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News about corporate social responsibility (CSR): the interplay of intermedia agenda setting influences between corporate news releases and press coverage

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Abstract Due to the lack of a standard definition for the concept of *corporate social responsibility* (CSR), various discourse communities have assigned different meanings to it. Based on the intermedia agenda setting theory, this study examines the extent to which CSR-related news releases published by the two electricity providers in Hong Kong have influenced press coverage over a 6-year period between 2006 and 2011. A total of 202 news releases and 1,045 news articles were content-analyzed based on the following mutually exclusive categories of CSR-related news events: *operations, education, community, products and services, recognition, environment,* and *donations and sponsorships*. This study found that operations-related and products and services-related news releases were more likely to be reported in the press. Recognition-related news releases were the least likely to be reported. Based on the findings, this study posits that two criteria would determine whether a CSR-related news release is likely to be covered in the press: the extent to which the news events are relevant to the core operations of the corporations and the extent to which the news events make an impact on society.

Introduction

The concept of *corporate social responsibility* (hereafter CSR) is an oxymoron—*corporate* implies profit making; *social* implies a multiplicity of interests of different

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stakeholder groups; and *responsibility* implies required, and thus, involuntary actions. It is a fluid concept to which communicators can assign different meanings for different purposes (Windell 2007). In spite of the lack of consensus on a standard definition of CSR, the different definitions of CSR share one common assumption: it is universally acknowledged that corporations *do* have responsibilities to society at large beyond their own interests and legal obligations (Podnar 2008).

Over the years, changing social dynamics, such as changing norms, values and expectations, have contributed to an ongoing debate about what CSR is and how it should be presented. As a consequence of the British Petroleum (BP) oil spill in 2010, which is the largest oil spill in the history of the petroleum industry, BP has been heavily criticized for the environment impact, health consequences and other negative impact that it has made on society. Its award-winning CSR campaign, Beyond Petroleum, was criticized for aligning BP with the interests of the community while covering up its primary interest in profit maximization (Freeland 2010). Such corporate behaviors have caused CSR to be viewed as a postmodern public relations strategy serving the purpose of image management (Lessen 2007). Some even argue that corporations can never be socially responsible because of their inherent nature of being profit-driven and their incapability in addressing the needs of all stakeholder groups (McMillan 2007; Waddock 2007).

CSR has often received more criticisms than compliments due to the different expectations and goals that different stakeholder groups have about CSR. Burchell and Cook (2006) suggested that there is a competition of power and dominance amongst different discourse groups about CSR. Specifically, different groups compete in gaining access to and influencing the dialogue on CSR. The dialogue is not necessarily dominated by corporations; multiple actors are involved in a dialogue on what constitutes CSR whereby "the capacity of civil society actors to shape the debates and parameters of CSR discourse is balanced against the most powerful corporate voices to cast the discourse of social and environmental responsibility in terms more favorable to them" (Burchell and Cook 2006, p. 134). Therefore, it is recommended that future studies on CSR discourse investigate the balance between how social actors and powerful corporations exercise their capacity in getting their voices heard respectively.

The dialogue on CSR does not only refer to the direct communication amongst discourse communities; it is also about the indirect influence that each group has on one another. It is the "interplay of public and organizational narrations" that is developing CSR stories (Wehmeier and Schultz 2011, p. 479). In the age of Web 2.0, consumers can also be *prosumers*, taking part in both the production and consumption of CSR-related information (Capriotti 2011). Ihlen (2008) recommends the use of *public sphere* as a concept for the analysis of CSR because there are social actors other than corporations who are also changing the norms, values and expectations about CSR. In social constructivist perspectives, the communication about CSR is also "constructing and modifying reality, social conditions and relationships" (Ihlen et al. 2011, p. 11).

One of the communication platforms on which the dialogue on CSR takes place is the news media. According to Arvidsson (2010), corporate management in Sweden perceived increased media coverage as a driving force for them to take a proactive rather than a reactive approach to CSR because the proactive approach could help to present their corporations as operating within the norms and expectations of society and

could help them gain legitimacy. Despite this, Carroll (2011) found that only a handful of reporters had covered CSR-related news stories; he posited that the principles of newsworthiness and professionalism, such as the degree of autonomy, professional norms and public service orientation, were possible structural factors contributing to the low coverage of CSR-related news stories.

