

Communicative Dilemmas of CSR: Towards an Integrative Framework of CSR Communication

Sophie Esmann Andersen, Anne Ellerup Nielsen,
and Christiane Marie Høvring

Abstract Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is said to be resting on a fundamental dilemma: a dilemma between ethical obligations towards society versus economic duties of maximising profits. In other words: A clash occurs between business and morality. In this chapter, we explore how this fundamental dilemma is replicated in CSR communication contexts. The purpose is to conceptually explore CSR dilemmas in communication contexts in order to develop an integrative framework for understanding the complexity of and communicative dilemmas embedded in CSR. Framed by three communication disciplines (integrated marketing communication, organisational communication and corporate communication), we outline how CSR is applied, and how it changes and redefines key concepts within each discipline. CSR generates new stakeholder demands and social expectations towards the organisation; the question is how the organisation manages and communicates this new role of responsibility. On that basis, we discuss how the CSR dilemma manifests as three communicative dilemmas: *A self-promotion dilemma* related to challenges of promoting CSR without simultaneously demonstrating its organisational anchoring; *an identification dilemma* related to the challenges of creating CSR value for employee identification without becoming a normative tool of employee identity control; and *a relation dilemma*, which is concerned with the challenges related to stakeholder engagement and the balancing of how to integrate the multivocality of different, opposing stakeholders without compromising the ideal of representing one unified corporate entity. The insights of the chapter contribute to the literature on CSR and CSR communication by providing a more nuanced understanding of the challenges and complexity of CSR communication, manifested as communicative dilemmas.

S.E. Andersen (✉) • A.E. Nielsen • C.M. Høvring
Department of Business Communication, Aarhus University, Aarhus, Denmark
e-mail: sea@bcom.au.dk; aen@bcom.au.dk; cmoh@bcom.au.dk

1 Introduction: CSR and CSR Communication

CSR is rooted in philanthropy and has become an umbrella concept for describing activities and practices that support the relationship between business and society (Bowen, 1953; Carroll, 1999). These activities and practices embrace legal, economic and ethical issues (Carroll, 1999; Schwartz & Carroll, 2003) and are categorised into three groups articulating CSR as a general concern for *people, profit, planet*, also known as the ‘triple bottom line’ (Elkington, 1997). The triple bottom line covers a large spectrum of corporate functions included in CSR, i.e., from employee relations, environmental management, market positioning, issues management, corporate governance etc. to supply chain management dealing with global issues such as human rights and corruption (Blowfield & Murray, 2008). Following Van Marrewijk (2003) CSR is approached as set of activities and practices accomplished to attain an overall goal framed as ‘sustainable development’: “Sustainable development is the development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (Brundtland, 1987). According to recent CSR research, sustainability is practiced as a variant of CSR particularly by larger corporations e.g., in the oil and pharmaceutical industry when publishing their sustainability reports (Ihlen, Bartlett, & May, 2011, p. 6).

The way CSR is addressed by scholars and practitioners (strategic planning, implementation and selection of issues, organisation of activities, etc.) are determined by the context in which CSR is practiced (Dahlsrud, 2008). In the realm of globalisation and with the growing empowerment of corporations, consumers, NGOs and media watchdogs, CSR has become an increasingly important stakeholder issue. The increasing stakeholder pressure on businesses to demonstrate social engagement (e.g., Matten & Moon, 2008) has forced companies to adopt CSR strategies and policies in favour of their employees, suppliers, customers and the local and global community in which they operate. Along with the CSR movement a growing need for disclosure of CSR strategy, policy and operational issues has thus emerged. Hence the increased focus on CSR in communication research and practices in communication industries and disciplines, e.g., marketing, public relation and corporate communication (Nielsen & Thomsen, 2012).

A particular point of interest in CSR revolves around a fundamental ethical dilemma embedded in CSR concerning the question of what motivates corporation to engage in CSR. The literature on CSR tends to identify two main drivers for corporations’ engagement in CSR: (a) corporations have ethical obligations towards society (moral approach) (e.g., Carroll, 1999), versus (b) corporations’ duty is to maximise profits (business approach) (e.g., Friedman, 1970). From a moral perspective stakeholders are framed as allies of corporations and CSR is conceptualised as an act of reciprocity based on the corporation’s obligations towards its stakeholders, whereas from the business perspective stakeholders are

considered partners in a market transaction and as a target of financial performance¹ (Sharp & Zaidman, 2010, p. 51). From a business perspective the challenge of implementing CSR in today's corporations is therefore to be able to balance the societal versus the business agendas in the corporations' behaviours and rhetoric. However, from a moral perspective businesses are expected to live up to stakeholders' needs and expectations in order to gain their license to operate, addressing CSR as corporate social citizenship (e.g., Matten & Crane, 2005). Although the two perspectives are not necessarily in conflict, they reflect different sets of drivers for engaging in CSR: *enlightened self interest* on the one hand and *paying back to society by being a good corporate citizen* on the other.

We argue, that the ethical dilemma has particular consequences when replicated into a CSR communication context with regards to what and how corporations share CSR with their stakeholders. Unfolding this dilemma is the main focus of this chapter. More particularly, the purpose is to conceptually explore CSR dilemmas in order to develop an integrative framework for understanding the complexity of and communicative dilemmas embedded in CSR. We argue, that a deeper understanding of how these dilemmas come into play and are addressed by corporations may help clarify the nuances, challenges and discrepancies in and around CSR communication.

The chapter is structured as follows. First we outline three theoretical approaches for framing CSR communication: *Integrated Marketing Communication*, *Organisational Communication* and *Corporate Communication*. Key concepts, stakeholders and the communicative articulation of the ethical dilemma are described within each of the three framings. Second, we discuss the communicative dilemmas identified from the perspective of integration and present our framework, identifying, unfolding and illustrating the specific CSR communication dilemmas articulated within each of the three framings. The chapter is concluded with an outlining of theoretical, conceptual and managerial implications for CSR communication as well as for future research, and is accompanied by questions for reflections.

2 Three Theoretical Framings of CSR Communication

CSR communication is most often studied from within different communication disciplinary perspectives (Golob et al., 2013). Thus, in order to study how the ethical dilemmas of CSR are replicated in CSR communication contexts and how they emerge, we conceptually outline three main communication disciplines (integrated marketing communication, organisational communication and corporate communication) as theoretical framings for exploring CSR communication.

