Communicating CSR Through Corporate Image Advertising

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Abstract The purpose of this chapter is to review the state of play in regard to corporations' advertising of their corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives, policies, and/or achievements as an identity-building exercise. An organisation's use of advertising to lay claim to socially-responsible operations is bound to be contentious and inspire responses of scepticism and/or cynicism, especially if such advertising claims appear at odds with stakeholder perceptions of the organisation's performance. The contentiousness of CSR advertising claims is enlarged by confusion over what constitutes CSR and what does not. Cause-related marketing campaigns, for example, are a form of sales promotion technique yet are enlisted in the hope of a corporation addressing its responsibility to society. Ultimately CSR performance must stand on impacts and outcomes, and anything less will be adjudged spin, greenwashing, or mere impression management. This chapter regards CSR advertising, and indeed other elements of the brand's integrated marketing communications, in this light.

A corporation's advertising of its socially responsible (CSR) initiatives, policies, or achievements is an identity-building exercise. It is a communicative act signalling the firm's business model, that is, the architecture of its creating, delivering, and capturing value (Teece, 2010). As one aspect of the organisation's identity, CSR is to be included in the amalgam of informational inputs that engender the image that various stakeholders fluidly construct of the organisation. A corporation's image is the "totality of a stakeholder's perceptions of the way an organization presents itself, either deliberately or accidentally" (Markwick & Fill, 1997, p. 396). These informational inputs are manifold, and also include, for example, viewed through the perspective of *corporate marketing*, the organisation's culture, character, constituencies, conceptualisations and covenant (Balmer, 2006, as cited in Balmer & Greyser, 2006, p. 735). CSR advertising, as with advertising in general, is about the statement of claims. The veracity of these claims will be challenged, tested, and possibly rejected out of hand in line with how they stack up against the competing

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amalgam of informational inputs that make up the stakeholder's evaluation and response. The purpose of this chapter is to review the *state of play* in regard to corporations' advertising of their CSR initiatives, policies, and/or achievements as an identity-building exercise.

1   Corporate Social Responsibility

Before examining corporations' communication of their CSR by using the technique of advertising it is important to clarify what CSR refers to, as this is generally held to be an ambiguous and contested term (e.g., Garriga & Melé, 2004; Secchi, 2007). For the purpose of this discussion, the term CSR will be used to describe how businesses go beyond economic criteria, such as creating products and profits, to pursue broader societal and environmental goals. This pursuit of broader societal and environmental goals is to be understood as involving efforts that go beyond minimum legal requirements to minimise negative externalities and maximise beneficial impacts on society (Preston & Post, 1975).

One example of a typology of domains that capture such goals and initiatives, developed by the socially-responsible investment index Socrates: The Corporate Social Ratings Monitor and discussed in extant literature (e.g., Sen & Bhattacharya, 2001), includes the six broad domains of: (1) community support (e.g., housing initiatives for the economically disadvantaged and philanthropic giving); (2) diversity (e.g., gender-, race-, and disability-based diversity initiatives within and outside the firm); (3) employee support (e.g., concern for safety, job security, union relations and employee involvement); (4) environment (e.g., environment-friendly products and production processes, and recycling); (5) international operations (e.g., overseas labour and materials sourcing practices and operations in countries with human rights violations), and (6) product (e.g., product safety and innovation, and marketing/contracting controversies). Harmful and addictive products of *sin industries*, such as tobacco, military weapons, firearms and nuclear power are negatively screened from such indices (e.g., Domini Social Investments, 2015).

For the purpose of this discussion, which will concentrate on corporate image advertising, it is also important to discriminate between what CSR is and is not, that is, which aspects of a corporation's image should not be construed as CSR. The literature identifies two forms of promotion related to causes. The first is *cause-related marketing* (CRM), defined by Varadarajan and Menon (1988) as, "basically a marketing program that strives to achieve two objectives—improve corporate performance and help worthy causes—by linking fund raising for the benefit of a cause to the purchase of the firm's products and/or services" (p. 59). While the advertising of such campaigns may add to a corporation's image, in essence, as will be explained in the following section, such advertising should not be considered *corporate image advertising*. Rather, as the above authors note, the corporate contribution to the cause specified within the campaign is made "on behalf of those customers who engage in revenue-producing transactions with the firm during

a specified time period and comply with other terms of exchange" (p. 59), and should more correctly be referred to as a sales promotion, that is: "The media and non-media marketing pressure applied for a predetermined, limited period of time at the level of consumer, retailer, or wholesaler in order to stimulate trial, increase consumer demand, or improve product availability" (American Marketing Association, 2015).