Because corporations' success in creating positive CSR news stories is advantageous in protecting their image during crises and ensuring better financial performance, corporations are advised to understand what news values are and add news values to their stories so as to win the competition for story placements (Carroll 2011). Thus, based on the intermedia agenda setting theory, this study examines the extent to which the CSR-related news releases published by corporations, as a form of agenda setting medium, influence subsequent press coverage. In light of existing research on how different stakeholder groups define CSR differently, the purpose of this study is to empirically identify the similarities and differences between how corporations and the press report CSR-related news events and the possible reasons behind it.

Literature review

Different discourse communities may differ in their definitions of CSR and thus, their interpretations of CSR; what is considered a socially responsible behavior for one group may be considered an image management tool for another. Thus, the communication about CSR is of crucial importance to how different discourse communities exchange and socially construct the definition of CSR. Bartlett and Devin (2011, p. 48) pointed out that CSR is "not just a technical exercise in describing what corporations do within society, but it is also a normative exercise in defining what corporations should be responsible for in society." In fact, the mismatch between social expectations and corporate behaviors is one of the reasons why CSR has been criticized for being a mismatch between words and actions (Christensen 2007).

One of the biggest problems in CSR communication is that the communication about it does not necessarily lead to behavioral change. Smith et al. (2010) found that one of the problems related to CSR in supply chains is that corporations often restrict their efforts to serving the purpose of image management only and do not intend to change their behaviors. On the other hand, Dempsey (2011) has shown how NGOs' engagement in communication practices has influenced the social responsibility of corporations. She pointed out that discourses are somehow connected with each other, so the creation of something new must be dependent upon what has already been previously produced. Various discourse communities are engaged in a process of influencing not only the discourse on CSR but also corporate behaviors. Instead of seeing each discourse as being isolated from one another, they should be seen as being connected with one another.

Despite the interconnectedness amongst different discourse communities on the CSR discourse, most literature on CSR communication has either examined one single communication tool (e.g. Chan and Welford 2005; Maignan and Ralston 2002) or an overall communication strategy enacted by organizations (Ihlen 2008). Thus, more research should be conducted to look into how different discourse communities influence one another.

For this reason, the theory of intermedia agenda setting effects was selected as the theoretical framework for the present study; the theory suggests that there is a transfer of issue salience from one medium to another. Its origin could be traced back to 1972 when McCombs and Shaw came up with the agenda setting theory, suggesting that the news media played a crucial role in shaping the political reality because the public considered the issues which were reported in the news media to be more important (McCombs and Shaw 1972). As a result, the public thinks about the news issues that the news media have reported. Agenda setting is a cognitive process during which the audience's perception of reality is shaped by the media's filtering and shaping of reality. The reality is shaped through the media's selection of news issues.

The intermedia agenda setting theory has been applied to study the extent to which the issues reported in one medium influence another medium. For instance, DiStaso (2007) examined the influence of corporate news releases on media reports about financial information; she found that what corporations say, how they present it, and what and how much content is transferred to the media is important in influencing corporate reputation. Vliegenthart and Walgrave (2008) defined intermedia agenda setting effects as being about "how news media emulate each other and adopt each other's stories" (p. 860). The major distinction between intermedia agenda setting effects and the original agenda setting theory is that the former is concerned with the influence of issue attention amongst different media caused by the competitive nature of the media market.

What is reported in the news media is of crucial importance to corporate reputation; at the same time, the news media is an important agent in the public sphere for the public discourse on CSR about what it is and what it should be (Carroll 2011). Thus, discourse communities hoping to gain access to influence the CSR discourse should understand how the news media select their CSR-related news stories. Due to economic constraints, the media adopt more information from public relations information subsidies in certain circumstances (Curtin 1999). Curtin also suggested that media gatekeepers would place the information subsidies in a continuum between *public service* and *profit*. If the purpose of the information subsidies is for profit only, then the information subsidies will be discarded by the media. On the other hand, if it is about public service, the information subsidies will be analyzed by journalists based on journalistic standards to decide whether it will be covered in the news. There are also other factors influencing whether information subsidies will be reported. For example, limited economic resources may motivate editors to cover the stories so that the space will get filled up. Even if an information subsidy gets covered, however, it has to bear the risk of having its content changed because of the professional norms of journalism practiced by journalists, such as having to balance sources to achieve neutrality and having to highlight the news elements in a story.