¹See also chapter "Toward a Conceptual Integration of Corporate Social and Financial Performance" of this Handbook: by Diane L. Swanson and Marc Orlitzky.

Acknowledging that all three disciplines adopt an integrated approach to communication, we argue, following van Riel (1992), that integrated marketing communication is driven mainly by an external stakeholder focus, whereas organisational communication is primarily directed by an internal stakeholder focus. Our approach to integrated marketing communication draws on Schultz and Kitchen (2000) and refers to the integration, alignment and management of all external communication activities, including advertising, sponsorship and public relations (e.g., Pickton & Broderick, 2005). Regarding organisational communication, we refer to Miller's (2006) classical conceptualisation of organisational communication as human resource and work place related communications issues, more specifically defined as communication that occurs *within* organisations, including employee communication, leadership and processes of organisational change and development.

As argued by Cheney, Christensen, Zorn, and Ganesh (2004) organisational communication includes both a more narrow definition being a sub-discipline of communication as well as a broader paradigmatic definition covering and influenced by a variety of sub-disciplines, e.g., marketing and anthropology. In order to include this umbrella-like definition of communication, we draw on Christensen and Cornelissen's (2011) definition of corporate communication as the third theoretical framing for exploring CSR communication. Drawing on Harrison (1995), Christensen and Cornelissen (2011) we describe corporate communication as the management of all communications that involve an organisation as a corporate unity, thus, positioning corporate communication as a strategic management discipline contributing to define corporate reputation (cf. Argenti, 1998; Cornelissen, 2014; Fombrun & van Riel, 2004).

The three communication disciplines can thus, from an organisational perspective, be seen as referring to different strategic levels: Marketing strategy, HR strategy and Corporate strategy, reflecting the different and often conflicting interests and functions, to which CSR communication is expected to add value.² Below we conceptually outline how the different communications disciplines as theoretical framings affect CSR communication, including key concepts, CSR communication activities and embodiment of integration, enabling us to propose how the CSR dilemma is articulated differently within the three communication disciplines.

²It should be noted that our approach to studying the communicative dilemmas of CSR through the theoretical framings of Integrated Marketing Communication, Organizational Communication and Corporate Communication is a purposive choice, in so far as we are able to define their related strategic and organizational levels on the basis of these particular framings, which further adds to the complexity of CSR communication. Not only as issues concerning internal versus external communications, but pointing towards more fundamental organizational challenges. Thus, we acknowledge alternative approaches to and understandings of the field of communication, e.g., more flexible definitions of strategic communication or communication management, which would point towards other challenges and issues of CSR communication.

2.1 CSR Dilemmas from an Integrated Marketing Communication Perspective

From an integrated marketing perspective CSR has become an important driver for businesses' brand positioning and reputation in the market place. Not only do consumers generally care more for the social and environmental impacts of production and consumption processes than previously, they also increasingly attribute value to and engage in brands with CSR assets (Lii, Wu, & Ding, 2013, p. 16). As a result, most businesses are forced to engage in CSR in order to meet both their customers' and suppliers' expectations. Some companies position their brands on CSR more than others. While many companies affiliate their brands with social causes with a competitive purpose such as e.g., L'Oreal, others adopt a more integrated approach identifying the entire organisation through CSR such as e.g., Body Shop (Du, Bhattacharya, & Sankar, 2007, p. 225). Stakeholders' increased level of expectations concerning CSR and the subsequent pressure on corporations to integrate CSR as a competitive advantage (Porter & Kramer, 2006) challenge their capability to adopt appropriate CSR methods and processes that are congruent with stakeholders' desires and values. Accordingly, several studies on consumers' beliefs, attitudes and behaviours towards companies' CSR programmes have appeared in recent years (e.g., Du et al., 2007; Golob, Lah, & Jančič, 2008; Pérez & Rodríguez, 2013; Pomeroy & Dolnicar, 2009; Stanaland, Lwin, & Murphy, 2011). Many of these studies demonstrate how and the extent to which companies' socially responsible activities influence consumer preferences and decisions. Particularly in cases where the price and quality of goods provided is considered to be the same, consumers tend to prefer companies that are socially responsible rather than companies that are not (Banyté & Gadeikienė, 2008; Bronn & Vrioni, 2001; Podnar & Golob, 2007). Scholars therefore consent that in order to capitalise on CSR, businesses should have a more nuanced understanding of how CSR is perceived amongst consumers and other stakeholders. Which determinants of belief of CSR for example are proved to be crucial for their CSR appeal to consumers? A prerequisite for consumers to attribute value to a company's CSR as a brand asset is (not surprisingly) awareness of its CSR programmes and activities. Moreover, consumers' attribution of value to CSR initiatives is argued to be consistent with the company's intrinsic and/or extrinsic motives for engaging in these activities. Shaping CSR beliefs thus "suggests that companies need to 'work smarter' in communicating their CSR initiatives to consumers" (Du et al., 2007, p. 238). In spite of the growing interests of businesses to get insights into consumers' and publics' perception and evaluation of CSR activities and strategies, marketing and public relations research also demonstrates that the disclosure of CSR marketing initiatives may cause suspicion and scepticism by critical consumers (e.g., Elving, 2013; Jahdi & Acikdilli, 2009). Consumer scepticism towards CSR is first and foremost addressed as a tactical issue. Thus the influence of the content and form of CSR communication including the above mentioned value attribution of motives is the object of a study revealing that when companies extrapolate egoistic- and

stakeholder-driven rather than value-driven attributions to CSR, consumer scepticism is elicited (Skarmas, Leonidou, & Saridakis, 2014). In the same vein a study exploring consumer reactions to CSR advertisements demonstrates that the lowest level of scepticism is registered when consumers are confronted with advertisements from companies with a good reputation and a strategic fit between the business and the CSR activities. It is argued that companies should adopt a more conscious and reflected approach to their use of CSR communication strategies (Elving, 2013). At the strategic level issues causing public cynicism and scepticism towards CSR communication address e.g., the CSR promotion expenditure of advertising at the expense of the cause (Jahdi & Acikdilli, 2009). Or the lack of a strategic approach to CSR is questioned and the whole idea of replicating marketing promotional techniques conceived to improve the positioning and branding of businesses such as e.g., cause-related marketing. When practiced as promotion, CSR is ‘a PR invention’ rather than about “a company’s long-term footprint on society” (Frankental, 2001, p. 23). A more sustainable and integrated approach to CSR communication would imply that companies try to improve their impact on all stakeholders who are affected by their activities regarding their “long-term reputation within the context of the social and ecological sustainability” of their operations (ibid.).

