clothing kind

It's no secret that fashion is a shady business. Filled with harmful chemicals, and in-human working environments, an industry that for the past 50 years has been a vice to the bottom – and the textile industry now accounts for 10% of global carbon emissions. We wanted to show that it didn't have to be like this. Clothing can be kind, and we're here to prove it.

Armed with an eco-conscious team, a love of contemporary clothing, and plenty of pop music to keep us going, we've created a brand that is thoughtful from start to finish. We only work with suppliers that share the same values, and that are verified by reliable and high social standards. Long-term partnerships that allow us to grow together and build trust. By doing this, we can sleep easy knowing that everyone involved in our brand is treated with respect.

We'll even pack your groceries right so that we're not stopping in and wasting ours in transit.

Every brand has a choice, and our choice is to be kind.

Figure 10



Figure 11

eat chocolate, save the planet

We're helping our farmers transition to dynamic agroecology (a type of regenerative agriculture) because it helps improve farmer livelihood and mitigate climate change.

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Figure 12



Figure 13

Did you know Divine Chocolate is the only Fairtrade chocolate company in the world that is affiliated to Kuapa Kokoo is a cooperative with over 100,000 co-owners in Ghana who owns 20% of Divine Chocolate. They are grow cocoa of the highest quality that we then use in our chocolate. #choklad #rättvisemärkt #palmölfri #divinechocolate #divinechoklad #kakao #jointhechocolaterevolution #JoinTheChocolateRevolution #fairtrade #choklad

Figure 14

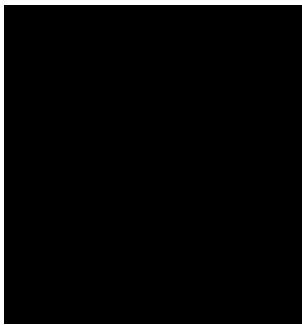


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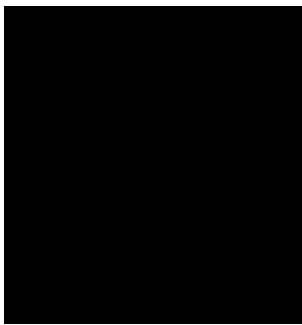


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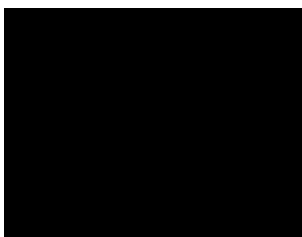


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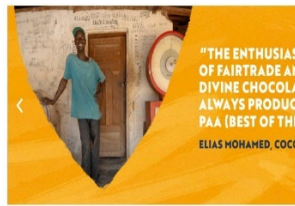


Figure 18



Figure 19



Figure 20



Figure 21

Do you like dark chocolate?
 "Deliciously Smooth Dark Chocolate"
 With this chocolate cake also
 ❤️Vegansk
 🌱Mark of justice
 🦋Free from palm oil
 🌿Only natural ingredients

Figure 22



Figure 23

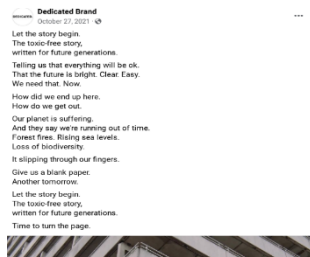


Figure 24

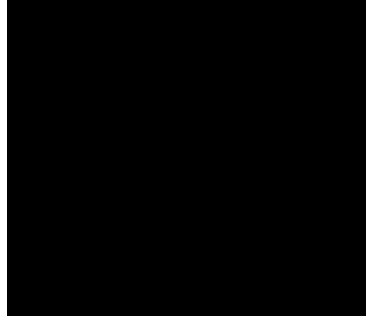


Figure 25

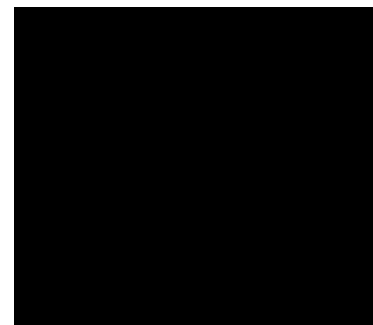


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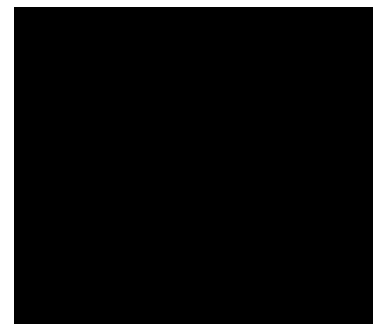