To influence the media agenda on the CSR discourse, those who follow media routines and style are likely to exert more influence. Sweetser and Brown (2008) found that information subsidies do cause agenda setting effects on the media's agenda building process. It is estimated that information subsidies, such as news releases and press conferences, account for as much as 50 % of the news content (Akpabio 2005). Of these information subsidies, news releases are strategically written to achieve an organizational goal and are used as a narrative by an organization to influence its stakeholders, such as the news media (Gilpin 2007). "News releases might be

characterized as genres of autobiographical narrative produced by organizations wishing to highlight certain circumstances or provide a given interpretation of events in order to influence stakeholders, including the media" (Applegate 2005, p. 12). According to Gitpin, public relations practitioners utilize news releases as a means of communicating with publics via the media as a more credible third party.

To compete to influence the media agenda on CSR, corporations are advised to understand how news values are defined in the professional practice of journalism (Carroll 2011). For instance, news releases should consist of elements of newsworthiness that resemble a news article, including *conflict*, *impact*, *prominence*, *proximity*, *timeliness* and *the unusual* (Applegate 2005). The purpose of news releases published by corporations is not only to influence what issues are reported in the media but also the content of the news stories.

To study beyond the transfer of issue salience, the agenda setting theory can be classified into two levels: the first level is about the salience of the issues covered in the media whereas the second level is about the transfer of salience of the attributes related to the issues (McCombs 2005; Weaver 2007). According to Weaver, issues undergo processes of being selected, emphasized, excluded and elaborated during content production. In second-level agenda setting, attributes are defined as "a property, quality, or characteristic that describes an object" (Kiousis et al. 2006, p. 269). The second-level agenda setting can be further classified into two dimensions: the substantive dimension refers to the ideology whereas the affective dimension refers to the tone of descriptions about the substantive dimension. With respect to the tone of the news coverage about CSR, Carroll's (2011) study on CSR-related news found 80 % of positive news coverage, 17 % of neutral news coverage and 3 % of negative news coverage. Therefore, in spite of the uncertainty about how the media may change the content of information subsidies based on journalistic norms, it can be argued that CSR-related information subsidies are more likely to be reported positively if they are covered in the media.

Based on the literature review on CSR communication, the purpose of this study is to examine the extent to which the CSR communication efforts made by corporations influence subsequent press coverage. It seeks to fill the gap of the lack of research on how discourse communities influence one another on CSR and the possible reasons behind it. In particular, it raises one research question: to what extent do the news releases published by corporations on the different CSR-related news events make an impact on press coverage and why? Applying the theory of intermedia agenda setting effects as a theoretical framework, this study suggests that how corporations set their agenda on CSR through their news releases can influence how the news media build their agenda on CSR.

Method

To study how the CSR agenda set by corporations influences the subsequent media agenda on CSR, news releases from corporations were compared against subsequent news coverage about those news releases in the press. According to Harris et al. (2001), content analysis is the dominant approach in agenda setting research due to its usefulness in documenting what has been covered. Furthermore, MacKuen and

Coombs (1981) argued that the number of articles devoted to an issue reflects the media's judgement on the salience of the issue. For the present study, data collection and content analysis were conducted in multiple stages.

In the first stage of data collection, the news releases published by the two electricity providers in Hong Kong, namely CLP and Power Assets, between 2006 and 2011 were collected from their official web sites. The two electricity providers in Hong Kong are listed in the Hong Kong Stock Exchange and both operate as a monopoly serving two different regions in Hong Kong. They were selected for this study because of their significance to the entire Hong Kong population and thus, to the media. According to the Corporate Social Responsibility Survey of Hang Seng Index Constituent Companies published by Oxfam Hong Kong in 2010, which measured the CSR performance of 42 listed companies, CLP was ranked second and Power Assets were ranked 13th.

In the second stage of data collection, the key words "CLP" and "Power Assets" were entered into the *Wisenews* database, an online database on which most published news articles in Hong Kong can be found, to generate all the news articles published over the same 6-year period from 2006 to 2011. At the time of data collection, there was a total of 19 newspapers in Hong Kong. Because only 17 of them were available on *Wisenews*, only 17 of them were included in this study.