The integrated approach to marketing blurs the boundaries between consumers and public as stakeholder groups. With the move from the instrumental focus on CSR as a business case (Kakabadse, Rozuel, & Lee-Davies, 2005) towards a broader societal conceptualisation of CSR as social engagement and stakeholder dialogue (Pedersen, 2006) the notion of consumers as *citizens* seems to be an appropriate concept for capturing more intense and authentic corporate-consumer relationships articulated in recent studies on CSR communication (e.g., Andersen & Nielsen, 2011; McShane & Sabadoz, 2015). A research study on CSR communication activities practiced in the Pepsi Refresh Project illustrates this type of extension of the corporate-consumer relationship. Arguing that consumers are transformed from individual to connected citizens through new communication practices and strategies applied in cause-related marketing, it is demonstrated how values are created and local commitment installed by Pepsi and consumer citizens through social interactions and bodily engagement as a result of co-creation processes adopted in Pepsi’s Refresh social media cause-related marketing campaign (Johansen & Andersen, 2014, p. 13). This example is thus a point in case for illustrating how mutually beneficial values and benefits are produced through integration and synergy of marketing and consumption processes. Hence potential sceptical voices from critical consumer citizens are subverted.

2.2 *CSR Dilemmas from an Organisational Communication Perspective*

The internal organisational aspect of CSR is relatively understudied (e.g., Costas & Kärreman, 2013). For instance, some of the more prominent and cited text- and handbooks on CSR and CSR communication (e.g., Ihlen et al., 2011; May, Cheney, & Roper, 2007; Morsing & Beckmann, 2006; Werther & Chandler, 2006) do not include independent sections on employees as stakeholders, despite the fact that human capital is widely acknowledged as the most important asset of organisations. Following this, a report on CSR and HR's role concludes, that "CSR minus HR = PR" (WBCSD/BEP/CPI, 2003), stating that employee engagement and trust towards CSR initiatives are pivotal for its success. In other words: HR does have a share in CSR, and CSR strategies do not only pose responsibilities and duties towards external stakeholders, but towards employees as well.

The rather limited research on the internal organisational communication aspect of CSR seems to adopt two main foci: One stream of research draws on an internal marketing logic and is concerned with how to engage employees to do and practice CSR (Collier & Esteban, 2007), e.g., corporate volunteering programs (Barkay, 2012) or community involvement (Zappalà, 2004) as means to create corporate value and reputation. The second stream of research includes more HR-related aspects of CSR, mainly concerned with how to create organisational value in employer–employee relations through CSR, e.g., in recruitment or staff retention (e.g., Bhattacharya, Sen, & Korschun, 2008) with the purpose of creating not only "bodily-corporate-producers" but also "bodily-corporate-ambassadors" (Barkay, 2012). Consequently, it can be argued that from an internal organisational and HR perspective, CSR is predominantly preoccupied with how organisations can optimise their human resources through CSR and create organisational value and to a lesser degree on how CSR mobilises employees and offers employee value (cf. Costas & Kärreman, 2013). Following this, CSR from a HR perspective seems to ignore the Kantian imperative that humans should never be seen as means to an end, but as ends in themselves (cf. Wilcox, 2006). From a Kantian perspective, there is thus more to CSR and HR than organisational value creation.

In his article "Employee Engagement and CSR" Mirvis (2012) offers a more nuanced perspective, as he applies three different approaches to study CSR for engaging employees, including its impact on motivation, identity and sense of meaning and purpose. The author applies different types of psychological contracts (Rousseau, 1995)—transactional, relational and developmental—to explore different ways in which organisations engage employees through CSR. The concept of the psychological contract presumes the employer–employee relationship to be reciprocal (Morrison & Robinson, 1997), thereby equally highlighting obligations, demands and expectations towards being a responsible employee as well as a responsible employer. From an employee perspective, Mirvis argues, that the three models of engagement outline different forms of benefits of engagement: *The transactional engagement model* offers self-satisfaction: when engaging in

CSR initiatives, basic individual employee needs of self-satisfaction can be met. *The relational engagement model* relates to employee identity: when engaging in CSR, the individual employee is able to express certain responsibility-related values and dimensions of his identity. And finally, *the developmental engagement model* (to a certain degree corresponding to the concept of the ideological contract, Thompson & Bunderson, 2003) helps the employee address “not only ‘who am I?’ but also the larger existential developmental questions of ‘Why am I?’” (Mirvis, 2012, p. 105), activating employees to transform and progress into “responsible corporate citizens” (Mirvis, 2012, p. 93). It can be argued that the development from the transactional to the developmental model of CSR engagement suggests a progression towards a more empowered, self-directive employee. However, from a critical management perspective, it can equally be argued that employee empowerment is mere pseudo-empowerment in the sense that organisations gain increasingly more power and influence over human development. For example, Costas and Kärreman (2013) demonstrate how CSR works as a form of aspirational control that ties employees’ aspirational identities and ethical conscience to the organisation. Through a study of two management consultant companies, the authors show how CSR contributes to identity regulation by “serving the construction of an idealized socially, ecologically and ethically responsible self and providing a clear pathway for living it out” (Costas & Kärreman, 2013, p. 411), causing however at the same time employees to feel guilt and self-remorse for living the prosperous consultant lifestyle. In other words, the corporate CSR employee identity becomes a controlled identity template, leaving no room for alternative voices and critiques, potentially creating new marginalised employee positions. Thus, what initially started as a corporate responsibility practice and offer of ethical values as a means to create value through human resource development and employee identification, may end up causing ethical straitjackets creating conform and uniformly thinking employees (Morsing, 2006). Such corporate practices of normative control may potentially provoke disloyalty, demotivation and even cynicism among employees (Kunda, 1992).