Varadarajan and Menon (1988) highlight that the amounts expended by the firms on the promotion of CRM programs, through which corporations stimulate demand for their brand(s) "tend to be substantially higher than their promised maximum contribution to the cause" (p. 59), and provide the example of the American Express Company's 1983 CRM program in support of the renovation of the Statue of Liberty. Though American Express reportedly spent $6 million on promotion of the campaign its contribution to the Statue of Liberty-Ellis Island Foundation was a mere $1.7 million.

The short-term nature of the CRM offer, effectively a form of sales promotion aimed to stimulate immediate demand for a particular item from a corporation's product mix, along with the moot criticism that it is, in effect, the consumer that is acting philanthropically rather than the corporation, precludes it from the following discussion.

The second, positioned more closely to the advertising of a corporation's CSR than CRM, and drawing on one of the six broad CSR domains listed above, is *corporate societal marketing* (CSM), defined as encompassing "marketing initiatives that have at least one non-economic objective related to social welfare and use the resources of the company and/or one of its partners" (Drumwright & Murphy, 2001, p. 164). A further variant of CSM is *social-cause marketing*, defined as promotional activities that "prominently and publicly identify a company's association with a particular sport, entertainment event, nonprofit organization or social cause" (Bloom, Hoeffler, Lane Keller, & Basurto Meza, 2006, p. 49). These authors also refer to this promotional technique as *affinity marketing*, as it attempts to "demonstrate an affinity with consumers interested in sports teams, entertainment events and social causes" (p. 49). Since 1992, for example, Avon's *Breast Cancer Crusade* has worked to help research, prevent, and treat this disease, providing more than US$175 million to breast cancer research projects around the world (Avon Foundation, 2015).

Unlike CRM, wherein a brand's association with a cause is typically limited in time and the amount contributed to the cause is constrained by the level of consumer sales, the key to these CSM promotional approaches is that they feature "company initiatives involving the provision of money, resources and/or publicity to socially beneficial causes in a way that seeks to create an association in the minds of consumers between the cause and the company or one of its brands" (Bloom et al., 2006, p. 50). CSM efforts' support for a cause may be strategically aligned with the interests of key consumer groups, and hence designed to build an affinity with those groups, hopefully one that results in stronger and more profitable relationships.

We might therefore see each of these techniques as a form of corporate image advertising, although subtle differences exist between these techniques and advertising that specifically states claims in relation to the corporation's minimising of its negative externalities and maximising of beneficial impacts on society through the way it conducts its operations. This latter form of advertising, *CSR advertising*, the subject of this discussion, goes beyond associational benefits with the philanthropic giving and support outlined by Bloom et al. (2006) above. In Fig. 1, below, Patagonia's *Common Threads Initiative*, for example, went further than association with a cause, making claims around the brand's business model; the architecture of how it was creating, delivering, and capturing value (Patagonia, 2015).

The benefits of CSR are broadly rationalised within such theories as: institutional theory (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983); organisational ecology theory (Hannan & Freeman, 1977); the resource-based view of the firm theory (Penrose, 1959); and signalling theory (e.g., McDonald & Oates, 2006; Spence, 1974). Specifically, being perceived as socially responsible may: build bonds between the firm and its stakeholders, influencing the supply of resources (Maignan & Ferrell, 2004); create a halo effect for a firm's products and services (Brown & Dacin, 1997); buttress against condemnation in the wake of business failings, such as product-harm crises (Klein & Dawar, 2004; Ricks, 2005); improve brand equity (Hoeffler & Keller, 2002); engender customer loyalty (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003); enhance brand differentiation (McWilliams & Siegel, 2001); provide a degree of competitive advantage (Porter & Kramer, 2002); and, through the mediating effect of reputational capital, lead to improved financial performance (Orlitzky, Schmidt, & Rynes, 2003). Such results are, naturally, conditional rather than assumed.