The third stage of preliminary data analysis involved two coders classifying the news releases published by the two electricity providers as being either *CSR-related* or *non-CSR related*. The two coders, consisting of a graduate student and an undergraduate student with previous experiences in content analysis, had to agree on whether each news release was CSR-related or non-CSR related before proceeding with the analysis. As a result, 129 news releases from CLP and 73 news releases from Power Assets were identified for data analysis. As for the news articles, the two coders had to agree on whether each news article was CSR-related or non-CSR related based on the headlines. A total of 722 and 323 news articles from CLP and Power Assets were found and were analyzed, respectively.

In the fourth stage of data analysis, qualitative content analysis was conducted for open coding and axial coding to be used to identify the different CSR themes that could be found in the news releases (Strauss 1987). Each news release and each news article is considered a unit of analysis. The process of coding generated seven mutually exclusive CSR themes based on which each unit of analysis was categorized. First, *recognition* refers to the corporation's receipt of an award or other forms of acknowledgements in recognition of their CSR-related efforts. Second, *products and services* refers to the corporation's launch of a new product or service for customers to further promote itself as a socially responsible organization, such as the availability of paperless invoices. Third, *operations* refers to the corporation's investments in making improvements in existing operational facilities or new facilities to extend its social responsibility, such as the use of renewable energy. Fourth, *donations and sponsorships* refers to the corporation's making a donation or sponsorship for an initiative run by another organization on a voluntary basis. Fifth, *education* refers to the corporation's execution of an educational program which primarily serves the purpose of educating members of the community, such as a training program for the youth. Sixth, *community* refers to the corporation's execution of a community program whose primary purpose is to serve the community at large, such as a health program for senior citizens. Lastly, *environment* refers to the corporation's launch of an

environmental program which is oriented towards preserving the environment or promoting awareness about energy conservation, such as a tree planting event. To ensure that the coders understood the mutual exclusivity of each CSR theme, Table 1 was used as a coding scheme.

The two coders content-analyzed each news article based on the above categories of CSR themes. Prior to proceeding with the analysis, a sub-sample of 30 % of all the news releases and news articles was used for a pilot test to check whether the two coders were coding consistently. Upon agreement on the definitions of the categories, the coding reached a reliability statistic of a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.833. Before proceeding with the analysis for all news releases and news articles in the sample, the two coders discussed to ensure the mutual exclusivity of each unit of analysis by coming to an agreement on using the *main theme* of each unit of analysis for the content analysis. For instance, an educational program about environmental protection for children could fall under the categories of both education and environment. However, because the main purpose was to educate, it was coded as education. A tree planting event also served the purpose of promoting awareness as a type of education. However, because its main purpose was to protect the environment, it would be coded as environment.

Table 1 Coding scheme used for the content analysis

CSR Themes	Definition	Example
Recognition	Receipt of an award or other forms of acknowledgements in recognition of their CSR-related efforts.	e.g. being recognized for its CSR campaigns, receiving an award for its CSR programs
Products & Services	Launch of new products or services for customers to further promote its social responsibility.	e.g. paperless invoices, opening a new center to promote electrical cooking
Operations	Investments in making improvements in existing operational facilities or new facilities to extend its social responsibility.	e.g. using more environmentally friendly sources to generate energy, investing in wind power, etc.
Donations & Sponsorships	Making a donation for a cause or sponsoring an event run by another organization. Unlike the categories of *education*, *community* and *environment*, the corporation has no direct involvement in promoting the cause or running the event.	e.g. making a donation for disaster relief or sponsoring a concert run by another organization
Education	Running an educational program for the purpose of educating members of the community.	e.g. training programs for the youth
Community	Running a community program for the purpose of serving members of the community.	e.g. health programs for the elderly
Environment	Running an environmental program for the purpose of preserving the environment or promoting awareness about the environment.	e.g. tree planting events, beach cleanup

Even though the data collection for the news releases and the news articles were conducted independently, it was found in the process of open coding that related news releases could be found for all news articles in the sample. Thus, all the news releases were one of the sources, if not the only source, of the subsequent news coverage about the same CSR-related news events. In addition to classifying each news release into each CSR theme, the present study also content-analyzed the press coverage based on whether the tone of news articles was *positive*, *negative* or *neutral* (Carroll 2011). The two coders were required to read the entire news articles; based on the sources used, they determined whether an article was positive, negative or neutral. For example, even though a news released published by the corporations about a new operational facility would always be positive, the press coverage about this news event might require journalists' use of additional sources to balance the story and make it neutral. If both positive and negative sources were cited, then a news article would be considered neutral. If only positive sources were used, the news article would be considered positive. If only negative sources were used, then the news article would be considered negative.