Consequently, it can be argued that as companies strive to enhance employee performance, loyalty and engagement through CSR, new ethical challenges emerge. The increased corporate influence on employee identity and the development of employees into responsible corporate citizens, driven by CSR as a normative standard and a developmental psychological contract as what ties the employee–employer relation together put forward new demands for what it means to be a responsible employer. Can the employer dismiss an employee for not sharing the same values as the company? Can the organisation refuse to use its health insurance, e.g., for abortions for employees, if it conflicts with ethical, ideological or religious values of the CEO? What are the obligations and responsibilities of organisations as an employer in times of crisis? Can the employer dismiss an employee whose identity and ideological values are tied to the corporate brand—or does the employer have obligations beyond the employee life cycle? App, Merk, and Büttgen (2012) propose expanding the employee life cycle to include pre- and post employment phases, thus pointing towards the long-term

commitment of employers, which transforms CSR into a sustainability strategy. Freitas, Jabbour, and Santos (2011) suggest that the HRM discipline has evolved from being merely a question of personnel management to a strategic discipline moving towards sustainable HRM, which aims at creating sustainable value by balancing “economic prosperity, social equity and environmental integrity” (Freitas et al., 2011, p. 232). Such reframing of the corporate responsibility of the employer transcends the organisational boundaries and rearticulates employees as whole human beings to whom the organisation has a responsibility beyond contractual obligations.

2.3 CSR Dilemmas from a Corporate Communication Perspective

CSR communication is recognized as a growing integrated area of corporate communication along with tactical areas, e.g., *corporate design, corporate advertising, media relations* and more strategic areas, e.g., *internal communication, investor relations, crisis management, change communication, issues management*, etc. (Cornelissen, 2014, p. 4). Corporate communication is regarded as an integrated management discipline for managing communication (Cornelissen, 2014, p. 24). Coordinating all internal and external communication with an overall purpose of establishing and maintaining favourable reputations with stakeholder groups is acknowledged as the key function of corporate communication (Cornelissen, 2014, p. 5). Over the years corporate communication has developed from a tactical support function driven by the ‘positioning’ paradigm through advertising and dissemination of information towards a strategic tool driven by stakeholder engagement with advocacy, transparency, interactivity and authenticity as new agendas (Cornelissen, 2014, p. 13). Emerging with a growing pressure from and empowerment of stakeholders, these new agendas are anchored in CSR and explain the growing importance attributed to CSR as corporate communication.

From this perspective CSR communication is practiced as a proactive corporate support of anticipating stakeholder interests and beliefs, becoming hence a new driver for reputation enhancement (Andriof & Waddock, 2002; Brammer & Millington, 2005; Brammer & Pavelin, 2006; Hillenbrand & Money, 2007). Incorporating CSR activities such as CSR standards, philanthropic projects or programmes for establishing and nurturing trustful relationships with stakeholders into the corporation have been considered as proactive tools that constitute antecedents for how to create a good corporate reputation (e.g., Andriof & Waddock, 2002; Fombrun, 2005; Waddock, 2002). More holistic approaches tend to believe that CSR and related issues can be considered as assets in terms of which corporations’ reputation may be evaluated together with other activities such as e.g., crisis management (Hillenbrand & Money, 2007, p. 226). However, attributing a major role to CSR and CSR communication as ‘the’ driver for reputation

enhancement rather than as a more pervasive corporate practice, which is anchored in the overall organisational goal and activities, may leave corporations in delicate situations in case unexpected stakeholder activism or crises occur. The double-edged sword in dealing with stakeholder management as a practice that can provide equal stakeholder opportunity is probably an illusion. Time and again the importance of balancing and navigating stakeholder interests is addressed as a crucial corporate management activity. And yet it is well known that critical corporate issues attract media watchdogs and critical voices keep popping up, threatening to ruin the reputation of an organisation from 1 day to the next, as demonstrated by notorious examples such as e.g., Enron and BP in the past and e.g., the Rana Plaza collapse in Bangladesh in recent times. Hence, the massive resources spent on *risk management* that lives in clover along with the global integration of CSR, sustainability and corporate governance into corporate management.

CSR communication is challenging and its forms and practices have often been subject to media attention by critical stakeholders. Most CSR communication is primarily identified as the communication appearing on corporate websites and in CSR reporting. In these media, corporations tend to present glossy social self-portraits and promotional descriptions of their CSR activities (Cornelissen, 2014, p. 245). The problem with this type of CSR communication is twofold. First, it taps into old-school thinking of how to maintain corporate-stakeholder relationships in which stakeholders are to be 'managed'. In more recent approaches to stakeholder theory relationship building is approached as 'collaboration' and 'stakeholder engagement' addressing stakeholders as social partners. Second, the communicative implication is that, while according to new practices stakeholder relationship building relies on dialogue, opening for iterative corporate interaction with stakeholders, the old practice tends to keep stakeholders at arm's length as passive receivers of one-way communication. Moreover, the discursive and rhetorical practices of CSR communication tend to stick to the narrow goal of image and reputation embedded in the marketing perspective and the positioning approach addressed previously. Thus, in the name of 'transparency' and 'corporate disclosure' corporate communication about CSR programmes and activities are likely to generate backlashes, occurring not only as a result of perceived inconsistency between corporate CSR messages and organisational practices, but also due to unclear, non-reflexive or exaggerated communication strategies, mixing past, present and future CSR performances. This kind of short-term communication practice often leads to more confusion than to clarity and transparency. When some stakeholder interests are complied with more than others, misinterpretation may occur and the opportunity to negotiate, had the communication been addressed through dialogue, may be missed, which again may result in stakeholder tension and conflicts leading to perceptions of hypocrisy and gap hunting (Christensen, Morsing, & Thyssen, 2013). A well-known corporate response installed to cope with this challenge is gap closing, i.e., dealing with conflicts as they occur rather than anticipating their occurrence. However, as one gap may be closed, and one stakeholder satisfied, another gap occurs with a new stakeholder to satisfy, etc. A potential way of coping with this dilemma is suggested by Christensen et al. (2013)

arguing that instead of addressing critical voices and hypocrisy as a negative issue inviting to close a gap between message and action as soon as it appears, the practice of aspirational talk consisting in inviting critical voices to participate and discuss the corporations' CSR ideals and values and trying to reach higher goals and aspirations, may allow them to explore and expand their CSR capabilities (Christensen et al., 2013, p. 15).