On the surface, the correlation between informing stakeholder audiences about a brand's CSR initiatives and achieving the types of positive marketplace responses listed above appears a simple one, but this likelihood will be moderated by the information the corporation is able to communicate about its CSR record and impacted by the different informational constituents, potentially both positive and negative, that complement the amalgam mentioned above. Maignan (2001) has argued that CSR information can distinguish firms pursuing authentic CSR programs from those merely paying lip service to CSR, but while responses to firms' CSR initiatives are information-dependent, the quality of CSR communication is critical, a view echoed by O'Riordan and Fairbrass (2008). Referring to consumers, Mohr and Webb (2005) observe that if such positive responses to CSR were so predictably reliable, "most or all companies would have embraced the concept by now" (p. 124). Accepting the paramount importance of effective CSR communication in securing positive responses to corporations' CSR initiatives, the discussion now turns to the specific communication technique of advertising.

Fig. 1 Patagonia's 2011 Black Friday Advertisement in The New York Times

2   Advertising and CSR

Advertising might be defined as: "The placement of announcements and persuasive messages in time or space purchased in any of the mass media by business firms, nonprofit organizations, government agencies, and individuals who seek to inform and/or persuade members of a particular target market audience about their products, services, organizations, or ideas" (American Marketing Association, 2015). The advertising of CSR initiatives, policies, and/or achievements is understood to relate to informing and persuading about the organisation rather than individual products or services, and is therefore regarded as corporate image advertising. Corporations seek the recognition of their (corporate) brand names, however, "the primary objective is to build and sustain overall positive attitude towards the company" (Percy & Rosenbaum-Elliott, 2012, p. 195). This form of advertising, these authors argue, is "not aimed at specific decisions on the part of a target audience" (p. 196), but rather, "companies want people to like them." (p. 195).

The potential benefits that might accrue to corporations perceived to be creating, delivering, and capturing value in a socially responsible manner rely upon awareness and conviction among key stakeholder audiences. Corporate image advertising provides an opportunity to create this awareness and conviction.

Patagonia's Black Friday, 2011, launch of its "*Don't buy this jacket*" advertising campaign was aimed at informing stakeholder audiences, most prominently consumers, about its *Common Threads Initiative*. The campaign opened around Thanksgiving with a full-page advertisement in the *New York Times*, and over the following 2 years, annual sales grew by almost 40 % (Bloomberg Business, 2013). Apparel consumers obviously liked what they saw about the company.

Did Patagonia tap into the prevailing *zeitgeist*, or did consumers finally become aware of a brand that offered a better alternative than its competitors on the key criteria influencing their apparel consumption choices? The Cone/Echo Global Corporate Responsibility Opportunity Study (Cone Communications/Echo, 2011) reported 96 % of respondents considered it important that companies change the way they operate, 93 % that they raise awareness and educate, and 91 % that they develop partnerships (p. 15). Further, 94 % of consumers reported that were likely to switch brands to one associated with a good cause, when price and quality were about the same (p. 20). The consumer picture was little changed when followed up in 2013, with 96 % of respondents indicating that when companies engage in CSR, they would have a more positive image of the company, 94 % would be more likely to trust that company, and 93 % and would be more loyal to that company (Cone Communications/Echo, 2013, p. 19). The preferred methods for consumers to learn of corporations' CSR initiatives, policies, or achievements was on-product labelling, followed by media coverage, and then advertising, ahead of company websites and social media (p. 33). It would appear Patagonia reaped the reward of its CSR advertising.

Patagonia's campaign was attention-getting and provocative. It informed of what the brand was doing, creatively personalising claims of its initiatives with

"WE", and it informed the consumer what he or she was required to do in order to reduce, repair, reuse, recycle, and reimagine, in line with the *Common Threads Initiative*, with "YOU", ordaining that "together we can reimagine a world where we take only what nature can replace" (Nudd, 2011). The zeitgeist, reflected in the Cone-Echo market sounding, suggests the brand's advertising, and the initiative it was designed to promote, was appreciated by consumers. The corporate advertising of CSR initiatives, policies, or achievements is, however, far from a straightforward exercise. While consumers may indicate that advertising is one of the most-preferred means for CSR communications, it is a problematic informational conduit. For example, advertising is found to be the means of communication that inspires the greatest level of scepticism (Obermiller & Spangenberg, 1998; Obermiller, Spangenberg, & MacLachlan, 2005).