In the final stage, upon data collection, repeated revisions and finalizations of the coding scheme and completion of the coding, the data were inputted into an Excel file and the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) for data analysis.

Results

The intermedia agenda setting effects posits that there is a transfer of issue salience from one medium to another. The results of the present study show that news releases on certain CSR themes were more likely to be covered in the press than others. The following table shows a comparison between the number of news releases and the number of news articles published on each CSR theme.

The results indicate that the CSR theme of operations had the highest number of news releases and news articles whereas the CSR theme of donations and sponsorships had the least number of news releases and news articles. It suggests that both the corporations and the press place the highest emphasis on the top ranked CSR theme of operations and the least emphasis on the lowest ranked CSR theme of donations and sponsorships. However, the emphasis they gave to the other five CSR themes differed, showing that there is no transfer of CSR-theme salience from news releases published by the two corporations to the news articles published by the press.

Corporate news releases, as a type of information subsidies, are published for the purpose of gaining media coverage. Hence, corporations are advised to highlight the news values of the news stories in the news releases. In addition to newsworthiness, however, there are also other factors within the journalistic practice that determine whether a news releases will be covered in the press. The following table shows the average number of news articles published for every news release published under each CSR theme.

It was found that operations-related CSR news stories generated the highest number of news articles; an average of 9.58 news articles were published for every news release published about operations. The second highest ranked CSR theme was products and services; an average of 7.77 news articles were published for every news release

published. Donations and sponsorships was ranked third, generating an average of 4.50 news articles for every news release published. Environment was ranked fourth, receiving an average of 3.83 news articles for every news release published. Community and education were ranked fifth and sixth, attracting an average news coverage of 3.14 and 2.64 news articles, respectively. The lowest ranked CSR theme was recognition, gaining an average coverage of 2.04 news articles for every news release published.

To study the interplay of agenda setting influences between corporate news releases and press coverage, the tone of the press coverage was also studied based on the tone of the sources used in the news articles. The following table shows a percentage breakdown of the tone of coverage for each CSR theme.

The results indicated that even though operations and products and services were ranked top in terms of average press coverage, they were also the top two receiving the highest percentage of negative and neutral coverage. These two themes also received the lowest percentage of positive news articles. Among the coverage for the theme of operations, 23.59 % was positive; 27.77 % was negative and 48.43 % was neutral. The theme of products and services received 81.19 % of positive coverage, 2.48 % of negative coverage and 14.85 % of neutral coverage. Even though CSR is generally perceived to be positive, the theme of environment still received 1.45 % of negative coverage. Apart from these three, none of the other themes received negative coverage. The theme of recognition received 100 % of positive news coverage.

Discussion

The present study examines the extent to which corporations' agenda setting efforts on CSR-related news events influence the processes of the media's agenda setting and building efforts. By investigating how much press coverage different CSR-related news releases receive, it seeks to find out whether corporations are able to influence how much emphasis the press places on each CSR theme. The comparison in Table 2 found that there was no transfer of CSR-theme issue salience between corporate news releases and press coverage; publishing more news releases on one CSR theme may not necessarily result in more press coverage. Based on the findings shown in Table 3,

Table 2 Comparison between the number of news releases and news articles published on each CSR theme

Rank	News Releases by Corporations	Freq.	%	News Articles by the Press	Freq.	%
1	Operations	50	24.8	Operations	479	45.8
2	Education	44	21.8	Products & Services	202	19.3
3	Community	35	17.3	Education	116	11.1
4	Products & Services	26	12.9	Community	110	10.5
5	Recognition	25	12.4	Environment	69	6.6
6	Environment	18	8.9	Recognition	51	4.9
7	Donations & Sponsorships	4	2	Donations & Sponsorships	18	1.7
	Total	202	100.1	Total	1,045	99.9

Table 3 Average number of news articles published for every news release published under each CSR theme

Rank	CSR Theme	Average number of news articles for every news release
1	Operations	479/50=9.58
2	Products & Services	202/26=7.77
3	Donations & Sponsorships	18/4=4.50
4	Environment	69/18=3.83
5	Community	110/35=3.14
6	Education	116/44=2.64
7	Recognition	51/25=2.04

the present study has identified two conditions under which a CSR-related news story is likely to receive more press coverage: its level of impact on society and its relevance to the corporation's major operations. Figure 1 shows how each CSR theme meets the two conditions.