Figure 27 (video)

Figure 28

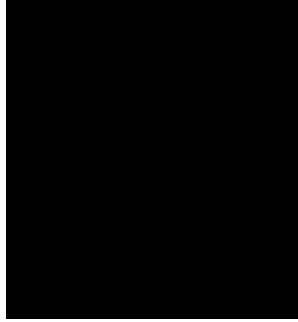


Figure 29

Dedicated to Sustainability

We started with a clear purpose: to create a brand that cares for the environment. To meet this goal, we wanted to ensure that every product we create is made with the highest quality materials and is designed to last. We also wanted to ensure that our products are made in a way that is both ethical and sustainable. Today, we're working with CO2 and 50% recycled cotton, GOTS recycled polyester, and organic cotton. We're also working with local suppliers to reduce our carbon footprint. We know we can't solve the world's problems on our own, but we can make a difference.

Figure 30

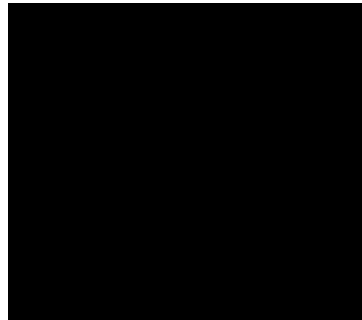


Figure 31

WHY REGENERATION?

Sustainability is a word we use a lot. But let's be honest—it doesn't go far enough. Why would we want to sustain a broken system? **WE MUST REBUILD AND REGENERATE!**

We believe ...

Regenerative Agriculture is

WORLD REGENERATION

One ecosystem at a time.

Acknowledgement

I will start by thanking my Creator for bestowing me with the opportunity to conduct this project and for things I learned throughout this experience. I want to sincerely thank my supervisor, Lars Hallgren, for his support and guidance and for building my trust in the process. I want to thank my teachers and peers for providing me with knowledge and everlasting memories. I want to thank my husband and daughter for their support and motivation through these past months. I want to thank my mother and brother, their love, struggles and prayers made it all possible.

Popular Science Summary

Mission-oriented companies reinforce a positive brand image by emphasizing their ethical practices, social responsibility, and environmental sustainability in their online CSR communication. Their online communication employs a variety of semiotic elements to humanize the messages, showcasing real people affected by their initiatives. The findings of this study show recurring themes where companies incorporate social and environmental messages into their branding and product design; branding based on the potential values of their target audience; marketing while presenting downsides of the conventional processes or products that highlights their ethical practices against negative industry norms; and hedonic philanthropy, portraying their product as beneficial for the good cause and enjoyable for the consumer.

The thesis focuses on the online Corporate Social Responsibility communication of mission-oriented companies and analyzes to what extent the multiple semiotic modes of online CSR communication depict corporate narratives. The study uses a multimodal approach, investigating various elements of communication, including text, colors, images, motion, sound and symbols, to see how these elements work together to create a cohesive message. The thesis is grounded in the concept of multimodality, examining how different modes of communication work together to create meaning. By applying this approach, the research provides a comprehensive view of mission-oriented companies' constructing their CSR narratives on platforms like corporate websites and social media. The findings suggest that online CSR communication has the ability to significantly enhance a company's public image and strengthen its stance in the market. Promoting hedonic philanthropic messages in their communication can develop empty signifiers of responsibility while maintaining the appearance of responsibility. The findings of this study show potential for creating a progressive, ethical and eco-conscious market landscape where mission-oriented companies present themselves as environmental and social leaders in the industry by framing their solutions as the default model for responsible and ethical consumption.

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