Corporate image advertising, along with public relations and sponsorships, provide firms with opportunities for "manufactured publicity" (Rossiter & Bellman, 2005, p. 375), in order to claim "what we say we are" (Balmer & Greyser, 2006, p. 735), and project the *desired identity* (Van Rekom, 1997). Corporate image advertising may differ from the more factual identity that may be communicated by channels the corporation has less control over, as will be discussed below, but the wider the discrepancy between the desired identity and the actual identity, found in Balmer's (2006) *Conceptualisations*, or 'What we are seen to be', the less effective, less persuasive the advertising might be expected to be. Balmer's (2006) six-element corporate marketing mix is to be interpreted to inform organisational philosophy and permeate organisational members' thinking and behaving, rather than to merely provide a tool-box for a corporate marketing department (see Balmer & Greyser, 2006, p. 734 for a discussion). Polonsky and Jevons (2006) echo this, noting, "CSR activities must be supported by other core brand and product attributes" (p. 342). For this reason, overly positive corporate-image claims, particularly in the non-economic domain, are likely to inspire increased scrutiny and even a backlash (Ashforth & Gibbs, 1990; Blomqvist & Posner, 2004). We expand this corporate communications conundrum further in the next section.

3   The CSR Appeal in Corporate Image Advertising and Brand Positioning

The firm's corporate communications, 'What we say we are' (Balmer, 2006), form a significant part of the corporation's brand positioning, that is, "the way consumers, users, buyers, and others view competitive brands or types of products" (American Marketing Association, 2015). Corporate image advertising, which includes advertising of firms' CSR performance, is created in order to achieve communication effects, such as the stimulation of category need, brand awareness, brand attitude, and, ultimately, brand purchase intention (e.g., Percy & Rosenbaum-

Elliott, 2012). The intent with CSR-based corporate image advertising is to position one's brand favourably on CSR criteria, relative to competitive brands.

The issue of CSR brand leadership is taken up by Lindgreen, Xu, Maon, and Wilcock (2011), who seek to identify the core components necessary for development of a CSR brand and the capabilities the firm needs in order to implement a CSR-related brand strategy. These authors define a CSR brand as a "stakeholder-based, strategically integrated orientation toward ecological and social well-being" (p. 969), at the heart of which lies a socially responsible dimension intended to differentiate a firm, and its products or services, from its competitors. The likelihood of success in attempting to position a brand along CSR lines is anticipated to be a function of the consistency across the various dimensions of the corporation's identity, that is, the degree to which it is integrated across the brand's marketing communications, especially the gap between the desired identity and stakeholder conceptualisations of how the brand is seen to be (Balmer, 2006). These conceptualisations may be based on, for example, stakeholders' first-hand experience with the corporation and/or its products or services, or impressions formed via socially-networked configurations. This point, along how CSR-based advertising as just one component of a brand's integrated marketing communications efforts might be used as both 'sword and shield', will be returned to further on, but it is useful, at this point, to consider the mechanisms and challenges in achieving effective CSR-based advertising and positioning.

4 CSR-Based Corporate Image Advertising

CSR-based corporate image advertising, or CSR advertising, is prone to a number of challenges, including heightened scrutiny (Ashforth & Gibbs, 1990), scepticism, or disbelief of the stated claims (Pomering & Johnson, 2009), cynicism toward the motives for the firm engaging in CSR and/or disclosing its CSR involvement and performance (Ellen, Webb, & Mohr, 2006). Drumwright (1996) observes that advertising with a social dimension is among the most controversial of marketing approaches, with some seeing it as marketing's "greatest contribution to society," and others marketing's "most unabashed exploitation" (p. 71). In line with the resource-based view of the firm, this contribution can result from stakeholders endorsing 'good' corporations and withholding resources from 'bad' competing firms. Responsible consumption is one such example (Hansen & Schrader, 1997).

Such responsible patronage, however, has been found to be tempered by stakeholders' affinity for the social or environmental dimension identified in the firm's CSR initiative (Sen & Bhattacharya, 2001). Recent research also suggests that corporations' candidness with stakeholders about socially responsible intentions can backfire. Based on an experimental study, Newman, Gorlin, and Dhar (2014) counter-intuitively find that information about a firm's product being better for the environment by design is perceived less favourably than if the same environmental benefit had come about by accident. Such counter-intuitive results seem to be at

odds with Patagonia's Common Threads Initiative campaign experience. Another recent study by van Rekom, Go, and Calter (2014) finds that if customers perceive that a corporation's intended societal contributions are in line with the organisation's characteristics, they are more inclined to believe that CSR advertising fits the organisation and that the organisation is authentic. While dealing with different measures, such findings suggest that CSR advertising is a vexed question, in need of further clarity. The next two sections seek to assist this understanding by exploring issues of CSR advertising's executional complexity and use as an impression management and diversion communication tactic (Perks, Farache, Sjukla, & Berry, 2013).