This study found that the CSR themes of operations and products and services attract the highest percentage of press coverage. These two themes share the same characteristic in common: the news information about these two CSR themes is highly impactful on society and is highly relevant to the two corporations' core operations in the electricity industry. Because the two corporations included in the study operate as monopolies in Hong Kong and are listed in the Hong Kong Stock Exchange, changes or decisions made about their operational facilities and their products and services are highly impactful on the entire population. Moreover, these two themes are of high relevance to their operations in providing electricity and services to the entire population. Being engaged in these two CSR themes implies that corporations have
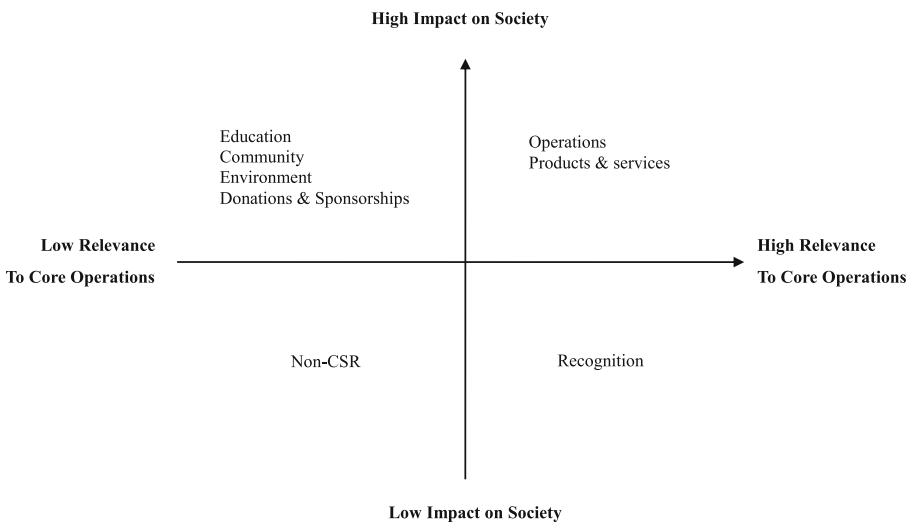

Fig. 1 Four quadrants showing how each CSR theme meets the two conditions. Four quadrants for measuring the newsworthiness of CSR-related news events

incorporated CSR into their core operations. Their engagement in these two CSR themes is especially impactful on two stakeholder groups which are of high importance to them, i.e. their customers and their investors. Incorporating CSR into their operations and products and services activities could help to address the criticism that CSR is just about image management because corporations are mostly engaged in external CSR activities, such as making donations to society at large. It implies that corporations are changing their corporate behaviors to become more socially responsible in their core operational activities as well.

Even though these two themes attract a high percentage of news coverage, implying that they are more successful in creating agenda setting influences, Table 4 shows that these two themes are also ranked higher in terms of receiving negative news coverage, especially the theme of operations. It can be argued that the more press coverage a CSR theme receives, the higher the possibility of its receiving negative coverage. It is possible that the theme of operations has received more negative coverage because it is likely to involve some controversial issues, such as whether the use of renewable energy would increase the cost of electricity for customers. For issues like these, the media are likely to obtain additional balancing sources in addition to those used in the corporate news releases. Also, experts and environmental groups may comment on these activities, which could change the tone of the coverage. The high percentage of press coverage on the CSR themes of operations and products and services indicates that CSR is more highly recognized by the press when it is incorporated into a corporation's core business operations.