3 Discussion: Towards an Integrative Framework of Communicative Dilemmas of CSR

From the perspective of integration, the three theoretical framings point towards three different points or levels of integration:

Integrated marketing communication builds upon an ideal of coordination and integration of all marketing and PR activities in order for the company to speak with one voice, so that the company looks and sounds alike in all promotional activities (Kitchen, Brignell, & Li, 2004). The idea is thus that speaking with one voice and one sound utilises the synergy of repetition and makes promotional messages stronger and more recognisable to the public (Schultz & Kitchen, 2000).

Metaphorically speaking, the 'One voice, One sound' reflects and focuses on the expressive aspects of communication—the externally visible and manifest design and corporate messages. From a CSR perspective, this preoccupation of promoting and expressing CSR messages invokes the classical "walk-the-talk" CSR challenge or what we might call "the self-promoting dilemma" (Coombs & Holladay, 2011). The communicative dilemma occurs because the promotion and expression of CSR values and messages do not automatically incorporate and comprise an organisational anchorage. Consumers and publics may question the intention and authenticity of companies engaging in CSR. On the other hand, speaking with 'No voice, No sound', i.e., not promoting and communicating about CSR initiatives to external audiences may keep the organisation from reaping the strategic values of CSR.

Organisational communication as a communication discipline rests upon an ideal of integrating—or aligning (Morsing, 2006)—employees into the values of the company. CSR contributes with ethical values and thereby forms the basis for more emotional and symbolic expectations towards the employer—and reciprocally: expectations towards more dedicated and loyal employees, with the establishment of strong relational or developmental psychological contracts, posing demands on employees to live and become the brand. While the CSR dilemma of integrated marketing communication is expressed as a concern for the strategic and organisational anchoring of CSR values, the CSR dilemma of organisational communication may be said to occur, when the organisational demands on employee engagement—as part of an organisational anchoring of CSR—become a strategy of employee control and moral straitjackets, creating a uniform and conform staff of

employees. The company represents “one mind”, with which employees must comply and according to which they must mould themselves, thus creating what we might label “a dilemma of identification”.

Corporate communication as a discipline draws on the Latin word for corporate, “corpus”, suggesting a collective entity united into one body, highlighting corporate communication with the goal of communicating the organisation as a whole, a bodily entity (Christensen, Cheney, & Morsing, 2008). Metaphorically speaking, corporate communication thus represents “one body”. Consequently, as argued by Christensen & Cornelissen: “With its notion of integration, corporate communication imposes new types of inflexibility on organisations that subscribe to this ideal and, thus, constrain their ability to respond to changes in environments marked by turbulence and change” (Christensen and Cornelissen, 2011, p. 394). From a CSR perspective, this organisational inflexibility is what causes the communicative dilemma. While the communicative dilemma related to integrated marketing communication concerns the “walk-the-talk” challenge with its embedded “self-promotional dilemma”, the very same dilemma is neutralised because of the corporate integration of communication: Internal and external organisational communication and processes are per definition integrated within a corporate communication perspective. Rather, the dilemma occurs in the relation to stakeholders and their different, often contradictory expectations towards the organisation. Recent stakeholder theories suggest that organisations no longer outline the strategic direction and take the centre stage in stakeholder relations (Steurer, 2006). Instead, issues and challenges develop between stakeholders when stakeholder expectations and contradictory agendas conflict, forming complex stakeholders networks (Roloff, 2008). We might therefore suggest the communicative dilemma to be “a relational dilemma”: The CSR challenge for corporations lies in navigating between and among different stakeholder expectations and interests, without compromising the corporate ideal of coherence, consistency and being “one body”.

Summarising, we have conceptually discussed how the ethical dilemma of CSR displayed between strategic intentions and ethical actions is replicated in CSR communication contexts assuming different forms depending on the communication disciplinary framing. Taking our point of departure in the concept of integration, we have shown how each communication discipline rests on different assumptions and ideals of integration, presenting the organisation with *one voice*, *one sound*, as *one mind* and *one united body*, which seems to intensify the different communicative dilemmas. Framed by integrated marketing communication and the ideal of presenting promotional messages with *one voice*, *one sound*, we have argued that this one-sided focus on the expressive and aesthetic dimensions of CSR causes sceptical consumers and publics to question the intentions of engaging in CSR and whether the advertised CSR messages are nothing but greenwashing: The brand *looks* good, but *is* it good? Framed by organisational communication and the ideal of representing and being *one mind*, we have argued that as organisations strive to create loyal and engaged employees through CSR values and ethical standards, the organisation may end up with a disloyal, unmotivated and uniform staff of employees, who feel forced into complying with a corporately defined

Table 1 An integrative framework of communicative CSR dilemmas

	CSR and IMC	CSR and org. comm.	CSR and corp. comm.
Strategic level	Marketing strategy	HR strategy	Corporate strategy
Key concepts	CSR as a strategy of positioning and differentiation Authenticity through engagement with publics Value and benefits through integration and synergy	Developmental/ideological psychological contract Human resource development through CSR Extended employee life cycle	Balancing stakeholder expectations: proactive versus reactive Reputation and risk management (CSR as legitimacy) Hypocrisy, transparency and consistency
Key audiences	Consumers and publics as citizens	Employees as whole human beings	Stakeholders as partners
Embodiment of integration	One voice, One sound	One mind	One body
The communicative dilemma	Self-promotion dilemma	Identification dilemma	Relation dilemma

moral code of practice. In other words: are CSR values used for taking responsibility as an employer, or as moral straitjackets for moulding employees into a certain corporate mind-set. And finally, framed by corporate communication and the ideal of appearing as *one body*, we have argued that the corporation may lose its flexibility and ability to respond and relate to different, often opposing stakeholder voices and demands. Thus, the question is how a company navigates between its own ideal of consistency and coherence, while at the same time incorporating the multivocality of opposing stakeholder voices.