5 CSR-Based Corporate Image Advertising's Executional Complexity

The purpose of CSR-based corporate image advertising is to project a 'manufactured', desired facet of the corporation's identity to stakeholder audiences in order to achieve the broad aim of assisting in the building, or positioning, of a positive image of the corporate brand in those stakeholders' minds. To achieve this, the advertising needs to achieve a series of communication effects: it must stimulate need for the product category, create an awareness of the corporate brand, and develop a positive attitude toward that brand (e.g., Percy & Rosenbaum-Elliott, 2012). Before looking at each of these effects in turn, as they apply to CSR advertising, it is useful to consider the steps that need to be gone through on the way to attitude change, as proposed by McGuire (1969), in order to gain insight into the challenges at hand in developing effective CSR advertising communication.

McGuire explains that the potential for attitude change is the result of a series of compounding probabilities, including the probability of: being exposed to the message; paying attention to the message; comprehending the message; yielding to the message; retaining the intention; and behaving in line with this intention. The first of these steps will be achieved via the advertising's media schedule, a discussion of which is beyond the scope of the discussion at hand. The next three steps are critical for achieving the sought communication effects, and are more to do with the creative elements of the advertising message itself. Patagonia, for example, ensured it achieved attention to its Common Threads Initiative advertisement in the *New York Times* by booking the full page and taking the audience by surprise with the instruction to not buy the brand's jacket. The use of "WE" and "YOU" (capitalised in the Patagonia advertisement) are straight from the copywriter's handbook: "Write to one individual" and "use the word 'you' liberally" (Drewniany & Jewler, 2014, p. 132). This advertisement might be presumed to have been comprehensible to the publication's readership as the Common Threads Initiative was explained in clear language and a minimal amount of copy. Yielding might be expected to be at a high level, as the copy was presented in a contractual style,

suggesting what each party agreed to do so that a world of waste minimisation and optimal resource management might be reimagined, together (Nudd, 2011). The need for counter-argument from audience members is largely negated by the headline, "Don't buy this jacket", and the contract implied by the text in the advertising copy. The sales effect over the following 2 years, reported above, suggests that this advertisement might have played some part in achieving McGuire's final two steps for the brand.

But not all social initiatives are as simply communicated. If we stop to consider the communication effect of stimulating category need, it is apparent that there are in fact two 'product' categories that need must be stimulated for: the corporate brand, in whichever product category or industry sector it is located, and the need for a particular social issue to be attended to, and by a corporation, an organisation that may normally be associated with delivering economic utility and value. The next communication effect, brand awareness, is also about awareness of two brands, the corporate brand and the 'social issue' brand, as is brand attitude. CSR advertising claims confront consumers with a mixed-motive information-processing task (Drumwright, 1996), requiring respondents to evaluate both an organisation's economic and non-economic, pro-social performance. This process is even more complicated when there are three brands to be processed in the one advertisement. Though essentially a cause-related marketing (CRM) campaign, consider the recent advertising of Swiss watch manufacturer TagHeuer featuring one of the brand's watches, Leonardo DiCaprio as the celebrity endorser, and the cause the brand is supporting in the CRM campaign, variously Green Cross*, or NRDC**, with the copy line, "A partnership to help protect our planet" (Fig. 2). *Green Cross International, was founded in 1993 by (former USSR) President Mikhail Gorbachev, "to foster a global value shift toward a sustainable and secure future." (Green Cross, 2015); **An "environmental action group," the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) was founded in 1970 in USA with the mission, to "protect our air, land, and water from the forces of pollution and corporate greed. We protect. We defend. We lead the way" (NRDC, 2015). This trio of 'brands' potentially necessitates a very demanding processing task for the respondent, who must also respond to the processing demands of the other executional elements of the advertisement.