The CSR themes that fall into the quadrant of being highly impactful on society and being low in relevance to core operations are ranked second in terms of receiving press coverage. These themes include education, community, environment and donations and sponsorships. One of the common characteristics shared by these themes is that although the corporations are involved in either funding or executing the programs, these programs do not have much to do with the corporations' core operations in terms of the provision of electricity. For example, under the theme of community, CLP ran the "Care for the Elderly" program and Power Assets ran the "U3A" programs in cooperation with non-governmental organizations to care for the health of senior citizens. A minor portion of the programs might involve electricity, such as sending a team of volunteers to fix the electricity in their homes. Yet, these themes are still largely unrelated to electricity. Likewise, making a donation for a cause or sponsoring an event

Table 4 The overall tone of the news coverage regarding each CSR theme

CSR theme (frequency)	Positive	Negative	Neutral
Operations (479)	23.59;%	27.77 %	48.43;%
Products & Services (202)	81.19%	2.48 %	14.85 %
Education (116)	90.52%	0 %	9.48 %
Community (110)	90 %	0 %	8.18 %
Environment (69)	94.2 %	1.45 %	0 %
Recognition (51)	100 %	0 %	0 %
Donations & Sponsorships (18)	88.89%	0 %	11.11 %

run by another organization is also unrelated to the corporations' core operations. These themes receive little or no negative news coverage. It is possible that they receive relatively little coverage because the press does not wish to serve as a mouthpiece in promoting these corporations. For these themes, it is also relatively difficult for journalists to collect additional sources to make the news stories neutral.

The CSR theme of recognition has received the lowest percentage of press coverage out of all the CSR themes because it falls under the quadrant of being highly relevant to the core business operations but only moderately impactful on society. Because it is highly relevant to the corporations' business operations, it meets one of the conditions for receiving press coverage. But recognition-related CSR news stories' does not make any impact on society. While corporations' fulfilling their responsibilities towards society beyond their own interests is the core concept of CSR, recognition-related CSR news stories involve corporations' presentation of the acknowledgements they receive for their efforts and do not benefit any other stakeholder groups. If the press reports about the awards and recognitions that a corporation receives, the press would be helping to promote the corporate image of the corporation. Recognition receives a percentage of 100 % positive news coverage because it is impossible for the press to find sources to balance the tone of the news stories about the positive recognition that the corporations receive from credible bodies.

Lastly, the quadrant of being low in both relevance to core operations and impact on society makes a news release or news article non-CSR related. Because the two coders had to agree on whether to classify a news release or a news article as being CSR-related before proceeding with the coding, it was also found that those that do not meet the two conditions of being high in relevance to core operations and impact on society would not be considered a CSR activity. The four quadrants indicate that CSR-related news events are best exemplified for maximizing the likelihood of press coverage when the news events are characterized by corporations' incorporation of CSR into their core business operations and their efforts in making an impact on their core stakeholder groups.

To study how the two electricity providers in Hong Kong, representing the discourse community of corporations which shape *the corporate agenda*, influences *the media agenda* through the transfer of issue salience in CSR-related news stories, this study used the theory of intermedia agenda setting effects as a theoretical framework and challenged the assumption that there is a transfer of salience. The press remains partially independent in its topic selection—publishing more news releases about a certain CSR theme does not lead to more press coverage. One of the possible reasons why intermedia agenda setting influences were not found in this study is because of the positive nature of CSR information. Most of the CSR information may be considered lacking in elements of newsworthiness, such as conflict, impact, prominence, proximity, timeliness and the unusual (Applegate 2005). Furthermore, as the news media are established as a credible third party which mediates information between their sources and their audience, they are not supposed to promote the corporations positively. When maintaining a balanced tone, which consists of the use of both positive and negative sources, is emphasized in journalistic practices, the news media could experience difficulties in finding sources to balance the tone for certain CSR themes, such as recognition. Because their role is not to act as a mouthpiece for the corporations by speaking positively of them, they might be refrained from picking up these positive

news stories. Other factors, such as the economic power of the news organizations and the amount of empty space available for coverage of additional news information, may also determine whether a CSR-related news release would be covered in the press.

Conclusion

Without a standard definition, communicators are free to assign different meanings to the concept of CSR to their advantage. But as long as they do not deviate too much from the existing social and business norms, other discourse communities are likely to share some similar interpretations about CSR. Despite this, different discourse communities are created for a strategic purpose. Thus, different groups have different expectations about CSR and have to abide by different professional norms, causing different discourse communities to create and shape their own meanings about CSR. The present study assumes that discourse communities do not operate in isolation from one another and do influence one another. Adopting the framework of intermedia agenda setting effects as a theoretical basis, this study has identified two conditions under which CSR-related news events are more likely to be covered by the press: their relevance to the corporations' core business operations and their impact on society. These two conditions also portray that the news media perceive CSR as being best defined and practiced as socially impactful activities which are incorporated into the core operations of corporations.

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