Following these different assumptions and ideals, we suggest that the communicative dilemma occurs as: *a self-promotion dilemma, an identification dilemma and a relational dilemma*. The communicative dilemmas are summarised in Table 1, which offers an integrative framework of communicative CSR dilemmas:

For many communication scholars, suggestions of how to handle the conflictual stakeholder encounters and stir out of the communicative dilemmas focus on stakeholder dialogue and often with the notion of consensus as an ideal (Pedersen, 2006), arguing that conflicting voices can be persuaded into adopting new positions, consistent with corporate values. As an alternative, Munshi & Kurian introduce the idea of sustainable citizenship, defined in opposition to the discourse of corporate citizenship, as an “idea of active citizenship with an ethical commitment to long-term holistic sustainability grounded in social justice that explicitly recognises and addresses power differentials and marginality” (2015, p. 154). The authors argue that sustainable citizenship is not about dialogue and compromises, but rather about working with the dialectical nature of complex issues, meeting the complexity rather than reducing it. This means that sustainable citizenship as a practice is turned into inclusive processes that highlight marginalised perspectives, issues, and voices as central aspects of decision making (2015, p. 154).

Thus, whereas a dialogue approach often assumes a neutral dialogue platform, underestimating issues of power and marginalisation, while at the same time tending to privilege some (key) stakeholders over others (Hammond, Anderson, & Cissna, 2003; Munshi & Kurian, 2015), the dialectic approach enables the different stakeholder groups to engage with alternative and conflicting positions, exploring new values and entering into new group constellations (Kathlene, 2014; Munshi & Kurian, 2015). The dialectic approach, thus, appreciates and makes a virtue of the necessity of interacting with opposing and conflicting stakeholder groupings, acknowledging the strategic values and innovations that potentially occur in the meeting of oppositions.

From a CSR communication perspective, it can be argued that the concept of sustainable citizenship dissolves or neutralises the communicative dilemmas of integrated marketing communication, organisational communication and corporate communication insofar as the concept includes all roles and positions (employer, employee, citizen, consumer etc.). In other words: The notion of sustainable citizenship dissolves the boundaries between organisation and society, between organisation and stakeholder, and between one stakeholder and another (e.g., Crane & Ruebottom, 2011), claiming all to comply with an agenda of living in a sustainable world.

Consequently, following Munshi and Kurian (2015), sustainable citizenship represents an ethical and conceptual integration compared to an instrumental communicative and pragmatic integration (Suchman, 1995). The question is, however, whether such alternative forms of integration merely close existing communicative dilemmas just to pose new ones.

4 Conclusion and Implications

A key interest in CSR is the question of what drives organisations to engage in CSR, which is often formulated into a fundamental dilemma of CSR: The clash between ethical obligations towards society versus duties towards maximising profits, thus a matter of morality meeting business. In this chapter we have explored how this fundamental dilemma of CSR is replicated in CSR communication. The purpose of the chapter has been to conceptually explore CSR communication dilemmas in order to develop an integrative framework, which identifies, unfolds and discuss different manifestations and characteristics of CSR communication dilemmas.

In order to explore the CSR communication dilemmas, we have used three communication disciplines as framings: integrated marketing communication, organisational communication and corporate communication. These framings have allowed us to conceptually examine how CSR is applied within each of the disciplines, and how CSR changes and redefines key concepts of each discipline, insofar as ethical dimensions generate new stakeholder demands and social expectations towards the organisation, whether met as an employer, a product brand or a global corporation. From the perspective of integration, we have shown how each

communication discipline rests on different assumptions and ideals of integration, presenting the organisation with *one voice, one sound, as one mind and one united body*, which seems to intensify the different communicative dilemmas.

The theoretical contribution of the chapter lies in the nuancing of the CSR dilemma in different communication contexts, concluding that the communicative dilemma is far more complex than just a matter of business meeting morality. We demonstrate how the CSR dilemma manifests as three communicative dilemmas:

- A self-promotion dilemma.
- An identification dilemma.
- A relation dilemma.

Communicating CSR, thus, puts the organisation in situations where the art of balancing different ethical dilemmas is required. A CSR-driven organisation is always par excellence placed in an ethical arena. However, in this chapter we have demonstrated that an organisation must not only relate to whether CSR is strategically anchored, but must constantly be aware of how it propounds different ethical ideals and dilemmas through its communicative practices, constantly finding itself in troubled waters.

Conceptually, the insights of the chapter contribute to a more nuanced understanding of how CSR and CSR communication fundamentally redefine the role of organisations in society and their relations to stakeholders. CSR and CSR communication generate new social expectations towards the organisation, as a brand, as a workplace and as a corporation. CSR has the potential to create strategic value, however, it also makes demands on organisations to act accordingly: to demonstrate its role as a responsible employer, to act ethically and authentically when interacting with markets and to exercise transparency and openness in strategic and communicative processes. And within these new roles and actions a range of ethical dilemmas occur, in which the organisation must constantly reflect on how it promotes itself, how it creates value frameworks for identification and how it meets the interests of different stakeholders.

Several questions, however, still remain: How do the different CSR communication dilemmas relate to each other? Will one dilemma overrule others or will it enhance them? How do organisations navigate between the different communicative dilemmas and how is their urgency prioritised? We propose future research to empirically explore these questions in order to strengthen our understanding of CSR communication. However, based on the insights provided by the current chapter, we anticipate that there are certain challenges related to studying communicative dilemmas of CSR in empirical contexts due to the complexity of CSR communication. First, empirical studies of CSR dilemmas may be facing a *challenge of delimitation*. Communicative dilemmas of CSR are complex by nature, intertwined and interconnected, as one dilemma seems to pose new ones. Thus, one challenge for future research is to propose a valid and meaningful delimitation of what to include empirically, knowing that not every aspect can be included. In continuation hereof, we pre-empt a second challenge that future empirical research may be facing, namely a *methodological challenge* in proposing a research design, which

is able to capture and respond to—rather than reducing and simplifying—the complexity of the field.

5 Exercise and Reflective Questions

1. What characterises the ethical dilemma of CSR? Give an example of a company or brand, which has failed to stir this fundamental dilemma and reflect on the image and reputational costs of this.
2. Why is it important for companies to be aware of the communicative dilemmas of CSR? Can you think of a company or brand that has hit the news because of one or more communicative dilemmas?
3. How does the concept of sustainable citizenship differ from corporate citizenship? Discuss if and how sustainable citizenship may dissolve the communicative dilemmas of CSR.