Indeed, the complexity of many social issues presents audiences with information-processing challenges. The step of comprehending the message often demands that the CSR advertising audience member is sufficiently familiar with the social issue being engaged with by the firm through its CSR initiative to appreciate the firm's efforts in grappling with this social issue. This is not always the case. In several studies, consumers have been found to be unaware of the ethical features of different brands' products, and have little knowledge and understanding of those ethical issues in spite of their regular coverage in the media (Auger, Burke, & Devinney, 2003; Bhattacharya & Sen, 2004; Pomering & Dolnicar, 2009). To facilitate the necessary comprehension, some level of educating of the advertising respondent may be necessary, running the risk of cognitively overloading the respondent. Cognitive load and working memory are two likely constraints on

Fig. 2 Leonardo DiCaprio's celebrity endorsement of TagHeuer and Green Globe

CSR advertising processors as they attempt to make sense of 'social topic information' (Pomering & Johnson, 2009), *en route* to calculating corporations' efforts in relation to particular social topics. Adding a social dimension to commercial messages increases the complexity of the consumer's processing task, potentially beyond one's capacity for efficient cognitive processing, or "sufficiency threshold" (see Eagly & Chaiken, 1993, pp. 330–333 for a discussion). For this reason, James (2002) has argued that the communicating of the firm's CSR commitment, and the benefits of the societal initiatives within CSR advertising claims can never be as tangible to the consumer as more functional benefits. Kahneman and Tversky

(1973) find that heuristic processing replaces more elaborative processing as the processing task moves from a simple to a more complex task. A positively-perceived celebrity endorser might assist this process. The addition of a third-party endorsement for the firm's CSR claims, for example, an NGO, adds another layer of processing demands for the advertising recipient, but this reportedly increases admiration of firms so endorsed (Dawkins, 2005). Trust in the third-party endorser may heuristically provide the firm and its CSR claims a halo effect, but the depth of this effect, in terms of whether this admiration translates to the firm achieving the advertising's sought communication effects, remains unclear.

Those mavens with much existing knowledge of a social topic featured in a firm's CSR advertising might be advantaged in the processing task in that they might more easily deduce the gravitas of the corporations' efforts, but, equally, their expert knowledge might lead them to find explanations of the corporation's efforts insignificant and/or inappropriate, and counter-argue the claims set out in the firm's advertising. Those with insufficient familiarity of the social issue may struggle to comprehend the barest minimum level of social topic information in the advertising, and therefore will be unlikely to yield to the message, negatively affecting their attitude to the brand, or indeed, brands. A promising line of research to provide greater clarity in this aspect of CSR advertising is proffered in the area of cognitive resource matching theory (Coulter & Punj, 2004).

The complex CSR advertising processing task described above imposes challenges on to the advertising's creative designers as well as the advertising processors. Motivations for yielding to advertised brands, or more often their specific products, is typically explained dichotomously, perhaps as negative versus positive, or informational versus transformational (e.g., Percy & Rosenbaum-Elliott, 2012; Rossiter & Percy, 1997). The former, negative or informational motivations, provide information in order to solve or avoid a problem, and typically use a *logos* appeal, while the latter, positive or transformational motivations, aim to create a positive feeling in the message recipient, transforming him or her by creating an authentic emotional experience, and hence typically employ a *pathos* appeal (see Percy & Rosenbaum-Elliott, 2012, pp. 9–10, for a discussion). A mixed-motive (Drumwright, 1996) advertising appeal, for example, the conveying of social topic information to explain the magnitude of the issue the corporation is endeavouring to mitigate along with uplifting information on the brand's mitigation efforts, poses creative design challenges. (Note: appeals to one's altruism raise the question of whether this will be seen as an opportunity for the perceiver to solve a problem or enhance their own status through their sacrifice, however, while the reader might find the discussion surrounding prosocial motivations, including altruism and egoism, of interest, this discussion is beyond the scope of this chapter. The reader might see, for example, Holmes, Miller, & Lerner, 2002).

Percy and Rosenbaum-Elliott (2012), explaining the similar mixed-motive decision to purchase a new car—requiring liking the car and its functional attributes (negative/informational), and feeling positive about how they are likely to be seen by the world behind the wheel of such a car (positive/transformational)—argue that this is at least a two-stage process, and recommend two separate advertisements to

address the two dichotomous motivations. This is not easily achieved with CSR-based print advertising, however, as separating the social topic information from the corporation's record on that social issue would create two very different advertisements; the first, merely about a social issue, and the second boasting CSR claims in a particular domain without the social topic anchor needed to permit the recipient to interpret the firm's claims, similar to a map without a key. Overcoming the mixed-motive processing challenge may be more realistically achievable in electronic advertising, for example, video/cinema/internet, where greater creative flexibility is on offer.