References

- Andersen, S., & Nielsen, A. E. (2011). Climate conscious citizenship in a digital urban setting. *Mediekultur—Journal of Media and Communication Research*, 50, 119–142.
- Andriof, J., & Waddock, S. (2002). Unfolding stakeholder engagement. In S. Sutherland Rahman, S. Waddock, J. Andriof, & B. Husted (Eds.), *Unfolding stakeholder Thinking (chapter one)*. Sheffield: Greenleaf.
- App, S., Merk, J., & Büttgen, M. (2012). Employer branding: Sustainable HRM as a competitive advantage in the market for high-quality employees. *Marketing Revue*, 23(3), 262–278.
- Argenti, P. A. (1998). *Corporate communication* (2nd ed.). Boston, MA: Irwin McGraw-Hill.
- Banytė, J., & Gadeikienė, A. (2008). Corporate social responsibility as a marketing means in Lithuanian business practice. *Economics and Management*, 13, 227–238.
- Barkay, T. (2012). Employee volunteering: Soul, body and CSR. *Social Responsibility Journal*, 8(1), 48–62.
- Bhattacharya, C. B., Sen, S., & Korschun, D. (2008). Using corporate social responsibility to win the war for talent. *MIT Sloan Management Review*, 49(2), 37–44.
- Blowfield, M., & Murray, A. (2008). *Corporate responsibility—A critical introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Bowen, H. R. (1953). *Social responsibilities of the businessman*. New York, NY: Harper & Row.
- Brammer, S., & Millington, A. (2005). Corporate reputation and philanthropy: An empirical analysis. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 61(1), 29–44.
- Brammer, S., & Pavelin, S. (2006). Corporate reputation and social performance: The importance of fit. *Journal of Management Studies*, 43(3), 435–455.
- Bronn, P. S., & Vrioni, A. B. (2001). Corporate social responsibility and cause-related marketing: An overview. *International Journal of Advertising*, 20(2), 207–222.
- Brundtland, G. H. (1987). *Our common future. World commission on environment and development*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Carroll, A. B. (1999). Corporate social responsibility. *Business and Society*, 38, 268–295.
- Cheney, G., Christensen, L. T., Zorn, T. E., Jr., & Ganesh, S. (2004). *Organizational communication in an age of globalization. Issues, reflections, practices*. Long Grove, IL: Waveland.

- Christensen, L. T., Cheney, G., & Morsing, M. (2008). *Corporate communication. Convention, complexity, and critique*. London: Sage.
- Christensen, L. T., & Cornelissen, J. (2011). Bridging corporate and organizational communication: Review, development and a look to the future. *Management Communication Quarterly*, 25(3), 383–414.
- Christensen, L. T., Morsing, M., & Thyssen, O. (2013). CSR as aspirational talk. *Organization*, 20(3), 372–393.
- Collier, J., & Esteban, R. (2007). Corporate social responsibility and employee commitment. *Business Ethics: A European Review*, 16(1), 19–33.
- Coombs, W. T., & Holladay, S. J. (2011). *Managing corporate social responsibility: A communication approach*. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Cornelissen, J. (2014). *Corporate communication. Theory and practice*. London: Sage.
- Costas, J., & Kärreman, D. (2013). Conscience as control—Managing employees through CSR. *Organizations*, 20(3), 394–415.
- Crane, A., & Ruebottom, T. (2011). Stakeholder theory and social identity: Rethinking stakeholder identification. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 102(77), 77–87.
- Dahlsrud, A. (2008). How corporate social responsibility is defined: An analysis of 37 definitions. *Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental Management*, 15(1), 1–13.
- Du, S., Bhattacharya, C. B., & Sankar, S. (2007). Reaping relational rewards from corporate social responsibility: The role of competitive positioning. *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, 24, 224–241. Lii.
- Elkington, J. (1997). *Cannibals with forks: The triple bottom line of 21st century business*. Oxford: Capstone.
- Elving, W. J. L. (2013). Scepticism and corporate social responsibility communications: The influence of fit and reputation. *Journal of Marketing Communications*, 19(4), 277–292.
- Fombrun, C. J. (2005). Building corporate reputation through CSR initiatives: Evolving standards. *Corporate Reputation Review*, 8(1), 7–11.
- Fombrun, C. J., & van Riel, C. B. M. (2004). *Fame and fortune: How the world's top companies develop winning reputations*. New York, NY: Pearson.
- Frankental, P. (2001). Corporate social responsibility—A PR invention? *Corporate Communications: An International Journal*, 6(1), 18–23.
- Freitas, W., Jabbour, C. J. C., & Santos, F. C. A. (2011). Continuing the evolution: Towards sustainable HRM and sustainable organizations. *Business Strategy*, 12(5), 226–234.
- Friedman, M. (1970, September 13). The social responsibility of business is to increase its profits. *New York Times Magazine*.
- Golob, U., Lah, M., & Jančič, Z. (2008). Value orientations and consumer expectations of corporate social responsibility. *Journal of Marketing Communications*, 14(2), 83–96.
- Golob, U., Podnar, K., Elving, W. J., Nielsen, A. E., Thomsen, C., & Schultz, F. (2013). CSR communication: Quo Vadis? *Corporate Communication: An International Journal*, 18(2), 176–192.
- Hammond, S., Anderson, R., & Cissna, K. (2003). The problematics of dialogue and power. *Communication Yearbook*, 27, 125–157.
- Harrison, S. (1995). *Public relations: An introduction*. London: Routledge.
- Hillenbrand, C., & Money, K. (2007). Corporate responsibility and corporate reputation: Two separate concepts or two sides of the same coin? *Corporate Reputation Review*, 10, 261–277.
- Ihlen, Ø., Bartlett, J. L., & May, S. (2011). *The handbook of communication and corporate social responsibility*. West Sussex: Wiley.
- Jahdi, K. S., & Acikdilli, G. (2009). Marketing communications and corporate social responsibility (CSR): Marriage of convenience or shotgun wedding? *Journal of Business Ethics*, 88, 103–113.
- Johansen, T. S., & Andersen, S. E. (2014). Cause-related marketing 2.0: Connection, collaboration and commitment. *Journal of Marketing Communication*, 35(1). doi:10.1080/13527266.2014.93868.

- Kakabadse, N., Rozuel, C., & Lee-Davies, L. (2005). Corporate social responsibility and stakeholder approach: A conceptual review. *International Journal of Business Governance and Ethics*, 1(4), 277–302.
- Kathlene, L. (2014). *Citizen engagement—Finding innovations along the way*. Keynote address at the International Symposium on Transforming Public Engagement on Controversial Science and Technology, University of Waikato, Hamilton, New Zealand.
- Kitchen, P. J., Brignell, J., & Li, T. (2004). The emergence of IMC: A theoretical perspective. *Journal of Advertising Research*, 44(1), 19–30.
- Kunda, G. (1992). *Engineering culture: Control and commitment in a high-tech corporation*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple.
- Lii, Y. S., Wu, K. W., & Ding, M. C. (2013). Doing good does good? Sustainable marketing of CSR and consumer evaluations. *Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental Management*, 20, 15–28.
- Matten, D., & Crane, A. (2005). Corporate citizenship: Towards an extended theoretical conceptualization. *Academy of Management Review*, 30(1), 166–179.
- Matten, D., & Moon, J. (2008). Implicit and explicit CSR: A conceptual framework for a comparative understanding of corporate social responsibility. *Academy of Management Review*, 33(2), 404–424.
- May, S., Cheney, G., & Roper, J. (2007). *The debate over corporate social responsibility*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- McShane, L., & Sabadoz, C. (2015). Rethinking the concept of consumer empowerment: Recognizing consumers as citizens. *International Journal of Consumer Studies*. doi:10.1111/ijcs.12186.
- Miller, K. (2006). *Organizational communication. Approaches and processes* (4th ed.). Belmont, CA: Thompson Wadsworth.
- Mirvis, P. (2012). Employee engagement and CSR. *California Management Review*, 54(4), 93–117.
- Morrison, E. W., & Robinson, S. L. (1997). When employees feel betrayed: A model of how psychological contract violation develops. *The Academy of Management Review*, 22(1), 226–256.
- Morsing, M. (2006). Corporate moral branding: Limits to aligning employees. *Corporate Communication: An International Journal*, 11(2), 97–108.
- Morsing, M., & Beckmann, S. C. (2006). *Strategic CSR communication*. Copenhagen: Jurist- og Økonomiforbundets Forlag.
- Munshi, D., & Kurian, P. A. (2015). Imagining organizational communication as sustainable citizenship. *Management Communication Quarterly*, 29(1), 153–159.
- Nielsen, A. E., & Thomsen, C. (2012). Corporate social responsibility (CSR) management and marketing communication. Research themes and streams. *Hermes—Journal of Language and Communication in Business*, 45. Available at http://nordicom.statsbiblioteket.dk/ncom/files/30365896/Hermes_49_5_nielsen_thomsen.pdf
- Pedersen, E. R. (2006). Making corporate social responsibility (CSR) operable: How companies translate stakeholder dialogue into practice. *Business and Society Review*, 111(2), 137–163.
- Pérez, A., & Rodríguez, d. B. I. (2013). Customer personal features as determinants of the formation process of corporate social responsibility perceptions. *Psychology and Marketing*, 30(10), 903–917.
- Pickton, D., & Broderick, A. (2005). *Integrated marketing communication* (2nd ed.). Harlow: Prentice Hall.
- Podnar, K., & Golob, U. (2007). CSR expectations: the focus of corporate marketing. *Corporate Communications: An International Journal*, 12(4), 326–340.
- Pomering, A., & Dolnicar, S. (2009). Assessing the prerequisite of successful CSR implementation: Are consumers aware of CSR initiatives? *Journal of Business Ethics*, 85(2), 285–301.
- Porter, M. E., & Kramer, M. R. (2006). Strategy and society: The link between competitive advantage and corporate social responsibility. *Harvard Business Review*, 84(12), 78–92.

- Roloff, J. (2008). A life cycle model of multi-stakeholder networks. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 17(3), 311–325.
- Rousseau, D. M. (1995). *Psychological contracts in organizations: Understanding written and unwritten agreements*. Thousands Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Schultz, D. E., & Kitchen, P. J. (2000). *Communicating globally. An integrated marketing approach*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Schwartz, M. S., & Carroll, A. B. (2003). Corporate social responsibility: A three-domain approach. *Business Ethics Quarterly*, 13(4), 503–530.
- Sharp, Z., & Zaidman, N. (2010). Strategization of CSR. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 93, 51–71.
- Skarmeas, D., Leonidou, C. N., & Saridakis, C. N. (2014). Examining the role of CSR skepticism using fuzzy-set qualitative comparative analysis. *Journal of Business Research*, 67(9), 1796–1805. doi:10.1016/j.jbusres.2013.12.010.
- Stanaland, A., Lwin, M., & Murphy, P. (2011). Consumer perceptions of the antecedents and consequences of corporate social responsibility. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 102(1), 47–55.
- Steurer, R. (2006). Mapping stakeholder theory anew: From the ‘stakeholder theory of the firm’ to three perspectives on business-society-relations. *Business Strategy and the Environment*, 15(1), 55–69.
- Suchman, M. C. (1995). Managing legitimacy: Strategic and institutional approaches. *Academy of Management Review*, 20, 729–757.
- Thompson, J. A., & Bunderson, J. S. (2003). Violations of principles: Ideological currency in the psychological contract. *The Academy of Management Review*, 28(4), 571–586.
- Van Marrewijk, M. (2003). Concepts and definitions of CSR and corporate sustainability: Between agency and communion. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 44, 95–105.
- van Riel, C. B. M. (1992). *Principles of corporate communication*. Harlow: Prentice Hall.
- Waddock, S. (2002). *Leading corporate citizens. Vision, values, value added*. Boston, MA: McGraw-Hill.
- WBCSD/BEP/CPI. (2003). *Human resources and sustainable development*. A report on HR, CSR and Sustainable development, published by World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD), Wales’s Business and the Environment Programme (BEP) and The University of Cambridge Programme for Industry (CPI). Report accessed July, 2015, from <http://www.wbcds.org/web/publications/hr.pdf>
- Werther, W. B., & Chandler, D. (2006). *Strategic corporate social responsibility. Stakeholders in a global environment*. Thousands Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Wilcox, T. (2006). Human resource development as an element of corporate social responsibility. *Asia Pacific Journal of Human Relations*, 44(2), 184–196.
- Zappalà, G. (2004). Corporate citizenship and human resource management: A new tool or a missed opportunity? *Asia Pacific Journal of Human Resources*, 42(2), 185–201.