Consider the mixed-motive video CSR advertising example of Australia's Westpac Banking Corporation, an early entrant into CSR-based corporate image advertising. Westpac was the first Australian bank, and one of 10 founding signatories globally to adopt the Equator Principles (Westpac, 2015). It communicated this across the nation's television screens a decade ago. The commercial opened to scenes of water birds covered in a layer of oil, logging, deforestation, and factory emissions, and displayed the copy: "some of the biggest problems in the world today were financed by banks". A few seconds and more shots of environmental misery later, the copy states: "in 2003, 10 of the world's banks signed the Equator Principles…..agreeing not to fund projects that endanger communities or the environment". The commercial then cuts to images of the bank and its employees, and reveals, "only one Australian bank was among them". A white screen then introduces the bank's logo and the strapline, "every generation should live better than the last", a twist, it would seem, on the sustainable development notion that the needs of the present should be met "without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987, p. 43), before this is replaced by the bank's name, and a second strapline, "Australia's first bank", and the URL, "everygeneration.com.au" (Westpac Banking Corporation, 2015). This message is conveyed in 45 s. The viewer may be left wondering what the Equator Principles are and how effective banks, especially Westpac, may have been in their quest. Viewers may also have had their suspicions as to why this bank was choosing to speak of its CSR performance at that time.

6   CSR Advertising as Impression Management and Diversion Communication Tactic

The Westpac advertising described above came about at a time when Australian banks were experiencing serious erosion of their reputational capital (Beal & Delpachitra, 2005). Given the parlous state of banks' corporate images in Australia at this time, due to such practices as branch closures and downsizing, the extent to which such commercials could salvage the corporate image of Westpac among many stakeholder groups is questionable. Much of this CSR

advertising was directed more toward internal stakeholders, particularly employees (Pomering & Dolnicar, 2009). Being signatory to a list of vague lending principles or policies is not considered as informative as description of the outcomes and impacts of CSR initiatives (Wood, 1991). As such, CSR-based corporate image advertising that features mere pronouncements of policies and practices, rather than evidence-based claims of CSR outcomes are more likely to inspire scepticism toward the brand's claims and less likely to achieve sought communication effects (Pomering, Johnson, & Noble, 2013), and may also lead to cynical questioning of the corporation's motives for the campaign, especially if its timing coincides with a challenge to the corporation's legitimacy.

Firms' use of CSR advertising at times when business as usual is challenged may suggest to audiences that the CSR is being used to paper over legitimacy cracks. Suchman (1995) has defined legitimacy as 'the generalized perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are desirable, proper, or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs, and definitions' (p. 574). Legitimacy crises are sparked by *trigger events* (Kernisky, 1997), such as unsafe products or business practices at odds with societal norms. Just as stakeholder audiences need to be informed about a corporation's CSR performance in order to be aware of their records, the withdrawal or challenging of legitimacy presents a crisis requiring an effective communication response.

Such communicative responses are subject to heightened scrutiny, however, as CSR is a contested and controversial concept, with considerable argument that it is a construct designed to promote business interests and power, at the expense of society (Banerjee, 2008). Critical management scholars suggest this societal subversion is achieved through CSR communications, such as advertising, creating a *false consciousness*, or false interpretation of social reality (Prasad & Holzinger, 2013). Claims of CSR initiatives within controversial industry sectors (Wilson & West, 1981) highlight CSR's conceptual contestation, raising the question of whether a corporation or, indeed, an industry can be simultaneously considered socially irresponsible and socially responsible. So-called 'sin' industries in particular, such as gambling, alcohol, and tobacco, are known to contribute to social misery and loss of capacity within communities, yet are legal, though often heavily regulated, as a matter of public policy, and, along with extractive industries, are among the most vocal of CSR corporate communicators. A recent special issue of the Journal of Business Ethics (2012) focused on how such organisations "gain or sneak legitimacy through their CSR policies and initiatives" (Lindgreen, Maon, Reast, & Yani-De-Soriano, 2012, p. 394). Such CSR advertising is bound to inspire debate as corporations and their stakeholders attempt to resolve the equation of how much 'good' is needed to compensate for the 'bad'?

The operation of registered clubs in Australia is one example of this contentious compensation conundrum. Australia's registered clubs, more than 6500 of which are represented by the peak body Clubs Australia, are "not-for-profit, member-based organisations that exist to provide infrastructure and services for the community, and further a core purpose, such as the promotion of sporting activities or veterans' welfare" (Clubs Australia, 2015). These community-based organisations

are operated on a business model that pursues revenue principally through the operation of electronic gaming machines that mainly target their communities' most disadvantaged and vulnerable (Peatling, 2012). In 2011–2012, excluding online gambling, adult Australian gamblers lost over A\$20 billion (Polites, 2014), with approximately 60 % lost to electronic gaming machines, predominantly operated by registered clubs (Productivity Commission, 2010).

The attempt to protect, reinforce and develop the corporate identity to be perceived as one that conforms to legitimacy expectations and is socially responsible might be described as impression management (for example, Elsbach, 2003; Elsbach & Sutton, 1992). Is it a reasonable expectation that CSR advertising might be called into service in order to mask socially irresponsible initiatives, products or actions? In the race to manage corporate impressions, is the rhetoric of CSR advertising more important than the firm's actual CSR performance? CSR might legitimately be used both proactively and reactively, as both sword and shield, but does the hollowness that the term 'impression management' might convey bring the concept of CSR, and therefore CSR advertising, into disrepute? Recent work by Schoeneborn and Tritten (2013), venturing CSR communication beyond transmission to be more aptly seen constitutively sheds light on the answer to this question.

According to Schoeneborn and Tritten, CSR advertising might be considered 'transmission', that is a "mere instrument" that ignores the "formative role of communication in constituting, altering, and perpetuating organizations" (p. 194), that is, "the 'communication constitutes organizations' (CCO) perspective" (p. 198). Unlike transmission approaches, such as CSR advertising, which reduce communication into a linear, unidirectional process of dissemination of information (Axley, 1984), the CCO view proposes a number of findings. These four findings are included here as they provoke consideration of CSR advertising's capabilities and limitations, in relation to alternative marketing or corporate communications that might be employed.

First, CSR-related advertising must resonate with other communications that are central to how the organisation creates value. Second, speech acts can bring the communicative reality they promise into being. Third, the process of CSR communication can extend organisational boundaries, especially when third-parties are encouraged to endorse those communicative boundaries and various organisational members engage in dialogue with stakeholders and the wider public in social media. Lastly, texts, scripts, processes and routines act to constitute and stabilise the organisation over time. Hence, the CCO view might be understood as the antithesis of the notion of false consciousness (Prasad & Holzinger, 2013). But can CSR advertising deliver a 'true' consciousness? Based on a study of young Danish consumers, Schmeltz (2012) argues it can, but a "much more direct and open approach is called for instead of the currently recommended subtle, indirect way of communicating CSR" (p. 44).

7 Conclusion

This question also brings this discussion full-circle, to the discussion of business models, value creation, and the elements that make up a corporation's identity, and recognition that, working with Balmer's (2006) *six C*s of corporate marketing, Conceptualisations, 'what we are seen to be', has the ability to moderate the corporation's various attempts to manufacture one, desired identity, leading to one, universally-held, desired corporate brand image. The gap between the desired identity and conceptualised identity needs to be as narrow as possible, and only CSR that is true to the firm's business model that creates, delivers and captures value in legitimate, socially responsible ways will achieve this. Anything less will be adjudged spin, greenwashing, or mere impression management.

CSR is about delivering societal—social and/or environmental—outcomes, and these outcomes, and their impacts, are what is of interest to stakeholders, and should be at the heart of corporations' CSR initiatives and integrated marketing communications, including CSR advertising. Anything less will be subject to scrutiny and possibly adjudged as mere hollow rhetoric. Stakeholders, keen to distinguish authentic pronouncements of CSR from mere promotional posturing, are right to cast a filter of scepticism over such hollow claims. This is especially so for consumers, who provide corporations with the resources and legitimacy they crave via their purchase decisions, but to improve marketplace efficiencies through consumer ability to act as rewarding and punishing agents of firms' CSR performances (Hansen & Schrader, 1997), information about CSR achievements, impacts and outcomes is needed.

8 Exercise and Reflective Questions

1. How is CSR advertising similar and dissimilar to CRM and CSM?
2. What is needed for CSR advertising to be an effective form of marketing communication?
3. CSR advertising is described as presenting a mixed-motive processing challenge. Explain why this is the case.
4. How does CSR advertising fit into Balmer's (2006) corporate marketing mix?
5. Discuss the pros and cons of advertising approaches such as Patagonia's 2011 Black Friday Advertisement in The New York Times.

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